DOINGWHATWORKS

PLANNING FOR ENGAGING TEXT DISCUSSIONS

Purpose	Trainers, coaches, and expert teachers are encouraged to use this tool to provide in-service training on facilitating text discussion. During this session, teachers will view or listen to four teachers describing how they facilitate text discussion, they will discuss their observations, and then complete a planning tool to prepare for a discussion in their own classrooms.
Materials	Laptop and projector; teachers may bring a selected text for use with discussion planning tool.
Optional Sample Materials	*Mark It Up! Questioning and Making Connections* *Social Studies Pair-Sharing and Discussion Guidelines* *Literature Circles Lesson Plan and Materials* *Analyzing Speeches: Homework Assignments and Note-Taking Templates*
Media	*Mark It Up! Scaffolding Text Discussion*, slideshow of eighth grade English class at Pocomoke Middle School. (5:11) *Student-Driven Discussions in Social Studies*, slideshow of a social studies class at Saline Middle School. (5:44) *Literature Circles in High School*, video of ninth grade humanities class at Gateway High School. (8:11) *Building Academic Literacy Through Text Discussion*, audio interview with English teacher at Burlingame High School. (5:53)
Topic	Adolescent Literacy
Practice	Engaging Text Discussion

Planning for Engaging Text Discussions

Part I: View and Discuss the *Doing What Works* Media

View or listen to each media item and use the following questions to guide your note-taking and discussion:

1. How does this teacher make discussion about text engaging for students?

2. Are teachers using small groups or whole class discussions? What are the pros and cons in each configuration?

3. What does this teacher consider when selecting a reading for class text discussion?

4. How does the teacher scaffold the learning so that all students can participate successfully?

Part II: Plan a Discussion

Here are some questions to consider as you are selecting a text for student discussion:

Selecting an appropriate text	
1. What kind of text will you choose (e.g., narrative, expository, fiction, non-fiction, textbook, article, poem, etc.)?	
2. What is the text about?	
3. What background information might students need in order to be able to read this text?	
4. What features of your selection make the reading relevant, interesting, and engaging for your students?	
5. How does this reading relate to the unit you are planning?	
6. What are your reasons for choosing this text?	
7. What is the reading difficulty level?	
8. How will you scaffold the reading for students who will find it most challenging?	
9. Will this text elicit meaningful conversation among the students? What kinds of conversations do you expect/hope for?	
10. Are there layout/graphic clues to support students' reading (e.g., bold headings, italics, tables, charts)?	
11. What issues or content might be difficult for students to understand?	
12. What issues or content might be subject to multiple interpretations?	

Discussion task structure and teacher's role	
1. Do you want students to discuss the text as a whole class, in small groups, in triads or pairs?	
2. What are your reasons for choosing this structure?	
3. How will you support the discussion?	
4. How do you see your role in the discussion?	
5. How will you encourage your students to talk with each other?	
6. How will you encourage your students to listen to each other?	
7. How will you establish norms for classroom discussion?	
8. What strategies would you like to encourage students to use while they are reading (e.g., finding the main idea, questioning, determining the author's meaning)?	
9. How will you support their use of these strategies?	
What questions can you ask, or prompts can you provide (including sentence starters, note-takers or graphic organizers, for example), that will encourage your students to:	
1. Analyze the author's meaning or intent?	
2. Agree or disagree with the author?	
3. Make connections with prior knowledge, other readings or content, or current events?	

4. Share their own questions, assumptions, ideas, or wonderings?	
5. Identify challenging words, phrases, or passages?	
6. Develop an argument or establish a point of view?	
7. Support statements with evidence from the text?	
8. Draw inferences?	

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-PEP-11-C-0068. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.