



# Preface and Overview

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## Who Will Use This Book?

We have written this practical and useful book for a wide range of professionals in middle and high schools, including content area teachers and those working with struggling learners. The book is ideal for school, district, and other types of professional development programs. It will also be a helpful supplement in undergraduate and graduate reading and language arts classes as well as in clinical courses where there is a desire to provide useful strategies that have wide applicability across the content areas. Professors teaching content area courses will find the book especially valuable.

## What Are Some of the Outstanding Qualities of This Book?

There are several outstanding qualities of this book.

1. The book contains strategies that have utility across the curriculum.
2. The strategies are organized around three important areas: vocabulary, comprehension, and response.
3. The strategies are presented with a unique and helpful chart that quickly shows when, why, and how to use them. The type of text (narrative or informational) with which the strategy can be used is also indicated.
4. The strategies are presented in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step manner.
5. Most of the strategies contain one or more examples from the various content areas that comprise the curriculum.
6. A reproducible master accompanies most strategies.
7. A website contains extra reproducibles for many strategies, examples using various content areas, and helpful resources for instruction. Go to <http://webcom3.grtxle.com/ancillary> and use username JB\_Content and password JB\_Content for access.

## What Grade Levels Do the Strategies Address?

The strategies in this book are relevant for the middle grades through high school. After reading about a strategy, it should be quite easy for you to determine how best to use it with your students. You will probably want to adapt some of the strategies to fit your teaching style, text materials, and your students' particular needs.

## What Insights Have Been Provided by Research?

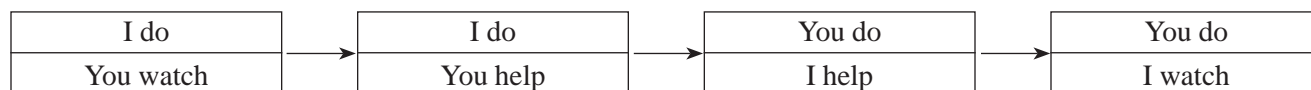
Gray (1925) and Herber (1970) established the importance of the relationship between literacy and learning in the content areas. Students must internalize the language of specific disciplines in order to think critically about the content. Unfortunately, studies have found that as content becomes more complex, student engagement with subject area reading declines significantly, most often by eighth grade. This drop is related to a decrease in content literacy instruction that encourages self-questioning and deep reading (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). To continue to engage older students in their content area learning, strategy instruction including the use of graphic organizers, comprehension monitoring, questioning, and summarizing are of critical importance. Students also need a variety of strategies to retain content word meanings. Such strategies include self-selecting words, making personal connections, and noting semantic relationships (Baumann, Kameenui, & Ash, 2003; Carr, 1985). Finally, opportunities to respond to text and share responses with peers through hands-on activities and discussion are effective for learning and retaining content vocabulary (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). The strategies in this book reflect the findings of these and other studies documenting the effectiveness of content area reading strategies (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Hedrick, Harmon, & Wood, 2008).

There is little doubt that teaching results in student learning. A persistent problem is that of teachers mentioning a skill or assigning a task without taking the time to teach it. Instruction that is characterized by clear explanation, modeling, and facilitating scaffolded practice can increase student learning. The National Reading Panel (2000) compiled a large volume that offers several strategies for effective comprehension instruction. According to Cunningham (2001), the comprehension section of the report is potentially valuable. The following principles are generally consistent with two other major reviews (Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984) and a related chapter (Pressley, 2000) of research on teaching comprehension.

1. Teach students to be aware of their own comprehension. This strategy is often referred to as comprehension monitoring.
2. Have students work together on their strategies. This strategy is called cooperative learning.
3. Have students make graphic summaries of what is read through the use of graphic and semantic organizers. Use them as a bridge to student-generated talk or writing.
4. Use story and text structure.
5. Help students learn to ask and answer questions.
6. Teach students to summarize what is read.

The strategies selected for this book will help you in each of these areas. The key ingredients, however, are your actions as the teacher. Consider the following model.

- Take time to teach the strategies.



- Tell students how the strategies promote learning.
- Model how the strategies are used.
- Think aloud by describing what goes on in your mind as you are using the strategy.
- Gradually release the responsibility to students.
- Provide guided practice so students can learn how the strategy will help them understand the lesson or text.
- Reinforce their efforts.
- Develop the strategies over time and remind students to use their strategies in a variety of contexts.
- Have students reflect on the strategies and how they help in particular contexts.

Finally, we want to stress again the critical importance of teaching the strategies.

## Is This Book Easy to Use?

Yes! The format and organization of this book makes it very user friendly. We have also included a Quick Reference Guide inside the front cover so you can quickly locate the various strategies and consider their use. Note that the strategies are listed in alphabetical order. There is also a reference page on the back cover.

## Where Should I Begin?

Glance at the Quick Reference Guide inside the front cover. Scan the strategies and find a particular strategy that interests you. Turn to the page for that strategy. Suppose you select the Discussion Web on page 27. Under the title, you will see a chart that covers five areas.

1. **FOCUS** indicates how many of the three areas (i.e., vocabulary, comprehension, and response) are covered by the strategy. The Discussion Web focuses on *comprehension* and *response*. Response indicates that oral or written actions by students are part of this strategy.

2. **TEXT TYPE** refers to the two major classifications of materials: narrative and informational. The Discussion Web can be used with both types of text.
3. **WHEN TO USE** tells you if you should use the strategy before, during, and/or after reading. The Discussion Web is best used *after* reading.
4. **STRATEGY** is based on the work of Duke and Pearson (2002), Keene (2008), Keene and Zimmermann (1997), Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy (1992) and others who have conducted and reviewed the research in comprehension. These strategies help students become thoughtful, independent readers who are engaged in their reading and learning. The following are brief descriptions of the seven major strategies we use in this book.
  - *Monitoring Meaning*—Students who monitor meaning as they read know if the text makes sense to them. If not, they use fix-up strategies such as pausing, rereading, and/or discussing their understanding with others to help clarify the meaning.
  - *Using Relevant Prior Knowledge*—Students use their background knowledge before, during, and after reading to make sense of and remember new information. They assimilate new information into their background knowledge. This is sometimes referred to as using and developing their schema.
  - *Asking Questions*—Students generate questions before, during, and after reading. They use their questions to help them focus and remember important ideas from the text.
  - *Inferring*—Students combine their prior knowledge with that which is read to create meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text. Readers who infer draw conclusions, make and revise predictions, use and interpret information from the text, make connections, answer questions, and make judgments about the reading.
  - *Creating Images*—Using all five senses and their emotions, students create images during and after reading. They may use their images to make connections, recall, and interpret details from the reading.
  - *Determining Importance*—As they read, students make decisions about what they believe is important in the text. These might be words, sentences, or main ideas developed from the reading. They then draw conclusions about the key ideas or major concepts contained in the text.
  - *Synthesizing*—Students put together information from the text, from other relevant sources, and their background knowledge to create understanding of what has been read. Students use text structures and text elements as they read to predict, confirm or reject ideas, assimilate thoughts and create overall meaning. “A synthesis is the sum of information from the text, other relevant texts, and the reader’s background knowledge . . . produced in an original way” (Keene, 2008, p. 252).

You can see that the Discussion Web helps with *inferring*, *determining importance*, and *synthesizing*.

5. **HOW TO USE** refers to whether the strategy is best used with individuals, small groups, and/or whole groups. You can see that the Discussion Web is best used with *small groups* and *whole groups*. There is amazing variety in how the strategies can be used, so don’t be limited by our recommendations. You’ll likely find additional ways to use the strategies that increase student engagement.

Below the title of the strategy are the words *Description* and *Procedure*. There is a brief description of the Discussion Web followed by a step-by-step procedure for using it. We like to think of the numbered steps as a systematic lesson plan to help you present the strategy to your students. You should, of course, feel free to adapt the steps and examples to fit your students.

We then provide one or more *examples* (see page vii) of how the strategy might be used in different subjects or content areas. You may quickly be able to think of logical extensions to your lessons in a variety of areas.

### Focus

Comprehension  
Response

### Text Type

Narrative  
Informational

### When to Use

After Reading

### Strategy

Inferring  
Determining Importance  
Synthesizing

### How to Use

Small Group  
Whole Group

## Discussion Web

**DESCRIPTION:** The Discussion Web (Alvermann, 1991; Duthie, 1986) is a graphic aid for helping students address both sides of an issue by considering pro and con arguments before drawing a conclusion. Active discussion is stimulated by this strategy, which incorporates reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

### Procedure

1. Choose a selection that has the potential to generate opposing viewpoints. Be sure to initially develop an understanding of key vocabulary, survey illustrations and charts, build background knowledge as needed, and help students set purposes for reading. Then have students read the selection.
2. Display the reproducible master on page 30 and duplicate and distribute copies to students. To introduce the Discussion Web, pose a question related to the selection that stimulates opposing views. Have students write the question on their Discussion Web.
3. Have students work with a partner to brainstorm at least three responses for each side of the question posed. Encourage students to write down key words or phrases and strive to have an equal number of reasons in each column. Students could take turns writing reasons on the same Discussion Web. Provide ample time for each set of partners to share their reasons.
4. Pair one set of partners with another set of partners so they can compare their reasons. Tell the groups that the goal is to work toward consensus. Provide time for students to share and discuss. Encourage students to listen carefully, especially for views that may differ from their own. The conclusion can be written in the box on the bottom of the sheet.
5. Select or have each group select an individual to serve as a group spokesperson. Provide three to five minutes for each group to decide which of the group's reasons best support the group's conclusion and check or star the best reasons. Then have the spokesperson from each group report to the whole class.
6. If desired, invite students to write their individual answers to the question posed on the Discussion Web.
7. Consider the following variations of the Discussion Web based on Alvermann (1991) and Swafford (1990).
  - Current or historical issues can be explored by making simple changes in the Discussion Web. The U.S. Civil War slavery issue could be examined through the positions of Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. A partial Discussion Web showing this example follows.

### Focus

Comprehension  
Response

### Text Type

Narrative  
Informational

### When to Use

After Reading

### Strategy

Inferring  
Determining Importance  
Synthesizing

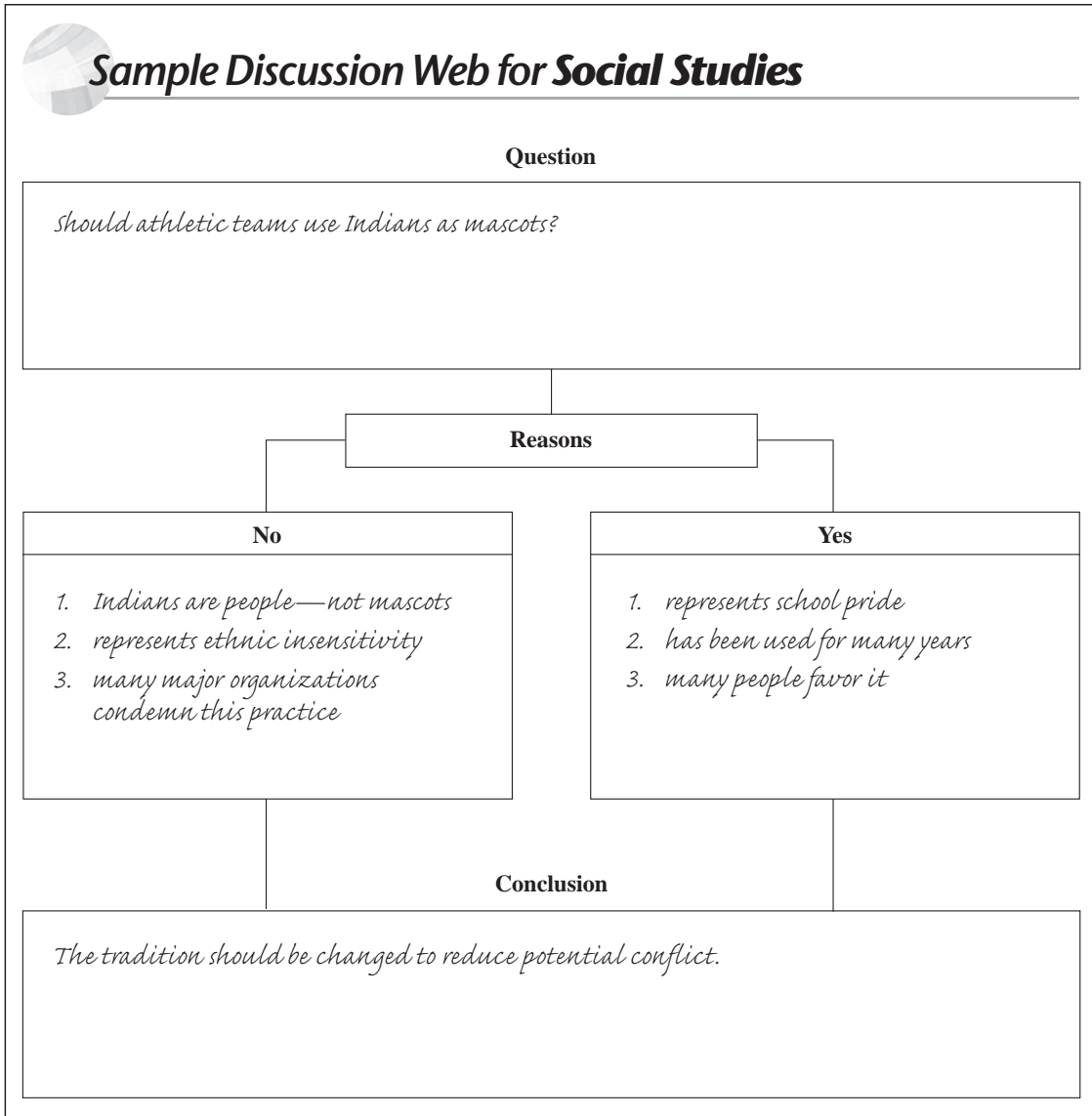
### How to Use

Small Group  
Whole Group

To make the strategy especially useful, a *reproducible master* is included for most of the strategies. You have the publisher's permission to reproduce and use the master with your students within the guidelines noted on the copyright page of this book.

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