



Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation



Providing students with the opportunity to participate in effective discussions regarding the significance or meaning of a text in all content areas is a way to improve reading comprehension. Teachers may guide a whole classroom discussion or monitor students as they discuss in small groups. Effective discussions may include constructing comprehension and investigating outcomes both through cognition, relating what one knows, and listening to what others have to say.



How to carry out the recommendation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully prepare for the discussion. Ask follow-up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion. Provide a task, or a discussion format, that students can follow when they discuss texts together in small groups. Develop and practice the use of a specific “discussion protocol.”

Potential roadblocks
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> There might be low student participation due to students’ lack of interest in the topic or desire to avoid receiving negative feedback from teachers and peers. Time spent on in-depth discussions for one topic might result in a lack of time to cover other curriculum topics. Teachers may lack discussion facilitation knowledge and skills.

Reference: Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices* (NCEE 2008-4027). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/8>



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Carefully prepare for the discussion.

Prepare for discussions by strategically selecting readings that will engage students in different understandings and analyses to drive the conversation. Predict areas of textbooks or reading selections that may present students with difficulty, and prepare support materials for those areas. Also, be sure to gather information about countering points of view when available. Finally, when creating questions, focus on encouraging students to analyze and engage in deep discussions about the text.

2. Ask follow-up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion.

Initially, provide students with questions that require them to consider different perspectives. Follow up with questions that spark further analyses should be based on student comments that emerge during the discussion. Discussion questions should reflect the reading comprehension standards by providing students with opportunities to think about how to support an answer using multiple parts of text or using evidence from the text to support a claim.

3. Provide a task, or a discussion format, that students can follow when they discuss texts together in small groups.

Give students reading passages that require them to use reading comprehension strategies. Also, consider providing students with different roles that go into group reading, such as discussion leaders, prediction creators, and paraphrasers. During the discussion, walk around and monitor discussions, provide feedback to students, and ask thought-provoking questions.

4. Develop and practice the use of a specific “discussion protocol.”

It is difficult to facilitate meaningful student discussion that results in improved reading comprehension. Utilize frameworks and best practices identified at your school or in the literature to support the establishment of a set of processes or guidelines for effective student discussions.

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Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>There might be low student participation due to students' lack of interest in the topic or desire to avoid receiving negative feedback from teachers and peers.</i>	Elicit student participation by selecting a high-interest topic that may only be indirectly related to the intended class topic. For instance, try starting a discussion using a text that students will engage with, such as an article from the web. You must also provide a socially safe, encouraging environment so that students can confidently provide their thoughts during the classroom discussion. To increase safety and build student confidence in discussions, strategically call on quiet students for discussion questions that you know they can answer. Allowing students to work in small groups can also help quiet students engage.
<i>Time spent on in-depth discussions for one topic might result in a lack of time to cover other curriculum topics.</i>	Content-area and literacy standards require students to think deeply, and students need the opportunity to apply these skills in class. If the required curriculum does not allow for in-depth learning opportunities, districts or states may need to review curriculum expectations. If this is not feasible, teachers need to strategically prioritize a few topics that they will include in more in-depth conversations.
<i>Teachers may lack discussion facilitation knowledge and skills.</i>	Professional development can help teachers learn to be mediators of deep discussions in the classroom. It may be helpful for teachers to have time to gather topics and participate in discussions on those topics so they can learn helpful discussion techniques firsthand.



For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.