STRATEGIES TO GET MORE STUDENTS TO READ ASSIGNED MATERIALS

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify strategies for getting more students to do their assigned readings
- Identify the importance of the retrieval effect
- Identify pre-class assignments to teach students to become active readers
- Recognize in-class exercises that requires reading before class
FOCUS ACTIVITY

- Take 1-minute to reflect and identify strategies that you use to motivate students to do assigned readings
PREPARATION FOR CLASS ACTIVITIES

- Doyle (2014) explained: “Students don’t do their reading and other assigned prep work because, based on their experience, they believe that teachers will discuss any important information included in the readings during class” (p. 67).
- “It might be important to structure a class so that students are accountable for their pre-class activities and cannot do well without reading”
STRATEGIES TO GET STUDENTS TO READ

- Quiz (retrieval practice, interleaving)
- One-minute paper at beginning of class
- Reading responses and guides
- 3-5 minute summary at beginning of class
- Research on retrieval practice
- Mini-lesson on reading strategies
- Mini-lesson prior to assigned reading
- Purposeful reading assignments/Reflections
- Readiness assessment test
- Asking for reading notes or summary map
- Allow for student choice
GETTING STUDENTS TO DO THE READING

- According to students surveyed in higher education, taking quizzes was the most effective technique at getting them to read (Hattenberg & Steffy, 2013)
- Short writing assignments was number two on this list.
- Anything optional, including being called on in class or letting them work on their own was rated lower
If we don’t grade students on an assignment, they think we regard it as unimportant.

Consider assigning 15-30% of the final grade for reading-related activities (e.g., quizzes, reading responses) and inform students about the importance of the retrieval effect:

**Quizzes**
Take the online quizzes (posted on Blackboard) for reading assignments before class begins. Quizzes (6 points each) consist of multiple-choice and matching questions. You may use your textbooks or notes during the quizzes. However, the quizzes are timed; you will have 15 minutes to complete 12 questions. So, you need to read the assignment before starting the quiz. Students that try to take the quizzes without reading the assignments usually run out of time looking for the answers in the text.

Articulate your expectations
Effective, active readers always have a clear purpose when they read.

As instructors, we know why we are assigning particular articles, but that reason isn’t always clear to our students. That can affect motivation to read the assignment.

As part of our transparent teaching practices, we can let students know what we hope they will be getting from the assigned reading. We can give them both

- **Short-term applications of the reading** (tomorrow’s class discussion, a quiz, etc.)
- **Long-term applications of the reading** (assigned essay, research project, etc.). These are usually attached to our global class objectives.
SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR GOOD READING

- Students don’t always come to our classes with great reading habits. How did you learn to read actively? In college? In grad school?

- Consider direct instruction of the kinds of reading you’d like to see your students do:
  - Text-based strategies
  - Strategies that move “off the page,” supporting individual meaning-making and critical thinking
  - Rhetorical reading strategies
TEXT-BASED STRATEGIES

- **Pre-viewing the selection.** This helps “warm up” the brain to get ready to read and look for information.

- **Vocabulary clarification.** Should they be looking up every word they don’t know? What should they do before they look it up?

- **Passage clarification.** What should they do if there is a whole chunk of text they don’t understand?

- **Visualization.** This helps students think about the idea in a new way. It also helps with memory/recall.

- **Summary.** This doesn’t have to be a paragraph. It can be an outline or a map!

- **If you see reading strategy workshops advertised on campus, consider encouraging your students to attend!**
I. First Major Topic
A. First major idea
   1. First important detail
   2. Second important detail
B. Second major idea
   1. First important detail
      a. Minor detail or example
      b. Minor detail or example

II. Second Major Topic
A. First major idea
MOVING “OFF THE PAGE”: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

- Good readers automatically connect what they are reading to their own experiences and lives.
- These kinds of personal connections help us to better understand and remember what we are reading.
- Possible personal connections sentence starters:
  - This reminds me of when …
  - Something similar happened to me when …
  - This sounds like something I’ve read/watched/observed before …
- Click here for an example.
appear to miss the point or who seem unable or unwilling to read critically. Many of our students are “good” readers in the traditional sense: they have large vocabularies, read quickly, are able to do well at comprehension tasks involving recall of content. They can identify topic sentences, introductions and conclusions, generalizations and supporting details. Yet these same students often frustrate us, as they paraphrase rather than analyze, summarize rather than criticize texts. Why are these students doing less than we hope for?

To interpret any sophisticated text seems to require not only careful reading and prior knowledge, but the ability to read the text on several levels, to build multi-faceted representations. A text is understood not only as content and information, but also as the result of someone’s intentions, as part of a larger discourse world, and as having real effects on real readers. In an earlier study, we say that experienced readers made active use of the strategy of rhetorical reading not only to predict and interpret texts but to solve problems in comprehension (Flower, “Construction of Purpose.”) Vipond and Hunt have observed a related strategy of “point-driven” (vs. “story-driven”) reading which people bring to literary texts.

If we view reading as the act of constructing multi-faceted yet integrated representations, we might hypothesize that the problem students have with critical reading of difficult texts is less the representations they are constructing than those they fail to construct. Their representations of text are closely tied to content: they read for information. Our students may believe that if they understand all the words and can paraphrase the propositional content of a text, then they have successfully “read” it.

While a content representation is often satisfactory—it certainly meets the requirement of allowing students to take a test assignments—it falls short with
MOVING “OFF THE PAGE”: QUESTIONING

- Journalistic who/what/when/where/why questions are great for remembering information they will be responsible for on an exam or quiz. It can also serve as a study guide.

- Genuine “I wonder” kinds of questions are great for getting students to think critically. Students can be encouraged to find questions for which the answer is not right there in the text; these kinds of questions can be fruitful seeds for reflective writing, class discussions, and even research questions.
“I wonder” questioning example

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While a content representation is often satisfactory—it certainly meets the needs of many pre-college read-to-take-a-test assignments—it falls short with those texts which require analysis and criticism. What many of our students
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While a content representation is often satisfactory—it certainly meets the needs of many pre-college read-to-take-a-test assignments—it falls short when we do not construct representations of context of structure, and of con'ventional feature. What they often fail to do is to move beyond content and con'ventional representation of context as persuasive actions, arising from contexts, and with intended effects. "Critical reading" involves very little with respect to reading for context. More than critical reading for context, it is identification of conventional features of discourse, such as introductions or examples, and more than simple evaluation of agreeing or disagreeing. Sophisticated, difficult texts often require the reader to build an equally sophisticated, complete representation of meaning. But does this goal translate into the process of reading?

As assigning as this notion of the active construction of meaning is, we really have no direct access to the meanings/representations that readers build. We cannot enter the reader's head and watch as the construction of meaning proceeds. Nor can we get anything but an indirect measure of the nature, content, and structure of that representation. What we can do, however, is to watch the way that readers go about building representations. We can observe their use of reading strategies and infer something about the representations they build.
Kantz suggest “[reading] sources as arguments and think about the rhetorical contexts... rather than read them merely as facts” (78). In the same way, a student of Greene’s stated that “we are not just educated by concepts and facts that we learn in school. We are educated by the people around and the environments that we live in” (12,13). Explain the connection.
WHAT ELSE?

- Take one minute to brainstorm: Are there discipline-specific reading/annotation strategies that would be beneficial for your students? What kinds of things do you mark up or look for when you are reading in your discipline?
IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE IN CLASS EXERCISES THAT CALL FOR READING

- Active learning refers to teaching strategies that “involve students in doing things and thinking about the things that they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2).
FIRST 5-MINUTES OF CLASS

- Open-ended quiz (retrieval practice, interleaving)
- One-minute paper for students to reflect on questions on assigned readings
- Mini-presentation
- News report
- Focus with a quote, question, story, problem, or video
- Make it meaningful team
- Check for reading notes or summary maps
- Write/pair/share from a discussion prompt (connection to reading purpose)
DURING CLASS

• **Reading Groups/Circles**- 5 or 6 students, each with a different role in the group:
  - Discussion leader- prepared questions to facilitate discussion
  - Passage master – important passages that provide key information.
  - Creative connector- makes connections between readings and social, cultural, political, economic ideas.
  - Devil’s advocate- list of questions raised by critics of the authors
  - Reporter- summarizer’s groups discussions.

• Students should know the success of this activity depends on two things:
  - everyone coming prepared by having read the assignment (multiple texts)
  - everyone participating
DURING CLASS, CONT.

Jigsaw readings

- Assign different sections of the same reading to different small groups. Small groups identify the 3-5 main points from the section that their classmates need to know, plus examples.

- Assign different readings on the same topic, or allow students to choose from two or three. Students who read the same article identify the 3-5 main points plus examples, etc.

- Either way, students get ‘regrouped’ with other students who did not read the same section or article. Students teach each other the material.

- Critical thinking extra step: Ask students to find connections between the ideas in the different sections or articles. This is a good time to practice the source integration and citation style you’d like to see in your students’ papers.
FINAL 5-MINUTES

- One-minute paper for students to predict what will be covered in next readings (Lang, 2016)
- Interleaving quiz
- Focus with a quote, question, story, problem, or video
- One-minute paper (What did you find most meaningful today? What did you learn? What is the muddiest point?)
- 5-minute application exercise (students must identify five ways in which the material they learned can be applied in outside contexts)
- 5-minute metacognitive five (How are you learning? What can you do to improve your learning?)
FOCUS ACTIVITY

- Take **1-minute** to write which of the aforementioned strategies you would consider using in your course.
- After you are done, turn to a partner and take **3-minutes** to explain why you selected this strategy.
REFERENCES AND HELPFUL RESOURCES


- Honeycutt, B. (2016). *FLIP the first 5 minutes of class! 50 focusing activities to engage your students and create more time for learning*. Raleigh, NC: FLIP It Consulting.