



SAVE the DATES.

Join us for the **32nd Annual HSTW Staff Development Conference**, July 11-14, 2018, in Orlando, Florida.

Come early for the **Sixth Annual College- and Career-Readiness Standards Networking Conference**, July 9-11, in Orlando.

Literacy Strategies That Transform Teaching and Learning

The ability to read and understand text can open a world of opportunities for students as they progress from reading simpler text to understanding complex text across various content areas. This newsletter explores the importance of challenging literacy-based assignments in all disciplines. It emphasizes the need to move students beyond the primary grades where students are learning to read to middle grades and high school standards where students use reading and writing as strategies for mastering content knowledge and skills.

This newsletter describes best practices presented at the **31st Annual HSTW Staff Development Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, July 2017.**

Raise the Rigor: Strategies to Promote Reading Comprehension



Anna Hasenkamp

Anna Hasenkamp is a middle grades social studies teacher in the Florence School District 1 in an area of South Carolina along I-95 known as the “Corridor of Shame” because of its poverty and low-performing students. Believing that “all students benefit from rigor, and students from poverty benefit the most,” Hasenkamp says it is important to create rigorous literacy-based classrooms in all content areas. She adds that “the ability to read and understand complex text is the best way to distinguish students who are college and career ready from those who are not.”

Hasenkamp makes a point to give her students rigorous literacy-based instruction every day and is quick to point out that “rigor does not mean hard. Rigor means challenge.” It is through substantive questioning that she provides that challenge.

She incorporates a variety of research-based questioning strategies to improve her students’ reading comprehension, challenge high-achieving students and help lower-achieving students find success. She relies on the Q-Chart to ensure that her questions are rigorous and do not rely on low-level thinking for answers. Hasenkamp’s desire is to “consistently set high expectations and increase cognitive load” by using the three C’s of questioning: cold calling, chill time and no call outs.

Q-Chart

	Is	Did	Can	Would	Will	Might
Why						
How						
When						
Where						
Want						
Who						

“Who might have been responsible for the plan’s failure” is a higher-order question than “Who is the author of the novel.”

Pose, Pause, Pounce and Bounce

One of Hasenkamp’s favorite three-C’s strategies is called pose, pause, pounce and bounce (PPPB). Using PPPB, the teacher *poses* to the class a question about the reading but does not allow anyone to call out an answer. Instead, she gives students at least seven seconds of “chill time” to think of an answer. One of the “rules of engagement” of cold calling is that students may not answer any question with “yes, no or I don’t know,” so this *pause* after hearing the question gives them an opportunity to “think and think again.”

If students are really captivated by the question, the teacher may extend the reflective time before he or she *pounces* by calling out a specific student to answer. In most questioning activities, students can stop thinking when someone answers a question, but not with PPPB. After the called-out student answers and the teacher engages him in conversation on the topic, the teacher *bounces* to another student and asks his or her opinion of the first student’s response. The teacher continues to bounce from student to student with probing questions until he or she has assessed that everyone understands the reading or content.



While pouncing and calling out may have negative connotations for some, Hasenkamp emphasizes that questioning should never be used to humiliate an unprepared student. The reflective time and probing questions give each student a chance to engage in productive thought and conversation. Hasenkamp says student engagement and scores on the South Carolina PASS exam increased after she began using the literacy-based lessons.

As a teacher trained in the instructional strategies of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), Hasenkamp knows the importance of reading comprehension and believes that “reading determines which students will be successful” in college and careers. Many of the reading and questioning strategies she incorporates in her instruction come from the LDC CoreTools website ([https:// LDC.org/coretools](https://LDC.org/coretools)), a clearing house of teacher- designed instructional modules and mini-task assignments, all of which are literacy based. To learn more about LDC professional development provided by the Southern Regional Education Board, [click here](#).

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Seven Literacy-Based Assignments for Social Studies Classrooms

Dave Madden, sixth-grade teacher at **Lakeside Middle School** in Anderson County, South Carolina, shares Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) mini-tasks and strategies created specifically for social studies teachers. These seven strategies, applied to primary documents, use hands-on activities to build confidence and help students reflect on their learning, while increasing reading comprehension and writing skills. They also help students conceptualize knowledge to move beyond surface learning.

People, Objects, Settings, Engagement and Relationships — P.O.S.E.R. requires students to make inferences about a primary source, such as a photograph. Active reading of complex text requires students to infer meaning and has a high influence on learning. The strategy encourages students to think for themselves and not limit knowledge to what the teacher tells them. Madden says, “We need to give our students the ability to analyze a visual primary document.”

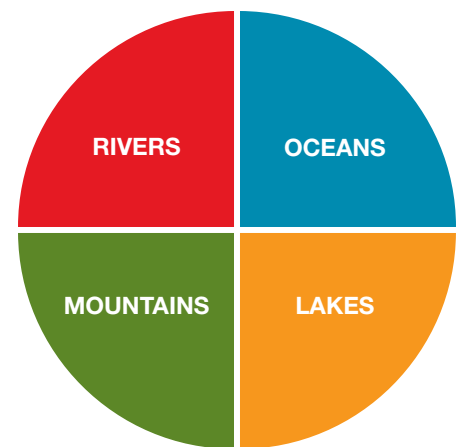


Dave Madden

I Can See Clearly Now

When students imagine and draw the key ideas of a social studies topic, they are more apt to remember them. This strategy takes a mosaic approach to vocabulary. Students are given a dozen or so key ideas that they illustrate on a one-pager. This technique goes deeper than just surface knowledge. “The power of the activity is the transfer of knowledge when they share their drawings with a partner or class,” says Madden.”

Bodies of Water



Concept Circles

The concept circles strategy features four key terms, each in one of the four quadrants of the circle. Students then move either direction around the circle to explain the concept in a sentence. As one example, he cites bodies of water: lakes, mountains, rivers and oceans. Lakes are reservoirs found in mountains that are drained by rivers into different oceans. Madden adds, “The activity challenges our students to think and process relationships among key terms.”

A Matter of Perspective

This strategy exposes uncharted territory and sometimes even taboo thinking while eliminating the pitfall of bias and asking students to consider multiple sides of a story. Students studying the Boston Tea Party in the U.S. write a letter to a peer in Great Britain whose father is the owner of the tea that was thrown in the harbor. This forces students to consider a historical event from a different perspective, and move beyond surface learning of the Boston Tea Party.

Event Map

Madden describes the event map strategy as “graphic organizers on steroids.” Students are given an historical event, for example, World War II. Without using words, they illustrate the event with information about the key points, such as drawing flags to represent Japan and the United States. By spending extra time focusing on details, students retain more information long term.

Political Cartoon Analysis

Students consider higher-order thinking questions organized into a scaffold to identify, examine and evaluate a political cartoon. For example, who does it represent? What time period is it from? What is the intended message? They examine the symbolism of the objects and the individuals involved to build a deeper understanding of content study. “Students surprised me with their ability to correctly share the meaning created in the cartoon,” says Madden.

Found a Poem

The “found poem” strategy uses words, phrases or quotations from a text and rearranges them into a new meaning similar to a word cloud. Students select words or phrases they find meaningful from a document (for example, the United States Constitution) and organize these around a theme or message. This structured method helps students review material and synthesize their learning.

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I Did Read! I Still Don't Get It!

Being able to analyze and comprehend content-specific texts is an essential skill for ensuring students' future successes. Employers expect workers to understand technically sophisticated text specific to the worker's field and to write such text clearly and concisely as well. Teachers are expected to provide students the means to succeed.

According to SREB literacy consultant **Quinton Granville**, several factors cause students to struggle with reading and comprehending complex text. Two typically cited by teachers are: students' reading abilities are too low to read with understanding, or students exhibit little interest in the topic the text addresses. Granville also notes in many cases students struggle with reading complex text because they have not been prepared for the type of critical thinking and visualization such material demands. He recommends teachers take the following steps to prepare students:

Preparing Students to Read Complex Text

Select text that aligns with the focus of the standard(s). Analyze text to prepare students for vocabulary, comprehension and application. Identify strategies that students can use to comprehend complex text. Brainstorm activities in which students apply information from text to demonstrate understanding.

Granville stresses the importance of using information from a standard to select and analyze texts. He explains, “If a standard states that students are to analyze opposing views about a particular concept, you have to identify texts that represent opposing views. This is done by reading each potential text.”

Once potential texts that align with the standard have been identified, the next step is to determine how they can be used to support students with reading complex text, says Granville. He maintains teachers should analyze text to determine how students can “EARN” their grade. EARN stands for essential vocabulary, annotating, reading comprehension and note-taking.

In other words, determine how students can learn essential vocabulary that will help them understand as they read, annotate to identify key points and make connections, deepen their (reading) comprehension of concepts, and practice note-taking to capture information that can be applied to writing. A third critical component centers on providing students with literacy strategies that help them navigate through complex text.



Reading to Write Versus Reading to Pass an Exam

When presenting at the 2017 HSTW Staff Development Conference, Granville facilitated an exercise in which participants use a T-chart to compare two concepts in a text. “Students are more likely to benefit from reading to write than reading to pass a test,” he states. Granville notes students should use reading strategies to prepare to respond to a complex writing prompt.

During the question and answer session at the conference, one participant shared, “This is something that my students and I can benefit from. I can see that their struggles in reading mainly came from me focusing on preparing them for a test more than preparing them to use what they read to produce writing to show me what they understand.”

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Strengthening Students' Understanding Via Cooperative Learning

In a separate session at the HSTW Staff Development Conference, Granville focused on the benefits of establishing a culture of cooperative learning for students. He notes teachers play a big role in building a culture where students can work together to complete tasks and feel safe to make mistakes during the learning process.

As it relates to literacy, Granville says working cooperatively provides students a platform for discussing information from texts with other students. Students are exposed to different perspectives and opposing views. Working cooperatively provides students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of information discussed in texts or hone their ability to perform literacy-based skills as they work with their peers to complete tasks. True learning takes place, he maintains, in a classroom culture based on student interaction as they bounce back from mistakes.

Overcoming Fear and Letting Students Lead

Sometimes teachers are afraid of putting students in groups to complete a challenging task, contends Granville. Teachers often cite the fear of students socializing too much and working too little and students learning from each other rather than the teacher as reasons for apprehensiveness toward group work. "One of the most difficult things to accept as a teacher is the more hands-on you are during the learning process, the less students are going to learn," asserts Granville. Quoting B.F. Skinner, Granville emphasizes, "Whenever there is a lot of teaching, there is little learning."

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Breaking Into Literacy: Engaging Students in Literacy Through Innovative Lessons

"If you teach students in a fun and innovative way, they are more likely to get the information you want them to learn..."

For many students, history class is all about how much information they can cram into their heads and remember long enough to take a quiz. Teachers lecture about historical facts, events, people and themes that students ought to know and tell them to take notes. Students are often bored. But they don't have to be.



Ricky Simpson,
History Teacher

"If you teach students in a fun and innovative way, they are more likely to get the information you want them to learn in the document," says **Ricky Simpson**, a history teacher at **Honea Path Middle School** in Honea Path, South Carolina. He says teachers need to stop telling students what they need to know; instead, design lessons that allow students to think critically and arrive at their own answers.

In fact, he maintains one reason students do poorly on assessments is that "we tell them what we want them to know, and we don't let them figure it out." Simpson, who is also a local trainer in the instructional strategies of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), says teachers need to rethink the type of assignments they give students. When approaching assignments from a literacy-based mindset, the quality of assignments improves and so does student growth.

Simpson says one of the greatest problems students have in history classes is not knowing how to utilize primary source and secondary source information in documents. Primary source information provides direct or firsthand evidence about an event. These might include historical documents, eyewitness accounts, speeches or video recordings.

Unlocking Treasure Box

Simpson uses innovative literacy-based assignments to help students understand history. He's created a fun activity that requires students to unlock a treasure box.

It works something like this: Students come to class and find pictures about a subject or unit — the American Revolution, for example. Sticky notes provide clues (facts, timelines, maps, etc.) about how to open the first of several locks. Once students open the first lock, they find other clues about the overall activity or unit that help them open the next lock and so on.

All along the way students work collaboratively to read primary and secondary source documents. Through close reading, they find clues to open more locks and ultimately get into the big box. All texts, clues and findings are driven by the content standard. Definitions, timelines, dates and more are ultimately learned, not memorized. In addition, the final product is an authentic writing assignment.

“It almost gets 100 percent participation,” says Simpson. “They want to be the first person to get into the box.” He adds the activity is modern — it requires a little bit of technology, including QR codes and invisible ink. “I find they [students] retain the information better when they discover it on their own rather than just having to memorize facts,” says Simpson.

Engagement Leads to Achievement

Simpson says students’ scores soar after experiencing the treasure hunt activity. Each year, his history students are administered the district’s Student Learning Objective (SLO) Benchmark Assessment as a pretest, and Simpson says the average score is usually 20 percent to 25 percent. At the end of the year, during post-SLO assessments, after using the breakout boxes, there’s a huge jump in scores, with the average score climbing above 80 percent — a 60 percentage point increase from the beginning of the year.

Not Easy, but It Pays Off

Preparing the lesson units can be time consuming. “It’s a lot of front-end loading,” says Simpson, but he adds, once teachers put in the effort and have a final project or assignment, it’s something they can use from year to year with very little changes.

The school will be offering webinars in the 2017-18 school year showing teachers how to go through the treasure hunt activity.

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