

LEARNING TOGETHER ABOUT ENGAGING TEXT DISCUSSION

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 work in the larger group and in small groups to deepen their understanding of instructional strategies and practices.
Materials	Laptop and projector
Media	<p><i>Using Text Discussions to Engage Students and Improve Comprehension.</i> Watch this multimedia presentation to learn about important features of extended discussions about text. (5:51)</p> <p><i>Engaging Adolescents in Discussions About Text.</i> Watch this expert interview with Dr. Janice Dole to learn about how teachers can use engaging text discussion to facilitate reading comprehension. (6:31)</p>
Topic	Adolescent Literacy
Practice	Engaging Text Discussion

1. Watch the multimedia presentation, *Using Text Discussions to Engage Students and Improve Comprehension* and the expert interview, *Engaging Adolescents in Discussions About Text*. Lead a discussion to clarify the team's understanding about engaging text discussions. Ask them to reflect on these questions:
 - Why is it important to provide opportunities for adolescents to discuss text?
 - What are some key features of effective, extended discussions?
 - What should teachers consider when selecting a text for a discussion?
 - What are some of the roadblocks to implementing this practice? What are some ways to address these roadblocks in your classroom?
 - What kinds of tools, materials, or training would you need to incorporate more text discussion into your classroom?

2. Discuss as a group: What can teachers do to create a classroom environment that supports classroom discussion?

Option: Teachers may discuss the question in small groups and draw a visual diagram of a classroom environment that supports discussion.

Whole group or small group discussion topics may include the following:

- Posing authentic and provocative questions for discussion
- Establishing classroom norms for discussions
- Creating a safe space for practicing speaking and listening
- Modeling and practicing discussion roles
- Providing prompts for participation (e.g., sentence starters)
- Providing tools to organize discussions (e.g., graphic organizers)
- Discussion aids posted on classroom walls
- Physical set-up of classroom

3. Fishbowl exercise:

To the trainer: Bring in a short text and provocative discussion question for a fishbowl exercise. A group of 5 or 6 teachers is seated in a circle in the middle of the room, surrounded by observers. The group in the center is asked to read the text and respond to the question. The observing group takes notes.

Option: You may take this as an opportunity to try out an activity structure like reciprocal teaching or literature circles, or simply have a free-form discussion.

Lead a discussion after the fishbowl activity about what was observed. The questions below can serve as prompts for observers' note-taking during the discussion or for the debrief after the discussion:

- What did you notice about body language and non-verbal behavior?
- What did you notice about how people expressed an opinion?
- What did you notice about the language or manner with which people agreed or disagreed?
- (If using roles) What did you notice about how each person carried out their role?
- How effective were the text selection and discussion question?
- What skills or strategies did you notice the teachers using that your students haven't mastered yet?

As a wrap-up, have teachers discuss how they might conduct a fishbowl activity in their own classrooms and how they would modify the activity for their own use.