Teaching Strategies for the Classroom

BJU Press and Academic Oversight

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Compiled by BJU Press's Academic Oversight Department

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The BJU Press Teaching Cycle and Suggested Teaching Strategies

Teaching follows a natural rhythm. Our teacher editions structure lessons according to our teaching cycle to embrace and use that rhythm.

The teaching cycle follows four phases: Engage, Instruct, Apply, Assess. Throughout each phase, we include carefully crafted and researched teaching strategies.

Teaching strategies are methods of instruction that teachers use to help students learn and apply knowledge and skills so they become engaged, independent, and strategic critical thinkers at different stages of teaching and learning. Teaching strategies are vehicles that get students from where they are to where they need to be in learning.

The following selection of teaching strategies exemplify the kinds of activities and suggestions you will find in your BJU Press teacher editions. Many of these teaching strategies may fit into several phases of the teaching cycle. We invite you to use them whenever you need them in your teaching.

4

Assess student understanding by using a variety of tools to systematically evaluate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs in order to improve student learning.

1

Engage students by capturing student attention, activating prior knowledge, and motivating them to connect with new content.

ASSESS

ENGAGE
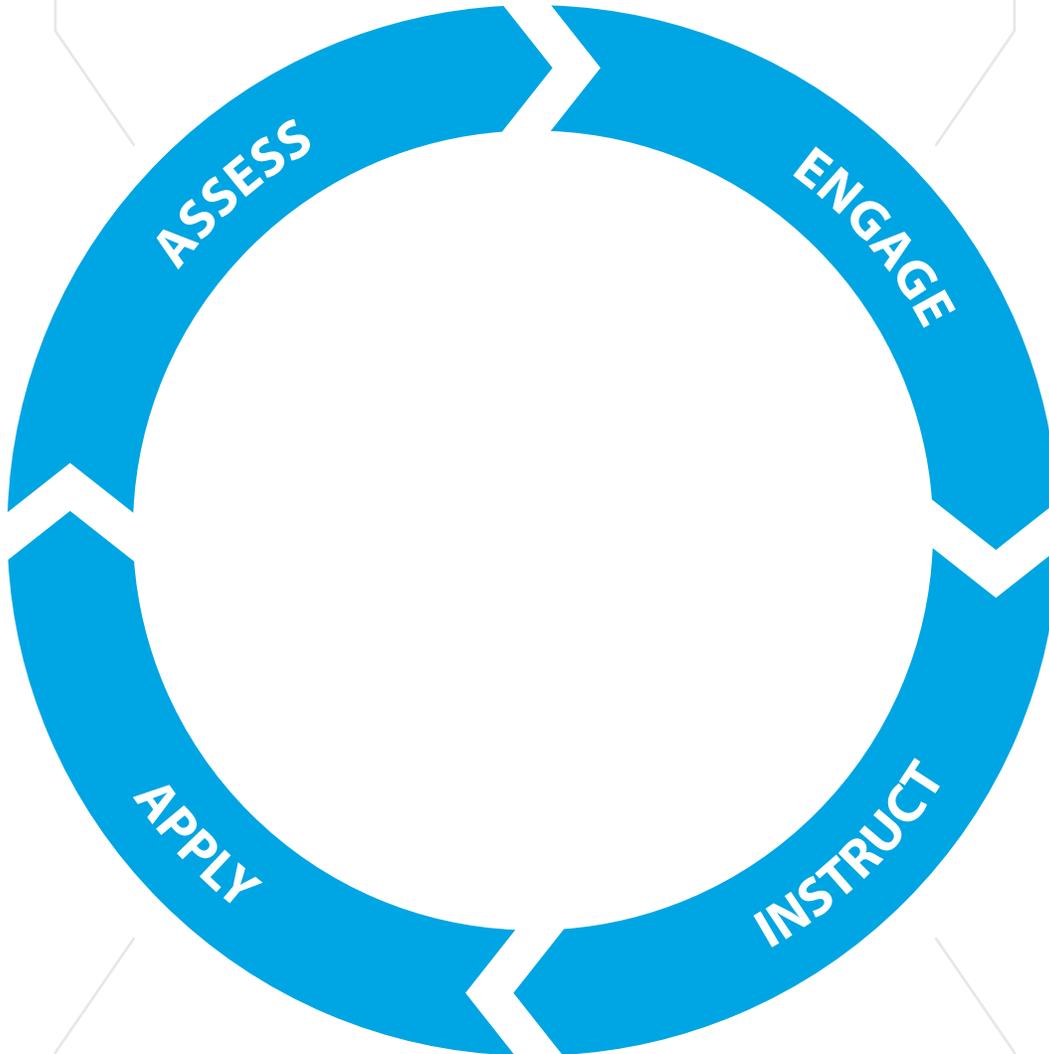
APPLY

INSTRUCT

Apply student learning by practicing knowledge and skills and connecting them to real life.

Instruct students by using direct, indirect, and interactive strategies to expand their knowledge and skills.

3

2

Engage

At the beginning of a course, chapter, or daily lesson, one of the first steps for teachers is drawing students in and getting them engaged in what they'll be learning this year, this week, or today. In this phase of the teaching cycle, you'll need teaching strategies that capture your students' attention, drawing them in and making them eager to learn what you have to share. This eagerness will help motivate them to learn what's ahead and personally connect with the content.

Another facet of this phase in the teaching cycle is activating prior knowledge. In addition to engaging students' interest and motivating them to connect with the content, you will also need to help them connect new content with what they have already learned.

Buzzwords

Display five key words that relate to a reading assignment. Students work individually, in pairs, or in teams to discuss the meaning and connections of these words and give textual evidence for their ideas. Students may be asked to record their ideas on a graphic organizer or share their ideas with the rest of the class.

THEME

Cubing

Use cubing to help students think about a concept in a variety of ways. Give students a prepared cube with prompts on each side (e.g., describe, compare, contrast, analyze, evaluate, connect). Direct them to roll the cube and respond to the assigned question or direction. To make a cube reusable for multiple lessons or classes, number the sides 1–6 and display the corresponding prompt on the board. Students roll the cube to determine their assigned category.

	describe	
compare	contrast	analyze
	evaluate	
	connect	

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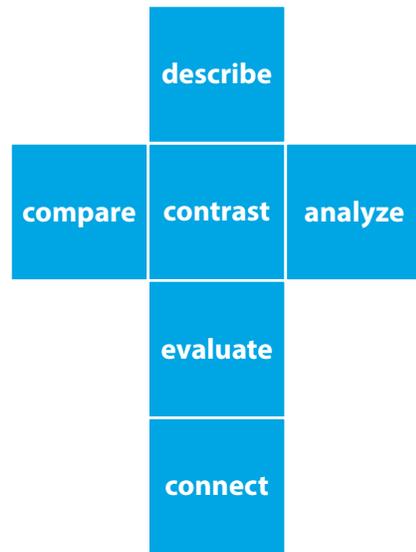
Scan or click the QR codes to access strategy specific resources

Dual Coding (Multimedia Learning)

In dual coding, teachers add a meaningful visual learning aid to the oral instruction. This activity gives students the opportunity to receive information visually and verbally. With both visual and verbal information and enough time, students will better understand the material and remember it longer. Visuals can be graphic organizers, symbols, storyboards, diagrams, pictures, cartoons, infographics, memes, and slide presentations.

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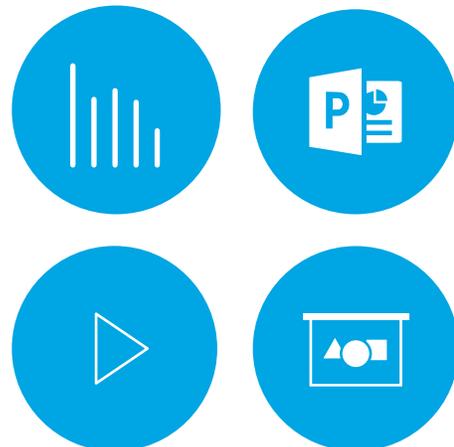
Fishbowl

Three to five students stand or sit in a circle. The rest of the students stand or sit in a circle around them. Pose a question for discussion, and the inner circle begins the discussion. The members of the outer circle observe, taking notes or completing a rubric based on the inner circle's conversation. Follow the conversation with a debriefing session so the class can discuss their observations together. Fishbowl could also be used for role-playing and modeling collaboration skills (e.g., paraphrasing, follow-up questions, elaboration).

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Future Wheels (Concept Mapping)

Students brainstorm the potential consequences of a change—event, movement, trend, idea, problem, or decision—on an individual, an institution, or society. Using a graphic organizer, list the change in the inner-most circle, and instruct students to add direct consequences branching off from the change and then add indirect consequences from the direct consequences. After the students have listed their ideas, they analyze the impact of the change. Use Future Wheels to analyze events in history, the outcomes of ethical choices, and the logical conclusions of philosophical ideas.

Trend or Event
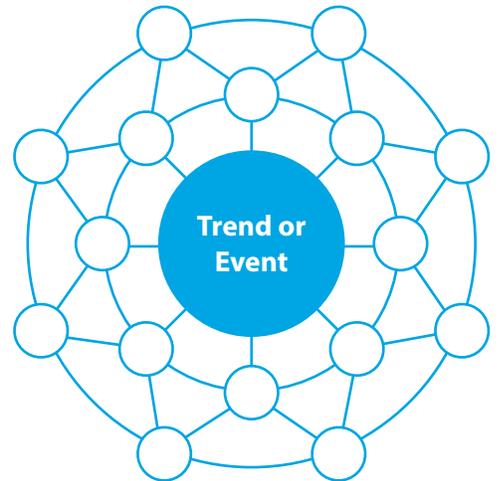
(Creative Commons)

Intentional Mistakes

Display material that contains mistakes and ask students to work together in small groups to find the mistakes. After giving the students time to work, ask the students to show their fingers to indicate how many mistakes they found. The group that finds the most mistakes shares their findings, and the other groups evaluate whether or not each one is a mistake.

Learning Grids

Give students a die and a grid with cells that contain questions related to the previous day's lesson. They roll the die twice to get numbers to identify a specific cell where the column and row intersect (e.g., one across, four down) and then answer the cell question. Grids can contain terms or key words connected to a topic, and students must explain the connection between the term and the topic. Grids may also contain prompts that require students to recall information from previous lessons.
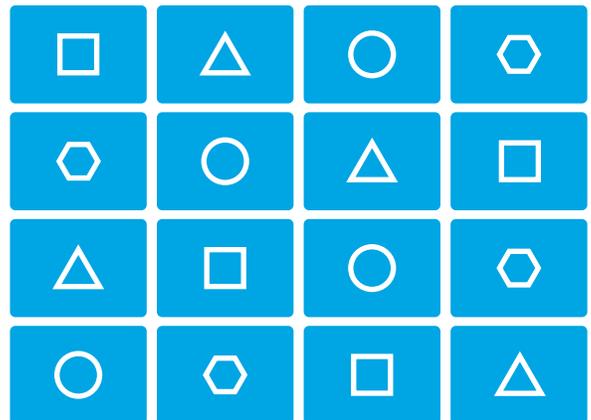
Misconception Check

Assess students' prior knowledge by identifying incorrect knowledge or beliefs that will prevent further learning. Create a list of common preconceptions or misconceptions related to the discipline or unit of instruction with multiple choice responses (e.g., strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, completely disagree). Ask students to complete the anonymous questionnaire, which will provide information for the teacher on which incorrect ideas the students hold and how strongly they hold them. Use these checks to plan for instruction and future discussion.
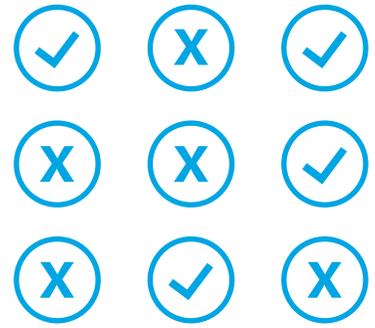
Role-storming

Students brainstorm ideas from the perspective of another person.

Variation: Students brainstorm ideas from the perspective of a different place or time. For example, in history class students might brainstorm how to create income during the Great Depression.
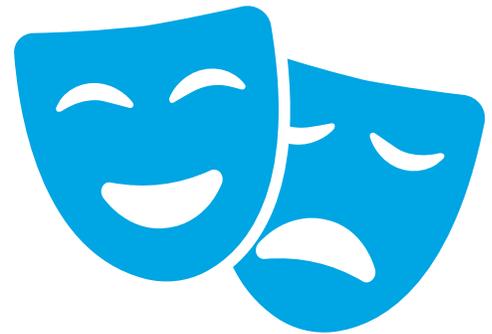
Roundtable Brainstorming (Chain Notes, Round Robin)

Divide students into groups. Give each group a piece of paper with a topic or problem written in the center of the page (like a mind map) or at the top of the page (as a list). Each member adds an idea to the paper and then passes it to the member on the left. The page can rotate around the circle multiple times as students add their own ideas or expand on the ideas of the other group members.
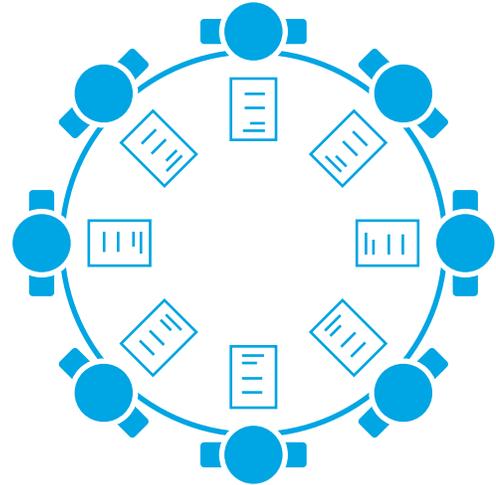
Scavenger Hunt

Instruct students to search for specific information, objects, or experiences. They might find this information in their class notes, in their textbooks, by searching online, or by following a set of teacher-prepared clues. Alternatively, students might have a set amount of time to find and respond with the requested information.

You can create a scavenger hunt using FlipGrid, Google Forms, or GooseChase.

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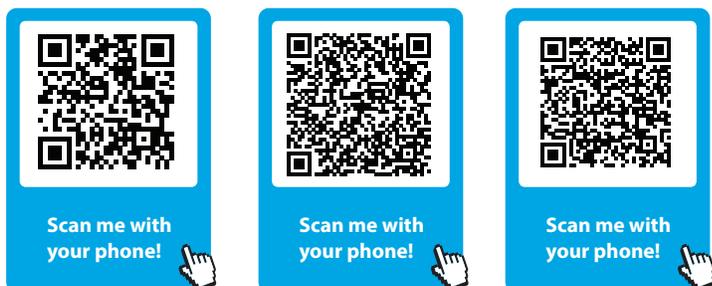
Instruct

The second phase in the teaching cycle may seem to be all about direct instruction, but you can also incorporate other teaching strategies here. The teaching strategies for this phase focus on expanding the students' knowledge with direct, indirect, and interactive learning activities. Interactive learning activities continue to promote and encourage engagement, while direct and indirect activities allow more opportunities for direct instruction.

Pause and Write (Stop and Jot)

To assess understanding and promote student retention, pause during instruction to ask students to respond in writing to a key question from the day's lesson. Model a response or ask volunteers to share a response. Variations include Jot-Pair-Share (students share their ideas with partners after finishing their written response), Quick Jot (give students ninety seconds to answer the key question), Stop and Fill (give students a worksheet with blanks related to the key question), and Group Jot (students discuss and compare their written responses in groups).

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Discussion Clusters

Divide students into groups of four to six people and give each group (or "cluster") one or two questions on the lesson topic. One member of the cluster records the group's ideas and reports them to the entire class.

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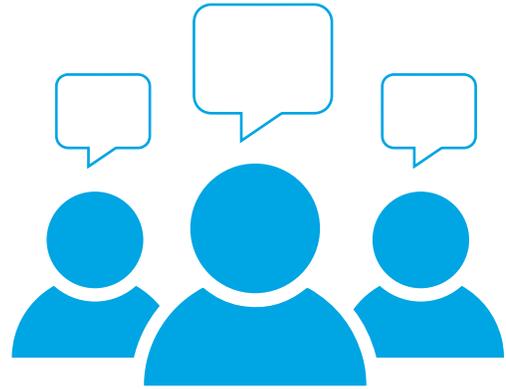
Facts of Five

Students write five main ideas after reading a text. Students then form groups of three to pool and discuss their ideas and narrow the fifteen group ideas down to the five most important. Two student groups then merge to discuss their lists and again narrow the ideas down to five. The entire class then discusses the remaining ideas and again narrows the ideas down to what the students consider to be the five most important.
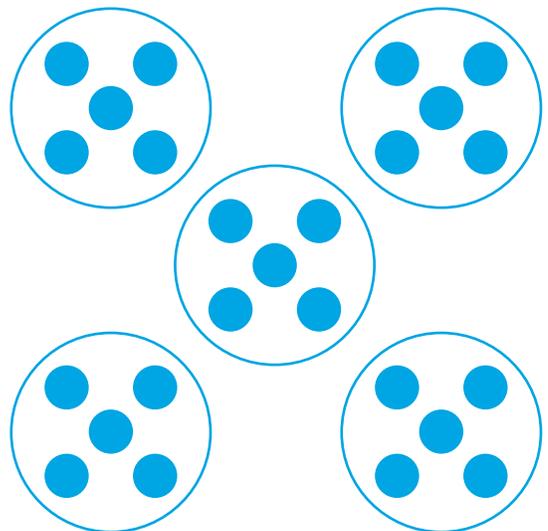
Math Talks

Ask the students a question and give them sixty seconds to form a response. The students then discuss their thoughts in small groups for sixty seconds. The teacher then polls the students to find out what they think the answer is. The teacher may also ask students to explain their answers and poll the students again to see if more of them have the correct answer. This activity may work in other subjects as well.

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Learning Menu (Menu of Activities)

To differentiate instruction and increase student engagement, offer a menu of options for students to practice a concept or skill or demonstrate their understanding of a topic. On a tic-tac-toe board, ask students to complete three activities in a row. A "free choice" on the board allows students to create their own activity.

Write your word as a picture.	**Write an acrostic for your word.**	**Write your word in a sentence.**
Write a definition for your word.	**FREE SPACE**	**Organize your spelling list in alpabetical order.**
Write the name of a book you find your word in.	**Write your word three times.**	**Group words into word families.**

Think Aloud (Modeling)

Think out loud to model a process (e.g., visual analysis, reading comprehension strategy, persuasive paragraph writing, math problem-solving). Afterward, give students opportunities to practice the process themselves. Listen for areas where students need additional help to understand the material.

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Writing Workshop

Begin a writing workshop with a five- to fifteen-minute mini-lesson about a specific writing skill or strategy. Then give students time to apply the skill to a writing assignment. Follow writing with evaluation, either by peer review or with a teacher conference. After making revisions, students may share their work with a partner or with the rest of the class.

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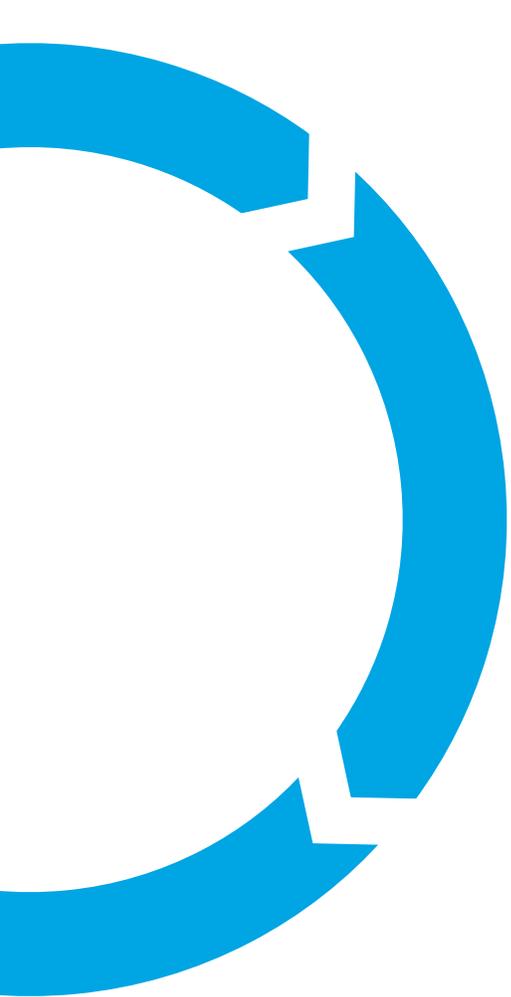
Apply

Application in the teaching cycle is two-fold. First, students need an opportunity to practice knowledge and skills with activities and exercises. These activities can be more diverse than a set of questions from a workbook and will often include opportunities for multisensory learning. Second, students need to be able to apply what they have learned in the lesson to real-world scenarios.

Chalk Talk

Split students into groups and give them a poster board and a prompt (e.g., Why should we educate ourselves about other cultures? What do we know about reptiles?). Individual students answer the prompt, recording their ideas on sticky notes and posting them on the posterboard. After students post their original ideas, they read the ideas of their peers and respond by writing more comments or questions, circling their favorite ideas and drawing lines to connect similar ideas. Follow with a class discussion. Use Chalk Talk to assess prior knowledge, assess student learning at the end of a unit, and discuss lesson topics.

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CONCEPTS \ A	B	C	D	E	F
1	•	•	•		
2 (A •)			•	•	•
3 (A •)	•	•			•
4 (A •)	•		•	•	•
5		•		•	•
6 (A •)		•	•	•	

Defining Features Matrix

Ask students to categorize concepts on a graphic organizer according to the presence or absence of specific features. Give them a grid that includes two or three similar concepts listed across the top, possible defining features listed down the left side, and empty middle cells where the students will mark a plus or minus sign or write "yes" or "no" to indicate the presence or absence of a feature in a specific concept.

Flipped Classroom

In a flipped classroom, do in the classroom what you would usually assign for homework and assign as homework what you would usually do in the classroom. Provide video instruction, written instruction, or research topics that students use to learn before coming to class. In class, help students understand the instruction and lead them in collaborative learning projects.

Four Corners Discussion

Assign one lesson-related topic to each corner of the room. Students choose their favorite topic and move to that corner, where they pair up and either share as much information as possible on the given topic or discuss questions you provide.

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Four Corners Math Map

Students create a graphic organizer to organize their thinking to solve word problems. Students write the main idea or what they need to find out in the middle of the map. In the four boxes, the students (1) list the important information from the word problem, (2) brainstorm possible strategies or operations needed to solve the problem, (3) solve the problem step by step, and (4) write a summary of how the problem was solved.

What do you already know?	Brainstorm ways to solve this problem
What do you need to find?	
Try it here	Write a summary of your solution
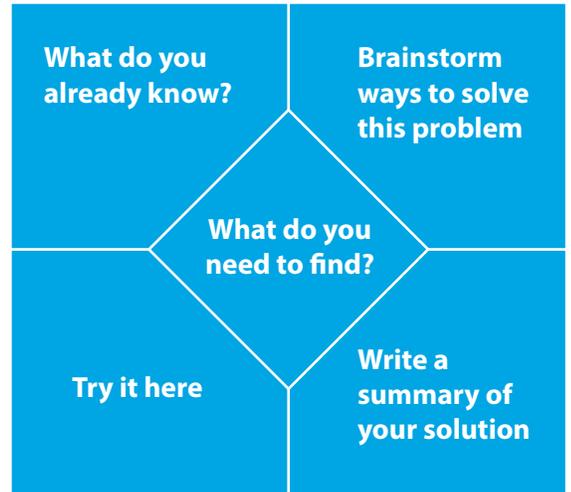
Concept Definition Map

Students, working in pairs or on their own, use their vocabulary knowledge to complete a graphic organizer that defines a vocabulary word, lists examples (synonyms) and nonexamples (antonyms), lists characteristics, and/or illustrates the meaning of the word. Their map becomes a place for them to take notes during reading or a review activity before a test.

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DEFINITION:	CHARACTERISTICS:
TERM:	
EXAMPLES:	NON-EXAMPLES:
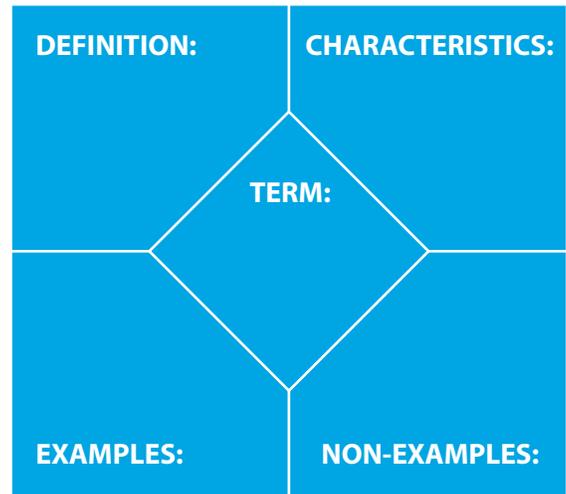
Math Journaling

Students use notebooks to respond to prompts such as the following: (1) create a concept map about a math topic, (2) show several ways to solve a problem, (3) analyze a problem solved by another student and explain how it was solved, (4) create problems for another student to solve, (5) brainstorm how to use specific math skills in real-life situations, and (6) reflect on your progress in math and consider what areas you still need to improve in.

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Turn and Teach

Introduce a concept to the class. Pairs of students then reteach the concept to each other.

Tug of War

In this collaborative activity, students gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of opposing viewpoints by examining two sides of an issue (e.g., the opposing perspectives of two characters in a story, opposite viewpoints on a scientific advancement or historical event) without taking sides. Select an issue that has multiple perspectives, choose two opposing viewpoints, and select resources for student research. Then, draw a tug-of-war rope across the whiteboard, labeling the ends of the rope with the two opposing perspectives. Student pairs or groups research the issue and brainstorm "tugs," or reasons, that support both sides of the dilemma. Write the tugs on individual sticky notes and place them on the rope according to their strength—stronger reasons placed toward the ends of the rope and weaker reasons placed near the center of the rope. Write "What if . . . ?" questions (complexities that affect the issue) on sticky notes and place them above the tug-of-war rope. Conclude the activity with a discussion of the reasons on both sides and a reflection on how the activity changed students' thinking about the issue and what students learned about examining opposing viewpoints.

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Cause-and-Effect Organizer and other Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visual tools that students use to brainstorm ideas, organize information into understandable chunks, classify objects, show relationships between ideas, plan and structure tasks (e.g., research, writing assignments, labs, word problems), and practice information retrieval. To build a cause-and-effect organizer, students create several separate circles on their papers. Next to each circle, they add an arrow pointing to a box. In each circle, instruct the students to add a major event they have been learning about. In the square, they will need to decide what that event caused.

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Role-Play Debate

Students debate a topic or action from the viewpoint of an individual who would be impacted by that topic or action. For example, students could play various roles to debate the issue of socialized medicine: a doctor, a nurse, a pharmacist, someone who is generally healthy, someone who has a terminal illness, a hospital executive, a lawmaker, and so on.
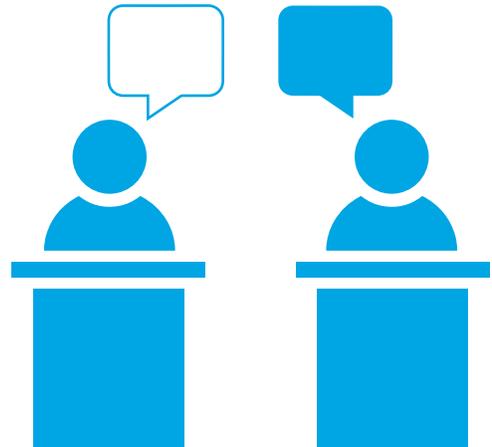
Assess

In the last phase of the teaching cycle, your goal is to assess student understanding by using a variety of tools and resources. However, you may be continuously assessing your students throughout the teaching cycle—beginning with preassessments in the Engage phase and monitoring during the Instruct and Apply phases with formative assessments—so these strategies especially can be used at any point in the teaching cycle. This last phase of the teaching cycle can be used for formative and summative assessment at the end of a lesson or for summative assessment at the end of an instructional unit.

A–Z Chart

Give students a chart with a subject title (e.g., concept, theory, process, name of a piece of literature, unit of instruction from a textbook) and a box for each letter of the alphabet. Students work in groups of two to four, brainstorming words that begin with every letter of the alphabet related to the given topic and filling in the appropriate boxes on the chart. For example, if students in science class are studying the nervous system, they might write "brain" in the *B* box, "nerve" in the *N* box, and "spinal cord" in the *S* box. Students in history class who are studying the Civil War might write "Confederacy" in the *C* box and "Union" in the *U* box. The A–Z Chart works well for reviewing a previous lesson, activating prior knowledge before a new lesson, and solidifying new knowledge at the end of a period of instruction. The chart can also be used as a place for students to take notes during instruction and as a vocabulary worksheet where students list synonyms or antonyms.

A	B	C	D
	•	•	•
•			•
•	•	•	
•	•		•
		•	
•		•	•

Concept Sketches

Students create annotated diagrams or drawings with notes that describe the process or concept being sketched and how the elements are related. For example, students might sketch the water cycle or the layers of the atmosphere for science class, create graphs or diagrams of famous buildings for history class, create maps or draw a diagram of plate tectonics for geography, or sketch a diagram of the branches of state or federal government for history and social studies.

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Demonstration of Learning

In contrast to traditional forms of assessment (e.g., quizzes, tests, essays, daily practice assignments), a demonstration of learning, or a performance-based assessment, is an alternative way for students to show that they have met course objectives. The focus is on creative, interactive projects that develop 21st century skills and increase student engagement through choice. Students demonstrate mastery through projects, presentations, or products that are both evaluations and learning experiences.

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Entrance/Exit Ticket

Entrance tickets and exit tickets are brief, ungraded written assessments that test student understanding. Students can answer questions on their own paper or in an "Entry Journal" or fill in creative "ticket" pages created by the teacher. Entrance tickets may be used to activate prior knowledge or focus the students' attention on the current day's topic. Exit tickets require students to review key ideas and summarize and apply concepts to demonstrate and solidify their understanding at the end of a lesson. Exit tickets can also encourage students to reflect on the learning process and set goals for future learning. Ticket questions can be open-ended or closed-ended. You can create digital exit tickets using Poll Everywhere or Google Forms. Students fill out the tickets using a tablet, smart phone, or computer, and the app compiles the results for you.

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Quick Write

Ask students to write on a specific topic, article, event, position, or prompt for a short period of time (one to five minutes), writing as much as they can in the time allotted without worrying about revision. Quick Writes can informally assess understanding, encourage critical thinking and reflection, or provide writing practice. After students finish their writing, they can exchange papers with a peer and write in response to the peer's Quick Write.

Gallery Walk (Chat Stations)

Students exhibit their work on posters or in stations set up around the classroom. Small groups of students travel from station to station together to observe and learn. (Students could be given cooperative learning roles such as leader, reporter, monitor, and recorder.) The creators of the materials act as tour guides or docents, giving other students a short presentation about their poster or creation and conducting a Q and A. The gallery visitors are asked to listen, take notes, ask questions, and move to the next station when they are finished. When the students have visited all the stations, the groups meet to synthesize their findings and then share them with the class. In a variation of gallery walk called chat stations, prepare stations and ask the students to perform a task (e.g., read a primary source, watch a short video, fill in a graphic organizer, solve a problem, analyze a visual or a thought-provoking quote, complete an activity using laptops) or respond to a prompt (e.g., answer questions, classify, illustrate, synthesize, defend). Students can also leave notes for others to read and think about. Students can move individually, in pairs, or in groups. They can work at their own pace or under a time limit. At the end of the chat station session, ask students to share the information they collected or conclusions they made from the evidence they examined. Chat stations could also be used on the first day of school as an ice breaker to have students preview what they will learn throughout the year.

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Panel Discussion

Groups of students research an assigned topic and serve as an expert panel in a class presentation. Members of the group discuss assigned questions and then open the discussion to the other class members who act as the audience, ask further questions, and make comments.

Portfolio

For a longer activity that shows development over time, a portfolio is a collection of selected student work that documents student knowledge, skills, and progress; gives a broader picture of student learning and growth than a traditional test provides; and showcases the student as a unique individual. Portfolios can include tests, learning notebooks, essays, journal entries, student-created videos and websites, lab reports, multimedia presentations, artwork, photographs, projects, awards, honors, teacher and peer evaluations, and student self-evaluations. Student work can be collected digitally in an e-portfolio. A shorter portfolio might be used to cover a single unit of instruction instead of a full year.

Reflection Journals

Students reflect on the learning content and process at the end of a lesson in their reflection journals, answering specific questions about their individual learning (e.g., What did I learn in class today? What questions do I have about the lesson's content? What was the most helpful part of the lesson today? What connections can I make from today's lesson to previous lessons?) or writing their own creative responses (e.g., a self-interview or a letter of advice to themselves on learning). Students can be asked to set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-based) and to track their progress.

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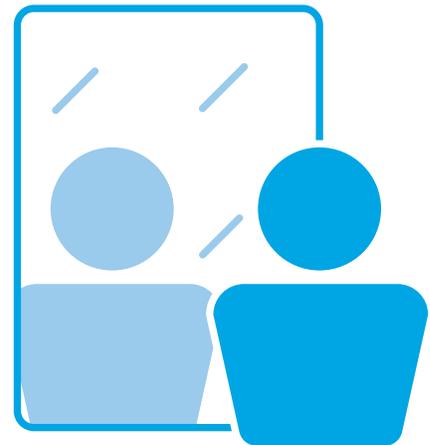
Elevator Pitch

Students give a thirty- to sixty-second persuasive speech that ends with a call to action. As a variation, at the end of a lesson students give a thirty- to sixty-second summary of what they've learned.