**CRISS**

**Pre-Reading Strategies**

As we teach reading and learning in our classrooms, it is vital that we focus on pre-reading strategies and activities. If we are not preparing students to read or learn then their comprehension is not going to be where we want it. Research shows that if we activate background knowledge, students will retain more information. Before-reading activities range from structured activities that can take an entire class period to simple two minute discussions.

Here are the concepts that before-reading strategies are based on:

* Building Background
* Previewing or Surveying
* Activating Prior Knowledge
* Building Vocabulary
* Visualizing
* Setting the Purpose

Here are some strategies that will help you address the aforementioned concepts:

* ABC Brainstorming (2)
* Anticipation Guides (3)
* Carousel Brainstorming (4)
* Mental Imagery (4)
* Pattern Puzzles (5)
* Word Sorts (6)
* Think-Pair-Share (7)
* Think Alouds (7)
* Predictions (8)
* KWL and KW(H)L (9)
* Questions First (9)

**ABC Brainstorming** (pg 57): This strategy can be used as a pre-assessment, during-assessment, or post-assessment. This is a way for students to stretch their creativity and knowledge of the content at hand. It is a simple strategy to which you can add many variations. You can have students sit in groups and have the papers move or you can have the papers be stationary and have the students move. It can also be done as a full-class discussion/activity.

1. Write down the alphabet on a piece of paper (have the letters go down the side of the paper like an acrostic poem).
2. Working with a partner, ask them to brainstorm their knowledge that begins with the appropriate letters. Students can be assigned certain letters or can work on the entire alphabet (here’s where differentiation can play a role)
3. Come back together as a class and create a list of information that the students brainstormed. Have students cross off incorrect or unimportant information and have them circle or highlight the information that they find important to the topic at hand.

***Differentiation***: You can write certain letters of the alphabet on pieces of butcher paper and have students work in groups on a specific set of letters. After a decided time have students pass the butcher paper to another group. Now the groups must read what the previous groups wrote and add there own unique thoughts.

**Examples:**

Brainstorm the elements from the periodic table:

A

B

C - copper

D

E

F

G - gold

H – hydrogen, helium

I

J

K

L

M - magnesium

N

O

P

Q

R - radium

S - silver

T - tungsten

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

Brainstorm everything you know about shapes:

A - angles

B

C – circles, circular, circumference

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R – round, rectangle

S

T - triangles

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

**Anticipation Guides** (pg 90): This strategy is an effective way to activate background knowledge about a topic before studying certain content. Based on their personal thoughts and experiences (relevance), students respond to several statements that are related to the selection or topic. They must agree or disagree with each statement and provide reasoning for their response. This strategy is designed to “ignite” students to the topic about to be discussed. These guides can be used in all content areas with a variety of learning materials: videos, readings, discussions, novels, art, etc…

1. Identify 5 or 6 major concepts to be learned in the material. Write statements that reflect the big ideas of the content rather than focusing on smaller specific details.
2. Have students individually decide whether they agree or disagree with the statements and provide reasoning for their decisions.
3. Discuss as a large group the decisions that students made.
4. At the end of the unit you can refer back to the anticipation guides and see if the student’s responses have changed at all.

***Differentiation***: You can have students sit at their desks and volunteer their answers in a large group discussion. You can have students get in small groups and discuss their responses. For kinesthetic learners, you can make one side of the room “agree” and one side of the room “disagree”. As you discuss each statement, have students move to the side of the room that correlates with their answers.

This can also become a post-reading activity by having students correct the answers that they got wrong. If your anticipation guide is made up of facts that they will learn in the article, have them go back after reading and fix their answers. You can also have them make any false statements true based on the reading.

**Examples:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Parents know what’s best for their children.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Love is the most powerful emotion.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Emotions often influence people’s actions.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. People can control their own fate.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Our lives are not affected by other people’s actions.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Adults usually act responsibly and maturely.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Boyfriends or girlfriends are more important than family.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 8. You should keep secrets from your parents.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Teenagers don’t know what true love feels like.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Your parents should approve of people you choose to date.

**Carousel Brainstorming** (pg 62): This is a cooperative learning activity that involves students brainstorming in small groups. It can be used to bring our background knowledge and for review.

1. Pick about five related topics or concepts to determine your students’ background knowledge. Write each topic or questions on a piece of large paper (butcher paper) and post them around the room.
2. Assign or let students pick groups and have each group move to a specific piece of paper around the room. Give each group a different colored marker to record their information.
3. Give the groups a time limit (1-2 minutes) to write down everything they know about the topic that they are at. After the allotted time, have the groups rotate to the next piece of paper.
4. Students can respond to the previous groups’ information and/or they can add new information to the topic.
5. Continue this until each group has had a chance to respond to all of the topics. At the conclusion, have students reflect on what they have learned and what they still have questions on.

***Differentiation***: This can be done moving around the room or you can have groups be stationary and have the pieces of paper move around the room. There are also many activities that you can have them do at the conclusion of the strategy. You can have groups take their original topic and present the information that the class came up with (this works on summarizing skills). You can have groups do a writing activity/reflection with the information when they are done. You can also come back to these ideas at the end of a unit to see if their thoughts have changed at all from what they wrote down at the beginning.

**Mental Imagery** (pg 105): This strategy helps trigger visualizations through guided imagery. This can be used as a great brainstorming tool and also for review.

1. Turn off the lights in your classroom and have your students close their eyes. Describe to them in detail a situation that you want them to picture in their mind. It might be something from their past; it might be an object; it might be the topic you are studying (human heart, muscles and bones, characters in novels, etc…). This guided imagery needs to be very descriptive and detailed so that the students get a very specific image in their minds.
2. Turn on the lights and have students open their eyes. Have students write about or draw the image that they have in their mind. This is a very informal recording of information. Have them work as fast as they can so that they don’t lose the image that they have created for themselves.
3. Have students share what they came up with during brainstorming. This can be used as a discussion started or as brainstorming for writing.

**Pattern Puzzles** (pg 44): This is an active approach for understanding pattern and structure. It can be used as a pre-reading strategy to introduce ideas to students. It’s also a good way to assess prior knowledge by seeing the way students arrange the puzzle pieces. These work with any content that requires sequencing or steps and/or ideas.

1. Write or find a paragraph or list that discusses the content you are working on.
2. Cut paragraphs apart – sentence by sentence or section by section. Put all strips into envelopes (or you can paper clip them together).
3. Give the ‘puzzle pieces’ to a group of two or three students. Instruct them to work together to organize the sentences into a well-written paragraph (if you have given them a list or process have them put the steps in order).
4. Have students explain why they organized the sentences the way they did – what they noticed, what they did, why they did it.
5. Share with students the correct order that the pieces belong in. Discuss why they belong in the order that they do.

***Differentiation***: You can use any kind of writing – or even pictures – with this strategy: poetry, math, word problems, scientific journals abstracts, newspaper articles. You can use this as a pre-reading strategy and have students go back and correct the order after you have read. This will make them think about what they did the first time and figure out why they were wrong.

For students who need more support, you can give them multiple paragraphs/sections. The first section can be intact and then they will use the complete section as a model for the sections that are cut apart.

**Examples**:

In a quadrilateral two angles are equal. The third angle is equal to the sum of the two equal angles. The fourth angle is 60° less than twice the sum of the other three angles. Find the measures of the angles in the quadrilateral.

* + Ask a Question
  + Do Background Research
  + Construct a Hypothesis
  + Test Your Hypothesis by Doing an Experiment
  + Analyze Your Data and Draw a Conclusion
  + Communicate Your Results

**Word Sorts**: This strategy can be used as a pre-reading to see the prior knowledge that students possess of any given topic. These can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups. The end product of word sorts should be groups of categories of vocabulary words and/or technical terms from the text or concept clustered by common feature. Teachers may consider using phrases and/or sentences from the text instead of just words. Limit the number of words, phrases, or sentences to 10-15.

1. On 3x5 cards (or pieces of paper) write down the terms that you want students to use for this activity – the words can be vocabulary words or concepts that will be introduced in the lesson.
2. Mix the words up and paperclip them together.
3. Give the words to a group of two or three students. Instruct them to work together to put the words into categories – this gets students thinking about the words, both how they are alike and how they are different. Instruct students to create a category name for each category they create.
4. Have students explain why they categorized the words the way they did – what they noticed, what they did, why they did it.

***Differentiation***: For this activity you can do either a closed sort or an open sort. A closed sort is when the teacher provides the students with either the category names or the criteria for classification. Students still have to understand the words, but they don’t have to assign their own categories. A closed sort would be helpful with struggling learners or with material that is very difficult. An open sort is what’s described in the above lesson; students must provide the categories themselves and justify their classification system.

Examples:

quadrilateral polygon triangle square rhombus

rectangle parallelogram circle octagon semicircle

zapatos comida uvas pantalones perro gato

manzana ropa paella animales camiseta pajaro

Capitalism Socialism Communism centralization profit one-party rule competition free enterprise regulation collectivism government ownership

**Think-Pair-Share** (pg 56): During a think-pair-share, every student becomes an active participant. It works well as a pre-reading activity, as a problem-solving strategy, as a break in lecture, or as a follow-up activity. The nice thing about this strategy is that you don’t just get the same students participating in discussion. It allows for all students to have their voices heard without the intimidation factor of saying something in front of the entire class.

1. Teacher begins by suggesting a topic or asking a question.
2. Students “think” and write down what they know or have learned about a particular topic.
3. Then, have students “pair” with each other or a small group of students (this can be done quickly with someone sitting near them, or you can have them move around the room). Have them share the ideas that they thought about.
4. Conclude with a whole-class share discussion. Have students share some insight that their partners talked about.

***Differentiation***: This activity can be done in many ways: it can be formal or informal. It is a nice replacement for a typical brainstorming activity. It is also a good way to prepare students for a writing assignment. It allows them to discuss their ideas with someone else before jumping right into an assignment.

**Think Alouds** (pg 34): This strategy involves having the teacher model for students the processes involved in constructing meaning from the specific text used in class. The teacher reads the material aloud and verbalizes his/her own thoughts while reading orally, thereby making the thinking process apparent to the students. As teachers, we sometimes forget that our students don’t know how to think like scientists or historians or mechanics. This helps show them how to read and how to think while reading, rather than just throwing them into the text.

1. Explain how you make a prediction or develop a hypothesis.
2. Describe the mental image formed in your brain (many of our students don’t see pictures in their heads as they read).
3. Make analogies – linking prior knowledge to new information obtained from the text.
4. Verbalize confusing points: words not known, confusing syntax, unclear ideas.
5. Demonstrate fix-up strategies when comprehension is cloudy: reread, read ahead, figure out a word’s meaning, etc.
6. Ask yourself questions as you go along. Do you understand what you are reading?

***Differentiation***: This activity can be done with anything, not just reading. You can think aloud through a math problem. Don’t just show them the steps, but explain what’s going on in your head as you’re doing those steps. You can use it when demonstrating a lab – again, explain the thinking process, not just the actual steps. This will get students to start thinking metacognitively about their thinking as they work on these activities as well.

**Predictions**: This strategy is a pre-reading strategy used to get students making predictions about what they are going to read. It works easily when reading fiction or nonfiction narratives, but it can also be adjusted for other types of reading and learning. By providing students with a section of the text ahead of time, it works on having them make inferences rather than just guessing based on the title.

1. The teacher must pull lines of text from the piece of writing that deal with the same character or concept. These lines should help provide insight into who the character is or what the main ideas of the concept are.
2. Either give students the lines of text or put them on the overhead/board/smartboard. Have students read through the text and then write a prediction based on what is provided. Their prediction should be about who the character is (what kind of person are they) or what the concept is about.
3. Have students share their predictions.
4. After reading, have students go back to their original predictions and see whether or not they were correct. If incorrect, have students rewrite the prediction to make it correct.

***Differentiation***: Again, this can be easily used with characters in literature, but you can also use it with any kind of text. In math, you could list properties of a new concept and have students explain what they think it is. In science, you can take sections of the textbook and have students predict the concepts that they will be learning.

You can also do this based on the plot of the story. You can provide students with a list of words that were taken directly from the story. Instruct students to write a prediction for the story – the only requirement is that all of the words must be used in the prediction. This forces them to think about what the words mean and how they could work together to create a coherent storyline.

**Examples:**

old lady cigarette twilight war

weapons sniper informer

* “We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know.”
* “no, hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford.”
* “Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if need be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift?”

**KWL or KW(H)L** (pg 83-90): This strategy is designed to engage the students in becoming active learners as it motivates to purposefully seek information from their text and other sources. It can be used as an effective pre-reading strategy because it activates students’ prior knowledge about the concept or subject. The KWL involves three or four steps (depending on if you include the H). It can be done individually, in groups, or as a whole class.

1. K – Determine what the students KNOW about the subject (list them on the board or overhead).
2. W – Determine WHAT the students need to learn about the subject (list them on the board or overhead). This is also referred to as what they WANT to know, but sometimes students will tell us that they don’t want to know anything. In this case, ask them what they think they will learn in the unit.
3. H – HOW will the student locate the information in the W column (text, library, internet, etc…)
4. L – After locating the information, fill in what the student has LEARNED.

***Differentiation***: This is a tried but true strategy that seems to have a million variations. After filling in the K and W columns, you can have students categorize information and turn it into a concept map. You can have student write a summary on the bottom of their chart once it has been completed. You can have student write questions in the W column and use those to focus your unit; students would then answer only those questions in their L column. There are many twists you can add to the KWL but it truly is a good strategy to get students thinking about prior knowledge.

**Questions First**: This strategy is helpful in determining a purpose for students as well as determining their prior knowledge of a particular subject. This strategy is also helpful when you have those students who think that they know everything – you are giving them a chance to prove it. The basis of the strategy is that you give students the questions that you would give them after reading, however you have them answer the questions before reading. Then after reading students go back to the questions and fix their answers. It’s a great strategy to get them thinking about their learning.

1. Teacher writes out the questions that students should be able to answer after reading.
2. Students answer the questions before reading (don’t let them look at the text).
3. Teacher should collect the answers so that students aren’t tempted to go back and change the answers while reading. Also, by collecting the pre-reading answers, the teacher can see the prior knowledge of each student.
4. Have students read the text.
5. After reading, give students their original answers back. Have them read through what they put first and then have them write the correct response (they should be able to use the text during post-reading).

***Differentiation***: You could have students answer the questions individually, in groups, or go over them as a whole class.