

The Teacher-to-Teacher initiative was created by the U.S. Department of Education to provide the latest strategies and research on educational practices that work in the classroom. This series features teachers from across the country presenting techniques that can be used with students of all ages. This series is just one way the Department of Education is helping teachers get the support they need so “No Child is Left Behind.” (MUSIC) Hi, I’m Theresa Hinkle. I’m a seventh grade Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at Kernodle Middle School in Greensboro, North Carolina. One of my passions in teaching middle school kids is working with reading in the content areas. It’s something that I think is critically important, that we all get on board and that we share the opportunities and the challenges that it presents for us. (MUSIC) I want to start the day with thinking about our essential questions and I have them posted right up here for you. How many of you use essential questions in your classrooms? Yeah, I know that some of you probably have to have your state standard on the board or your objective or something like that. Someone who uses essential questions... Why do you think they work? Why do essential questions work in the classroom? Exactly, they focus the students on the day’s task. How many of you have entered your classroom and the kids say, “What are we going to be doing today?” You know, essential questions get you started right away. Had we been starting this morning and I already knew you and we didn’t have to do that little, let’s get to know each other piece, the very first thing you would have seen when you came in this morning were my essential questions and there would have been something for you to do in regards to those essential questions. So essential questions can also provide you with your starter or your warm-up activity, and that’s a nice way to focus your students. They’re also great at the end of the day, at the end of the period. And again, I teach seventh grade and so in seventh grade you do not want any down time, none whatsoever. So if I have more than seven seconds left at the end of the period, I know that I need an activity. Beyond seven seconds, we can have some problems. So my essential questions can also be my ticket out the door. Tell me one thing that you learned today that you could respond to one of the essential questions or tell me three things that makes reading in the content area so different, so difficult or whatever the case might be. So I urge you, if you don’t use essential questions, to think about them. If you have to use state standards or objectives, these are also in kid friendly language. I don’t know about your objectives and standards, but sometimes they’re really hard for me to understand, and heaven-forbid that the kids should actually understand them too. So, here’s what we’re gonna be talking about today, and I hope you’re in the right place and this is what you wanted to talk about. What makes reading in the content area so different and/or so difficult? And secondly, what instructional strategies provide support for all readers. And I intentionally said all here, because I don’t think that this is just about struggling readers. I don’t think it’s just about remedial kinds of readers. I think that all readers, even those kids who really tend to be good readers, in your English or your Language Arts classrooms, have a tendency to struggle with content area reading. And we’re going to be talking about just exactly why that is, in just a few minutes. What I’d like for you to do right now, is to do a quick

think-pair-share activity for me. Now again, and I have to tell you guys, I'm such a teacher. I am such a teacher. So, I'm gonna have to treat you the way I treat my kids a lot of times, so don't let me hurt your feelings on that respect, but when I say to my kids, "I want you to think about this" and remember I teach seventh grade. Do you think they actually think about what I want them to think about? Rarely, very rarely. So, I change think-pair-share and I say think-jot it down-pair-and share it. So I'm gonna ask you, and you don't have to jot it down, because we are adults here, but I'm gonna ask you to think about question number one. I want you to think about question number one and simply jot down all by yourself, a list of those things from your personal experience that make reading in the content area, in any area if you choose, so different and/or so difficult. (MUSIC) Now as you pair up, it can be a pair, a partnership, it can be a table group, it really doesn't matter how you go about sharing these. But, because you're all so bright and so gifted, I'm gonna add one more piece to this, alright? And it is early morning so we want to challenge you a little bit too. As you share these, I'm going to ask you to actually categorize them into two categories for me. So as you share the things that you've put down, I want you to consider those variables, or those items that you think have something to do with either a text that you're asking the kids to read or the assignment itself. So which of these items that you've listed involve textual or assignment type features? That's category number one. What the actual assignment or text brings to the task. The second category, I'm going to refer to as reader variables. So what are those things that the student either does or does not bring to the page? What does the kid have or not have that makes a difference that makes reading in the content area so different or so difficult. Take about three minutes, talk about those at your table, then we're going to move forward and that's going to lay the groundwork for the rest of our discussion this morning. It can be technical, it's not for entertainment, and it doesn't connect with the student's world. The content is different and it's also very, very technical. We tend to shy away from technical reading and that's where they lack the skills. I have, under difficult I have lack of skill, poor skills or lack of skills. Reading level then. Right. That would be the text wouldn't it? Sure, the text level. And aren't many content texts written above the reading level? They say that very often it's two years above the reading level of the students that are reading it. That's certainly true with a lot of science books. Right, we've started buying middle school science texts now for our ninth graders. We're buying like seventh and eighth grade, right, because the ones they have for high school are just too high for the students. Let's see, you know I'm always fascinated, first of all, we're obviously preaching to the choir here. So, I think you're going to be surprised that a lot of the conversations that were taking place at this table were taking place at this table and so on and so forth. The other thing is always a little bit intimidating to me is the fact that I hear so many great things that you people are already doing, and I'm thinking, what am I going to share up here with these folks? So let me back up before we actually take a look at this and talk about my learner outcomes for you. Okay, because I think this is critically important. I'm hopeful today, that during this session, one of three, or if we're lucky, all three of these things will

happen. Number one, I'm hoping you'll get at least one new strategy. As a classroom teacher, I'm very, very, very practically oriented. I want to start out front and say, everything we're going to talk about today is research based. It's all there. There's a bibliography in the back of your handout that I provided for you. If you want more information, take a look at it. We're talking practical today. We're talking if, heaven forbid, we were to all have to return to the classroom tomorrow morning, we could roll in there and try something new. So I'm hoping we learn something new, and not just from me that you learn something new, but from the other folks that you're working with collegial here. Whether it's here or... once you get back to your school. Secondly, I'm very, very hopeful that something that you already do, will be affirmed. You know, it's so nice to have someone else that even if you develop this very brief relationship with this person, that someone says, you know I do that and it really works for my kids, too. It just makes you feel like, well maybe I'm on the right track here. And finally, for those of you who are the veterans in the room, I'm hopeful that we can recycle something. I don't know, have you ever heard of an idea maybe in a workshop, or you read something and you go, you know, I did that three or four years ago and I don't know why I quit doing it, but I just quit doing it, or I quit because it didn't work in this respect, but if I could re-tool it just a little bit, make this ever-slight light little tweak, maybe it would work for me. So that's what I'm hopeful of today, you're going to learn, you're going to be affirmed, you're going to recycle some ideas. Okay? Take a look at the first powerpoint slide and let's talk about text and assignment features and what I'd like to do, you have these in your handout or you can follow along here. I've pulled together my thinking on this. Let's see if we're on the same page, and please feel free to chime in and jump in and add to this as we talk. First thing that struck me was that vocabulary, as we enter the realm of more expository reading and writing for our kids, the vocabulary becomes very difficult. It becomes very specialized. It becomes very technical in nature. So even if we have kids who can call the words, they can break the sounds down, they can call the word, they don't always have meaning for that word and there are a variety of reasons that that happens, but they don't always have the meaning that they need to have for that word. Give me a thumbs up if that discussion came up at your table, something about vocabulary, language, okay. Good, I told you we were all on the same page here. And please at any point in time, before I move on, you know the other thing I guess I should share with you, as a seventh grade teacher, there are a couple of things, I'm very used to, number one, people not paying attention to me, and secondly, so if you have other things you need to do, just go ahead and do those, and secondly, I'm very used to people wanting to talk about things that have nothing to do with what I'm talking about. (Laughter) You know the kid that's giving it this number and you're thinking, oh my gosh, David finally has it, because I'm doing Mid-Summer Night's Dream and we're just having this lovely time, and David says, "will we be getting our yearbooks today?" I'm like, you know David, I don't really know and unless somebody's getting a yearbook in Mid-Summer Night's Dream, let's not talk about it right now. But, if you want to talk about something that's about these things, we will, and if you want to talk about something else,

we will too. I'm okay with that, I'm really okay with that. I teach seventh grade, you can't scare me. So, vocabulary, we're all on the page there, the variance and the readability. Here's what I'm talking about, a couple of year's ago, I took my Social Studies textbook and I went through and I did a couple of scans on some of the passages and I found that in my seventh grade Social Studies textbook, the readability ranged anywhere from fourth grade level to tenth grade level within that very same book. There's a problem. There's a problem. And that's just with the textbook, which is supposedly somewhat controlled. What if you want your kids to read primary sources? You want them to read real-world stuff, okay. We have little control over that, so there is a variance in the readability of the kinds of documents, more and more and more, when we move into content area classrooms. Also, let's understand that the kinds of things we're going to be talking about here, may also apply in the English / Language Arts classrooms. This is not just, only in Social Studies, or only in Science, but sometimes they're a little more controlled. And there are other factors that we'll talk about too that may make a difference. Expository writing tends to be organized differently than narrative. Oh I'm sorry, did you guys talk about that readability issue at all? It's just harder, or it varies, yes? You did? Okay... and it's okay if you didn't, you can go "yes, I did." Expository writing is organized differently than narrative. There's not a beginning, a middle, and an end. There aren't those happy little characters that we can latch onto and care about. We don't build and build and build and finally get to the climax, which is always wonderful because that way we know the end is in sight. I know the end is in sight. When kids read in a Science book it just seems to go on and on and on and on. You see, it's organized differently and they don't know how to wrap their minds around that different organization. Anybody talk about that at your table? Finally, the one that I thought of is, the fact that when we're dealing primarily with Social Studies and Science kinds of things, the text is so dense. It is packed, I mean slam packed with concepts. You know, for example, North Carolina, I teach Africa and Asia in my seventh grade Social Studies curriculum. It's a wonderful curriculum. In one chapter, in the textbook, it might cover the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, Mohandas Gandhi, Hinduism, and it's effect on the daily life of the people, and the role of women and the cash system. Pretty dense, huh? That's one chapter. Think about your Science textbook. You know, they try to pack so much into those textbooks, right? And sometime it just becomes overwhelming because we have to go through and go, well I can't do all this and we can't even look at all this and it's just overwhelming because too often we assume that the textbook is our curriculum as opposed to a way to deliver our curriculum and we feel that, gosh, it comes with all this great stuff and we've got to slog through every bit of it, well we don't. But it takes an awful lot of time sometimes to drag out of it what you do want to do and so we have text that tends to be very dense and therefore very difficult in terms of multiple concepts for kids. Do you agree with that? Have you encountered that? What else did you guys talk about that were either textual or assignment features that I don't have here? It's boring. It's boring, yeah. It's not very exciting. Let's go ahead and let's talk about reader variables, and we can always go back and forth, you

know that was the one thing that I saw some of you struggling with the idea of, well, "is it this or is it this?" yes, it's whatever you want it to be, it really doesn't matter. Reader variables, what the kid does or does not bring to the page. First of all, the kids bring a varied level of experience. Right? Interests and experience, maybe we should jump on down to number three. Their interests, their motivation, and their experiential levels are so vastly different. You know, I'm always a little bit intimidated by that kid, that when we start talking about a particular topic, gives it this number, and again it's probably usually David or someone, and I'm thinking okay, we're gonna talk about yearbooks, but... And he's going, "well I saw, on the Discovery Channel, last night..." At which point I think, let me just sit down, because this kid probably knows far more about this particular topic than I do. Meanwhile, of course, you have Holly over there who's like, who cares, don't know, don't want to know, don't ever care to know, made it this far without knowing, and you have David, who's just all fired up about it and going, "oh, and then we could..." and so on and so forth. I always talk about my son when I do these things. If you ever meet him, act like you don't know him, because he always says, "you don't talk about me do you, mom?" and I'm like, "no, never mentioned you." But, my husband happens to be from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, they had a battle there, you might have heard about it. And so, my son grew up tromping through that battlefield. This kid, by the time he was, probably about sixth grade, could walk you through all three days of the battle. Okay? He knew what happened when, he knew who had the high ground, who gave it up, he knew all that stuff. Alright? So, his eighth grade teacher said to me one time, you know, "When we started talking about Civil War, she said it was one of those moments when Travis raised his hand and here we go." And she said, "Basically he walked us through the three days of the Battle of Gettysburg." And she said, "I at least had the good sense to sit down, shut up, and let him do it." Because he knew what he was talking about. So you have those kids who bring that to the page. I think sometimes, we always want to focus on those kids who don't care, don't want to know, but we do have those kids who do care about a particular topic, particularly again, when we get into science and we get into social studies and we get into health or we get into technology. They do care and they do have the knowledge and we have to make sure that we use that information from our kids. I know you all talked about experience and motivational interests, didn't you? Yes? Sure, exactly, they either have a great deal or they have none at all. Yes, this past spring break, I had kids in my class, my team, who went to Europe for spring break, and I had kids who went to Wal-Mart over spring break, okay. So the broad variance of what they brought to the page when they returned from spring break or when they returned from summer, and so on and so forth. Second one talks about a lack of instruction in expository reading. I framed this for grades five through ten for a reason. And I think it could go four to twelve and maybe even further. But, it's about fourth grade, if I'm correct, that kids start, for about the first time, to encounter expository writing, non-fiction pieces that are maybe not just biographies or autobiographies. Now, please don't get me wrong, and if you teach in those early grades, let me just say this, bless you, thank you. Because I

couldn't do it, I could not do it. I have somehow made it this far in my life and in my career without having a real good feel for what a diphthong or schwa is and I love you folks who teach that to kids, because I don't know, okay. So I'm not pointing any fingers here with any of these, but I'm saying that up to this point, about fourth grade, kids are learning to read. It's about fourth grade when they start reading to learn. They start having to process and take in more information. And therefore we have to shift around and teach them how to do that. And a lot of times it hasn't happened up to this point. That's one of the areas where we're going to spend a lot of time talking today, in terms of "so, what can we do?" So, did you talk about that one? They just don't have the background knowledge, no one's taught them this up to this point. Did you talk about that? Thumbs up if you did, or if you agree. Okay, finally, and this hooks onto it, gaps of study techniques and an emphasis on skills, and maybe not on process. It's also about this time that we have kids who encounter the need to do things like research papers. Back to that unnamed child, who lives in my house, he came home in eighth grade with the task of writing a research paper and I said to him, "oh, okay well let's talk about you thesis statement" and he said, "mom, I don't need a thesis statement," and I said "oh, okay" and I said, "well you know, I don't think we have any index cards, let's go out and buy some index cards for you to do note cards." "Mom, we don't have to do note cards, we just have to write a research paper." And I said, "exactly how is it you plan to get from the point where you are now to handing this paper in?" "Mom, I'm just going to write the paper, I'll look it up in the encyclopedia and I'll just write the paper." And there was no structure there. This was a bright kid. This was a bright kid, and someone assumed, somewhere along the line, that he would know, and no one taught him. No one taught him those kinds of things. Okay, again, I'm not pointing fingers, I'm just saying what I'm hoping we're doing here as we take a look at these variables, is not to point fingers, is not to lay blame and go, "well, I just don't know what we're gonna do or that's not my job," but to say, "so, here's the lay of the land folks, what are we going to do about it?" Here's what we have on the table, how are we going to address this? So, I think it's about this time where because the text is so dense and so thick and has so much information, kids have to start learning, how do I tackle this, how do I deal with this, how can I get my hands, my mind wrapped around all of this? Okay, so tell me the things that I did not include, or those that you want to say, "yeah, but" or you want to add something to, because you had some great discussions at your table, and I'm sure I didn't capture everything. So we need to give direct instruction on how to take notes? Exactly, direct instruction, looking at study techniques and again looking at the whole process here, you know, I know you have those kids who open the book, they really do read the chapter and then they close the book and go, "I don't get it," you know, because they didn't know how to attack it, they didn't know how to mark up the text, they didn't know how to connect to the text and so on and so forth. Yes? They're not allowed to mark up the text. Yes, yes, thank heavens for sticky notes though, okay, I mean I agree with you, my kids are not allowed to mark in the text and I find that to be incredibly unfortunate, because I think it would help. Although, I must tell you, I don't know if your kids

do this or not, but when I try to teach them to highlight, what we generally end up with is a beautiful rainbow of color, okay. And so we have the blue section and then we have the pink section and then we have the yellow section, and then we just have colored text, okay. It isn't really highlighted, necessarily, and then that goes back to the instruction of, do this with this color, do this with... stop! Don't mark all that text, those kinds of things. They think they're highlighting, but I think sticky notes can do an awful lot for you in that respect. My classes, we've tried using color coded sticky notes, but we always forgot what the colors meant, so we now just use sticky notes and we put symbols on them and that's how we do our responses and our reactions and I mean kids will walk into my room with either a textbook or a novel and I mean there are sticky notes just all over the place, just hanging out. And it's because they've used those to respond to something, to ask questions, to make a connection, to envision something, whatever it is that you're focusing on for that particular piece. It's an instructional piece, you're absolutely right. We talked over here about, we keep everything so separate from one another, and I had a light bulb go on because I have my kids find vocabulary, on their own, while they're reading, but I have instructed them not to use any words from other subjects, like science and... (laughter) We forgive you, don't worry. I know isn't that horrible? It's like I'm sitting here, I'm thinking, oh my goodness, I should've been letting them do that, so I've already learned something. Alright! Check, on the outcomes, okay, you may leave now. I think it's important, and I'm glad you brought that up, I think it's crucially, critically important that if you teach in a middle school, then you are all over the idea of teaming, okay, because we are all about teaming in the middle school. So even if you don't teach in a middle school or if you don't have that kind of a team structure, the more people you can get on board with what you do, the better off you're going to be. Okay? If you can provide that framework for your kids, that they see the same kinds of things, the same kinds of activities, that they hear the same words, that the expectations are the same in multiple places that they go, they do start to make those connections and they do start to internalize those kinds of things that we're trying to teach them and I think that's crucially and critically important. That's where you have to reach out to your colleagues, whether it's the rest of your science colleagues or it's the other people who teach the ninth graders in your building or whomever it is. I think the more opportunities that we work together, the tighter safety net we provide for kids so that they don't fall behind, that they don't fall through the gaps. It's almost like a trampoline, you hit it and they just bounce right back and they reengage in the activities. (MUSIC)

(MUSIC) What are we going to do to address this, because as I said, I don't want us to lay any blame here – I don't want us to lay any blame – this is not about blame. I think we need to do a couple of things. First of all, back to that process piece. I think we need to make sure that our kids are aware and that we are aware, that reading in the content area is a different process. It just isn't the same. It's just different than reading a novel. Shores and Perkins, back in '92, said that there are four levels of metacognition when we talk about reading. Now, I don't propose that you go out and start saying to your kids "David You are a tacit reader, and Mike, you are..." That's like the old redbird, bluebird, buzzard grouping thing. I'm not going there. I simply saying that we need to make sure that we start to look for, as our kids read and as they perform in class, so what is it that they are struggling with? Take a look at these. The words underneath are mostly mine, so as I tried to put them in words that we could all understand. The tacit reader is that kid I mentioned earlier – really did try – opened the book, read the chapter, closed the book, and said "I don't get it! I don't know." This kid just is totally aware of the process – can call the words, perhaps – maybe they can't call the words, okay – but is totally unaware of how to attack the text – how to get meaning, how to derive meaning. They don't even know that they don't know. They tried, it's over, end of story. The next level of reader is the aware reader. Anybody in here a tennis player – tennis player – golfer? Okay. Do you people do anything active? (laughter) I'm a tennis player, so let me talk tennis to you for a second. So, I'm going out and I'm playing tennis against someone, and it's 4 – 0. I'm losing badly. Things are not looking good for the home team. I am aware that there is a problem with my tennis game on this particular day. But I am playing someone who is so good – who is so far past me – that I don't have a clue how to fix it. So I am incompetent, but at least I know I am incompetent. But, how do you think that makes me feel? Inadequate. I want to give up, I'm inadequate, I'm powerless – that's a great word – defeated. Could you get angry? Yeah! Okay. Take me off the tennis court – go into your classroom. How does your kid feel who reads text – whether they're second grade or eighth grade or eleventh grade, and they know there's a problem, they know they don't get it, but they don't know what to do. All those same terms you just said, are what these kids are feeling as they read. Now, again, I don't think we need to go out and start labeling kids, but I think we need to start thinking about so how are we going to move kids to being either strategic or reflective readers. How are we going to move them along so that they understand the processes well enough that they have the fix-up strategy. Okay? Now there's some times, you know, with my tennis game it's not going to much matter – I can't beat Serena Williams, for example, okay. That's never going to happen, but if I go out and I play someone – I'm playing Jennie, and Jennie is killing me on these short shots coming back over the net, I know how to make some adjustments. I'm going to hit the ball wide to her forehand, because she can't hit a forehand. I'm going to serve and volley, so I'm going to be at the net when that ball slightly drops over. I have some strategies. Do they always work? No, but as a reflective tennis player, I'm going to come back and say, "You know what? The next time I play somebody like Jennie, here's what I'm going to do." The next time I have to read

a chapter in the science textbook, here's how I'm going to attack it – here's what I'm going to do. That's where your direct instruction comes in. So, there's the first piece I think we need to do. I think we need to make sure that our kids and that we start understanding process. There is a process. You know, kids think that reading is just this magical thing that happens. They don't always understand that there are a lot of things that go on – and we're going to talk about one way to address that in just a second, too. I think, as I mentioned to you earlier, that we need to shift what we do. We need to take a look at things differently. Someone said in my session the other day "Is this not the way everybody teaches?" And I said "No, unfortunately, it is not the way everybody teaches." So, again, today you may be going "Check, do this, do this, do this." I think if you go back into your buildings, you will find that everyone doesn't teach this way. Everyone doesn't think this way. And I think that's where we need to change, we need to make a shift in the way we think about our instruction. I want to suggest that we need to shift what I'm going to refer to as a front-end loading model – and I heard you speak about this before – about pre-reading activities – and that's exactly where we're headed today. I think that we need to take a look at the way we deliver instruction – direct instruction in the content areas. Now, before we go one step further, I know you've never said this, but tell me if you've ever heard this before "But I'm not a reading teacher. I teach social studies and I have a whole curriculum and I don't have the time or the knowledge to do this." Have you ever heard that before? Okay. My guess is that some of you who are language arts folks are here because those folks are coming to you and saying "What are you going to do, because this kid cannot read my science book, and how are you going to fix it?" "Well, you aren't, but we are?" okay, would be my response. And here's the other response I would give to that. You teach social studies. Do you like social studies? Are you good at social studies? I think so. Okay. Some of you in this room are science teachers – you have that science mind. I heard you say "I don't do science." Okay, but you have some science folks back here at your table. You understand science – you like science – you think like a scientist. You think like a social scientist, or a historian, because you get it, okay? Guys, that's all I'm asking you to do. Take that from your brain and give it to your kids. One of the things that I find is, creating in the students an interest in the subject. And one of the things I like to do, when I start instead is to let everyone in the classroom realize that to some extent, they are all chemists. Because if you cook, you are a chemist. You do the same things a chemist does. And when you do this and you show them, it creates an interest in the subject matter and once you do that, you've sort of gripped them and you can run from there. You're absolutely right. You have hooked them in and whether it's something now you want them to do or something you want them to read, you've also done this – you've leveled the playing field just a little bit. So that kid who came in thinking "I have a chemistry set, and I am a chemist," and the other five people sitting at a table who thought "I know nothing about chemistry – I don't do chemistry," – you've now leveled the playing field, because everybody in this room realizes "I'm a chemist – I can do this. I need to learn more about this." You've done exactly what I'm talking about with the pre-reading kinds of things

that we're going to do. Pre-reading – pre-teaching – whatever you want to call them – because they don't always have to come right before reading. We talked yesterday in a group about the fact that sometimes we have to get kids doing things before we can get them reading things. Especially maybe our kids for whom language is a difficulty – maybe they're just acquiring English, for example, some of our struggling readers. If we can get them involved in learning and doing, then maybe they'll want to know more and we can send them back to the actual text. Because we know they have to read – we know that's a piece of it, but if you do some really cool activities and some great things to hook them in, in the first place that might be your stepping stone to lead them on to doing some other kinds of things with their reading. Absolutely. Thanks for sharing that. You shouldn't be doing reading strategies from your science class because it's a separate thing and the system does that to the kids also. Yeah. Well, the system does that to teachers too, don't you think? Yeah, I think so. And here's my take on that. First of all, who better to tell a kid how to read your textbook or your subject in your classroom than you? That's number one. Alright? You know what you're after. You know what the kids need. So who better to do that? And a lot of times, people, it's out of fear, it's not that they're going "I'm not going to do that," – it's out of fear "I don't know, I don't have a reading background." But you read. You're a good reader. You know where you're headed. You know your objectives. You can do this. So I think there's a mind shift that has to occur there. One of the books that I reference, and it's also in your handout so you don't need to take a look at it now. But one of the authors that I love to take a look at is Jeffrey Wilhelm. Is anybody familiar with his work? It is in your bibliography there. He has written a book that's all about think alouds – think alouds. Think alouds are nothing but modeling – where you take what occurs in your brain as you approach a text, and you simply talk the kids through it. Now, does that make common sense now that I've said it? That makes such good sense – he had to write an entire book, do a lot of research on it, for us to figure it out – "gosh, we probably ought to be doing this". So, you might want to do something like this – you might want to give your kids a visual cue, okay, where you simply go "hmmm" and you start saying "you know, as I approach this social studies chapter, the first thing that strikes me is that there seems to be a lot of water I'm seeing in the pictures in this chapter," or "I'm noticing a word here that I don't have a clue what this word is about," and you are simply talking them through the processes that go through your mind. You are modeling reading for them. Because again, they think it just happens. They don't want to do the work on the front end, they don't want to read the directions, they don't want to engage sometimes in your pre-reading activities, they just want to open the book, read the stuff, and get it over with. Okay, they just want to get through it. So if you talk them through that process and you engage the kids in that, then hopefully, eventually they will become the ones who do that for you. They will become the ones who say "let me talk you through that." First time I had a student say that, I was just like "Yes!" When he said "well just let me talk you through my thinking on that." We don't really stop and think that we're using a process. I mean, somehow, like we were having our students do compare contrast and we couldn't

figure out why they didn't know how to do it, because we didn't know we used a process. And, so it's a risk – you're asking us to take this big risk – like the other day I wrote a poem, showed them how I went through the process. And I was afraid while I was doing it – what if this is horrible – that we're doing a found poem, and I'm doing it, I haven't even written it at all. And so I'm going through the whole process up in front of them, and the whole time I'm thinking “man, I hope this thing turns out okay.” Because you're risk-taking, and it's sort of scary in front of your students. It is, but, part of that process is also to get “you know, this really didn't work, did it, guys?” What could I have done differently here to...? And that's why I go back to one of my original statements – it's all about process. And I think we do have to get in there and unpack, so what is the task we're asking kids to do – let's unpack that. Let's take a look and see. So what does it take? What does it take to actually do this? What were the actual skills and processes and things that went through my head as I read this chapter in social studies, for example. I want to propose that we take a look at a different type of reading model. I want to say you need to spend the majority of your time getting your kids ready to read – pre-reading activities. Now, I have some very specifics to share with you, but I want to tell you very quickly why I think they're important. Number one, they help to differentiate. They help to level that playing field – all those different reader variables that we talked about earlier. Secondly, they will bring in the kids' prior knowledge – that kid who knows everything – that kid who knows very little. They will establish a focus or purpose for the kids. And I don't mean you need to read this chapter so you can answer the questions at the end – that is not a focus or a purpose for reading. They also build scaffolding. I love the idea of scaffolding. That whole idea that for some kids they have really, really long legs and they can take a huge leap, and for some kids they are just barely climbing. You know, they need lots and lots and lots of help. They need lots of places to sit down and rest. They need lots of places for people to pull them along. Pre-reading activities will do that for us. And finally, pre-reading activities will expand and explore vocabulary. I want to go on over and talk, just briefly, because we're going to spend the rest of our morning talking about pre-reading activities. I want to just say a couple of things about during-reading activities before we look at some very specifics. During-reading activities need to be guided and they need to be structured. That does not mean that they need to say again “Read the chapter and answer the questions at the end.” They have to be doing something – they have to be actively engaged. Let me go ahead, pull your toes out of the way, because I'm going to step on a few right here. Graphic organizers – do you use them? Yes – do you like them? Graphic organizers are nothing but neat, attractive worksheets. They don't necessarily engage the readers, unless you do this. I teach graphic organizers the first nine weeks – maybe nine weeks works for you and maybe six works for you and maybe twelve weeks – make it fit. Whatever works for you. I teach them – they are all over my walls. We are constantly – “which one should we use” and all this kind of stuff and after nine weeks they all come down – they all come down. I never hand out another graphic organizer for the rest of the year. Why? What am I hoping my kids will do? It's not that it's like “boy, we're through with that –

no more graphic organizers.” What do I want them to do? You want them to develop their own system. Sure, create your own. Because, if they create their own, how is that different than me handing them the graphic organizer and saying “fill it out” – what’s the difference there guys? It’s obvious. Ownership. They have shown a level of understanding – they figured out a way to make it work for them. If you’re like we are, graphic organizers don’t work for us. So I am constantly trying to figure out “does it go here, does it go here, does it go here,” let me just do my own – I can just put it where it needs to be for my brain. Now, did I have to have direct instruction before that? Absolutely! Did I have to create that level of knowledge and understanding? Did I have to teach signal words? You mentioned cause and effect. I had to teach them how to recognize it’s cause and effect, okay. And if I didn’t do that, then I’ve messed up. But yeah, I want to move them along. When I use them though, I leave them up on the room and the first nine weeks I will point them out and say “let’s use this one – this is why we’re using this one.” And then after that I won’t say “let’s use this one,” but I leave them up there so they have a visual because I’ve found that students will strictly go with one and that’s the one they go with all the time and they’re not willing to step back outside to try a different type of organizer. Right. Right. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. Here’s what I’d like to ask you to consider, okay. First nine weeks, you make the suggestion. Second nine weeks, they’re there – the support is there – they can look up there. Maybe third nine weeks? Take them down. (Laughter) And it might not work for you. And everything it’s gotta work for you – it’s gotta work for your style, it’s gotta work for your kids. So, maybe that’s not a good idea for you. Explore it. If you haven’t explored it, explore it. If you feel your kids falling apart, put them back up, for heaven sakes. But, aren’t you kind of saying in a sense that you’re going to teach it, they’re going to kind of guided practice through it, kind of have some choice, and then the last nine weeks then you’ll know if they’re independently actually using it because they’ve either got, they’ve internalized them so they able to use it, or they’re still, you need to go back then, and you might find out actually not in the third nine weeks, you actually might find out in the second part of that third nine weeks, “you know what, I’ve got to go back and re-teach some of these, because they’re just not using them independently.” There’s no mastery. Yes, exactly. The other part about pre-reading activities is, during reading activities people will go “well, I don’t have time to do all this stuff.” Well, make the during-reading activity build on the pre-reading activity. So, maybe you brain-stormed your graphic organizer at the beginning – now as you read, you complete it, or you move things, or you delete things, and then as your post-reading activity you write from it, or you do something else with it. All you did was one activity, but you did it up front and you carry it through. You know, how many of your kids, when they do something and they go “can we throw this away?” “Are we through with this?” No! Okay. You did it before you read, you’re going to use it while you read, you’re going to use it after you read. And that’s another thing for those teachers who say “But, I just don’t have the time,” and all those kinds of things. The other place I’ll go ahead and step on your toes and then we’ll move on. During reading activities, during reading time, it needs to be

silent reading time and it needs to be independent reading time. Now, before you get in an uproar, let me say a few things about that. So, if you're not an elementary-trained person, you may not know the term round-robin reading. Okay, who knows what round-robin reading is? Would you – Jessica, could you just tell us real quickly what's that going to look like at this table right here? I can call on David and ask him to read and then David can pick somebody else to read, so it's just kids taking turns reading aloud. They take turns reading aloud, and in some classrooms it's very, very predictable, because David will read the first paragraph, and then Mike will read the second paragraph, and so on and so forth. Now, what do you think Kathy – reader number five – is doing while readers one, two, three and four are reading? She's reading paragraph five. Not only is she reading paragraph five, she's punching Jennie and going "What is this word? What is this word?" So did anybody hear the first four paragraphs? No! And, Mike – bless his heart – Mike read and he read it just like this. And you're all thinking "oh, my gosh, this is so boring, it was about the American Revolution, it should be fun, exciting." But Mike has read in this monotone, or poor Jessica, we get to Jessica, and Jessica mispronounces every third word. She is so mortified now the kids are like– what have we gained from that? Nothing! Nothing! Okay, take round-robin reading out back and bury it! But, you have kids in your classroom – they're English language learners. They need to hear! How are we going to let them hear? You can tape it. If you tape it, plug them in – make them look at the words as they go through it. It helps them get that pacing – it helps them hear what it should sound like. Tapes! I think it's okay sometimes for you to do the reading out loud too, cause you can control that. You can have the enthusiasm. You can do those kinds of things that David's talking about, that have an accountability piece. You know, Jessica, when she's reading, she's not going to say "and, what's the next sentence say?" You know, because she's a student in the room. So, I think that there are those ways that you can do it. But, for the most part, round-robin reading really just doesn't work all that well. How about Jump-In reading? Jump-in reading – tell us about that. Where you have to read, but you select at which point you read and how much you read. So, you can jump in and read one sentence if that's all you're comfortable with, or you can jump in and read a paragraph. And some people do it, and just, when you're finished you just stop. I've seen other teachers do it where the student says "jump in" meaning I'm done, somebody else can jump in and then that allows students to participate at their own pace and the amount that they want to do. And what grade level have you used that at? High school students. Okay, great! Great! That sounds like a great idea. Yeah. Let's talk vocabulary for a second because we've said that's something that's really, really, really tough for us. I want to make a suggestion to you. How many of you use word walls? Okay, I love word walls, okay? Whew. They're an – David's saying, thinking "finally, I do something the woman likes – it's about time!" You know, word walls, and do you know guys, make it work for you – make it work for you. I talked, the other week in Pittsburgh, to a group of folks – they are a literacy high school. They have word walls in their classrooms and at the end of every unit of study, they select – the department group gets together – the

science department gets together – they bring all their words from their word walls and they decide “so, what are we going to put our here in the hall”, so as you enter the science hallway there are word walls all over the place – just words. Words – some people like to put words and definitions, words and examples, words and pictures, some people just put the words, but the kids are involved in a word-rich environment. The kids constantly are surrounded by words. Word walls are wonderful for your kids who struggle, your kids who are language learners – English language learners – they provide that support. You know, in my classroom, when I say something to someone and they say, they answer the question, and then someone will invariably go “you know, John looked at the word wall to get that answer.” And my response is always “well, that’s because John is incredibly smart and knows that I put the words on the word wall for a reason.” So, it helps kids, it jogs their memory, it gives them words for their writing, it gives them words in their discussion. I constantly see my kids looking at the word wall in my room – constantly! It’s a great warm-up activity. Take a look at the word wall and pick out three words that involve our writing process. Okay, it’s a quick cool-down or wrap-up activity or ticket out the door activity. Word walls – there’s nothing magical about them – you can color-code them, you can alphabetize them. I’m sure you’ll find this shocking, but I tend to be a little random, and my words are just all over the wall, but I like that because the kids have to look for them too. They have to dig around. But you figure out what works for you. Word walls – there’s tons of research – there’s tons of ideas out there – a lot of times it marketed as an elementary school thing. It’s another one of those ideas, like you said, take it on to middle school – take it on to high school. It’s good stuff! It provides structure, it provides support, it provides scaffolding. Be careful though. You can’t put every word. We tend to think every word is the most important word. They must have this word. Consider the words that, number one they really, really, really need for that unit of study – the words that they’re going to need somewhere else – not just in your classroom. If it’s just for that unit, then you just tell them that word, you know, and just move on. We don’t need to spend an awful lot of time digging through it, just tell them what the word means. Teach them how to use the context clue that showed them that and move on. These are words that they’re going to need in a lot of places, alright – and I think that they work well. Yes. If they can find the word that we’ve been using in the newspaper or magazine, they bring it in, they get an extra 10 points, and it’s amazing that even at that grade level, they are thrilled finding it when they read a newspaper or magazine. Oh, sure! Are you familiar with the Frayer model – the Frayer model – does this look familiar to anybody? I love this! I love this! There is a hand-out – you can look if you’d like – it’s at the end of the power point – you’re welcome to look or not. And in it I talk about two activities. One is called adding up the pieces, and one is called family ties. And basically what I’ve done there is I’ve given you a menu of options. If you want to use something like the Frayer model, and I personally call this the Frayer-Hinkle model, because I don’t ever use any model the way someone probably intended it to be used – I make it work for me – so you can call it the Frayer-whatever-your-last-name-is model too and make it work for you. But,

basically, I've given you a menu there and I've said "Think about what you need the kids to know about this particular word or concept or idea." Okay? The ideas or the basic things that I think you probably want to have there – I think you want to know what is it that is always involved? Now, Frayer calls them essential elements – my kids wouldn't get that, so I always list it as "this particular topic – whatever we're talking about – always has." Again, I teach Africa and Asia, monotheism and polytheism come into play. We start doing some comparisons in religion and how they affect the ways that people live, so I need my kids to know what monotheism is. So, at some point – and I do not mean from day one, I don't walk in here, I don't teach rocket scientists, I don't walk in here and go "well today class we'll talk about monotheism," because my kids would look at me and go "Huh?" "What?" I'm talking about after we've studied the Middle East and we've studied Christianity and we've studied Islam and we've studied Judaism and we're now ready to move on, but we need to make sure we understand monotheism before we go to polytheism. Okay? So maybe I'm using this as a post-reading kind of an activity. Maybe I have this on – every kids doing this at the table, or a table group is working, or I have it on laminated sheets – it doesn't really matter how you do this, it's playing around with words, and its giving meaning to words for kids. What are the essential elements of monotheism? Give me a quick one. Monotheistic religion has one God, okay? You guys got that, if you didn't know it, by doing a structural analysis, okay? That's another thing that you could do with this word. So what is mono-? What's the prefix? The prefix is mono-? Give me some more words that use mono-. Let's talk about prefixes for a minute. I know they're not all social studies words, but let's do it anyway, because we're talking words and words are good, okay? Monorail – yeah! There's a connection for a lot of kids – they've been to Disney – they've seen the monorail, so I brainstorm words, and then I look at the suffix and I talk about –ism. What other words do you know? Can we come up with a meaning for that? And then we talk about the word in the middle there, as my kids like to refer to it – the word in the middle, and they would go "well –the- is it like a, an, or the, and at that point I'd have to say, "no, you guys probably don't know the word theology, or theologian, but you would hear those words in church, and then we would break that down – yeah. So, it has one God – what might we find in a monotheistic religion – and there are a variety of things that would go there. What are some examples of monotheistic religions, and so we would list those and the one that I absolutely love the most – what are some non-examples? Can you see this working with math? Yeah! Could you see this if this was all done graphically? We're studying parallelograms or whatever the case is, and so for my non-examples I'm drawing other shapes that are not. This is a huge piece. What is it not is a huge piece, because that just adds meaning – that adds meaning for the kids. Again, this works so incredibly well with your English language learners. There's nothing special about using these four categories – figure out what works for you. A lot of folks like to do this and use a graphic – use a picture. I do! I love having my kids draw pictures and do different things with the words. I'm not sure that this is one that I would have them draw a picture with. Take a look at these words for me. The list, group,

label activity. I have nine words up here. Somebody tell me a category that you could... pick two or three of these words. What category could they go into? Okay, I have a big category of the Middle East – lets break it down a little bit. What words would you like to put under people? Bedouins, Berbers, souks – you think souks is going to be there? We'll have to find out about that one. What's a souk? What's a souk? Well, you know what guys – I can tell you now, or I can wait – you know, 'cause you're going to want to find that one out for yourself and its going to be in today's reading. Okay? You think it's a piece of clothing – that's a good prediction. What about fellaheen – does anybody know that word? I think, I don't really need my kids to know all these words, but they are all words that are going to be in today's reading. So, in some cases, I'm going to tell them some of these words, because I don't need for them to hold these words as their own. So, I might say a souk is a bazaar, it's a marketplace – it sounds like suit, doesn't it? Okay, and that's why you probably thought. Fellaheen, Fellaheens are the farmers. Okay? Now what if a kid says to me "I want to put Bedouins, Berber and Islam together." And I say, "Why?" And they say, "They all are proper nouns." Now, that told me something. There's a quick assessment. If I thought they knew some of these words, I now know they don't know any of these words, and they're having to look structurally, so that's okay, cause that tells me something. Because maybe I use this for pre-reading, and maybe I use it for during-reading, and maybe I use it for post-reading, or maybe I use it for all three. So, I might say to my kids, "Let's talk about that word desertification. Big word! What do you think it might have something to do with?" The desert – we know it's about the Middle East – do you see another desert-kind-of word up here? Oasis. What is oasis? Water? People are looking for water in the desert, yeah. Anything else you see that might fit in with that whole desert, water? Bedouins are the people who move around. So the Bedouins are moving around throughout the desert, which is expanding because of something called desertification – it's actually growing – it's growing. They are having to travel further, and further, and further, looking for the oasis, and some of them are deciding "you know, we can't live this way anymore." They are losing that culture of moving around and they are settling down at the oasis and they are becoming fellaheen – or farmers. One of the groups whose really been affected by this are women. Because their livelihood – their way of doing things – has changed as they have had to settle down and no longer move about – go to souks and bazaars and sell the things that they make, okay? Now, did my kids know any of that when I started? No. Do they know for real any of it now? No, but I've teased them. I teased them, and I got them thinking, and as they read, I might say something like "pull out your gel-pens." Do your kids use gel pens? I hate those things. "Pull out your gel pens and ask you read find three categories. Use your pink gel pen, or your highlighter, and circle three words or two words or four words and then write a sentence that goes along with those words to explain them," – just like that long, run-on kind of sentence that I just used with you. Do you know how you could use this as a post-reading activity? It's described in your packet as three-in-a-row. You know how this looks like a tic-tac-toe board? Yeah. Choose a row –it can be a row – it can be a column, it can be a diagonal

row. Make me a sentence that shows that you understand the relationship of those three words. It gives choice – maybe you have them do it as a group, so no one is on the spot, maybe they write it on a sentence strip and put it up on the wall so we can all take a look at it. But it's a great activity to see as a post-reading activity, did the kids get what you wanted them to get? And look at your time investment here. You pulled out nine words or terms that they were going to see. You've teased them, you've talked. Now, do I still want to go back and do some more things with the key words here? Absolutely! Absolutely I do! But you've done some things with your vocabulary words here that are very, very, very important. You've laid them out there, you've gotten them to start thinking about those vocabulary. Do you use prediction or anticipation guides? Yes, good! Let's talk about those for a second. Look through your chapter. Again, maybe I've picked out some of the key, crucial things I want my kids to know. As you take a look at these up here, you will see, but again, I teach middle school, so one of the things I want to do is, I want to get the gross factor out there real quickly, because that hooks them. So as soon as my boys read number one "When a member of the of the Parsi religion dies, he is placed on a high platform so that the vultures will pick his bones clean." My boys are going "Yeah! That's cool!" And my girls are going "Ooh, that's gross." Now, do I really need them to know that one fact? No! You know where I'm taking them with this? I'm taking them to reincarnation and Hinduism, alright? Now, I had to use the gross factor, 'cause if I throw out the word reincarnation, they're like "Huh? Carnation? Are those those little flowers?" They're not going to be with me on that, so I throw out the gross factor. The other thing that I like about prediction or anticipation guides is, if you're predicting just like you did with souks, you can't be wrong. There's no risk – none of us know this stuff, guys. Isn't this the coolest thing in the world? So, let's give a thumbs up if you think its true, or thumbs down if you think its false, or stand on your right foot, or go to that corner if you think its true and that corner if you think its false. There's no risk involved, 'cause nobody knows this stuff and that's a cool thing to have the kids just take a look at. You can see I continue the gross factor a little bit more over there and then I say to the kids "So, as you read," that was my pre-reading activity. Maybe I just had them write true, false, true, false, true, false. Maybe I had them table-talk it. Maybe I had them come in and I said "There are four statements here. Choose one and do a quick-write on why you think it's a true statement or a false statement. What background knowledge do you have?" At which point some kid's going to say to me, "I don't have any background knowledge, I'm clueless." And I'm going to go okay, that tells me something. But he's writing it, so he doesn't have to say it out loud. Now, as you read today, guys, you're going to find out all this information. Everything is going to be in here. They're going to talk about cow dung, and they're going to talk about vultures picking bones, and this is really good stuff. Oh, yeah, and by the way, they're going to talk about voting and public office too. But you need to know that, so it's okay. So, as you read today, what I want you to do is, again, use a different color pen, or make a mark on the right-hand margin, as opposed to the left-hand margin, and as you read tell me is it true, or is it false, and just give me the page number where you found that information. I

have provided for them a quick reading guide. I have structured, I have guided their reading. I built on my pre-reading activity. I've now structured their reading. Another thing that's very similar – ask them to simply make a connection. These involve those kinds of things that are not necessarily true-false statement, but more opinion, or feeling kinds of things. This works wonderfully if you're in science working on genetics. So, anything that might have the least bit of controversy, or anything like that. I don't know how many of you teach middle school, but there is no one in the world that suffers more than seventh grade girls. So, when I use this particular one, my girls are like "Yeah." I would simply say something to them like "Okay, guys, these are some important ideas that we're going to be talking about today, and I want you to take a look at these and tell me if you agree or you disagree, or I want you to pick one and write about it, or I want you to do a table-talk on it. And then, as you read" – Can anyone identify where I'm going with these? "life involves suffering, if you don't try to accumulate a lot of material wealth you'll be happier" – can anybody tell where I'm going? Buddhism. So, as you read today, you're going to be reading about Buddhism. You're not Buddhists. But I wonder if there are any things that you believe, that you feel, that a Buddhist also feels." I'm creating a connection. Those are a few reading, pre-reading activities, and those are a few vocabulary activities, and we are very close to being out of time. I know we started a little bit late so I want to wrap up by talking about some post-reading activities and then open the floor up for what you learned, what was affirmed, and anything else that you want to share and talk about because we didn't get as much time for you to talk today and I apologize for that because together you guys have so much more knowledge to share than I would and I'm glad you at least had some table-talk time. The very last hand-out that you have – and again you don't have to go there right now, but you're welcome to if you'd like – talks to you about post-reading strategy. I didn't spend much time on post-reading because it's the one place that we tend to do a pretty good job. We tend to do post-reading kinds of activities that check for understanding – that clarify what the kids do and don't know, that extends their knowledge. I want to challenge you to think a little bit outside the box – just a tiny bit, okay? So, in your science classroom you're doing the chemistry unit and you want to know if the kids understand the elements on the periodic table. And so, as opposed to a test, or maybe in addition to a test, maybe we say okay, at random I'm going to give you five elements, or three, or however many that it is, and here's what you have to do. You have to create a comic book, and in that comic book, or comic strip, your elements meet one another on the street – they encounter one another somehow – are they going to bond? Are they going to repel one another? Will they get along? Will they mix? Will they form new things? Maybe they'll get married and have – whatever all those little things that happen in science, I have no idea. You science people are sitting back there looking like "What is she talking about?" You know, will there be an explosion? Is it dangerous when these two get together? Would kids have to understand your topic to do that? Yeah, but you've differentiated – you've given them a different outlook – a different way of showing you what they know. Reader's theatre, are you familiar with reader's

theatres? I love them. Do a search on the web. They're wonderful! You can find tons of stuff on reader's theatre. I like reader's theatre – they're like the old radio plays from back in the day. I like them because there are no sword fights, because they don't get to move. When I teach ancient African civilization, I don't stand up there and talk about ancient African civilizations. We read African myths, and the kids have to do a reader's theatre, that shows – they have to write a script, okay, so they have to understand something about how that works. They have to show how people believed things occurred – the creation myth, or a death myth, or whatever the case is. So, look at different ways of allowing your kids to show you what they know. Dramatic monologs! Kids love to talk, okay? Let them come in and let them be a Buddhist. Let them be a Hindu. Let them be a parallelogram and tell how it feels to be a parallelogram in a world of circles and squares. Okay? Give them those opportunities to share what they know – what they've read – in different kinds of ways. And I think that we'll find a great deal of success as we consider and as we continue to push the envelope to ask people in our buildings to make changes and to take risks. I think that we'll find an awful lot of success on that. So, I'm not going to put you on the spot. I'm going to ask for one of the three. Because that way, maybe that way we'll get everybody included. If you learned something today – one new strategy you can take back – if you had something affirmed, something that you already do in your classroom, you're feeling like "Yes". Or if you recycled something or you retooled something and you thought "I did it. I think I'll do it a little differently or I'm going to pull this one out of the moth balls" say Woo! Woo! Good! Thank you for your time. (Music) For more information or a free online follow-up to this program, log on to [www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative](http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative). This broadcast and the follow-up are brought to you through a partnership of the U.S. Department of Education and the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium.