

“I have a wide range of readers in my classroom. Some are well below grade level and others are above. I am not a reading specialist, so what can I do in my classroom to support these readers in the middle grades?”

- **Time to talk**

Research shows that when students are given time to talk about what they think and read, they are able to think more critically. This can be student to student, partners, small groups or whole group. It can be for brief amounts of time (2 minutes) or longer. Varying the format for discussions will help support all personalities in the classroom.

- **Accessible text**

Richard Allington (reading guru) says children should spend 85% of their time reading “easy” text and 15% reading “instructional” text. Ways to make the text more accessible are to shorten the amount of reading, read a portion aloud to the students, rework the text so it is easier to read and comprehend, provide background knowledge via videos and pictures prior to reading, and use a variety of resources on the same topic.

- **Graphic Organizers**

Graphic organizers help all readers because it gives them an opportunity to work with the information they are trying to understand. In addition, it helps them hold their ideas and information so they can discuss it. A wide variety of organizers can be used-there is no perfect organizer. Children organize in all different ways so try to expose them to more than one type of organizer.

- **Partner and small group work**

When struggling readers are allowed to work in partners and group work, they are able to build background knowledge and learn from each other. This informal support can help them make sense of things they know nothing about.

- **Conference with students**

If you can set yourself up with a small group or individuals, you can address some of the most needy learners in your room. Your conferences become the avenue for instruction. This is a very easy and effective way to differentiate instruction!

- **Release responsibility in a strategic way**

Releasing students to read, write, think, and talk are ways to give them more room to learn. You can release for a small amount of time (2 minutes) and pull them back together, increase the amount of time you release them, and repeat the cycle. Strategically planning for this will help you keep control of the process, but allow more room for learning to take place.

- **Include informal writing responses**

Allowing your readers to jot down thinking, talk to the text, annotate, use sticky notes, and journal are all ways for them to get their thoughts down in a logical way. Informal writing is less threatening than formal writing and provides you will valuable evidence about what they are comprehending.

- **Be explicit**

Tell your readers exactly what you are teaching them. This goes beyond content. Think about the level of thinking that you want to take place (making inferences, evaluating, analyzing, etc.). Tell them this and show them how by modeling, thinking aloud, and exhibiting excellent student work.