

## Recommendation 3 *continued*

distribute sticky notes to students and ask them to mark these points in the text. Students could also mark text that they think is confusing, and teachers could use this material as the basis of a class discussion about what information is needed to make the text easier to understand.

### Adapting for younger students

Read a selection aloud, and have students discuss it with a partner and then report back to the class. To start a discussion at that point, the teacher can ask students whether they think the character did the right thing.

## 2. Develop discussion questions that require students to think deeply about text.

Teachers should develop higher-order questions that encourage students to think deeply about what the text means rather than simply recalling details.<sup>72</sup> Questions should reflect what teachers want students to draw from the text, including implicit as well as explicit information. They generally should not be simplistic (“What is the boy’s name?”) or ask just for an opinion (“Did you like the story?”). Typical higher-order questions include

- Why did \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you think \_\_\_\_\_?
- If you were the author \_\_\_\_\_?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ remind you of and why?

Table 8 shows sample higher-order questions linked to the NAEP’s three categories of comprehension.

When preparing questions, teachers should think about the following: the best time to present each question to students—before,

during, or after reading;<sup>73</sup> which questions should be asked when students first read the text;<sup>74</sup> and which questions should be asked after a second or subsequent reading. In a similar vein, teachers should determine exactly where in the text a question will be asked (e.g., after a specific page, paragraph, or illustration). For students in kindergarten and 1st grade, shared reading time or read-alouds provide an opportunity to introduce higher-order questions that invite discussion.

### Adapting for younger students

These types of questions can be adapted to students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, but teachers of students in kindergarten or 1st grade who are just becoming familiar with these types of questions may have to ask more follow-up questions (see step 3, below) to clarify what in the text led the students to respond as they did.

Specifically, younger students may find it difficult to take on the viewpoint of the author or a specific character. Teacher guidance can help them recognize and appreciate those viewpoints, drawing on the empathy that children have at this age.

## 3. Ask follow-up questions to encourage and facilitate discussion.

Reading comprehension improves when teachers ask follow-up questions that encourage students to apply the reading comprehension strategies they know. The questions should be asked in the context of a curriculum in which students are taught comprehension strategies as described in Recommendation 1.<sup>75</sup> In a sustained discussion, teachers should respond to the students’ answers in a way that leads them to think about and elaborate on their answers and the meaning of the text.

Teachers should ask students to refer to the text to justify their answers. Depending on the grade level, this may mean recalling events and passages in the text or pointing to illustrations to justify their answers. Follow-up questions should both provide students with a model for thinking about the text and its meaning more actively, and help them learn to construct and support opinions with textual evidence. Examples of recommended follow-up questions include the following:<sup>76</sup>

**Table 8. Sample discussion questions related to NAEP categories of comprehension**

<b>Locate and Recall</b>	What is the main idea of this section? Who were the main characters in <i>Goldilocks and the Three Bears</i> ?
<b>Integrate and Interpret</b>	How did the bears feel when they found Goldilocks? Why did they feel that way? How did Goldilocks feel? Why did she feel that way? What are the differences between how Goldilocks and the bears felt?
<b>Critique and Evaluate</b>	What do you think is the most important message in this story? How well did the author describe the new ideas in what you just read? If the author asked you what she could have done differently or better to help other students understand, what would you tell her? How might Goldilocks behave in the future based on her experience in this story?

Source: Categories of comprehension are drawn from the *Reading Framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, National Assessment Governing Board (2008), where they are referred to as "cognitive targets." The panel created sample questions for illustrative purposes.

- What makes you say that?
- What happened in the book that makes you think that?
- Can you explain what you meant when you said \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you agree with what \_\_\_\_\_ said? Why or why not?
- How does what you said connect with what \_\_\_\_\_ already said?
- Let's see if what we read provides us with any information that can resolve \_\_\_\_\_'s and \_\_\_\_\_'s disagreement.
- What does the author say about that?

Ideally, initial questions and follow-up questions should resemble a collaborative discussion instead of a typical cycle of teacher initiation (teacher asks a question), student response (one student answers the question), teacher evaluation (teacher evaluates the

student's response), followed by the teacher asking an unrelated question directed at the class or a different student. Although common in classrooms, this kind of discourse does not allow students to build meaning from the text in a collaborative way.<sup>77</sup> For younger students, the panel believes that follow-up questions can facilitate discussion, particularly when teachers conduct the discussion in small groups with appropriate supports such as clarifying student answers and guiding students to respond to one another's answers positively.

Students new to in-depth discussion may struggle with this format. Therefore, teachers should model the format and guide them in responding to the text while keeping them focused on both meaning and the discussion question at hand. Younger students may require additional assistance in answering some of these kinds of questions. Throughout the discussion, teachers should remind students to talk to one another and not just to the teacher.

## 4. Have students lead structured small-group discussions.

As students become more proficient in discussion, the panel suggests providing opportunities for peer-led discussions about text in which students pose questions to their peers.

The key to forming groups is to include students who are relatively good at discussion in each group and to allow students to direct the discussion.