# Increasing Reading Stamina



## Differentiating the Learning Process in Grades 3-12

## Strategies Kit

# Increasing Reading Stamina Strategies Kit

## Differentiating the Learning Process

Helping students maintain focus and build stamina while reading (listening stamina for non-readers), is an important skill that will assist students in K-12 in college and career, and in life. If we do all the heavy lifting for students in reading complex texts, they begin to lean on that support rather than learn from it. Providing students strategies and time to build stamina is imperative. So, what is stamina?

Reading stamina is having the energy and the concentration to focus on reading. For students who lack stamina, reading is a frustrating and unpleasant experience, so they tend to read as little as possible. Students don't lose stamina simply because they struggle. They lose stamina when they struggle with no strategies or hope of success.  The key is to make learning easier rather than making the text easier. We want to promote a growth mindset.  Making it easier to learn shifts the focus from completing a task to developing a self-extending system for learning – *while* completing the task.

Many struggling readers lose their "stick-to-it-ness" during challenging times because they haven't experienced the success that lies at the end of hard work. They see the hard part but not the growth part.  It is imperative to make that growth visible to struggling learners. Students are used to seeing an evaluation of a product such as an assigned grade, but it is just as important, or more so, to share the evidence of students' literacy progress.  It is of equal importance to celebrate the process and their perseverance. Spotlighting areas of growth, such as building the amount of time they read or using a tool to comprehend when needed, merits a celebration!

**Scaffold the Process - Not Just the Activity:**
There is a common misinterpretation of the role of a scaffold. Scaffolding is a process in which teachers model or demonstrate how to solve a problem and then step back, offering support as needed.  The goal is to create more independence as students read and comprehend rather than dependence.  In ELA, students are to engage with reading, often reading complex texts. When providing scaffolds, they should:
- Encourage stamina to persevere with complex text.
- Allow students an opportunity to struggle a bit and still find success.
- Invite problem solving (be cautious if it requires continual support from the teacher/aide).
- Allow students to transfer the strategy to other texts/tasks.
- Eventually fade or become obsolete with experience and practice.

**The Brain:**
When faced with a full page of text, reading can quickly become overwhelming for many students.  "The brain best receives information in little chunks, sections, or groups of similar bits of information.  Then the brain needs time to think about, chew on, and digest those chunks of similar information. This "time" is what processing is all about.  The brain must have time to process what was just learned. The brain can't process too much information – it needs small, relevant chunks to process. THEN additional chunks can be taught or learned and then processed." (2008, Jensen & Nickelson)

**Strategy: Chunk & Chew**
One of the more user-friendly and effective approaches used in education is *chunk and chew*—breaking content into small pieces and giving students adequate time to process it. Teachers should strategically design lessons to include manageable amounts of content, intentional questioning, and tasks that give students time to process their responses.

**(continued)**
Chunk is the length of text.  Chew is the way to process the chunk. Some students may need additional support when reading a chunk to assist with comprehending the text – we call this chew time. The reasons for support may include lack of focus, lack of confidence, or lack of time to process. With each chunk, students can use tools to assist with the processing building meaning and increasing stamina.

**Chunking Tips:** Consider the reading level of the student, the complexity of the text, and the interest of the student to determine the appropriate length of text (or chunk) to read. The chunk students can read and comprehend will vary from student to student.
- Discuss with students how the brain takes in information and the importance of processing what they read in chunks.  Show students a text that you may not enjoy or be interested in and show them how far you can read before you begin to lose focus. Explain to them that they are going to learn a few strategies that may assist in comprehending what they are reading by increasing their stamina and persevering.
- Model ways to chunk text using a simple text.  "I find that when I read this far, my mind starts to wander.  I think my chunk size is……".
- Students may already know how big of a chunk they can take in at a time before they begin to lose focus.  Have them practice reading and marking the text where they start to lose focus or understanding.
- Have students share the length of their chunk and discuss why everyone had different size chunks and discuss some of the reasons why the chunks were the size they were (boring, noises in the room, tired, etc.)

**Chunk Size:** The following are ideas for ways that text can be chunked.
- Look over the assigned text to see where natural chunks occur.  It is important to understand there is no right or wrong way to chunk a text if you can justify why you grouped certain text together.
- At the beginning of the year, you can pre-set the chunks before you hand out an assignment by directing students to "Chunk paragraphs 1-3, 4, 5-8 and the table on page 17."  Differentiate to the needs of the students by adjusting chunk size as needed.
- Gradually throughout the year, teachers should increase the size of the chunk.  When slowly increasing the size, students find they have acclimated (or built stamina) to reading longer chunks.
- Provide students ample time to read their chunks.

# Increasing Reading Stamina Strategies Kit

Each tool in the kit could be used with a chunk of text.  Each of the tools can assist with the "chewing" or processing of the information. Once again, a chunk can be any segment of text that a student is reading, such as a paragraph, a section of a chapter, a chapter, a table, a chart, a graph, a visual, a map or even a group of sentences.  The more challenging text usually requires a smaller chunk, providing time for students to grapple with and make meaning of the text.

There are many students who do not need chunk and chew tools.  In fact, for many students, breaking up the text may be frustrating.  These students do not need the chunks nor the tools but teaching them how to use them may be important in the future if they encounter text that may require chunking and chewing.

Where to Begin:
- Model, model, model how and why to use the tools.
- Have the entire class practice each tool.
- Provide baskets of the tools close to students' desks/tables so they can have quick access when needed.  Teachers may need to assign certain tools for certain students who need them but don't want to use them.  Show and discuss the benefits of using objects to help students focus and process.

The following are possible tools for the toolkit. Feel free to add or delete items based on the needs of your students. Remember, for some students, just the act of using a tool allows for them to learn kinesthetically, which matches the way many students learn.
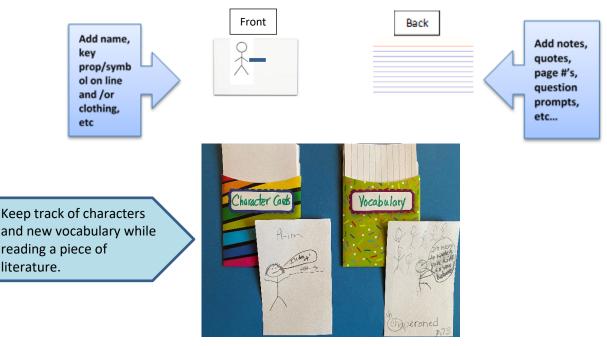
## Sticky Notes

A sticky note can be used with a chunk to write or draw a main idea, to ask a question, or to write what about the text is confusing. It is NOT ok for students to leave the note blank. Once students are finished with their sticky notes for each chunk, they can be placed on a piece of paper and turned in like a regular assignment. This will provide the teacher with an idea, or a picture, of what the student is thinking while reading.

## Index Cards

Index cards can be used to record new or key information about the text. The fact that an index card is not a typical sheet of paper may make it more engaging for students. Students can add to the cards while reading to keep track of any new information. These cards can act as a reference tool to refer to while the student is reading. Examples include:

- **Vocabulary:** While reading text with new vocabulary, students can use make vocabulary cards with the word and description to keep alongside the text to refer to while reading   As students read, they can refer to the vocabulary cards when they encounter the word. If they learn more information about the word as they are reading, they can add additional informational to the card.
- **Characters:** If the text contains multiple characters, cards can be used to keep track of the characters. Students can use character cards to help them recall and keep track of a character while reading (or listening). The front of the card could have a stick figure drawn on it labeled with the character's name. The line coming from the arm of the stick figure can be a place where students can place a key prop or symbol that helps them identify and then recall the character. The student may also draw props or clothing on the character to help them recall and identify specific details about the character they uncover while reading the text. The back of the card can be used for students to place notes or key pieces of evidence (with page numbers) found in the text.

Front

Back

Add name, key prop/symbol on line and /or clothing, etc

Add notes, quotes, page #'s, question prompts, etc...

Keep track of characters and new vocabulary while reading a piece of literature.

Character Cards

Vocabulary

Keep track of chapter information using library card holders and index cards Chapter 1, 2, 3, etc.

**Highlighters**

Students that struggle with understanding what they read may benefit from using highlighting tools. Highlighting can be helpful if students understand what and how to highlight. The following are a few highlighting ideas that may help some students interact with the text and increase their reading stamina.
- Give students a purpose for reading.
- Have students read through the chunked selection first.
- Next, have them reread and begin to highlight. (Remind students to highlight only the facts which are the most important or the key vocabulary, not an entire sentence.)

Below are a few ideas on how students can use highlighters:
1. Teachers may wish to have students use various colors of highlighters to identify main ideas from details (e.g., use orange to represent main ideas and blue to represent supporting details).

2. Teachers may have students highlight words that they find difficult to understand in order to see what potential difficulty a student may have with a text.

3. Teachers may have students highlight everything they understand in yellow and everything they do not in blue. This provides a teacher with information on the difficulty level of the text for the student.

4. In order to minimize how much students highlight, specify the number of words or the amount they can highlight to indicate key ideas.

5. Teachers may have students highlight text that supports "Opinion #1" in one color and the text that supports "Opinion #2", in another color.

6. Teachers can assist students by providing questions to highlight when they see an answer. To help students locate evidence to support the answers, include "How do you know this is true?" with each question. This will remind them to look for evidence to support their conclusions.

7. Highlighting can also be used to show how text is put together. Have students highlight various parts that they need to identify. For example:
   - Title
   - Theme/Topic/Thesis
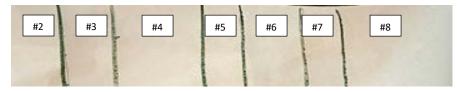   - Main Idea
   - Details
   - Conclusion

## Paper Strips

When students need to have a place to "hold their thinking" while reading a text they cannot mark on, have them use strips of paper or adding machine tape as a recording tool.

1. Line up a paper strip (or tear a piece of adding machine tape) the vertical length of the page they are reading. Line it up next to the text and draw a line on the paper where each paragraph or assigned chunk ends.

2. Have students write or draw a summary, main idea, or questions they may have on the space next to each chunk.

3. Students can also use adding machine tape to create a "comic strip-like" summary with words and/or pictures. They can number each "cell" with the paragraph number and/or the page number on the back.

| #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8 |

## Color Tools

While persevering through longer text, students may tire and lose stamina or focus due to several issues: one may be boredom, their eyes are tired or the lighting irritates their eyes. Colored acetates/overlays or print trackers may offer some students relief to a typical white paper/black print look. (Students who have dyslexia or Irlen syndrome https://www.irlensyndrome.org/ are found to benefit from these tools).

**Highlight Reading Strips**
The different color helps highlight the line they're reading and blocks out the lines below. This handy reading resource helps to limit transposing of words and letters and makes learning to read and strengthening reading skills more efficient.

**Colored Overlays**
Overlays can improve clarity and eye movement control in some students. All students may benefit from changing "the look" of what they are reading.

**Cut-out Window Tracker**
Students may find they can track print easier through a transparent tinted window. The window helps students focus on one line at a time.

**Reading Tracker Rulers**
The reading line helps to provide focus and clarity on each line by tracking print through a transparent window.

## Craft Sticks

Craft sticks can be used to help students stay focused on the part of the text they are reading. Place the craft stick under the words being read and move along as reading.

## Annotation

Annotation is a powerful reading tool. Annotating means writing your ideas, thoughts and questions as you read. Students can annotate a text to leave tracks of their thinking so they can learn, understand, and remember what they read. During the reading process, the reader marks the text at appropriate points, using symbols and/or words that serve as visual cues and help keep the reader focused on the text. Students can be encouraged to write questions or comments, or to integrate "text codes". Some codes could include:

- ?  =  question
- *  =  important information
- ?? =  confusion
- R  =  this reminds me

Students can use the bookmarks (see below) as a guide for the symbols that can be used to annotate a text to indicate their thinking.
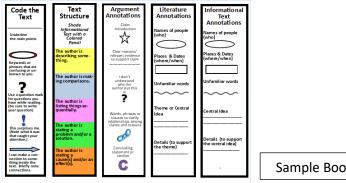
### Annotation Bookmarks
The codes on the following bookmarks are one idea of what teachers can use to help students focus on text and target specific standards. The following bookmarks are available:

Grades K-2: (3 Bookmarks)
- 1st Bookmark - Annotations for reading an opinion (Writing Standard #1)
- 2nd Bookmark – Annotations for reading literature (Standards #1 - #3)
- 3rd Bookmark – Annotations for reading informational text (Standards #1-#3)

Grades 3-12: (5 Bookmarks)
- 1st Bookmark – Annotation symbols recommended by Fisher and Frey
- 2nd Bookmark – Annotations for identifying the way the author has structured a text
- 3rd Bookmark - Annotations for reading opinions/arguments (Writing Standard #1)
- 4th Bookmark - Annotations for reading literature (Standards # 1– #3)
- 5th Bookmark – Annotations for reading informational text (Standards # 1—#3)

Sample Bookmarks

### Trip Ticket
The trip ticket is a tool that allows students to "take a trip" in the classroom to seek help on a word, question, or confusing part of a text.  Students often waste time when they are stuck and not sure where to get help. Students can use the Trip Ticket to choose another student to assist them. Any student that is asked for assistance must sign the Trip Ticket to create a trail of what they students did to seek help. At the bottom of the trip ticket, students are to check the box if they received assistance for the help they needed.

### Sentence Stem Bookmarks
Some students may have difficulty responding to other students during classroom discussions or when completing written assignments. Teachers can help students overcome this difficulty by using sentence stems. Sentence stems are a learning scaffold that can help students respond (orally and through writing) using complete sentences. If students are to answer a question, or reflect on a topic, this tool can help them get started. This strategy is helpful for students who are not confident in how to organize their thoughts.  It is a great strategy for ELL students as well.
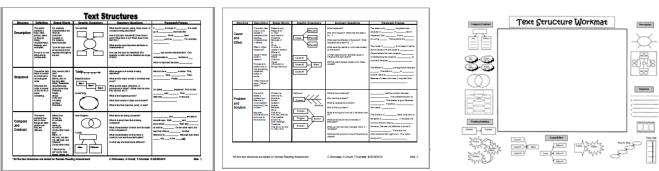
### Text Structure Frames
What are the most effective ways to help students learn to read challenging content-area texts?  One way is to teach them **text structures**. This is different from text *features* — the headings, subheadings, and supporting visuals that writers use to highlight key points. A text structure is its overall organization. When students understand the structure of the text, they know how ideas are arranged and what to expect from the text. This knowledge then aids students in understanding the relationships of information within the passage.

When teaching students about text structures, identify the key words that can signal the type of text structure the author is using. Tell students that when they recognize key words, they may be able to recognize the organization of information and relationships between ideas. The All About Text Structures (below) Guide provides students signal words, possible paragraph frames and other helpful tools to help read and write about text. Tell students that an author may use more than one text structure in a passage.  Some possible tools to include in the Capture Basket include:
- Workmat (below):  This can be used so students can see all the possible text structures on one sheet and either use it to identify the text structure the author is using or to see an example of what type of graphic organizer they can draw to act as a notetaker while reading.
- Text Structure Guide: The guide provides not only signal words, but possible frames to use to write a summary of a text, sentence starters to help form a written response and graphic organizer ideas.

Text Structures Guide                                          Workmat

Jensen, E., & Nickelsen, L. A. (2008). *Deeper learning: 7 powerful strategies for in-depth and longer-lasting learning*. Corwin Press.

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