

Best Practices: Engaging All Learners

Below are suggestions for how to modify your lessons based on the varying needs of your students.

Advanced Organizer

The Advanced Organizer (AO) helps set expectations and lets students track where they are in the lesson. Tailor your advanced organizer to the needs of your group.

- Be sure the AO is LARGE ENOUGH for the entire group to see. With typed AOs, make sure the font is big and easy to read. For handwritten AOs, slow down to print large and clearly.
- Simplify the AO, as needed. Use clear, limited language and put it in sequential order according to your rotation. Show students what they will do first, second, and third.

For Instance:

Together we will look at a painting by Sam Gilliam and:

- Write 5 things we notice
 - Play the Creative Questions Game
 - Investigate some of the materials the artist used
- Point to each step of the Advanced Organizer as you transition. Say something like, “We just finished sharing our five observations (pointing to number one), now we are going to play the Creative Questions Game, and then we’ll investigate materials. Let’s go!”
 - Engage students in the Advanced Organizer: Find a way to get them excited about what you are going to do that day. Perhaps, with a show of hands or thumbs up, they can vote on what they are most excited about, what they most want to see, or what makes them the most curious. Try voting again at the end in your wrap-up. “What part of our time today was the most exciting/enjoyable to you?”

See/Think/Wonder

Help students by guiding their looking; try breaking down each section into concrete, yet open-ended, questions:

1. **SEE** — Rather than, *What do you see?*, guide students by giving concrete examples of what to look for. For example, *what colors do you notice? What shapes? What kinds of objects? Or, what do you notice first? What are the big things you see? What are two details or smaller things you notice?* This will guide students to look for specific things, while still giving them an open-ended prompt.
2. **THINK** — Rather than, *What might be happening?*, ask: *What might the story be? What might be happening to that character? Or what might he or she be thinking or feeling?* Whenever possible, ask: *What do you see that makes you say that?*
3. **WONDER** — Rather than saving the Wonder for the end of the routine, try asking the Wonder after the see: *What are you wondering? Or What are you curious about?* Emphasize all questions and curiosities help the group think about the work of art. Time permitting, go on to the Think, or tell a succinct story incorporating some of the answers to their questions.

Make the STW graphic organizer more concrete

In each of the STW columns, write numbers and/or draw several lines to fill out. This visual will remind them of what they are supposed to do and reinforce that they have accomplished the task at hand.

Give options for students who struggle with writing, taking turns, and articulating their thoughts:

- **Everyone responds at once** — Have students write one sentence/question/etc. in large writing on a piece of paper and then have them hold them up to share. You can quickly look at the responses, read off a few, or move on. This allows everyone to participate without having to wait their turn, speak out loud if shy, etc.
- **Quick whip** — Use a quick whip-around by telling students you will go around in order, no need to raise hands, as everyone will share one thing they see. The challenge is to listen hard because if your “see” is taken, you’ll need to come up with another. This game style builds excitement and can help students to focus and stay engaged.
- **Think/Pair/Share** — This routine can be especially helpful for struggling writers. Have students turn to their partner and share a “see,” “think” or “wonder.” Give very specific instructions. For instance, rather than saying, “share your observations with your partner,” say, “Turn to your thinking buddy, face them, knee to knee, then take turns sharing two of the colors you noticed in this painting. When you are done sharing, touch your nose.”
- **Thumbs up/down** — Use the thumbs up to keep students engaged while others are talking and sharing. For example, if Sally says, “I see a white cloud,” tell students: “Give me a ‘thumbs up’ if you see white clouds, too.”
- **Draw the answer** — For struggling writers, give the option of drawing the answer. Remind students that artists take notes in many ways, including writing and sketching.
- **Dictate an answer** — Have students dictate their answer to you, a thinking buddy or chaperone.
- **Create a checklist** — Many students respond well when they know they have accomplished something. Make an area for them to check off what they have done. For example “Write two shapes you see. Then check them off. Write one sentence telling what you think the story is about. Check it off. Write one question you would like to ask the artist about this painting. Now check it off.”

Make it a GAME:

Students love challenges and games. Consider “I Spy” for the See portion of the routine. Call the Elaboration Game by another name (Super Sleuth Game, for example.) Some students do well if you time them or give them a challenge to fill up a page with observations, questions, or ideas. Plan fun ways to walk between galleries engaging students to look, talk with each other, or keep their hands occupied. Experiment with what works best with your group.