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## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Teaching requires a lot of flexibility. Even though you've done your part in preparing, some days will not go as planned. Any given classroom has a diverse group of students with different levels of academic readiness and learning preferences. Your goal is to meet the needs of all of them, which is where careful lesson planning and using a variety of instructional strategies comes in.

It's also important to monitor how your students respond to content and adapt your methods as needed. When teachable moments present themselves, you must take advantage.



### WHAT ARE TEACHABLE MOMENTS?

Teachable moments are situations in which students are well-positioned to learn something. They often arise when you least expect them: when a student asks to clarify a misconception they have or share something personal about themselves that is relevant to a class activity. Sometimes teachable moments come up when a student asks a peripheral question during your lesson.

Whether you teach kindergartners, fourth graders or middle school science or math, teachable moments can extend your students' learning, help them think about content from various perspectives and spark their interest in new topics. Here are a few tips on how to use teachable moments effectively:

#### **Pay attention to students' interests.**

The more meaningful and relevant you can make your lessons to your students' lives, the more likely they'll ask questions and share their ideas and insights. Your goal should be to guide students to build upon

their existing knowledge base. This is easier when you already have a sense of what your students are interested in and the types of activities that might open the door to further academic development. Teachable moments are student initiated, but getting to know your students enables you to design lessons in ways that nurture critical thinking.

#### **Use mistakes as teachable moments.**

Helping students learn from their mistakes is a vital part of education. If your student gets a math problem wrong, have them walk you through the steps they took to solve it. Did they miss any? Do they need to revisit their nightly homework routine? Create a classroom culture that embraces mistakes as opportunities. Encourage your students to change their approaches when their first attempts don't work.

#### **Circle back to teachable moments as soon as you can.**


If your students ask good questions that you do not immediately have answers to, it's OK to admit that you need to get back to them. Remind them that even teachers have to

research things and tell them how you intend to do so. Revisit the conversation to share what you discovered as soon as feasible. Even better: connect that new information to other topics your students are currently learning.

#### **Use engaging, challenging activities to spark teachable moments.**

Although teachable moments are unplanned, you can incorporate student-centered activities into your classroom that stimulate them. Use high-interest current events or multifaceted, age-appropriate issues as inspiration for projects and class discussions. Invite parents or other guest speakers to the classroom to share their experiences and knowledge and encourage students beforehand to think of questions they want to ask.

*Teachable moments are opportunities to capitalize on students' curiosity and follow their lead. They don't have to be lengthy detours from your lessons to be impactful. Seize these moments when you recognize them because they can ignite students' passion for lifelong learning.*



# USING THE FOUR A's TEXT PROTOCOL WITH READING INSTRUCTION

Teaching students to read is a complex process. As students become fluent readers, their ability to think critically and connect with what they read is essential. The Four As teaching strategy adapted by the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity<sup>1</sup> is a framework for approaching many subjects and activities that involve reading. The objective of this protocol is to encourage students to activate their critical thinking skills and ponder their own and others' points of view.

## The four A's ASSUMPTIONS, AGREE, ARGUE & APPLY

The four As reference the words assumptions, agree, argue and apply. What does each mean and how can you use this methodology to enhance student learning with reading activities? Here's an overview and tips for setting your students up for success:

**Divide students into groups.** Facilitating the four As framework runs best when students are separated into small groups.

**Explain the goal.** Tell students to read the text you assign independently, then write down a few thoughts in response to these four questions:

1. What *assumptions* does the author of this text have?
2. What do you *agree* with in the text?
3. What do you want to *argue* with in the text?
4. What parts do you *aspire* to apply or act upon?

Taking notes about each of the four As is an essential part of the process. It encourages students to think through their own perspectives before engaging in conversation with classmates. That activity is valuable too, but make sure students reflect on themselves first.

## Have groups discuss their ideas.

The four As strategy is intended to help students do more than just read texts, but rather, contemplate the text's meaning and intent. Having students write notes in response to each prompt is useful but having them discuss their answers is even better. But first, set a few ground rules. A good practice is to have students take turns reading their responses aloud to their groups while their peers listen. Only after all have shared should students weigh in on each other's answers or ask questions.

**Modify as needed.** The Four As protocol has been around for many years and adapted by educators for use in various subjects, grades and text types. Your goal as a teacher is to get students to think deeply about the material they read and communicate with their classmates about their and others' perspectives.

## HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GUIDE STUDENTS THROUGH EACH OF THE FOUR AS:

- To identify the author's assumptions, encourage students to think about the author's intent with the writing. What is their main point? What might make the author biased in favor of their claim (and the underlying assumptions)?

- Remind students that they might find themselves largely agreeing with the author's claims, partly agreeing or disagreeing (i.e., arguing against). They might share the author's assumptions or not.
- Some students might struggle to articulate parts of a text against which they would argue. Another approach is to have them consider how well the underlying assumption is supported by the evidence provided. Without sufficient or convincing evidence, the author's main point might not be believable or logical (and thus, something a student might argue against).
- To help students identify parts of the text that they aspire to apply or act upon, tell them to think about the call to action of the text. What does it make them feel or want to do?

*The four As framework helps students explore topics thoroughly and engage with texts they read. Although it's often used with nonfiction writing, it offers flexibility for different types of text, and you can adapt it for fiction reading too. Try it with your students to help them strengthen their analytical thinking as they read, a skill they will need in high school, college and beyond.*

<sup>1</sup> School Reform Initiative (now Center for Leadership and Educational Equity). "Four A's Text Protocol." Accessed August 2, 2024. <https://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/four-as-text-protocol/>.

# CONFRONTING PLAGIARISM: HELPING STUDENTS UNDERSTAND IT AND AVOID IT

In the digital era where students have a world of information, tools and resources at their fingertips, it's essential that educators talk with students about cheating and plagiarism. Many students lack a solid grasp of what plagiarism is and is not. They might not realize the serious consequences of intentional or unintentional plagiarism either. Here are a few tips for teaching students about this important issue:

## DESCRIBE THE COMMON TYPES OF PLAGIARISM.<sup>1</sup>

Students are usually familiar with complete or verbatim plagiarism, which is taking someone else's entire work and passing it off as one's own, and direct plagiarism, which is lifting and copying entire sections of text. However, they might be less aware of other types of plagiarism, such as:

- *Self-plagiarism*, which is submitting writing previously submitted for another class or purpose.
- *Patchwork plagiarism*, which is taking parts of writing from various sources and presenting them as one's own work.
- *Paraphrasing plagiarism*, which is presenting another's work as one's own by changing the wording and sentence structure but failing to cite the source.

Another type of plagiarism is when students cite their sources incorrectly by missing quotation marks or doing a poor job paraphrasing. This might be considered accidental, but it's still plagiarism to not give credit to the author or source of the student's ideas.

## EDUCATE YOUR STUDENTS ON TEXT CITATIONS.

Citing sources properly is students' best defense against plagiarism, they must do so when they quote, paraphrase or summarize text from an article, website, blog, video or any other source. Provide students guidance on your school's preferred citation style (such as Chicago Manual of Style, American Psychological Association style or Modern



Language Association style). Teach them how to create in-text citations within the body of written text and a properly formatted references page with those citations. Offer plenty of examples and opportunities to practice creating citations.<sup>2</sup>

## MAKE SURE STUDENTS KNOW HOW TO PARAPHRASE.

Students typically get the concept of quoting an author or part of a website verbatim, but paraphrasing is a common area of confusion. Make sure your students comprehend how to put another's ideas into their own words by doing more than just swapping out a few words. When paraphrasing text that's relevant to their work, students should construct sentences in their own way, in their own voice.

## OFFER GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH.

Teach best practices for creating writing assignments by breaking the research process down into a clear, methodical approach. Harvard University advises students to plan out how to use sources in their writing and:

- Keep their own writing and research notes separate from their source information and writing drafts.

- Cite paraphrased information (in their own words) logically in their writing.
- Keep track of all print and electronic sources in a file as they write drafts.
- Understand the context of their sources to make sure it is relevant and appropriate.
- Use quotation marks around directly quoted material.<sup>3</sup>

## BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR POLICIES ON PLAGIARISM.

Although proper education and guidance helps most students circumvent unintentional plagiarism, you should still be clear with students that plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable. Include your school's language about academic misconduct and the penalties students will face for committing plagiarism in your syllabus.

*The more you educate students upfront about plagiarism, quality research, paraphrasing, quoting and how to cite sources, the less likely problems will arise. You'll uphold a classroom culture of academic integrity while helping your students prepare for college-level research and writing.*

### REFERENCES:

1 Scribbr. Streefkerk, R. "The 5 Types of Plagiarism | Explanations & Examples." Last modified November 21, 2023. <https://www.scribbr.com/plagiarism/types-of-plagiarism/>.

2 Scribbr. "How to Cite Sources | Citation Generator & Quick Guide." Accessed July 27, 2024. <https://www.scribbr.com/category/citing-sources/>.

3 Harvard Guide to Using Sources. "How to Avoid Plagiarism." Accessed July 27, 2024. <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/how-avoid-plagiarism>.

# INSIGHTS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**Artificial intelligence has become embedded in all types of educational technology systems. That prompted the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to do a deep dive into the opportunities to use AI to improve education and the potential challenges.**

In 2023, the DOE's Office of Educational Technology published, "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations." This extensive report discusses the reasons it is important to address AI in American education, highlights key insights about AI's impact on education from multiple perspectives, and offers questions for discussion as well as recommendations for policy action.

## INSIGHTS ABOUT AI'S IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Here's a summary of the DOE's main insights about the role of AI in teaching and learning:

### AI enables adaptivity in learning.

AI may improve educational technology's ability to build on students' strengths and grow their skills and knowledge. However, AI models leave out human learning and lack common sense judgment. It's critical for educators to design learning environments with those limits in mind.

### AI-based adaptivity must be expanded

from a deficit-based model to an asset-oriented model, addressing not only students' areas of weakness but also their strengths. AI-based models should focus not just on cognitive learning but also social and other types of learning and should support learning for neurodiverse and neurotypical learners alike. AI models must enable students to succeed at open-ended and creative tasks, not just fixed tasks like solving math problems. AI-based adaptivity models must help students learn to self-regulate when encountering difficult problems.

**Students need to learn about the risks of AI (like bias and surveillance) as well as its value.** They should explore AI's presence in education and society and determine for themselves how AI adds to their lives.



**AI presents many opportunities to reduce teachers' administrative and clerical work.** There are many daily tasks that AI could handle, allowing teachers to spend more time focusing on their students. AI-enabled voice assistants can handle simple tasks like record keeping and creating reminders. AI-enabled learning systems can offer after-hours homework support to students. AI professional development tools can give teachers feedback and tips to increase student engagement.

**AI technologies must allow teacher monitoring.** They need to signal teachers when their human judgment is needed. This will require initial setup of the tools to handle certain types of tasks and provide protocols for alerting teachers.

### Surveillance and privacy concerns

**must be addressed.** AI-assisted technology captures data to personalize resources and recommendations for teachers and students. Educators are understandably concerned about protecting the privacy of their students and themselves and abiding by state and federal laws.

### Good AI models must align to student learning and offer explainability.

Teachers must be able to understand how AI systems make decisions and recommendations for students. Without explainability and the ability to override AI-based decisions when teachers disagree with a tool's logic, they will never be able to fully entrust certain decisions to AI models.

*AI in education technology offers many exciting opportunities and creates risks as well. The DOE is continuing to develop resources to increase understanding among education leaders, teachers, support staff, researchers, policymakers, technology developers, community organizations and learners. We expect that education-specific AI guidelines are forthcoming.*

*To view the full report (with insights about AI's impact on formative assessment and research as well), visit <https://tech.ed.gov>.*

We have developed a series of webinars providing tangible solutions to academic struggles that almost every student faces at some point during their school years. Visit us at [www.huntingtonhelps.com/webinars](http://www.huntingtonhelps.com/webinars) for the full library of recorded webinars.

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