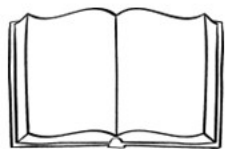


Engagement Toolkit for Social Studies





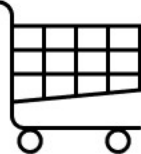
This manual started as a box I carry with me. In more than twenty-six years of training teachers, I stopped walking into sessions empty-handed and built a physical toolkit instead — cards cut, signs laminated, dice and sticks bagged and ready to go. Prepping those pieces in advance is what makes them useful: when a room starts to drift, I don't need time to plan, I need something I can reach for and use in the next minute. Somewhere along the way it occurred to me that everything in that box was a teaching strategy. If it holds a room full of adults, it will hold a room full of students. So I built this toolkit for teachers — and because none of it depends on a particular unit or course, every strategy in here works with any content, at any secondary level.

How to Use This Toolkit

Every page describes one strategy: what it is, how to run it, and what you need to prep ahead of time. Strategies are labeled by type — Increase Engagement, Discussion, Literacy, Review, and Primary Source — so you can choose by the kind of thinking you want students doing.

Start with the content students have to master, then pick the strategy that makes them think about it. A strategy is never the lesson. Engagement without purpose is just entertainment.

Engagement is not the goal. Meaningful learning is the goal — engagement is how students get there.



Shopping list

Everything in this manual runs on materials you prep once and keep in a bin. This is the full list, pulled from the materials page of every strategy. Quantities are given where a strategy specifies one.

Basic Supplies

- ❖ Popsicle sticks — at least 100 (36 for Grouping Sticks, 26 for Rotating Trios, the rest for historical figures)
- ❖ Sharpies
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Binder clips — about 12 (8 of them for Connection Cards)
- ❖ Ziploc bags
- ❖ Laminating pouches
- ❖ Tape
- ❖ Hot glue gun and glue sticks

Game Pieces and Manipulatives

- ❖ Toy soldiers — at least 10 per Task Card War set
- ❖ Dice — a pair for each Question Dice box, one per Charades Plus group
- ❖ Empty crayon boxes — one per Question Dice set
- ❖ Jenga blocks — one set for Logic Boxes
- ❖ Play dough — 3 tubs (dollar store or Amazon)
- ❖ Toothpicks
- ❖ Pipe cleaners — for Charades Plus
- ❖ Timers — one per Charades Plus group
- ❖ Direction sheets — one per Charades Plus group
- ❖ Tiny boxes — one per Charades Plus group, to hold the die
- ❖ Labels — for Logic Boxes

Print and Prep

Every card set, sign, and shape this manual calls for is in the **Templates** section at the back. Print, laminate, and cut those before you build your kit.



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Random Response



Random Response

Popsicle Stick People

PREVIEW

What is it?

This tool increases engagement by allowing teachers to use several different random response or grouping strategies.

How does it work?

1. Allow your students to choose a Popsicle Stick Person – make sure you have a matching popsicle stick with the person's name on it. When you need to call on a student at random, pull one of the famous people's name out of a cup and call on that student.
2. Use the Popsicle Stick People for grouping – Find a Popsicle Stick Partner that your famous person has something in common with. Or create a group of 3 that includes all....
3. Use Popsicle Stick People to enhance reading – students can prepare to write about that individual as they read the text.

PREVIEW



PS - If you want different historical figures for the Popsicle Stick people, you can find more in Prince Padania's store on TPT.



PREVIEW



Random Response

Popsicle Stick People

PREVIEW

You will need the following materials

- ✓ Popsicle sticks
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Historical Figures Handouts
- ✓ Hot glue gun and glue
- ✓ Laminating pouches
- ✓ Ziploc bag

Directions

- ☐ Laminate each of the historical figures of your choice
- ☐ Glue the figures on the front of a popsicle stick and write their name on a corresponding stick.
- ☐ Put them in a bag in your tool kit

PREVIEW



Discussion Strategies



PREVIEW

Steps:

Prepare a series of open-ended questions about your topic.

1. Place your students into groups of four. Give each student one of the “Add, Subtract, Multiply, Divide” cards.
2. Ask one of your open-ended questions. Identify one student in each group to answer the question to the group. In a set amount of time, they can ADD additional information to the answer; SUBTRACT information which means they question what was previously listed; MULTIPLY information which means they provide elaboration or factual examples to the ideas previously listed, and DIVIDE the answers to summarize or identify the most important answer.

PREVIEW

PREVIEW



Add,
Subtract

PREVIEW

You will need the following materials:

- ✓ Add, Subtract, Multiply and Divide Cards
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ 1 binder clip

Directions

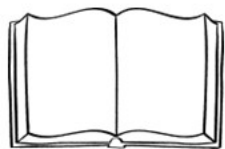
- ☐ Laminate and cut out the Add, Subtract, Multiply and Divide Cards
- ☐ Group the cards together and put them in your book kit

PREVIEW



PREVIEW

Literacy Strategies



Connection Cards

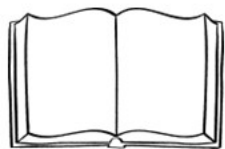
What is it?

Connection Cards are a way for students to play a variety of games with vocabulary terms.

How to do it:

1. These cards are designed to encourage students to interact with your word wall. You will need your vocabulary terms posted in a word wall for this activity.
2. Prep the activity by printing and cutting out several sets of the connection cards.
3. Place students with a partner or in a small group of 3-4 students – tell your students that they will be competing against each other to see who can earn the most points in a vocabulary game.
4. Give each group a stack of cards. Each student will draw a card. When they complete the task on the card they will earn the points indicated. Each person can earn up to 10 points each round.
5. Play the game for 5-10 minutes and then allow your students to tally up their points.





Connection Cards

PREVIEW

You will need the following materials

- ✓ Word Wall Connection Cards
- ✓ 8 binder clips

Directions

- ☐ Laminate and cut out the Word Wall Connection Cards
- ☐ Put each set together with a binder clip
- ☐ Place in your tool kit

PREVIEW



PREVIEW

Review Strategies



PREVIEW

What is it?

Play Dough Processing allows students to create 3-D images of key vocabulary terms.

How to do it:

1. Prepare the materials before class. You will need Play Dough (found at the Dollar Store or Amazon) and toothpicks. I also recommend baby wipes for easy clean up after you are finished. Print the Play Dough Processing handouts (1 set for each class) and cut them out.
2. Place your students into small groups (3 or 4). Give each group different colored Play Dough, pins and toothpicks. Pass out the cards to your students and challenge your students to create a 3-D image to represent the vocabulary term.
3. After they have made their image, they need to write a short summary detailing how their creation matches the definition.
4. Give your students a STRICT time limit on this activity. This should take them no longer than 10-15 minutes! After all of your students are finished, display the products and allow your students to examine the different products. To extend the activity, they can give feedback or praise on post-it notes.

PREVIEW





Play Dough Processing

PREVIEW

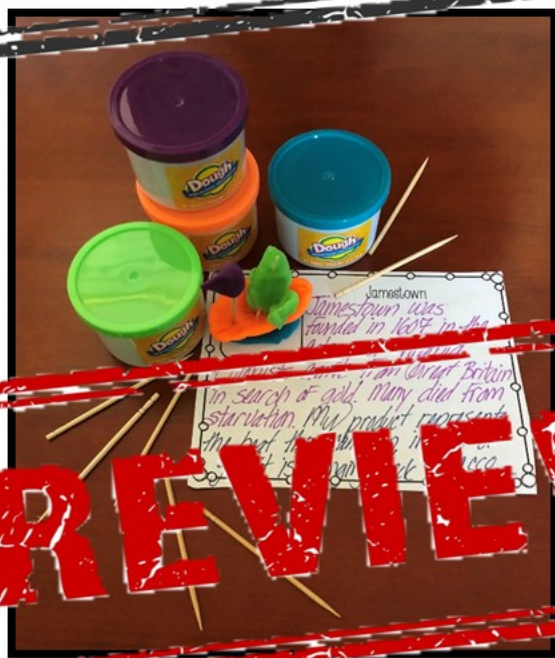
You will need the following materials

- ✓ 3 tubs of play dough
- ✓ Handful of toothpicks
- ✓ Play dough processing cards

Directions

- ☐ Laminate and cut out the Play Dough Processing Cards
- ☐ Place the cards in a Ziploc bag with the toothpicks and 3 tubs of play dough

PREVIEW



PREVIEW

Templates

U.S. History Popsicle Stick People



Add

Share any additional thoughts.



PREVIEW

Multiply

Elaborate on any thoughts.



Subtract

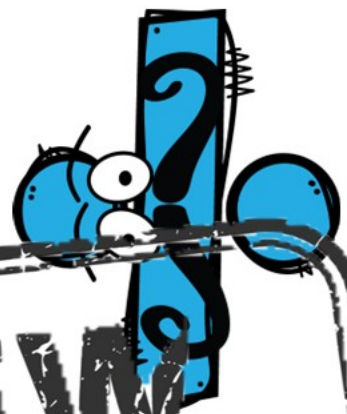
Change or question any ideas.



PREVIEW

Divide

Review and identify the most important one



PREVIEW

Chat Cards

Share:

Share an idea sparked from a previous speaker. You can start your comments with-

"This makes me think..."

"That reminds me of..."

"I agree or disagree, because..."

"True. Another example is when..."

"That's a great point..."

Sum It Up:

Summarize what was just said in a shorter version. You can start your sentences with-

"I hear you saying that..."

"So, if I understand you correctly..."

"I like how you said...and I think..."

"To summarize your ideas... and I want to add..."



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I love *connecting* and *sharing ideas* with teachers!
You can find me on social media and through my website.



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About the Author

What do I believe about Social Studies instruction?

- ✓ Students need to be engaged to learn.
-Schlechty's *Design Qualities of engagement*
- ✓ All students can learn – we just need to support them in different ways.
-Seidlitz's *Seven Steps*
- ✓ Kids need to continuously review content through games and engaging activities.
-Himmele's *Total Participation Techniques*
- ✓ Writing is essential for learning, not just assessment.
-Daniels' *Content Area Writing*
- ✓ Vocabulary instruction must be intentional and engaging.
-Marzano *Academic Vocabulary*
- ✓ History should not be trivial pursuit – dig deeper and teach with essential questions and enduring understandings.
-Wiggins & McTighe *Essential Questions*
- ✓ Students are social – purposeful talk is crucial to learning.
-Walsh *Quality Questioning*
- ✓ Students need to read in Social Studies – reading informational text cannot be mastered without constant practice.
-Kinsella's *Considerate Text*
- ✓ “Soft skills” of collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are essential to future success in the job market.
-Muir *Reasons Millennials Get Fired*
- ✓ The best way to improve reading comprehension and scores, is to focus on building knowledge through Social Studies instruction.
-Wexler *The Knowledge Gap*
- ✓ Heavy reliance on digital technology can weaken critical thinking, focus, and literacy – students learn best with pen and paper.
-Horvath *The Digital Delusion*



Dawn
Viñas

Dawn earned her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. In her education journey, she was shaped by her various roles as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, curriculum coordinator, professional development trainer, university professor, and author. Dawn has provided Social Studies professional development for over 20 years to more than 10,000 teachers from Alaska to Florida. In 2015, Dawn started Social Studies Success[®] with the mission to revolutionize Social Studies instruction. With a goal of improving instruction, Dawn has provided consulting, classroom resources, and professional development services to several school districts across the state of Texas and the nation. You can reach Dawn [here](#).