Thinking Boxes

What are they?

Students engage in several brief episodes of two-three minutes of thinking, jotting and sketching while working through material they are reading, watching/listening to, or otherwise learning. Simply have students fold a piece of paper into boxes and number them.

Why use the technique?

Thinking Boxes dramatically increase student engagement with the material they're learning or considering. Stopping to think and jot keeps the brain active and takes into account the limits of working memory. Thinking Boxes increase students' writing fluency, enable teachers to gauge learning and redirect or reteach when necessary, and allow us to honor students' thoughts and voices through quick sharing.

They look like: (jotting, sketching, labeling to…)

- connect
- infer
- summarize
- synthesize
- predict
- review
- note
- conclude
- compare

*process
*predict
*list
*define
*question
*clarify
*brainstorm
*etc…

How long do they take?

- 1-3 minutes of writing per box
- 2-3 minutes of sharing per box
- When needed, 2-3 minutes clarifying; going back to a box to rethink, add or correct
- One to three times per week

Important notes:

- Start small with just a few boxes per book or experience. Pose easier questions/tasks to build students' confidence.
- Build in higher-order thinking queries over time and scaffold these with conversation.
- Don't overdo the technique.
- Keep the pace brisk! Students don't have to be "done" with each box before you move on!

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Have a great reading/writing/thinking day!