

Status of the Class

During AR™ periods, as students are engaged in reading, quizzing, and book selection, we urge you to be active. Use this time for brief, one-on-one conversations during which you monitor and guide their practice. This is a key routine for putting the “guided” in guided independent reading, and is essential to students’ reading progress.

Because you are checking each student’s “status”—that is, what the student is doing during that particular reading practice period—we call this check-in procedure Status of the Class. To get the most out of AR, take Status of the Class every day. Not only is it the best way to monitor student’s practice, it is tremendously motivating.

Teacher Routines for Conducting Status of the Class

Review, discuss, and initial student reading logs, spending 30 to 60 seconds with each student. Meet with students one at a time in this order:

1. Students ready to take a quiz
2. Students who are starting new books
3. Students continuing a book

When talking to a student who wants to take a quiz, check the reading log to make sure that the student has completed the book.

When talking to a student who is beginning a new book, check the following:

- *Book level.* Is it in the student’s ZPD? If not, do you approve?
- *Points.* Is the book length appropriate?
- *Genre, author, and subject.* Why did the student choose this book? Is the interest level appropriate?

When talking to a student who is continuing a book, check the number of pages read since the previous day or since the beginning of class. If too few pages were read, ask:

- Why did you read only __ pages today? Is the book too long or difficult? Is the book not interesting? Is there something you don’t understand?

If more pages were read than seems reasonable, ask:

- When did you read these pages? Can you summarize what you’ve read?

Other questions you might ask include:

- Are you enjoying the book?
- What’s been the most interesting (exciting, humorous, sad, etc.) part so far?
- What do you like or dislike about how this author writes?
- Would you read a book by this author again? Why or why not?
- What new things have you learned?

Since you may not be able to speak to every student every day, print out the Resource titled *Status of the Class Record Sheet* and use it to keep track of your contacts.

Using Status of the Class to Reinforce and Extend Instruction

After you have gained some experience with Status of the Class, you can use the routine to connect your instruction to the books students are reading for independent practice. Here are examples of questions and activities that relate to specific genres, skills, and strategies.

Realistic Fiction

- What are the protagonist’s biases and prejudices? How do they affect his actions in the story?
- What is the theme of the story? How do you know?
- Do the characters seem real to you? Why? Use examples from the story.

Historical Fiction

- Which parts of the story are based on real historical events, people, or places?
- What else do you know about this time period?
- What makes this story fiction and not a history lesson?

Status of the Class—Continued

Mystery

- What evidence can you find in the story that points to the villain?
- Does the setting add to the sense of mystery? How?
- Describe the main character. What makes him or her a good detective?

Fantasy

- How is this place like our world? How is it different?
- How does the author make you believe in the fantasy world?
- Would you like to live there? Why or why not?

Biography

- How is this person like you? How is he or she different?
- If you had 10 minutes alone with this person, what would you talk about?
- Why did you choose to read about this person?

Word Study

- *Compound words.* Find two compound words in the story you're reading. What are the small words that make up the compound words?
- *Synonyms and antonyms.* Use three adjectives to describe the main character. Then list an antonym for each adjective you gave.
- *Context clues.* Identify a word you did not know in your book. Which surrounding words, phrases, or images helped you understand the word?

Comprehension

- *Predicting outcomes.* Did you know how the book was going to end? What clues did the author give you?
- *Summarizing.* Summarize the story in 100 words or less.

Literary Elements

- *Point of view.* From whose point of view is the story told? How do you know?
- *Metaphor.* Find a metaphor in your story. How does it help you better understand what's happening?
- *Story elements.* What is the main conflict in the story? How is it resolved?

Critical Thinking

- What is the author trying to say in the story? What does the author want you to know about life?
- Which character did you identify with most? Why?

Tips for Different Grade Levels

In the primary grades, begin taking Status of the Class when most students are reading independently and keeping their own reading logs, typically by the end of first grade or the beginning of second grade. With younger students, Status of the Class works well as a small-group discussion, rather than a one-on-one conference. Use this time to review skills and identify areas for instruction.

In the elementary grades, check that students are on target for meeting individual goals. Make sure that students are accountable for their reading practice. They should be using reading logs properly and keeping their materials organized in reading folders. Ask questions to check students' understanding of specific skills and strategies you've taught.

In the upper grades, reading practice may be the responsibility of several teachers. If so, be sure that the same teacher takes Status of the Class with the same students each day. As students read longer books and new genres, use logs and daily conference time to ensure a good reading pace and check general comprehension before a student takes a quiz.