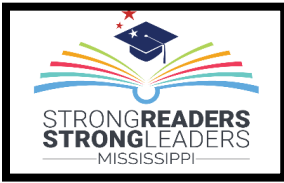


# Everything *English Language Arts*

MDE English Newsletter

March 2022

[Mississippi Achieves Teacher Blog](#) | [MDE English Language Arts Webpage](#) | [MS Literacy Webpage](#) | [ELA Director Contact](#)



## How to Build Strong Readers

To find out about Mississippi's approach to developing literacy skills from birth through grade 12, click [here](#).

**Recordings,  
Slides, and  
Workbooks**

## Literacy Live! Elementary and Secondary Series

Access training recordings and additional resources for various topics from teaching reading online, using decodables, to advanced phonics instruction and structured literacy. Learn more [here](#).



## National Council of Teachers of English

Find resources, research, communities, and groups to support your teaching practices by clicking [here](#).



## The Mississippi College Countdown Newsletter

Join the [ACT](#) state organization for Mississippi, click [here](#). Sign up to receive the ACT monthly newsletter for K-12 professionals, click [here](#). Learn more about ACT WorkKeys, click [here](#). See the ACT Test Prep YouTube Playlist, click [here](#).



## College Board Advance Placement Resources

Student Resources: [AP Students](#), [AP Students-What is AP?](#), [AP Students- Choosing Your AP Courses](#)

Teacher Resources: [AP Central-Teaching AP for the First Time?](#), [AP Classroom](#)



## Recommended Reads and Science of Reading Guide

Article: [Rethinking How to Promote Reading Comprehension](#)

Guide: [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#)



## We want to hear from you!

Each month we will be sharing teaching tips, and we would like those tips to come from **ELA teachers in Mississippi**. We look forward to growing in our instructional practice with you.

To nominate a teacher or submit your own tip, complete the following form found [here](#).

Teaching Tip for Ma

**What?** Academic conversations are deep, meaningful discussions that enhance learning. This type of talk consists of thoughtful questions, insightful observations about the topic or other student comments, and active listening.

**Why?** Peer talk is an essential practice that creates real learning opportunities and effective conversations. Academic conversations support critical thinking and provide structured support for students who may be hesitant to contribute to a classroom discussion.

### **How? (Overall)**

Focus on helping students develop the following skills:

- Elaborating, clarifying, and questioning
- Supporting ideas with examples & evidence
- Paraphrasing Building on ideas
- Synthesizing key ideas of the conversation

Create a protocol, and explicitly teach through modeling and practice.

### **How? (Implementing Technology with Socratic Seminar)**

Since the onset of Covid-19, we've seen an increase in access to technology within our classrooms. Utilizing this technology to engage both virtual and in-person students is more important - and often more challenging - than ever. I've always found Socratic Seminar to be an effective learning tool. Now that most classrooms are one-to-one with Chromebooks/devices, bringing those devices into the Socratic Seminar is a fun way to keep students engaged.

In my classroom, I put students into 2 circles - an "inner circle" and an "outer circle." Students in the "inner circle" participate in a traditional Socratic Seminar. I designate one student to be the mediator/leader, and all students within the circle take turns discussing the novel or topic. Students are expected to come to the Socratic Seminar prepared with discussion questions/topics. Each student is required to speak. The mediator's job is to call on students to speak and to pose questions/thoughts when needed. I also walk around the circle, asking questions and inserting comments when needed.

While the inner circle is discussing, the outer circle is not allowed to speak. Instead, they participate in an online discussion of their own - on Google Classroom. They type their thoughts/responses to the inner circle's discussions simultaneously. This means there are two discussions happening at once - the inner circle is verbally discussing, while the outer circle students are typing responses on a chat in Google Classroom. After 10 or 12 minutes the groups switch. This added element to the Socratic Seminar keeps all students engaged and makes it easy for virtual students to participate, since the outer circle group ends up having its own discussion on the same topics. Often, the outer circle discussion gets more intense when students want to respond to something that is being said out loud, but they can only type.

It's amazing to see the agreements, differing points of view, and added thoughts that happen online, and then to see the reactions when they switch, and the inner circle students get to read the outer circle comments. My co-worker Jessica Waterman and I began using this strategy when we were teaching the same course. Both of us will attest that adding the online element to the Socratic Seminar enhances student engagement overall.

For further reading see the following resources:

[Academic Conversations](#) and [Socratic Seminar](#)

This month's teacher tip was submitted by Jennifer Hanberry. Jennifer teaches 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the Picayune School District.

