

Creative Teaching in the Classroom: A Case Study Using the Hot-Seating Strategy in English Language Arts



Executive Summary

In this report, we give a comprehensive description of how an Austin Independent School District (AISD) 2nd-grade teacher, Mrs. Theresa Wood, integrated a drama-based Creative Teaching strategy into her guided reading lesson. Creative Teaching strategies are effective and engaging instructional techniques drawn from drama, visual arts, music, movement, and digital media to teach any content. Developed by experts in the field, these strategies are instructional frameworks to engage students, drive inquiry, promote rigor, and create a personal connection to the learning. This particular Creative Teaching strategy, called hot seating, involves students interviewing characters from the story they have read. This case study will provide a vivid understanding of why teachers choose hot seating to amplify their instructional goals in English language arts lessons, how a teacher facilitates the strategy in the classroom, and how it can be extended and modified to fit different needs.

This case study describes, in detail, aspects of instructional design that are often invisible to an outside observer. In doing so, we reveal the strategic and nuanced creative choices of the teacher. As we trace the teacher and the students through the execution of the strategy itself, we see how it facilitates students' participation in the inquiry of the text and enhances reading comprehension, as well as how the teacher closes out the strategy by engaging the students' metacognitive thinking. Because this report dives into the minutia of pedagogy, it is primarily intended for an audience with a background in instruction.

After the deep description of the strategy in action, we present the reflective perspectives of the teacher and other instructional experts, who unpack how the strategy works, how it can be modified to fit lessons in any curricula, and how it can be modified to meet the needs of diverse students.

Through this deep investigation, we discover that the structure inherent in the hot-seating strategy is a powerful lever for language and reading skill development and comprehension because it requires students to learn and apply new vocabulary, while they also develop their inquiry and questioning skills. Students practice these essential skills during hot seating, while engaging in an authentic task that is accessible to all and fun for everyone involved.

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Introduction

Creative Teaching across the curriculum is a critical component of the Creative Learning Initiative (CLI). Creative Teaching strategies use techniques drawn from drama, visual arts, music, movement, and digital media to teach any content. They have been developed by experts in the field and determined by research to be effective, versatile, and time-efficient. Rather than a boxed curriculum, these strategies are instructional frameworks to engage students, drive inquiry, promote rigor, and create a personal connection to the learning. These strategies can be used in any lesson, across any curriculum or subject matter. This report focuses on the use of one Creative Teaching strategy in an English language arts (ELA) lesson in order to expose the inner workings of the strategy in action. Research has shown that students who had teachers who were highly competent at implementing Creative Teaching and used it at least twice a week had significant growth in their State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading scores above and beyond the average yearly change (Jensen et al., 2020). Those findings led us to learn more about the implementation of Creative Teaching in the classroom by conducting a case study of a highly competent teacher using Creative Teaching in her ELA instruction (see sidebar for methodology). In this case study, we describe how this AISD 2nd-grade teacher, Mrs. Theresa Wood, integrated the drama-based strategy, hot seating, into her guided reading lesson. To tour the reader through the nuance of this particular classroom moment, we bring in the reflective voices of the teacher and two experts in the field: John Green-Otero, the AISD coordinator of the CLI, and Dr. Brent Hasty, the executive director of MINDPOP. This case study provides a vivid understanding of why teachers choose hot seating to amplify their instructional goals in ELA, how a teacher facilitates the strategy in the classroom, and how it can be extended and modified to fit different needs.

What is the hot seating Creative Teaching strategy?

When the hot-seating strategy is applied to the instruction of reading comprehension, the basic sequence of events is as follows. After everyone has read the story, the teacher devises a dramatic setting that allows for an interaction between characters or objects from the story and people who might want to interview them, such as a TV talk-show audience or journalists at a press conference. The teacher asks a few students to take on the role of characters from the story, and the rest of the class takes on the role of the interviewers or a TV talk-show audience. The audience members create questions to interview the characters and they act out the interview in a dramatized scenario. The students, in their character roles, tend to answer questions about what happened in the story, how the characters might have felt, and how the different events in the plot connected from their perspective. As students answer their peers' questions, the teacher checks for understanding and asks clarifying questions. At the end, the class reflects on the hot-seating strategy as a whole, which, depending on the instructional goal, can lead to more research, more reading, or more predictions about potential outcomes or impacts of the story.

The structure of the hot-seating strategy is a powerful technique for language and reading skill development and comprehension because it requires students to learn and apply new vocabulary, while they also develop their inquiry and questioning skills (including the skills of summary, inference, prediction, and main idea). It provides many opportunities for the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge and requires that students reflect and re-reflect on the content included in the text or inferred by the text, as well as make sense of the diversity of perspectives in the class.

This strategy converts easily for different content areas and different levels of sophistication. Though typically used to interview real or imagined characters in the context of a story or series of events, it can also be used to explore concepts. In a social studies lesson, the interview questions might go to students acting out historical figures or even the personifications of different positions on a multi-sided issue. In a science lesson, the interview questions might go to a series of experts in the changing field (e.g., Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo) or might address different families of elements (e.g., halogen, noble gases, alkali metals). No matter the content area or grade level, hot seating provides students with an authentic task that facilitates their generation of ideas and conceptual models, as well as the transferring and translating of what they already know into another context, and the contribution and understanding of multiple perspectives on whatever issue, story, or event is the subject of the strategy. These processes and ways of thinking bring connection and rigor to content that might otherwise be flat and distant.

While most teachers will choose hot seating with specific content objectives in mind, the strategy also provides practice in perspective taking and empathy, which are important social and emotional skills for navigating relationships with others. Obviously, as the students at the front of the room answer interview questions, they must project their perspectives onto the characters, but this also happens for each student in the class as they prepare for the interview by writing out questions. From a tactical perspective, the question-writing step can be leveraged as a formal writing exercise and/or as a formative assessment for the teacher to gauge the students' current understanding of the story or topic. All of this (i.e., the increased rigor in the content area, the social emotional learning [SEL] practice, and the formative writing assessment) is done by leveraging the learning activities of drama and theater while bringing fun and laughter to the learning.

How to Hot-Seat: From Start to Finish

Step 1: Choose the right strategy: Why did the teacher choose the hot-seating strategy for this lesson?

Mrs. Wood's primary objectives for using the hot-seating strategy at this moment in the instructional sequence were to support her students' skills in reading comprehension, as well as understanding and analyzing literary elements (TEKS 110.4 and 110.7). The story was *Cloudette*, by Tom Lichtenheld. It is about a small cloud that learns how to do big, important things despite its small size.

This case study was based on Yin's (2018) descriptive case study design. One elementary teacher, who was selected by the CLI program managers, had previously been deemed an expert at Creative Teaching. Observation of a video recorded lesson was used for the descriptive analysis. Experts in the use of Creative Teaching strategies in the classroom were consulted for their opinions on the use of the strategy for the content area application. These experts reviewed the video and highlighted points of the video that were excellent examples of application of the strategy in the content area. This was followed by an interview with the teacher to get the planning and decision-making part of the lesson. Again, the teacher reviewed the video and expanded on the planning that took place before the lesson and the decisions made during the lesson that are not necessarily evident in the video.

More about the CLI

The CLI is a community-wide effort to bring creative learning and the arts to each and every student in Austin. Led by MINDPOP, the City of Austin, and AISD, CLI supports systematic and sustainable programs that integrate creativity, the arts, and Creative Teaching strategies with classroom teaching, campus programming, and campus improvement. <https://www.austinisd.org/cli>

Sometimes Mrs. Wood used the hot-seating strategy exclusively to increase students' reading comprehension, but in this case, her students were also learning about the different types of clouds in science and she chose this book to hot seat, because she wanted them to hear the vocabulary words in different contexts. Integrating content across areas helps make those concepts more concrete as well as extend those concepts to other applications. The reinforcement of vocabulary and deepening of those concepts was a secondary benefit of her lesson, as well as offered her a fluid opportunity to do some formative assessment and provide and receive feedback about the students' conceptual understanding.

Step 2: Set up the strategy: How did the teacher prepare the students for the hot-seating strategy?

Though teachers can use hot seating effectively as an engaging stand-alone activity, it is maximized when it is repeated over time and becomes part of a classroom routine. Using this strategy repeatedly over time amplifies the benefits to students and allows students to focus on the content of the lesson over the novelty of the strategy. Consistent application of pedagogical approaches such as Creative Teaching have also been found to be highly effective at regulating students' neurological systems, allowing them to maintain higher-order thinking and reasoning skills for a greater duration. It does so by activating their somatosensory networks, which are responsible for sensory experience; moreover, through patterned, repetitive, and rhythmic experience, these techniques can calm the stress response systems in students' bodies. So because stress and anxiety literally stop a student's ability to learn, Creative Teaching (as a somatosensory experience) naturally accesses this neural network and therefore can be a powerful tool to calm, regulate, and focus students. This allows teachers and students to accomplish more and spend more time on learning.

Mrs. Wood understood the importance of routinely using Creative Teaching strategies throughout the school year, so she introduced the structure of hot seating at the beginning of the year by first modeling how to get into character. She explained,

I always demonstrate getting into character at least three times early in the year. I show how I get nervous or how I mess up, but they learn that when I tap my head, I'm the character, no matter who walks in the classroom until I tap my head again.

Over time, she incorporated the strategy while teaching different books and different concepts with increasing ease. This repetition provided some predictability for students who were less frequent contributors to class or who considered themselves less dramatically inclined.

When hot seating becomes a class routine, the mechanics become more seamless, engagement increases, and the level of inquiry and investigation becomes deeper. Focusing on the technique first allows students to focus on the learning goals later. In the case of Mrs. Wood's class, her prior work paid off and her entire class seemed comfortable and engaged throughout the lesson. As they began the lesson, she told them they would be hot seating the book. For the most part, her reading of the book looked similar to how most teachers read aloud, but she made one tweak to set the students up for the hot-seating strategy. In addition to asking for synonyms of the vocabulary words, as she normally would, she asked students to act the words out with their bodies and embody key moments in the book. They created frozen images of selected moments and vocabulary words in the story to practice creating mental images. With this adaptation, she primed their kinesthetic learning, increased their future recall, and helped



them anchor important points in the story.

After reading the story, Mrs. Wood could have elected to jump right into the hot-seating strategy, but she instead touched on a different Creative Teaching strategy, called statues. This useful modification was not necessary, but it set up the hot-seating strategy by guiding the students to start thinking about embodiment and how to take on the role of this character. With a tap on the head, Mrs. Wood transformed into a TV talk-show host by slightly changing her voice, posture, and using a prop microphone. She added these elements over time as the strategy became a regular part of her instruction, but the strategy worked just as well holding a dry erase marker like a microphone. In the dramatized scenario she created, three characters from the book were interviewed, and the rest of the class supplied questions for the interview. She called up one student at a time, asked which character they wanted to be, and one by one, the students tapped their heads to become their characters. This action of tapping the head is a useful ritual for students to step in and out of the role. It allows for greater management of risk, and the routine helps students understand what is expected of them and when. Mrs. Wood asked each of the three characters some questions about who they were and how they fit into the story. The students took on the roles of three characters in the story: the antagonist, a small cloud named Clouette; another larger, friendly cloud; and a frog who Clouette helps in the story by making it rain in his pond.

The first student came up and tapped her head to transform into the character from the book. Unprompted, she raised her arms over her head in the shape of a circle to look like a cloud and puffed her cheeks out to imitate a puffy cloud. This embodiment signaled to Mrs. Wood that the student had an understanding of at least one of the characteristics of a cumulus cloud (i.e., the type of cloud describing the character of Clouette in the text). Mrs. Wood tapped her own head and said, “Why hello, Clouette, I’m so glad that you are here today. I understand that you are a teeny, weeny, little cloud. What kind of cloud are you?” The student responded, “I’m a cumulus cloud.” Mrs. Wood said, “And can you tell me a little bit about yourself?” The student described the external traits of the main character by saying, “I am white and puffy and smaller than the average cloud.” She used her body to describe what she recalled from the story, as well as what she understood about cumulus clouds.

The second student came up, tapped his head, and turned into his character by changing his voice, using a deeper pitch and rounded tones. Raising his arms out very wide, he introduced himself as one of the higher clouds. Mrs. Wood asked a question about details from the story: “What are some of the names you have for Clouette?” He said, “Sky fly.” She then asked, “What are some of the things you do with your friend Clouette?” “We play games together, like hide-and-seek,” he said. Interestingly, while the story does refer to “cute little names” that the other clouds call Clouette and they things they do together, these particular examples were generated by the student as an extension of the themes in the text, not citations from memory.

Finally, the last student came up, tapped her head, and became her character. She crouched down like a frog and said, “Ribbit, ribbit.” Mrs. Wood greeted her and asked, “I see that you are in something very dry. What has happened? Please tell me.” The frog

replied, “No one has sprinkled rain on my pond, so I cannot swim anymore.” Mrs. Wood asked, “How do you know Cloudette?” “Because she sprinkled rain on my pond,” she said. By introducing their respective characters with their words and bodies, each of the three students described what they recalled from the story, introducing a new dimension. The short exercise provided the teacher with immediate feedback about the three students’ reading comprehension and their content knowledge of the different types of clouds, which was valuable because these students were the ones to be interviewed in the larger hot seating activity, and also because it served to summarize the text for the whole class in an engaging way.

Step 3: Students generate interview questions: How did all the students participate in the inquiry of the text?

To begin the formal part of the hot-seating strategy, Mrs. Wood instructed the students to work with a partner to generate questions to ask the three characters. Her prompt directly addressed her reading comprehension goals: “Think of the plot, a problem, important events, or the resolution.” She further explained that the students would assume the role of audience members on her talk show and would get to interview the characters, using the questions they created. She asked for thumbs up if they understood and got acknowledgment from the whole class. As the students started generating questions in pairs, she circulated the room and listened to the content of the students’ dialogues. Her assistant sat with students who needed targeted support.

This point in the hot-seating strategy is prime for individual formative assessment and feedback. During this section, teachers using hot seating listen for the kinds of questions students are generating, including the elements and details they draw from the text, to assess comprehension and miscomprehension. Mrs. Wood reflected on this part of the strategy: “That’s when you’re giving a great verbal assessment to check for understanding. And you’re given the opportunity to redirect kids when they get the details wrong.” This type of formative assessment is more engaging than a traditional instructional approach, whereby a teacher sits in front of the class, asks a series of questions, and gauges everyone’s understanding of the responses by one or two students. Instead of restricting opportunities for formative assessment and privileging particular types of thinking, here, the teacher creates the kind of instructional space that allows a substantially larger number of students to participate and be successful. Having this individualized formative assessment also allows the teacher to differentiate and accommodate at a higher rate and with a higher degree of success.

Satisfied the students had a clear understanding of the story, as evidenced by their conversations, Mrs. Wood moved to the next step instead of opting to reteach a problematic section.

Step 4: The interview: How did the teacher facilitate the interview so it fostered reading comprehension?

After everyone generated questions for the interview, the three students came back to the front of the class. Mrs. Wood directed the



rest of the class to tap their heads in unison to become the talk-show audience members. Mrs. Wood also tapped herself on the head and became the talk-show host. “Hello everybody! We have a wonderful show today, we have three guests,” said Mrs. Wood as the show host, and then the three students introduced their characters. The students had become their characters by tapping their heads, changing their voices, and using their bodies to represent the two clouds and the frog. Mrs. Wood asked the audience to ask their first question.

One student asked, “How did it feel to help the frog, Cloudette?” The remarkable thing about this question, and most of the questions asked by the students in hot seating, is that they were informed by the text but extended beyond it. The responding student had to make an inference based on their understanding of the story to answer this question. The student playing the character of Cloudette responded, “It felt really good to do something important for once.” Mrs. Wood asked a follow-up question to ground the answer in the text: “What was the important thing you did for the frog?” Cloudette said, “I didn’t think I could do it, but I rained on his dried-out pond and made it an actual pond again.” “Rain? Can you tell me all about it?” Mrs. Wood asked and then adjusted her instructions to say: “Actually, look at the audience members and tell them all about it.” Cloudette explained dramatically, “I held my breath and puffed up bigger and bigger and bigger, and then I finally rained.” She used her arms to act out her thoughts, and at the end, the audience gave Cloudette a spontaneous round of applause. Their applause was good spirited but also confirmed that Cloudette’s answer aligned with their reading of the story and with the evidence they had gathered from the text.

Another student asks the next question: “How did it feel to have all the other colossal clouds have jobs and you didn’t have one?” Cloudette responded with an answer that was not in the text word for word but displayed her empathy for the protagonist: “I felt a little left out and wanted to scream, ‘It’s not fair!’” The next student asked, “How did you feel when you asked Cloudette to make rain with you?” While the student playing the role of the colossal cloud did not answer the speculative question directly, they did provide evidence from the text that addressed Cloudette’s motivation: “She wanted to help and make rivers and make crops grow.” Mrs. Wood asked a redirecting question to help the student add information from the Colossal cloud’s point of view: “Why did you need Cloudette’s help?” “Because we need to make rain really quickly,” said the colossal cloud.

One of the audience members asked the final question to the frog: “How did it feel to live in a dried-up pond?” The frog said, “I felt dreadful because I wanted to cool off because it was very hot.” Mrs. Wood asked, “Can you tell me who helped you solve your problem?” “Cloudette helped me solve my big problem,” replied the frog. Finally, Mrs. Wood asked for a round of applause for the actors.

Step 5: The guided reflection: How did the teacher engage the students in meta-cognitive thinking to close out the strategy?

After the talk show interview session was over and the three students playing characters from the story had returned to their seats, Mrs. Wood asked the whole class what they learned about the characters by using drama. One of the students said that the main character, Cloudette, changed from the beginning to the middle and the end. Mrs. Wood then asked the students playing the key characters how it felt to become a character

and what they have to remember when they do drama. One student said they had to remember details from the story and about the character they were playing. Another student said, “It felt kind of weird to change my voice.” These responses highlight the multiple kinds of information the students were managing in this role play. The students recognized the challenges of drawing on evidence in the text to support their role-play dialogue. They recognized the challenges, or “weirdness,” of translating text and illustration clues into physical and vocal representations that accurately portray the character. Despite the weirdness, making the decision to represent a high-level cloud by speaking with rounded and slightly guttural tones reveals a complex level of reasoning and a deep understanding of the content. Mrs. Wood closed out the lesson by asking the students to give a round of applause and thanked all the children for their participation.



Discussion

How can teachers modify the hot-seating strategy to meet different needs in an ELA lesson?

While the scenario presented in this case study wonderfully illustrates the hot-seating strategy, the example given is not the strategy in a pure form. A strategy card exists that represents the generic strategy (see below), but in reality, hot seating is never used in its pure form, because teachers are always modifying it to meet their specific needs. In fact, an essential part of the strategy’s design is its flexibility to be adapted to fit a wide range of learning situations. Sometimes these modifications are strategically planned out ahead of time, and sometimes they happen in the moment. In this case, Mrs. Wood made several adaptations to the strategy and included some creative choices of her own. She modified the strategy based on the book *Cloudette*, her desire to reinforce science vocabulary, and her knowledge of her individual students. To explore the flexibility inherent in the design of the hot-seating strategy, we interviewed Mrs. Wood and two Creative Teaching experts, Dr. Hasty and Mr. Green-Otero, who shared their insights into how the strategy can be modified based on the different instructional needs of the lesson and the needs of individual students.

Possible Variations for the Lesson Design

Usually when ELA teachers are working with texts, they first decide which reading comprehension skills they would like to practice or which literary devices they would like to explore. The teacher crafts the dramatized hot seating scenario toward those goals. Before the lesson begins, the teacher makes creative choices about the nature of the dramatization, the types of characters that will be interviewed, and the role of the interviewees. In the case of Mrs. Wood, she set up the dramatization like a TV show in which the audience was asking questions of the special guests, who were key characters in the story. These creative choices on her part directed her students to focus on understanding the story arc and the various characters’ motivations. Dr. Hasty elaborated

on the options:

Teachers can create all kinds of scenarios for hot seating, such as pretending characters are visiting the class for a special interview or that they are journalists writing a story on the events, etc. The scenario just provides an authentic reason for one group to ask another group questions. Journalists, researchers, TV talk-show hosts and audiences, and lawyers in a courtroom are just a few possibilities. Some teachers intentionally do not have kids take on the role of the key characters, asking them to assume the role or perspective of related characters (animate or inanimate) that can provide a perspective on the main characters. When choosing to interview historical characters in the hot seat, I suggest keeping a log of research questions that might be generated during hot seating. Because the strategy sometimes requires conjecture or speculation, I like to follow up the hot seating activity with research to check the accuracy of the character's statement. Sometimes we find the answer in the original text and sometimes we have to go to different sources to find the answer. This not only reinforces students' inquiry and research, it also provides a way to correct any factual errors the character may provide.

The teacher also has creative freedom in how they situate the hot-seating strategy within the rest of their lesson cycle. It can be used as a way to introduce a text, as a means to dig deeper into the complexities of a central theme or conflict, or as a prompt for the final assessment of learning. On this particular day, Mrs. Woods used hot seating to introduce a new text, draw connections to another content area, and interpret characters' motivations. To establish a firm foundation in the characters and direct the students' interview questions, Mrs. Wood chose to extend the strategy at the front by adding a version of another Creative Teaching strategy, called statues. Some teachers invest time in the question-writing step of the strategy to have the students practice writing skills or insert a process for voting up the best questions to meet the instructional goal. The latter is a great exercise for collectively modeling advanced critical thinking. Many teachers like to build on the expertise gained through the hot-seating strategy and extend the lesson beyond the end of the interview.

Mr. Green-Otero shared how a teacher can extend the lesson to escalate the rigor involved:

What I like about this strategy is that it puts students into the role of the expert. By requiring them to reflect, ask questions, build arguments and ideas, and productively challenge the ideas of others, this strategy pushes students into a space where they're having to take ownership of their own learning, make inferences and back them up with evidence, and innovate. Effectively, what it creates by design is a space where students find the very edge of their own and collective understanding and push themselves into new learning. It's visible, it's in relationship, and it's rigorous. When done well, that experience is the mountaintop of the educational landscape—because of which, it will always be where I want students to end up.

Mr. Green-Otero continued by explaining how the lesson can be extended:

If I have more time to work with a group of students, I can blow up this concept from a single lesson into a multidisciplinary lesson arc and extend it over several lessons, as long as I want. The students then not only can get more information to deepen their expertise but also they can apply their new skills in analysis, synthesis, comparing and contrasting, etc. into new contexts. This reinforces not only their learning of the curricular content but the skillsets we want them to have to be successful beyond the lesson and into their lives.



One way to expand the lesson is to empower the students as experts to connect the hot seating interviews back to the text in a reflective writing exercise. Dr. Hasty stated,

Students can take the role of reporters, taking notes on the hot seating interview. They can test each claim by the characters by doing research, using the text to find evidence that confirms the statement or calls it into question. In this way, they are practicing using text clues to build their understanding over time.

Possible Variations for Individual Students' Needs and Abilities

The flexibility of the hot-seating strategy, along with multiple entry points for participation, also makes the hot-seating strategy easy to modify to accommodate students' individual needs. For example, Mrs. Wood recommended, "teaching the vocabulary before you read the book. That really helps out English language learners." She also was sensitive to the needs of her various special education students. She said, "Sometimes my special education kids want to come up and ask questions. It's important to have a chance to participate. If they want to come up and hot seat, I practice with them a lot one on one just becoming the character." She also mentioned that her teaching assistant (TA) sometimes works with students one on one to create, write, and speak out interview questions, depending on their needs. She shared this illustrative story of one student's transformation over the year through continued practice of the hot seat strategy in class, mixed with focused support:

One of my special education students didn't even speak a sentence. Not because he didn't know the language, he just didn't have the basic skills for speaking through speech. By working on writing questions as complete sentences, he was able to, with the help of his TA, write questions and practice. Eventually, he was coming up and asking questions on his own. He loved doing it and even enjoyed getting up. It just takes a while. He didn't start participating with us until after Christmas. What teachers have to realize is, with anything, the kids are going to grow over time. You're going to have some that won't come around until February or March and they have the right to pass in the meanwhile.

Mrs. Wood confirmed that allowing students the right to pass if they do not yet feel comfortable is another way to differentiate. This is especially useful for the students who may not consider themselves theatrical at first. Similarly, Mr. Green-Otero emphasized the flexibility of the strategy to accommodate all types of learners, not just theatrical students:

Whether or not the performative aspect of this drama-based strategy speaks to all students, there's a place for every kind of student in it. As a student, whether you want to be the one standing in front embodying and representing this character, or you want to take on the role of an audience member, there's a lovely way for you to always be actively participating in the learning. With hot seating, there is no way really to opt out of it, not every kid gets up and performs each time, but you're giving the theatrical kids a chance to be more authentically themselves."

Like Mrs. Wood's example of her student who struggled with speaking, Mr. Green-Otero noticed that with repetition and support from other students, the less-theatrical students might eventually feel comfortable playing these roles. Mrs. Wood confirmed that in her experience, after seeing their classmates get up and hot seat the characters, the less-theatrical students were more likely to want to do it themselves. She said, "By the spring, everyone was raising their hands wanting to be picked for the hot seat."

Conclusion

The lesson described in this case study accomplished many things in a short period. Academically, it reviewed vocabulary learned in science, provided an opportunity for students to generate questions about the text, and provided an opportunity for the teacher to assess understanding on multiple occasions—all while practicing comprehension skill Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), a few of the literary elements TEKS, and one of the theater TEKS for this level. Because all roles are critical to the strategy, participation was comprehensive and each student's thinking was pushed to the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy. It also required that all students take an active role in a group endeavor, while allowing them to manage their own personal-risk comfort levels, increasing their sense of agency and independence. Together, Mrs. Wood's use of the hot-seating strategy promoted knowledge acquisition and recall, the development and strengthening of 21st-century skills, and greater SEL skill capacity.

While this long list of instructional achievements is impressive, the staying power of this strategy is the fact that all of this was achieved in a highly engaging activity that the students saw as role playing (emphasis on the play). Dr. Hasty (whose professional background transverses drama to curriculum design) explained how harnessing the thinking inherent in the dramatic skills of acting and storytelling can do all these things in such a short time:

The teacher created a new frame for reading comprehension, the authentic task of how to interview someone, and put the students in that role of generating questions as an interviewer. In doing so, the students were motivated to practice their ability to recall the text, summarize text, and

- Teaching vocabulary before you read the book and doing frozen images when you read aloud can help students with their drama skills

- It is helpful to demonstrate hot seating a few times for them before you ask them to hot seat

- An anchor chart of the story's beginning, middle, and end can give students something to reference while hot seating

- You can use a book that integrates lessons from other content areas for reinforcement

- TAs can work with special education students to develop questions, vocabulary, and getting into character

- You can observe the discussion students have during the generating-questions segment as a verbal assessment

- You can try to get students to answer in complete sentences or write out their questions to practice grammar.

- As an extension, you can allow students to practice hot seating in centers

interrogate the text—which are the three strategies used to get kids thinking and generating mental models. All of these are evidence of reading comprehension and this multi-strategy drama-based technique gives kids ways of amplifying their comprehension skills.

The particular example given in this case study details the use of the hot-seating strategy in a 2nd-grade reading comprehension lesson but is just one of many ways the hot-seating strategy can be applied. While ELA teachers find the strategy extremely useful, it can also be used in different content areas (e.g., science, math, and social studies) and not just in the core areas but in all curricula and learning. The strategy's design requires students to engage in rigorous learning practice and it seamlessly adjusts to the needs of the grade level, content area, and desire of the teacher.

Creative Teaching strategies, such as hot seating, accomplish all of this in a fun and simple-to-do way. The students in this case study were engaged in the official learning objectives and had fun learning. That ability for all students to actively be engaged and participate, while developing important skills, makes the hot-seating strategy an invaluable tool in the educator's toolbox.

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Melissa Andrews, MA
Cinda Christian, PhD
Helen Archuleta, PhD
Department of Research and Evaluation



4000 S IH 35 Frontage Road | Austin, TX 78704
512.414.1724 | fax: 512.414.1707
www.austinisd.org/dre | Twitter: @AISD_DRE

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