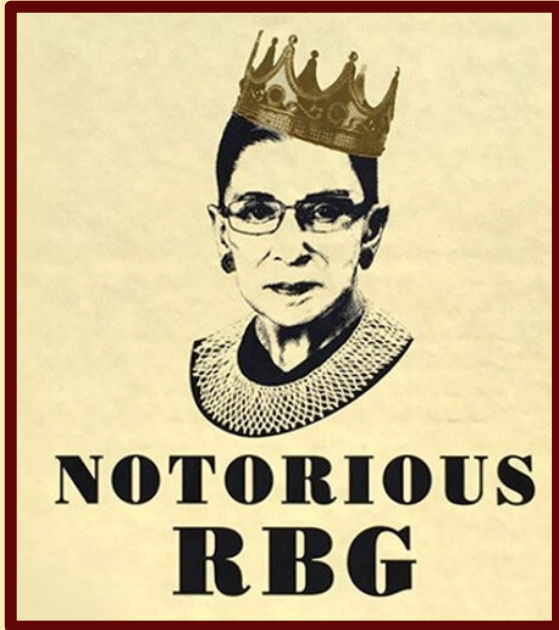


KINDLING THE FLAME FOR READING IN OUR GEN Z STUDENTS

LANA MYERS, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION

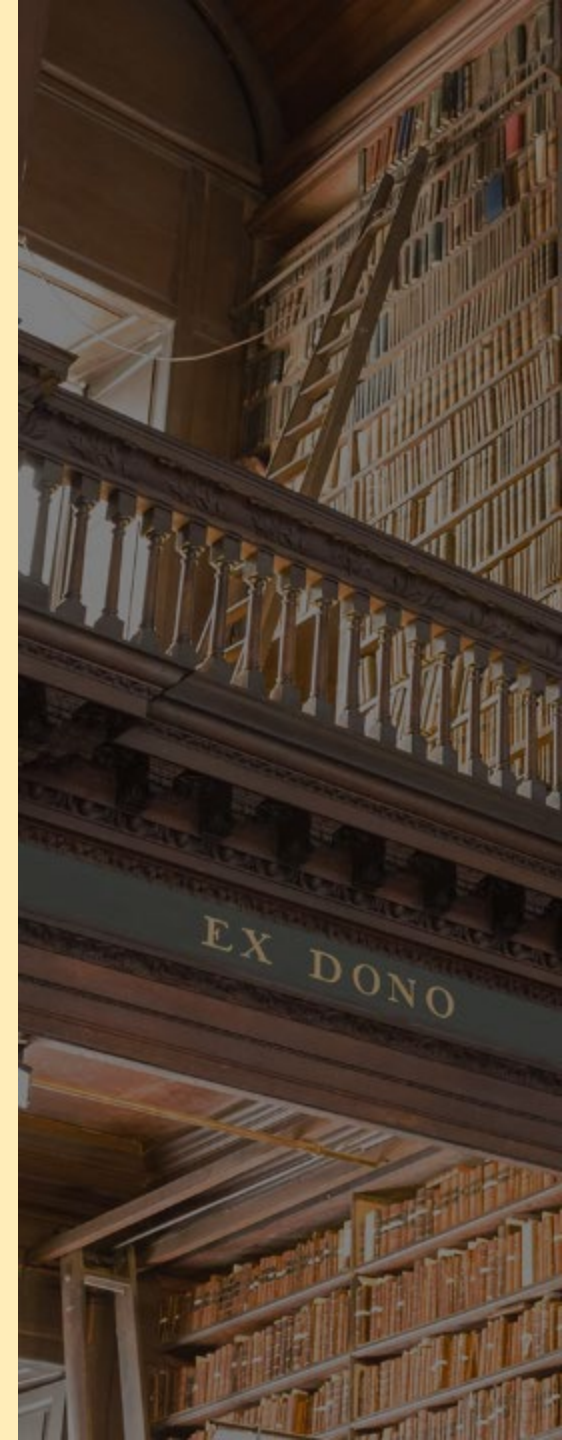
APRIL 8, 2026

COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (CAC)



“Reading shaped my
dreams, and more
reading helped me make
my dreams come true”

– Ruth Bader Ginsburg



AGENDA



- **Sabbatical project – from the initial spark to the raging fire**
- **The reading challenges of Gen Z**
- **Teaching reading across the curriculum**
- **The big five: reading strategies across the curriculum**

SABBATICAL INTERESTS

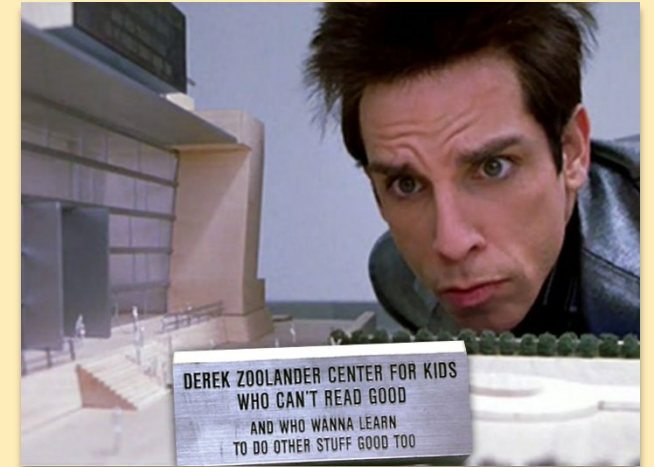


Concerns about students not doing the reading at all or using AI summaries

Worries about some students' lack of reading comprehension and retention skills

Desire to learn new reading strategies to apply in the classroom

Interest in Reading Across the Curriculum

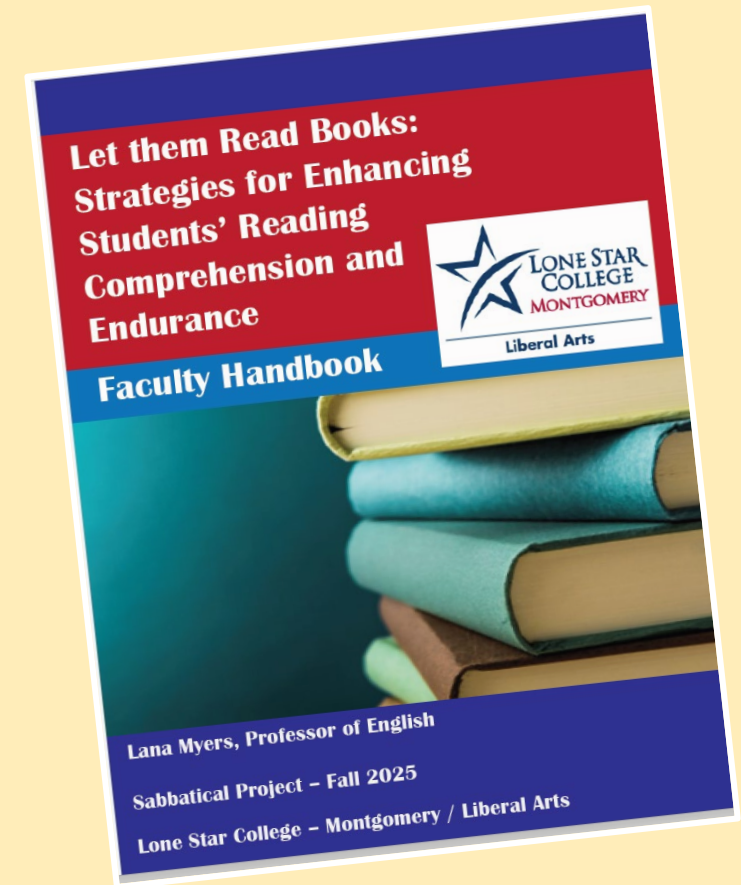


**Derek Zoolander
Center for Kids Who
Can't Read Good**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



- **Develop a Reading Comprehension and Endurance Strategies handbook for faculty.**
- **Handbook shared with faculty via email in return week of spring 2026.**
- **Strategies integrated in spring 2026 courses and beyond.**
- **A series of professional development opportunities provided to faculty in spring 2026.**



HANDBOOK CONTENTS



- I. Introduction, Purpose, and Goals**
- II. Literature Review**
- III. Pre-Reading Strategies**
- IV. During Reading Strategies**
- V. Post-Reading Strategies**
- VI. Sample Lesson Plan - Reading Critically**
- VII. Works Cited**
- VIII. Acknowledgements**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



- **FRC: Spring Roundup** – January 13, 2026
- **FRC: Best Laid Plans: Lesson Planning to Support Students' Critical Reading Skills** – Feb. 10, 2026
- **Curiosity Presentation** at Liberal Arts Division Meeting – March 3, 2026
- **FRC: The Carrot, Not the Stick: Help Students in Any Discipline “Do the Reading”** – March 24, 2026
- **CAC: Kindling the Flame for Reading in Our Gen Z Students** – April 8, 2026



THE WRITING AND RESEARCHING PROCESS

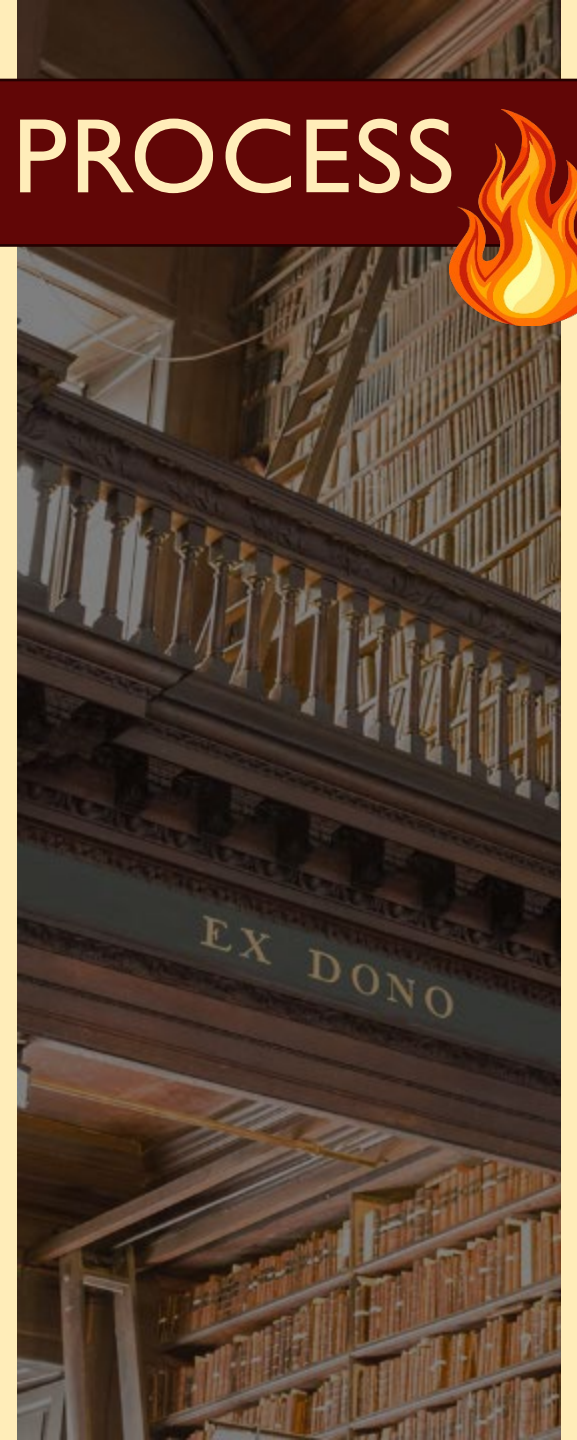


- **August and September**

- Scouring libraries, library databases, and Amazon for sources concerning reading theory or reading strategies
- Collecting news articles about Gen Z and reading

- **October, November, and December**

- Identifying the strategies to include in the handbook
- Designing the cover and layout
- Writing the introductions to each strategy, the lit review, and the sample lesson plan
- Communicating the 26 strategies and designing any visual aids to accompany the strategies
 - Writing plan: four hours a day at least four days a week // 8-12 pm or 4-8 p.m. (mid-day freedom!)



UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES



- **Feeling like a grad student again**
- **Renewing Y2K desktop publishing skills**
- **Energizing my love for reading and teaching reading**
- **Reflecting on my deep appreciation for my family, friends, and LSC**



THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z



- Generation Z (Gen Z) students were born between 1995 to 2009 (Camfield and Bayers I). Many of them attended high school during the pandemic, when the **completion of smaller, shorter assignments was necessary** due to the physical and emotional distance between student and teacher.
- These digital natives often **expect similarly truncated reading and writing assignments** when they transition to higher education.

THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z (CONTINUED)



- In *The Anxious Generation*, by Jonathan Haidt, suggests that “The members of Gen Z are test subjects for a **new, radical way of growing-up**, far from the real-world interactions of small communities in which humans evolved. Call it **the Great Rewiring of Childhood**” (6-7).
- This rewiring, or attention fragmentation, affects: “. . . sustained engagement with complex ideas” (Kelly). In particular, there is a concern that “. . . we will **consume less complex cultural content**” and “. . . our **capacity to create such content may diminish**” (Kelly).

THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z (CONTINUED)



- A *Chronicle of Higher Education* article entitled “Is Reading Over for Gen Z Students?” suggests that students “... **don’t necessarily see the value in reading**, [if they are assigned] a 20-page academic article, and they may choose not to do it. **They may choose to load it up into ChatGPT and get a summary**” (Stripling).



THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z (CONTINUED)



- It is not a coincidence that there has been a “**significant decrease in adult literacy and numeracy skills** since 2017” (U.S. Department of Education).
- Alarming, a report from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) explains “The **average U.S. literacy score fell 13 points from 271 in 2017 to 258 in 2023**” (U.S. Department of Education).

- By comparison, “**Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden were top European Union performers** in reading competency;” “**Japan was a top performer**” in reading competency as well (U.S. Department of Education).

THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z (CONTINUED)



Is social media to blame for the reading challenges of Gen Z? Australia's social media ban serve as an excellent test case.

- In December 2024, **Australia became the first continent in the world to ban social media for children under sixteen years old.** The list of banned applications includes: “Tiktok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Threads” (Livingstone).



THE READING CHALLENGES OF GEN Z (CONTINUED)



Does reading still matter?

- Ricardson and Eccles emphasize the correlation between reading and success in their research noting “... **measures of reading proficiency and literacy abilities have been shown to predict high school completion, degrees earned, adult income and occupational status**” (1).
-
- Hollowell explains “**Improved reading growth affects** a student’s individual life, but it also impacts **their family and community** for generations to come” (7).

DESPITE ALL THESE CONCERNS...

- An article in Inside Higher Education entitled “True, Students are Reading Less,” suggests that **professors should not cave into the pressure of assigning less reading or shorter readings.** The author notes “**Make big demands—smile when you do it, but ask them to do more than they want to do or even think they’re capable of**” (Kirby).
- Similarly, an article in The Atlantic entitled “Stop Meeting Students Where They Are” explains “If we **want students to keep reading books, faculty have the most important role to play—**regardless of whatever new devices or platforms emerge to capture students' attention. **The reaction to declining reading skills, poor comprehension, and fragmented attention spans should not be to negotiate or compromise, but to double down on the cure**” (Hunter).



TEACHING READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



- Tovani explains “**Teachers don’t have to be reading specialists** to teach comprehension strategies. They simply have to be aware of their own processes as readers. They can **notice their own thinking as they read, determine what they do to make meaning, and pass these techniques on to their students**” (109).
- Meagher suggests teaching students how to incorporate just a few strategies at a time “... reading actively with a few strategies will increase understanding of the material and retention of the material” (12).

TEACHING READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (CONTINUED)



- When **reading strategies are modeled by the instructor**, students will, optimally, “. . . **move toward choosing to employ successful reading strategies** beyond when there are explicit assignments or requests to do so” (qtd. in Graff 176).
- The Aspen Institute’s report entitled: "Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success" describes a **professional development activity** focused on reading comprehension: “**Faculty members across all disciplines were encouraged and trained to teach students a set of specific reading strategies** alongside the content curriculum in courses” ("Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success”).

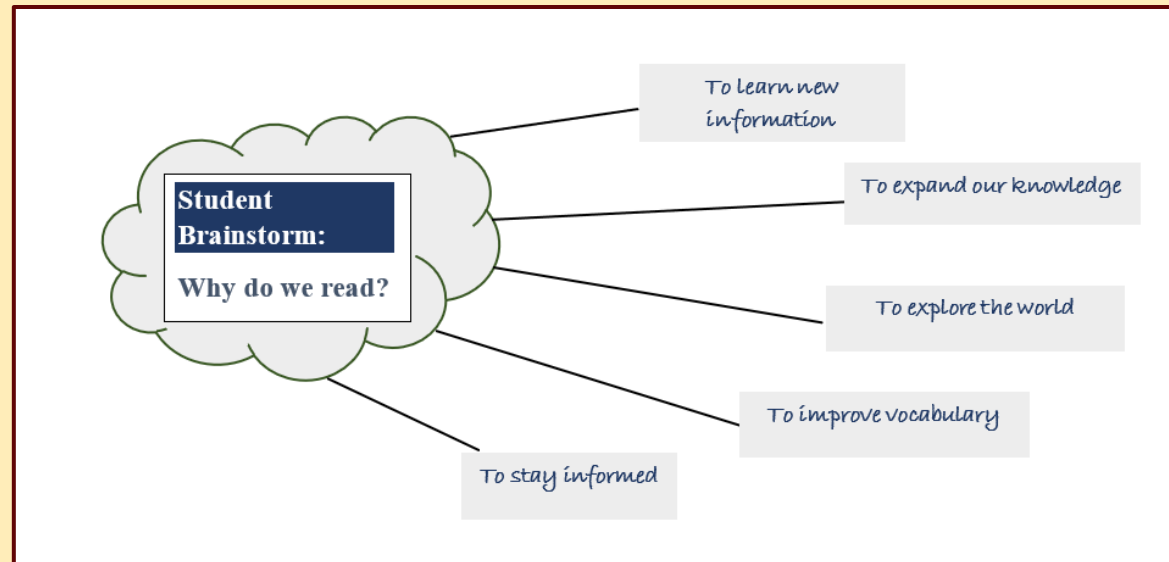
THE BIG FIVE: READING STRATEGIES ATC

1. Setting Authentic Purposes
2. KWL Strategy
3. Metacognitive Think Aloud
4. Reading for Understanding
5. Processing Multiple Texts

ATC STRATEGY 1: SETTING AUTHENTIC PURPOSES



- Greenleaf et al. suggest that instructors **ask their students to brainstorm, list, and compare authentic reasons to read.**
- They noted that **highlighting “...the students’ own words was instrumental in answering students’ ... frequent complaint of ‘Why are we learning this?’”** (Greenleaf et al. 78).



ATC STRATEGY 2: KWL STRATEGY



- One pre-reading strategy suggested by Bustami et al. is the **Know-Want-Learn (KWL) approach**.
- In one study, when instructors implemented the KWL strategy in the classroom, “. . . **students improved their reading comprehension skills**” (35). The researchers further suggest that “. . . the strategy itself has an effect to **trigger the students to be autonomous learners**” (Bustami et al. 35).

What do you know about the topic?

What do you want to know?

What did you learn after reading?

ATC STRATEGY 3: METACOGNITIVE THINK ALOUD



- In *Breakthroughs in College Reading*, Julia Gamberg describes a **Metacognitive Think Aloud assignment she applies in asynchronous, online classes** (qtd. in Graff pp. 178).
- Gamberg suggests “**Reading in community can lead to improved meaning-making**” (qtd. in Graff pp. 178).



1) First, each student will record a video of themselves as they read a five minute, or so, text aloud and verbally address two-to-three metacognitive strategies they are using to help understand and analyze the text. Metacognitive strategies include, but are not limited to: predicting, questioning, summarizing, re-reading, making connections, and reflecting.

ATC STRATEGY 4: READING FOR UNDERSTANDING



- In *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, Wilbert J. McKeachie et al. highlight the value of **reading for understanding**.
- They write “We need to teach students how to read – to **read with understanding, how to think about the purpose of the author, about relationships to earlier learning, and about how they will use what they've read**” (32).

Strategies to Help Students Read for Understanding

Connect textbook reading assignments to the lecture and in-class learning activities. Avoid presenting the reading as supplementary or disconnected from the lecture content.

During class, **regularly ask students for their reactions** to the week's required readings. Address the course readings frequently, emphasizing their importance.

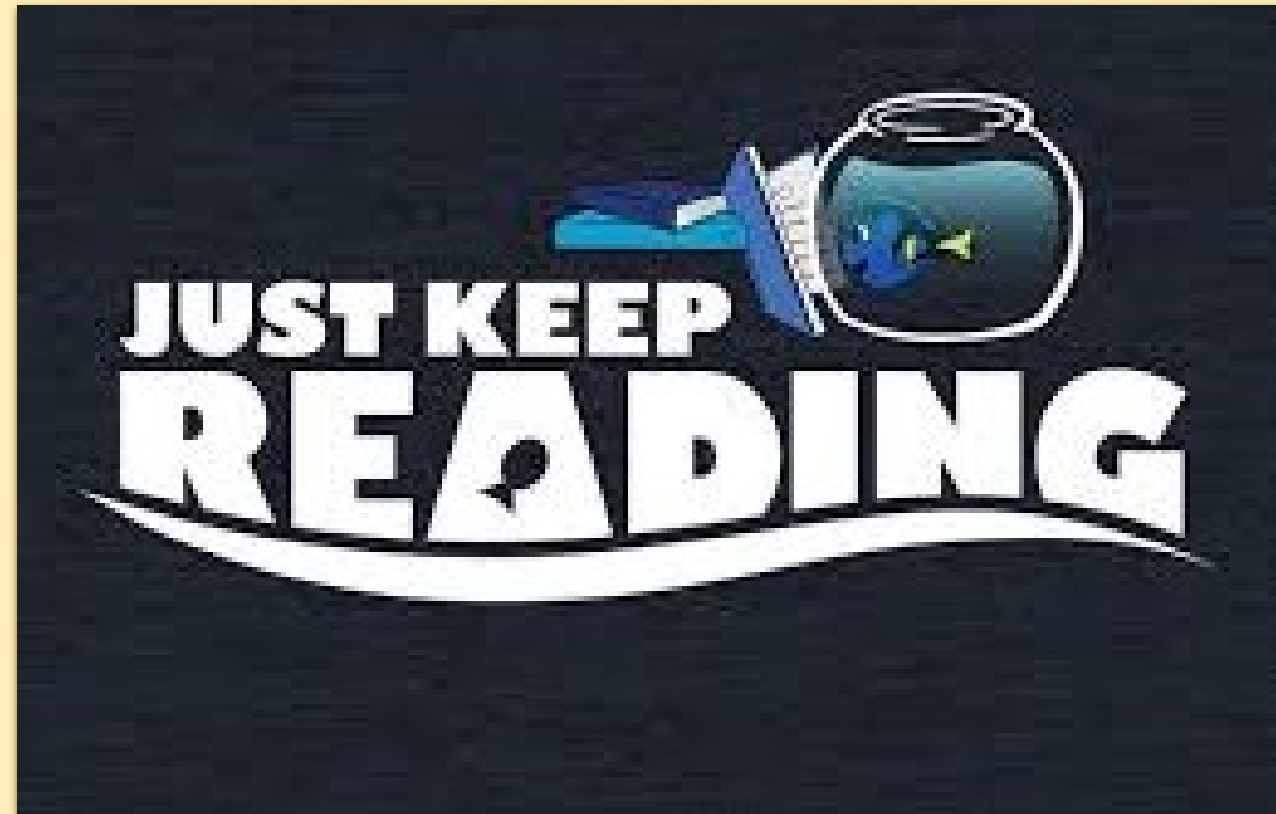
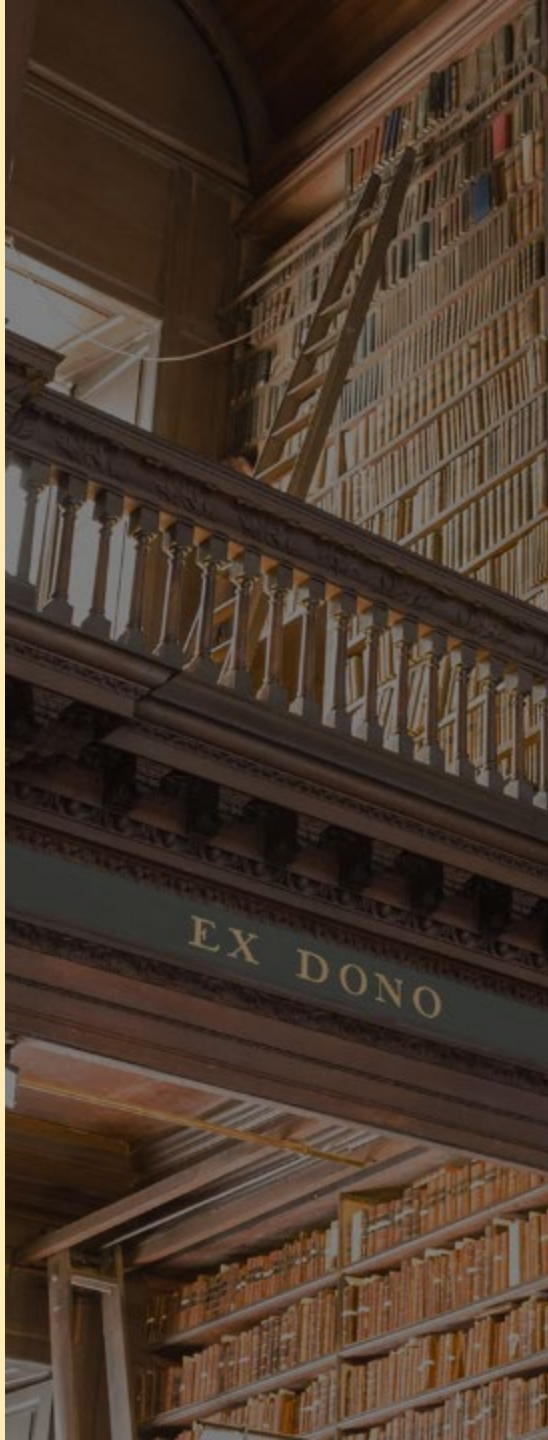
Require students to **write a one-minute essay** on the most important two, or three ideas, they learned from the required reading. Repeat this one-minute essay assignment regularly.

Ask students to **write a question based on the required reading**: something they would like explained, or an idea stimulated by the reading.

ATC STRATEGY 5: PROCESSING MULTIPLE TEXTS



- One reading strategy for the sciences advanced by Tracey Linderholm et al. is **reading three sources at once concerning the same scientific subject**. This strategy could work well for non-science texts as well.
- Linderholm et al. explain “**Studies show that readers engage in higher order thinking skills when required to evaluate multiple sources**” (335).
 - **When evaluating three sources at once, a reader must:**
 - (a) Keep track of the source of information
 - (b) Critically evaluate the information from each source
 - (c) Process in a “nonlinear” fashion to integrate ideas across texts
 - (d) Make decisions about the relevance or even the accuracy of information



A hand holding a sign that says "ANY QUESTIONS?" against a red background. The sign is white with black text and a black border. The hand is white with a black sleeve. The background is red with a white dotted pattern.

**ANY
QUESTIONS?**

**Thank you for
attending!**

**Contact me at:
lana.c.myers@lonestar.edu
Bldg. G, Room 221 G
936/273-7053**

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