

Using Question Stems to Create Opportunities for Collaborative Thinking

Rather than having students take multiple summative assessments, use these steps to help design opportunities for students to collaborate to understand how questions are asked on standardized assessments.



Choose a Unit

- Think about using standardized question stems in a unit where students will be reading common texts and will have many opportunities to discuss these texts in small groups or as a whole class.
- I chose a unit where students will be reading a whole-class novel. Their next unit also allows for opportunities to continue this work.

Gather Resources

- Use different resources to determine how questions are asked on standardized assessments. I was able to use examples provided by district assessments, as well as websites like Newsela and CommonLit, that use the Common Core State Standards to create their questions.
- Look for patterns in how questions are asked to determine how you would like to design questions and answers for your students.
 - For example, many of the question stems ask for students to determine the BEST piece of evidence or the BEST sentences to include a summary.



Create Questions

- Use common texts students are reading together to write questions and answers. Students can use these questions during small and whole group discussions to collaborate.
- Try to keep track of which standards you are addressing in the questions you are asking. Depending on the focus for your unit, make sure students are able to see how questions are asked differently for each standard.

Provide Time for Discussion

- Make time for students to read and discuss the questions you've created in small-group discussion. This allows students to think together about what the question is asking and what they believe would be the best answer.



Pass the Baton

- Now that students have the experience of learning how questions are asked on standardized assessments, let them create the next set of questions to share with peers. They can share their own created set of questions to continue practicing collaborative thinking to help answer multiple-choice questions.

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