



14 Power Strategies

to Boost Reading & Writing Achievement on Standardized Tests

STRATEGIES TO EMBED READING & WRITING INSTRUCTION INTO YOUR CURRICULUM

Course Overview

In this era of high-stakes testing, it's never been more important for students to enter into standardized assessments with essential skills and personal confidence. Throughout this course, teachers will learn explicit literacy strategies students need in order to be successful on state and national assessments. (Specific references will be made to the new SAT, ACT, and AP exams, Indiana assessment, PARCC, & Smarter Balanced assessments.)



Three reasons to enroll

1. High-stakes testing affects everyone.

How students perform on standardized reading and writing tests has far-reaching implications for students, teachers, and schools. Insights into the requirements for test success are needed now more than ever before.

2. Success on standardized tests is only part of the goal.

With mastery of academic standards as the ultimate goal, targeted and intentional preparation for the state assessment helps students improve as readers and writers for the test and beyond.

3. Success on the test requires explicit instruction.

Kristina Smekens will share strategies to embed rigorous reading and writing instruction into your yearlong curriculum so that students are equipped with the most essential literacy skills.

"Wow! I loved your charismatic personality and your positive attitude toward 'The Test.' Changing teachers' mindsets has to happen in order to mold our students' mindsets!"

~ A. Dreibelbis

"Such a valuable resource to prioritize the lessons to prep kids for standardized tests." ~ J. Warner

"My stress levels have been through the roof thinking of ways to improve my students' scores on End-of-Course-Assessments. The tips I have learned today have made me feel so much better about preparing my students! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

~ S. Randolph

COURSE OUTLINE

Find more information for each strategy on the next page.

STRATEGIES:

- 1) Juggle multiple texts
- 2) Recognize questions in a variety of formats
- 3) Decode vocabulary within questions & prompts
- 4) Identify the best answers
- 5) Make inferences about complex texts
- 6) Discern evidence versus details
- 7) Explain evidence thoroughly
- 8) Determine main idea & theme
- 9) Recognize new information within text features
- 10) Evaluate author or character perspective
- 11) Draw comparisons across multiple texts
- 12) Respond to texts in argumentative and narrative essays
- 13) Respond to a research-writing task
- 14) Respond to a literary-analysis task & strategy

Total time to complete course:

10-11 hours

(Allotted time to complete course:
60 days)

Instructor:

Kristina Smekens

President & Lead Consultant
for Smekens Education Solutions, Inc.

When you complete the course, you'll be able to:

- ▶ Identify how today's assessments are different from previous tests.
- ▶ Execute lessons to target Kristina's 14 Power Strategies for succeeding on standardized assessments.
- ▶ Create a sequence of text-dependent questions that keep students rooted in the text and follow the same progression standardized assessments utilize.
- ▶ Tweak your writing-about-reading tasks to mirror the constructed responses on standardized assessments.
- ▶ Hone students' habits for citing specific and relevant evidence.
- ▶ Prioritize the literacy skills that require explicit instruction.

Top questions teachers ask about preparing for standardized assessments

- ▶ What's different about the testing expectations under the new standards than those assessments administered previously?
- ▶ How can I intentionally prepare students for the state assessment without simply "teaching to the test"?
- ▶ How should I prioritize my yearlong planning so that students are adequately prepared for the state assessment?
- ▶ Beyond the English/language arts curriculum, what can be done in the content areas to cultivate critical reading and writing skills?
- ▶ How can I differentiate my instruction to help struggling readers pass the test?
- ▶ For my high-ability students, what unique instruction do they need in order to exceed expectations on state assessments?

Kristina provides the answers to these questions and many more!

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Strategies #1-14

PREPARE FOR A VARIETY OF PASSAGES

- 1 Read multiple texts in one sitting, juggling different author ideas.

ANTICIPATE THE TASKS

- 2 Expect a variety of text-dependent questions that are presented in multiple formats.
- 3 Be familiar with academic vocabulary in order to accurately decode questions and prompts.
- 4 Attack questions with test-taking tips to identify the *best* answers.

ROOT THINKING IN TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

- 5 Distinguish between what counts as evidence versus what are just details from the passage.
- 6 Follow a process for making inferences and answering questions, even when the text is complex.
- 7 Include explanations that demonstrate how evidence supports an inference.

THINK STRATEGICALLY TO INFER AUTHOR IDEAS

- 8 Determine the main idea/theme of a passage and support it with textual evidence.
- 9 Read charts, graphs, and text features to gain information beyond what is stated in the passage.
- 10 Evaluate how an author feels about a topic by determining his viewpoint.
- 11 Draw comparisons across literature and informational texts.

SYNTHESIZE IDEAS WITHIN EXTENDED RESPONSES

- 12 Generate an informative or argumentative response after analyzing the literary qualities of a text.
- 13 Generate an on-demand research writing based on information gleaned from multiple texts.
- 14 Generate a narrative response that maintains the plot details from the original passage.

"This workshop gave me so many ideas! The provided resources have given me a new perspective on how I can help prepare my children for standardized tests (and just plain good writing). I am inspired and invigorated!" ~ **C. Grider**

"I learned many strategies to add to the lessons I am already teaching. I found ways to teach the parts that I am weakest at with confidence. Any time I come to these workshops, I leave energized with many ideas to implement into the classroom." ~ **M. Harris**

"Are you kidding? ALL of this will help me! You easily tied standards to everyday lessons to testing questions & prompts...you make it so easy! You make all of us feel like we're in this together, and you're here to help us—and you do it while also making it exciting and getting us pumped up to make changes!" ~ **H. Gorr**

"I feel that I will be able to more specifically and significantly teach my students content that allows them to be prepared for standardized tests." ~ **J. Baldwin**

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Kristina Smekens

Kristina Smekens is a full-time literacy consultant who has built a reputation for using enthusiasm, humor, and common sense to equip K-12 educators with practical, demystifying strategies for teaching reading and writing.

As president and lead consultant for Smekens Education, Kristina is constantly developing new strategies for helping teachers to meet the demands of today's College and Career-Ready Standards. She and her two full-time associates share those strategies with teachers across the United States and beyond through on-site school trainings, regional seminars, and an always-growing pool of print, digital, and video resources.

A PRESENTER

Kristina has a gift for making the complex seem simple—for showing teachers how to meet the needs of readers and writers by bridging the gap between education research and practical, classroom-tested strategies that work. When she presents at state and national conferences, teachers flock to her sessions because they know Kristina will share strategies they can use in their own classrooms the very next day.

But beyond providing teachers with practical classroom techniques, Kristina is also a master at giving educators an injection of motivation and encouragement to help them return to their classrooms with the confidence and excitement they need to execute change. In fact, more than 17,000 educators rely on a monthly “shot in the arm” from Kristina as subscribers to her monthly email newsletter, “Big Ideas.”

AN AUTHOR

Well known for offering innovative ideas, Kristina has created more than 50 “Smekens Originals,” a compilation of books, guides, and classroom tools designed to help teachers implement best-practice literacy strategies. Among the most popular of these resources are her best-selling books, *Launching the Writer's Workshop: Grades K-2* and *Grades 3-12*. Other popular publications include *The Trait Mate: 6-Traits Starter Lessons*, *Connecting Comprehension & Composition*, *Sing & Comprehend*, *Close Reading Questions for Literature*, *Close Reading Questions for Informational Text*, *Trait Trackers*, and *Serving Up Synthesis*. Additionally, Kristina is the author of *Trait-Based Writing: Lessons and Activities* (Scholastic, 2009).



A CRAFTER

Beyond books and physical teacher tools, Kristina has also created a library of more than 50 on-demand training videos that are utilized by teachers around the world. With topics ranging from “Building Kid-Friendly Writing Rubrics” to “Achieving a Close Reading,” each of Kristina’s “webPD” videos uses a seminar-style format to capture her energy and enthusiasm while conveying her teacher-friendly ideas.



BACKGROUND

Kristina earned her BA in English and education at Michigan State University. Prior to her full-time consulting career, she was an accomplished high school English and journalism teacher in Michigan and Indiana. A leader in state and national scholastic journalism endeavors, Kristina authored a journalism textbook and teachers’ guide for Walsworth Publishing in 2002.

Over the past 12 years, she has been blessed to work and learn with hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers throughout the Midwest. She was awarded the Excellence in Reading Award by the Indiana State Reading Association in 2013 for her contributions to literacy in Indiana.

Kristina lives in Warren, Indiana with her husband and business partner Brady, their three teenage children, and a rambunctious family dog named Buddy.

“Kristina was fantastic! She was very intentional in her approach to teaching the 6 Traits and making it interesting for all learners! I learned new and exciting strategies to improve student writing.”

~ J. McKnight

“Love your energy, enthusiasm, & honesty!”

~ K. Dernulc

“Thank you so much! Kristina is so upbeat and knows how to engage her audience! I learned a lot.” ~ L. Clark

“The organization was fantastic! Kristina made the most of every moment. I have new strategies and mini-lessons to use in my classroom next week!”

~ N. Fessler

“Kristina is amazing! I laughed out loud! A conference I actually enjoyed.” ~ B. Smith

“Kristina’s energy was captivating! She inspired me to be a better teacher and gave me the tools to succeed in the classroom.”

~ M. Fischl

“After 33 years of teaching, I still am drawn back into Kristina’s workshops because they are research-based, standards-focused, and very interactive.”

~ K. Cadle

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TWO WAYS TO REGISTER:

1. Online - with a credit card *(Perfect for individuals!)*

Visit: <http://smekens-education.teachable.com/>

2. FAX THIS FORM - with a school purchase order to **888-376-0489**

Contact Person: _____

Email: _____

School name: _____

School address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

School phone: _____

COURSE FEE: Based on number of participants. For group registration, submit names below.

☐ One person

\$265

☐ Team of 3+

\$253
per person

☐ Team of 10+

\$237
per person

☐ Team of 15+

\$223
per person

PAYMENT:

☐ Purchase Order attached (# _____)

TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS: _____

COURSE ACTIVATION DATE: _____

TOTAL PURCHASE AMOUNT:

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

Group Registration Process

To register a group of teachers, complete the form on this page and fax it with a purchase order to webAcademy at 888-376-0489. After a purchase order is received, a professional development specialist will email each registrant with instructions for accessing the course.

Continuing Education Credit

With prior approval from the registrant's school district, participants may receive credit for 5.5 hours of professional development for this webAcademy course. At the conclusion of the course, registrants may download a Certificate of Completion which can be used to verify participation.

Graduate Credit

Thanks to a partnership with the Midwest Teachers Institute, registrants may elect to pursue three university-level graduate credits after completing this course. These are non-degree credits designed for professional certification renewals and salary step increases. (Check with your district or employers to determine their policies for pay increases.) The cost of graduate credit is \$300 and is separate from the cost of each web course.

webAcademy
BY SMEKENS EDUCATION

If you're not able to attend a live, full-day Smekens workshop, the next best thing is to enroll in the corresponding webAcademy online course. Each webAcademy course features engaging online professional development led by Smekens Education President and Lead Consultant, Kristina Smekens. Designed for individual or group use, every self-paced course consists of video footage from one of Kristina's full-day workshops.

In addition to delivering 5+ hours of professional development, webAcademy courses also include opportunities for educators to reflect and comment on what they are learning. Registrants are granted 30 days to complete the course but receive lifetime access to a password-protected web page that contains a treasure trove of lessons, videos, and other resources for implementation.