

Consider these suggestions as you assess what students have learned and how they are reacting to the texts. As you read aloud and invite initial responses, keep the following in mind:

**Look for**

- attention (bright eyes, nodding heads, sadness, window-gazing, inattention)
- obvious interest (or lack thereof) in hearing the text or seeing any illustrations
- focus or distractibility
- understanding or confusion reflected by body language
- positive or negative attitude

**Listen for**

- sounds of engagement (laughter, sighs, groans)
- questions
- “What ifs” and “Yes, buts”
- comments that indicate understanding or confusion
- informal conversations about the text after the read-aloud
- talk about the story and related issues
- connections and reflections
- thoughtful silence
- “Read it again!”

**Talk about** (in discussions, “grand conversations,” chats, or conferences)

- questions you and your students have about the text
- images brought to mind by the text
- thoughts that were aroused
- possible responses
- connections and reflections
- patterns that emerged

**Notice**

- who chooses the text for independent reading
- who uses something from the text in their writing
- who responds to the text in what way
- who chooses another text that is somehow related (same series, author, genre, etc.)

**Setting up your classroom:**

- Limit distracting visual and auditory stimuli. Aim for a calm and peaceful feel.
- Keep clutter under control. Model effective organization.
- Group noisier activity spaces and quieter ones so they do not interfere with each other.
- Have a special place for student-teacher or student-student conferences.
- Be flexible with seating arrangements and consider when students might need a place for calm and focused thinking or small-group work.
- Choose your transitioning signals carefully (e.g., a quiet drum, a subtle bell, music).
- Have a predictable (but flexible) routine to help students anticipate and prepare.
- Have available fidget toys or worry beads for calming.
- Keep track of triggers for hypo- or hyperactivity and make modifications to facilitate self-regulation.
- Create a safe and caring environment where students feel they have ownership.

**Fostering emotional regulation:**

- Familiarize yourself with resources on emotional self-regulation (e.g., CASEL, Edutopia, the Canadian Safe School Network).
- Encourage and reinforce cooperation, collaboration, tolerance, respectful behaviour, and kindness. Trust matters!
- Introduce relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, mindful awareness, and yoga.
- Modulate your own emotional responses and share how you do it.
- Help students to express their feelings using the directing, relating, and expressing functions of language (see pp. 27–31 of this resource).

**Strategizing to enhance focus and attention:**

- Be consistent in teaching and learning techniques and scheduling so students can anticipate, get prepared, and focus accordingly.
- Teach goal-setting and planning strategies directly.
- Build up attention span by eliminating unnecessary interruptions and providing appropriate breaks.
- Watch for indications of the need for some help, and indicate that students need to develop appropriate help-seeking strategies. Ask students to consider what they can do when they are stuck, confused, or need more information.
- Help students develop methods to self-monitor (e.g., lists, folders, sticky notes).
- Look for ways to make learning fun, motivating, and engaging.
- Provide concentration spots where students can go if they need extra quiet or limited distraction when working on something in particular.
- Deliver complicated instructions in more than one mode. Check for understanding.
- Give choice and ownership.
- Make sure that your demonstrations and modelling are clear.
- Help students develop personalized mnemonics that match their learning style and preferred modality.
- Aim for engagement. Motivation increases and self-regulation becomes easier.

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We are starting a new literacy and mental health series called *Well Aware*! We will be reading interesting books written by exemplary Canadian authors. As we work with these books, we hope to come to understand more about how to be happy and healthy, make good choices, and reduce stress and anxiety. We also expect to improve our literacy skills.

The intent of this series is to use the skills of language, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, to address important ideas about positive mental health. The mental health of all of our children is critical to their social and emotional development, but it also plays an important role in their success at school.

Exploring ideas through literature is not new and it is not meant as an “add-on” to an already full curriculum. It is simply a way to use the strength of communication skills as a vehicle to help children not only manage and cope with their everyday lives, but also to “be the best they can be,” physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally.

As with all curriculum initiatives, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this exciting new resource.

Thank you for your interest!

Sincerely,

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

As part of our learning about positive mental health, we are learning to apply the skill of **active listening**. Ask your child to tell you what this means and how it is helpful.

Have a look at the lists below for ways to practise active listening skills. Tips that help all of us make our conversations more meaningful:

- **Eye contact:** Turn off and tune out all other media. Focus on the speaker.
- **Body language:** Nod, open your arms, and share the same “space” (e.g., sit down to reduce a height difference).
- **Pass it back:** Try statements that begin with *Are you saying that ...; So what you are telling me is ...; Oh, that must have felt ....*
- **Acknowledge:** Let others know you “hear” what is said.
- **Ask questions:** *What does that look like? feel like? sound like?*
- **Agree to disagree:** Let others know that you may not always agree with what is said, but that you both need to respect opinions.

Questions that help open the doors to communication:

- *Wow! You look excited! What’s up?*
- *I can tell that you are (sad, stressed, upset) by the expression on your face. Let me know if you want to talk about it.*
- *If you had to change one thing about the way today went, what would it be? Why?*
- *What’s something that you really enjoyed about school today?*
- *Did you experience a feeling of calm today at some point? What were you doing? What do you think made you feel calm?*

Thanks for your interest!

Sincerely,

Name: 

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As you work together to create your play, keep the following in mind:

**Script:**

- Keep it brief and easy to remember and understand.
- Include emotions. Is it funny, scary, sad, happy?
- Does it make a point? How do you know?

**Stage Directions:**

- Are they clear and easy to follow?
- Do they help both the audience and the actors understand the plot?

**Setting:**

- Have you clearly identified where your play takes place?
- Do you need a backdrop or other prop to help the audience understand where the play is happening?

**Props:**

- Do you need props to help you get your point across to the audience?
- Can you create “imaginary props” that will still be clear for the audience?

**Actors/Players:**

- Is there a role for everyone in your group who wants to participate?
- How do you determine who plays which role?

Remember that the main idea for your play is to focus on cooperation and helping others to feel good about themselves.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete the following:**What is the title of your play? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Name the actors and their roles: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Write a short summary of your play: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Share your work with the class. Congratulations on becoming playwrights!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Planning**

1. Tell about the text you are creating.

What is the text about?	
Why is this topic important to you?	
Who is your audience?	
What will make your text interesting to your audience?	
What is your purpose?	
What do you want your audience to learn, think, feel, or do?	
What form are you creating?	
Name/Identify one important feature you will include.	

**Reflecting**

2. List three important skills/strategies you used while you were creating this text.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How can you use those skills or strategies to keep improving?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Text Feature	Definition	Give an Example
Title	- The name given to a text or section of a text. It gives the reader an idea of what the text is about.	
Heading	- A descriptor that helps you to recognize a section of information. A <b>subheading</b> is used to label sections within a section.	
Bulleted or numbered lists	- Lines introduced by a small shape, number, or letter. They may be items in a list, steps in a procedure, a set of examples, etc.	
Illustrations	- Drawings (or sometimes photos) that accompany the text. They may be included to add visual interest, and they may also help support readers' understanding of the text's content.	
Boldface	- Type that is darker and heavier than the rest of the type. This is often used for emphasis.	
Italics	- Type that is slanted to the right. This may be used for emphasis. It may also be used for the title of a complete work, such as a book or poem.	



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A story changes when a new person tells it. Writers and producers carefully choose the person or group who presents their stories and information. You can learn about their message by thinking about whose voice you hear most.

Name of the selection or show \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is speaking in this story or poem, or telling about this event? (Whose voice do you mostly hear?)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Is this the voice of one person or a group of people? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Write down three to five things you can tell about that person or group of people.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why do you think the writer or producer chose that person or group to present the story or information?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Think about how the selection or show would be different if the writer or producer had chosen a different person or group to present the story or information. Give an example.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We are studying a text by Robert Cutting entitled *Get Real!* It is a story about a young boy, named Jake, who learns life lessons from his Kanienkeha'ka (Mohawk) grandfather.

We thought you might be interested in how Jake relates life to four critical areas. As you read these, take time to discuss them with your child. You may be surprised to see how much he or she has learned!

In *Get Real!* Grandpa tells Jake that there are four components to living a full life.

**Mind:** What you think affects how you feel. Jake's grandfather gives an example of turning negative thoughts into positive thoughts: Rain can make you sad, but it also makes the grass green, the flowers grow, and the air fresh!

**Body:** When you look after your body, you feel better, think better, learn better, and enjoy life more! It is important to exercise your body every day and eat well.

**Heart:** Caring about or having compassion for the way others feel is important, and helping others makes you feel good. Jake's grandfather uses the phrase "Walk a moon in my moccasins." Ask your child what that means.

**Spirit:** Having "spirit" involves respect and responsibility.

Jake's grandfather uses the following example to talk about connecting the four elements of life.

- When he created his drum, he used his **mind**.
- When he built and played his drum, he used his **body**.
- When he played his drum with feeling, he used his **heart**.
- When he respected the tradition and importance of the drum for his people, he felt responsible for passing along important life messages. This is when he used his **spirit**.

Can you share any life lessons or important family traditions with your child? Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Strategy: I ...	How?	Engaged/Active Readers Think ...
I predict ...	... using what I know and what I have read and experienced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm guessing this will be about ___.</li> <li>• What might happen next?</li> <li>• This title/heading/picture makes me think ___.</li> <li>• Because of __ , I think __ will happen.</li> </ul>
I connect ...	... what I read to other texts and to my knowledge and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this remind me of anything?</li> <li>• Has this ever happened to me?</li> <li>• Have I ever felt this way?</li> <li>• What do I already know that will help me?</li> <li>• Is this information the same as or different from what I've read or experienced?</li> </ul>
I confirm, monitor, and track ...	... and stop to think about my reading. I try different ways to help myself when I don't understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this make sense?</li> <li>• Should I slow down or speed up?</li> <li>• Do I need to reread?</li> <li>• How do I say this word? What does it mean?</li> <li>• Will the context help me?</li> <li>• What clues help me fill in missing information?</li> <li>• What have I learned?</li> </ul>
I ask questions and reflect ...	... on what the text says and what is "between the lines."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this happening? Why did this character ___?</li> <li>• Is this important?</li> <li>• What do I think the author is really saying?</li> <li>• This makes me wonder ___.</li> <li>• How does this information connect with what I have already read?</li> </ul>
I visualize and imagine ...	... what is happening while I read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can I imagine with my senses (see, hear, touch, smell, taste)?</li> <li>• What do the characters, the setting, and the events of the story look like in my mind?</li> </ul>
I summarize, retell, and relate ...	... the most important ideas. I can restate them in my own words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This story is mainly about ...</li> <li>• The most important ideas were ...</li> <li>• How is the story organized? How is it sequenced?</li> <li>• How does the text's organization help me?</li> <li>• What evidence is presented in the text to support ideas? Is it convincing?</li> </ul>

After you have read *Creepy Crawley*, discuss the questions below related to each chapter.

### Understanding Chapter 1:

- *Creepy Crawley* uses a narrator to tell the story. Why do you think the author has done this? (Question and Reflect)
- After reading the first chapter, what do you think this text is going to be about? What makes you think so? (Predict)
- Why do you think Joseph acted as he did in the situation with the Touse brothers and Doug? Explore different possibilities and give reasons. (Question and Reflect)

### Understanding Chapter 2:

- This chapter introduces us to the boys' parents. What were your first impressions of Mr. Touse? Mr. and Mrs. Crawley? What makes you think this way? (Reflect and Relate)
- When Mr. Crawley suggests that Joseph come over sometime, we read that "Mrs. Crawley's face showed fear and panic as soon as Mr. Crawley had made the invitation." What connections can you make between this and different things that happen later in the story? (Track and Connect)

### Understanding Chapter 3:

- Describe how you picture the media room where the Crawleys tested out the video games. What details come from the author's words? What items have you added from your own imagination? Explain. (Visualize and Connect)
- Has your opinion of Doug or Mr. Crawley changed since the beginning of the text? What have they (or others) said or done that have affected your opinion? (Connect and Reflect)

### Understanding Chapter 4:

- How have things changed at school for Joseph since the beginning of the text? Why do you think the other kids accepted Doug and stopped calling him "Creepy Crawley"? (Confirm, Connect, and Reflect)
- What new information does the author tell you about Mr. Crawley (Chuck)? How is this information important to the story? Explain. (Track and Summarize)

- Joseph says, “It felt as if the room had suddenly become as cold as the North Pole.” When you first read this, why did you think Mrs. Crawley reacted this way? Why do you think the author didn’t explain her reaction right from the start? (Question, Reflect, and Summarize)

### Understanding Chapter 5:

- What new information did you learn about Mr. Crawley (Chuck) in this chapter? What do you think is happening to him? What can you “read between the lines” about the Crawley family’s reactions? (Predict, Summarize, and Question)
- Up to this point, the author has often described Mrs. Crawley’s face and actions, and only sometimes mentioned things she says. What do these parts of the story tell you? How do you “read” what this character is feeling when she doesn’t say it out loud? (Visualize and Connect)

### Understanding Chapter 6:

- Do you agree with Doug’s statement, “Most people don’t understand mental illness”? Why or why not? (Reflect, Connect, and Relate)
- At Joseph’s house, he and Doug have a conversation about Chuck and his health. Why do you think the author included lots of questions and answers in their conversation? (Question and Reflect)

### Understanding Chapter 7:

- Describe how you visualize Doug with his yellow shoes. Why do you think the author included this detail at the beginning and the end? Share reactions to Joseph’s comment, “I’m glad he wore his best yellow sneakers.” (Visualize and Question)
- Why do you think Doug decided to speak on behalf of his dad at the school board meeting? How is this different from the way Doug acted around people at the beginning of the story? What explanations can you think of for the change? (Question and Connect)
- Do you think it was important for Doug to share the information about his father’s mental illness at the meeting? Why or why not? What can you tell from the story about how people at the meeting felt when they heard it? (Reflect, Connect, and Imagine)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** Recall the scene in the school bathroom where the teacher walks in to find Joseph, Doug, and the Touse brothers. How would you feel if you were

- a) Doug
- b) Joseph
- c) one of the Touse boys
- d) the teacher who found them

**2.** Recall the scene where Joseph is playing video games at Doug's house. He happens to mention that the school board is trying to get rid of the teacher-librarians, and Mr. Crawley (Chuck) walks out. How would you feel if you were

- a) Joseph
- b) Mrs. Crawley
- c) Doug
- d) Mr. Crawley (Chuck)

**3.** Recall the scene where the Crawleys invite Joseph and his parents over for dinner, and Chuck starts shaking and ends up leaving the room. How would you feel if you were

- a) Mr. Crawley (Chuck)
- b) Doug
- c) Mrs. Crawley
- d) Joseph

**4.** Recall the scene where Joseph and his mom were out walking when they saw the ambulance taking Mr. Crawley to the hospital. How would you feel if you were

- a) Joseph
- b) Joseph's mom
- c) Kathy (Doug's sister)
- d) Doug

**5.** Recall the scene where Doug gets up to speak on his father's behalf. How would you feel if you were

- a) Doug
- b) Mrs. Crawley
- c) Joseph's parents
- d) Joseph

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

As part of our language and health curriculum, students are learning about the importance of developing a healthy mind and body. Recently, we have been working with a text entitled *Creepy Crawley* by Canadian author Steve Pitt.

There are many important themes in this text, one of which is the *stigma* that surrounds mental health issues. As teachers, parents, and caregivers, we can work together to help reduce this stigma and encourage our children to talk about mental health the same way they would about physical health.

Here are a few discussion starters that you may wish to use to open the lines of communication and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

- Ask what your child learned about mental health from reading *Creepy Crawley*.
- Ask your child to explain what the character of Doug Crawley told the audience about mental health at the school meeting.
- Ask your child what he or she would suggest if a friend felt sad, worried, angry, or frustrated. Encourage them to include ideas such as
  - **Tell** someone.
  - Use “feeling” words to express what is happening.
  - Use ways to relax, such as deep breathing, “going to your happy place,” singing a song, dancing, playing a game, etc.

These are just a few strategies that can help individuals to recognize, manage, and express feelings related to everyday mental health challenges.

Stigma concerning this issue has been around for decades. If we can help children (and adults) to realize that mental health is equally as important as their physical health, we have the potential to play a role in making it easy to talk about mental health.

Thanks for your help!

Sincerely,