Before Reading Strategy: Tea Party

Purpose:
Tea Party offers students a chance to consider parts of the text before they ever actually read it. It encourages active participation with the text and gives students a chance to get up and move around the classroom. This pre-reading strategy allows students to predict what they think will happen in the text as they make inferences, see causal relationships, compare and contrast, practice sequencing, and draw on their background knowledge.

Materials:
- Text selection could be a section of a textbook, chapter of a novel, or an article
- A set of half as many phrase cards as number of students - two students will have the same phrase

Steps:
- On cards, write phrases, parts of sentences or single words from the text that give insight into important points. Choose phrases that could be interpreted in multiple ways.
- Don't paraphrase the text. You can omit words to shorten, but don't change any words.
- Pass out cards to students and have them mingle around the room sharing their cards with others. This could be done to music – move when the music is playing, stop at a new partner to share when the music stops.
- Have students read cards to each other and begin discussing what the text might be about.
- Next, instruct students to return to small groups (4 – 5) to discuss what they presume the text is about.
- Ask groups to record their predictions by writing a paragraph that begins: "We think that this selection is about…"
- Share statements to whole group explaining how they reached their predictions.
- Now, have students read the selection.
- After reading, have students discuss with small group whether their predictions and inferences were correct, and how and why they would revise them.

Debrief:
- What is your understanding of the text?
- How close were your predictions? How did you revise them?
- What was it like to read a piece of text after making predictions like this?
- Did you find yourself more engage in the reading?
- Was your understanding deepened by working with your small group?

Adapted from *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do* Kylene Beers, 2003.