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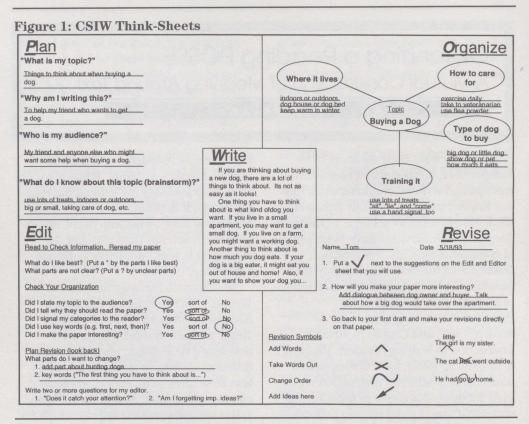
ARTICLE BY **TROY V. MARIAGE**

Teachers want their students to be independent, strategic, and empowered readers and writers, characteristics that our low-achieving and mildly impaired students often fail to achieve. In the past decade, however, there have been several comprehension and composition frameworks that have been highly successful in helping these students learn to read and write. Two programs, Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1986) and Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing (Englert, Raphael, & Anderson, 1992), have distinguished themselves in strategy instruction with their focus on *discourse* in transferring control of reading and writing processes to students. In these frameworks, the teacher plays a central role in guiding instructional conversations with students around small sets of strategies embedded within conversations while reading or writing.

In Reciprocal Teaching, the teacher and students begin their early conversations around a text by modeling, thinking-aloud about, and discussing four strategies: (1) *questioning* the text or other members of the group to help make sense of the text's meaning and provide an anticipatory set for reading further, (2) *summarizing* a section of the text to develop a sense of the big ideas the author is trying to convey, (3) *clarifying* any unclear vocabulary, textual ideas, or group members' thinking, and (4) *predicting* what might happen in the text based upon the group's discussion and textual information. A key component of the Reciprocal Teaching procedure is the opportunity for students to take the role of teacher and lead the comprehension dialogue. When students have responsibility for leading the reading group, it is believed that they internalize and take ownership of the strategies much quicker than if taught the strategies in less interactive contexts (Palincsar, 1986).
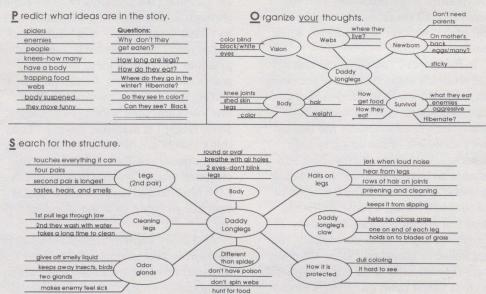
In Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing (CSIW) (Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony, Fear, & Gregg, 1988), a series of think-sheets were developed to highlight and concretize different aspects of writing expository text structures (e.g., expert, explanation, compare/contrast). As shown in Figure 1, think-sheets provide opportunities for students-teacher and students-students to verbalize a number of writing processes, including the planning of one's paper through asking orienting questions such as "What is my topic?" and brainstorming as many ideas related to the topic as possible, organizing ideas into categories and supporting details, and then editing and revising the first draft by one's self and then with a peer (Englert, 1992; Englert & Mariage, 1991b). These think-sheets are meant to be temporary instructional scaffolds, supporting discussions around writing until students have internalized aspects of the social dialogue to guide their independent writing.

As a more knowledgeable member of the learning community, the teacher has a special role in introducing students to the normative structures and language of these disciplines and scaffolding student responses by social interactions that bridge new to known. Furthermore,

Figure 1: CSIW Think-Sheets

Plan

"What is my topic?"

Things to think about when buying a
dog.

"Why am I writing this?"

To help my friend who wants to get
a dog.

"Who is my audience?"

My friend and anyone else who might
want some help when buying a dog.

"What do I know about this topic (brainstorm)?"

use lots of treats, indoors or outdoors,
big or small, taking care of dog, etc.

Write

If you are thinking about buying
a new dog, there are a lot of
things to think about. Its not as
easy as it looks!
One thing you have to think
about is what kind of dog you
want. If you live in a small
apartment, you may want to get a
small dog. If you live on a farm,
you might want a working dog.
Another thing to think about is
how much you dog eats. If your
dog is a big eater, it might eat you
out of house and home! Also, if
you want to show your dog you...

Organize

Where it lives

indoors or outdoors
dog house or dog bed
keep warm in winter

Topic
Buying a Dog

How to care
for

exercise daily
take to veterinarian
use flea powder

Type of dog
to buy

big dog or little dog
show dog or pet
how much it eats

Training it

use lots of treats
"sit" "lie" and "come"
use a hand signal too

Edit

Read to Check Information. Reread my paper

What do I like best? (Put a * by the parts I like best)
What parts are not clear? (Put a ? by unclear parts)

Check Your Organization

Did I state my topic to the audience?   Yes   sort of   No
Did I tell why they should read the paper? Yes   sort of   No
Did I signal my categories to the reader?   Yes   sort of   No
Did I use key words (e.g. first, next, then)? Yes   sort of   No
Did I make the paper interesting?   Yes   sort of   No

Plan Revision (look back)
What parts do I want to change?
  1. add part about hunting dogs
  2. key words ("The first thing you have to think about is...")

Write two or more questions for my editor.
  1. "Does it catch your attention?"   2. "Am I forgetting imp. ideas?"

Revise

Name Tom   Date 5/18/93

1. Put a ✓ next to the suggestions on the Edit and Editor
    sheet that you will use.

2. How will you make your paper more interesting?
    Add dialogue between dog owner and buyer. Talk
    about how a big dog would take over the apartment.

3. Go back to your first draft and make your revisions directly
    on that paper.

Revision Symbols

Add Words

Take Words Out

Change Order

Add Ideas here

little
The girl is my sister.

The cat has went outside.

He had go to home.

Figure 2: Partially-Completed POSSE Think-Sheet

POSSE

P redict what ideas are in the story.

spiders
enemies
people
knees--how many
have a body
trapping food
webs
body suspened
they move funny

Questions:
Why don't they
get eaten?
How long are legs?
How do they eat?
Where do they go in the
winter? Hibernate?
Do they see in color?
Can they see? Black

O rganize your thoughts.

color blind
black/white
eyes   — Vision

Webs

where they
live?

Newborn

Don't need
parents

On mother's
back
eggs/many?

sticky

Daddy
longlegs

knee joints
shed skin
legs   —   Body   —   hair
color   weight

How
get food
How they
eat

Survival

what they eat
enemies
aggressive

Hibernate?

S earch for the structure.

touches everything it can
four pairs
second pair is longest
tastes, hears, and smells

Legs
(2nd pair)

round or oval
breathe with air holes
2 eyes--don't blink
legs

Body

Hairs on
legs

jerk when loud noise
hear from legs
rows of hair on joints
preening and cleaning

1st pull legs through jaw
2nd they wash with water
takes a long time to clean

Cleaning
legs

Daddy
Longlegs

Daddy
longleg's
claw

keeps it from slipping
helps run across grass
one on end of each leg
holds on to blades of grass

gives off smelly liquid
keeps away insects, birds
two glands
makes enemy feel sick

Odor
glands

Different
than spider
don't have poison
don't spin webs
hunt for food

How it is
protected

dull coloring
It hard to see

S ummarize. Summarize the Main Idea. Ask a "Teacher" Question about the Main Idea (Check Details).

E valuate. Compare. Clarify. Predict.

teachers must model a language that can help students mediate their own mental processes. In the area of reading, this language can be tied to the strategies that good readers use, such as activating background knowledge through *Predicting*, *Organizing* ideas and *Searching* for the text's structure, *Summarizing* sections of the text, and *Evaluating* what one has read in terms of one's own background knowledge about the topic and by clarifying any unclear vocabulary or referents.

To guide teachers and students in the language of comprehension, a framework of strategies (i.e., POSSE) was developed that utilize a set of powerful strategies and a think-sheet to support and make visible aspects of the comprehension process before, during, and after reading in the language arts and throughout the curriculum (Englert & Mariage, 1991a). This research is distinguished from other research on strategy instruction with low-achieving and special education students in several important aspects: (1) strategies are not reduced and taught separately but are used in the context of instruction, (2) teacher and student discourse provide the tools for both instruction and assessment and are inextricable links in the process of scaffolding student understanding, (3) modeling to-be-learned skills includes providing students with a *language* to talk about and understand the discipline, (4) reciprocity and collaboration between teacher-student and student-student are necessary components in effectively relinquishing control of strategies, and (5) strategies are used flexibly across the curriculum in tasks that are meaningful to students.

In the first section of this paper, the reader is introduced to an instructional procedure known as POSSE (Englert & Mariage, 1991a). Next, reading is examined as a form of investigation where students are introduced to a small set of strategies and guided in the development of a language to talk about text. Our discussion focuses on the importance of creating a social context that supports the development of a shared vocabulary, and the mutually interactive and reciprocal nature of comprehension instruction. We conclude our paper by suggesting that multicomponent frameworks for guiding the comprehension dialogue can be effective instructional tools in introducing and practicing comprehension strategies across the curriculum.

THE READING POSSE: MAKING STUDENTS' THINKING VISIBLE

Predict

POSSE lessons start with the activation of background knowledge. Students brainstorm ideas from their background knowledge using the story title, headings, pictures, or initial paragraphs to prompt idea retrieval. Brainstorming serves two important purposes. First, students are able to build upon each other's ideas and make connections to their own prior knowledge. Second, by predicting ideas and generating questions to be searched for in the text, students create a purpose and motivation for reading.

The teacher serves a number of important roles in helping to make visible the content and processes of students' thinking. First, the teacher serves as scribe in recording students' brainstormed ideas to free-up students' attention to concentrate on the meanings and relationships among their ideas. The teacher records the students' ideas on an overhead transparency or large piece of chart paper (Figure 2) for future reference and to provide a record of the group's collective knowledge.

Another important role of the teacher in the predicting process is the use of

Figure 3: The Language of POSSE

The Language of POSSE

Reading Process	Comprehension Strategies	Self-statements	Instructional Scaffolds
Before Reading	**Predict** where did you get that idea? ask questions **Organize** categories detail	I precict... I am remembering... One question is... One category might be... A detail for that category is...	POSSE strategy-sheet Self-statement cards Teacher/Student think-aloud Helper words Reciprocal Teaching Mapping main ideas and details of passage
During Reading	**Search** search for the main idea **Summarize** main idea ask question about main idea	While I am reading I need to search for the main points the author is talking about I think the main idea is... A question about the main idea is...	
After Reading	**Evaluate** compare new to known clarify unclear words or referents predict what author will talk about next	I think we did (did not) predict this main idea Are there any idea or word clarifications? I predict the author will next talk about...	

teacher think-aloud, especially when students have lapses in generating ideas. As a form of procedural facilitation, teachers and students refer to a strategy sheet to cue students' thinking and give students a language to talk about text. Some teachers even take the self-statements from the think-sheets and put them on cards that are placed in the center of the table to remind students of the language of predicting. For example, one teacher held up a self-statement card that had the sentence stem "I predict that..." and then proceeded to think-aloud her prediction and where she got her information. The teacher thought aloud by saying "I predict that the author will talk about the daddy longleg's suspended body. I remember watching a T.V. show about how insects move and they talked about how graceful the daddy longlegs moves. My question is, 'Why don't they get eaten if they move so slow?'" The teacher then entered her

idea and question in the "Predict" column of the POSSE think-sheet (See Figure 2).

Throughout the POSSE procedure, self-statement cards and the think-sheet serve three important purposes: (1) they provide a temporary support for bridging student thinking to prior knowledge, (2) students are encouraged to own their ideas by using "I" messages at the beginning of each sentence stem, and (3) support is provided for introducing a language to talk about ideas in the text. These sentence stems, along with other instructional scaffolds, are outlined in Figure 3.

Organizing Predicted Ideas

From the predicted ideas, students are asked to organize their ideas and identify categories that are placed in the semantic map on the POSSE think-sheet. As many poor readers have difficulty in generating main ideas from text and

instead focus on random details, creating categories serves to make visible to students the relationship among main ideas and supporting details and leads them to anticipate the text's structure. A useful scaffold to reinforce the notion of text structure is the recognition that many category labels in expository text can begin with the words "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," or "how." As students become more accurate in their prediction of category labels, teachers can help students to see that their categories most often start with these "helper words." For example, in stories about animals, students begin to see that some common text elements might be "What it eats," "Where it lives," "What is looks like," "Who its enemies are," and "How it bears its young."

As in the predicting stage, self-statement cards can be used with two sentence stems when the teacher or student is thinking-aloud: "I think one category might be…" and "A detail for that category would be …." Experience shows that as students become more adept at generating category labels, this also serves to elicit more prior knowledge. Importantly, the teacher and students can add or delete information from the POSSE map at any phase of the discussion. For example, it is common for students to independently search for answers to predictions and questions the group members have raised on their own. Jason, a third grade special education student, brought in evidence from one of his dinosaur books at home that the Loch Ness Monster may really be a Plesiosuarus, due to their similar appearance. This new information was then added by the teacher to the group's category about "What it looks like," even though it was not one of the original predictions.

These two prereading strategies, predicting and organizing predicted ideas into a semantic map, frame the before-

reading experience. In the process, students' background knowledge is made visible and connections are made to the possible text structure. The POSSE think-sheet captures the group's collective knowledge and can be compared to information in the actual text.

Search and *Summarize*

As students begin to read small sections of their passage (i.e., paragraph or longer), they are reminded and made aware of the semantic map they have generated in the prereading phase. Student questions and category labels are quickly reviewed to set a purpose for reading. As an example, one teacher emphasized that good readers are like POSSE detectives who want to read critically to search for clues to answer their questions. One teacher went so far as to give the group leader a cowboy hat with the word POSSE written across the top!

The actual reading of text during Search and Summarize is very similar to the Reciprocal Teaching procedure described by Palincsar & Brown (1986). In the summarize stage, a student leader is chosen to lead the group discussion. A small section of text, usually a paragraph in length, is read aloud by the student leader or a volunteer that the leader calls upon. The leader then summarizes the main idea in one's own words, and generates a question about the main idea to elicit supporting details. If the student leader has difficulty generating a main idea or a question about the main idea, one can call on group members to negotiate the meaning of that section of text. Initially, the teacher plays an important role in modeling the summarize strategies by thinking-aloud and using a cue card with the sentence stems "I think the main idea is..." and "A question about the main idea is …."

In one section of the "Daddy Longlegs" text (shown in Figure 2), the teacher first modeled the summarization

strategy by stating "I think this section tells me how the daddy longlegs cleans its legs." I know that this is the main idea because each sentence tells me more about how the daddy longlegs goes through particular steps when cleaning its legs. So I am going to record that main idea in one of the category boxes in our text structure map. So my question about the main idea is 'How does daddy longlegs clean his legs?'" The teacher then called on members of the group to elicit the details that supported her main idea, including "They pull their legs through their jaw" and "They wash them with water." She included these details on the lines next to their main idea. Later, when the group's student leader provided his summary, the teacher sought to enhance the group's awareness of the categorization strategy by asking students to justify the summary using passage details. Once students discussed their reasoning for selecting the main idea, the teacher recorded the main idea in one of the category boxes.

Evaluate

After summarizing the main idea of a short section of text, the group leader prompts several other strategies that serve to further understanding (i.e., compare, clarify, and predict).

Having supported the group's choice of a main idea with details from the text chunk, the group leader then *compares* the text map with the predicted map under the organize section. The group leader is cued by the sentence stems "I think we did (did not) predict this main idea." The compare strategy is an opportune time to make connections from students' background knowledge to text meaning. Discussion as to why the author did (or didn't) include information that the group had predicted provides a powerful medium for giving ownership of ideas to one's students. As students begin to see that they have gener-

ated questions or predictions that were included in the text, they are provided support for the importance of text structure. Students also begin to recognize that authors must make choices for including and excluding certain information. The compare strategy emphasizes that the text is not an authority but a body of information put together by real people and open for negotiation (Alvermann, 1990). Some of the liveliest discussions are around why the author failed to include information that the students had hoped to read about.

Having compared the text map to the predicted map, the student leader then asks group members if there are any vocabulary words or unclear ideas that need *clarification*. The sentence stem "Are there any word or idea clarifications?" provides the stimulus to begin the discussion. Dialogue around unfamiliar words or ideas places the impetus for creating meaning in the group's hands. The teacher can support this discussion by introducing strategies such as rereading the sentence, looking back to previous information in the text map, and reading ahead to see if the word or idea is clarified in the next section of text. Though no individual student may have the answer, by negotiating meanings within the group, students are provided opportunities to help scaffold each other's thinking. The teacher plays an important role in helping to provide information that might help students bridge their own background knowledge to the text. For example, in discussing a section of text describing "What happens in The Bermuda Triangle?" a group of fourth grade students in a learning disabilities class generated an intriguing question that they attempted to clarify with the support of the teacher and each other.

Paul: Okay, "What happened in the Bermuda Triangle?"

	Michelle? (calling on group member)
Michelle:	People disappeared...and there's spaceships...
Paul:	Things disappeared.
Anna:	Animals could go there.
Bill:	I wonder if dolphins could get out of there?
Teacher:	That's a good question. May I write that down so we don't forget?
Paul:	Maybe. Water. That would be amazing if only water could get through there and I wonder if that is true. That would be weird if it was true.
Paul:	Heather?
Heather:	Why won't water disappear?
Bill:	That would be weird if water disappeared...because...
Heather:	(clarifying herself) No water is what makes them disappear.
Teacher:	Ahhh. You think that water has a hand it it. That is interesting.

In this short transcript, we see all five group members involved in clarifying meaning. Bill's question about dolphins is prompted by Anna's earlier statement about animals and stimulates the group to begin clarifying meaning about how things disappear in the Bermuda Triangle. Paul, the group's leader for this section of text, speculates on the ability of only water getting through the triangle which then elicits Heather's question "Why won't water disappear?" Bill then confronts Heather's statement and helps her to clarify her original comment. Although the group does not yet have the answer to what happens to things that enter the Bermuda Triangle, they have generated and refined a hypothesis about the role that water might play in the disappearance of objects entering the triangle. In their quest to clarify their own prior understandings, group members have invested themselves into the

discovery of meaning. It is this active, social process that develops real purposes for reading and serves to stimulate further exploration.

The final strategy in the evaluation stage is cued by the sentence stem "I predict the next main idea will be ...." The student leader makes a *prediction* based upon information given in the short section of text just read. The leader then accepts predictions from group members and explanations as to what text structure cues led them to their predictions. The purpose of this final strategy is to get students to look critically for structural elements that allow them to predict what the author might talk about next. For example, the last sentence of a paragraph often gives an indication of where the author is taking the reader. Over time its is expected that students will begin to see that text cues are most often contained in paragraphs preceding the next section of text.

The POSSE procedure then begins again at the Search/Summarize stage with a new student leading the discussion of the next section of text.

Summarizing after Completing Entire Passage

Having completed an entire passage, the reading group has generated maps that reflect their prior knowledge and collaborative understanding of a passage using the POSSE think-sheet. Students summarize the entire text by examining categories and details the group has constructed. They compare their prior knowledge as evidenced by their predicted ideas, questions, and categories during the prereading stage against actual text information. Looking across previous and shared understandings allows students to critically examine previous conceptions, an important skill in becoming a self-regulated learner. Students look back to see if their pre-

reading questions were answered in the text and make plans to discover additional information sources to help fill in gaps created by the interaction of the text and the group's prior knowledge.

INVESTIGATING MEANING WITH A POSSE

Although not intended to serve as a mnemonic for remembering comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, the acronym POSSE serves to emphasize that reading, like writing, is a recursive process that necessarily encourages reflection, questioning, and reexamining prior knowledge. Like writing, the strategies that good readers use to understand text can be used in multiple contexts both within and outside of school. Activating background knowledge, generating questions to be answered through discourse with others or the text, organizing information for efficient retrieval and use, and connecting new to known are not specific to reading instruction, but help us to view the learner as an active constructor of meaning who uses multiple strategies and sources of information when problem solving (Pearson & Fielding, 1991).

In this section, three aspects of the POSSE procedure are discussed as they relate to (1) the development of a shared vocabulary for talking about text, (2) the reciprocal nature of reading instruction and the gradual transfer of control of reading strategies, and (3) the use of scaffolding devices to provide temporary support for student thinking.

Creating a Shared Vocabulary

One key to the success of any discourse community is the development of a shared vocabulary that allows one to become a participant in the conventions that have been developed within a discipline. How a teacher values student contributions, allows for the dialectical aspects of discourse about reading as opposed to "quasi-discussions" in which the teacher controls knowledge, and views oral language as critical in analyzing one's own and others' thinking, all help to send messages to students about what is valued and serve to form the normative structures of the reading community. As there is an inherent asymmetry in power between teacher and student, a dynamic tension exists between encouraging students to build on their informal ways of knowing and the formal, institutionalized ways of understanding. How a teacher handles this tension and structures the discourse to gradually transfer control of the language and strategies of reading to the student will ultimately determine the success of the instruction (Englert & Mariage, 1991; Mariage, in press).

The lack of strategic knowledge and metacognitive control of the processes of learning often distinguish the low-achieving and mildly handicapped students from more successful learners (Raphael, Englert, & Kirschner, 1989). In the POSSE procedure, students are introduced to and encouraged to use the language of more expert readers. POSSE makes explicit to students a language and set of strategies that good readers have internalized and made automatic. The POSSE procedure attempts to first make visible, on the social plane between group members, the strategies and language of more able problem solvers. As such, POSSE serves as a temporary *vehicle* for creating meaning around text by providing initial support to guide the students' and teacher's thinking. The goal, as with all good instruction, is to have readers who have at their disposal a multitude of strategies that they are able to use flexibly in any reading situation. It is not enough to present strategy knowledge to students and expect them to be successful. Rather, it is the active use of these strategies in

real contexts that allow students to take ownership of their reading behavior (Bereiter & Scardemalia, 1985).

The POSSE procedure introduces a vocabulary to talk about text in three ways: (1) a set of strategies that can be used before, during, and after reading that are cued by the acronym POSSE and made visible to students through the POSSE think-sheet, (2) a series of self-statements that help give students a language to begin conversing about text during prereading activities and the reciprocal reading procedure, and (3) the use of teacher think-aloud and modeling when introducing new strategies and when breakdowns occur in the group dialogue (see Figure 3).

Transferring Strategy Control Through Reciprocal Dialogues

Although the teacher plays a primary role initially in providing much of the cognitive work as students are introduced to reading strategies and the structure of the lesson dialogue, it is the eventual handover of control to the reading group that underlies successful instruction. Teachers must themselves become active learners in the reading process and view their role as one of coach, apprentice, and facilitator. The following transcription during the "organize" stage from a fourth grade class' discussion of a story about the Loch Ness Monster serves to illustrate the handover of control from teacher to student:

T: For the category "Where it lives", we'll say it lives...in Scotland (circles the detail with a red marker).
Ann: Oh, I have one! "What it does!!"
T: Oh, you have another category. Anymore ideas about where it lives first?
Joe: In Loch Ness Lake.
T: Okay. Do you think we have them all [ideas about where it lives]?
Joe: Deep water, rocky at the bottom

(Teacher circles these ideas).
T: Okay...In red, I'll write "Where it lives" so you know that the ideas circled in red are all part of the category "Where it lives." Okay, let's do another category in yellow.
Sue: I have another category.
T: Joe, you come up and put Sue's category in yellow...
Joe: (Circles two ideas related to category, "Where people heard it from.")
Tom: I have another category, "What it does?"
T: Ann, would you go up and circle things that have to do with "What it does"?
Ann: (thinks aloud as she circles the ideas that are related to this category)...They say the head... They have pictures of it.
Sue: That's not what it does (Ann crosses through the line she had begun to write around the detail).
Ann: I have one for Joe that is part of his category. This idea (points to "They have pictures of its head") belongs to his category. (Joe spontaneously comes up and circles that idea...).
T: How about gets blamed for drownings? Could that be part of what it does?

One sees a number of instances where the teacher has handed over control to the students as evidenced by (1) students self-correcting each other (e.g. "That's not what it does"), (2) having students come to the board to circle predicted ideas that fit under category headings determined by the group, (3) the language of the teacher as a co-equal in the group who looks for consensus among group members ("Do you think we have them all?", "How about gets blamed for drownings? Could that be part of what it does?"), (4) the use of "I" messages by students when responding

to others ("I have one for Joe that is part of his category..."), and (5) students independently adopting the think-aloud strategy used by the teacher ("They say the head … They have pictures of it"). It is of interest to note that at this point the students had not read any text but were constructing meaning based solely on their background knowledge.

In the above example we see several instances of teacher and student think-alouds. In the think-aloud procedure, the teacher or student verbally states what one is thinking in order to model inner thought processes. This procedure allows the teacher and students to scaffold thinking when introducing new strategies, when clarifying thinking or when there is a break in the continuity of discourse. However, it is not only the modeling of inner thought that is important but naming the strategy being used and having students identify and practice strategies while reading text. Poor readers are unlikely to acquire cognitive strategies simply by imitating models: they need direct, explicit instruction in the strategies to be successful.

In addition to hearing teacher and student think-alouds, students actively participate in using the strategies with whole text in the reciprocal teaching procedure. As students take turns being the group leader for short sections of text, they are given daily practice in the use of comprehension strategies. Self-statement cards provide additional support and help insure students have opportunities to use the language of more expert readers while discussing text.

It is the reciprocal nature of discourse that allows for modeling, guided practice, explicitness in terms of *what*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to use strategies, and the eventual internalization of self-questions and thinking processes that allow for the generalization of strategies beyond the reading group. When teach-ers allow students to have an active role in the comprehension dialogue, a powerful message is sent about the social construction of meaning. These students have come to view their own voice and the voices of others as playing a central role in what the group shares in common.

Scaffolded Assistance

Underlying the notion of scaffolded assistance is the belief that students are able to do things with the assistance of others that would not be possible to do alone (Applebee & Langer, 1983). A common element is the importance placed upon the reciprocal nature of dialogue and the role of language (Palincsar, 1986). Inherent in this notion is making visible to students their prior and current understandings and confronting this knowledge with new evidence that may challenge existing beliefs. In the POSSE framework this takes many forms throughout the reading process and includes the use of teacher and student think-alouds, peer collaboration, and the use of procedural facilitation.

When introducing new strategies to students and when breakdowns occur in the group dialogue, the teacher plays a key role in making known her own thinking so as to model how one retrieves information or uses strategies "on line." For example, in the above transcript, the teacher provided temporary support when students failed to come up with details about "What the Loch Ness Monster Does" by saying "How about gets blamed for drownings? Could that be part of what it does?" The teacher recognized the students' difficulty and then modeled an appropriate question that is given back to the group for consideration. The students then agreed on the teacher's suggestion and were able to continue the conversation. Although not necessarily supporting thinking of an individual student, the

teacher helps the group over a hurdle that enables them to maintain continuity of discourse and ownership of the cognitive work being done in the group.

A second way that POSSE encourages scaffolded instruction is through its emphasis on group cooperation and participation through the reciprocal teaching procedure. As the reciprocal teaching procedure is dialogic in nature, there are numerous opportunities to support students and encourage further reflection through questioning, restating students' responses, and clarifying misconceptions. The following transcript from a story about the Bermuda Triangle serves to illustrate. In this segment, John, the group's leader for this section of text, helps Molly to understand that the Bermuda Triangle is not an actual triangle in the ocean, but an imaginary boundary marking an area where many ships, planes, and people have disappeared.

Molly: (To John, the group leader) Did you see the Bermuda Triangle when you were in Florida?

John: It's not just a triangle out in the ocean. It's just water. There's a lot of fog.

Paul: Yeah, there is a lot of fog.

Teacher: Molly, I think what they are wanting to say is that there is not a line that you can make with a black marker on the water. Would a line stay in the water?

Group: No!

Teacher: Its just sort of an area and no one is quite sure where that area starts.

John: What shape it's in [reinforcing teacher's explanation].

Teacher: But they think it forms the shape of a triangle. If they could draw a line, they think it might form the shape of a triangle.

Molly: Ohhh, on the outside?

Teacher: That's right. And do you know what we call that? We call that the perimeter. When you draw an outline of something (pointing to triangle in story), that is called the perimeter.

Molly: Like our world!

Teacher: Kind of like our world. The perimeter of our world. The outline, outside.

In this sequence we see the importance of discourse in making visible the incomplete ideas of a student and providing support for this idea by clarifying one's definition (John's explanation that triangle is not really a triangle, but just water), restating an explanation by using an analogy (Teacher restated John's explanation by pretending to draw a line on top of water), and questioning students about their new understandings ("Would a line stay on the water?", "Do you know what a perimeter is?"). Although Molly's ideas about the Bermuda Triangle are still incomplete, we see how her thinking was supported and expanded through the deft use of teacher and student discourse.

A final way in which student thinking is supported is through the use of procedural facilitation that helps preserve the group's thinking and supports further use of dialogue around text. The POSSE think-sheet, self-statement cards, and list of helper words all help to provide initial support and structure the comprehension dialogue.

BEYOND POSSE: INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The inherently social and strategic processes of literacy events provides opportunities to influence instruction across the entire curriculum. Strategies such as predicting what one already knows about a topic, organizing these predictions into categories that make

sense to the learner, searching for a text's structure that can give clues as to the intentions of an author, and engaging in a reciprocal dialogue about information presented are not relegated to reading alone but can serve as a framework that guides comprehension in all content areas. Using a small set of strategies in different contexts and instructional settings (i.e., whole group, small group, individual) promotes generalization by making explicit to students some common elements involved in negotiating meaning with oneself and others.

In addition to the use of strategies across the curriculum, a second potential use of the POSSE procedure is for both daily and summative reviews. The POSSE think-sheet allows the teacher to review the previous day's lesson by focusing attention on the group's prior understandings before reading and then comparing this knowledge with new information presented in the text. A common complaint by teachers is the lack of continuity in instruction when students are unable to complete a passage during a given time frame or class period. As prereading activities such as making predictions about what information will appear in text, generating questions to be answered, and building background knowledge are arguably the most important phase in reading instruction, it is often difficult to successfully complete a passage in a single setting. The POSSE think-sheet captures much of the previous day's discourse and allows for the quick retrieval of information with its use of the text structure maps both before and during reading. Students can generate summaries by looking at main ideas and supporting details from both phases and form an overall statement of their previous questions and how the text has confirmed or disconfirmed their previous understanding to that point.

Similarly, after completing an entire passage or when reviewing for a test, the POSSE think-sheet can serve to guide discussions about relevant insights into the subject being studied. The think-sheet serves as a built-in study guide that can be used by the whole class, in small groups, or individually to consolidate information.

A third use involves opportunities to make connections between reading and writing. As stories are mapped based upon main ideas with supporting details, these same category labels can then serve to emphasize the importance of text structure. Students can be shown that good writers have a central idea and then support that idea with relevant information. Main ideas can be taken from a POSSE map and students can practice developing paragraphs by rewriting sections of text. For example, the main idea "Daddy Longleg's Claw" and its supporting details, shown in Figure 2, could serve as the impetus for writing a paragraph. The teacher could introduce the notion of a topic sentence that includes the main idea and details that support this topic. As an organizational tool, these text structure maps can be expanded to eventually incorporate an entire story.

When POSSE is used as an adjunct to process writing approaches that emphasize planning, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising, students are given additional support for the importance placed upon strategic processes. Teachers can point out that in both reading and writing one must generate purposes for undertaking the event including "Who is the audience?", "Why am I writing (or reading) this?" and "What do I already know about this topic?" Further, good readers and writers organize their thinking so they can retrieve information when they need it. Outlining, mapping categories of information, and summarizing all serve to help readers and writers make sense of their subjects. Finally, both reading and

writing involve a form of reflection to evaluate one's efforts (i.e., editing, revising in writing and summarizing, questioning, comparing, and predicting in reading) and make additional plans. When both reading and writing are viewed as processes with many similarities between them, teachers send a powerful message about the utility of strategic approaches to learning.

A final, but not exhaustive, extension of the strategies used in POSSE are the opportunities for students to use strategies and then report back to the whole class to compare understandings or instruct other groups. As students become familiar with the comprehension and composition strategies, teachers can encourage independent practice by having students use particular strategies in pairs or small groups. For example, in a thematic unit around deserts, a teacher incorporated the strategies of predicting, questioning, organizing, drafting, and editing in the eventual production of a class videotape that was sent to the class' penpals. The teacher started the unit by having her students brainstorm ideas about what might be included in a unit on deserts and then organized these predictions into the categories (a) people of the desert, (b) animals, (c) plants, and (d) weather. Pairs of students were then given one of these category labels on a large sheet of chart paper and used texts from around the room to add details. Having spent time gathering information for their category, the pairs then used the map to write about their topic. Each of the pairs' papers were then put on an overhead for editing by the whole class. Students then voted on the organization of the final paper and began rehearsing their texts.

Allowing students to work independently of the teacher encourages transfer of ownership of the literacy process, helps students to internalize the strategies through redundancy in many differ-

ent contexts, and provides the poor reader many opportunities to bring their rich experience to bear on the construction of meaning.

Ultimately, it is the teacher's decision to create the learning environment for one's students. Issues such as time allotted for instruction, age and ability levels of students, classroom management, quantity and quality of curricular materials, and one's personal beliefs about the nature of learning all play important roles in the determination of what one chooses to teach. A multicomponent process such as POSSE is one way teachers can begin to introduce strategies to students that can be used flexibly in many learning situations.

CONCLUSION

Instructing the low achieving and special education student is a source of frustration for many teachers. All too often, this frustration is reciprocated in students who have given-up hope of becoming successful readers. When students are unable to read fluently, instruction is often guided by the belief that one must be able to call words efficiently before engaging in higher level comprehension discussions. Students come to learn that reading is an endless maze of discrete skills with the goal being to complete work the teacher has assigned.

This reductionistic belief prevents the poor reader from participating in the more meaningful dialogues around text in which higher achieving students engage. Without explicit instruction and practice in using the language and strategies of more expert readers, teachers miss rich opportunities to develop normative features of reading that emphasize the active, social, and strategic nature of learning.

Students read for a multitude of purposes in numerous contexts. The author

has presented one way to structure the comprehension dialogue and to capture the thinking of students and teacher for reflection upon the new and the known. Poor readers need many opportunities to participate in meaningful discussions with their teacher and peers through a guided dialogue that allows for frequent practice of comprehension strategies.

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