



Perspectives

Issue 1, 2003

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Editorial

In our educational system it is rare for professional development to be tailored to meet the individual needs of teachers. Mostly it is a case of one size fits all. Yet why should this be the case considering obvious differences amongst teachers in terms of experience, expertise in particular curriculum domains, and interests? While all of us would agree it is important to consider the individual needs of students, it is rare, I think, for systems to cater for the individual needs of their teachers. So what might be the most beneficial ingredients in catering for our members?

Undoubtedly, our offering of a conference every two years is one of them. The approach to this event in providing for our members seems to work very well. Having a respected educator amongst us to provide expertise on some of the 'big' issues that we regularly confront in our practice is an invaluable gift and one that cannot be purchased merely by procuring and 'consuming' our visitor's textbook. With Sharon Vaughn, as expected, we received a master class that should motivate us to consider many issues relating to literacy teaching; how we can structure our teaching to minimize failure through carefully constructed programs at the classroom level and then following up with interventions that provide sustained, intensive, research based programs for students who need 'pushing' towards agreed goals or criteria.

Second, the contribution of our generous local professionals ensures that we receive the benefit of their expertise in particular areas that concern us. Two such sessions that I had the good fortune to attend were conducted by Wendy Scott on differentiation and Ruth Fielding-Barnsley on phonological and phonemic awareness. We need their very specific expertise as well.

So what might be some of the other components that might contribute to the professional needs of ST:LD's? In recently interviewing a number of expert teachers trialling an innovative practice it was arresting that some of them mentioned the need to visit other teachers involved in similar innovations. This need arose as a result of their attempts, often brilliant, so they could learn and compare how they were matching up. Surely, this is a fairly common and logical reaction.

Second, having the opportunity to hear master teachers who have practiced in our field for many years reflect on their practice can be inspiring to those still grappling with many aspects of our craft. Perhaps, the concept of the 'Teacher's Chair' can go a little way towards promoting this end.

Third, it might advantage our members for our association to take stock of the conferences and workshops available each year where specialists in areas such as autism provide the latest research on these issues. The dissemination of this information might assist many teachers to coordinate their professional development planning. Wouldn't it be useful to have a record of members with expertise in specialized areas? There is after all much expertise amongst us.

Finally, and I know this is not an original idea, teachers need assistance in profiling what professional development experiences they need over time to reach their potential as professionals. The opportunity to participate in professional partnerships, in particular between the mentor and professional teacher could really help many teachers to reach their full 'maturity' as professionals. Perhaps professional associations could participate in this process in some significant way.

Back to the conference! LDA, in particular Wendy Scott and RSTAQ need to be applauded for bringing together such a productive professional event. While it did not provide the

'smorgasbord' of speakers that are sometimes available at conferences, the 'menu' promised food that would be appetizing, sustaining, and even memorable. That proved to be the case. Let's do it again!

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Yesterday was a most enjoyable day, spent with fourth year education students at the Queensland University of Technology. These bright young adults (and some not so young I might add) were keen to learn about Appraisalment and Learning Difficulties. We also revisited Richard Lavoie's excellent training video – "How hard can this be?" also known as FAT City.

One student even teased me about taking up the offer of \$50,000 and early retirement so that she could have a position in 2004.

Why am I sharing this with you? Well, sometimes we focus on our own lives and needs and don't see the big picture. Part of the big picture is that we are not indispensable and that one day we will lay down the heavy burden of responsibility caring for students with learning difficulties allowing a younger generation to pick up the ideal and run with it. It's their turn!

Despite some issues that we might have with our institutions of higher learning, they are preparing many fine students who bring great energy and enthusiasm to the teaching field. Our schools could do with a large injection of these youthful virtues. Now is the time to share our hard fought for wisdom with them to ensure their gifts are fortified by our gift of experience.

If we can spread our knowledge to others – student teachers, parent volunteers, teacher aides, class teachers, etc., – then we can perpetuate good practice and thus retain the collective wisdom of the teaching community.

Meanwhile, there is no shortage of work. Don't fear! You will never be redundant.

Keep up the good work.

David

Welcome!

Welcome to '*Perspectives*', a distant relation of '*The Quarterly*', which as you probably know was the main vehicle of communication amongst our members over the last couple of years. That was then, but now as Stephen Mysliwy informed you in our first newsletter we are approaching our communications differently this year. Apart from the newsletters, we wish to share with you some professional offerings that we hope will provide you with some extra sustenance. These will come under the umbrella of '*Perspectives*'.

Why have we used the title '*Perspectives*'? It occurred to us that our members attend conferences, workshops, professional network meetings etc where there is an enormous flow of information. At the recent Brisbane Conference, for example a large number of wonderful professional teachers assembled to listen to Sharon Vaughn and other specialist educators who generously shared their expertise. All of us who attended went away the richer for the experience. Following the conference is an opportunity for us to reflect on the 'pearls' that we gathered and reflect on how we might apply them to our practice. Now here is the crunch.

We would like you to share with our members a professional experience that recently engaged you and has lead you to consider how you can apply it to your practice. It's the next step after the event – application time. It doesn't have to be a long contribution a few paragraphs providing a few directions for members accompanied by a reference or two - just enough to point the way.

Our next issue we would like to share with you towards the end of November so think about 'penning' a few lines in October and forward your contribution to us. Alternatively, send me an e-mail with an attachment. The facility to do this is available on our website.

Our collective knowledge is enormous. We are all aware of that. Please share generously.

Best wishes,
The Editor

Reflections ...

Stephen Mysliwy reports and reflects on the return of a very welcome visitor for the 2003 Conference.

The much-anticipated return visit of Sharon Vaughn, co-creator of Collaborative Strategic Reading, (CSR), occurred during the June School vacation. She returned to Australia to present a series of lectures in Sydney, to the Catholic, Independent and Systemic schools at the Gold Coast and of course she appeared the combined conference of the Remedial and Support Teacher's Association of Queensland (RSTAQ) and Learning Difficulties Australia (LDA). We have to thank the tireless efforts of Joy Seary (RSTAQ) and Wendy Scott (LDA) who worked hard negotiating for over a year to have Sharon with us this year.

The main focus of Sharon Vaughn's sessions this time round was her latest research on helping struggling readers to access texts. Sharon presented to us aspects of a three tiered intervention program she has developed with the Texas school system. During the following review of her presentation I will include web addresses so you can access her work.

Sharon Vaughn is the co-author with Candace Bos of the book 'Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning and Behavior Problems' Fifth edition, Allyn and Unwin 2002. Candace Bos also presented at an RSTAQ conference several years ago. Sharon paid tribute to her friend who died last year.

Sharon's talk was entitled 'Group Size and Time Allotted to Intervention: Effects for Students with Reading Difficulties'. Her purpose was to discuss the influence of group size and duration of supplemental instruction to children with reading difficulties.

Six key elements of effective reading instruction were also discussed.

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics and Word Study
- Spelling and writing
- Fluency
- Text Comprehension
- Vocabulary

Aspects of these were also noted in the large study conducted in America, which later became known as the National Reading Panel Report (2000).

Sharon Vaughn's most important message seemed to be the need for practice to be backed up by research-based evidence. To this end Sharon introduced participants to a statistical tool called **effect size**. This tool helps professional educators discuss the validity of particular approaches in education. It is refreshing to listen to and grapple with these issues because it gives us the opportunity to examine approaches using a common vocabulary. By using statistics in this way we are able to take subjective emotion out of the debate and focus on what is proven to work.

One of the first items in discussing group size and composition was to attack ability grouping for reading instruction. Sharon tendered these arguments against this procedure:

- Quality of instruction is inferior for low ability groups
- Emphasis in teaching lower ability level students 'wanders' to teaching skills rather than their reading an abundance of texts
- Low ability groups receive less time for reading instruction
- Reading groups tend to be stable and restrict friendship choice
- Ability groups lower the motivation and self-esteem of low achieving students.

After this discussion, Sharon went onto outline the research supporting approaches that she was recommending. This is where things get a little tricky (and surprising). To begin with a short lesson in statistics. I found this little gem from a site at the University of Durham a nice concise description of effect size

‘Effect size’ is simply a way of quantifying the effectiveness of a particular intervention, relative to some comparison intervention. It is easy to calculate, readily understood and can be applied to any measured outcome in Education or Social Science. It allows us to move beyond the simplistic, ‘Does it work or not?’ to the far more sophisticated, ‘How well does it work in a range of contexts?’ For these reasons, ‘effect size’ is an important tool in judging effectiveness.”

More on this can be found at <http://cem.dur.ac.uk/ebeuk/research/effectsiz/intro.htm> including an effect size calculator .

So much for definitions, the higher the effect size the more effective the intervention. Sharon included in her talk this table –Interpreting Effect Size as Percentiles

	Effect Size	Corresponding Size
	.10	54%
Small	.20	58%
Medium	.50	69%
High	.75	77%
	1.00	84%
	1.50	93%
	2.00	98%
	3.00	99.8%

Using the above we can discuss Sharon Vaughn research. The following is a meta-analysis on

‘One-on-one’ and reading disabilities.

Overall effect size for:

- One adult with one child = 0.41
- Trained college student= 1.65
- Volunteers = 0.59

A trained college student being a student from any field interested in a community project such as tutoring children after school.

These results elicited an audible response of disbelief from the participants. Responding to this reaction Sharon then produced another statistic about one-to-one tutoring.

Instructor	Effect Size
Teacher	0.67
Community volunteer	0.40
College students	1.91
Paraprofessionals	0.68

The audible intake of air earlier became a loud disbelieving murmuring among all participants. Sharon then quelled the disquiet with the announcement that the college students were trained by her and did exactly as they were told, following a very prescribed intervention strategy. Sharon did not however explain why she thought that teachers and paraprofessionals scored so closely. I think that the positive news is that any intervention is important.

Rather than continue to show more tables I would like to report that Sharon’s research also demonstrated that children in small groups of 3 do just as well as those involved in one-on-one tutoring.

So what was the tutoring that Sharon recommended? The Department of Education in Texas has instituted a three-tier education program to improve reading competence.

The first tier is offered to all the children in the form of core classroom instruction involving the six elements mentioned earlier. The regular classroom session runs for about ninety minutes per day using all the elements of an effective reading program. Children are assessed at least three times during the year to check progress. The second tier involves supplemental instruction in small groups of 3 to 5 using a trained tutor in one thirty minute session per day for up to 20 weeks. The children are monitored using a benchmark system devised by the Texas Education Agency. Children who are still not successful are given another period in tier 2. The third tier involves groups of three children receiving two thirty-minute sessions per day for another 20 weeks. Children accessing tier three support are very high needs children who require high levels of intervention for the long term. Hopefully however, those that exit earlier are those for whom the intervention has been effective.

The lessons used by the trained tutors involve highly structured lesson plans involving all the key elements of phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, spelling and writing, fluency, text comprehension, and vocabulary. The lessons are included in a book called, ' Supplemental Instruction for Struggling Readers, Grades 3-5: A guide for Tutors'. This text is available at www.dibels.uoregon.edu

The Three Tier Reading Model emphasizes:

- Early identification of students in need of help
- Supplemental instruction to prevent or alleviate reading difficulties
- Serving students who require occasional additional instruction as well as students who require long term support
- Assessing students on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

Any intervention requires of teachers/tutors opportunities for students to take advantage of more of the following:

- Repeated opportunities for practice and review
- Additional opportunities for correction and feedback
- Increased time on-task, engaged in reading instruction and practice
- Drill repetition and practice review
- Breaking down tasks into smaller steps
- Making learning visible
- Using, then fading prompts and cues.

A tall order, yes. But we are in this game not because the task is easy but because it is worthwhile when it works.

Sharon's presentation of her research-based studies was lively, entertaining, and thoroughly useful. Who could ask for anything more?

Stephen Mysliwy

The reflection below is written in response to the lecture on differentiation delivered by Dr Wendy Scott at the LDA, RSTAQ conference held at QUT, Kelvin Grove Campus 2003.

Differentiation

In these days of inclusive practice it is imperative for educators including the ST:LD to discern which strategies, modifications to the curriculum, and arrangements in the classroom environment can be implemented to meet the complex learning needs of a range of students. While this process may be accomplished largely through commonsense negotiations amongst the various stakeholders, it seems important that both classroom teachers and support teachers be aware of the approaches that can maximize the possibilities of catering for this diversity.

Even the likely starting point of planning collaboratively and working as a team in implementing an agreed upon plan, challenges classroom and support teachers with the need to reflect how this model might be accomplished effectively. What types of strategies allow support teachers to maximize their contribution to partnerships requiring special educators to focus more broadly, while still allowing them to support students with learning difficulties adequately? This issue was highlighted by Klingner & Vaughn (2002) in their case study of an experienced support teacher attempting to find a right balance between advocating for targeted students in the classroom while at the same time attempting to cater for an allocated group. Reconciling roles can pose quite a dilemma for teachers attempting to address this balance.

At the recent conference (2003) held under the auspices of LDA (Learning Difficulties Australia and RSTAQ, Wendy Scott explained the virtues of differentiation, an overarching approach that appears to have potential for providing a general template of what inclusive

practice might look like. According to one of the pioneers of this approach, Carol Tomlinson (2000) it is a philosophy based on a belief system how individualizing might occur without providing a simple recipe. It does however provide guidelines and principles for the differentiating process.

Scott argues that inclusive education is only tenable with modifications to the classroom structure, curriculum and strategies. As she points out, effective practices that have been successfully implemented with students having special needs may have just as much currency for all students.

Wendy Scott shared her research where she looked intensively at adaptations in six classrooms. She asked the question, 'What is differentiation?' and suggested that differentiation is effected through modifications in a classroom through:

- Modifications to the curriculum, that is adapting **what** is taught
- Adapting instructional approaches, that is **how** teaching is conducted
- Classroom arrangements, that is adapting **where, when and with whom** teaching is implemented. (Janney & Snell 2000).

Westwood (1996) suggests something similar in citing Dewhurst (1996) to explain how differentiation might happen. Differentiation can occur through:

- 'planning for different outcomes from the same task;
- modifying learning tasks;
- giving some students more support and direction;
- using different forms of grouping in the classroom;
- using different resources.'

According to Tomlinson, 1995a, four characteristics shape teaching and learning in an effective differentiated classroom. These are:

1. 'Instruction is concept focused and principle driven ...
2. On-going assessment of student readiness and growth are built into the curriculum.
3. Teachers do not assume that all students need a given task or segment of study, but continuously assess student readiness and interest ...
4. Flexible grouping is consistently used. In a differentiated class, students work in many patterns ...'

While it may be tempting to attempt to implement many of these 'strokes' concurrently in response to pressing needs to make urgent accommodations, Scott warns of the need to hasten slowly implementing modifications gradually.

So what modifications might contribute to the pedagogical mix in providing differentiation?

In terms of the curriculum, it seems helpful to extract the 'big ideas' that underpin it. These are defined as 'concepts and principles that facilitate the most efficient and broadest acquisition of knowledge across a range of examples in a domain (Carnine 1994)'. These are described as the 'instructional anchors' from which more specific ideas, knowledge and narrow concepts can hang. In the literacy area, one 'big idea' is the concept of genre. It can be demonstrated to students that various genres differ in their generic structure. For example, in the teaching of reading comprehension and promoting writing expression, making explicit to them how the structures of texts helps to determine the 'skeleton' of an author's work appears to benefit students. Furthermore, teaching tools including modelling, questioning, use of graphic organizers, use of cue cards, provide the 'ropes' to the 'instructional anchor'. It seems feasible that careful teaching of these can provide one important dimension for differentiation.

Second, in terms of expectations for the range of students it may be helpful to consider the organizer offered by Sharon Vaughn to participants at the RTA conference in 1996. Participants may remember that she discussed with attendees the use of a triangle to support the planning for the differentiation of goals based on the competency of class members. This organizer may be rediscovered in her text, 'Strategies for teaching students with learning and behavior problems', p.476 or by revisiting the RTA newsletter, September 1996. For your convenience a copy of this organizer is included in TIPS. The bottom third of the triangle is provided for planners to list 'What all students will learn', the middle section for 'what most students will learn', and the top section for 'what some students will learn'.

It might be considered that an organizer may cause planners to limit the learning of some students. Rather, it seems to be the intention of the authors that no students will 'escape' a unit of work without attaining some goals that they can realistically achieve with some effort. There is a danger that some students may slip under the radar unless minimal achievement is spelled out. This is particularly so for those students experiencing severe learning difficulties who may develop 'expertise' in becoming invisible in the classroom environment. As well, the organizer may encourage teachers to strive to accommodate the higher achievers who may find it relatively easy to achieve the common goals.

Third, it seems important to consider which strategies appear to benefit all students irrespective of ability. One group of strategies that appear to fit the bill are those coming under the banner of cooperative learning. It is important to emphasise that true cooperative learning as opposed to group work, where students may or may not truly share the responsibility for completing a task, involves interdependence so that a group sinks or swims on the basis of all members. This principle, along with others delineated by Johnson & Johnson (2002) underpins successful

cooperative learning.

Gillies (1993) points out that the training of students to work together effectively is crucial to their success. Students need to learn the social and interaction skills that help to ensure that all students participate with due respect paid to the contributions of all group members. This seems particularly true if students with learning difficulties are to benefit from the experiences of working with peers. (Further information about this and others pertaining to cooperative learning may be found in 'Cooperative learning in schools' by Robyn Gillies. In addition, The Hot Topic: Cooperative learning found under the Curriculum Exchange, Education Queensland provides valuable leads for those wishing to pursue the area in greater depth.)

As well teachers need to form small groups – no more than four is the recommendation where careful consideration is given to the combination of students. It is generally suggested that mixed ability groups provide the best option. More able students benefit from providing explanations and assistance to less able peers. Less able students benefit from the assistance received and middle-achieving students in mixed groups appear to do as well as they might if placed in homogenous groups.

Perhaps one way for teachers to learn some of the processes of cooperative learning is adopt one that provides careful guidelines for its implementation. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) developed by Klingner, Schumm & Vaughn (1998) has the virtue of teaching students reading comprehension strategies previewing, clarifying, summarizing, allocates specific roles and provides scripts to assist students be productively engaged in groups. These can assist students to develop the discourses that set them on the path of effectively comprehending expository texts. This strategy, like Reciprocal teaching from which it was derived appears to benefit diverse groups of students (Bos & Vaughn 2002, pp.211 – 215).

Differentiation is a process that requires careful planning, a heap of good will and excellent communication skills if it is to be employed, developed and sustained over the long haul. The intent here is to suggest a few tools that might assist this process.

REFERENCES

Websites

Albemarle County Public Schools Technology and Differentiated Instruction: Web Resources

<http://k12.albemarle.org/Technology/DI/>

Curriculum Exchange See in particular the Hot Topics:

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/

Cooperative learning

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/01592.htm

Differentiated instruction

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/01483.htm

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<http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed389141.html>

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Michael Boyle

TBR: As a teacher of writing, what sorts of things can be taught, and what cannot? Ever taught Americans? How are they different from Irish students?

MR: How long do we have to talk about this? I've fierce opinions about teaching creative writing. I tell my students if a writer who is teaching you tells you writing cannot be taught, walk out. Would you pay a carpenter to teach you a little carpentry if he told you he couldn't teach you but would happily take your money to finance his next creation? You might not make the steadiest table on earth but you will build a table, and it will be 'your' table.

Teaching writing is one of my greatest joys. Witing, at its simplest, is speech, is thought, slowed down. Anyone — anyone — can write. There is no mystery. One word follows another. I tell my students that if they want to write, really want to write, they'll be writers by the end of my course. Yu can teach, or perhaps I should say introduce the student to everything: form, technique, voice, all of it. You can introduce them to the thrill of creation, to the intense pleasure of reading closely. Of course, to use one of my father's old saying, you can bring a horse to water but you can't make him drink. But if they want to drink I can make them thirstier than they've ever been.

The most important aspect of teaching is to create a safe environment, to reduce the fear, to make it fun, to give permission if permission is sought, to strip away the pretense of divinity. Then torture them.

I teach in a terrific program for the University of Iowa — it's a summer study abroad program we set up with the help of Trinity College, Dublin and the students are addicts. I remember sitting at the front of the bus we were taking to Belfast and I turned around and everyone, every single student, was reading. That's the education our children deserve. I could talk about the teaching of writing and reading all day ... (Irish writer Martin Roper) Bookreporter 2003

UNIT PLANNING FORM

**What some
students will
learn.**

**What most
students
will learn.**

**What ALL
students
should
learn.**

Reprinted with permission. (Sharon Vaughan, 1996)

Date: _____ **Class Period:** _____

Unit Title: _____

Materials/Resources:

Instructional Strategies/Adaptations:

Evaluation/Products:

David Waterworth (Support Teacher Appraisal) shared some generic strategies that can be used across curriculum areas.

See the TIPS database for further information about Reciprocal Teaching.
<http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/00597.htm>

STRESS FREE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Need for strategies/processes that are content free and able to be used across curriculum areas.

1. **Think – Pair – Share**

- Think:** Make own list
Pair: Discuss with person next to you; list strategies
Pair again: Discuss in groups of four
Share: Brainstorm as whole group

See also:

Listen – Think – Pair – Share

<http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/00604.htm>
(NB Brainstorming can be used as a separate strategy. See for example, KWL through the TIPS database, Curriculum Exchange: Education Queensland.

See also the Hot Topic: Cooperative learning for further cooperative learning strategies on the Curriculum Exchange, Education Queensland

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/01592

2. **Peer Tutoring** – can be used with any piece of text – using Pause Prompt and Praise; students share a book and read together. See also see the Hot Topic: Peer Tutoring on the Curriculum Exchange, Education Queensland
http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/01486.htm

3. **Reciprocal Teaching** – students work through a prepared checklist discussing a piece of text which a pair or group has read.

4. **Plus Minus Interesting** – students judge ideas presented either in text, or brainstorm by placing in a grid as either plus, minus or interesting. See the accompanying format.

See the Department of Education, Tasmania - ENGLISH LEARNING AREA: Teaching strategies, PMI.

<http://www.discover.tased.edi.au/english/PMI.htm>

I have used all the above strategies with small groups and whole classes and found them very powerful, easy to implement and require very little preparation outside school time.

Students need to be taught how to use each strategy. The more often they are used, the more proficient students become.

PLUS, MINUS AND INTERESTING

PLUS +	MINUS -	INTERESTING ?

TEACHING STUDENTS TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS TO PROMPT EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

Rationale

It is important to model for students the types of questions that good readers ask themselves as they read to maximize their interaction with a text. Think-alouds can demonstrate to students that comprehending is a very active process. As well, students need to discriminate the types of questions that lead to effective discussion in groups.

Many students who have struggled with decoding texts may have immature comprehension skills. They may be inactive readers merely focussing on the literal aspects of what they read. One way to intervene is to model a Think-aloud in combination with a strategy such as 'Question-answer relationships' (Raphael, 1982,1984,1986)

Goal

To teach students how to form different types of questions that can be used in book discussions and literature circles, and in the comprehending of expository texts as well.

Materials required

Cue card with the QARs (Question answer relationships) strategy, Post-its - 4 different colours, 'Question sheet' divided into four quadrants that can be used during group discussions to prompt the formation of different types of questions, a range of texts for discussion; initially focus on short texts where it is relatively easy to extract information

Procedure

STEP 1. Presenting the QAR framework

Use simple passages or traditional stories to demonstrate the four types of questions, that is 'In the book' – Right there (textually explicit) Putting it together (textually implicit); 'In my

head' – Author and you and On your own. Alvermann and Phelps, 2002 use the 'Three Bears' to provide an example of the different types of questions and how the reader needs to work to get answers. See the attached sheet that might be used as a cue card.

Examples:

1. **Right there:** What were the three bears eating for breakfast?
2. **Putting it together:** Why was baby bear upset when he came home? (The answer is likely to be across more than one paragraph.)
3. **Author and you:** What kind of person was Goldilocks? (The text gives some clues but we would need to 'guess' that she was curious, perhaps homeless, needing a place to rest in the absence of a café.
4. **On your own:** What might it be a bad idea to go into a stranger's house? (The reader needs to think of a reason why this might be the case, for example it is against the law, or it is a dangerous thing to do etc.

STEP 2. Thinking of questions in groups

Use the sheet with four quadrants to demonstrate to students how they might place the different types of questions in the four spaces. Suggest that the four colours denote the different types of questions. For example, GREEN might be 'Right there' questions, YELLOW 'Putting it together', RED 'Author and you', BLUE 'On your own'. Provide opportunities for the students to apply this framework in groups. If these discussions occur in the classroom, reflect on the value of the questions and how they can help the reader to explore different types of information. You might like to use currency values to communicate the value of the various questions. For example, you might say, 'That's a \$100 question,' great thinking.

STEP 3. Practicing the use of the framework

Provide opportunities for the students to apply the strategy, for example while they are involved in 'Literature circles' or 'Book club' groups.

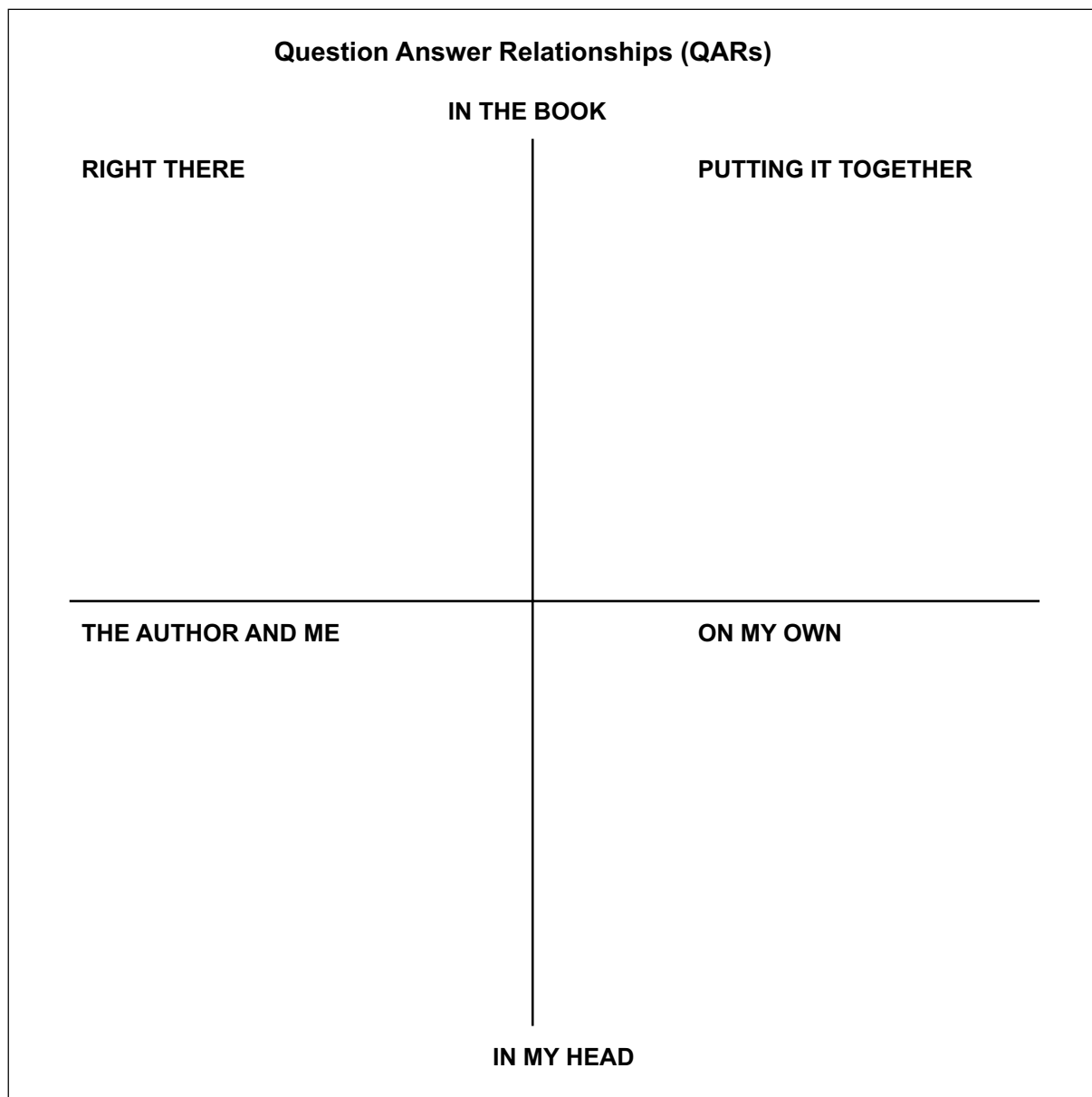
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<http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/english/jwforum.htm>

ENGLISH LEARNING AREA: Department of education, Tasmania
Teaching strategies
<http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/english/askquest.htm>

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QARs (Question/Answer Relationships)

In the book

- **Right There**
What were the three bears eating for breakfast?
- **Think and Search (Putting it together)**
Why was Baby Bear so upset when he came home?

In My Head

- **Author and Me**
What type of person was Goldilocks?
- **On My Own**
Why is it a bad idea to go into a stranger's home when no-one is home?

Reference: Alvermann, D. E. & Phelps, S.F. 2002, Content Reading and Literacy: Succeeding in Today's Diverse Classrooms, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, chapter 7, pp. 204 - 245



FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Comprehension Instruction: Research-based best practice

Cathy Collins Block and Michael Pressley
(eds) NY, Guilford Press, 2002.

This is a broad ranging, thoroughly solid text that attempts to inform educators of the advances in our understanding of the nature of comprehension, how these processes can be taught and what should be the dominant foci of instruction where due recognition is paid to the teaching of comprehension. It is impressive that there is so much more understanding of what is required to teach reading comprehension since Dolores Durkin (1978) severely criticized the lack of attention to this component of reading instruction. What particularly impressed the editors was the degree of consensus amongst contributors about the many areas of comprehension instruction that are worthy of attention.

The book consists of four groups of studies with an introduction and conclusion provided by the two editors. The four groups are:

- Theoretical foundations: New directions for the future
- Branching out and expanding our horizons in the 21st century
- Comprehension instruction in preschool, primary, and intermediate grades
- Intensification of comprehension instruction throughout middle school, high school and college.

In reading this book, it is very useful to start with the introduction and conclusion to clarify the issues involved. In particular, the conclusion stipulates what strategies need to be taught to promote successful comprehension. In ‘Summing up’, Block and Pressley conclude the following:

- ‘Begin teaching comprehension skills during the primary grades’...and ‘continue to teach comprehension processes for as long as students need it.
- Develop decoding skills in readers’ ensuring that students have sufficient instruction to develop fluency.
- ‘Teach vocabulary’ understanding the relationship between word knowledge and comprehension.
- ‘Have students read diverse and worthwhile texts as they perform diverse and worthwhile text processing tasks’ incorporating an awareness of prior knowledge students bring to a variety of texts – narrative, expository, web based; as well students need to engage in strategies that involve them comprehending main ideas, eliciting important details, and tracking and linking important ideas across texts.
- ‘Teach students to relate their prior knowledge to new texts when prior knowledge can increase understanding of new texts’ with emphasis on drawing students to become aware of their prior knowledge and how this links to texts. The connection is the degree

of consciousness brought to the reading.

- ‘Teach students the well-validated comprehension strategies’; these may be taught as individual strategies or as a repertoire, for example in Collaborative Strategic students are taught previewing, monitoring and clarifying, summarizing, self-questioning and summarizing as a constellation of strategies.
- ‘Teach students to monitor whether they are understanding text’ and make adjustments where this is not happening.

Because this is a complex text and readers have different starting points and interests it is hard to recommend individual chapters. However, it seemed important to this reader, to consult the chapters dealing with the place of direct instruction (The case for direct explanation of strategies), the role of imaging in comprehension (Imagery: A strategy for enhancing comprehension) and the role of metacognition (Metacognition in comprehension instruction) in the comprehending process.

What is really impressed on the reader is the need for teaching explicitly comprehending processes. It cannot be presumed, as it was frequently in the past, that comprehension skills were ‘picked’ up along the way. If there is one clear message that runs through this text is that mature comprehension needs to be consciously taught over the long haul by the implementation of carefully constructed strategies. Such attentive teaching presumably requires careful planning amongst teachers.

As I have indicated this text requires considerable commitment to glean the essence and significant details. Consequently, I presume it would be most welcome by students of teaching but I would suggest that it could be an excellent basis for professional development in school contexts where teachers as a collective are reviewing their approaches to teaching comprehension. Such a commitment would, I suggest, result in teachers’ scrutinizing critically ‘lighter’ texts that seem at first glance more closely connected to the daily curriculum.

(Available through the Education Queensland Professional Collection)

Conversations: Strategies for teaching, learning and evaluating

Regie Routman, Portsmouth: NH, Heinemann, 2000

Are you up for a literacy text that looks something like a cross between an old-fashioned ‘bumper’ book and a telephone directory? The main body of teaching comes in the white pages (over 600 pages) with 240 blue pages being devoted to teacher resources. The white pages are absolutely jammed packed with teaching advice on all areas of literacy. Here are a few:

- Using picture books to inspire personal narrative
- Organizing for writing
- Individual conferences
- Using textbooks and guides
- The role of the Language Arts coach
- Working with struggling readers

I dipped into this book because I was interested in finding out how teachers can mediate literature discussions. I found a great list of cues or prompts. Here are a few of them.

- Tell us what
- Tell us why you agree
- Let’s talk about
- Let’s discuss why
- So you’re saying
- Talk more about that.

These got me on the path on thinking how teachers can vary the ‘spiel’, getting away from the all pervasive question.

In short, this great resource is one to keep handy for dipping into whatever your literacy need happens to be. It seems to me that Routman’s text could truly be the teacher’s friend.

(Available through the University of Queensland library)

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