THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 4 OCTOBER 2003 ISSN 1392-947X

MISSION STATEMENT

Thinking Classroom serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in promoting democratic teaching practices. The publication encourages professional development, research, and reflection. *Thinking Classroom* features articles that foster learner-centered teaching strategies including critical and creative thinking, active and cooperative learning, and problem solving. The journal also publishes articles about the institutional structures that support these practices.

Founded in 2000 as a publication of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project funded by the Open Society Institute

Published as a quarterly journal from 2002 by the International Reading Association

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139 USA

COVER DESIGN
West & Assoc., McLean, VA USA
COVER PHOTO
PhotoDisc, Inc.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

The International Reading Association is a nonprofit service organization dedicated to improving reading instruction and promoting the lifetime reading habit. The Association publishes professional books and five professional print journals: *The Reading Teacher* (about learners ages 1–12), the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, Reading Research Quarterly, Lectura y Vida* (in Spanish), and *Thinking Classroom* (also published in Russian as *Peremena*). The Association also publishes the electronic professional journal *Reading Online* (http://www.readingonline.org) and a bimonthly newspaper for members, *Reading Today.*

THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

Production by **Garnelis**, Klaipėdos g. 6,
LT-2600 Vilnius, Lithuania
Printed by **Spaudos kontūrai** UAB,
Viršuliškių skg. 80, LT-2056 Vilnius, Lithuania

Departments

Features

Letter from the Editor

About fifty years ago my mother considered what to do about my brother who was simply not learning to read. Always a "can do" kind of woman, she learned about a reading specialist, Nila Banton Smith (IRA President, 1963–1964), and set off to study with her. Rosalie Saul, the first learning disability teacher in the state of Connecticut, taught her son to read and became an early member of the International Reading Association.

IRA was at that point a tiny organization. I remember what looked like a newsletter coming to our mailbox, something called *The Reading Teacher*, that was mimeographed on 8.5"x11" paper, folded, and stapled. Though my mother never wrote for that "journal" she read it eagerly. For her, an isolated reading specialist, the publication provided community and conversation. It addressed problems she cared about deeply and helped her as she planned her work as a teacher.

At the 13th European Reading Conference I find myself thinking again about community and conversation, particularly in relation to *Thinking Classroom*. Clearly, this is not a journal that focuses on reading specialist issues, but rather on what it means to be an effective classroom teacher who uses literacy as a way of leveraging learning. My hope, however, is that it's more than that.

Colleagues in Eastern Europe tell me about the academic traditions extant in their schools— students learn isolated facts to prepare for exams. Year after year, more facts, more tests. Frankly, American education appears to be moving in the same direction these days.

"So, what is the problem with this approach?" I ask a colleague from the Czech Republic, a nation whose students consistently score well on international assessments. "The students don't know how to think," he replies. "They don't connect information, they don't question, they don't apply what they know to new situations." For my friend, the goal is not just to learn information, but rather to use information to explore and imagine and argue and create.

In this issue of *Thinking Classroom* we offer many opportunities for teachers to connect information, to think critically, and to question the texts presented. In an article by Joyce Herbeck and Clara Beier, "Helping Preservice Teachers to Understand Reading and Writing as Emancipatory Acts," the authors suggest that students of any age should move from *reading* about justice into *action* in support of social justice. This piece concerned me for two reasons. First, I wondered about the developmental aspect. Given the needs of young children for approval, how might a teacher with a social justice agenda encourage independent thinking rather than simple compliance? My second concern had to do with state control—in countries where opposing government policy may have dire consequences, were we as editors being responsible in suggesting to teachers and students that they make their protests public?

I consulted colleagues who were considerably more experienced in responding to governmental manipulation and censorship. Interestingly, they seemed relatively undaunted by the piece (see discussion on page 43). Instead of viewing the proposed activities as political, they saw them as social, and interpreted the strategies suggested by Herbeck and Beier only as modern methods, methods they seemed anxious to adopt. What an interesting world, I thought, now more anxious than ever to publish this piece.

In the same way that my mother looked forward to the IRA publication that supported her work as an isolated reading specialist, I hope that *Thinking Classroom* readers find support in these pages for their own efforts to think critically and reflectively. Through the efforts of these teachers, their students will surely develop as more critical readers, writers, and thinkers.

Wendy Saul

What's New?

13th IRA European Conference on Reading "Reading—Writing—Thinking"

Almost 300 educators came from Europe, Central Asia, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Philippines, and South Africa to participate in the 13th European Conference on Reading 6–9 July in Tallinn, Estonia. The conference was organized by the International Reading Association's International Development in Europe Committee (IDEC) and the Estonian Reading Association.

The tradition of European Conferences on Reading dates back to 1977 when the first conference was held in France. The main goals of the conference are to promote literacy, to share best practices, and to promote community among educators around the world. At the opening ceremony, Meeli Pandis, President of the Estonian Reading Association, remarked that this gathering of the professional community would promote the spread of a very serious "infection"—the love of reading. The strategies for dissemination of this "disease" were plenary sessions, research presentations, round table discussions, workshops, and other activities.

Guest speakers at the conference were Peep Ratas, secretary-general of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research; Peeter Normak, vice-rector of Tallinn Pedagogical University; Alan Farstrup, executive director of IRA; and Eldbjoerg Tosdal Lyssand, chairperson of IDEC. Comprehensive and thoughtful keynote presentations by Ingrid Ruutel, first lady of Estonia, and Winsome Gordon, UNESCO representative, opened the conference. And in a welcome change from the old tradition of very official, ceremonial speeches, MaryEllen Vogt and Maureen McLaughlin (IRA), and Gunter Kress (London University) offered presentations that were extremely lively and interactive.

The Conference concluded with an invitation to the 14th European Conference "Literacy Without Boundaries," to be held in Zagreb, Croatia, 31 July–3 August 2005.

Paata Chorgolashvili (center) accepts the charter for the new Georgian Reading Association from Alida Cutts of IRA (left) and Eldbjoerg Lyssant of IDEC (right)

IDEC Meeting

The International Reading Association's International Development in Europe Committee (IDEC) met on the eve of the European Reading Conference and welcomed several new members: the Albanian Reading Association, the Bulgarian Reading Association, the Georgian Reading Association, the Russian Regional Reading Association (embracing the Moscow and St. Petersburg Reading Councils), and the Special Interest Council "RWCT-Russia."

The RWCT Pre-conference

On 5–6 July 2003, prior to the 13th European Conference on Reading, Tallinn Pedagogical University hosted a meeting of representatives from 12 countries participating in the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project for Higher Education: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Volunteers from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States also took part in the meeting.

The participants shared the initial results of the higher education project, which was instituted by the International Reading Association in 2002 with funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI-NY). In-country RWCT teams have already reported some success in introducing new syllabi and developing critical literacy in institutions of higher education. This is particularly encouraging since universities have traditionally been the source of educational reforms. Of course there are still many challenges, which differ from country to country. College faculty members are not necessarily ea-

ger for change, and there can also be problems motivating the students to engage in active reading and critical thinking. However, the participants noted, it will be easier to solve these problems through a unified effort, involving all those who are now working to write a new curriculum for the 21st century—a curriculum for thoughtful, creative, open education without boundaries.

First International "Socrates" Courses on RWCT in Lithuania

This summer, 8–14 June, The Modern Didactics Center offered a professional development course in Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking as part of the European "Socrates" program. "Socrates" allows educators from European countries to choose courses from a wide variety of offerings throughout the continent, with course descriptions and registration materials available through a central Internet database. The MDC course was the first such course held in Lithuania. Course participants came from Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Finland, and the United Kingdom. They were introduced not only to the philosophy, theory, and methodology of critical thinking, but also to Lithuania's historical and cultural heritage.

Guest speaker Grazina Kaklauskiene, programme coordinator of the national Socrates office, offered her wishes that "the first pancake not be burned" (i.e., that the venture should succeed on the first try). During a visit by the group to the national Parliament, Professor Rolandas Povilionis, head of the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science, and Cultural Affairs, discussed the changes and challenges currently being faced by the Lithuanian educational system.

Judging by the participants' positive evaluation of the course and their consistently sunny mood, folk sayings are not always true: In this case, not only was our "first pancake" not burned—it came out perfectly! This success was due partly to good trainers and well-prepared materials, but also to a very motivated group of participants.

Peremena Website

At the end of March a new *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* gateway page (http://www.reading.org/publications/tc/) and *Peremena* web pages in the Russian language were added to the www.reading.org website. Visitors to the site can now access sample articles, instructions for authors, and other information in Russian as well as English. The web presence can introduce *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* to readers who might otherwise never have access to it—in fact, two recent journal submissions (from Russia and from Turkey) have come to us from authors who initially learned of the journal through our website.

IRA Book Wins Prestigious Award

Young Adult Literature in the Classroom: Reading It, Teaching It, Loving It, published in 2002 by the International Reading Association, has received the Golden Lamp Award for Books from the Association of Educational Publishers (AEP). The award was presented 4 June 2003 at a ceremony held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

The Golden Lamp Award is one of the most prestigious awards in educational publishing. *Young Adult Literature in the Classroom* was selected over 50 other entries in the category. The book also received the Distinguished Achievement Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing in the nonfiction adult book category.

Young Adult Literature in the Classroom, edited by Joan B. Elliott and Mary M. Dupuis, shows teachers how to use young adult literature as a teaching tool across cultures, genres, disciplines, and grade levels. Judges praised the book for its well-written and concise presentation of practical strategies that encourage teachers to take a new look at how young adult literature can help students learn, understand, and grow.

Young Adult Literature in the Classroom is one of more than 200 titles published by the International Reading Association, a leading provider of professional development resources for literacy educators. Information about the book, including a sample chapter, can be found in the Association's online bookstore, http://bookstore.reading.org.

Education in a Multilingual World

UNESCO has published a position paper on multilingual education. The right to diversity, particularly ethnic and linguistic diversity, is being increasingly called into question as globalization becomes more and more prevalent. UNESCO strongly defends cultural diversity and presents key concepts related to educational and linguistic issues in this document, which includes a series of texts for reference. The publication (UNESCO doc.ED-2003/WS/2) is available free of charge from UNESCO's Documentation and Information Service, Education Sector. E-mail: sdi@unesco.org

Look Who's Talking

THE QUESTION:

If you were given US$100 (or its equivalent in your local currency) to buy something for your class, what would you buy?

Teresa Sirianni

Technical School for Industry and Handicrafts

I believe in creativity and free expression! As a chemistry teacher, I have learned that many students obtain the best results when I get them involved with creative activities. In chemistry lab, the use of colour is very important: For instance it may be a good way to explain how many reactions are involved in an experiment.

I think that by using colour—markers, pens, coloured paper, etc.—students are able to show these facts simply and clearly. Therefore I would buy art supplies to use in my teaching.

Petros Georghiades

Teacher, Livadia Primary School, Cyprus

I think I would spend the money on educational software, because there isn't much of it available in Cypriot schools at present. ICT has only recently been introduced in primary education in Cyprus, and it is widely accepted that it can play a very powerful and interactive role in the learning process. Without the right software, however, the potential of a computer is greatly restricted. For these reasons, and in view of the rapidly changing technological world and the need to educate computer-literate citizens, I consider educational software to be one of my top priorities when it comes to learning resources.

Shirley Atie

Thinking Skills Teacher, Personal and Social Education Curriculum Centre, Malta

I would rent transportation to take my class to the Centre for Creativity in our capital city Valletta.

We could look at the exhibition of paintings, and then discuss them using the thinking strategies I recently learned during a Critical Thinking seminar in Vilnius. I think I could arrange this trip for 50 EURO. We would decide how to use the rest of the money through discussion among the students. Perhaps they would choose to buy snacks or postcards, or supplies to create a project about our field trip.

Carmen Matienzo

Secondary Education Institute "Valentin Turienzo," Cueva, Spain

I would buy some materials such as paper, pens, and paper clips, and some books and magazines de-

signed to develop different skills. I think its is absolutely necessary to teach pupils to do independent research, to investigate things for themselves. We [teachers] can work with the students on using original sources for research.

Helen Pearce

St Andrews Church of England Primary School, UK

Using round robin strategy, we could discuss with the children how we should spend this amount. Possible version: Do we give the money to charity? Spend it ourselves? What are the benefits of the different choices? Maybe we could invest the money in order to increase the amount?

A question for the next issue:

How different are urban and rural schools in your country?

Readers are invited to respond to this question, or to suggest questions for future issues. The editors will select items for printing. Please e-mail your answers and suggestions to: bmichaels@reading.org

Writing for **Thinking Classroom**

Thinking Classroom (also published in Russian as *Peremena*) serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in democratic teaching practices. It seeks to encourage professional development, research, and reflection. Authors are invited to submit articles that focus on active inquiry, student-centered learning, alternative assessment, and other aspects of educational change. Due to the international nature of the journal, articles should address issues that appeal to a wide audience, and terms or examples that are specific to a particular country or region should be explained in the text.

Thinking Classroom strives to maintain a balance of practical and theoretical information. The writing should take the form of a narrative, rather than a formal research report. Examples from classroom experience, quotations from colleagues or students, or examples of students' work can help communicate ideas to journal readers.

In addition to original submissions, *Thinking Classroom* will consider for publication articles that have appeared previously in national journals with limited circulation, to present these works to a wider international audience.

Format for Submissions

- Submissions are accepted in English or Russian.
- Articles should not exceed 5,000 words in length.
- Articles should be submitted electronically, preferably in .rtf format as an attachment to e-mail, to **bmichaels@reading.org.**
- The full name(s) of the author(s) should be included on a cover sheet, but this information should not appear in the body of the manuscript, as submissions are reviewed anonymously. The cover sheet should also include complete author contact information (**postal address and e-mail address**).
- References to articles or books cited must be complete. For journal articles include author, date of publication, title of article, title of journal, volume number, and page numbers (where article appeared). For books include author, year of publication, title, location and name of publisher. Additional details and examples can be found online at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html
- If an article includes samples of writing or artwork produced by students, the author of the article must obtain written permission for their use. Likewise, if photographs are submitted to accompany an article, written permission must be obtained from both the photo subjects and the photographer. (A parent or guardian must give permission for use of a child's photographs or schoolwork.) Permission forms in English and Russian may be downloaded from the journal website at http://www.reading.org/publications/tc/permissions.html
- The editors rely on a system of anonymous peer review to help them select articles for publication.

Letters to the Editor, **Reviews** of books or websites, and contributions to **Look Who's Talking** should also be sent to **bmichaels@reading.org.**

Permission to use materials from Thinking Classroom

What More Needs Saying About Imagination?

Margaret Meek Spencer

The 19th World Congress on Reading, hosted by the International Reading Association with the support of the United Kingdom Reading Association, was held July 29–August 1, 2002 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Margaret Meek Spencer was the featured speaker in the opening plenary session of the Congress. The Association is honored to publish Dr. Spencer's address in its journals—*The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Lectura y Vida*, *Thinking Classroom*, and *Peremena*. Through publication of this address in our journals, we are able to bring Dr. Spencer's inspiring message to the Association's entire readership.

There is no limit to the human imagination—to our ability to redescribe an object, and thereby contextualize it. A descriptive vocabulary is a way of relating one object to other objects—putting it in a new context. There is no limit to the number of relations that language can capture, of contexts that descriptive vocabularies can create (Rorty, 2000, p. 23).

This article was originally prepared as a paper for the opening plenary session of the International Reading Association World Congress held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in July 2002. On that occasion, the participants were looking forward to a variety of encounters with others who shared their interest in promoting children's literacy. There were to be four days of stimulating, collaborative work on many aspects of reading, especially with regard to the progress of young people as readers. My charge was to offer the members of the audience a short prompt, a kind of memorandum that would encourage them to reconsider what Margaret Donaldson, a famous Edinburgh psychologist of reading, called "the features of the starting point" (1978, p. 15). Having considered some of the background knowledge and understandings we held in common, we would then move to new explorations of our individual special interests.

At conferences, I have in my mind's eye a recurring image of old-fashioned country fairs, where people met to exchange good gossip and cheerfully danced around the traditional maypole, skipping in and out, holding ribbons of different colours attached to the top of the pole. Dancing around a maypole was part of my early childhood. (The locus classicus for this in children's books is Randolph Caldecott's illustration of *Come Lasses and Lads*, 1884.) As the dancers concentrated on their steps and movements, above their heads an intricate pattern appeared on the pole as the circling movements of the dancers plaited the ribbons. The dancers didn't see the pattern until the dancing stopped. As my share in this conference dance, my ribbon was to introduce a consideration of imagination, the aspect of the human condition most taken for granted in the learning and teaching of reading and writing. My

Please cite as Spencer, M.M. (2002, July 29). *What more needs saying about imagination?* Address at the International Reading Association World Congress, Edinburgh, Scotland.

concern was to set in motion a studied awareness—a filière—of this topic that might thread its way through our interactions in the days that followed.

The text I held, nervously, in my hand, had been prepared as "sounded writing" to be read aloud to listeners who would recognize the rhetoric that was to convey the seriousness of the subject with the friendly familiarity of a welcome. This is a revision of that text. It now has the inevitable signs of a greater distance between the writer and the unseen individual reader. The maypole has been put away with the patterned ribbons still entwined, but the dancers have gone.

I chose imagination as a core issue in children's learning to read and write for these reasons. First, we know, as Richard Rorty (2000) said, human imagination has no limits. It cannot be fully accounted for in words. Instead it creates and renews all experiences, hopes, wishes, feelings, and thoughts. In my schema for children learning to read and in their continuance as readers and writers, imagination is not something separate or extra that their teachers add to their learning. Making texts mean is the way by which readers, at each stage of growth, "orchestrate" different kinds of knowledge of life and language text. Imagination is at the heart of this process. As Anne Bussis and her colleagues said, "Reading is the act of orchestrating diverse knowledge in order to construct meaning from text while maintaining reasonable fluency and reasonable accountability to the information contained in writing" (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, & Klausner, 1985, p. 67).

Second, it is impossible to keep thinking and imagination apart, especially in the "firstness" of children's early encounters with the world they have to learn to make sense of. Creativity is cognitive consciousness and imagination. The child who sees stars for the first time and says they are "holes in the sky" makes the case exactly. Caught up in immediate classroom realities of helping children learn to read, we may put poetry and storytelling on one side until we have dealt with letter sounds. But when children have their first reading lessons, at home or at school, their imaginations are already up and running as the fulcrum of their views of the world and how it works. Their language is already at work on the process.

Third, we now have a deal of evidence, chiefly from studies of children's early experiences, that convinces me that metaphor is at the heart of children's learning. They explain things to themselves in terms of sameness and difference. When this happens in language they are not only extending their vocabularies, they are also working out meanings. Much of this understanding has been available for some time. But the pressure to provide new insights about children's early behaviour, especially in specialized cases of deprivation, loss, exile, and exclusion, has led to a tendency to take for granted some things that contributed to our current state of awareness (Neuman & Roskos, 1998).

Take children's play and storytelling, for example. Go back to Sigmund Freud. Imagine him watching a child playing with a cotton reel tied to a piece of string. The child throws away the reel, saying "fort" (gone), sternly. Then, as he pulls the reel back he says "da" (there), in a different tone of voice. Freud interprets the child's delight in bringing back the reel as his way of coping with his mother's absence. Jean Piaget explained how children come to understand that objects have "permanence." They continue to exist even when they can't be seen. Jacques Lacan said that the difference between "fort" and "da" is a linguistic difference. Each of these explanations is an imaginative interpretation of both the words, and more than the words. How then would you respond to a question posed by a young child who, watching his mother holding his baby brother, asks, "Does his head come off?" The deep structures of metaphoric activity are part of what we interpret as imagination. Where do children think their parents go when they disappear? Will they come back? The nature of imagination is not always benign.

Nevertheless, *imagination* is one of the good words for what Terry Eagleton called "the global reach of the mind" (2000, p. 45). Most people speak well of it, adding adjectives such as *vivid* and

active. In terms of literary criticism its use is generally positive. Sometimes, however, *imaginative* has been linked with lies and deceit. Many grown-ups are still anxious about the "truth" value of narrative fiction. Others have created the notion of "imaginative accountancy" to describe ways of cheating tax collectors.

Imagination joins cognition and affect, thinking and feeling, especially when we praise something. As there is no all-encompassing definition of imagination, we tend to look for examples and appearances of it where it serves as a form of approval: in chess moves, golf, cooking, patterns of design, and engineering, as well as in more usual examples in art, music, and poetry. Just before the IRA World Congress, a series of news broadcasts repeated the accusation that the British security services had failed to engage with the likelihood of a terrorist attack with "sufficient imagination," the implication being that terrorists were already in the processes of imaginative planning for another one.

My initial rereading for this topic included poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, some of his notebooks and lectures, and Volume II of his biography by Richard Holmes (1998), who wrote that "At the heart of Coleridge's thesis would emerge a concept of the poetic imagination which acted as a single unifying force within all creative acts" (p. 108). Holmes also showed in detail how Coleridge's idea "may well have been triggered by [Sir Humphry] Davy's own scientific theories about the nature of energy and matter." He added that this was "an early premonition of the modern physicist's search for a 'Grand Unified Theory' applicable to the entire cosmos" (p. 108). The modernity of Coleridge's thinking is a recurrent emphasis in the biography.

When I was engrossed in these ideas, I went to a colloquium that brought together the scientists of the Royal Society (founded in 1660) with Richard Holmes and members of the Royal Society of Literature on the topic of "Coleridge Among the Scientists." Imagination was at the heart of the discussions as was Holmes's conviction that "Coleridge did not write like a traditional philosopher at all, but closer to a modern existentialist viewpoint, in which the actual experience of moral choice and the creative act are invoked as formative events" (1998, pp. 410–412). In this discussion we meet again the remnants of an old argument that confines imagination to art and reason to science. The coming together of the two Royal Societies is to blur the boundaries that keep science and the humanities apart. Part of this endeavour has been supported by the attention paid to imaginative literature for children.

American philosopher Maxine Green's work on "releasing imagination" as a significant feature of good teaching has something of Coleridge's intensity. For her, imagination is "seeing anew." "As we see anew, we share perspectives offered by knowledge and understanding" (2000, p. 90). To exemplify this she has drawn on her early reading experiences, mostly of English canonical texts:

> It struck me early in my life that the languages of imaginative literature disclosed alternative ways of being in and thinking about the world. I read not only the fairy stories, but also Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (which I did not originally realize was the work of someone outraged by the mistreatment of child laborers) and Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. Before I entered into Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, James Barrie's *Peter Pan* was a climactic discovery for me. The metaphor of flight through an open window towards Never-Never Land gave me some hint of what imagination could do before I ever learned the word. (p. 90, copyright 2000. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons. Inc.)

Just how hard children work to make sense of the world is evinced in their play and in research analyses of it over decades. Lately, however, the acknowledged link between symbolic play and interactions with storybooks has moved out of focus. The drive to maintain structured learning has resulted in less continuous reading of complete texts, such as books where the pictures and the words enhance and extend each other, or short novels in which the reader learns to distinguish the author from the narrator. I'm inclined to believe, however, that, in their contacts with new media, children run ahead of adults in their ability to derive meaning from pictures. The

emphasis on "visual literacy" will surely offer a series of new descriptions of imagination in this context (Arizpe & Styles, 2003).

The international audience at the opening ceremony in Edinburgh reminded us all that imagination is likely to be culturally and historically specific. According to Raymond Williams (1983), culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. Beyond its attachment to the artistic skills and gifts of the few, it also refers to common social and intellectual interests. As Williams's disciple, Terry Eagleton, tells us, culture isn't just what we live by, the day-to-day, taken-for granted of what is familiar, but it's also what we live for, global extensions of our thinking and feeling, joy and peace in continuing. For children, reading is a dialogue with their future: their anticipations of "what will happen next?" and "shall I be able to cope with it?" (Eagleton, 2000, p. 131).

History is more than the narrative of our past that we learned at school or picked up afterwards. Instead, it is the affective relationships we have with places, times, and beginnings; our origins, memories, kinship, and communities; more good words. Equally, we know that, whatever language we speak, any person with whom we can communicate is not an alien. Culture and history are part of our imagination; they constitute the Big Narrative, the story we are all part of.

Young people sometimes take longer than we think to understand the otherness of others, hence the importance of Coleridge's notion of displacement: his idea of how we understand their interior landscape. I'm fairly sure I learned to do this by reading. It was easier to see why book characters acted as they did before I tried to understand why the adults I knew were less predictable. I used to ask student teachers where they were when they read a novel or a poem, and was there any difference when they read a newspaper. They always saw the point quickly. They knew the world of the newspaper, or bits of it, as "real." With the poet or the novelist they were both in the "real" world and, at the same time, in the world the novelist or the poet had taken great pains to create for them.

Now hear the words of Nobel poet Seamus Heaney, who shows how "poetry earns its keep" as the mainspring of imagination and language: "Consciousness can be alive to two different and contradictory dimensions of reality, and still find a way of negotiating between them" (1995, p. xiii). I both think and feel this to be true. Such awareness as we have when we read, look, or hear helps the growth of what we can envisage. I also believe imagination shrivels and shrinks if it is not nourished by these "negotiations." Those who create literature for young people offer them worlds of possibilities.

Lately, adults have also entered the same territories, with interest and satisfaction. For example, adult readers of Harry Potter stories have narrowed the perceived gap between narratives for older and younger readers. Over the last two years or so, I've seen adults reading the stories of Harry Potter in the London Underground. Some fully engrossed readers have gone past their destinations. One day, when I went to get a train from Kings Cross to Cambridge, there was a notice painted in white on the platform (the surface of the walkway): "No Broomsticks to Be Parked Here." A little farther along were "Owls Must Be Kept in Cages" and "New Boys Queue Here." A notice on a solid brick wall said "Platform 9 and Three Quarters." A banner above my head announced "Hogwarts School."

These announcements constituted a move from the actuality of the train to Cambridge to the invented world of J.K. Rowling and back again. As the first film of Harry Potter's exploits was being shown in London at that time, most of my fellow passengers were contemplating Heaney's (1995) two dimensions of reality. The reality that they may have been avoiding by means of a temporary imaginative absence was the fact that this was the railway line where there had been a recent devastating train crash.

Young imaginations often move into a mental space that they recognize from what they read. Authors of children's books and makers of new computer

software help their readers to appreciate the possibility of parallel worlds. But it takes the matching imagination of the reader to complete the process. Teachers follow the trails of philosophers, poets, artists, psychologists, and literary theorists who explore imagination as the global reach of the mind and how it may be developed. The trouble is, education seems bound to concentrate on the outer realities of learning—information—and so there is less time for the imaginative possibilities of different kinds of reading and thinking. Music and art should not be optional extras in the curriculum.

Lev Vygotsky was clear about imagination. He linked its development to language, which lets children think about what they don't see and may not encounter in play. They use imaginative language as they make worlds of play and stories. These are not subconscious fantasies. Instead they are various kinds of internal drama, directed behaviour that becomes utopian constructions (1978).

This idea brings us to a central point in children's imagining. Before they go to school they seem to keep the inner and the outer realities close together. In some children they are never fully separated. Ted Hughes, in a paper that strongly influenced a whole decade and more of writing for children, said that

> a child takes possession of a story as what might be called a unit of imagination.... In attending to the world of such a story there is the beginning of imaginative and mental control. There is the beginning of a form of contemplation.... The story itself is a kind of wealth. (1976, p. 80)

In Carol Fox's explorations of early oral narratives, children

> invent worlds peopled by lions, bears, rabbits, witches, giants, robbers, policemen, heartless mothers or small children. They make liberal use of magic and coincidence, extreme forms of punishment, a great deal of violence and much fear and suspense. To tell their stories, the children use tacit knowledge they are not aware they have, of the ways narratives get told. Their production of these is spontaneous. (1993, p. 25)

What was clear from the start of Fox's impressively detailed account of preschool children's storying and world making was their imaginative narrative competences. They were often reworking stories they had heard read, but these were not simple repetitions. The transformations became "a space where children can work out emergent subjectivities in the medium of language" (1993, p. 34). Even so, making a new story from the parts of others and the incidents of everyday life needs the power of directed imagination.

Alice, aged 4, offers a simpler example. Like other children of her age and culture she knows the story of Cinderella and spends much time reworking it. (There are more than 200 collected versions already. My favourite is that of James Britton's daughter who summed up the whole tale as "a bit sad book about two ugly sisters and the girl they were ugly to." This gave her father the idea that children "may possess a highly general sense of form.")

Alice has been to see a fairly straightforward production of "Cinderella" at the Youth Theatre. For weeks afterwards she insists on re-creating the play with her parents, grandparents, and other consenting adults. Alice is both the producer and the protagonist. Before each performance the others wait to be allotted their parts, although the cast list remains the same. Father and grandfather are the Ugly Sisters. (It is not clear whether Alice thinks this is a description of their appearance, or of their characters.) Grandmother becomes the fairy godmother. (Godmothers in Alice's family are associated with presents.) We are all involved in transformations. First we have to change our voices to indicate who we are. This foregrounds the play of voices that children practise with telephones, and the dialogic monologues they perform with their toys. It is the dialogic imagination externalised.

Alice has created four scenes: the arrival of the invitations and the decision that Cinderella will stay at home; the transformations made by the good fairy; the dramatic return at midnight; the arrival of the prince with the slipper. The actors are not allowed to improvise. Throughout, as Vygotsky said, consciousness departs from reality (1978). Alice's running commentary on the performances of the adults

makes this clear. At the same time, it is also evident that she is aware of her family as themselves as well as the characters they portray.

In Vygotsky's scheme of things, to imagine other realities is important. Imagination has the capacity to enrich realistic thinking by liberating it from too close a dependence on immediate perception (1978). Myra Barrs, who has studied this topic in depth, sees imaginative thinking "as the paradigm of advanced thinking generally, and necessary for its development" (1998, personal communication).

Alice has some way to go. Meanwhile she dramatizes other stories and enjoys the feelings that come with the recitation of lines like "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are." Wonder is a word she practises; she gives it additional awe in a sequence of recitative tones. She will come to know it as an abstract noun. Meanwhile she is learning from pictures in books the words for the things she hasn't yet encountered.

Skilled authors and artists are extending Alice's play as they encourage her to enjoy reading. *Would You Rather* by John Burningham (1978) depicts imagined situations that could occur in the life of a young reader who is being asked to consider possibilities and make choices (e.g., Would you rather be lost…in the fog, at sea, in a desert, in a forest, or in a crowd?). There are no marks of punctuation on the pages. After the question form, the words act as captions to the pictures. The pictures evoke frissons of disgust, swallowing a dead frog; of fear, being lost; of shame, mum having a row in a café. There is also an implicit challenge of "I dare you" from the artist-author to the reader.

In the later stages, when young readers and viewers are more experienced and independent, authors and artists introduce "growing points," instances in a story where the reader moves to a more mature understanding of cause and effect, understanding feelings, and the greater vocabularies of description and abstraction. These epiphanies are features of current writing, complex often, but books for older readers seem to offer their reader ways of confronting what the world could be like, for better or worse. In terms of imagination, we are bound to take account of more than what young people read. They are bombarded on all sides by seductive possibilities of what life could be like if only….

What more needs to be said about imagination? I leave the answer open, having drawn on those whose words seem to suggest ideas to be explored. One thing seems certain: Imagination is the ultimate freedom. It lets all of us realize how things might, or could, be otherwise. But after that, we are bound to be responsible for what we help to bring about, especially in the education of children.

"The imaginative transformation of human life is the means by which we can most truly grasp and comprehend it" (Heaney, 1995, p. xv). This quotation comes from Seamus Heaney's commentary on a poem by Robert Frost. He was writing about what poetry is good for. Like many things best begun in childhood, discovering something of the poetic imagination is one of the most significant. Thus play, narrative stories, and poems are ways by which children's imagination grows together with their increasing grasp on the world and their more general paradigms of advance thinking.

It seemed right at the time to finish with a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson (1885), one of Edinburgh's best-known writers of poetry for children, as an example of the best kind of answer to the question we began with.

The Land of Nod

From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

References

Arizpe, E., & Styles, M. (2003). *Children reading pictures: Interpreting visual texts*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Burningham, J. (1978). *Would you rather*. New York & London: North-South Books & Random House UK.

Bussis, A.M., Chittenden, E.A., Amarel, M., & Klausner, E. (1985). *Inquiry into meaning*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's minds*. London: Fontana.

Eagleton, T. (2000). *The idea of culture*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Fox, C. (1993). *At the very edge of the forest: The influence of literature on storytelling by children*. London: Cassell.

Green, M. (2000). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Heaney, S. (1995). *The redress of poetry*. London: Faber.

Holmes, R. (1998). *Coleridge: Darker reflections. Vol. 2*. Princeton, NJ, & London: Princeton University Press & Routledge.

Hughes, T. (1976). Myth and education. In G. Fox, G. Hammond, T. Jones, F. Smith, & K. Sterk (Eds.), *Writers, critics and children* (pp. 77–94). New York & London: Agathon Press & Heinemann Educational Books.

Neuman, S.B., & Roskos, K.A. (Eds.). (1998). *Children achieving: Best practices in early literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Rorty, R. (2000, March 10). Being that can be understood is language. *The London Review of Books*, p. 23.

Stevenson, R.L. (1885). The land of Nod. *A child's garden of verses*. London: Longmans, Green.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (Rev. ed.). London: Flamingo.

Margaret Meek Spencer has an international reputation in the fields of children's literature and literacy. Over more than 40 years she has worked with significant effect to promote a wider recognition of the importance of literature of quality for children and of the benefits that can accrue from its serious study. For this she is respected and honoured by authors, publishers, librarians, parents, teachers, and academics.

Her broad conception of literature embraces not only picture books, stories, novels, and poetry but also information texts and electronic texts. In all these categories Spencer has viewed texts intended for children not as a lesser branch of adult literature but as part of the larger enterprise of literature for all. She has used the same critical apparatus to examine it, with illuminating results. Her work is animated by a constant concern to offer children texts rich in meaning, realised through images and words that delight and challenge young readers.

Spencer has helped teachers and others who work with children to observe with a more intelligent and perceptive eye how children make sense of texts and the ways in which they weave them together with their other experiences of life. In this way she has been a major influence on the thinking and the practice of many teachers and academics working in education and has significantly deepened our conception of literacy. Through her writing and speeches she has markedly affected the education of very many children, throughout and beyond the English-speaking world. She has substantially enriched the understanding of teachers about what it is to be literate and how the very youngest children can be challenged and nourished by their encounters with texts.

The many books by Spencer on different aspects of literature for children and on literacy are memorable for their conceptual subtlety, width of reference and scholarly attention to detail. Several of these texts, such as **The Cool Web: The Patterns of Children's Reading** ***(1998, Macmillan),*** **How Texts Teach What Children Learn** ***(1998, Thimble Press) and*** **On Being Literate** ***(1993, Heinemann), have become classics of their genres. Indeed, through her writing Spencer has raised the level of understanding of many thousands of parents, teachers, and academics about the role texts play in children's success as readers and writers.***

Everyone Can Talk in Our Class: The Quiet Ones Again

Raya A. Bermakhanova

When he transferred into our school, Oral was a difficult kid to work with because of his poor health. The previous year I had taught a boy who was born without a left hand, but in spite of his disability he was good-natured, learned quickly, and got along well with the other children. It was easy to work with him. With Oral it was quite the contrary—he was introverted and uncommunicative. In his old school because of his illness they had not expected him to learn much or to get good grades. Now in our class he always kept to himself, and no one paid him much attention. That was probably why he panicked if I called him up to the blackboard; he was afraid of giving the wrong answer. If he wasn't prepared for class, he would just stare blankly and start to sweat. I learned from talking with his mother that at home, the only place where he was comfortable, he was open, talkative, and sure of himself. She asked me to help uncover in school what she saw as his true nature.

I observed Oral carefully. I wanted to discover which subjects he liked and where he needed special attention. I often saw him whispering answers to himself, comparing his answers with those of his classmates. Even if he was prepared for class, he was embarrassed to speak out and answer. His perspective on the class was that of an observer, and he watched the proceedings as if watching a movie. After class I tried to engage him in conversation. Did you like the class? Was it interesting? What were the kids discussing? Did you want to join in? How could you have done that? I decided to seat him next to a talkative little girl in the class who could share thoughts with him and ask him his opinions. At first Oral would just cut short both this classmate and me, answering something like, "Yeah, fine."

To his mother he reported, "The other kids have discussions, work in groups, make up stories together. I could never express my opinions the way they do. It was pointless for me to come to this new school."

I kept trying to arrange it so Oral would say at least two or three words each day in class. In the course of a discussion I would ask him questions: "What do you think will happen next?" "What would you do in the place of the main character? Why?"

In our *native language* class we were working on a story called "Jeksen." I posed a question for discussion: "Were the children right to call Jeksen selfish and greedy?" I provoked a heated discussion. Opinions were sharply divided, and two opposing groups emerged. I asked Oral what he thought about this boy Jeksen and what he thought "selfish" meant.

Oral responded, "He was a bad kid, because he wouldn't let the kids ride his horse. He always kept to himself, so they called him selfish." After that Oral fell silent, and I could see that he was afraid to defend his opinion further. As the other kids offered their opinions, Oral was analyzing his classmates' answers.

We made a discussion chart on the blackboard:

Yes, the kids were right	No, the kids were wrong
He didn't let them ride his horse	He seemed bad, but it was just because of his personality
He ran off with a boy's hat, and that boy might have gotten sick	He was just trying to show off, and it was the first time he had ridden the horse by himself
He was boastful, and he only thought about himself	He was going through a tough time. If they hadn't chased him away, but just talked to him, maybe he would have acted differently

I went up to Oral and asked him, "Which side are you on? Which opinion is closest to your own? Why did you choose that side?" Apparently listening to his classmates express and argue about their viewpoints had helped Oral define his own position. But he would tell it only to me, very quietly.

Four or five days later we were analyzing the text of a story called "Two Friends." And again I posed a discussion question to the class: "Was the batyr (Kazakh warrior) right in going to the enemy camp to rescue his friend?"

That day for the first time Oral spoke up to answer: "I think that the batyr saved his friend because this friend was like a relative to him, like a brother. Friends share everything, go through everything together, so that's why the batyr went to rescue his friend."

I could see both joy and terror shining in Oral's eyes. His classmates heard him out, supported him, helped him…. That day he was the leader of the class, and he seemed to have broken through some sort of barrier. From that time he began to change dramatically. His previous timidity disappeared; he confidently joined in discussions, expressed his opinions without hesitation, and stood up for his views.

Why did this happen? I think it was because I have always had a rule in our class: There are no wrong answers. Anyone can speak out freely and express his or her opinion.

To give readers a sense of the class atmosphere that results from this rule, here are some of the other children's answers to the question about the batyr.

> "For your friend you'd give your life; you'd go through fire. Because he's the one that's closest to you." (Bolat)

> "It is better to have a hundred friends than a hundred rubles. One old friend is better than two new ones. Surely there's a good reason for these proverbs. That's why the batyr, without giving it a second thought, went to rescue his friend." (Alma)

> "What if the batyr died trying to save his friend? Then the Kazakh nation would lose two of its defenders. The warrior should have thought about his nation. If he died, who would save them?" (Daniyar)

> "Why did he go by himself? Wouldn't it be better to take his army and defeat the enemy?" (Bayan)

> "Instead of doing this he should have married a pretty girl and fathered new warriors to defend the nation." (Saule)

Some of their thoughts were superficial; some were more profound. Some were able to relate the story to ideology, to the idea of patriotism. But their eyes were shining with enthusiasm, they all had their say, and no one was left out of the discussion. They all wanted to answer, they were completely uninhibited—they were experiencing the joy of learning.

One important consideration for teachers: In order to have well-organized discussions, the teacher must first teach the children to listen to one another. Initially our discussions were noisy, and because the kids didn't listen to one another they kept repeating the same answers over and over, so we wasted a lot of time. All the children addressed their answers to me, the teacher. I didn't know what to do. I tried to imagine myself in the students' place. Eventually one day I tried arranging the desks so they were facing each other, and I sat off to the side…. These days the kids no longer repeat one another's answers. They have learned how to listen.

I credit the change in my teaching style to a professional development course in *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking*. RWCT methods promote open dialog between teacher and students, allow people to express their opinions and to disagree, and provide opportunities for them to work together to find solutions to problems and overcome difficulties. I myself have also changed—I'm less fearful than I used to be, and I am happy to have colleagues observe my class. Now I enjoy my work!

An earlier version of this article appeared in *The Power of Language and Knowledge About Language*, a collection of papers from the First Kazakhstan National Conference on Reading (pp. 44-47. Ed. S. Mirseitova. 2001. Almaty, Kazakhstan: Center for Democratic Education.)

Raya A. Bermakhanova is an Elementary school teacher at Parasat school in Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan.

Setting Literacy Goals: Shawna as President, Shawna as Poet

Douglas Kaufman

In an effort to create a more learner-centered classroom, Shawna's fourth-grade teacher, Laura, decided to help students learn how to set and attain goals independently. During the first week of school she assigned each student to set a goal for the year. Hoping to increase their personal investment, Laura did not limit their choices but simply said, "Find a goal that is important to you." She would take time out of some classes to discuss strategies for attaining their goals. Students, in turn, would work toward their goals during class.

The students began by writing their goals on cutouts shaped like maple leaves, which they pasted to a large paper tree hanging on the wall. Many leaves revealed ambitious dreams of becoming sports stars; others held hopes of going to college. Still others reflected on even more general ambitions. "One of my goals is to be happy and look happy," wrote Debbie.

Shawna, too, wrote down an ambitious goal: "My goal is to help the sick and feed the poor and when I am older I will run for president and I will heal the world and make it a better place."

In this article I examine aspects of literacy goal-setting by describing and analyzing how Shawna, a fourth grader in an urban public school in the northeastern United States (New England), responded to her open-ended assignment to create a goal, and how she also created independent goals that extended my understanding of her goal-setting processes. I frame her goal-setting within the context of her literacy work and then interpret my findings to discuss implications that may lead to further investigations of goal-setting in literacy classrooms.

Literacy goals

I originally entered Shawna's classroom as part of a research team investigating students' self-evaluation processes as they pertain to classroom literacy experiences. This classroom was one of many across the United States that, over the past two decades, have fundamentally transformed many practices in language arts instruction. Students in this class often had opportunities to choose their own books and writing topics, work for extended periods of time outside the teacher's immediate oversight, and focus on the processes of learning as well as the completed products. Such opportunities alter the role of the student from passive receptacle of information to independent thinker, actively engaged in learning and responsible for engaging (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 2001; Harwayne, 1999; Kaufman, 2000). Students evaluated themselves and their situations continuously in order to make informed choices, steer toward educative destinations, and document their learning.

Evaluation has, in fact, become the cornerstone of the curriculum for many literacy teachers (Hansen, 1996, 1998, 2001; Taberski, 2000). And, with our continued emphasis on learning processes and student control, it has moved away from its limited definition as a judgment of completed work toward a deep reflection of what readers, writers, and learners do while in the act of reading, writing, and learning.

The research team identified goal-setting as a critical mode of evaluation (Hansen, 1998, 2001). Goal-setting—a conscious projection of future accomplishments—is a space on a spiraling

Photo: PhotoDisc, Inc.

continuum of reflection where a learner charts a new course of purposeful activity or changes a current course. Goal-setting draws on learners' previous knowledge, their understanding of personal talents and limitations, and their ability to conceive of a course of action that leads to new knowledge, ability, and growth (White, Hohn, & Tollefson, 1997).

Hansen (1998) identified five questions that good evaluators try to answer: (1) What do I do well? (2) What is the most recent thing I've learned to do? (3) What do I want to learn next in order to grow? (4) What will I do to accomplish this? (5) What might I use for documentation? (p. 39). We identified goal-setting and planning as embedded firmly in questions three and four, helping to form the continuing cycle of self-evaluation.

But goal-setting is difficult for those who have little experience (Carroll & Christenson, 1995), and we still need to learn how children create realistic goals or develop logical plans that move them forward academically in student-centered classrooms. For this investigation, I focused on how Shawna set out to accomplish personal *literacy goals*, which I define as goals that lead to actions requiring the focused, extensive practice of reading and writing. I discuss two of Shawna's literacy goals, which exemplify the two prevalent types of goals that she and all students in the class set. Shawna showed personal investment in both goals and experienced considerable success while working toward both, but the difference in how she created each altered her approach to them in significant ways. Shawna's second goal was more realistic in the context of the school setting, was more closely connected to her personal knowledge base, and resulted in more independent reading and writing to learn. These findings suggest that successful goal-setting may lie in *how* and *why* children create their goals and how teachers support their creative endeavors.

Shawna's first goal: To heal the world

On the day the students set their first goals, I interviewed each student independently. While each could identify a goal as "something you want to achieve," none of the 30 students could give a specific answer as to *how* they expected to achieve their goals. Laura recognized the difficulty they were having and a day later created a lesson in which she discussed her own literacy goal to make a portfolio of children's book reviews. She introduced the concept of systematic planning—breaking the goal down into a series of smaller, more manageable steps. Together, she and the class discussed steps she could take to read children's books, write a review about each one, and organize the reviews in her portfolio. Laura then asked the children to examine their own goals and devise plans for attaining them.

I sat down next to Shawna. "What can you do this year to work on your goal?" I asked.

"Talk to the President?"

"That might be hard. He's a very busy person."

"Write to him?"

Shawna began scribbling furiously. In five minutes, after some conferring and revising, she produced a plan: "My plan to achieve is to write to the president for advice to feed the poor and help the sick and make it a better place. Are you willing to help me?"

Shawna works on her plan

Shawna, with my help, had created a plan. Yet, despite her initial enthusiasm, she worried about how to implement it and did not act on it on her own. A few days later, however, I handed her a paper I had written about our conversation. She read it as she walked to her desk, never taking her eyes off the paper. "It's so cool!" she said. "It sounds like I'm in a book!" My formal recognition of her work motivated her to start her letter to the President immediately. Before lunch she had a draft:

> Dear President,
> I need to ask a favor. You see I am relly sad when I see sick people on the street and the poor people. I mean Thanksgiving is coming and the poor people can't afford any food and that's sad. I don't want to see that in my city. I mean I live hear.

She then tucked her letter into her portfolio, where it remained until we talked about it together a few days later. She did not work on it independently.

Students, in general, continued to struggle to develop and act on plans. Laura called them together to discuss the difference between long-term and short-term goals. The students decided short-term goals were ones that they could "do today." Put together, short-term goals would become the plans for reaching their long-term goals.

After the discussion, Shawna created a short-term goal: "To find out about people who help the sick and feed the poor." This amendment narrowed her focus to a task achievable during class. She asked me to help her find some books in the library.

Within a few minutes Shawna had found a book about Florence Nightingale, the famous nurse who treated patients during the Crimean War (Colver, 1961). After checking it out she opened the book immediately and pored over the pages. Soon she read something that stunned her. "I'm on Chapter 4! Look what it says!" She read the passage in which a young Florence describes her ambitions. "Look!" Shawna's hands shook. "It says 'I will make the world better'!" She had recognized her own goal on the printed page.

Later that day a reenergized Shawna announced that she was starting to collect cans for a food drive. But, again, her initial enthusiasm did not bear fruit. In subsequent days she abandoned the drive without asking for further help.

Successful goal-setting may lie in how *and* why *children create their goals and how teachers support their creative endeavors*

The next time Shawna went to the library, she asked for my help again. She checked out a book about nurses (Witty, 1980) and presidents (Flitner, 1973), wanting to compare their lives. Reading the second book she commented, "'The President, who lives in the White House, does many things. He offers ideas to Congress to make the United States a better place in which to live.' See? 'A better place'! Every book I get says 'A better place'!" Shawna's literacy work appeared to frame her personal goal within a larger social context and motivate her to search out even more books on people who had made the world a better place. The following week Shawna checked out books about U.S. civil rights leader Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman, the former slave who led other African American slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Shawna was progressing on her amended plan to learn about others who had made the world a better place. However, she faced difficulty when I asked her how she planned to reach her larger goal; she still couldn't articulate an answer.

Laura continued to discuss her students' goals with them weekly, and Shawna continued to work on her short-term goal to learn about people who helped those in need. Together, the class created goal sheets on which they wrote down their goals, corresponding plans,

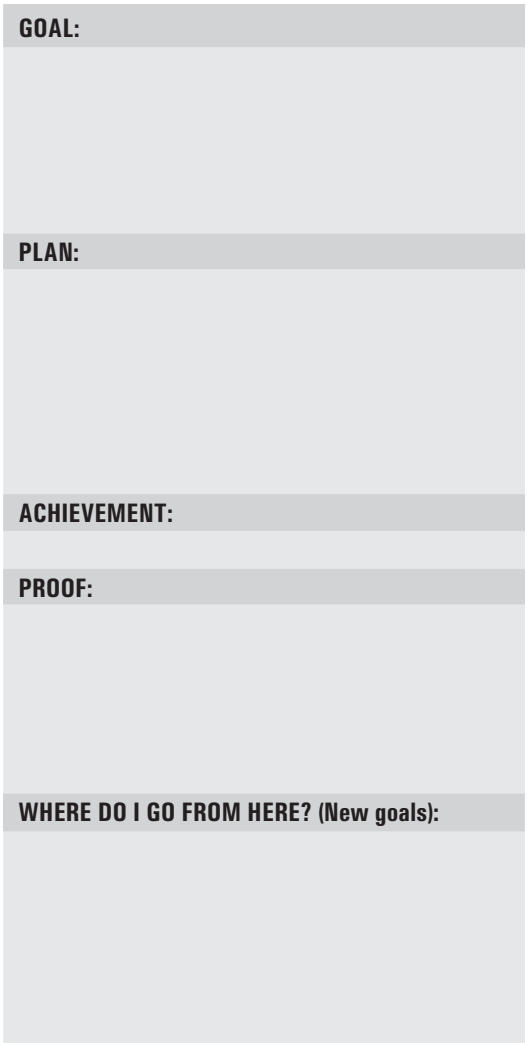


Figure 1. Goals sheet designed by fourth graders.

and proof that the goals had been accomplished (Figure 1). They wrote short-term goals on cards and taped them to their desks so that they could look at them during the day. Laura hoped that the physical documentation of the goals might make it easier for students to conceptualize a course of action. For many students, these activities led to new projects. However, many others still struggled to find methodical ways to reach their larger goals independently. A clear pattern emerged: These students, including Shawna, continued to request direct help and would not work toward their goals until we offered it.

When November arrived, I reminded Shawna that in her letter to the President she had mentioned Thanksgiving was coming. To be timely she needed to send it soon. Shawna asked for help editing her piece. Then she read her final draft:

> Dear President,
> Hi, my name is Shawna. I did not write to tell you my name. I wrote to ask you a favor. You see, I'm really sad when I see sick people and poor people. I mean, Thanksgiving is coming and the poor people can't afford any food, and that's sad. I don't want to see that in New Hampshire. Do you know that sick people die without medical attention?
> Thank You
> Can you help
> Signed sincerely,
> Shawna
> P.S. I am only 10 years old.

Finished, she slapped the letter into an envelope and ordered me to mail it to the White House on my way home.

Shawna's goal stalls

A couple of weeks later, Shawna asked, "Were you here when the President wrote me back?"

"No! What did he write?"

"'Thank you for your concern,' or something. And they gave me a picture of the President and the Vice President in their tuxedos." According to Laura, Shawna had been ecstatic when she had received her form letter from the White House, but by the time she spoke to me the thrill had waned. She told me she didn't know how to continue her goal. She sighed, "I don't know what to write the President because he's not going to do anything. I know that for sure. There's too many people in the world that need help." Her passionate request had done no good as far as she could see and she became unwilling to work on it any more.

Shawna's goal had stalled. In many respects, her overall experience was successful. By eventually formulating a smaller goal to learn about those who helped the sick and fed the poor, she tapped into a passion, sought out resources with help, and learned a great deal. She also crafted a letter to the President, conferred about it, and took it through multiple revisions. These activities, conceived with the prompt of the initial assignment and accomplished with help from knowledgeable others, are classic examples of scaffolded learning (Bruner, 1986), and Shawna left the experiences with a richer literacy knowledge base.

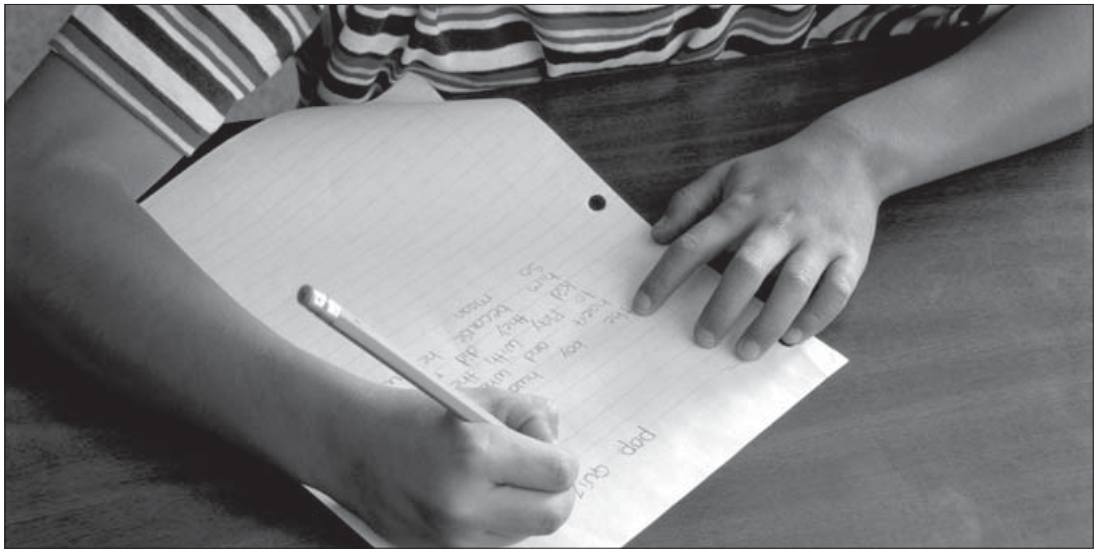


Photo: PhotoDisc, Inc.

However, the experience also held its share of disappointments. The grandeur of Shawna's goal seemed to inhibit her ability to act upon it independently. Despite an enthusiasm ignited by talking with Laura or me, she nevertheless did not work toward her goal or plan until we prompted and helped her. Obvious, too, were her disappointment and frustration when she realized how difficult her grand goal was to reach. Apathy set in.

Shawna's second goal: "Did you know that I like to write poems?"

However, a second goal, which arose without any prompt from Laura, offers a new perspective on how teachers might address the teaching of goal-setting and attainment. One day Shawna announced to me, "Did you know that I like to write poems? My brother's a poet. And my mother's white, but she likes rap. Do you want to see the poem I wrote?" She ran to her desk and returned with her poem. "Mr. Kaufman, read it," she demanded politely. I expected one of the funny, singsong ditties that many of her friends were writing, but instead I read:

WHAT IS LOVE

Love is care love
Is to share love
Is coco colerd like me
Love is the rain
Love is the black
Lady that cries for her
Life on the east coast
Of Africa So what
Is
Love

I remained silent, collecting my thoughts, trying to recall where I had heard a lovely voice like this before. Making the connection, I finally said, "Oh, Shawna, I love it. This line, 'Love is cocoa colored like me…' sounds like one of my favorite poets. His name is Langston Hughes."

For my next visit I brought in my well-worn copy of *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1974) and gave it to Shawna. To my ear she and this writer who wrote so eloquently about the black experience in the United States were compatriots. She leafed through the book and quickly picked out the very poem that had pulsed through my head when she had shared her own poem. She read "Dream Variations" out loud to me, which ends,

Rest at pale evening…
A tall, slim tree…
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

Shawna continued to read. Fifteen minutes later her head was still bent low and her eyes darted as she silently mouthed Hughes' words. Soon she crept across the room to where I was taking field notes and gently held the poem "Afro-American Fragments" over my notebook so that I couldn't write. "Mr. Kaufman," she whispered, "did you know that I'm African American?"

During the next few weeks Shawna independently sought out books by African American authors. She shared with me a variety of poetry books by Joyce Carol Thomas (1993), Walter Dean Myers (1993), and Eloise

Greenfield (1986). She read out loud in an easy, fluid style and prohibited me from helping her with any hard words before she figured them out herself. During each read she also wrote her own poetry, experimenting with rhythm, rhyme, and structure. My input was much more minimal than before. Here Shawna appeared to know exactly what she was doing. As she wrote daily, she acted upon what she already knew and clearly loved, working hard to become better at it.

Independent Persistence

One day I found Shawna in the library, absorbed in *Coming Home: From The Life of Langston Hughes* (Cooper, 1994). Suddenly Shawna pushed the book away. She quickly pulled out a piece of paper and wrote, "Shawna's Poem." She tapped her pencil against her lips, then began to draft. Dissatisfied with the result, she pushed the paper away and tried a new poem.

"Mmm," she complained when she had finished. She perused her poem "What Is Love," which resided in her portfolio. "I know! I can write a poem 'What Is Jazz'!" She played with the line for a bit but then abandoned it for a different topic. "Oh! I can't think of *anything*!" she cried after repeated attempts to get a good line down. She went to a corner for a while to think without distraction. Five minutes later she had written yet another poem.

Returning, she again studied the poem intently. "This," she announced, "is bad." She crumpled it up and tossed it toward a wastepaper basket and began again.

Shawna's writing appeared to be entering a new stage: Her frustration did not lead to abandonment but to renewed effort. She worked diligently without my intervention. Soon she had a poem she wanted to keep. It was a message to her father, whom she had not seen in a very long time:

WHEN I SAY I LOVE YOU

When my daddy
Says he loves me
He says it with care
He says dear honey
I love you
From the grounds
To the heavens
When I hear that word
I get so weak I
Go to him and say
I love you
More

Fourth graders' conceptions of goals

Shawna's goal-setting story was woven among those of her classmates. Viewed separately these stories demonstrate the wide variety of talents, tastes, and ambitions each individual carried, unique qualities that we might miss during the hectic classroom day. Viewed collectively they describe a pattern of activity that suggests what we might do to increase the successful attainment of student-set goals and independent learning in a literacy environment.

The first goal: An assignment out of context

Shawna's two goals of healing the world and becoming a poet exemplify the two types of goals that my yearlong observations and analysis reveal every fourth grader made. The first goal type was prompted by Laura's class assignment and *initiated outside the context of students' own work*. At the beginning of the year these students were not yet immersed in reading and writing for personal reasons and could not yet use their work to identify goals. Consequently, almost all of them set goals that were virtually unattainable in the classroom environment.

It became clear that students' conceptions of goals were different from ours. We initially assumed they would create small-scale, short-term, academic goals—writing a better narrative or learning a troublesome math concept, for instance—that would require simple planning and ensure fairly quick success. But while every student easily and enthusiastically created goals during the September assignment, I was able to code every goal into one or both of two general categories: (a) they were extremely *ambitious and long-term* (e.g., Jason's "to be a professional basketball player") and/or (b) they were *vague* (e.g., Tina's "to try my best"). These features made it difficult for students to progress because their goals were disconnected from their current knowledge base (Carroll & Christenson, 1995). In essence they had

created goals that required skills outside their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

Laura's lesson in which she modeled her own realistic literacy goal of creating a portfolio of book reviews helped students to create smaller goals successfully, but none of them abandoned their original ones. Clearly their grandiose goals were very important to them, apparently representing their real dreams for the future. But because passionate goals like Shawna's were ambitious, long-term, *and* vague, she and her classmates had difficulty determining how to achieve them, despite their relevance. It was only when we helped Shawna formulate smaller goals and worked with her closely that she experienced considerable success.

The second goal: An act of self-inspiration

It appears that our act of *assigning* goal-setting without first focusing on students' immediate talents and interests contributed to the creation of goals that were ambitious, long term, and vague. It decontextualized the concept for them, removing it from the here and now of their lives, apparently causing them to define goals as things that were *supposed* to be difficult to accomplish.

However, Shawna's goal to become a poet exemplifies the second type of goal that I documented all the students setting, working toward, and accomplishing regularly, with comparative ease. These goals were smaller and more short term and arose directly out of students' immediate personal interests and knowledge. They clearly suggest that every student already had a grasp of goal-setting and planning that was not apparent in their work on the original assigned goals. For instance, Shawna's classmate Adam watched his father read a biography of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. Adam then went to the library, researched Lincoln, and wrote his own biography, drawing on talents and experience he already possessed. Attainment of this literacy goal required acting upon personal interests, setting a clear plan for achievement, and following through in an effective manner.

When Shawna began her poetry writing, she engaged in the very type of goal-setting we had expected when Laura first assigned children to set goals. Shawna learned about poetry because she was self-inspired; she loved to write and knew how to begin the journey.

Creating conditions for goal-setting

Shawna's accomplishments and struggles while working on her goals suggest conditions we might create to enhance goal-setting and attainment in our classrooms:

- a consistent examination of the meaning of the word "goal" in lessons and discussions,
- consistent modeling of our own goals in class,
- honest recognition of students' goal work, which increases motivation,
- scaffolding (when we, as knowledgeable others, gradually shifted responsibility to Shawna as she gained expertise with concepts, she was able to understand complex concepts and create plans), and
- social interaction in which students can converse and be questioned about their goal work.

The big lesson: Begin with what students know and care about

But, as important as these conditions may be and as successful as most elements of Shawna's first goal-setting experience were, it was Shawna's second goal—her diligent, passionate poetry work—that fundamentally changed the way we viewed students' goal-setting. The most important finding of this study is that Shawna and her classmates already *were* successful goal-setters and goal-accomplishers in many ways, as evidenced by their abilities to tap into personal interests and chart independent courses of action that allowed them to learn more about their topics of interest. This suggests that our teaching of goal-setting might have been more effective if we had first acknowledged what they already knew, then built constructively off of this foundation.

Earlier I outlined five questions that Hansen (1998) claimed every good self-evaluator answers. When I first entered

Shawna's classroom, I initially focused on only two of the questions—"What do I want to learn next in order to grow?" and "What will I do to accomplish this?"—as clear goal-setting questions. Laura's lessons addressed strategies and practices for answering them. While Shawna and her classmates clearly experienced success in learning how to answer them, their struggles were obvious and their ultimate understanding, in our view, was incomplete.

However, I learned that the first two of Hansen's questions—"What do I do well?" and "What is the most recent thing I've learned to do?"—were just as crucial to the goal-setting process as the others. In the beginning I didn't explicitly work with students to address these questions. This research suggests we might. When Shawna stated, "Did you know that I like to write poetry?" she addressed these questions on her own, centering her subsequent goal within her current knowledge and experience. She had already internalized many of the strategies needed to begin working toward her poetry goal alone and could thus be proactive in ways she couldn't with her first goal. Helping Shawna recognize and exploit her current knowledge may have ameliorated many of the problems she experienced in developing her more grandiose goal. When students start with what they know and care about, it leads to more engagement in literacy (Guthrie, 1996) and more independent learning. This foundation is a better place from which to build toward their more ambitious goals. We also open ourselves to more teaching and learning possibilities arising out of students' unique passions. Shawna and her classmates have set and met goals from their earliest years. When we acknowledge these goals and let them inform our agendas, we may better help them to become poets and perhaps even presidents.

References

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about reading, writing, and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Bruner, J.S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Calkins, L.M. (2001). *The art of teaching reading*. New York: Longman.

Carroll, J.H., & Christenson, C.N. (1995). Teaching and learning about student goal-setting in a fifth grade classroom. *Language Arts, 72*(1), 42–49.

Colver, A. (1961). *Florence Nightingale: War nurse*. Champaign, IL: Garrard.

Cooper, F. (1994). *Coming home: From the life of Langston Hughes*. New York: Philomel.

Flitner, D. (1973). *Those people in Washington*. Chicago: Children's Press.

Greenfield, E. (1986). *Honey, I love, and other love poems*. New York: Trophy Press.

Guthrie, J.T. (1996). Educational contexts for engagement in literacy. *The Reading Teacher, 49*, 432–445.

Hansen, J. (1996). Evaluation: The center of writing instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 50*, 188–195.

Hansen, J. (1998). *When learners evaluate*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hansen, J. (2001). *When writers read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harwayne, S. (1999). *Going public: Priorities & practice at the Manhattan New School*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hughes, L. (1974). *Selected poems of Langston Hughes*. New York: Vintage Press.

Kaufman, D. (2000). *Conferences & conversations: Listening to the literate classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Myers, W.D. (1993). *Brown angels: An album of pictures and verse*. New York: Harper Collins.

Taberski, S. (2000). *On solid ground. Strategies for teaching reading K–3*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Thomas, J.C. (1993). *Brown honey in broomwheat tea*. New York: HarperCollins.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

White, K., Hohn, R., & Tollefson, N. (1997). Encouraging elementary students to set realistic goals. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 12*(1), 48–57.

Witty, M. (1980). *A day in the life of an emergency room nurse*. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates.

Douglas Kaufman is Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut, USA.

Whose Goals Are These, Anyway?

Sergei Lysenko

Many students, maybe even most of them, expect the teacher to present information, give them correct answers, provide instruction, and make class interesting. Even if these expectations do not quite suggest that students view themselves as "objects" for the teacher to manipulate, there is no denying the passivity expressed here. It is as if, from the very beginning of school, the student accepts the role of follower and leaves the role of leader to the teacher.

"What is so bad about that?" you may ask. After all, such a relationship between teacher and student is quite natural. The difference in age, knowledge, experience, and social status determines these positions, this kind of relationship. And if the student trusts the instructor—and the instructor, in turn, respects the student's right to make mistakes—this arrangement takes us a long way on the road of knowledge.

And still we want something more. I, for one, would rather not lead my students. I prefer to walk alongside them, helping them discover their own opportunities and options. In this relationship the students assume a more active role. To foster such relationships, teacher educators need to present the educational process as something *developmental*, to help teachers realize that the student is a *subject*, an active participant in the learning process, and not the object of instruction. For most teachers, and for students as well, this perspective represents a radical change.

The Moldovan Summer Debate School, which I help to organize, is attempting to effect such a change in perspective. This camp, established by the National League of Pre-University Debate, brings together the best high school debaters in Moldova to improve their skills and compete with one another. Two years ago we instituted a new program with the underlying goal of "helping students recognize the importance of being proactive in life." We sought to achieve this goal through a number of concrete activities that have been carefully worked out and analyzed by the participants.

On the first day of camp, the students begin writing a "Plan for Personal Development." The children set their own goals, predict outcomes, and work out criteria for evaluating their successes. To create this plan, we ask students to:

1) list the things (in debate) you feel you know well and are able to do well

2) list the things you would like to learn, or would like to be able to do better

3) choose the things on the second list that are most important to you

4) Formulate goals for yourself according to the following criteria:

   - Is achievement of this goal measurable?
   - To what degree can I control its achievement?
   - Have I stated the goal in positive terms ("I will…" as opposed to "I will not…")?

Using this process, each participant formulates three or four personal goals. The most frequently stated goals include learning to play by the rules, overcoming fear of public speaking, constructing rigorous arguments and counterarguments, being able to win or lose gracefully, becoming more knowledgeable, learning to express ideas more concisely, and making new friends and acquaintances.

> ***I, for one, would rather not lead my students. I prefer to walk alongside them***

In addition to the Plan for Personal Development, participants in the Summer Debate School are asked to evaluate each activity and each day of the program in terms of its contribution to the achievement of their goals (for example, Which of today's activities was most helpful in realizing your goals? What problems have you encountered?). The personal note in these questions helps the program organizers and teachers assess the usefulness and efficacy of each activity from the students' point of view. Moreover, it gives the students an opportunity to reflect on their experience in terms of their own values and goals.

Our initial experience with the new structure for the camp has given us a lot to think about. Many participants found it difficult to formulate specific, measurable goals or to chart their own progress toward a goal. It is interesting to note, however, that at the end of the summer a clear majority of the participants felt that they had achieved most (70%–90%) of the goals they had set for themselves.

Teachers trying to implement new learner-centered strategies should be aware that students most likely will not be able to formulate their concrete personal goals on the spot. Goal-setting should be viewed as a developmental process continuing throughout the year. Students should be asked to specify concrete goals or expectations for any given topic of study. The teacher can help students in this regard, offering a variety of possible aims, so that the teacher and student can work together to set goals. Students also need to be taught to analyze their progress toward the goal.

Initially explicit goal-setting may elicit a negative reaction from students. "I won't write down my goals because then you will expect me to meet them." In this phrase we hear the implication, "I don't want to take responsibility." We have to respect a student's right to refuse; it means he or she is not yet ready to accept responsibility. In this case the teacher is faced with yet another problem—changing the student's attitude.

It is important for teachers and students to periodically revisit and readjust their goals. The teacher can help a child recognize his or her achievements, progress toward the goals, and—if necessary—reflect on any failures. Failures may be connected with an unrealistic goal, or external circumstances, or a lack of personal effort. These reflections can become the basis for updating the goals and strategies.

I believe that students have difficulty seeing themselves as active agents because this role is a new experience for them. In fact, many adults have trouble seeing themselves as capable of initiating change. We need to become conscious of our own underlying attitudes toward whatever we do—or will do—in life. School is a good place to begin: Ask students to reflect upon the goals they bring with them to their studies, what they can do to realize their goals, and how they can decide if they are moving in the right direction.

Sergei Lysenko teaches history at Svetoch Lyceum (Chisinau, Moldova), heads the Chisinau Debate club, and coordinates Debate activities among Russian-speaking students in Moldova. He is a trainer in Moldova's RWCT program.

Developing Thinking Skills With Peers, Parents, and Volunteers

Keith Topping

Everyone (including the government) is talking about the need to develop thinking skills. For the busy teacher, the problem is how to actually achieve this in practice. Paired Thinking is a practical, structured method for the development of thinking skills. It uses peer, parent, or volunteer tutors in partnership with individual students, and is based on differentiated book reading experiences shared by each pair, often building on relationships and methods organized as Paired Reading. This article describes both Paired Thinking (PT) and Paired Reading (PR); discusses how Paired Thinking builds on the research base developed through studies of Paired Reading; details the method known as Paired Thinking; suggests ways it might be organized in schools or elsewhere; and directs the reader to freely available information, research evidence, and resource materials.

In a meta-analysis of 20 controlled studies of instruction for critical thinking, Bangert-Drowns and Bankert (1990) found that methods involving explicit instruction on generalization issues yielded the greatest gains in the skills measured. However, virtually all the research literature is concerned with teacher-directed programs in thinking skills, for which evaluation outcomes have been mixed, although some notable exceptions incorporate an element of peer interaction (see Appendix/Sidebar). Additionally, some of the teacher-directed or materials-led programs are costly in terms of student class time, teacher planning and preparation time, and other resources, and risk failing to "infuse" thinking skills across the curriculum. There is practically no research literature on parent or volunteer tutoring of thinking skills. Thus the PT method makes a significant contribution to research and practice.

Paired Thinking: What is it?

Paired Thinking is a framework for pairs working together. Some difference in reading ability is needed in each pair. The pairs can be

- peers of the same or different ages, or
- parents working with children at home, or
- teaching assistants working with children in school, or
- volunteer adults, such as senior citizens, working with children in school.

PT builds thinking skills on reading skills. Embedding the teaching of thinking skills in the transferable skill of reading has the advantage that reading is probably the most widely used means of obtaining information that requires deep processing. PT can be based on any fiction or nonfiction reading material.

Higher order reading skills that focus on deep comprehension arguably already involve some thinking skills. PT seeks to develop reading comprehension skills to a higher level, a level that

- goes beyond the author's intended meaning,
- goes beyond the book read,
- relates to the present lives of tutee and tutor,
- potentially relates to the future lives of tutee and tutor, and
- potentially relates to the actual or hypothetical problems of others, in other words, is more abstract and capable of wide generalization.

PT involves training tutors and tutees

Methods Involving Some Peer Interaction in Thinking Skills

The methods listed below involve an element of peer-assisted learning, sometimes combined with or following direct instruction by the professional teacher.

Reciprocal Teaching

Palincsar & Brown (1988)
Key Strategies: Prediction, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying.
Evaluation: Rosenshine & Meister (1994) review of 16 quantitative studies of RT generally supported the efficacy of the method.

Transactional Strategies Instruction

Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder (1996)
Key Strategies: Range of specific strategies to guide problem solving when experiencing a failure of comprehension.
Evaluation: Yearlong program was effective in raising scores on standardized measures of reading comprehension with low-achieving children in second grade, in comparison to distal control groups.

PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies)

Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Pate, & Mathes (1994), Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan, & Allen, (1999)
Key Strategies: Comprehension strategies (including retelling, summarizing, predicting, and elaborated help-giving) integrated with class-wide peer tutoring.
Evaluation: PALS students made greater gains in reading comprehension than controls, although the elaborated help-giving element of the strategy proved most useful in working with older students.

Reciprocal Peer Tutoring of Comprehension

Mastropieri & Scruggs (2000)
Key Strategies: Reciprocal peer tutoring of reading comprehension strategies with middle school students with learning disabilities, with a strong emphasis on summarization.
Evaluation: Performance on reading comprehension tests showed significant advantages for program students (tutors and tutees) compared to a traditional reading instruction condition.

Inference Awareness Training

Yuill & Oakhill (1988)
Key Strategies: Make inferences, generate questions, and check comprehension.
Evaluation: Outcomes positive with small numbers of lower ability children, but no better than outcomes from more traditional comprehension exercises.

Collaborative Strategic Reading

Klingner & Vaughn (1999)
Key Strategies: Reading comprehension strategy instruction and cooperative small-group learning.
Evaluation: Effectiveness demonstrated in at least one controlled study.

"Ask To Think—Tell Why"

King, Staffieri, & Adelgais (1998), King (1999)
Key Strategies: Scaffolding discourse patterns through guided peer questioning involving specific types of questions (to review, elaborate, build, probe, hint, solicit metacognition, and so on). Structured question stems used to promote analytic and critical discourse in dyads and in small groups at three levels of complexity.
Evaluation: Shown to improve the solving of novel problems in a controlled study. In another study, 58 7th graders in same-age, same-ability, same-gender dyads successfully reciprocally scaffolded higher order thinking and learning, and the trained discourse pattern was quite different from naturalistic untrained tutorial dialogue patterns.

Conclusion

Studies of peer tutoring in thinking skills have generally found encouraging results. Paired Thinking has strong links with King's work ("Ask To Think—Tell Why," above), in that it provides questions as cues to scaffold analytic and critical discourse between members of the pairs. It differs from King's work in that it specifically builds that discourse on a differentiated and individualized reading experience chosen and shared by the pair.

to ask increasingly intelligent questions about what they have read together. It develops Socratic questioning—a thinking skills method about 2,500 years old.

Many teachers choose to build PT tutoring on the specific structured reading tutoring method of Paired Reading. Starting with PR enables the students to become familiar with tutoring; moving the pairs on to PT expands and develops the discussion already inherent within PR. (For alternatives to starting with PR, see Topping & Bryce, 2003.)

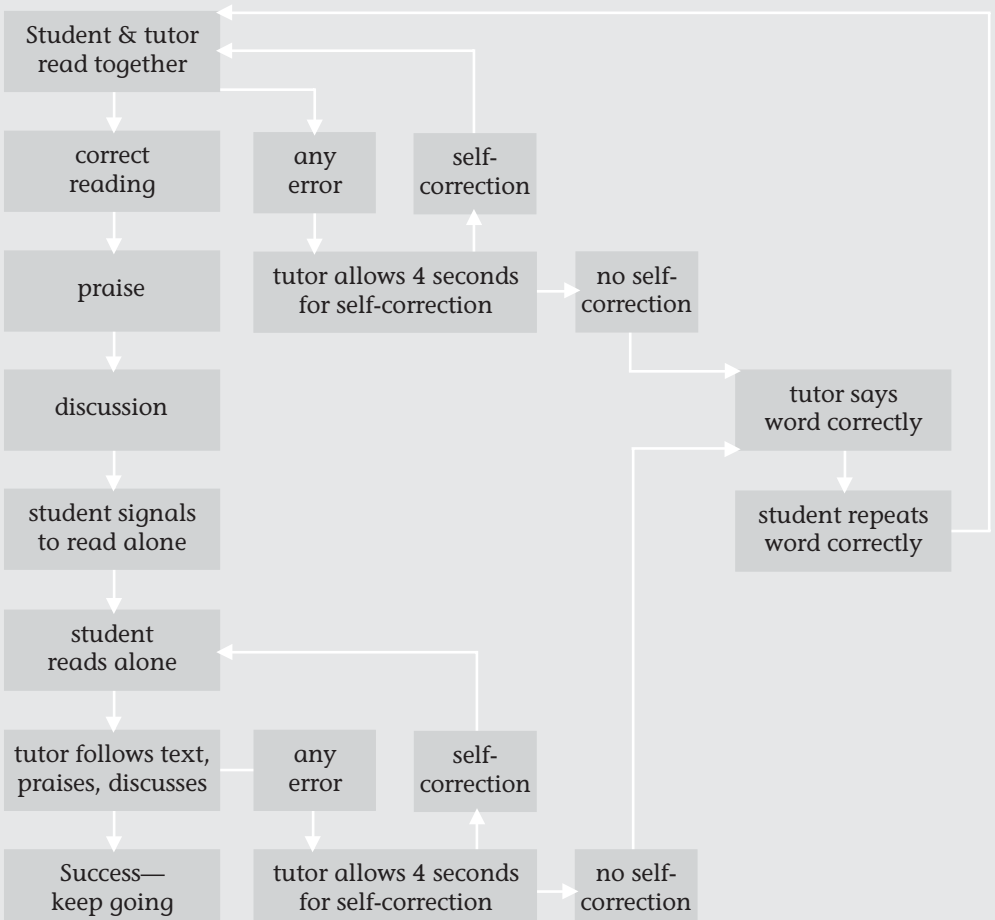
Paired Reading: What is it?

Paired Reading is a long-standing and well-researched method for supported or assisted reading. It is intended only for use with individually chosen, highly motivating, nonfiction or fiction books that are **above** the independent reading level of the tutee (but of course within the independent reading level of the tutor).

When the text is difficult, tutor and tutee read the text aloud simultaneously. When the tutee feels confident, he or she signals the tutor and reads alone. If the tutee makes an error while reading alone and cannot self-correct within five seconds, the tutor supplies the word, the tutee repeats it correctly, and they continue reading simultaneously. Integral to the technique are praise to promote confidence and discussion to check and extend comprehension. Figure 1 shows a flowchart of the PR cycle.

The name of this method has been a problem: The term *Paired Reading* has such a warm, comfortable feel to it that some people have loosely applied it to almost anything that two people do together with a book. Of course, the effectiveness research applies only to the specific and structured PR technique described in Topping (1995, 2001a) and in the Resources section in this article.

Figure 1. Paired Reading



The effectiveness of Paired Reading

In a recent review of the effectiveness of 20 interventions in reading instruction, PR ranked as one of the most effective (Brooks, 2002). The PR method has now been widely disseminated all over the world and shown to be effective with thousands of children in hundreds of schools. It has been the subject of many research reviews (e.g., Topping, 1995, 2001a; Topping & Lindsay, 1992; Topping & Whiteley, 1990). There are many controlled studies demonstrating its effectiveness. Follow-up studies indicate that gains are sustained and do not "wash out" over time.

There is evidence that the least able tutees and tutors gain the most. Low-ability tutors produce tutee gains at least equivalent to those produced by high-ability tutors. Overall, male tutors do better than female tutors in terms of their own test gains. So perhaps boys learn better by being tutors than by being tutored. Social, attitudinal, and self-esteem gains are also widely reported. PR provides a very sound basis for developing the PT method.

How does Paired Thinking work?

Paired Thinking incorporates reading, listening, thinking, feeling, and communicating. It also aims to help pupils to identify, review, and evaluate the values they and others hold, and to recognize how these affect thoughts and actions.

Paired Thinking provides

- modeling of intelligent questioning for the tutee,
- interactive cognitive challenge for both partners,
- practice in critical and analytic thinking,
- scaffolding,
- feedback, and
- praise and other social reinforcement.

The PT structure of 13 areas divided into 3 stages is outlined in Figure 2. Each area can be explored by a number of different questions, and an example (model or prompt) question is given for each area. Prompt sheets, available in four differentiated levels of complexity and difficulty to suit different pairs and provide developmental progression, provide an example question for each of the 13 areas. However, tutors are encouraged to view the prompt sheet only as a training device and fallback resource, as it is preferable for them to generate their own questions, which will be more relevant to their partner.

Figure 2. Paired Thinking stages and areas

Before Reading (Priming)	
Structure	What do the parts of the book tell us?
Type	What kind of book is it?
Difficulty	How hard is it?
Reader aims	What do you want from the book?
During Reading (Formative)	
Author aims	What does the writer want?
Meaning	What does it mean?
Truth	Is it true?
Prediction	What might happen next?
Links	What does it remind us of?
After Reading (Formative and Summative)	
Summarize	What are the main ideas?
Evaluate	How do you feel about it?
Revisit	What did you remember about it?
Extend	Have you questioned anything else?

The interactive behavior required is outlined in the Tips for Tutors handout (Figure 3). These points are abbreviated for everyday use in the Tips for Tutors Reminder Sheet. When initially presenting the Tips to pairs, teachers often present just a few at a time and not necessarily in this order.

Figure 3. Interactive behavior: Tips for tutors

- During reading, pause quite often at any **natural break** in the reading to think and talk about what you have read. This is especially difficult DURING reading—easier Before and After.
- Your **aim** is to **improve** the tutee's **quality of thinking** by asking helpful and **intelligent questions** that provide clues. This is not as easy as you might think!
- Please **think up your own questions** as well—the questions listed are only examples to get you started. Your own questions should encourage the tutees to say whatever they really think.
- Tutors have to think hard, too. Good thinking is not easy—for either of you.
- Some of the listed questions apply only to storybooks (fiction), some apply only to information books (nonfiction). Just **leave out the questions that don't apply** to the book you are reading.
- Although there are many questions, your conversation **is not a test** for the tutee. Indeed, often **there is no one right answer**, only many better or worse answers. Work toward getting more "better" answers. Even the tutor need not be able to answer the question at the beginning—you can work it out together.
- You need to put tutees at their ease, boost their confidence, and **encourage** them to trust you—or they might be afraid to let you know what they are thinking.
- Remember tutees don't know as much as you do, so **don't expect too much** or push them too hard.
- **Give** the tutees some **time to think**—they will not usually be able to answer straight away. But if they think for more than half a minute without success, maybe they need a clue, which you can supply in another question.
- Encourage tutees to **think aloud**, so you can hear HOW they are thinking and really understand them—if they think alone then just give you their final answer, you will not understand how they got there. You might think aloud yourself sometimes, to show them how to do it.
- **Never** say "**No**" or "**That's wrong**"—always ask another question to give a clue.
- **It's OK** for **both** tutors and tutees **to say** they **don't know**—but be clear about what each one needs to know, and think about how she or he might find out.
- **Praise** the tutee for all thoughtful responses—for example, "Good, I can tell you thought hard about that."
- Sometimes you can also try to **brainstorm** answers—this is where both of you say every possible answer that comes into your head, even if it seems silly or weird. Then choose the best.
- **Tutees can ask** tutors **questions**, too! Keep each other thinking!
- Tutors can say what they think, too—but be careful not to let tutees assume that must be the "right answer"—ask tutees what they think as well.
- In the *During Reading* stage, the five areas (Author Aims, Meaning, Truth, Prediction, Links) can be worked through in **any order**. Choose any relevant questions from any area at any time.
- You might need to go back to **read bits** of the book **again** at any time to check on things or answer questions. When you do, you might want to read the difficult bit to the tutee, so he or she can think about it.
- When you are stuck trying to think of a question quickly, "**How do you know that?**" is often a good one.
- When you are reading a longer book, you might find the tutees have trouble **remembering** everything, even if they did understand it in the first place. If they don't remember, it does not always mean they never did **understand**.
- You might find tutees remember the beginning or end of a book better than the middle—but they do need to think about the middle as well!
- In the *After Reading* stage when you are finding the main ideas or Summarizing, and choose to write down some keywords and/or write a summary for your classmates, it is usually **easier** if the **tutor does all the writing**—but the tutor must *not* do all the thinking!
- In the *After Reading* stage is a good time to really **praise** each other—AGAIN!

Differentiation and progression: Levels of prompt sheets

Prompt sheets that provide an example question for each of the 13 areas are available in four differentiated levels of complexity and difficulty to suit different pairs and provide developmental progression. Some teachers differentiate these levels further, which is easily done as the materials are freely available as electronic files that can be adapted and customized as required (see Resources section below).

The 13 example questions listed in Figure 2 constitute the Level 1 Question Prompt Sheet. For the training sessions and for the first regular sessions, all pairs start with a Level 1 Question Prompt Sheet.

As pairs progress at different rates in subsequent sessions, Level 2, 3, and 4 Prompt Sheets can be issued to particular pairs when judged appropriate. The levels are intended to enable the project organizer to differentiate and individualize the thinking interaction for different pairs progressively by adding layers of complexity and sophistication bit by bit. Level 2 is intended to be a relatively small step from Level 1 (to encourage all concerned), so all pairs should eventually progress to Level 2. However, progression to Levels 3 and 4 will be much more dependent upon the different abilities of individual pairs.

To exemplify this progression, we compare the prompt questions at each level for one area, namely Prediction (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Prediction at Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4

Level 1

"What might happen next?"

Level 2

"What might happen next?"
(Prediction)

- What do you think might happen next?
- What might make this happen? How likely is this?
- Can you imagine or picture in your head what it would look like?
- Did the book end as you expected? How else might it have ended?

Level 3

"What might happen next?"
(Prediction)

- What do the people in the book want or expect to happen next?
- What have you learnt about them that helps you to guess what they might do next?
- What do you think might happen next?
- How likely is this?
- What might cause this to happen?
- Might it depend on something else happening? What?
- Can you imagine or picture in your head what it would look like?
- Did the book end or conclude as you expected?
- How else might it have ended?

Level 4

"What might happen next?"
(Prediction, Inference & Deduction)

- What do the people in the book want or expect to happen next? (Intentionality)
- What have you learnt about them that helps you to guess what they might do next? (Characterization)
- What do **you** think might happen next? (Prediction)
- How likely is this? (Probability, Uncertainty)
- What might cause this to happen? (Causality)
- One cause or more? (Multiple, Complex, Interdependent Causality)
- How would you know what had really caused it? (Evidence)
- Might it depend on something else happening? What? (Conditionality)
- Will it **only** happen if something else happens?
- One thing or more than one? (Multiple, Complex, Interdependent Conditionality)
- Might there be a biggest or major cause? (Critical Factor or Incident)
- If this doesn't happen, what else might? (Alternatives)
- Can you imagine or picture in your head what it would look like? (Visual Imagery)
- Did the book end or conclude as you expected?
- How else might it have ended?

Thanks to the four differentiated levels of prompts, younger and less able readers can participate, but Level 4 is certainly applicable to higher ability and age ranges, perhaps best suited to high school or even college students. However, some very able primary (elementary) school pupils might prove capable of it. At all levels, the intellectual strain on the tutor is considerable. Indeed, among both researchers and practitioners, there is now more interest in the benefits of being a tutor than on the value of being a tutee.

Benefits of Paired Thinking

For both tutor and tutee, PT is

- very active and interactive—both the helper and the helped child are busy thinking all the time,
- low cost to implement in terms of teacher time and other resources,
- socially inclusive (all children have an opportunity to participate),
- flexible (adaptive to a great variety of different neighborhood, school, and classroom contexts, and to pupils of a wide range of ability), and
- durable (remaining to some extent effective when less than perfectly implemented, or when disrupted by factors such as pupil and teacher absence).

PT also

- applies flexibly to any reading experience shared by the pair,
- enables each pair to pursue their own interests and motivations,
- is highly adapted to the individual learner's needs of the moment,
- is democratic and encourages learner-managed learning,
- encourages critical and analytic discussion in the pair's vernacular vocabulary, and
- encourages self-disclosure of faulty or deficient thinking.

Organizing Paired Thinking in the classroom

Same-age within-class peer tutoring is easiest to organize but tends to lack the nurturing quality and wider effects on the school ethos that characterize cross-age tutoring. In either format, pairs are matched to assure a similar differential in reading ability in all pairs—matching the most able tutor with the most able tutee, and so on.

Paired Reading as a basis

If PT is to be based on PR, the teacher should conduct PR training as described in detail in Topping (1995, 2001a). This typically takes about one hour. PR should continue for three weeks so pairs become fluent with the method before moving on to PT. Some pairs and especially peer tutors find PT much more challenging than PR and may want to return to the easy, comfortable, flowing routine of PR, which does not unduly stretch their comfort zone. Therefore, the teacher should condition the pairs from the outset to view PR as a transitional stage to PT, which will involve some brain strain. PT can be "marketed" to students as a maturational progression from PR to a more grown-up activity. The PR/PT transition is also a good point to rematch some pairs when this is considered desirable.

Paired Thinking: Training and coaching

PT training also takes about one hour and should be carried out as described in detail in Topping (2001a). Tutors and tutees are trained together. The teacher first talks the pairs through the Level 1 Prompt Sheet and the most important of the Tips for Tutors and then spends about 10 minutes reading a short book or self-explanatory chapter to the group, telling them that they will be practicing Paired Thinking on the book afterwards.

The teacher then pretends to be a tutor in relation to the text just read, asking some of the questions from the Level 1 Prompt Sheet, treating the whole training group as tutees. Answers may be solicited from any tutor or tutee—from as many different participants as possible. Obviously it is difficult to demonstrate the *Before Reading* questions on a book unilaterally chosen by the teacher, but hypothetical answers could be discussed.

Then the roles change. The teacher plays the part of a tutee and encourages all the participants to pretend to be tutors. They should have their Level 1 Prompt Sheets in hand to help them. If there is another teacher present, he or she can act as a stooge tutor in the

Photo: Giedre Putnikaite

audience and fill in any gaps in the conversation.

At their next session together, the pairs will start doing PT for themselves on whatever book they choose.

If this is too much for the children to absorb on one occasion, the stages can be introduced on different days in sequence: *Before Reading* first; then *During Reading* on another day a little later; then *After Reading* a day or two later still.

This minimal training will almost certainly be too brief to generate high-quality practice in all pairs. Further training and/or coaching is likely to be needed, especially with younger and less able tutors, and perhaps especially with nonfiction books. Issues that should be addressed in subsequent training include

- What exactly might all the prompt questions mean?
- When do you fit in the questions without breaking the flow?
- How exactly do you "prompt by asking another question"?
- How does the tutor judge if a question is too difficult for the tutee?

The students will certainly offer some interesting suggestions in response to these questions—and some of them might be practical.

Paired Thinking: Sessions and progression

As with PR, frequency of contact for PT ideally should be three times per week for a minimum of 20 minutes (preferably on Monday, Wednesday, Friday), for at least the first 4 to 6 weeks. This initial intensity is necessary to establish good-quality implementation and to give the professional teacher sufficient opportunity to closely monitor and fine-tune the process in individual pairs, so students can proceed fluently and automatically.

After this initial period, teachers may schedule PT in any way that seems viable, keeping in mind the risk of boredom or curriculum displacement. Finding time and space in the curriculum is never easy. Fortunately, PR and PT very much lend themselves to double and indeed multiple counting. Such projects involve reading, thinking, language, communication, metacognition, learning about different learning styles, social skills, citizenship, and other aspects of personal and social education—all at the same time.

Paired Thinking: Monitoring

Regular, frequent, and reliable monitoring of the PT process is essential, and planning must ensure that it can be conducted easily and consistently and can be sustained over time. When monitoring peer-tutored PT sessions, the project organizer should always first check whether any tutors and tutees are absent. Members of incomplete pairs can be rematched, and there may be standby tutors, as in PR. However, the project organizer will need to think about how rematching might work—the standby

tutors will be completely reliant on the tutee's interpretation of the book because they probably will not have read it themselves.

In a peer tutoring or volunteer project, the project organizer must constantly circulate to see how the pairs are coping. If a parent and child are doing PT at home, it is just as important that the parent and child have access to support, monitoring, and trouble-shooting from the school or other appropriate source. The project organizer might wish to design a Paired Thinking Home/School Diary (see Resources section). The pairs should be reassured that taking more time so they can think better is all right, and indeed encouraged, provided they are actually talking about something relevant to their reading or thinking. Observations taken while monitoring will indicate when each pair is ready to move on to the next level.

Evaluation of PT

The power of the PR component of this program has already been proven. Measuring improvements in thinking skills without confounding with many other variables is difficult. PT necessitates slower progress through books than PR, because much more time is spent in Socratic discussion, so significant improvement in crude reading test scores might not be expected.

PT in the high school classroom

McKinstery and Topping (2003) deployed the PT technique on a cross-age tutoring basis in a high school and found remarkable increases in scores on reading tests for the tutees that were far beyond any normal expectations. The program also had affective benefits, and in this area tutors appeared to gain even more than tutees. Both tutors and staff thought that there had been a positive effect on the thinking skills of both tutors and tutees.

PT compared to PR alone

A criterion-referenced test of thinking skills was devised by Topping and Bryce (2003) and applied on a pre- and post-program basis to cross-age tutoring in one primary (elementary) school. One group started with PR then switched to PT after six weeks, while another group continued with PR throughout. The PT tutees showed significantly greater gains in thinking skills than the PR-only group, although surprisingly this was not true for the tutors. Further research is now in hand, involving a more sensitive test of thinking skills and more detailed analysis of the process of implementation, actual tutoring behaviors, and the development of metacognitive skills.

Summary and Conclusion

Work to develop thinking skills can easily become too teacher directed, creating difficulties in differentiation of instruction and raising questions about student engagement and generalization beyond the program materials. Teacher- or materials-led programs can also prove costly in student and teacher time and other resources. Peer, parent, or volunteer tutoring in thinking skills offers a less costly and more interactive alternative, and benefits the tutors as well. The Paired Thinking method offers an explicit structure for this purpose, building generalizable thinking skills on the reading comprehension skills developed by the Paired Reading method. Initial evaluation results are encouraging. The program is applicable to many countries and languages and can be based on many different kinds of reading material, so its potential use is virtually unlimited.

Resources

The Read On project website (www.dundee.ac.uk/psychology/ReadOn) includes many free resources for PR and PT and data on evaluation. A video resource pack for peer tutoring in PR and PT (Topping & Hogan, 1999; www.bpes.com) is also available. The Thinking Reading Writing website (www.dundee.ac.uk/psychology/TRW), associated with Topping (2001a), has many free resources for Paired Reading, Thinking, Writing, and Spelling. Summaries of this broader work are available on the Scottish Council for Research in Education website (www.scre.ac.uk/spotlight/index.html - Spotlights 82 and 83). For further information about peer-assisted learning across the curriculum, see Topping & Ehly (1998) and Topping (2000, 2001b).

References

Bangert-Drowns, R.L., & Bankert, E. (1990). *Meta-analysis of effects of explicit instruction for critical thinking.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 328 614)

Brooks, G. (2002). *What works for children with literacy difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention schemes. Research Report RR380.* London: Department for Education & Skills. Available at www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR380.pdf

Brown, R., Pressley, M., Van Meter, P., & Schuder, T. (1996). A quasi-experimental validation of Transactional Strategies Instruction with low-achieving second-grade readers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*, 18–37.

Fuchs, L.S., Fuchs, D., Kazdan, S., & Allen, S. (1999). Effects of peer-assisted learning strategies in reading with and without training in elaborated help giving. *Elementary School Journal, 99*, 201–220.

King, A. (1999). Discourse patterns for mediating peer learning. In A.M. O'Donnell & A. King (Eds.), *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning* (pp. 87–115). Mahwah, NJ & London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

King, A., Staffieri, A., & Adelgais, A. (1998). Effects of structuring tutorial interaction to scaffold peer learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*, 134–152.

Klingner, J.K., & Vaughn, S. (1999). Promoting reading comprehension, content learning, and English acquisition through Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). *The Reading Teacher, 52*, 738–747.

McKinstery, J., & Topping, K.J. (in press). Peer tutoring of thinking skills in high school. *Educational Psychology in Practice*.

Mastropieri, M.A., & Scruggs, T. (2000). *Can middle school students with serious reading difficulties help each other and learn anything? Qualitative and quantitative outcomes of a peer tutoring investigation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Palincsar, A.S., & Brown, A.L. (1988). Teaching and practicing thinking skills to promote comprehension in the context of group problem solving. *Remedial and Special Education (RASE), 9*(1), 53–59.

Rosenshine, B., & Meister, C. (1994). Reciprocal teaching: A review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 64*, 479–530.

Simmons, D., Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., Pate, J., & Mathes, P. (1994). Importance of instructional complexity and role reciprocity to classwide peer tutoring. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 9*, 203–212.

Topping, K.J. (1995). *Paired reading, spelling and writing: The handbook for teachers and parents*. London & New York: Cassell.

Topping, K.J. (2000). *Tutoring by peers, family and volunteers.* Geneva: International Bureau of Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Available at www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Publications/EducationalPractices/prachome.htm (Also in translation in Chinese and Spanish.)

Topping, K J. (2001a). *Thinking reading writing: A practical guide to paired learning with peers, parents & volunteers.* Available at www.dundee.ac.uk/psychology/TRW. New York & London: Continuum International

Topping, K.J. (2001b). *Peer assisted learning: A practical guide for teachers.* Available at www.dundee.ac.uk/psychology/kjtopping/plearning.html Cambridge MA: Brookline Books.

Topping, K.J., & Bryce, A. (2003). *Peer tutoring of thinking skills in primary school*. Paper submitted for publication.

Topping, K.J., & Ehly, S. (Eds.). (1998). *Peer assisted learning*. Mahwah, NJ & London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Topping, K.J., & Hogan, J. (1999). *Read on: Paired reading and thinking video resource pack*. London: BP Educational Services (www.bpes.com).

Topping, K.J., & Lindsay, G.A. (1992). Paired Reading: A review of the literature. *Research Papers in Education, 7*, 199–246.

Topping, K.J., & Whiteley, M. (1990). Participant evaluation of parent-tutored and peer-tutored projects in reading. *Educational Research, 32*(1), 14–32.

Yuill, N., & Oakhill, J. (1988). Effects of inference awareness training on poor reading comprehension. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 2*, 33–45.

Keith Topping is Professor of Educational and Social Research at the University of Dundee, Scotland (UK).

A Critical Literacy Curriculum:
Helping Preservice Teachers to Understand Reading and Writing as Emancipatory Acts

Joyce Herbeck and Clara Beier

…reading and writing should be emancipatory acts. When students are taught to read "the word and the world," as Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) wrote, then their minds become unshackled. As Freire insisted, teaching students just to read is not enough. We must teach students how to "read" not only novels and science texts, but cartoons, politicians, schools, workplaces, welfare offices, and Jenny Craig ads. We need to get students to "read" where and how public money is spent. We need to get students to "read" the inequitable distribution of funds for schools. This is "rising up" reading—reading that challenges, that organizes for a better world.

Christensen (2000, p. vii)

Most students don't realize the power they have as individuals. If they have experienced only a traditional curriculum, they wait for directions and generally receive high grades for following them exactly. Critical literacy, however, encourages students to look at each situation from a social justice perspective, to ask questions, and to take action. The goal is for students to realize that they can make a difference.

As teacher educators who work with elementary preservice teachers, we have a dual purpose for addressing critical literacy. First, we want our students to be knowledgeable about critical literacy and its importance in education. They need to be aware of the power of language and of their responsibility to nurture active citizens who use literacy to make a difference in the world. Second, we need to provide opportunities for these preservice teachers to learn how to create a critical literacy curriculum. As our students enter their first year of teaching, we want them to feel confident in the process of creating a curriculum in which critical literacy permeates the spirit of the classroom.

In this article we create a working definition of critical literacy, demonstrate how we introduce our preservice teachers to the topic, and give some examples of what it might look like in the elementary or middle school classroom. Our goal is to enable all students, both our preservice teachers and their future students, to recognize injustice, to use literacy skills to investigate a situation, and to take action to make the world a better place.

What is critical literacy?

Critical literacy engages students in issues of ethics. This process often begins with reading text and asking whose voices are being heard and whose voices are absent. Is there another side to the story that is not being told? Rather than the mere transfer of knowledge that characterizes traditional education, and even beyond the process of hands-on learning and learning by doing, critical literacy empowers students to question the status quo. Edelsky (1999) suggested several questions for a critical reading of the word and the world:

> Why is it like *this*? Who benefits from it being like this? Is that fair? What else do we need to know to get to the bottom of this? What's left out? Which voices *aren't* heard? What *doesn't* this material tell us? (p. 22)

Students thus get in the habit of probing for underlying causes.

Nieto (1999) stressed that critical literacy involves taking action. Critical literacy also refers to the reading and writing that students do in response to injustice. Whether it be reading to become more informed on a topic, writing to government officials to express an opinion on a national issue, organizing a group to stop racial slurs at a local high school football game (Hoose, 1993), or making a poster to advocate animal rights, students take steps to solve real problems.

Photo: PhotoDisc, Inc.

In a critical literacy curriculum, action projects are the goal. The reading and writing that are involved are authentic literacy experiences. Students are writing and reading for real-world purposes, not just to hand in an assignment. Someone besides the teacher will be receiving this project: A government official will be reading this letter; spectators at the football game will be hearing this announcement; students, teachers, staff, and visitors to the school will be seeing this poster.

The experience of taking action demonstrates to students both their potential to make a difference in the world and the power of language to accomplish change. When students realize the power of words, they often are more motivated to learn spelling, grammar, and punctuation in order to make their communication of ideas most effective.

A critical literacy curriculum doesn't happen overnight. Teachers begin by taking small steps. As they gradually feel more comfortable addressing controversial issues, the critical literacy perspective becomes more evident in their teaching.

Banks (1999) described four levels of multicultural curriculum that parallel the degrees of adoption of a critical literacy curriculum. The term is often synonymous with critical literacy because its definition has expanded in recent years to include not only racial minorities but also all groups who are marginalized, for example, the physically and mentally handicapped, homosexuals, and women. This model demonstrates how a critical literacy perspective can be enacted gradually.

Level 1, The Contributions Approach, is the most basic. It celebrates heroes and holidays. Christmas, for example, is often made multicultural by discussing the customs of several nations or ethnic groups. Although interesting and enriching as far as introducing different traditions, these celebrations almost never touch on more than such pleasantries as colorful native costumes, delicious food, and cheerful songs. Social justice issues are ignored, making Level 1 a rather shallow look at a culture.

Level 2, The Additive Approach, goes into more depth. An extended study of a concept or culture is added to the curriculum. This unit of study may last from a few days to a month and is usually accompanied by a variety of readings and activities. The problem with Level 2 is that it allows the group or issue to be absent from the curriculum for the rest of the year; for example, in the United States, Black History Month celebrates black authors and historical figures with readings, videos, and presentations. Many teachers, therefore, feel no guilt if they focus exclusively on white authors throughout the rest of the year. Students, therefore, do not see African Americans as

integrated into the history and culture of the United States. In fact, limiting the celebration of Black History to one month of the year creates an "us" and "them" mentality. African Americans are seen as "others" and not part of the "normal" curriculum.

At Level 3, The Transformative Approach, critical literacy permeates the curriculum. Teachers encourage students to assess every situation, in reading of text or in classroom events, from multiple perspectives. Students focus on whose voice is being heard, whose voice is missing, and the presence of injustice. The social justice perspective pervades all content areas. In social studies, students examine each event from the viewpoint of all involved. Science topics, especially the environment, are discussed from the aspect of who benefits from each situation and who is disadvantaged. Even math is taught in the context of social issues: percentage of unemployment, ratio of housing costs to wages, number of homeless people, and the capacity of homeless shelters. Current newspaper statistics add relevance and motivation to what previously were rote mechanical math operations. The entire curriculum is transformed as students learn to look at the world through the lens of critical literacy and to question authority.

Level 4, The Social Action Approach, takes Level 3 one step farther by encouraging students to right the wrongs they find in the world. Students take action in a variety of ways: speaking out to condemn injustice, writing to those who have the power to effect change, helping those in need. Although many class actions are simple and relatively quick, requiring only a few days, some action projects are long-term experiences. Often much research into the problem is required to determine what action would be most beneficial, and then a great deal of organization is necessary to obtain resources to actually put the project into action. The degree of complexity often depends on the age of students. Regardless of the length of the project, the goals of Level 4 are to teach students decision-making skills and to empower them with the belief that they can make a difference.

Helping preservice teachers understand critical literacy

On beginning-of-the-semester surveys we ask our preservice teachers to define "critical literacy." Although a few students give accurate definitions, typical responses are "I don't have a clue" and "I'm not sure." Many students leave the space blank. The term *social justice*, in general, equally confuses the students. The surveys are an important start to the semester because they tell us that we can't assume prior knowledge in this area.

To introduce our students to critical literacy, we first bring in current articles on the topic to provide credible evidence that teachers are really doing this in classrooms today. One article (Heffernan & Lewison, 2000) described specific lessons in which a third-grade teacher introduced social justice issues such as racial prejudice, bias against the handicapped, and hate speech to her class through children's literature. Through discussion of many books as well as newspaper articles about local incidents, the third graders became aware of social justice issues around them. Their discussions developed critical perspectives. They asked questions. Eventually, they took action by writing to their local leaders about an injustice that affected their class.

We bring the picture books discussed in the article (Heffernan & Lewison, 2000) into class for the preservice teachers to read and discuss. Our students are amazed; they never dreamed that third graders were capable of discussing such serious issues and, especially, of taking action.

We next introduce the preservice teachers to numerous professional books devoted to creating a critical literacy curriculum (Allen, 1999; Edelsky, 1999; Henkin, 1998; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 1998; Robertson, 1999). These books aren't used as required texts but as a demonstration of the amount of activity that critical literacy has produced in recent years. Although there are more theoretical books on critical literacy, we chose these particular books because of their specific examples of classroom activities. Preservice teachers need models of critical literacy in practice in order to be able to begin to

assimilate a critical literacy perspective into their teaching. The website http://www.rethinkingschools.org/ is also an excellent source of information with classroom examples of critical literacy.

As teacher educators we try to model a critical literacy curriculum for our students. In our Children's Literature course, we choose books with social justice issues. Discussing the characters and events from a critical literacy perspective encourages students to become sensitive to the same or similar issues in their own lives. *Whitewash* by Ntozake Shange (1997) is a picture book in which the main character, Helene-Angel, is black. While walking home from school, she is attacked by The Hawks, a gang of white boys, who paint Helene-Angel's face white. Discussion of this book in class allows our preservice teachers to share incidents when they were ridiculed or made to feel inferior. They see how this book could be used in the same way in an elementary classroom in which students are fighting and name-calling. Discussion of Helene-Angel's feelings leads to other examples of hurt feelings. The class can come up with reasons why everyone needs to be accepted and ways to make everyone feel welcome. This experience in the class becomes an example of lessons the preservice teachers can develop for their future classrooms.

Other issues addressed in our Children's Literature course are homelessness, child abuse, and homosexuality, since these are issues teachers will likely face in their classrooms some day. There are several reasons to introduce these issues: (1) to make preservice teachers aware of the prevalence of these issues for classroom teachers; (2) to demonstrate how teachers can encourage a spirit of acceptance, respect, and support in their classrooms; and (3) to avoid for elementary and middle school students the hurt resulting from prejudice, isolation, and stereotyping. Dealing with social justice issues through children's literature is modeled as a way for teachers to lead their students to a critical literacy perspective. When students become accustomed to looking at literature through the lens of critical literacy, they are quick to recognize situations in the real world that they feel are unfair. They develop a heightened sense of social justice, and the teacher is the catalyst to continually guide students toward critical action.

Children's books addressing social issues

Homelessness

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting (1991)
A young boy and his father live in a large airport because the death of the boy's mother has made it impossible for the father to pay the rent. They move from terminal to terminal, careful not to be noticed.
National Alliance to End Homelessness, **http://www.naeh.org/**

Child Abuse

What Jamie Saw by Carolyn Coman (1995)
Jamie, a third grader, wakes in time to see his mother catch his baby sister, who was thrown across the room by his mother's boyfriend. Then his mom hurries him out into the December night to the safety of a friend's apartment.
National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, **http://www.calib.com/nccanch**

Homosexuality

Am I Blue? Coming Out From the Silence, a collection of short stories edited by Marion Dane Bauer (1995)
A son whose father is gay, a teenage girl who discovers that her boyfriend is gay, a lesbian whose grandmother accepts her sexual identity but whose mother does not, and a humorous look at the world through a blue lens that shows homosexuals in various shades of blue make this collection a wonderful place to begin a discussion of social justice for homosexuals.
http://www.pflag.org

We also teach a university course, "Intermediate Reading, Literature, and Language," that includes reading and writing workshops in which preservice teachers read and analyze children's literature, and students begin to examine issues of power, voice, and privilege. The theme of the workshop is critical literacy. As they critique the books, preservice teachers connect the topics in the book with everyday occurrences. For example, those students who read *Letters From Rifka* by Karen Hesse (1992) not only talked about immigration patterns from Eastern Europe to the United States but also began to discuss the mistreatment of various groups of people. Several students made connections between Rifka's treatment as a Jew and how Muslims in the United States are being treated after the attack on the World Trade Center; they could see the injustice.

In response to their discussions, the preservice teachers begin to use writing as a vehicle for changing their world. They talk about the power of authentic writing and how letters to the editor of local newspapers or to people on campus can serve as an impetus for change. One group selected the issue of parking on campus as a topic. The writing empowered them, gave them voice, and helped them understand that there are many ways to be members of a democratic society.

After our preservice teachers have an understanding of critical literacy as a concept, we provide numerous examples of critical literacy in the elementary and middle school classroom. Readings, discussions, and questions allow students to visualize how they can create a critical literacy curriculum for their future classrooms.

What does critical literacy look like in the classroom?

A critical literacy curriculum is possible at any grade level. Kindergartners, sensitive to the needs of one member of their class, wrote to the chair of the School Barbecue Committee to request a vegetarian option at the upcoming barbecue (Vasquez, 2000). A third-grade class gathered signatures from students, teachers, and staff in the school for a petition against "hate speech" and posted the petition in the entrance of the school (Heffernan & Lewison, 2000). An inner-city high school class, after studying bias in the language of the SATs, wrote a new test, incorporating the "culture, content and vocabulary" (Christensen, 2000, p. 113) of their school, and challenged preservice teachers to take the test and imagine that the results would determine whether they would be accepted into a college and receive a scholarship. College students read children's literature books on social justice topics and decided to participate in service learning projects that addressed homelessness in their communities. These examples of student action in response to a real-world issue are the ultimate goal of a critical literacy curriculum: students learning that they can make a difference.

One third-grade teacher, Mrs. S., grew tired of hearing her students complain that there was nothing to do during recess. The students explained that the playground on their side of the school had no equipment, and the rules required that they play only in their designated area. It wasn't fair that other classes had swings and slides, and the third grade had nothing.

Mrs. S. asked the students who they thought would have the power to buy some playground equipment. They told her that the principal could make that decision. She asked the students if all the third graders wanted new playground equipment. They assured her that everyone felt the same. She wanted to know how they could be sure? They needed to get the data in writing. She helped the students to create a petition stating their request as well as a rationale: "Whereas the third grade recess area has no playground equipment, and whereas third graders are required to play only in this area at recess, we, the students of the third grade, request that Mr. H, our principal, buy playground equipment for the third-grade playground."

Before collecting signatures on the petition, Mrs. S. required the students to be specific as to what playground equipment they wanted. They were to get suggestions from all the third graders. After another survey, the students returned with a list of items. Now Mrs. S. told the students that they would need to

provide a proposed budget for how much the equipment would cost. She gave the students a school supply catalogue and told them to be sure to include tax and shipping.

With petition, signatures, and budget in hand, the third graders made an appointment with the principal and presented their case. Mr. H told the students that the school board would need to approve the expenditure, and that they needed to present their proposal to them. The students made the arrangements to get on the agenda for the next school board meeting and practiced their presentation. The school board members listened carefully to the students and voted unanimously to accept the proposal. Within one month, the third graders had a new playground.

These third-grade students gained more than playground equipment. Through the guidance of their teacher, they learned that they had the power to accomplish change. They witnessed the power of language, both written and spoken. They recognized an "injustice," gathered information, and acted. Every recess reminded them that they had made a difference.

Conclusion

Critical literacy empowers students to think, to question, and to act. Instead of just complaining about how things are, students learn that they are capable of changing their world. However, this does not happen overnight. Teachers need to encourage students to think about events from a social justice perspective by continually asking the hard questions: Why is it like this? Whose voice is not heard? Who is benefiting from this situation? What else do we need to know? What can we do?

Teachers are the key. Preservice teachers need to become knowledgeable about critical literacy in order to nurture active citizens who know that they can make a difference in the world. By confronting the difficult topics, welcoming all voices, and expecting students to take action, teachers do touch the future. Reading and writing as emancipatory acts empower us all to make the world a better place.

References

Allen, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Class actions: Teaching for social justice in elementary and middle school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Banks, J. (1999). *An introduction to multicultural education.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bauer, M.D. (Ed.). (1995). *Am I blue? Coming out from the silence*. New York: Harper Trophy

Bunting, E. (1991). *Fly away home*. New York: Clarion Books.

Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word.* Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Coman, C. (1995). *What Jamie saw*. New York: Puffin.

Edelsky, C. (1999). *Making justice our project: Teachers working toward critical whole language practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world.* South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Heffernan, L., & Lewison, M. (2000). Making real-world issues our business: Critical literacy in a third-grade classroom. *Primary Voices K–6*, *9*(2), 15–21.

Henkin, R. (1998). *Who's invited to share? Using literacy to teach for equity and social justice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hesse, K. (1992). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Puffin.

Hoose, P. (1993). *It's our world, too! Stories of young people who are making a difference*. New York: Little, Brown.

Lee, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K–12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development*. Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas.

Nieto, S. (1999*). The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Robertson, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Teaching for a tolerant world: Grades K–6*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Shange, N. (1997). *Whitewash*. Illus. Michael Sporn. New York: Walker.

Vasquez, V. (2000). Our way: Using the everyday to create a critical literacy curriculum. *Primary Voices K–6*, *9*(2), 8–13.

Joyce Herbeck is Assistant Professor of Reading and Children's Literature at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT, USA.

Clara Beier is Assistant Professor of Education at the SUNY-Fredonia, Fredonia, NY, USA.

In Response

Thoughts on Critical Literacy: Educators Respond to Herbeck and Beier

The editors of *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* invited seven educators from various countries to respond to questions raised by the preceding article. Because it was not possible for the respondents to gather in one place they answered by e-mail. The conversation below is, in fact, a collection of their responses (edited for space considerations), which we hope will inspire further discussion of these issues.

Participants:

TC/P—editors of *Thinking Classroom/Peremena*

Gaisha Ibragimova (Kyrgyzstan)— Deputy Head of the Social Policy Sector in the Kyrgyzstan Presidential Administration, and Executive Secretary of the Presidential Committee on Education and Culture.

Olga Gromova (Russia)—Editor-in-Chief of *Library at School*, a newspaper published by September 1 Publishers, Moscow.

Yelena Savova (Bulgaria)—Instructor at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Romualda Raguotiene (Lithuania)—Psychologist and teacher of psychology at A. Mitskevich gymnasium in Vilnius and an instructor for the Lithuanian RWCT program.

Kestutis Kaminskas (Lithuania)—Adviser to the Parliamentary committee for Education, Science, and Culture affairs, and an instructor for the Lithuanian RWCT program.

Irina Dyadchenko (Ukraine)—Deputy principal of Academic Gymnasium #45 in Kharkov.

Yelena Malinina (Russia)—School psychologist at school #29 in Sergiyev Posad.

TC/P: *When presenting questions of social injustice to young children, does the teacher risk leaving out all their complexity, because the children are not yet capable of a balanced understanding?*

Gaisha: Elementary school students perceive the world through their emotions, in contrast to teenagers, who have developed a certain degree of rationalism. This emotional filter causes the child to evaluate any given situation as "fair" or "unfair" according to his or her personal perspective. I believe that children are fully capable of forming individual opinions with regard to moral situations because, as a rule, young children have a very keen sense of fairness.

TC/P: *If so, is political or social action developmentally appropriate for elementary school children? Do they have enough sense of self to develop their own political views?*

Gaisha: In my opinion, young children are not capable of formulating political—as opposed to ethical—views.

Olga: Actually, I think that elementary school children always have some kind of perspective on what's happening in the world, including political events, and they have definite political views on many issues. Sometimes their responses initially mirror those of the adults around them, but if we listen attentively to children and help them think through the issues, they may arrive at fully rationalized positions that differ from those of their parents or teachers. Being able to *articulate* a political point of view (or any other point of view) is another question. In my opinion, the problem is not one of self-awareness, but rather of self-expression.

Yelena S.: Children's ability to formulate and express their own opinion is directly connected with their ability to compare various points of view. By considering the opinions of others in light of their own experience (limited though it may be), they can develop well-founded conclusions and express them clearly, orally or in writing. The teacher must continually foster these skills and abilities, and not just in the context of political

topics. It is a gradual process, and the specific content and methods will of course depend on the age of the students.

TC/P: *If we follow the authors' suggestions, is there a chance that the teacher might be exploiting the students to advance a personal political agenda?*

Olga: Well, there is always a danger of that. Unfortunately there are a lot of political extremists and even mentally unstable people in education these days, however outrageous that may sound. But they're not the ones we're considering. We're talking here about whether the "typical" teacher is willing and able to develop critical literacy in his students.

Roma: We are surely aware of cultural differences in attitudes toward the teaching of social justice…. In this part of the world many teachers are still just "giving knowledge" to their students. This attitude toward teaching is supported by our evaluation system. Factual knowledge of the subject is given a high priority. Many of the teachers are "wedded" to the textbooks. But we have also seen some teachers who really listen to their students and who accept the ideas of critical thinking.

TC/P: *Do you think teachers should have some kind of special knowledge or skills if they intend to develop critical literacy in children?*

Gaisha: First and foremost, the modern teacher needs to be able to listen to others and really hear what they are saying; to show genuine respect for the opinions of others. The idea is not to provide ready-made answers, but to engage in the search for answers along with the children. In other words, the teacher must understand interactive teaching methods and assume the role not just of informant, but also of facilitator, project manager, advisor, coach.

Kestutis: What our teachers lack is the ability to loosen the reins of the subject they are teaching and to take a broader view of their role as teachers. I think teaching is not just a profession but also a way of life.

Olga: Here we touch upon a real problem. Our traditional form of education does not teach children how to reflect, or how to verbalize the results of reflection. If we even bother to try to elicit their opinions about important matters, we just ask them questions and expect immediate answers. Where are the students supposed to get these answers, when even adults would be hard-pressed to formulate answers on the spot? Try asking children what they think about the war in Iraq or the situation in Chechnya. You'll probably get simplistic answers, like "it's great" or "it's terrible" or "I don't know." But if you help them think out loud, their viewpoints turn out to be quite clear-cut and quite different from one another.

Gaisha: A teacher who wants to teach critical literacy must be prepared to enter into the search for solutions to real-life problems along with the children and their parents, to become part of the community, sharing responsibility for the life we live together. The teacher doesn't have the "correct" answers to these questions—the answers can only be found through a shared search. In my opinion, we need an entirely new type of teacher training, since a poorly prepared teacher who attempted to develop critical literacy might wind up just producing students who are "constant complainers."

TC/P: *So, how then do we approach the problem of changing the way we teach future teachers? And how do we deal with those who have spent their whole life at school?*

Irina: How to introduce teachers to critical literacy is certainly a multi-faceted problem. The greatest obstacle is the reluctance on the part of experienced teachers to change their teaching style, their habits of communication with students. In schools with strongly authoritarian traditions, the change to student-centered learning can be a painful one. However changing times and changing students will force even

the most experienced teachers to re-think some of their beliefs.

Kestutis: There is also another aspect to this problem. In former times teachers were all too familiar with "self-censorship." Certainly there were a lot of exceptions, but several generations in this part of the world were taught by self-censored teachers, parents, and so on…. That kind of mentality is hard to change.

Gaisha: And by the way, it's not just a matter of the political system. Throughout the world, education has tended to present children with an idealized view of things, rather than encouraging them to seek answers to questions they encounter in their day-to-day lives. This attitude leads to hypocrisy, to a two-faced view of morality and of life.

As for teacher preparation, unfortunately today's education faculties aren't providing adequate training. The teacher today not only fulfills the traditional role of providing information, but also must serve as a project manager, organizer, consultant, and facilitator.

TC/P: *Do you have any practical experience of involving children in this kind of social activities?*

Irina: Actually, we had a rather unexpected example. Some of the students in our school, members of a band called "Gravitation," organized a campaign to get their classmates to quit smoking. A survey of the student population had shown that peer pressure could be a more effective force against smoking than parental punishments or lectures from teachers. The members of the band, themselves all ex-smokers, proposed a concert with the theme "Quit with Us!" It is important that the students themselves be invested in the outcome of their efforts, and that they discuss the project on an ongoing basis.

Gaisha: As you remember, Herbeck and Beier talk about Banks's idea of the four levels of multicultural training. This idea bears an interesting similarity to Bakhtin's idea of a "Dialogue of Cultures." In the 1980s, in the city of Krasnoyarsk, they started a school called "Dialogue of Cultures" to put this theory into practice. As I understand it, the basic idea of the theory is that in learning about another culture, a child experiences an internal dialogue between that culture and his own subculture, which in turn has resulted from the dialogue between his parents' cultures. This process leads to enrichment of the child's own subculture.

This approach to education is particularly appropriate for my country, Kyrgyzstan, because we have a multi-ethnic population. For the past ten years we have been using Bakhtin's theory of the "Dialogue of Cultures" as the basis for our work in reforming the education system. The main difficulty in teaching critical literacy lies not with the students but with the teachers. Our teachers think dogmatically, and insist on having the last word, resist changing their minds, and consider anyone who has a different opinion to be "the enemy." We have found that we need a special program for teacher preparation.

TC/P: *Do you have any recipes for helping children demonstrate their best qualities?*

Yelena M.: The authoritarian approach of the past is no longer appropriate. You can't force children to do something or insist that they think a certain way. On the other hand, you also can't just order them, "Come on! Show us your stuff! Demonstrate your talents!" However, if the adult brings only his/her own talents and opinions to bear in working with children, with no regard for their initiative and imagination, students and teacher will cease to understand each other. "No matter what I do, no matter how I try to entertain them, they're not interested," such a teacher will report. Meanwhile the students are thinking, "this show belongs in a disco, not a classroom." What is really called for is undirected, cooperative work, allowing all the students and the teacher to contribute their best efforts.

In Response

TC/P: *You have said "undirected." What does this imply? How should we work with a class or group of children to involve them in community life?*

Yelena M.: Well, here we have some choice. Let's look at what is needed in any situation where we are organizing children for a collective effort. We need specific techniques and methods for working with the class, as well as realistic suggestions and goals that can be reached. You might find your scenario for a game or special evening event in a library book, or you might ask someone experienced in organizing this type of thing. You might look for enthusiastic volunteers to help out. You might involve the school psychologist. I myself, as a school psychologist, have experience with group projects. And while all this is very interesting, there is still a gap between what goes on in the group and what goes on in real life. I don't know of any method for dealing with this problem. Still, we have to try to get people of all ages more involved in solving community problems. Herbeck and Beier's article offers a number of interesting ideas.

By the way, the article raises another important question in my mind: Is the teacher described in the article really encouraging critical thinking and diverse opinions within the classroom? Or is he/she only asking the children to band together with him/her to oppose some perceived injustice outside the classroom?

TC/P: *And still another question is: What context should be used to judge the fairness of a situation? Fifth grade versus fourth grade? What about suburban schools with grassy playgrounds versus urban schools with fenced-in asphalt lot as a playground, or even no playground at all? What about a U.S. school (with all basic amenities) versus a school in the developing world, where food and shelter cannot even be taken for granted?*

Gaisha: Because social justice is a relative concept, what is fair to one may be unfair to another. However, the authors seem to insist that critical literacy must lead to action against injustice. In my opinion, insisting that children seek out injustices and work to eliminate them doesn't prepare them for real life—Instead, it leads them into a state of constant conflict, from which they cannot escape without considerable moral, and perhaps even physical, damage. So the question arises, is this really the right thing for a teacher to do?

Yelena M.: Nevertheless, nothing brings a class together as well as a common goal. Ask the students themselves for suggestions for a project, and maybe you can just give them a little push. They will really become involved if the project is something they thought of themselves, or something that grew out of an actual desire, question, or problem they are dealing with. In this case, the teacher will have no need to wonder, "What should I do with them? How can I get them interested?"

The Editors of TC/P invite you to share these questions with your colleagues and students, and consider writing to us with your responses.

Do you believe that even young children are capable of developing their own political views?

Should the school have a role in helping students become politically active? Is the role of the school different from that of the individual teacher?

Are there certain topics that you see as inappropriate for discussion or action in your own classroom?

In your own community, what might happen to a student or teacher who takes a position that differs from the official viewpoint, or that differs from the majority viewpoint?

As a teacher, how do you decide if you are really encouraging critical thinking and diverse opinions within the classroom? In other words, how might we distinguish between advancing our own personal, social, or political agendas (as just as they may be) and teaching critical thinking? How would you react if your students embraced a cause that you disagreed with?

How has your own school or school system changed in the past 5 years? In the past 10 years? How do these changes reflect changes in social or educational values?

Strategic Moves

Making Word Learning Memorable

William G. Brozo

Several years ago I was driving to teach a graduate class that met in a high school some 40 miles from my university's campus. The best route was off the main highway, and, being new to the area, I was in awe at the sight of treeless farm country that stretched to the horizon in all directions. As I looked out the car window to watch a monstrous harvester move slowly through the cornfields, a voice on the radio uttered these words: "Live hogs found November unchanged." I was stunned. What was the announcer talking about? Surely this expression could not be taken literally. But what other meaning could there be for these relatively simple words?

That night in class I made a point of asking my students about this peculiar phrase. Most just shrugged, unable to appreciate my bewilderment. "It's the farm report," a young man said matter-of-factly, "You'll get used to it." He went on to explain that the phrase makes perfect sense to farmers who own livestock—it helps them anticipate the price they can expect for their pigs in the coming months. The next morning as I was taking my then 5-year-old daughter to school, I asked her if she could tell me the meanings of each of the words in the phrase. Sure enough, after only a little help with the word "unchanged," Hannah supplied good definitions for all five words. The only problem was that when I asked her what the entire sentence meant, she had no idea. "Why did the pigs have to look for November, Daddy?" she asked. Good question.

Whenever I watch children become frustrated over learning new words, I'm reminded of this "live hog" experience, because it made clear to me that in order to really know a word we must have at least as strong an understanding of the context as we do the definition. Of course, this assertion is not original—vocabulary researchers have established support for it in numerous studies with a variety of different learners (Nagy & Scott, 2000). One excellent way to provide students with contextual support for new vocabulary is to give them firsthand experience with the words. Below is an example of what I mean.

> ***In order to really know a word we must have at least as strong an understanding of the context as we do the definition***

Mr. Dzama wants his secondary students to understand a technical term related to how human beings remember things. Instead of presenting a dictionary-type definition, asking students to record it in their notebooks, and then proceeding with the lecture, Mr. Dzama tells the students to write down 10 things they did the first day of second grade. After complaining with occasional moans and groans that second grade was too long ago to remember, his students begin writing, and soon most have completed their lists. Several students volunteer to read their 10 things, which typically include (1) got up, (2) got dressed, (3) ate breakfast, (4) brushed teeth, (5) rode the bus, (6) met my new teacher, (7) told what happened on summer holiday…and so on. Mr. Dzama then asks how many could actually remember exactly what happened the first day of second grade. There are a few specific recollections, but most students admit they made lists of things they knew they had to have done, even though they couldn't exactly recall them. "Right," replies Mr. Dzama, "because what I have just forced you all to do is ***confabulate***. When we confabulate we reconstruct memory not on the basis of specific recall but on the basis of related experiences."

Weeks later, Mr. Dzama's students could still remember the meaning of *confabulate* because they were able to attach the memory of an experience (i.e., writing 10 things they did the first day of second grade) to the word. Experiencing confabulation firsthand provided them with a context for an abstract concept. Unlike Mr. Dzama, most teachers give students word lists and ask them to commit the words to memory, without using strategies for building contextual understanding. Students may remember the words for an upcoming quiz or test only to forget them shortly thereafter. To

ensure that students really assimilate new vocabulary, the words need to be palpable, living, and functional.

The following chart lists terms from various subjects along with simple ways teachers can bring their students to experience these words. These examples should help you visualize the strategic possibilities of adding an experiential component to vocabulary teaching.

When teachers employ vocabulary strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, they increase the chances that word learning will be lasting. This is especially true of experiences that create meaningful contexts for new vocabulary. Students need much more than cursory exposure to words, especially those that are critical to understanding a topic or are conceptually loaded (Brozo & Simpson, 2003). And since words are learned best through the repeated, naturally occurring encounters children and youth have with them in meaningful contexts (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985), strategic-minded teachers should strive to capitalize on this basic tenet of language development within their classrooms.

Subject	Term	Context
History	*communism*	Students are asked to drop wallet or purse into a large box. The teacher then gives each one $20.00 of play money to buy paper and pencil. The class discusses feelings toward and reactions to this system of resource equity.
Science	*replication*	Students are given a thick piece of paper and asked to fold it into any shape they'd like (e.g., airplane, bird, snowflake), but they must write down explicit directions about how to recreate the shape. The folded paper shape is placed out of view, and another student is given the written directions and a new blank piece of paper. Using the written directions, this student must try to recreate the first folded shape. Then the original folded paper and the new folded paper are compared, and the two students discuss the extent to which the written directions allowed for "replication" of the original shape.
Math	*rhombus*	Students are given a brief definition of a rhombus then asked to pair up and find as many different examples of rhombi as they can in the classroom or around the school building. Afterward, students share their examples and explain why each one fits the definition. This activity can be done with numerous geometrical shapes.
Literature	*symbolism*	Form groups of four students. Give each group an object, such as a key, a toy car, or a coin. Students write down what the object might mean to them, then members of each group compare their ideas. Students are asked to pay particular attention to similarities of meaning within their groups.

References

Brozo, W.G., & Simpson, M.L. (2003). *Readers, teachers, learners: Expanding literacy across the content areas*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Nagy, W.E., Herman, P.A., & Anderson, R.C. (1985). Learning words from contexts. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *20*, 233–253.

Nagy, W.E., & Scott, J. (2000). Vocabulary processes. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 269–284) Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

William G. Brozo, Ph.D., is Professor of Language and Literacy in the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA.

Announcements

7th International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness

The Conference of the Association for Language Awareness will be held 19–10 July 2004 in Lleida, Spain. The Association aims at supporting and promoting activities across the whole breadth of Language Awareness, mother tongue learning, foreign language learning, and teacher education, at a variety of levels (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary education, and professional training and practice). Further information online: www.udl.es/dept/dal/ala2004/ or e-mail Josep Maria Cots: ala2004@dal.udl.es

Call for Papers: *World Literature Today*

World Literature Today is seeking manuscripts about literature and original poetry from North and South Korea, China, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, Saudia Arabia, or seldom covered literature from Israeli settlements or Palestine. The journal examines literature from a global perspective and often contains articles about children's and young adult literature. For additional information see www.ou.edu/worldlit/ or contact Professor Davis-Undiano at rcdavis@ou.edu.

Call for Artifacts

Douglas K. Hartman and Lou Ann Sears of the University of Pittsburgh are writing a history of the International Reading Association. They are seeking photographs, correspondence, papers, speeches, programs, audiotapes, videotapes, film, and other artifacts relating to important people and events that would be helpful in telling the Association's story. Of special interest is information about the Association's work in professional development, advocacy, partnerships with other associations, research, and global literacy development. More information is available by e-mail: dkh@pitt.edu or los3@pitt.edu.

Nominations for International Reading Association Awards and Grants 2003–2004

The International Reading Association sponsors a number of annual awards to recognize outstanding educators, writers, researchers, and journalists. Listed below are awards that have application deadlines in December 2003 or January 2004. Application for these awards may be made from anywhere in the world. Further information about these and other IRA awards (including guidelines and application forms in PDF format for many of the awards and grants) is available on our website: www.reading.org.

Non-English entries

All entries must be submitted in the time span specified for each award. If a selection committee decides that an entry submitted in a language other than English deserves closer scrutiny for which a time-consuming partial or complete translation is needed, the entry may be considered for the following year's award.

Media

The **Broadcast Media Awards for Television** recognize outstanding reporting and programming on television that deal with reading and literacy, recognize the value of reading in today's society, and/or promote reading as a lifetime habit. Entries must be oriented toward the general public rather than professionals in reading education and should be informational, critical, or motivational rather than instructional. Entries must have appeared between January 1 and December 31, 2003. Association members can encourage entries by notifying broadcast media personnel that a program is appropriate for consideration. For information on submitting Television entries, write to Public Information Office. E-mail pubinfo@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2004.

The **Print Media Award** contest recognizes outstanding reporting in newspapers, magazines, and wire services. Entries may include in-depth studies of reading instruction, discussion of research, or ongoing coverage of reading programs in the community and must have appeared between January 1 and December 31, 2003. The contest is limited to professional journalists. Association members are invited to inform their local newspapers of the contest and to encourage the authors of worthwhile articles to enter. For applications, write to Public Information Office.

E-mail pubinfo@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2004.

Professional Development

The **Gertrude Whipple Professional Development Grant**, which carries a monetary prize of up to US$5,000, is awarded to assist a member with the planning and creation of professional development projects, the production of high-quality materials, the marketing and scheduling of meetings and workshops, and the logistic support for conducting them. For guidelines, write to Council and Affiliate Services Division. E-mail gcasey@reading.org. Proposals are reviewed by a committee throughout the year.

Research

The **Elva Knight Research Grant** is a grants program of up to US$10,000 for research in reading and literacy. Non-North Americans and classroom teachers are especially encouraged to apply. It is expected that at least one grant each year will be awarded to a researcher outside the United States and Canada and that one grant will be awarded to a teacher-initiated research project. Research is defined as that which addresses significant questions for the disciplines of literacy research and practice. Projects should be completed within 2 years. Studies may be carried out using any research method or approach as long as the focus of the project is on research in reading or literacy. Activities such as developing new programs or instructional materials are not eligible for funding except to the extent that these activities are necessary procedures for the conduct of the research. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division. E-mail research@reading.org. Deadline for submission: January 15, 2004.

The **Helen M. Robinson Grant** is a US$1,000 annual grant to support doctoral students at the early stages of their dissertation research in the area of reading and literacy. All applicants must be Association members. For application forms, write to Research & Policy Division. E-mail research@reading.org. Completed applications must be received by January 15, 2004.

The **Jeanne S. Chall Research Fellowship** is a US$6,000 grant established to encourage and support reading research by promising scholars. The special emphasis of the Fellowship is to support research efforts in the following areas: beginning reading (theory, research, and practice that improves the effectiveness of learning to read); readability (methods of predicting the difficulty of texts); reading difficulty (diagnosis, treatment, and prevention); stages of reading development; the relation of vocabulary to reading; diagnosing and teaching adults with limited reading ability. This grant program was established to honor and carry on the work to which Dr. Jeanne S. Chall has dedicated her academic life. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division. E-mail research@reading.org. Submission must be received by January 15, 2004.

The **Reading/Literacy Research Fellowship** is a US$1,000 award to a researcher residing outside the U.S. or Canada who has experienced exceptional promise in reading research. Applicants must have received a doctorate or its equivalent within the past 5 years. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division. E-mail research@reading.org. Completed entries must be received by January 15, 2004.

The **Teacher as Researcher Grant** program is intended to support teachers in their inquiries about literacy and instruction. Grants will be awarded up to US$5,000, although priority will be given to smaller grants (e.g., $1,000–$2,000) in order to provide support for as many teacher researchers as possible. All applicants must be Association members. For guidelines, write to Research and Policy Division. E-mail research@reading.org. Deadline for submission: January 15, 2004.

Teacher

The **Teacher as Researcher Grant** program is intended to support teachers in their inquiries about literacy and instruction. See information above.

The **Ronald W. Mitchell Convention Travel Grant** provides funding to allow teachers of children in grades 4 and 5 (ages 10–11) that might otherwise not have the opportunity to attend an IRA annual convention. Two grants are awarded each year for up to US$1,000 each to support a first-time attendance of a teacher. For guidelines, write to Executive Office. E-mail exec@reading.org. Completed applications must be received by December 1, 2003.

Index

Thinking Classroom, Volume 4, 2003

DEPARTMENTS

FEATURES

AUTHORS

SUBJECTS

Subscribe to *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* & Enjoy All the Benefits of IRA Membership!

Become a part of a worldwide organization that disseminates research and information about reading and actively supports professional development for educators, curriculum reforms, and classroom innovation. Now is the time to join. Use one of the forms provided below. The first form should be used by those living in countries with developed economies and the second by those living in countries with developing economies.

Individual Membership Application, Developed Economies

INTERNATIONAL
Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 6021, Newark, DE 19714-6021, USA

Individual Membership

PLEASE CHECK JOURNALS:

All options include IRA's bimonthly newspaper, *Reading Today*

- ☐ ***The Reading Teacher*** (preschool/elementary)
- ☐ ***Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy***
- ☐ ***Reading Research Quarterly***
  Also available online as an add-on service at **www.reading.org/rrqonline**
- ☐ ***Lectura y Vida*** (Spanish)
- ☐ ***Thinking Classroom*** (English version) ☐ ***Peremena*** (Russian version)

MEMBERSHIP RATES

		with Book Club
1 Journal	☐ $61	☐ $190
2 Journals	☐ $86	☐ $215
3 Journals	☐ $111	☐ $240
4 Journals	☐ $136	☐ $265
5 Journals	☐ $161	☐ $290
6 Journals	☐ $186	☐ $315
Basic Membership (no journals)	☐ $36	☐ $165

Book Club members automatically get 9 new IRA books during their membership year, VALUED AT MORE THAN $200!

☐ **Take a 10% discount when you join for 3 years!**
Dues total x 3 years minus 10% = _____ **BEST RATE!**

PLEASE TOTAL DUES:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY **TC/P**

FIRST NAME INITIAL LAST NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY AND STATE/PROVINCE

COUNTRY POSTAL CODE

4 EASY WAYS TO JOIN IRA:

- **FAX TO 302-737-0878**
- **CALL 800-628-8508 ext. 290, weekdays 9 A.M.–5 P.M. ET**
- **JOIN ONLINE AT www.reading.org/membership**
- **MAKE CHECK PAYABLE AND MAIL TO IRA**

CREDIT CARD ACCOUNT NUMBER (VISA®, MASTERCARD®, AMEX®)

CREDIT CARD EXPIRATION DATE ___ – ___ NEW ☐ RENEWAL ☐

SIGNATURE _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ LOCAL COUNCIL # _____

Amounts are quoted in US dollars. Memberships may be paid by international money order, credit card, or check drawn on a US or Canadian bank. Checks drawn on a Canadian bank must be payable in US or equivalent Canadian funds (based on the current exchange rate).

00-22 Rev. 5/02

Individual Membership Application, Developing Economies

Those living in countries with developing economies (as identified by the World Bank, http://www.reading.org/membership/devel_countries.html) are eligible to receive the discounted membership and subscription pricing available through this form.

INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 6021
Newark, Delaware 19714-6021, USA

Economically Developing Countries

Please print clearly and limit letters and spaces to the blocks below by abbreviating when necessary.

Name

Street Address

City and State/Province

Country Postal Code

To order the *RRQ Online* option, go to http://www.reading.org/rrqonline

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.reading.org

TC/P

Membership Selections NEW ☐ RENEWAL ☐

Reading Today (Not required)	US$ 18.00	_____
The Reading Teacher	US$ 12.50	_____
Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy	US$ 12.50	_____
Reading Research Quarterly	US$ 12.50	_____
Lectura y Vida (Spanish quarterly)	US$ 12.50	_____
Thinking Classroom	US$ 12.50	_____
Peremena (Russian quarterly)	US$ 12.50	_____
Book Club (Provides nine new books throughout your subscription year)	US$ 129.00	_____
	Total	_____

Amounts are quoted in U.S. dollars. May be paid with international money orders, credit cards, or by check drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank. Checks drawn on a Canadian bank must be payable in U.S. or equivalent Canadian funds (based on the current exchange rate).

When using VISA®, MasterCard®, or AMEX® you can: ☐ Check (payable to IRA)
Fax 302-737-0878
Call 302-731-1600 Ext. 290 Weekdays 9 A.M.–5 P.M. ET
Order online www.reading.org/membership/ Prices subject to change

Signature _____ Credit Card Expiration Date: ___ ___

94-10 MEM 7/02

02-73 Pub 8/02