



# *The Literacy Times*

March 2004 Edition

Newsletter for Western Quebec Elementary Language Arts Teachers

## *Shared Reading and Focused Instruction*

Hope you had a terrific break and have returned refreshed. We also hope your students have returned with gentle temperaments and eager to learn. Our focus in this newsletter is shared reading.

### *Definition*

Shared reading was originally developed by Don Holdaway as a way to provide literature deprived children with the experience of being read to on the lap of a caregiver. It was intended to be done with a big book or chart. It has now generalized to include the reading of a text that is visible to the children through a chart, overhead, big book or multiple copies. The teacher reads a book or text while the children follow along chorally or silently.

Shared reading can be done in small or whole class groups

### *Purpose*

- Shared reading allows the students to participate in a pleasurable reading experience, despite the fact that the text may be beyond them.
- It allows students to sample a genre that may also be inaccessible due its complexity of language or vocabulary. Many non-fiction books are somewhat difficult for students to read independently, but experience with shared reading of non-fiction can make the task simpler.
- It broadens student's vocabulary, by allowing them to hear words they could not read.
- It allows the teacher to demonstrate reading and thinking strategies. By stopping our reading and modeling (or thinking aloud) our in-the-head processes, we make students knowledgeable of the myriad of strategies and knowledge we unconsciously bring to the reading task as sophisticated and efficient readers. For example, the meaning of text features such as italics, bolding, table of contents, glossary etc. can be successfully taught in a shared reading situation.
- Shared reading is the easiest way to demonstrate concepts about print. (Ex. Directionality)
- Shared reading enables the teacher to model comprehension strategies, and decoding strategies.
- Shared reading is ideal for modelling writing techniques and strategies and demonstrating the link between reading and writing.
- Sometimes sharing the first few pages of a book can familiarize young students with the story structure and difficult new words so that they can then read the rest of the text independently.
- Shared reading allows teachers the opportunity to expose students to sophisticated concepts poor reading ability denies them. Marzano claims that a lack of background knowledge prohibits many of our students from being successful in high school.

### *An example of shared reading in the classroom*

Objective: The teacher wishes to demonstrate self-monitoring comprehension while reading. (This strategy is suitable for students who are in the early reading stage and beyond - typically at the end of C1.1 on up to C3.2)

Determining if the students need the strategy. Students, who are not scoring well on the comprehension section of the DRA, will need to be taught a variety of comprehension strategies. The teachers will be observing students as they read and watching for behaviours that demonstrate monitoring and fixing confusion that arises from miscues, as well as proper phrasing and intonation during oral reading. Teacher will use their usual comprehension assessment

practices to assess if this is a problem. I would suggest that all students need to be made aware of the strategy at cycle 1.2 on.

*The Lesson:* The teacher explains to the whole class that she will be showing them how to monitor their understanding while they read and why it is important. The teacher reads aloud a section of a science text, stopping periodically when things confuse him/her. (This may be a simulated confusion, but still a plausible one.) The teacher expresses the confusion and demonstrates to the class that this part is puzzling. The teacher demonstrates a fix-up strategy such as rereading (perhaps two or three times), or thinking about what s/he has read, or reading ahead to find more about the element that puzzles him/her. Some teachers have found that actually putting a sticky note on the page with a “**huh**” or a “**?**” written on it serves to make the modelling more pronounced.

*Individual practice:* The children are then asked to read on their own and practice noticing and fixing their own confusion as they read. The children are asked to note the page they became confused on their bookmark, or sticky or in their reading notebook and how they tried (i.e. what strategy they used) to fix their confusion. In cycle one it is advised to introduce only one fix up strategy at a time.

*Extra support for weak students:* While the class is practicing the teacher may take a group aside that she knows will need extra support to use the strategy and do a small group or guided reading lesson with them, reinforcing the desired behaviours.

*Closure + Concept reinforcement:* The teacher asks students to share with partners or groups what the lesson was about today. S/he randomly picks someone to share. Students may have fix up strategies that the teacher has not demonstrated. All are listed on a chart.

*Follow up:* For the next two weeks the teachers asks student to practice this strategy during independent reading time. S/he takes small groups that need to be supported to make this strategy a part of their regular repertoire. Shared reading will continue to feature this strategy, but in a variety of genres, as long as the teacher feels it is appropriate.

*Assessment of attainment:* The teacher reads the student notebooks (or bookmarks) to see if the students are using the strategy. Observations during small group instruction may also be used.