



Volume II, Issue 2

December 2006

## Boys' Literacy Teacher Inquiry

### Work Plan Support Booklet – December 2006

*"Our team is fortunate to have representation from every grade, the special education support services, and our teacher librarian. All teachers are invited to attend the meetings, not just team members. Work that has been done has been shared by the team in a way that everyone contributes but no one person is overwhelmed."*

Teacher, St. Andrew Catholic School, Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Progress Report, June 2006.

#### Introduction/Overview

This Support Booklet follows closely on the heels of the last issue as a way of providing more direction and support for your work in schools. First of all, teams function effectively when they think carefully and provide time to reflect on the way they speak to each other. We have, therefore, included a section which expands on one of Garmston and Wellman's norms of collaboration, "Paraphrasing", from *The Adaptive School: a Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*, 1999. In this booklet, we have also provided more strategies for tracking the data that you are collecting. Be mindful as a team of the need to develop methods of collecting and keeping track of your data that will work with your already busy schedules and classroom life. In addition, we have supplemented the strategy "Teach with Purpose" from the *Me Read? No Way!* document with further key suggestions for thinking about your instruction in ways that are more clear and explicit.

#### Preparing your template for the January-February 2007 Regional Sessions:

As was promised in the November 2006 Support Booklet, we are providing a template for your team to use as an organizer for the January/February in-service sessions. Throughout the day, you can use your completed template as a convenient way to briefly and succinctly share some of your Inquiry Team accomplishments over the past months. We will collect them and, with your permission, incorporate your ideas into subsequent Support Booklets. It is not necessary for you to write a great deal, as we will spend lots of time during the day dialoguing together and communicating our progress.

Best of Luck!

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## PARAPHRASING: An Effective Tool for Team Learning

David Perkins, a Harvard cognitive scientist, has pursued studies related to both individual and collective intelligence. He maintains that we must be, “**people smart and process smart.**” David Perkins, 2003. *King Arthur's Round Table: How Collaborative Conversations Create Smart Organizations*, p. 22.

**Definition:** To paraphrase is to re-cast or translate into one's own words, to summarize or to provide an example of what has just been said. The paraphrase maintains the intention and the accurate meaning of what has just been said while using different words and phrases. The paraphrase helps members of a team hear and understand each other as they evaluate data and formulate decisions. Paraphrasing is also extremely effective when reducing group tension and individual anger.

Good team members and effective facilitators understand and practice the art of good paraphrasing. Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman determine that paraphrasing is one of the seven Norms of Collaboration. (See *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*, 1999, for ideas for all seven norms.)

Paraphrasing is a form of effective listening which will enhance the functioning of your inquiry team as you seek solutions collectively to dilemmas such as bringing meaning to your data, suggesting possible interpretations, designing solutions, and formulating your conclusions. Effective listening is comprised of both ‘trusting’ characterized by openness and sharing and being ‘trustworthy’ characterized by acceptance and support for the viewpoints of others. Paraphrasing brings more cohesion to the group process as we connect the flow of discourse from one speaker to another. All members of the team should work on this, not only the facilitator of the meeting!

As we reveal our feelings and reactions to each other and offer professional advice and counsel, it is essential that we do so in a way that encourages further conversation and does not serve to suppress it. Likewise, professional disagreement and conflict is best resolved through techniques designed to first clarify the thoughts and intentions of the messenger. In the press of time we can rush to judgment and in so doing, misunderstand each other, and leave a team meeting frustrated rather than satisfied with the team process.

Paraphrasing includes skills related to **acknowledging/clarifying, organizing/summarizing, and shifting conceptual focus of the thoughts and ideas of others.**

Below are some sentence stems which could be used to start paraphrasing sentences. Consider mounting them on a chart for the group to have available as a visual reference during meeting times:

### Acknowledge/Clarify

You would like to see...

You're pleased with...

You're trying to figure out...

You know it can be...

### Organize/Summarize

You have two goals here: one is to...and the other is to...

So, on the one hand..., and on the other hand...

There seem to be three themes: 1) ...2)...3)...

### Shifting Conceptual Focus

So...here is...

So an assumption here is...

So a concept here is...

So a perspective here is...

"The paraphrase is possibly the most powerful of all non-judgmental verbal responses because it communicates that 'I am attempting to understand you' and that says, 'I value you'."

Costa & Garmston, 1994. *Cognitive Coaching, A Foundation for Renaissance in Schools*, p. 49



## DATA: Collecting, Tracking, Analyzing

At this point in time, you will have gathered your baseline data for the students with whom you are working this year. You will have identified the additional sources and data collection techniques that will work best for you as you progress through your teacher inquiry for 2006-2007. Once again, refer to your Essential Question and your Indicators of Success to provide direction. The problem you have identified will guide your data collection.

In previous Support Booklets, we have introduced various types of data collection methods and strategies. We have emphasized that you need a balance of quantitative and qualitative data. You will now **have made or be making** key decisions about recording and tracking this significant information. One important aspect of your tracking might be aligning your assessments with the appropriate categories in the achievement chart.

Use a tracking template such as the one illustrated below to help you make sense of your data. Create one template for each type of data you are collecting. Ensure that all the teachers on your team understand and use the same template for ease of tracking and subsequent data analysis.

DATA TRACKING AND ANALYSIS			
Data Item	Purpose/Objective	Use	Follow-up
Type: # of Cases Time Period: Method of Collection:	<i>What is this type of data supposed to measure?</i>	<i>How will the information from this data provide evidence to support our inquiry?</i>	<i>What will we do with the information from this piece of data?</i>
<b>What do we need to do to collect this piece of data?</b>			
Type: # of Cases Time Period: Method of Collection:	<i>Were the above objectives met? How were they met or not?</i>	<i>How does the information from this piece of data support/not support our inquiry?</i>	<i>What will we do with the information from this piece of data? Is additional data necessary?</i>

Adapted from Action Research: *Continuing the Journey*. December 2005, York Region School Board



## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Teach with Purpose

The first step in planning instruction that promotes achievement is to establish a student's current level of functioning in a particular

aspect of literacy. The previous section on DATA: Collecting, Tracking, and Analyzing is intended to support your collection of this information and the tracking of the student's progress during this inquiry project.

The importance of determining a student's current level of functioning is evident in Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development." According to Vygotsky (1980), a student's current level of achievement is the zone of actual development. You should aim then to help students move towards the next level of development – the zone of proximal development.

In **Me Read? No Way!** the strategy "Teach with Purpose" p. 15 emphasizes the need to teach with "tightly structured, scaffolded, and explicit instructional strategies."

There are a variety of specific teaching strategies that can facilitate learning effectively across many areas of reading and writing. The instructional strategies described below encompass teaching techniques such as scaffolding, modelling, supportive instructional language, and guided practice as well as some concrete tools for students to use.

**Scaffolding** is a term used to refer to a number of specific instructional strategies. You can use these strategies to move the student from one place to another in terms of learning and to gradually transfer the responsibility for learning to the student, thereby fostering a more independent learner. Scaffolds can include such diverse activities as activating background knowledge, providing prompts or think sheets, and facilitating guided practice.

**Modelling** can also take on a number of different forms. You can "think aloud" using such queries as, "I wonder if...", "I don't understand why...", and "I imagine that..." Research has shown that teachers can use think-aloud techniques to model how a reader processes text and use the same techniques to demonstrate the cognitive processes related to the writing process. Students can also be invited to think out loud and model their strategies for decoding words, making predictions, summarizing, and evaluating text.

**Instructional language** refers to the oral language used in the classroom to instruct and communicate with students. You can modify and/or expand upon the language of instruction in order to communicate important information about procedures and concepts. You can provide important tips, cues, and explicit feedback in the form of interactive dialogue. You can also vary the complexity of your language of instruction by:

- simplifying and shortening instructions (often visual reminders/cues);
- providing concrete examples of more abstract concepts;
- using analogies; and
- presenting new information with an emphasis on main ideas and providing clear conceptual links between key ideas and supporting details.

**Guided Practice** – you can provide students with support and guidance as they initially learn new information or tasks and then gradually phase out this support as your students become more proficient. The levels of guided practice are:

- Students and teacher work together to perform the task and the students may contribute.
- Students work in small groups or with a partner but receive supportive feedback from the teacher
- Students engage in independent practice.

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Teach with Purpose . . . Continued



**Explicit strategy instruction in reading** can unfold in a variety of reading contexts. For instance, guided and shared reading provide educators with opportunities to model literacy strategies and scaffold students' use of literacy strategies. Independent reading provides students with opportunities to practice these skills in a self-directed manner. Read-alouds provide educators with opportunities to monitor students' independent use of literacy strategies.

**Explicit strategy instruction in writing** can unfold in a variety of writing contexts. For instance, students write to solve problems, identify issues, ask questions, clarify meanings, and explore viewpoints. Modelled and shared writing accompanied by think-alouds can be powerful approaches for showing students how the writing process can be used. Modelled and shared approaches often result in the development of shared criteria, checklists, or anchor charts that help to provide scaffolding as students move to guided and independent writing.

Boys may better encode and retrieve new information if it is presented in a structured way with **concrete tools** such as: graphic organizers, think sheets, cue cards, teacher prompts, or concrete analogies.

**Graphic organizers and aids:** A graphic organizer is a visual aid that can be helpful in demonstrating how concepts are connected to students who may not have well-organized prior knowledge or have difficulty making inferences or understanding the relationships among main ideas and details. Teachers are generally familiar with a wide range of graphic organizers.

**Think sheets** are posters to remind students of the steps needed to solve different problems.

**Cueing cards for strategies** – may help students who have difficulty retrieving information from memory to recall specific procedures, routines, or academic information.

**Concrete analogies or pictures** of an abstract or difficult concept are helpful for students. Research has highlighted the value of providing students with acronyms and visual prompts of the key steps in a complex activity. The acronym POW (Pick an Idea, Organize Notes, and Write and Say More) prompts students in writing an expository text.

Information adapted from *Education for All*, 2005. Ministry of Education, pp. 65-68 and *Reflections on Literacy*, 2006. Pearson Education Canada, pp. 46-49.







## Template

Please **photocopy** this template from the Work Plan Support Booklet, complete it in advance, and bring this page with you to the January/February Regional sessions.

School: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_ Team Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

### Team Collaboration:

In 4-5 sentences, outline one example of a process that has worked well for you and your team.

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### Instructional or Assessment Strategy to Improve Boys' Literacy Skills

Provide a description of a successful teaching or classroom assessment strategy. \_\_\_\_\_

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State how you used it. \_\_\_\_\_

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How might you adapt or change it in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you have a quick insight or tip to share with other teams? \_\_\_\_\_

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Resource: Identify below but bring the resource with you to the session, if possible.

Classroom Resource: \_\_\_\_\_

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Professional Resource: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Remember: Data Display**  
Bring an artifact or picture  
of how you are collecting  
or displaying your data.

