

Considerations for Facilitating the Read Aloud Lesson In Making Meaning – Part 3 of 3

By Kathy King-Dickman | Categories: Making Meaning, Implementation

*This is Part Three of a three-part series; you can read Part One here and Part Two here. In this blog I share my revised thinking from *1s Calling on Hands an Archaic Practice?* (part of the *Engaging the Disengaged* series).*

Neutral stance

Neutral Stance is a technique that I continue to struggle with. When students share brilliant thoughts, I want to hug them; however, positive praising of great answers can inhibit the discussion as much or more than negative comments. This is due to that fact that when teachers praise answers, they are putting themselves in the position of judge. If one answer is judged as good or correct, children internalize that a different thought could be judged as bad or wrong; if one answer is considered astute, children might fear that a different answer could be seen as stupid. How should teachers respond, then? Peter Johnston, the author of *Opening Minds*, says we should avoid saying a response is correct or good and simply replace this by looking at the responder saying, "Hmmm," in an interested voice. Peter Brunn, the author of *The Lesson Planning Handbook*, says we should scoot to the edge of our seats and look in the children's eyes as we say this. We want to show that we are extremely interested in what every student has to say, but that there are no wrong or bad answers.

Even when students share thinking that seems silly or not on target, it is our job to remain neutral and highly interested while probing with questions such as, 'What in the text makes you say/think that?' I will never forget when this learning was reinforced for me. Shortly after reading a poem about a beautiful spring day, the teacher asked the students to share their visual and other sensory images. One boy said, "I would be sad." My first thought was, what about a spring day makes you feel sad? I quickly judged him to be a poor listener. Wisely his teacher asked in an interested but neutral voice, "What in this poem makes you sad?" With an earnest face, he said, "Look at the picture in the poem. There is a frog in the little boy's back pocket. The poem said he was going to sit beside the stream and listen to the birds. If he sits down, he will squish the frog. Mrs. D said that good authors share their emotions and that emotions are one of our sensory images. If I was that frog and that little boy sat down and squished me, I would be sad." So when the purpose of a student's response to a question seems to be to get the others to laugh, without irritation or excitement simply ask, "What in the text made you think that?" Only once in the past decade have I found any child to not have a brilliant thought. Of course, then I have to avoid my innate need to hug the student and simply respond neutrally with something like, "Who agrees or disagrees with what [Michael] just said?"

Class Assessments

As students are collaborating, circulate and listen in. Jot down notes to be used as assessments and in large group sharing. In the Class Assessment Notes found in the *Making Meaning Teacher's Manual*, suggestions are given for what to listen for. Suggestions are also given about what to do if only half or just a few students are showing a solid understanding of the strategy being studied. These Class Assessment Notes provide excellent anecdotal information about how well students are comprehending as well as suggestions for

when they are not.



CLASS ASSESSMENT NOTE

Ask yourself:

- Are the students able to make inferences about characters?
- Can they identify clues that support their inferences?

Record your observations on the “Class Assessment Record” sheet (CA1); see page 27 of the *Assessment Resource Book*. Use the following suggestions to support the students:

- If **all or most students** are able to make inferences about characters, continue on to Week 2.
- If **about half of the students** are able to make inferences about characters, continue on to Week 2 and plan to check in with students who are struggling during IDR. You might ask those students to tell you about what they just read and follow up with questions such as:

Q *How do you think the main character is feeling in this part of the story?*

Q *What clues in the story make you think [he] feels [sad]?*

Q *What clues in the pictures make you think [he] feels [sad]?*

- If **only a few students** are able to make inferences about characters, you might give the class additional instruction by repeating the Week 1 lessons using an alternative book before continuing on to Week 2. Visit the CCC Learning Hub (ccclearninghub.org) to view the “Grade 3 Alternative Texts” list.

Research and Benefits

A study conducted by the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement found that in schools that are “beating the odds,” reading comprehension skills are “taught as social activity, with depth and complexity of understanding and proficiency with conventions growing from collaborative discourse.”

In fact, research speaks to the myriad benefits of collaborating often during the school day:

- Different perspectives are shared, honored, and negotiated.
- There is a focus on making meaning.

- Students take responsibility for their own learning.
- There is equal power between teacher and students and not the typical learning situation of an expert imparting knowledge to a novice.
- Students feel their voices matter so they contribute and pay attention.

A Collaborative Read Aloud/ *Making Meaning* Reading Lesson is one in which the students do more thinking work than the teacher. Cris Tovani, the author of many books on comprehension instruction, is famous for saying that schools shouldn't be places where young people go to see old people work. My mentor, Sue Wilder, often says, "The person doing the bulk of the talking is often the person doing the bulk of the learning." So give yourself a break, make your students do the thinking work and follow a *Making Meaning* lesson, adding all of the techniques suggested in the *Teacher's Manual*. Get your students to do the discussion, thinking, and learning.

To watch a teacher in action doing a lesson like the one described above go to:

<https://inside.collaborativeclassroom.org/video/765/asking-facilitative-questions> and

<https://inside.collaborativeclassroom.org/video/747/reading-comprehension-inferences-about-cause-and-effect-day-2>

References

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