

1996

To prompt or not to prompt: Prompting students at critical points in their reading

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Recommended Citation

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To prompt or not to prompt: Prompting students at critical points in their reading

Abstract

The effects of teacher prompting of eight third grade students who participated in the Links program were investigated. Reading Recovery-type prompts were used to help students over time independently use a balance of the three cueing systems (meaning, structural, graphophonic) as they read new texts in a Reader's Workshop-type setting. The prompting of the students occurred at four points : a) when they indicated they need help; b) at the end of a page; c) as the page was being turned; and d) after the entire text was read. Results indicated that the students were able to use reading strategies independently on more difficult texts after 6 months of participating in the Links program.

TO PROMPT OR NOT TO PROMPT:
PROMPTING STUDENTS AT CRITICAL POINTS IN THEIR READING

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of Reading and Language Arts
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by
Deborah S. Little

July 1996

This Research Paper by: Deborah S. Little

Titled: TO PROMPT OR NOT TO PROMPT: PROMPTING STUDENTS AT CRITICAL POINTS IN THEIR READINGS

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

7-29-96
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July 30, 1996

Editors

The Reading Teacher

414 White Hall

College of Education

Kent State University

Kent, OH 44242 USA

Dear Editors:

Enclosed please find for your review five copies of "To Prompt or Not to Prompt: Prompting Students at Critical Points in Their Reading." This manuscript focuses on the importance of observing students as they read and offering timely and finely-tuned feedback, which enables students to use a balance of cueing sources (meaning, structural, graphophonic). Carefully prompting students at the critical points in their reading (where they indicate they need help, at the end of the page, while the page is being turned, and after the entire text has been read) helps them know what they have done well and what alternative strategies they might try. This ultimately will lead to the independent use of reading strategies by the students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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TO PROMPT OR NOT TO PROMPT:
PROMPTING STUDENTS AT CRITICAL POINTS IN THEIR READING

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Running Head: PROMPTING STUDENTS

TO PROMPT OR NOT TO PROMPT:
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ABSTRACT

The effects of teacher prompting of eight third grade students who participated in the Links program were investigated. Reading Recovery-type prompts were used to help students over time independently use a balance of the three cueing systems (meaning, structural, graphophonic) as they read new texts in a Reader's Workshop-type setting. The prompting of the students occurred at four points : a) when they indicated they need help; b) at the end of a page; c) as the page was being turned; and d) after the entire text was read. Results indicated that the students were able to use reading strategies independently on more difficult texts after 6 months of participating in the Links program.

Let me tell you about Korey. Korey is a third grade student who has for the past two years received special help in reading through the Title One program. His performance on an informal reading inventory at the beginning of his third grade year indicated an instructional level of pre primer. The following is a representative example of Korey's first reading of a text in early fall after the book had been introduced page by page.

Text: Bug, come and talk to me.

K: Ladybug, come and talk with me.

Text: No, no. A bird is after me.

K: No. A bird is after me.

Text: Bird, come and talk to me.

K: Bird, come and talk with me.

Text: No, no. A cat is after me.

K: No. A kitty is after me.

Text: Cat, come and talk to me.

K: Kitty, come and talk with me. (Cowley, 1990b)

It is apparent from Korey's reading that he knew that books were supposed to make sense. Although his reading retained much of the intended meaning of the text, he did not rely on visual information to help identify words. He did not match voice to print in a one-to-one manner. His main strategy for reading texts was to memorize them. His over-reliance on meaning cues and structural cues and his neglect of graphophonic

information is a necessary developmental step in learning to read. However, most children of third grade age have developed these strategies.

Consider Vicky, another third grader who has also received Title One help in reading for two years. The following was her reading of Our Dog Sam (Bacon, 1988) at the beginning of her third grade year.

Text: Our dog Sam likes to help in the garden.

V: Our dog Sam likes to help in the ger- gerdan.

Text: Our dog Sam likes to meet the mailman.

V: Our dog Sam likes to meet the ma- mal, mammal.

Vicky knew by sight a core group of high frequency words, such as "is," "am," "to," "come," "like," and "see," and used them to read at a slow, word-by-word pace. She often would focus so much on the graphophonic information that she would say words which did not make sense and then would keep right on reading. For example, in the above text she read "garden" as "gerdan." Her main strategy for reading new words was "sounding them out," without considering the context of the story. A goal for her was to learn to notice when she had made a mistake and to think more about the story's meaning.

The above examples of Korey's and Vicky's readings of new text are familiar ones to us and to many classroom and special reading teachers who try to help students who are not putting the process of reading all together. We know that in order to read and comprehend longer and more difficult texts, students need to use a balance of the

three cueing systems (the meaning, structural, and graphophonic) (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987; Weaver, 1995). It is a challenge to teach these students who are struggling to read to comprehend text while balancing these cueing systems. How do we help them learn to apply these strategies independently on new texts? How do we do all of this while enticing them to read and reread books written at a manageable difficulty level?

As a teacher of reading, I tried many methods and a variety of materials. I studied the ways children learn to talk, read, and write and implemented process approaches such as Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop (Hansen, 1987; Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991). As a classroom teacher and then later as a Title One reading teacher, I found that with most children these approaches were successful, but with some they were not. Before my Reading Recovery training, I knew how to identify a reader's strengths and weaknesses, but I did not know what to say to help a child to read using a balance of the three cueing systems. I also did not know what I should do to help students be able to use the strategies independently. To help these children most effectively, I continued to search for the best balance of instruction and reading practice.

During my second year as a Title One teacher, I received training in the Reading Recovery program. After I had the opportunity to be trained as a Reading Recovery teacher, I realized that I needed to provide different instruction for these older readers. My training in Reading Recovery gave me the "tools" to help students of many ages to become more successful readers. The "tools" are the prompts developed by Marie Clay

(1985, 1993b) for the Reading Recovery program. I am convinced that these prompts are useful not only with first grade students but also with older students who are at the emergent and early fluency stages of reading (Mooney, 1990).

The purpose of this article is to describe how the prompts were used with groups of third grade children within a contextualized reading program called Links. The third graders came in small groups to a Title One classroom daily for extra help with reading. At the beginning of the year, the students' instructional reading levels ranged from one to three years below grade level. In every case the students' difficulties with the use of word identification strategies interfered with their comprehension of texts.

The program is called Links because it links some of the elements of Reader's Workshop (Hansen, 1987) with some of the components of Marie Clay's Reading Recovery program for first grade struggling readers (1985, 1993b). Links is based on the idea that emergent readers need to have lots of opportunities to read and reread self-selected material that is at their instructional level, to share their thinking about their books with their peers, and to have opportunities to receive direct and productive feedback on their reading from a teacher. It is intended that the teacher's feedback will highlight the readers' strengths as well as their weaknesses.

GOALS OF THE LINKS PROGRAM

One of the goals of the Links program was to help each third grade student to develop a flexible repertoire of strategies that he/she could use independently to read new texts. The intent was that each student become a reader whose reading improves

each time he/she reads. It was a goal that students learn to independently monitor their reading, search for cues, cross check one cueing source with another, and self correct, all the while maintaining the meaning of a text (Clay, 1991). Another goal was for students to read, for enjoyment and knowledge within a community of readers, books that were at their instructional level.

THE LINKS PROGRAM

The Links program's main components are individual reading of self-selected literature, rereading of familiar books alone and with partners, book response projects, small-group sharing, student-teacher conferences, and mini lessons (Calkins, 1986). These components can be described as a part of the elements of the Reader's Workshop.

Links includes several elements of the Reader's Workshop: choice, time, community, and response (Atwell, 1987; Hagerty, 1992; Hansen, 1987). Choice is important because when a child is able to select a book, ownership is established, and the child is more likely to want to read the text. For the Links program, when the students are ready to read a new book, they select a book from a group of about ten books. In this way, children are given some choice, and the selection is within an instructional range for the child. It is essential that children are given blocks of time regularly to select, read, and reread books in order to improve their fluency and practice their emerging reading strategies. Four days a week, the third grade students in the Links program had a half hour to first reread all or part of a familiar book alone or with a partner; next they could choose to complete a book response project, reread other

familiar books, or select and read a new book. The third grade children in the Links program felt free to read and discuss books written at their reading levels and to solve problems collaboratively because they felt a part of a community of readers. Early in the year, they participated in many discussions about their role as a community member. The final element, response, is important in providing children a purpose for reading. They receive feedback on their reading and their ideas. Through response, members of a community teach each other about differing perspectives and share different interpretations of textual meanings. In Links, when children read with partners, they share enjoyment, reading strategies, and thoughts about the texts. One day a week, the children have an opportunity to share personalized interpretations of their books with the group, through book response projects or through sharing of all or parts of books. Through their responses, audience members help readers extend their understandings of the books and celebrate their accomplishments. The two or three mini-lessons taught each week to the group are in response to the needs that the children have demonstrated through their reading and discussions. Finally, when conferencing with the teacher two or three times each week, students receive pertinent feedback about their reading strategies. The teacher also responds to their efforts to build understandings of texts.

Some of the features of Reading Recovery are applied during the student-teacher conferences of the Links program: a) Book introductions are given for each child and vary in depth according to the teacher's analysis of the child's needs; b) After the book introduction, the child reads the book with support from the teacher; c) The teacher

prompts, models, and praises the student during this first reading of the new book, using some of the same terminology used in the Reading Recovery program; d) Individualized teaching points are made after the first reading of the new book and after a second reading at a later date; and e) Book introductions and prompting change over time in response to a child's progress, to help scaffold the child toward becoming an independent reader. However, many aspects of the Reading Recovery program are not incorporated because Links is not intended to be "Reading Recovery for Third Graders." There are several reasons for this. The obvious reason is that the Reading Recovery lesson involves 30 minutes of intensive, one-on-one reading and writing daily for each child. There is no way to even attempt to duplicate the program when the 30 minutes would have to be divided among four students each day. Another reason is that Reading Recovery was developed for first grade students who are having difficulty learning to read (Clay, 1985, 1993b). In the third grade classrooms, the emphasis is on reading to learn, instead of learning to read, and I wanted the third graders to be able to focus extensively on the meaning of the texts they read. I felt that it is important for the third graders to belong to a community of readers who explore different interpretations of texts (Christenbury, 1992). With the Links program, more emphasis could be put on meaning, while working collaboratively with peers during partner reading and book sharing projects.

TEACHER-STUDENT CONFERENCES

The Reading Recovery type prompts are given during the student-teacher conferences. There are two types of conferences. The first type of conference is the Book Introduction Conference. During this conference, the new book is introduced, and then the teacher supports the student through the first reading of the text. Teacher guidance occurs first during the book introduction, later as the child reads the book, and finally after the entire text is read (Clay, 1993b).

The second type of conference is the Running Record Conference. This involves a rereading of a text previously read in an Introduction Conference. During this conference I did two things: (a) I took a running record (a quick shorthand record of words read correctly and words miscued) while the child read, in order to see what kinds of strategies the child used independently; and (b) I gave guidance after the running record was taken. The student's retelling of the text was also included at the end of this conference. In the following sections, I will describe each of these types of conferences in more detail.

Introduction Conference

The Introduction Conference consisted of two parts: (a) introducing the new book and (b) the first reading of the new book with teacher support. During the Introduction Conference, I did not read the book to the student. Instead, the student and I looked at and talked about the pictures throughout the book. The student was often asked to predict what would happen in the text and/or was asked to relate it to his/her own

experience. As we walked through the book, I was careful to talk about any unfamiliar phrases or difficult words (Clay, 1993b; Routman, 1991). By previewing the text in this manner, I was helping the student to build a foundation for comprehension before the initial reading of the text. Also, I was ensuring that the student was exposed to the ideas and the language that s/he needed to understand the story, the plot, the words, and the writing style of the text. (See Appendix for an example of a Book Introduction.) The amount of detail provided in the introduction varied according to the strengths and needs of each student (Clay, 1993b).

Next, the student orally read the text, while I supported his/her initial attempt by reinforcing appropriate reading strategies and by suggesting alternatives for inefficient strategies. The support given was carefully worded to guide the student to operate in his/her zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), while providing a scaffold so that the student could internalize the knowledge in order to become independent (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991). For example, a prompt that provides full support would be "You said.... Try that again. Get your mouth ready, and think what would make sense." An example of a prompt that provides less support would be "What could you try?" The amount and kind of support changed over time as the student's reading behavior indicated that s/he could apply strategies more and more independently (Clay, 1991).

After the student read the text aloud, I would focus on one or two teaching points. These teaching points were either statements that praised and reinforced a specific reading behavior (e.g., "I like how you noticed that that word didn't make sense

and you went back and fixed it."), or prompts that questioned what the student did while reading in order to help the student develop good reading strategies that s/he would need to become an independent reader (e.g., "Try that again, and think what would make sense.").

After the Introduction Conference, the student was asked to reread the text alone, then to read it with a partner, and finally to do a book response project about the text. Some or all of these activities would be completed before the student and I had the Running Record Conference.

Running Record Conferences

During the Running Record Conference, the student read the text aloud while I took a running record (Clay, 1993a). A running record is an assessment tool used to evaluate an individual student's use of reading strategies during oral reading of texts.

After the running record, I chose one or two teaching points based on the child's reading. I prompted, confirmed, or reinforced appropriate reading behavior by choosing one or two examples of good reading and examples of an area that needed to be improved (Clay, 1993b). Next, the student gave an oral retelling of the text. Then I made anecdotal records (Rhodes & Nathenson-Mejia, 1992) about the student's reading behavior.

TEACHING PROMPTS AND TEACHING POINTS

From October to the end of March, tape recordings were made of both the Introduction Conferences and the Running Record Conferences with each of the third

graders. These recordings, along with the running records and anecdotal records, revealed patterns of when prompting occurred during the Introduction Conferences and the types of prompts that were given. Although every student's conference was on his or her chosen book and no two conferences were the same, the places at which I intervened were often the same.

The tape recordings also showed that I included teaching points (Clay, 1993b) after a book was read in both the Introduction Conferences and in the Running Record Conferences. Therefore, I will discuss the prompting that occurred during Introduction Conferences first. Next, I will give examples of the teaching points that occurred after the books were read in both types of conferences.

Prompting During Introduction Conferences

After the new book has been introduced, the student attempts to read the book independently. During the first reading of a text, the teacher may need to support the student's efforts by prompting and other responses.

Providing appropriate prompts for a particular child on a given text is a very challenging task. The teacher has to decide what cueing sources the reader is using and what cueing sources are being neglected. Then, the teacher needs to decide what type of prompt to give, if any, and how specific or general it should be based on the child's past reading. A prompt of "What could you try?" is certainly more general than "Try that again, and think what would make sense." The teacher also wants to be careful to eventually shift the prompts to become more general with the prompting when the child

seems to be more capable. If the child receives a more general prompt and is unsuccessful with it, the teacher should be ready to offer a prompt with more support. Also, the teacher should realize that the child will not be ready for some prompts until s/he has built up a repertoire of strategies. For example, asking a child "What do you know that might help?" before they have any idea of what they could try will probably lead to a response of "I don't know."

It should be noted that the teacher needs to be careful not to over prompt. When the flow of the story is interrupted, there is always the danger that the reader will lose the story's meaning and begin to see reading as an oral task of saying the words. The teacher should also realize that it is not necessary to fix every mistake the child makes while reading (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987; Clay, 1993b). When a choir is learning how to sing a new song, the choir director does not expect every note to be sung just right. It takes several times through the song for the choir to get a near-perfect performance of the song. In many ways, the first reading of a book is like learning a song. The reader is not expected to get each word right. It is more important that the reader understands the text and is helped to acquire the strategies needed to read it well. Like the choir director who selects one or two important things to work on after they have sung the song the first time through, so the effective teacher selects one or two important parts to work on after the reading of a book. Over time, as the child learns more about the text and about how to use a flexible repertoire of strategies, the reading becomes better.

The teacher's goal is to help the child develop a self-improving system (Clay, 1985, 1993b). This system can only be developed when the teacher knows when to provide timely and unambiguous prompts that focus a student's attention to meaning, structural, and graphophonic cues. The teacher must constantly keep these questions in mind: Am I interrupting so much that the flow of the story and meaning are lost? Could this prompt wait until the end of the page or at the end of the book? What is the most powerful thing I can say that will show this child what reading is all about? Sometimes a student will work the problem out alone and surprise the teacher. The teacher must become an expert at carefully weighing the consequences of a decision to prompt or not to prompt.

When working with the third grade students, the opportunities to prompt during the Introduction Conferences usually occurred at three points: (a) when the student indicated a need for help, (b) at the end of a page, and (c) while the page was being turned. The following transcriptions show examples of what was said at each point and my reasoning for responding in a particular way.

When Students Indicated That They Needed Help

While reading the text for the first time, a child may indicate a need for the teacher's help by stopping at an unfamiliar word, by a shaking of the head, by looking at the ceiling, by asking for the word, or by rereading previous words in the text and then stopping. The child may sound only the first letter or letters or may try to sound the word out unsuccessfully.

The following conversations are examples of teacher prompts that foster independence in figuring out unknown words. They are intended to encourage the child to use reading strategies other than memorizing words, sounding them out, or waiting to be told by the teacher. The intent is for the child to internalize the strategies prompted so that over time the child develops ways of solving new words while maintaining the meaning of the text.

Prompting for Meaning, Structural, or Graphophonic Cues

The following interactions are examples of prompting for meaning and graphophonic cues when a child indicated a need for help. Although some students may also need to be prompted to use structural cues (related to part of speech), none of the third graders that I worked with indicated that they needed help with structure, and so no example of prompting for structural cues is given. It is important to note that the students were prompted before getting to the end of the page because they stopped and waited at a difficult part in the text. The intent of the prompts was to get the students going again and to help them think of a strategy that they could use to read the text as independently as possible.

Prompting for Meaning Cues. Vicky was reading Ben's Treasure Hunt (Randell, 1994a). When she came to the word "went," she paused, then reread the word in front, and then stopped. Because Vicky had a tendency to focus too much on the visual information, I prompted her with meaning prompts on this word:

Text: "Ben went to look on the swing. 'A clue!' he shouted."

V: "Ben w-" (Vicky stopped and waited.)

T: Why did you stop? What did you notice?

V: I don't know that word.

T: Try that again, and think about what would make sense.

V: (Rereading) "Ben w--" (Vicky stopped again.)

T: Remember that in this story Ben goes everywhere around the house looking for clues?

V: Yeah. His mom put them all over the place, and he went to look for clues in the yard, too.

T: Right! Try that again and think what would make sense.

V: "Ben w- went to look on the swing."

T: Does that make sense?

V: (Nods head, yes. Then continues reading the story.)

Prompting for Graphophonic Cues. Sometimes the third graders needed to be prompted to use more graphophonic information. Nichole was at the point in her reading where she was able to read most words independently by using a balanced combination of the three cueing sources: meaning, structural, and graphophonic. However, she would often stop when she came to words with more than two syllables or words that had prefixes and suffixes that were new to her.

Nichole was reading I Know a Lady (Zolotow, 1984). During the first reading of this book, Nichole came to the word "chrysanthemums" and stopped. From the

conversation during the book introduction, I knew that Nichole had some background knowledge about different kinds of flowers. She also had just read the words "daffodils" and "zinnias" without hesitation. Because of her ability to apply more advanced strategies, I prompted her by using a combination of graphophonic and meaning prompts:

Text: "She works in her garden and gives us daffodils in the spring, zinnias in the summer and chrysanthemums in the fall."

N: "She works in her garden and gives us daffodils in the spring, zinnias in the summer, and...."

T: Do you know a word that starts like that?

N: Yes. "Chris."

T: That's right. Use that to help you. Try that again, get your mouth ready, and think what would make sense.

N: (Rereading) "She works in her garden and gives us daffodils in the spring, zinnias the summer, and chr-ysanthemums in the fall."

T: Does "chrysanthemums" make sense?

N: Yeah. My grandma used to plants those, too.

T: Does it look like "chrysanthemums"?

N: (Nichole drags her thumb slowly across the word as she says it softly to herself.) Yes.

(The above example is an example of a time when I might have told the word to Nichole if she had not gotten it by using the graphophonic information and meaning.)

Later, in this same text, Nichole came to the word "berries" and tried to use visual information at the beginning and ending of the word and then stopped. I thought that Nichole probably knew the word "berry," but the "ies" ending was difficult for her, so I prompted as follows:

Text: "...and red holly berries when the snow falls."

N: "...and red holly ber-s." (Nichole looked up at me.)

T: You're right. It starts like that. Do you know this word? (Teacher writes "berry" on the dry-erase board.)

N: Berry.

T: Yes. Use that to help you and look at the end of the word.

N: "Berries."

T: Yes. If you're talking about more than one berry, you change the "y" to an "i" and add "es."

N: (Rereading) "...and red holly berries when the snow falls."

Sometimes a student needs choices when coming to a word that s/he is unable to figure out. David was reading Katie Couldn't (Bring-McDaniel, 1985). After some initial prompting, he was given some choices to check one cue source with another:

Text: (p. 4) "Katie couldn't. She was little."

(p. 5) "Jenny could stay up late at night."

D: "Katie couldn't. She was little. Jenny could...s... Jenny could s..."

T: Try that again, and think what would make sense.

D: "Jenny could ... sit? (Rereading) "Jenny could sit up long ... " ("No...")

D: "Jenny could ... " (David stopped.)

T: Could it be "start" or "stay"?

D: "Jenny could stay up l- late at night."

T: Check it. Does it look like "stay"?

D: (Slowly drags his finger across "stay.") "St...ay." Yes.

T: Good. It looks right and makes sense.

Modeling

Sometimes I supported the student by rereading the words up to the unknown word and then stopping to let the student produce a prediction of what the printed word might be. At times, I also gave the first letters or sounds after s/he reread to help the child predict the word.

For example, Nick was reading There's a Nightmare in My Closet (Mayer, 1968). When he came to unfamiliar words, he stopped reading. I thought that rereading and getting his mouth ready to make the first sound, while thinking about what would make sense, would help him. He was not getting his mouth ready to say the first part of the word when prompted, so I modeled it for him in the following dialogue:

Text: "I suppose there's another nightmare in my closet, but my bed's not big enough for three."

N: "...my bed's not big..." (Nick stopped reading and waited.)

T: Try that again. Get your mouth ready, and think what would make sense.

N: "I suppose there's another nightmare in my closet, but my bed's not big"

T: Good. Now say this first part.

N: "e..."

T: Try that again, and get your mouth ready to say that first part.

N: (Nick did nothing.)

T: (Modeling what Nick was asked to do.) "...but my bed's not big e--"

N: "Enough!"

T: Does that make sense? "I suppose there's another nightmare in my closet, but my bed's not big enough?"

N: Yeah.

T: Let's see if that word looks like "enough." (Teacher slides her thumb across the word "enough" slowly as she says the word out loud.)

N: There's no "f" at the end.

T: You're right. It sounds like there should be an "f" there, but in this word the "g & h" work like a team and say that "ffff" sound.

Prompting--You Try

Sometimes a student simply needs to be encouraged to try an unfamiliar word herself. Olivia was reading The Little Yellow Chicken (Cowley, 1988). Olivia had demonstrated on previous readings of other texts that she was able to figure out new words when prompted. She seemed to lack the confidence to try to figure them out by

herself. The following is an example of how a teacher could encourage a reluctant reader to keep going:

Text: "When the cooking was done the little yellow chicken said to his friends, 'Will you help me set the table?' His friends turned their backs."

O: "When the cooking was done the little yellow chicken said to his friends, 'Will you help me set the table?' His friends..." (Olivia stopped and looked up at me.)

T: You try.

O: "His friends t- tur- turned.... (Olivia looked up at me. I didn't look at her, but kept my eyes focused on the text.) His friends turned their backs."

Olivia was able to figure out the word on the page by herself by using all three cueing sources. A teacher needs to examine the reader's past text reading and to say "you try" only when s/he is sure the child can figure out the word with this general prompt.

Telling

Traditionally, many teachers have responded to reading behaviors such as those described earlier by telling the child the word. The problem with telling the child the word is that the child may never develop any strategies to learn to read unfamiliar words independently (Clay, 1993b). Although this is one of the responses I used, it was used only as a last resort. I usually tried to help the child get the word by other means first. When I did choose to tell the student the word, it was because it was a word that was

not in the student's background knowledge or to save instructional time on an unusual word. The following are examples of when I told a word.

Korey was reading the book Just Like Me (Neasi, 1984). In the following example, I told Korey the name of one of the sisters in the story because it was at the beginning of the text and because this name was beyond Korey's ability to read independently. It was also an unusual word:

Text: "My name is Jennifer. I have a twin sister. Her name is Julie."

K: "My name is Jennifer. I have a twin sister. Her name is..." (Korey stopped.)

T: Remember, there's Jennifer and J-

K: I forgot her name.

T: Her name is Julie.

Another time I told a word to Marissa, who was reading The Gingerbread Man (Parkes & Smith, 1984). Marissa had already tried rereading on her own and had sounded the first letter of the unfamiliar word "sultanas." It was a low frequency word, and I decided that we could come back to it at the end of the page and figure out what it meant:

Text: "The old woman gave him 2 sultanas for his eyes, 1 currant for his nose, some peel for his mouth and 3 cherries for his buttons."

M: "The old woman gave him 2..." (Rereading) "The old woman gave him 2 s---" (Marissa looked at me.)

T: I liked how you tried to figure that word out. That word is "sultanas."

M: "The old woman gave him 2 sultanas for his eyes one carrotant/ cur-rant/ currant for his nose, some peel for the mouth and 3 cherries for his buttons."

At the end of this page, we took another look at the word "sultanas" in context and through our discussion decided that it was some type of dried fruit or spice.

Marissa also tried finding it in the dictionary at the end of the conference.

Some might suggest that I should have had Marissa sound it out. However, Marissa was just starting to use more than the first couple of letters, along with rereading and thinking what makes sense, to read new words. I wanted to wait for an opportunity to help her use this strategy with a word that was familiar to her.

Prompting at the End of the Page

In making comments during the first reading of a new text, the teacher should avoid unnecessary interruption of the flow of the story. Likewise, the teacher needs to be very cautious at how much prompting occurs at the end of the page, making necessary comments as precisely as possible and then moving on. The comments in the following examples occurred when a student repeatedly avoided at least one type of cueing source on previous readings of texts and was continuing to avoid that cueing source (or sources) on the reading. The prompts were given at the end of the page to help the child think about the cueing source or strategy that s/he should be using. They were given as reminders:

Prompting for Meaning Cues

Korey was reading the story A New Car (Cutting & Cutting, 1993). On previous texts, Korey had miscued by substituting words that made sense but which did not look right. On this text, he was doing just the opposite. He was saying words that looked similar to the printed word but which did not make sense. I wanted him to understand that he needed to read using words that looked right and made sense, so I decided to prompt him at the end of the page:

Text: "Mom and Dad were going to look for a new car."

K: "Mom and Dad want going to look for a new car." (After this error, Korey acted as if what he had read was okay. He was about to read the next page.)

T: Check that. Does that make sense and look right to you?

K: Wanting.

T: Try that again.

K: (Rereading.) "Mom and Dad were going to look for a new car."

T: Does that make sense?

K: (Nods his head, yes.)

T: Yes. It needs to look right and make sense.

Prompting for Structural Cues

David was reading the book Joshua James Just Likes Trucks (Petrie, 1992). Often, David would substitute words that were similar both in meaning and in graphophonic information but which did not sound right and which did not reflect his

own oral language. His reading of this text was at a slow pace. I felt he was over focusing on the graphophonic information. The sentence "Joshua James just likes trucks." occurred many times throughout the story. Several pages into the text, the following prompts were given:

Text: "Joshua James just likes trucks. Trucks that go up. Trucks that go down."

D: "Joshua James just like trucks. Truck that go up. Truck that go down."

T: You said, 'Joshua James just like trucks.' Does that sound right? Is that how books would say it?

D: No.

T: Try that again and think what would sound right.

D: "Joshua James just like-- likes trucks."

T: Yes. (Repeating.) "Joshua James just likes trucks." That sounds like the way books would say it, doesn't it?

D: (Nods.)

Prompting for Graphophonic Cues

Sometimes a student is able to use meaning and structural cues but consistently ignores graphophonic information. When Korey was reading Red Socks Yellow Socks (Cowley, 1987), he substituted unfamiliar words by using mostly meaning and structural cues. He had favored these cueing systems on earlier texts as well. I decided to prompt him to use the graphophonic information in the following example to remind him of what he needed to include:

Text: (p. 2) "Little Billy had yellow socks. Big Billy had red socks."

(p. 3) "They wore their socks. Red socks and yellow socks."

(p. 4) "They washed their socks. Red socks and yellow socks."

K: "Little Billy had yellow socks. Big Billy had red socks."

"They had their socks. Red socks and yellow socks."

"They cleaned their socks. Red socks and yellow socks."

T: "Cleaned" makes sense, but look at the "w." Try that again, and think what would make sense and look right.

K: "They w- washed their socks. Red socks and yellow socks."

T: That makes sense and looks right.

Prompting When a Child Invents

Sometimes students may make up the story as they read or invent the text. The student ignores the words that s/he knows and "reads" something that sounds like something the text might say. A teacher needs to stop this behavior when it occurs, or the student may get the idea that what they are doing is okay. The teacher should get the student to attend to what s/he knows.

David was reading Dan the Flying Man (Cowley, 1990a). He knew several of the words in the text, such as "and," "the," and "am" but did not attend to these known words when he read the text. In the following example, I prompted him to stop inventing:

Text: (p. 2) "I am Dan the Flying Man."

(p. 3) "Catch me, catch me, if you can."

(p. 4) "Over a house"

(p. 5) "and over a crane."

D: (p. 2) "I am Dan the Flying Man."

(p. 3) "Catch me, catch me, if you can."

(p. 4) "I fly over houses."

(p. 5) "I fly over cranes."

T: (Pointing to p. 4.) Finger frame the word "I" on this page.

D: (Looking at the text on p. 4.) It's not there.

T: You're right. It's not on that page. You can't make up the story. That's not reading.

D: Oh.

T: Let's try it again.

D & T: "I am Dan the Flying Man. Catch me, catch me, if you can."

D: (Teacher's voice dropped out. David paused to look at the word "over.")

T: (Covering up the word "over.") Check the picture. Where is he flying?

D: Over a house.

T: Would that make sense here?

D: (Nods, yes.)

T: (Still covering the word "over.") Say "over."

D: Over.

T: What would you expect to see at the beginning of "over"?

D: (Saying the word slowly.) O- ver, an "o."

T: (Uncovering the word.) Were you right?

D: Yes.

T: See! You can check to see if it makes sense and looks right, instead of making it up.

Prompting for Fluency

When a child is beginning to match what s/he says to what is written in the text, the child slows down to coordinate his/her speech with the print. Once this one-to-one matching is secure, the teacher should encourage the child to speed up response to the text, so that the child does not start to habituate a slow, word-by-word reading style. It is important that the child knows that s/he may need to slow down at more difficult parts, but then s/he should speed up again on the phrases or words that are known.

Vicky had one-to-one correspondence under control, but she was continuing to read each story in a staccato, word-by-word manner. In the following example, Vicky was reading a new book called Just Like Me (Neasi, 1984). During a conference prior to the reading of this book, I had worked with Vicky to help her read in a more phrased and fluent manner on a couple of familiar books. With those familiar books, I had modeled how a good reader would read them and then asked Vicky to reread them with me, while I emphasized the phrasing. For her new text, I helped Vicky select the book

Just Like Me because I thought it would help her read more fluently. It had some repetitive language, and it was an easier text than she had been reading.

After the book was introduced, Vicky proceeded to read in her usual word-by-word manner. After a couple of pages, where the phrase "Just like me" had appeared, Vicky was prompted to read it more fluently:

T: "Julie is in first grade. Just like me!"

V: "Julie - is - in - first - grade. Just - like - me."

T: (Underlining the first part, "Julie is in the first grade," with a card.) Put them all together, so that it sounds like talking.

V: (Reading a bit faster.) "Julie is in first grade."

T: Now read this part.

V: "Just like me."

T: Good! That sounded like talking. That's what good readers do.

I continued to work with Vicky, encouraging her to read the phrase, "Just like me," more fluently. By the end of the book, she was sounding more fluent and phrased. On subsequent texts, I made sure to praise Vicky when she read parts of it in a fluent manner. I also continued to model fluent reading and encouraged Vicky to read in phrases.

Praising

When a student is just starting to use a strategy or a neglected cueing system, the teacher may want to make a point of praising the reader's appropriate reading behavior to encourage the student to continue using this strategy throughout the text.

Marissa was reading Mushrooms for Dinner (Randell, 1994b) when I felt that praising her for self-correcting an error was appropriate. On previous texts, when she came to an unfamiliar word, Marissa would often substitute any word that started the same way, even though it did not make sense, and she would continue reading, without correcting the error. On this story, she read a word incorrectly, but instead of continuing on, she noticed that what she had read did not make sense and then reread and fixed her error. I praised her self-correction at the end of the page, in hopes of getting Marissa to self-correct more often:

Text: "Father Bear came home and said, 'Look! No mushrooms! I did not find one! I'm going fishing.' 'I'm good at finding mushrooms,' said Baby Bear. 'I will go and get some.'"

M: "Father Bear came home and said, 'Look! No mushrooms! I did not find one! I'm going fishing.'" 'I'm good at fishing mushrooms,' said Baby Bear."

(Rereading and self-correcting.) "'I'm good at finding mushrooms,' said Baby Bear. 'I will go and get some.'"

T: I like how you fixed that all by yourself. When it didn't make sense, you went back and fixed it. That's what good readers do.

Commenting as the Page Is Being Turned

The kinds of commenting that occurred with the third grade students as the page was being turned related to comprehension. These comments focused on the meaning of the story. Sometimes, these comments were in the form of a prediction question, such as, "What do you think will happen next?" At other times, I tried to model what a good reader might be thinking as the text was read, such as "That dog sure is acting silly. I wonder what he'll do next?" or "I bet she won't let Jenny play with her, because she was so mean to her."

In the following example, Wendy was reading the chapter called "Spring" in the book Frog and Toad Are Friends (Lobel, 1970). She had just finished reading p. 13 where Frog tears off pages from Toad's calendar. As she was starting to turn the page, the following dialogue took place:

T: I wonder what's going to happen next?

W: I think Frog is going to wake Toad up and trick him.

T: Me too. Let's see what happens.

Teaching Points After the Book Is Read

Prompting at the end of the book occurred in both types of conferences. The prompts that occur after the book is read are called "teaching points." In some cases, this may be the only time the teacher comments about the child's reading. As the book is being read, the teacher needs to be thinking about one or two prompts or comments that will help the student improve his/her reading on future texts.

If an appropriate text was selected, it would have provided just a few challenges for the child, and the teacher will find it easier to focus on a teaching point. The child should have been able to read the new text at about 90% to 94% accuracy. If the text was so difficult that the child needed continuous help through each sentence, the book was too difficult, and the teacher should probably help select a more appropriate text (Clay, 1993a). If the child needed no help whatsoever on the new text, the teacher may simply praise the child for his/her fluent and accurate reading by saying, "I like how you read that book. That's how good readers read." For the child's next text, the teacher should help the child consider a text that offers a few challenges.

My teaching points usually included a praise of one reading behavior and a prompt for a more appropriate strategy. Also, I tried, when possible, to get both of the teaching points focused around one strategy. For example, if the student needed help on cross-checking meaning cues with graphophonic cues, I tried to find a place where the student did a good job of using this strategy and praised its use. Then, I took the student to a place in the text where s/he was unsuccessful at using that strategy and prompted the student to try it again. When a prompt was given after the reading of the whole text, the aim was to help the student either read more fluently, to focus on meaning, structure, or graphophonic cues (or a combination of these cues), or to discuss the story.

It is important to keep in mind that the focus should be on only one or two teaching points at the end of the book and not on every miscue. The teacher should try

to select the clearest examples of what it is that the child should work on to help the child read future texts.

The following conversations give examples of teaching points that occurred after the reading of a book. They show a variety of teaching points, from praising a student's reading to prompting for fluency and neglected cues.

Example #1: Praising Use of Graphophonic and Structural Cues

Marissa had just read Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed (Christelow, 1989). Prior to reading the book, a discussion occurred on the "ing" and "ed" endings in a mini-lesson to the whole group. Throughout the reading of this text, Marissa self-corrected places where these endings occurred. I praised her at the end of the book for noticing her errors and fixing them:

Text: (p. 9) "Then ... five little monkeys jumped on the bed!"

M: She'll probably fall off and hurt her head, too.

T: She might. Then what do you think her children will say?

M: No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

T: I bet they would say that, too! Marissa, you did some nice reading in this book. Like on this page (turning to p. 9), you said, "Then ... five little monkeys jumping on the bed!" Then you went back and fixed it and changed it to "jumped." How did you know it was "jumped" instead of "jumping"?

M: It had an "ed" and no "ing."

T: Yes. Is there any other way you could have known it was "jumped" instead of "jumping"?

M: (Rereading to herself.) It doesn't sound right to say, "Then, five little monkeys jumping on the bed."

T: Yes. So you know it has to be "jumped" there because it looks right, and it sounds right. I like how you fixed that part all by yourself.

Example #2: Cues Neglected--Graphophonic

Wendy had just finished reading the chapter called "The Story" in the book Frog and Toad Are Friends (Lobel, 1970). She was just starting to use the first three or four letters of unfamiliar words along with the context to figure out unknown words. In the following dialogue, I chose a place in the text where I could praise her for having used this strategy and a place where I could prompt her to use it :

Text: (p. 16) "Toad said, 'Frog, you are looking quite green.'"

(p. 25) "'Then you get out of bed and let me get into it,' said Toad, 'because now I feel terrible.'"

T: Wow! Toad really tried hard to think of a story for Frog.

W: Yeah, and he ended up feeling sick 'cause he banged his head against the wall and did all that other stuff.

T: That's right! ...Wendy you did some good thinking while you read this book. I like what you did on this page. (Teacher goes back to p. 16.) When you were reading this part, you figured out the tricky word all by yourself. You said,

"Frog, you are looking qu- qui- quite green. I like how you did that. It helps to look at the first three letters sometimes, doesn't it?"

W: (Nods, yes.)

T: Now, let's take a look at another part. Over here on p. 25 you said, "'Then you get out of bed and let me get in it,' said Toad, because now I feel bad.'" Try that again.

W: (Rereading.) ... "because now I feel t- ..." (Wendy stopped reading.)

T: (Showing only the first three letters with my thumb over the rest of the word.)

Try that again and say the first three.

W: ... "because now I feel ter-rible."

T: Does that word look like "terrible"?

W: Yes.

T: And does it make sense?

W: Yeah.

T: It helps sometimes to look at the first part of the word and think what makes sense. That's what good readers do.

Example #3: Cues Neglected--Meaning

Vicky had just finished the book Our Dog Sam (Bacon, 1988). On a few words, she had substituted using words that looked right, but which did not make sense. At the end of the text, the following was said:

Text: (p. 3) "Our dog Sam likes to help in the garden."

(p. 7) "Our dog Sam likes to meet the mailman."

T: Would you like to have Sam for your dog?

V: No. He kept messing things up for his owners.

T: He sure did! Vicky, let's go back and look at some of the things he did.

(Looking at the picture.) On this page, he was taking his owner for a run, wasn't he?

V: (Laughing.) Yeah. His owner can't keep up with him.

T: Look at this page. (p. 3) Here you said, "Our dog Sam likes to help in the ger- dan." Does that make sense?

V: No.

T: Try that again and think what would make sense.

V: "Our dog Sam likes to help in the" (Vicky stopped.)

T: Check the picture and try that again.

V: "Our dog Sam likes to help in the garden."

T: Does that make sense?

V: Yeah.

T: I like how you used the picture and reread to figure out that word. Try doing that on this page. (Previously, Vicky had read, "Our dog Sam likes to meet the ma-mal" [mailman] on p. 7.)

V: (Looking at the picture.) "Our dog Sam likes to meet the mailman."

T: That's what good readers do. They check the picture and think about what makes sense. Good job, Vicky.

Example #4: Cues Neglected--Meaning and Structure

In the next example, Nick had just finished reading The Greedy Gray Octopus (Buckley, 1994). Like Vicky, he tended to read unfamiliar words by saying something that was visually similar to the text but which did not make sense or sound right.

Text: (p. 12) "Along came a shrimp, a tiny pink shrimp."

(p. 8) "Along came a crayfish, a bright red crayfish."

T: Oh! I'm glad I'm not that octopus, aren't you?

N: Yeah. He got ate.

T: You did some good reading in this book, Nick. I liked how on this page you went back and fixed it when it didn't make sense. Do you remember where the tricky part was?

N: "Tiny."

T: Yes. At first you said, "Along came a shrimp, a ten pink shrimp." Then you went back and changed it. You were thinking about what looked right and made sense. Now, let's look on page 8. You said, "Along came a crayfish, a brate red crayfish." Does that make sense?

N: No.

T: Try that again., Get your mouth ready, and think what would make sense.

N: "Along came a crayfish, a" (Nick stopped.)

T: Do you know a word that starts like this?

N: (Shakes head, no.)

T: (Writing "brown" on the dry erase board.) You know this word.

N: Brown.

T: Yes. And "brown" starts like that word. Try rereading, and getting your mouth ready, and think what makes sense.

N: "Along came a crayfish, a br--" (long pause)

T: Could it be "brat" or "bright"?

N: "Along came a crayfish, a bright red crayfish."

T: Does that make sense?

N: Yeah.

T: When you're reading and you come to a word that you don't know, try getting your mouth ready to say the word and think what would make sense.

Example #5: Prompting for Fluency

On previous texts, I had prompted Vicky to read in a more phrased and fluent manner. She had just finished reading Timmy (Lawrence, 1989). Although Vicky had read the book quite easily, she still had kept a word-by-word pace on parts of the text where it was felt she should have been more phrased. The line, "...but Timmy wasn't there." appeared repeatedly in the story. I wanted to encourage Vicky to read it more fluently:

Text: (p. 4) "I looked in the toy box, but Timmy wasn't there."

T: You did a nice job of thinking what made sense in this story. On this page (p. 4), you said, "I looked in the toy box, but Timmy wasn't there." How did you know it said "toy box"?

V: I looked at the picture.

T: Good. That's a good strategy to use. Something else that will help you when you read is to say it like talking. (Teacher writes the repetitive phrase on a sentence strip.) Read this part again, and put it all together so that it sounds like talking.

(Vicky read it in a choppy manner, so I modeled how to read it. Then, I asked her to read the phrase until she was fluent.)

T: Great! That sounds like talking. Now, let's go back through the book again, and each time you come to this part, read it like you just did.

(Vicky read through the book again and was able to read the phrase "but Timmy wasn't there" in a fluent manner. She was also more fluent on other parts of the text.)

RESULTS

Students who participated in the Links program made excellent progress. After 6 months of participation in the program, all except one of the third grade students in Links improved by at least one grade level on an informal reading inventory. All of the children moved 1-2 grade levels in the trade books that had been leveled. In their daily reading of texts of the proper difficulty, all of the students became more independent in applying effective word identification strategies. Whereas at first most of the students

had stopped or appealed for help when encountering an unknown word in contextual reading, all of the students demonstrated independence in applying both graphophonic and meaning-related strategies. After six months of the program, none of the students invented texts. Each of the students demonstrated an ability to read and monitor for meaning, self-correcting without teacher prompts when their miscues did not make sense. After the first couple of months of the program, children could be heard frequently giving teacher-like prompts to one another during partner reading. Anecdotal records and classroom observations reflect a change in the attitudes of all of the children who participated in the Links program. Children complained when they missed a book sharing session due to schedule changes; they often checked out their books to read at home. Comments such as "Listen to this!" and "Let's both work on our sharing projects." became common.

CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

Most teachers want their students to be able to read independently, to choose reading material that meet their interests and abilities, to monitor their reading, and to know how to respond to their reading in appropriate ways. However, most teachers would probably respond that incorporating Links in its pure form into their classrooms would not be possible because of the number of students they teach and the other subject areas that need to be taught. I would like to suggest three alternatives.

One alternative is to hold Links during their present independent reading time. Some classrooms call this time "DEAR" time (Drop Everything And Read); others call it

"SSR" time (Sustained Silent Reading). As the students are reading, the teacher could conference with individual students. The other students could be reading self-selected materials, sharing them with a partner or a group of students, or completing a book project.

The second alternative would involve the teacher conferencing with a group of students, in a format much like guided reading (Mooney, 1990; Routman, 1991). The teacher could introduce a text that was at the instructional level of a group with four to five students. After introducing the book, the teacher would then listen to the students as they simultaneously read the book. As the students read, the teacher could guide student's individual reading as needed. For more proficient readers, the teacher could meet with a small group and focus on silent guided reading of a text. The teacher could introduce the book and have the students predict what they think is happening on different pages of the text. Then the teacher could ask the students to read silently to confirm their predictions and could guide the students to form new observations about the story line and characters. The other students could be individually reading books, reading with a partner, or responding to literature.

A third alternative would be for teachers to learn to use the prompts to help individual students whenever they indicate a need for help in reading. The prompts could be used during the reading of any subject area material.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have described Links, a program that combines elements of the Reader's Workshop and elements of Reading Recovery. Because it allows all readers to self-select texts that are at the proper difficulty level, it can accommodate all readers in a literacy classroom, including older emergent readers. Because of the many opportunities for collaboration and response, Links provides for that feeling of community that is essential for children to find meaning in their literacy activities. In the student-teacher conferences, teachers have opportunities to help students who are not putting the reading process all together. Through interactions around children's miscues, teachers have an important opportunity to provide finely-tuned feedback that can enable a student to acquire the strategies used by good readers. It is important for teachers to carefully observe and listen to children's reading and to study which cueing sources (meaning, structural, graphophonic) they are using effectively and to determine which cueing sources they are neglecting. Carefully prompting students at the critical points in their reading (where they indicate they need help, at the end of a page, while the page is being turned, and after the entire text has been read) helps them know what they have done well and what alternative strategies they might try. A teacher's knowledge of prompts and how and when to use them can be critical to a child's progress in reading.

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APPENDIX

A Book Introduction

The following is a book introduction that was given for David for the book, Dan the Flying Man (Cowley, 1990a).

T: What do you think this book might be about?

D: A guy who flies.

T: That's right. The title is Dan the Flying Man. What do you think he will fly over?

D: (Looking at the cover.) People, a house, and some cars.

T: (pp. 2-3) Let's look at the pictures to see what the story is about. What do you think he's telling them here?

D: That he can fly.

T: Yes. He says that he is Dan the flying man. Then over here he is teasing them. He's saying, "Catch me, catch me if you can." (pp 4-5) Look! Where is Dan flying?

D: Over a house.

T: Oh! Now look where he is flying.

D: (Says nothing.)

T: Have you ever seen a machine like this one that lifts heavy objects?

D: No.

T: This is called a "crane." (pp. 6-7) Now where is he flying?

D: Over a bridge.

T: And...

D: Over a train.

T: Yes. Let's just look at the next few pages and see what he flies over. (They look at pages 8-11).

(pp. 12-13) Who is that again?

D: Dan the flying man.

T: Look at all these people. (p. 13) What do you think they are doing?

D: They're trying to catch him. (pp. 14-15) They ran after him.

T: Do you think they will catch Dan the flying man?

D: Yes, 'cause he's close to the ground.

T: Let's see... (p. 16). What happened?

D: They caught Dan.

T: Yes. They caught Dan the flying man. You were right! Let's go back to the beginning.