

Going Deeper with Student-Led Conferences

Volume 6, Issue 1

Fall, 2008

During the 2008-2009 school year, the literacy focus will continue to be student-led conferences. The picture below represents the relationship among past literacy initiatives: Rings—from *knowing to doing* and Scaffolding, our last year's six header support for differentiation, and the goal of student-led conferences—this year's continuing focus.

A two-pronged theme: *Teacher talk—Student talk* provides an opportunity to delve deeper with last year's emphasis on student conferencing.

The *teeter-totter graphic* represents two messages. First, it communicates the desired imbalance of teacher talk and student talk within a conference. The student is on the higher end because that is the person who is

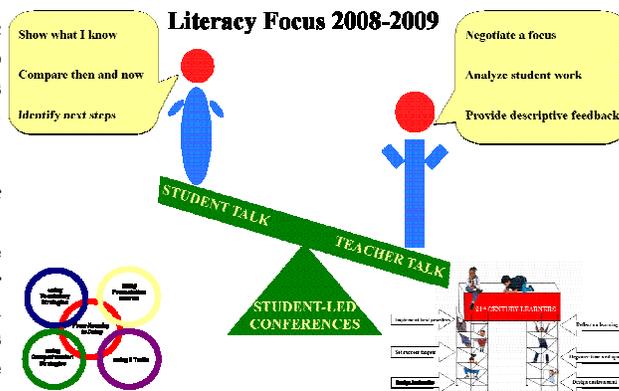
doing the majority of the talking during a student-led conference.

The *scaffold graphic* was placed underneath the teacher to represent features of classroom design that support the implementation of student-led conferences.

The *rings graphic* shown under the student repre-

sents the goal of student's independent use of research-based literacy protocols which help prepare the student to lead a conference about his own growth.

Last, the *talking bubbles* contain three steps for each participant to include in each and every conference.



Special points of interest:

- *District Literacy Focus*
- *Kelly Stukus returns to CHUH*
- *Lexiles impact learning*
- *Learning through e-mail*

Inside this issue:

<i>Using Strategies to Differentiate Instruction</i>	2
<i>Read 180—Research in Action</i>	2
<i>Using Lexiles to Build Understanding</i>	3
<i>Merging Technology and Lexiles</i>	3
<i>Breaking Indicators into Class-sized Goals</i>	3
<i>Title I Fall Parent Meeting</i>	4
<i>QAR: A Great Answer to Questions</i>	4

Kelly Stukus Re-joins the CHUH Team

As the newly hired Coordinator of Literacy, Kelly Stukus is excited to once again serve children and impact the learning of students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Her work will primarily focus on Title I and the after school tutoring needs of our elementary students

at Fairfax School.

The status of School Improvement affords the families of Fairfax Elementary School additional after school and weekend tutoring services. The supplemental education services provided are aligned with

state content standards, offered to students with economic need, and funded by Title I monies.

Ms. Stukus stated, “My goals include maintaining strong communication with parents and focusing on accountability for student learning.”

Using Strategies to Differentiate Instruction

There are many ways we can differentiate instruction to meet the varied needs of students in our classrooms. Examples of differentiation include matching students' reading levels with texts, matching content and students' interest, and providing opportunities for students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways.

Differentiating the use of strategies can be another option for providing access to the content for every student thus

supporting students at various skill levels. For example, if compare/contrast will deepen the level of understanding of the content, there are several strategies that can assist the student in learning at a level that is appropriate. A two-column *T-Chart* can be appropriate for some students in achieving the goal. For more challenge, other students will find a triple *Venn Diagram* useful. Students in the same classroom who are ready to manage more complex comparisons of the material, can make

use of a *Semantic Feature Analysis*, a tool that organizes a great deal of information for purposes of comparisons and contrasts. These three strategies can be used simultaneously in the same classroom with each student using the particular strategy that matches his/her level of learning. Follow-up discussions provide the opportunity for all students to examine the work from each of the three perspectives and further deepen their understanding of the content.

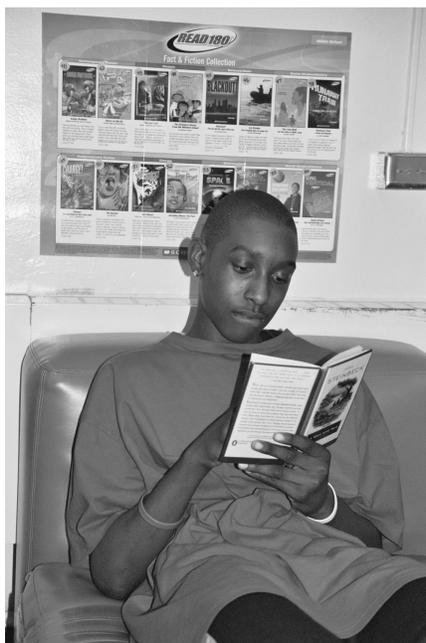
Traditional Semantic Feature Analysis

		Criteria		
Types of Animals	Dog			
	Cat			
	Snake			
	Bird			

Notice that the graphic on the left does not have criteria listed. When students develop their own criteria, they are asked to use different thinking skills compared to having the criteria predetermined.

	Plant Cells	Animal Cells	Plant and Animal Cells
Cell mem-			
Cell wall			
chloroplast			
cytoplasm			
Golgi			
lysosome			
nucleus			
ribosome			
Vacuole			

Read 180—Research in Action



How much growth is possible when a student receives targeted small group instruction designed to address his or her specific learning needs?

Read 180 teachers are planning a case study to discover the answer. Each Read 180 teacher who has three or more years of experience with the program will select one student to be the focus of an action research case study.

Students will be identified based on their Lexile score, level of engagement with Read 180 program components, and observed literacy behaviors. Once an area of concern has been identified, teachers will design instruction to specifically address the student's needs. The instruction will occur during targeted, small group time. Increasing reading fluency, identifying cause and effect relationships, and improving spelling or word recognition skills are possible areas

of focus. Teachers are hoping that with strategic emphasis the recognized student, as well as the other members of the group, will show tremendous gains. Changes in class work, scores within the computerized portion of the program, and Lexile levels should be evident and demonstrate a positive trend.

Read 180 reports from the Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM), student conferences, and videotaped interactions during the small group instruction rotation will be used to monitor student progress and growth.

The case study project began in October and will continue throughout the school year. Teachers will have an opportunity to share successes and gather feedback and suggestions from colleagues during the remaining three Read 180 training sessions in November, January, and May.

Using Lexiles to Build Understanding

A Lexile (L) identifies what level of text a student can understand independently and helps determine how much support a student may need to access content in content area textbooks. Based on the Lexile number, teachers and students can predict the level of text that can be read with 75% comprehension.

After we know the student's reading level, what do we do? This question has many answers.

If the text falls within the range of 100L below to 50L above the student's

Lexile, the student can read this material independently. In this case, meaningful activities that extend a student's experience with the text would be used.

If the text is above the Lexile, teachers can support the students many ways.

Possible adjustments could include:

- Building background knowledge for the content before reading.
- Providing visual support before,

during, and after reading.

- Finding text similarly themed at a lower Lexile.
- Using additional supports such as audio support. (A student can comprehend text that is read aloud up to three grade levels beyond his current level.)
- Understanding can be supported through the use of comprehension and vocabulary protocols.
- Explicit instruction related to text features can support understanding of complex text.

Merging Technology and Lexiles



After school tutoring programs within the district and some middle school and high school reading classes are incorporating Achieve 3000© into their curriculum. Achieve 3000© is a web-based system that supports students' growth in reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, critical thinking, and the use of technology. Up-to-date newspaper articles contain content from all curricular areas and keep the

students connected to current events from around the country and around the world.

Each student receives a daily article, which matches the student's Lexile, via e-mail. By responding to the e-mail, students build background knowledge and prepare for the reading. The student then reads the article and completes activities based on the content. Immediate feedback informs students of their progress.

Teachers are able to obtain detailed reports to address individual needs.

Vaugh Young, a seventh grader at Monticello Middle School had this to say about TeenBiz, "I like the read and response questions because they help me with my vocabulary." Luis Regalado, another seventh grader said, "I like the articles because they tell us about people and what they do."

In addition, each student has the ability to track work-in-progress and manage their own success with an individual portfolio and reports.



Breaking Indicators into Class-Sized Goals

At multiple schools, the instructional coach for literacy is working with teams of teachers to "deconstruct" their grade level state indicators. Some literacy PLCs have adopted a protocol that enables them to look very closely at the state indicators to decide exactly how to uncover the true intentions of each indicator.

Using a planning tool (see insert), the teams are examining the indicators to turn them into learning intentions, or lesson-sized goals, that are designed to help all students master the skills needed to be successful. This process enables teachers to reach consensus as to which learning intentions lead to understanding of the indicator itself. Since research says that student

achievement increases if students understand what their learning looks like, it is important to convey these learning intentions to the students. So, the next step is for the teams to turn their learning intentions into language that is easy for students to understand. Using the stem, "I can....This means...." the students should be able to gauge their own learning in this process.

Another step in this process will be to look at the ELA series that we are using (*Treasures*) to align the indicators/learning intentions to the skills

taught in the textbook series. This important piece ensures that teachers are emphasizing the teacher-created state indicators that we are all required to teach.

Indicator Template
Grade level 3
Subject reading
Indicator make inferences regarding events and possible outcomes from information in the text

Learning Intention for Teacher (lesson-sized) Break down the indicator to all the parts you need to teach These are the lessons needed to get there!	Learning Intentions In Kid-Friendly Language (I can....This means)
1. What's an inference?	1. "I can infer. This means that I can make guesses about things that happen in the story using clues from the story."
2. Kids will guess the ending to a story that is read aloud. Kids will use the clues to justify their answers.	2. "I can infer the ending of a story. This means that I can use clues in the story to guess the ending. I can tell my teacher what my clues were."
3. Kids will be able to determine the importance of the clues that can be used to infer	3. "I can look at clues in a story and decide which ones help me the most when I am inferring."
4.	4.

Title I Fall



The Title I Annual Fall Dinner will be held on Monday, November 10 at Wiley Middle School Cafeteria from 6:30 – 8:30 P.M. All students and their families enrolled in Title I reading or math classes at every one of the elementary schools have been invited to attend. Kelly Stukus, Title I Coordinator, will welcome our families and explain the purpose of our fall event. After enjoying a delicious spaghetti dinner, everyone will watch a performance by Jonathan Graham from Young Audiences “Books Alive” who engages his audiences in learning by dramatizing such classic, favorite books as *Amazing Grace*, *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Love You Forever*. Each school group will then gather with their Title I teacher to engage in a Reader’s Theater script and learn how to help their children with reading comprehension at home. Math families will participate in a demonstration session using Flash Masters, a fun way to help students learn their math facts at school and at home. They will receive “Math Around the World,” a resource booklet that contains suggestions for helping their students at home with practical, hands-on math activities. Each child will receive a new book to add to their personal library. We look forward to a fun-filled evening with an abundance of information for our students and their families.

At Oxford and Fairfax Schools we are increasing students’ abilities to identify different types of questions and know how to use this information when responding. I have introduced to some of the classrooms a strategy called *Question – Answer Relationship* (QAR). The intent of the technique is to enhance students’ thinking when creating and answering comprehension questions. It teaches students a three-way relationship among the question, text, and reader’s knowledge. Using four specific types of questions, students find the information that they need to answer questions.

QAR: A Great Answer to Questions

By Beth Gobieski

On the first day, it is important to introduce the concept of QAR by explaining to students the four basic question-answer relationships:

1. RIGHT THERE (RT) - can be found in the text
2. THINK AND SEARCH (TS) - can be found in different parts of the text
3. ON YOUR OWN (O) - based on students’ own experiences
4. AUTHOR AND YOU (A) - based on students’ own knowledge as well as information from the text

Model this strategy using a short text with examples of questions that represent QAR categories. Students write RT, TS, O, and A as abbreviations next to each question. After practicing with several texts, students should begin to build confidence when taking an assessment because they will be able to recognize the information source from which to retrieve answers.

Variations can be made using the QAR strategy, such as having students write their own questions using each category. This also has the potential to generate a student-led classroom discussion about the text.

Right There

What did...
Who is...
When did...
How many...
What kind...
Define...
Where was...



Think and Search

How do you...
What...
What examples...
How did...
Compare two...
For what reasons...
What happened...



QAR Starters

On Your Own

Have you ever...
In your opinion...
If you could...
How do you feel about...
What if...
Do you know anyone who...
How might...



Author and You

I agree with the author because...
How did the author cause you to think when...
I learned... from the author.
What might be the author’s reason for...
How did the author’s writing style...
If the author...
The author changed my thinking about...

