

# Teaching for Strategies

*Teaching . . . can be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully*

*before you reply.* MARIE CLAY

All learners have in-the-head processes they use to integrate new information with what they already know. Readers have the particular challenge of applying their cognitive processes to text. Clay (1991a) describes strategies as operations that allow the learner to use, apply, transform, relate, interpret, reproduce, and re-form information for communication. Through this "network of unobservable in-the-head strategies the reader is able to attend to information from different sources" (p. 328). The network is flexible, allowing the reader to change direction as needed. Inner control, Clay says, is built as the young reader becomes increasingly able to deal with information in the brain.

As teachers it is difficult for us to think about these complex in-the-head strategies. We cannot observe them but must hypothesize that they are being used. We can observe behavior, though, and as Kenneth Goodman (1982) has said, children's reading behavior gives us a "window on the reading process."

We are tentative in the way we talk and think about children's in-the-head strategies because we are never certain what is going on there. We must rely on behavioral evidence, and that evidence must be collected

over time. The teacher who is systematically taking running records of children's reading, ideally about one every two to four weeks, is building a pattern of evidence from which he can make fairly reliable hypotheses. He might want more frequent records (about every one or two weeks) on children who are making slower progress and need fewer records on children making very fast progress.

Just as strategies cannot be directly observed, neither can they be directly taught. We teach *for* strategies. Experience is a powerful influence on the construction of reading strategies. Anyone who has taught someone to swim knows that merely explaining the process does not work. Even modeling and showing is insufficient. The future swimmer must get in the water. When we talk about teaching for strategies in this book, we are not talking about a specific teaching approach to each new strategy but about a repertoire of interpretations and responses you can apply at any time to help the child learn from reading text. Your moves must be focused and supportive, designed to bring forward examples that will help children learn "how to learn" in reading.

There are many different strategies for reading. Clay discusses some of them by

providing examples in three categories: (1) strategies that maintain fluency, (2) strategies that detect and correct error, and (3) strategies for problem-solving new words. Each function involves a network of cues provided by meaning, language structure or syntax, and visual information. The important thing about these cues, however, is how readers access and use them. Let's look at what good readers do in each of Clay's broad categories.

### Strategies for Maintaining Fluency

When good readers read aloud, they are fluent and use phrasing. We infer, therefore, that silent reading is also fluent and phrased, that readers rapidly access meaning and apply it to the text (Does this make sense? Does this sound right in terms of what I know about language?). A fluent reader doesn't get bogged down in the details. A fluent reader is also flexible, varying her speed with the difficulty of the text. Less fluent readers rigidly use the same "reading voice" whether there is a great deal or very little problem solving to be done. Students who read slowly with little reflection of syntactic patterns are probably not accessing all sources of information and may, in fact, be losing comprehension.

Fluency is a critical factor in reading control. A study of over one thousand fourth graders' oral reading fluency (Pinnell et al. 1995) found that rate, fluency, and accuracy were all highly related to comprehension. The story the students in the study were asked to read was very easy, so they all read with high accuracy, but rate and fluency were critical factors in comprehension.

Readers' oral language is their primary source for anticipating what may happen next in the text and checking whether their reading makes sense. Oral language is a complex, rule-governed system. Before they come to school, children have learned rules by which they can generate an infinite number of oral sentences. Entering school, their knowledge of language expands rapidly, not just in vocabulary but in the kinds of structures they can produce.

Initially, it helps young readers if the texts they read resemble their oral language. As they read more (and also hear written language read aloud) they become aware of the way written language "sounds," the syntax, the way it is organized. This knowledge is a rich source of information for them as they move through text.

The example in Figure 12-1 is from Matthew's reading of *Worms for Breakfast* (level I). (This was an easy text for Matthew;

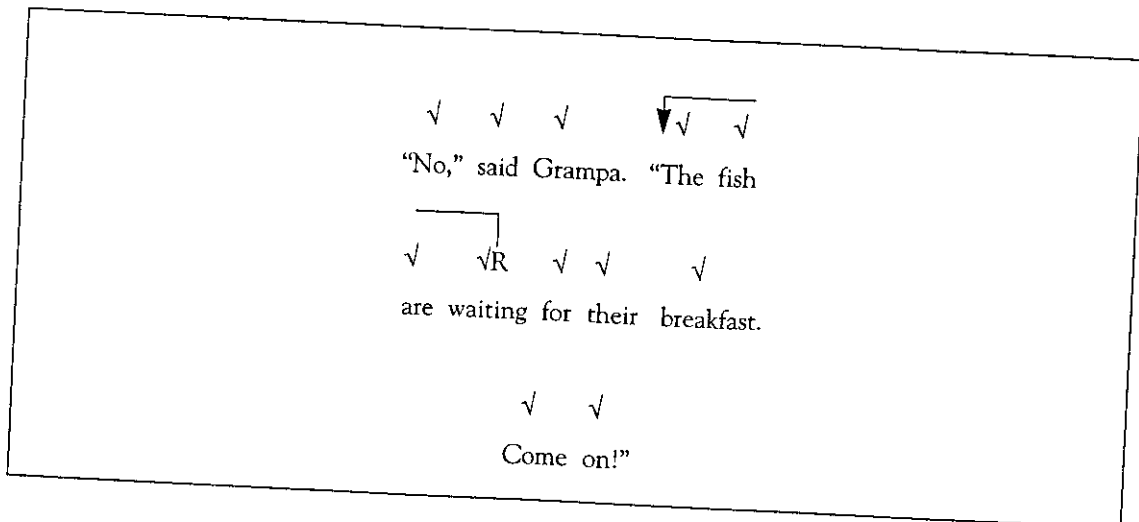


FIGURE 12-1 Matthew's reading

he finished with an accuracy rate of 96 percent.) Matthew is reading accurately in this passage, but his behavior also indicates a strong sense of language and meaning. He reads up to the word *waiting* without phrasing. He then hesitates, goes back and puts the phrase “the fish are waiting” together as a phrased unit. He then reads “for their breakfast” and “come on” as phrased units. Matthew as a reader is using his oral language as a cue to maintain fluency.

The child’s prior knowledge and understanding of the world is another basis for fluency: children anticipate what will happen in stories or the way information will be presented in expository texts. This framework makes the reading more quickly accessible.

Fluency is also supported by the reader’s ability to process visual information rapidly, including the use of punctuation. Being able to recognize words without slowing down helps maintain fluent processing. Fluent readers also recognize features of words that they know and use these features to get to words that are unknown. Fluent reading means solving problems “on the run,” something all readers must do if they are to gain understanding.

Teachers need to give special attention to phrasing and fluency and to the use of punctuation because “when the reading is phrased like spoken language and the responding is fluent (and some people say fast), then there is a fair chance that the reader can read for meaning and check what he reads against his language knowledge. And his attention can go mainly to the messages” (Clay 1993b, p. 51).

The book selection and introduction are

critical factors in helping children read fluently. The teacher makes sure that the text is well within the child’s control, that the words and language are accessible. The child’s background, his system of oral language, his store of words, and the way he solves words all work together if the texts are just difficult enough but not so difficult that the child cannot “put it together.”

As the reader moves through the text gradient, he becomes fluent at each level; the process is always whole and integrated. In the introduction, the teacher demonstrates the links between the new text and the children’s own knowledge of the world and the structure of language. She first engages the children with the text by talking about it and using some of the language. These teaching moves support the reading of text with phrasing and fluency.

### *Strategies for Detecting and Correcting Error*

Good readers read accurately but not necessarily perfectly. When they make errors, they have strategies for detecting and correcting them. This behavior indicates a combination of effective anticipation based on meaning and syntax and fast, efficient use of clusters of visual information. Young readers, at first, are coping with the print code and making connections between print and their own language systems. They may need to work on accuracy in order to match spoken and written language.

In the example in Figure 12–2, Moneisha stops when she says the word *me* while

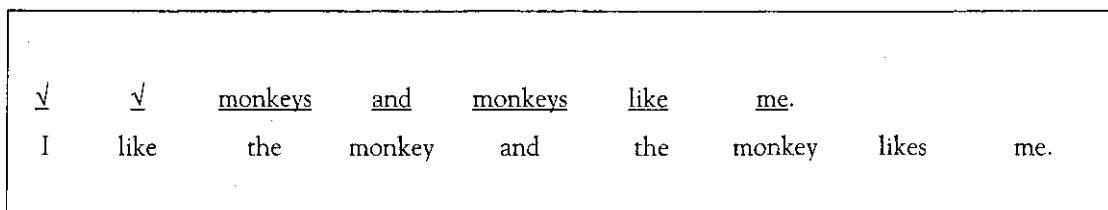


FIGURE 12–2 Moneisha’s reading

pointing under the word *monkey*, indicating that she knows something is wrong. She notices it doesn't match. She is using her own language and re-creating a text close to that in the book, but she knows that oral language must match the words printed on the page. At this point, Moneisha is not using particular aspects of words. She probably hasn't noticed the discrepancy between *me* and *monkey*, but she is beginning to monitor her reading, in this case the clusters that make up words, as she moves along the line. While she is familiar with the word *the*, it is overridden by her strong sense of language and she does not use this known word to check herself.

When a reader uses information from any source to check his own reading, he is *self-monitoring*. When the information encountered is not consistent with his understanding of what the text means, his sense of language structure, or the visual features of words, he wants to eliminate the dissonance. As adults, we also check on ourselves when we read, although we notice it only when there is dissonance. For example, if you are reading a long, complex novel with many generations of characters, you may suddenly find you do not remember how two people

are related. If the relationship is vital to understanding the plot, you might search back through the text (or refer to one of those handy "family trees") to resolve the dissonance.

Young children like Moneisha who notice a mismatch of whatever kind take steps to get rid of the dissonance. They may return to the beginning of the line, stop and make several attempts at an unknown word, or indicate by other behavior that they are bothered by the dissonance and want to solve the problem. This behavior is more productive than simply going on without trying to make a fit between meaning and visual cues. Although the behavior may not always result in self-correction, nevertheless it indicates a beginning inner control of strategic processes.

In the example in Figure 12-3, Karl reads accurately up to the word *wanted*, when he substitutes *wanted*. This substitution provides evidence that Karl is using language, meaning, and visual information. The sentence made sense and sounded right up to that point and *wanted* is very similar visually to *wanted*—the two words begin and end alike and both have a *t* in the middle. In fact, they differ by only one letter. When

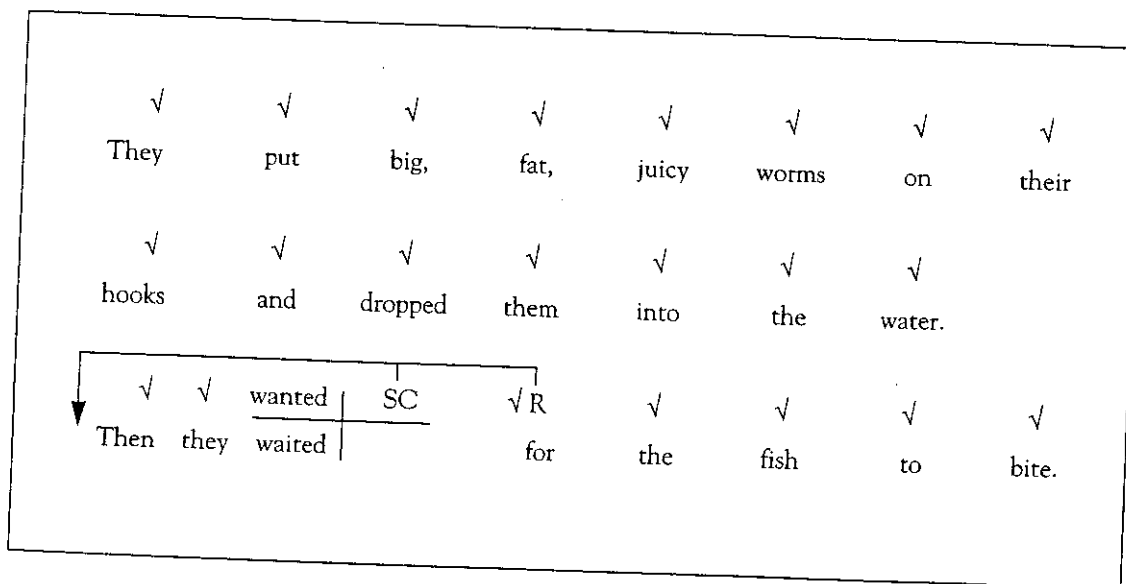


FIGURE 12-3 Karl's reading

Karl reads the word *for*, he probably notices a dissonance, a mismatch among his sources of information. His behavior indicates his awareness of the mismatch, and provides evidence that he is monitoring. His substitution no longer makes sense, and it is syntactically not a likely sentence in English. He goes back to the beginning of the line and this time corrects the word to *waited*.

The important observation about Karl's self-correction is not accuracy per se. It is his process of control. First he had to notice the dissonance and then search for sources of information that he may have previously neglected. The process of checking, searching, and self-correcting builds the reader's network of strategies. Early readers begin bringing together sources of information by checking one kind of information against another, a process Clay calls *cross-checking*. As readers practice cross-checking, they begin to use multiple sources of information.

In Figure 12-4 Karl shows by his behavior that he is actively processing. He reads

accurately but notices when he makes a substitution. The two substitutions are meaningful and fit with his knowledge of syntactic patterns (the structure of English language) but do not "look right." His knowledge of visual features of words prompts a further search of the visual information and self-correction. We can infer that Karl is also checking back with his own knowledge of language to be sure that his self-correction "sounds right" and "makes sense." Karl's teacher is pleased with Karl's initial, partially correct attempts—*cried for called* and *whispers for whispered*—because of the competence they reveal. Not only do they make sense and sound right, they are visually consistent with the beginning and ending of one word and with the first letter of the other.

Why did Karl search further? We might hypothesize that Karl is actively noticing and working on words and searching to make all systems, including visual information, fit together. Also, Karl self-corrects at the point of error rather than going all the way back to the beginning of the line, indicating that he probably is able to keep the

√	√	√	√	<u>cried</u>   SC	√	
"Here,	fish!	Here,	fish!"	called	John.	
√	√	√	√	√	√	√
"Come	and	get	your	worms	for	breakfast!"
√	√	√				
"Shh,"	said	Grampa.				
√	<u>whispers</u>   SC	√				
"Okay,"	whispered	John.				

FIGURE 12-4 Karl's further reading

meaning and structure in his head while attending to the particular word.

The important insight here is that Karl is doing effective processing. What we notice is not so much that Karl reads correctly but that he works on the printed message using all sources of information at his disposal.

This checking, searching, and confirming process is in itself rewarding to young readers because it works—they are able to read text successfully. Much of the behavior indicating monitoring, checking, and self-correction is overt as young readers sort out the complexities of written language while reading out loud. For self-extending readers, self-correction becomes more covert and is used efficiently when needed. Helping young readers develop this self-extending system is the goal of reading instruction.

### **Strategies for Problem Solving New Words**

The redundancy in extended texts (that is, the notion that information is communicated in multiple ways) allows the reader to solve new words. Perhaps not all the information is needed, but the reader uses it selectively to check and confirm.

For example, a text might say, "Two kittens ran away fast." Plurality is signaled by two words, *two* and *kittens* (the *s* ending). The meaning of the word *fast* is supported by the meaning of the action, *ran*. The reader doesn't really need all these cues to know that there were more than one kitten and that they ran fast; she usually samples some of the information available, just enough to be sure that there is no inconsistency. The word *two* signals that *kitten* should end in *s*, and the reader automatically predicts this ending rather than having to decode the word *kittens* precisely. By using language, the reader has reduced the number of likely alternatives, made her reading more efficient, and made word solving "on the run" easier. (Readers who are just putting the process together might overtly notice the *s* as a con-

firmed strategy.) For competent readers, the process is so fast and efficient that the *s* needs minimum attention.

Texts for young readers usually have pictures that provide an additional resource for checking and confirming. In text selection, one of the factors teachers consider is the degree to which illustrations help the reader. Good readers read for meaning with "divided attention," focusing on the meaning but simultaneously paying attention to visual information.

As teachers of reading we promote children's ability to solve words while reading extended text. The text itself becomes a support for taking words apart to solve them.

In the example in Figure 12-5, Susan predicts the verb *get* instead of *try*, a syntactically consistent substitution that makes sense unless one knows that the story is telling about steering the giraffe to the right, to the left, and forward. The text warning not to "back up" can be predicted from the sequence of events and from noticing the picture, which shows the rider already on the giraffe (not "getting back up") and a rhinoceros standing right behind the giraffe. Susan is not pointing to words, so we do not know exactly when she notices the *b* in *back*, but we hypothesize that she does notice it and that the letter, perhaps in conjunction with the other information from the story, prompts self-correction. Susan is using redundant sources of information in her word solving.

In the next error, Susan substitutes *back* for *backing*, but moving to the next words, *up* and *could*, creates a dissonance. In the previous text, "Do not try to back up," *back up* was signaled as being a verb phrase. Turning this verb phrase into a noun (gerund) signals that *ing* will be present. In Susan's implicit understanding of language syntax, "back up could" doesn't fit as well as "backing up," so she returns to the word and self-corrects. There are also redundant sources of information here. Susan may be using knowledge of language syntax to monitor and prompt searching, but she may also be noticing the

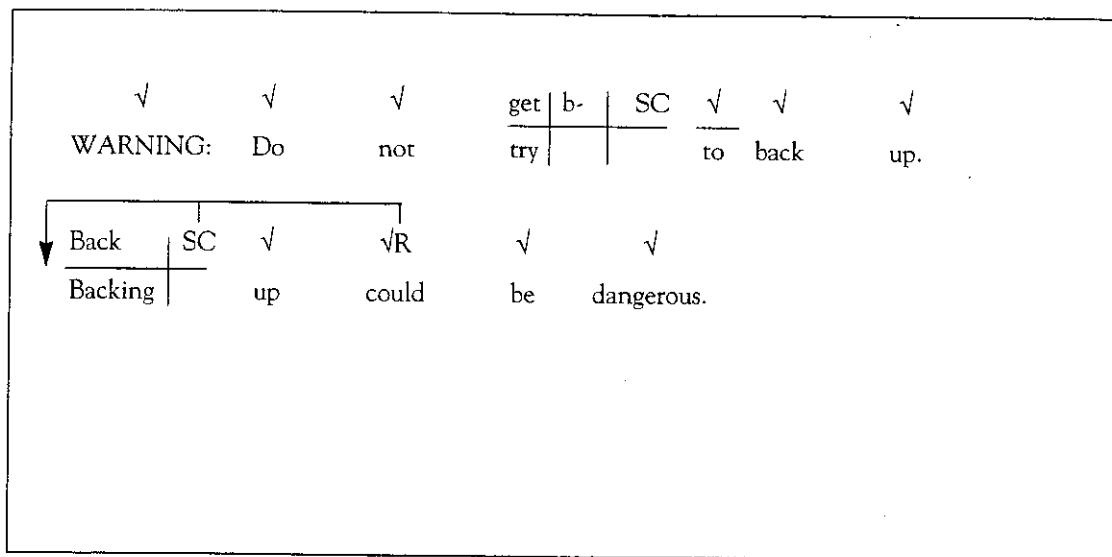


FIGURE 12-5 Susan's reading

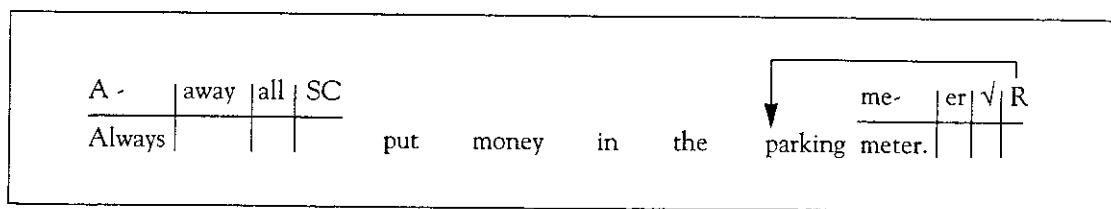


FIGURE 12-6 Susan's further reading

ing in *backing* or simply noticing that the word is longer than *back*. The process is different from solving words in isolation, because there are multiple sources of support.

Sometimes readers encounter words that are completely unfamiliar and the meaning and language in the text do not provide strong enough support for predicting the word with any accuracy. In this case the child needs his knowledge of how words work and letter-sound correspondences as cues. The clearest example of this circumstance for the young reader is a word at the beginning of a line of print—there is no syntactic information available and little meaning except for previous text and the picture. We would not encourage beginning readers to “read on” because it is a behavior that can interfere with meaning and detracts from the efficient use of all sources of information.

In Figure 12-6, Susan uses word-solving skills on the first word of the sentence, *always*. Her processing is overt; she appears to notice the first letter, uses a word she knows to be similar (*away*), then notices the initial word part (*al*) before she puts it all together to achieve a response that fits precisely with her knowledge of the way the word looks.

Readers also need word-solving skills when they encounter unfamiliar words later in the sentence, as Susan does here on the word *meter*. We can hypothesize from her overt processing that she has noticed the first part of the word as being consistent with a part she knows, *me*, but she is not satisfied with that attempt. She then notices the *er* ending, with which she is also familiar. Finally, though, when she puts it together as the word *meter*, which is the precise word on

the page, she repeats *parking meter* as if to confirm her work.

Clay (1991a) has noted many ways children solve unfamiliar words while reading text. Some are useful to think about here:

- *Using the meaning of the story, sentence, and/or language* to anticipate the word and confirming it with the visual information (does it make sense and look right, for example).
- *Repeating the line up to the problem word and making the sound of the first letter* is a productive strategy for beginners because it allows them to use the preceding meaning and structure while getting a cue from the first letter. This is a very early strategy, and children need to move well beyond this.
- *Sounding parts of words and then linking them to known words*, eliminating unlikely alternatives on the basis of meaning and structure, helps children narrow the possibilities until they can come up with the precise word.
- *Noticing part of a word that is like another word* (the *to* in *together*, for example) speeds up solving the new word and is much more effective than letter-by-letter analysis.
- *Solving words by cumulative letter-by-letter analysis* allows children to sample some of the information and quickly link it to prior knowledge (for example, the word *idea* in a previous example).

### **Reading as Comprehending**

Reading is the construction of meaning. Comprehending is not a product of reading; it is the process. The child is continuously making sense of the world; when reading, he is making sense of text. It is obvious from the previous examples that meaning is a strong support in maintaining fluency, detecting and correcting error, and solving words while reading text. Comprehension has a central role in constructing the network of strategies that are the foundation for the

self-extending system (see Askew 1991). Researchers (see, for example, Clay 1991a; Goodman 1996; Holdaway 1979; Tierney 1990) have found that:

- Readers have high expectations of text—that is, they expect it to have meaning for them.
- Readers want—in fact, are driven—to make sense of the process.
- Readers' understanding is influenced by their prior knowledge.
- Comprehension begins before reading as readers make predictions and anticipate the text, and continues after reading as they use their experience and extend it.

When you use running records, you are looking for behavioral evidence of comprehension. The accuracy rate is one indication: it may be that a high rate of accuracy (generally above 90 percent) is necessary. When the text is too hard, comprehension is simply impossible. The process breaks down for any reader, no matter how competent.

The use of cues is a second indication. When Karl read "then they wanted for" instead of "then they waited for" and then corrected himself, he was using meaning, syntax, and visual information to rethink a response that did not make sense or sound right to him.

Third is behavior that indicates an active search for meaning: repeating as if to confirm an attempt, repeating to search further, making different attempts at a word until one seems to fit either the story meaning, the structure, or the picture.

A fourth indication is fluency and phrasing. Good readers can dip down to the word level when they need to, but they tend to operate at the sentence and phrase level. A broad and reliable rubric for assessing fluency is included in Chapter 6.

A final indication is conversation with children following the reading, in which they reveal their expectations of text and their responses to it. If you need more evi-

dence, it is always possible to ask the child some questions about the text or even have him retell it. It may be, though, that Bill's comment, "I guess that troll learned not to pick on somebody his own size," is evidence enough that he understood *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

### **Teaching to Support Readers' Developing Strategies**

Good readers self-monitor, search for cues, discover new things about text, check one source of information against another, confirm their reading, self-correct when necessary, and solve new words using multiple sources of information. A self-extending system is a system of strategies that work together so that by reading, readers continue to learn more about the process of reading. Once children are able to use several sources of information fluently and effectively while reading, they apply their knowledge and skill to less familiar language, to novel and more difficult texts, and to longer and more complex pieces of written language. A reader must develop a self-extending system for himself and to do so requires appropriate texts that are rich in information.

When we prescribe reading instruction, as we must, we need to include a certain amount of control and support for beginning readers, but not of the type that requires teaching one

item (a word or a letter, for example) at a time in a tightly controlled sequence. Such tight control reduces children's opportunities to put together the process. Information-rich texts at the right level of difficulty allow children to use what they know (words and parts of words, meaning, and language) in strategic ways as they problem-solve their way through many books. This "reading work" builds the processing system. Books that are initially difficult become easy; strategies like self-monitoring and checking, tedious at first, require less attention, freeing the reader to engage in more complex operations.

As teachers, we have a range of options after introducing the story. Once the reading begins, we look for evidence that reading strategies are being used, focusing on each reader's strengths. For an example, let's look at Susan's guided reading group reading *The Hungry Kitten*.

In the sentence documented in Figure 12-7, Erica reads accurately but inserts *milk*. She is trying to make the text fit the meaning she sees in the accompanying picture but by her hesitation shows she is aware of the mismatch between her meaning and the print. Susan intervenes briefly to help Erica focus on the punctuation as an important source of information. Erica then repeats the sentence, using Susan's intonation patterns. Brief instructional conversations like this direct a reader's attention just for a moment to

√   √   √   √      milk

Erica: "Miaow, I like this," — (*She hesitates and shakes her head*)

Susan: Milk would make sense but remember those talking marks? They mean the kitten stopped talking right there (*points to end quotation marks*). It would sound like this, "I like this."

Erica: I like this (*repeats with more appropriate intonation*).

FIGURE 12-7 Erica's reading

an example that will help her learn “how” to process not only the book at hand but all future books.

Brian’s reading is documented in Figure 12–8. It is clear he knows some words and is using meaning; however, when he approaches a word he does not know, there is no active searching. He skips *hungry* after just hearing an introduction that mentioned the title of the book and emphasized how hungry the kitten was. He has apparently missed connections that could have helped him. When he comes to *away*, he says part of the word, hesitates, and goes on. This is not nearly as powerful as actively searching to make the whole message come together.

Later in the text, Brian again says *a* for *away* but this time stops and asks the teacher for help. Susan says, “Are you thinking about the story and what the big dog told the kitten to do?” “Go away?” Brian responds tentatively. Susan confirms the response but in a way that reiterates a strategy: “Does ‘go away’ make sense and look right?” Brian then reads the sentence correctly.

The reading documented in Figure 12–9 shows Sarah engaging in self-monitoring and self-correction. She predicts *like*, then, after checking the word, corrects to *will*. Still using meaning and syntax, she predicts *take* but checks it with visual information and self-corrects to *look*. It appears that Sarah is cross-checking one or more sources of information.

During this group’s reading, Susan listens in, captures samples of reading behavior, confirms children’s problem-solving attempts and successes, interacts briefly with individuals, and takes notes. The children each concentrate on her or his own reading, moving through the text in a way that is, for the most part, independent. After the reading, Susan makes two teaching points.

First, she asks the children how they thought the kitten felt; several children talk briefly about how happy the kitten was to have found a home. Then Susan writes “Hello, little kitten,” said a boy on the board. She says, “This is a sentence from the story and there are little marks that will help us read it. These little marks [pointing to quotation marks] tell us that the boy is talking.

√	√	√	√		
“Miaow,	I	like	this,”		
√	√	—	√	√	
said	a	hungry	little	kitten.	
√	a-	√	√	√	√
“Go	away,”	said	a	big	cat.
√	a-	√	√		
“Go	away,	little	kitten.”		

FIGURE 12–8 Brian’s reading

	√	like	SC	take	SC	√	√
Sarah:	We	will		look		after	you,"
	√	√		√		√	
	said	the		boy's		mother.	
Carol: Good checking. That makes sense and looks right.							
	√	√		√		√	√
Sarah:	"We	like		kittens,"		said	the boy.

FIGURE 12-9 Sarah's reading

Down here [pointing to the comma] is a mark that means when we read, we stop and take a little breath. It's a comma. I'm going to read it." She reads the text with appropriate pausing and intonation, modeling the process. "Now you read it with me."

All the children read the sentence in unison, using pauses and phrasing. Susan then asks them to turn to page eight in their books, which has text that provides good opportunities for children to read with phrasing and expression:

"Grrr . . . grrr . . . grrr.  
Go away," said a big dog.  
"Go away, little kitten.  
Grrr . . . grrr . . . grrr."

The group reads the page together, pausing at commas and making the whole page sound like a story.

Susan has also noticed that two of the children had difficulty with the word *stay*, so she takes a minute to write the word *stop* on chart paper. She says, "You know this word." Several children say *stop*. Then Susan writes *day* on the paper, and again, children read the word easily. Susan knows that these two

words are generally known in the classroom. They have appeared in writing many times. She says, "This word starts like *stop*," and she writes *st*, "and ends like *day*," and she writes *ay*. The children come up with the word *stay* right away. Susan then has them open their books to page sixteen, where the text "I will stay here" appears, and has them locate the word *stay* in the text. Finally, she asks Sarah to read the whole page just the way the little kitten would have said it. Sarah's reading is phrased and fluent, and she uses the punctuation marks. Susan praises Sarah, asks Erica to remain (Susan will take a running record of her reading of the story), and sends the rest of the group off to reread the story to a partner before rejoining their work groups.

It is obvious that even when groups are reading the same text, teaching points will vary according to a particular group's strengths and needs. Susan chose these today; for another group on another day, her teaching points will be different. Also, in a guided reading approach, groups do not "follow each other" through books. The other groups in Susan's class might never read *The Hungry Kitten*.

### ***Using Running Records to Assess Teaching for Strategies***

Susan will take a running record on one child's reading of *The Hungry Kitten*. She has the children in the group on a rotation schedule so that she is sure to systematically assess them. Teachers usually take between three and five minutes to take a running record on a book. For shorter books the time may even be less than three minutes. When children are reading very long texts, the teacher may select a part of the text for the record to get an adequate sample of the processing behavior (from 100 to 200 words). There are many options that accommodate taking running records during class time:

- Some teachers find a time in the morning (perhaps first thing when children are doing some kind of independent work) to take two or three records.
- Others dismiss the guided reading group, keeping one child to take a record while the other children go off to read to a partner, respond or extend the story, or return to work board activities.
- Another option is to call one child from the group, take a record on the last new book introduced, and then call the rest of the group for their guided reading lesson.
- Still another option is to call the entire group, ask children to reread books from the browsing box (sometimes specifying one or two of the newest titles) while taking a running record on one child from the group.

### ***Prompts Used in Teaching for Strategies***

In the examples in this chapter, teachers use questions or prompts to help children learn how to think about different sources of information as they put together a flexible system of strategies they can apply on increasingly difficult text. The teacher listens carefully, observes the precise reading behavior, and when appropriate, makes a facilitating re-

sponse. The list in Figure 12-10 is a sampling of suggested prompts or questions for facilitating the effective use of information sources by beginning readers (Clay 1993b; Goodman 1996; Department of Education [New Zealand] 1985; Fountas and Pinnell 2009).

The goal is for children eventually to consider these questions themselves as they use all sources of information in an integrated way to read with phrasing and fluency. The teacher needs to learn to prompt with just the right amount of support. As the child gains more strategic control, the teacher's level of support will lessen. This change over time will enable the child to take over the processing for himself.

### ***Assisted Learning During and After Reading***

In guided reading, our decisions are based on group work, both for reasons of efficiency and social value. But even though we are working in a group context, we are developing the individual reader's processing systems. We focus on what individual children can do and help them use their knowledge to get to what they do not yet know. We assess individual behavior. The teacher must know how individual skills develop and the many paths to learning that individuals may travel.

Jerome Bruner (1974) has described how young children develop skilled actions: they anticipate them; attempt them; and adopt them (if they have been successful) or modify them based on corrective feedback. With practice, they establish subroutines, which free their attention, allowing them to concentrate on new aspects of the task. Throughout the process accuracy, speed, and fluency increase.

Early reading behavior may at first require a great deal of a child's attention. Learning is helped by the child's natural eagerness and by feedback from the teacher, who suggests, points out, draws attention to, and sensitizes. In the process, young readers develop the systems that help them achieve greater

## Prompts to Support the Use of Processing Strategies

### To support the control of early reading behaviors:

Read it with your finger.  
You pointed under each one.  
Did you have enough (or too many) words.  
Did it match?  
Were there enough words?  
Did you run out of words?  
Try \_\_\_\_\_. Would that make sense?  
Try \_\_\_\_\_. Would that sound right?  
Do you think it looks like \_\_\_\_\_?  
Can you find \_\_\_\_\_? (a known or new word)  
Read that again and start the word.  
Try that again and get your mouth ready to start the tricky word.

### To support the reader's use of self-monitoring or -checking behavior:

Were you right?  
Where's the tricky word? (after an error)  
What did you notice? (after hesitation or stop)  
I liked the way you stopped.  
What's wrong?  
Why did you stop?  
What letter would you expect to see at the beginning? At the end?  
Would \_\_\_\_\_ fit there?  
Would \_\_\_\_\_ make sense?  
Do you think it looks like \_\_\_\_\_?  
Could it be \_\_\_\_\_?  
It could be \_\_\_\_\_, but look at \_\_\_\_\_?  
Check it. Does it look right and sound right to you?  
Check it. Does it make sense and sound right to you?  
You almost got that. See if you can find what is wrong.  
Try that again.

### To support the reader's use of all sources of information:

Check the picture.  
Can the picture help?  
Does that make sense?  
Does that look right?  
Does that sound right?  
Does that make sense and look right?  
Does that sound right and look right?  
Does that make sense and sound right to you?  
That makes sense but does it look right?  
That looks right but does it make sense?  
That sounds right but does it look right?  
You said \_\_\_\_\_. Can we say it that way?  
You said \_\_\_\_\_. Does that make sense?  
What's wrong with this? (Repeat what the child said.)  
Try that again and think what would make sense.  
Try that again and think what would make sense and look right.  
Try that again and think what would sound right.  
Try that again and think what would sound right and look right.  
Try that again and think what would look right and make sense.  
Do you know a word like that?  
Do you see a part that can help you?  
Do you know a word that starts with those letters?  
What could you try?  
Do you know a word that ends with those letters?  
What do you know that might help?  
What can you do to help yourself?

### To support the reader's self-correction behavior:

Something wasn't quite right.  
Try that again.  
You worked that out.  
You made a mistake. Can you find it?  
You're nearly right. Try that again.  
You worked hard on that.

### To support phrased, fluent reading:

Can you read this quickly?  
Put your words together so it sounds like talking.

FIGURE 12-10 Prompts to support the use of processing strategies

efficiency. Over time, using these systems becomes automatic.

As an example, let's take a child who is just beginning to match word by word. His teacher demonstrates and reminds him to "read with his finger." Just how much demonstration, what kind, and with how much repetition depends on the child's ability to understand and control the action. But over time, the direction to "read it with your finger" is no longer needed; both teacher and child direct their attention to other aspects of the process.

Children have been developing these processes from infancy; it is how they learn to learn. The reading teacher's responsibility is to help children use their knowledge of the world, of language, and of print to read simple stories and to interact with students moment to moment.

The kind of help given is critical. *Making it easy to learn* does not mean simply *making it possible for the child to get it right*. Too often, the impetus behind a book introduction is, How can I help Debbie get this word right? or, If I can get Paul to read with 90 percent accuracy, my reading graph will go up. That kind of thinking doesn't lead to powerful teaching that enables readers to develop the operations they need to read new text for themselves. Making errors gives readers a chance to develop effective procedures for searching, checking, and self-correction.

These problem solving opportunities, surrounded by a backdrop of successful reading, are what enables young readers to build a reading process. It is the quality of assistance given by the teacher that directs the child's attention to efficient, effective ways of learning how to solve problems for themselves.

### **Suggestions for Professional Development**

1. Form a small study group consisting of a grade-level team or a number of primary teachers.

2. Have each member of the group take running records with a child of his or her choice (preferably one who is making average or above-average progress) every week for six weeks. Be sure the texts are ones the child can read with an accuracy rate of between 85 and 95 percent.

3. At the end of six weeks, bring the records to a session and work together to examine them for evidence of strategic processing:

- Was the text an appropriate level of difficulty for this child?
  - Was it too easy?
  - Was it too hard?
  - Did it provide the opportunity for problem solving?
- Did the overt problem-solving behavior provide valuable information?
- What sources of information (cues) did the child use or neglect?
- Did the child notice error and actively work to make cues match? What does he do at the point of error?
- Did the child's further attempts after error lead to a correct response? Did they provide evidence of the use of a variety of sources of information?
- How did the child's behavior change from week 1 to week 3 to week 6? What did these changes indicate about possible changes in the development of a reading process?
- Is there evidence of fluency?
- Is there evidence that the child is reading with understanding?

4. If your group finds this activity helpful in understanding how children develop reading strategies, continue taking records on these same children for another six weeks and repeat the discussion session.