Strategic Word Solving: A Critical Component of the Interactive Strategies Approach (ISA)

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Copies of the slides will be available on the Child Research and Study Center website: www.albany.edu/crsc

The need to focus on word learning...

In order to comprehend written material, the reader needs to be able to read most of the words with relative ease.

- Effortless word identification allows the reader to devote most of her attention to constructing the meaning of text.

In the ISA, instruction focused on the skills and strategies that support word learning are often introduced in the context of whole class shared reading activities.

However, small group and one-to-one instructional settings provide the greatest opportunity to provide skill and strategy instruction that is responsive to the needs of individual students.
Small Group Reading Lessons

- Components for small group lessons:
  - Read Aloud / Shared Reading / Re-reading (depending on level of development)
  - Phonological/Phonemic Analysis & Alphabetics
  - Shared/Supported Reading of New Book
  - High Frequency Words
  - Modeled Writing / Shared Writing / Supported Writing
- Word learning is supported in each of these components.

The Development of Sight Vocabulary

Words become part of a reader’s sight vocabulary in two basic ways:
- Through effective word solving of unfamiliar words encountered in text.
- Through direct teaching of specific words.

The vast majority of the words that become part of a child’s sight vocabulary are acquired through effective word solving during reading.

The most frequently occurring words (e.g., the, was, to, from) are often directly taught to beginning readers.

The Development of Sight Vocabulary

- Word Solving
- Word Identification
- Word Learning

A Proficient Reader’s Sight Vocabulary is Huge!

How many different words can the competent 7th-8th grade reader identify effortlessly (at sight)?
- Estimates vary – but range from 50,000 to 80,000 words.

Strategic Word Learning

**Instructional Goal:**
The child will develop flexibility and independence in applying a variety of strategies to identify and learn unfamiliar words encountered in text.

“Strategic Reading - My Shadow (Clip)”

- The goal of teaching children strategies for word solving is to help them develop a Self-Teaching Mechanism.

  This helps them to learn new words and more about words each time they read.

  Video (1:27) (First Grade, 1-1 Intervention, April)
Approaches to Word Identification
(as described in the ISA)

- Selective Cue Approach
- Strategic Approach
- Automatic Approach

When children are first learning to read, they often adopt a selective cue approach to word identification.

They typically attend to:
- Prominent word features
- Context
- Features that are irrelevant to word identification in “typical” reading contexts

They generally do not attend to:
- Alphabetic information

Selective cues work when the child knows only a few distinctive words.
- For example: the, is, cat, yellow

Strategic Approach to Word Identification

- The development of a strategic approach to word identification is a primary objective of the ISA.
- Strategic readers identify unfamiliar words using both:
  - Code-based strategies (alphabets / letters)
  - Meaning-based strategies (context).

Automatic Approach to Word Identification

- The individual can identify the word effortlessly and quickly (automatically) in all contexts.
- The word is part of the individual’s sight vocabulary.
- Ultimately we want students to be able to identify the vast majority of words they encounter with automaticity.

Research suggests that it is critical for children to learn to use all of the graphic (letter) information in printed words as soon as possible (see Presley, 2006 for a review.)

Context cues should be used to direct and confirm decoding attempts.
Using Strategies

- Code-based strategies are taught to:
  - Encourage students to store fairly complete word information.
- Meaning-based strategies are taught to:
  - Direct and confirm independent word identification
  - Focus attention on the meaning of text.
- Interactive strategy use is taught to:
  - Move students toward independence in word identification.

ISA Strategy List

To use code-based strategies effectively the child needs to:

- Be sensitive to the individual sounds in spoken words (Phonemic Awareness)
- Know the names of the letters of the alphabet and their most common sounds
- Understand that the letters in printed words represent the sounds in spoken words
- Understand how to use the letters in an unfamiliar word to produce at least an approximate pronunciation

Code-based Strategies

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How the Think about the Sounds strategy is used depends on the child’s decoding skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Knowledge</th>
<th>Appropriate Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child can identify some letters and letter sounds, notices similarities in beginning sounds.</td>
<td>Think about the beginning sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child can identify most letters and letter sounds, notices similarities in beginning and ending sounds.</td>
<td>Think about the beginning and the ending sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child can decode single syllable words.</td>
<td>Look all the way through the word.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Think about the Ending Sounds” - Refining strategy use

In this video, the teacher explicitly teaches the children the importance of looking all the way through to the end of a word in an effort to identify the word and/or to confirm a word’s identity.

Video (1:59) (Kindergarten, Small Group, Spring)
Word ID Strategy Snapshot

In notes kept for each lesson, teachers use the two letter codes for each strategy to track which strategies the child uses:

- Spontaneously
- Only with prompting
- Not at all

Meaning-Based Strategies

To use meaning-based strategies effectively the child needs to:
- Understand that the purpose of print is to communicate
- Actively think about the meaning of the text while reading
- Have some familiarity with the topic(s) of the text
- Have requisite language ability (vocabulary and syntactic knowledge)
- Be able to readily identify most of the words in the text

How is strategy instruction sequenced?

- Introduce one strategy at a time.
  - Before reading
- Provide review and guided practice in the use of individual strategies.
  - Before, during and after reading
- Encourage interactive, confirmatory use of the strategies.
  - Before, during and after reading

“Emergent / Developing Readers – Read ‘Look Closer’”

In viewing this video, focus on:
- The word solving strategies that the children are using/developing
- What the teacher does to support the development of:
  - Word solving/identification strategies
  - Other important knowledge sources

Video 4:12 (Kindergarten, Small Group, Spring)

Meaning-based strategies taught in ISA:

- Check the pictures
- Think of words that might make sense
- Read past the puzzling word and then come back to it
- Go back to the beginning of the sentence and start again

Components of Strategy Instruction

- Clear explanations
- Think aloud
- Guided practice
- Independent practice
Guided Practice

- Scaffolding
- Continued
  - Explanation
  - Think aloud
- Reflection
- Gradual release of responsibility

“Strategy Review – Cut-up Strategy Chart”

In this video, prior to rereading a book, the teacher engages the child in reviewing all of the strategies that have been explicitly taught.

Notice and discuss:
- How the teacher encourages the child to articulate the strategies she is learning/has learned
- The location of the different strategies in the display area

Video (2:00) (First Grade, 1-1 Intervention, Late Fall)

“Provide Resources”

Resources:
- Strategy list
- High frequency word lists
- Word family / phonogram display
- Keywords
- Bb/Dd

Resource Board Video (.56) (Note that there is no audio on this video.)

During Reading: Provide just enough support (ordered from most to least supportive)

- Tell the word
- Suggest specific strategies
- Remind the child to use the strategy list
- Ask “What strategies could you try?”
- Wait patiently – notice and explicitly compliment on strategy usage
- Wait patiently – notice success and ask the child to reflect on strategy usage
- Wait patiently – briefly compliment and move on
- Wait – allow the child to independently solve the word without comment from the teacher

“Try Another Sound for the Vowel”

This video provides examples of ‘vowel flexing.’ Two children are shown as they try alternate sounds for the vowels while puzzling through words (ate, leave).

In viewing this video, notice and discuss:
- How and why the teacher responds differently to the two children.

Video (1:36) (First Grade, 1-1 Intervention, Spring)

Attend to Success - During & After Reading

Notice and encourage the child to reflect on strategy use:
- Spontaneous self corrections
- Hesitation before correct identification
- Use of one of the resources
- Partially correct responses
"Reflecting on Strategy Use"
- After Reading

In this video, the teacher engages the child in talking about the strategies he used in solving a particular word.
Notice and discuss:
- The collaborative, positive nature of the conversation
- The focus on what the child did well

Video (0:56) (First Grade, 1-1 Intervention, March)

Promoting Independence in Word Solving

☐ For each student reading behavior, think about what the teacher might do that promotes dependence vs. independence:
  - Child looks at the teacher upon encountering an unfamiliar word.
  - Child reads many unfamiliar words with a rising (questioning) intonation.
  - Child produces words that don’t fit the context.
  - Child seldom if ever self corrects.

"Encourage Collaborative and Independent Strategy Use"

Effective word solving should be viewed as a rewarding experience. Children should be encouraged to allow their friends the time needed for word solving and to provide assistance when requested - preferably in the form of a suggested strategy.

In this video, the teacher sends a very clear message that illustrates these points.

Video (0:46) (Third grade, Independent Group Reading, Spring)

ISA teaches strategies one at a time

Encourage Teacher Reflection on Student Word Solving

- Do the students:
  - Have multiple strategies for puzzling through words?
  - Use an appropriate mix of meaning-based and code-based strategies?
  - View word solving as an engaging and do-able task?
  - Take responsibility for confirming that a word has been accurately identified?
  - Build their sight vocabularies through effective word solving?
- What approaches have you found useful for promoting effective word solving?
- Is there consistency and coherence across instructional settings with regard to the strategies that are taught and the approach to word solving instruction?
- What, if anything, do you plan to change about your word-solving instruction?
Thanks for Listening!

Read about the ISA —