
In each of the following examples, the child's knowledge about letter-sound relationships is used as a link to new learning.

Example 1: Child making links; teacher making links during text reading
C: Along comes Jake...like *James*!
T: It starts like *James*. Yes, it does.
C: /B/(The word is *Ben*.)
T: Yes, it starts like your name. His name is *Ben*.

Example 2: Teacher making links during writing of a story
C: (Child writes *k* as the first letter of *costume*.)
T: Very tricky. You know that starts like *Kevin*. That was good thinking. But this time it's going to start like *cat* and *can*.
C: (Child writes a *c*.)

Establishing expectations for actions

Peter and Sam already expect to take initiative and make links with what they already know. But many children do not share that expectation. From the beginning, then, the teacher begins to establish a pattern of expectation that children will work at a problem (that is within their reach), take some initiative without waiting for the teacher to do the work, and make some links with what is already known.

It is important that children know that there are ways of working out what the text says and that it is *their* job to find the information needed to read the text successfully. For example, one teacher holding a child accountable for using what she controls in reading challenges her to work it out on her own, saying "Some of what you said here doesn't look right. Your job is to go back and make sure it looks right and makes sense."

In the following example, a teacher holds a child accountable for using what he knows in writing the word *my* in his story.

C: I don't know how to write it.
T: You know how to start it. *You* start it.
C: (Child writes *m*.)
T: (Teacher writes *y*.) Does that look like *my*? (pointing to word)
C: Yes.
T: Good work. You need to do everything you know how to do when you write.

Ways to foster active learning

If we focus our...teaching activities around children's *learning* to read rather than around the *teaching* of reading, we will be more likely to be

concerned about the matters relevant to preventing passive failure in reading.... It will also be of great help if we do whatever we can to prevent children from developing the notion that their responding is futile and that their ability is fundamentally deficient. The first step to this is not to believe it ourselves. (Johnston & Winograd, 1985, p. 296)

Children learn from activity and by discovery. Teachers serve as guides so that children know how to engage in purposeful self-direction. The child as a learner, with appropriate guidance, learns to actively control literacy behaviors that build a self-extending system.

Readers with a self-extending system can extend their own network of strategies to meet the demands of increasingly complex texts (Schwartz, 1997). They learn more about reading every time they read and more about writing every time they write. Active literacy learners demonstrate the following behaviors that lead to that self-extending system (Clay, 1991, 1993b; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Johnston & Winograd, 1985; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1994; Pressley et al., 1992).

Active learners monitor their own reading and writing. Children become conscious of differences between what they read and one of the several messages of the text. They experience feelings of dissonance (Brown, 1980; Festinger, 1958). The child's response may not make sense and may create cognitive dissonance. The response may make sense but be incongruous with something in the print, creating perceptual dissonance. Consider Peter's substitution of *the* for *my*. While it made sense, it did not look like a known word or did not use letters appropriate for the substitution. He was likely experiencing perceptual dissonance.

Children demonstrate that they are monitoring their own reading and writing behaviors when they hesitate, appeal to the teacher, reread, make several attempts, and give general signs of dissatisfaction. We may also assume that children who are reading or writing correctly are monitoring their work. Monitoring begins early and is continually adapted as part of a developing literacy process (Clay, 1991, 1993b; McGee & Richgels, 1996; Schwartz, 1997).

Teachers must attend to three conditions that facilitate a child's awareness that something is not quite right: (a) time to discover that all is not well, (b) permission to work at the problem, and (c) encouragement to discover something for themselves (Clay, 1991). Teachers

need to guard against the many ways in which they may be inadvertently monitoring *for* children (Allington, 1977). Even a teacher's frown or movement can rob the child of an opportunity to learn to monitor for himself or herself.

Teachers foster monitoring with calls to action that require children to check on themselves or to confirm their monitoring behaviors. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) offer some suggestions for teacher prompts in their book *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching For All Children*. Examples from their book include the following prompts: "Were you right?" "Why did you stop?" "You almost got that. See if you can find what is wrong." "Try that again."

For example, a teacher confirming the monitoring behaviors of a child who is becoming frustrated with an unknown word while reading says to the child, "You found a tricky part! Show me that tricky part. Good job! It's important to be able to find the hard part because then I can help show you ways to make it easier. That's good work!" In another example, a child writes the first two words of a story without leaving a space.

- C: Oops!!
T: Is there a problem?
C: No spacing.
T: I'm glad you noticed that right away.

Active learners search for and use information in the text. Children who are not actively looking for information in the text to solve problems or correct errors are destined to become problem readers. While children may be limited in their strategies for searching for sources of information early in their literacy learning, they should be searching for ways to make the text sound right, make sense, and match current knowledge of the relationship of the letters with their sounds.

Searching for information needed to solve problems when reading is an active process. The teacher can look for evidence of this process by observing to see if the child looks, checks, rechecks, tries something, or makes links with what is known (Clay, 1991). Using running records to analyze oral reading errors reveals readers' strategies in using available information for recognizing words.

Active searching behaviors are essential for building a strong reading process. Teachers can prompt children to use sources of information in a variety of ways: "Check the picture."

"Does that make sense?" "Does that sound right?" "Does that look right?" "Do you know a word like that?" "What could you try?" "What can you do to help yourself?" (Clay, 1993b; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). When the teacher calls for the child to search for more information, she may ask the child to search

- to find the error
- to find some alternatives
- to look at visual cues
- to sound parts of the word
- to make a choice
- to be flexible and change the response
- to be self-sufficient in solving the problem (Clay, 1991, p. 301).

Active learners discover new things for themselves. From the very beginning, children need opportunities to discover new things on their own. Peter and Sam took advantage of their print-rich classroom environment to make new discoveries. In addition to creating rich opportunities for literacy discoveries, teachers can encourage these discoveries by fostering, confirming, and celebrating them. For example, a child who is making discoveries about print points to the printed form of *g*, which differs from his known form of the letter.

- C: Look! That's a different one.
T: That's *g*. It *is* a different one. It's got some extra curly things on it, but you knew it still said *dogs*. All right!

Active learners check one source of information with another. Children learn very early that one kind of information from the text (meaning, structure, letter-sound relationships) can be compared with another kind and that all information should agree in the solution (Clay, 1993b). In time, they use many sources of information to correct errors and solve problems when reading text.

This early example of a teacher's call for a child to check one source of information with another follows the child's substitution of *tub* for *bath* when reading.

- T: It makes sense to say the *tub*, but look, this word can't be *tub*. It has to start with...
C: Bath.

The child's first response made sense, but he was not using the first letter as visual information to check his response. When the teacher prompted him to do so, he was able to check one source of information against another and correct his error.

Active learners repeat as if to confirm reading and writing so far. Just as Peter did when reading *My School*, young children tend to return to the beginning of a line or a sentence to confirm a response. In addition to clearing away the memory of any previous error, it helps the child to recall forgotten cues, use relationships between words as cues, and arouse memories not activated on the first try (Clay, 1991). One teacher responded to a child's self-initiated successful rereading of text in this way: "I like how you kept working on those tricky pages. You always went back to the beginning of the sentence to try it again, didn't you? That helped you a lot."

Active learners detect and self-correct errors when necessary. Self-monitoring and self-correcting are important signals of developing control (Clay, 1991; Wood, 1988). Both appear early and persist as the best indicators of inner control in oral reading. The important thing about self-corrections is that children initiate them because they see that something is wrong and call up their *own* resources for working on a possible solution.

Children learn more about the process each time they engage in problem solving. Having successfully self-corrected an error, children have practiced "monitoring, searching, generating, checking, and choosing processes, and they were all reinforced because success was contingent upon them" (Clay, 1991, p. 303). The following example illustrates the process for one child during text reading:

Teacher-child interactions	Hypotheses based on observations
C: Our dog Sam likes to <u>run</u> (stops). go	child monitored, showing awareness that something was wrong (detecting error)
T: I like how you are checking.	teacher confirmed his monitoring/checking
C: Our dog Sam likes to <u>walk</u> <u>run</u> (stops). go That word is <i>go</i> . It can't be <i>walk</i> .	child monitored; searched for and generated alternatives; made correction
T: Read it again and see if you can work it out.	teacher called for child to reread and check to see if <i>go</i> was correct
C: Our dog Sam likes to go for a run.	child reread with self-correction
T: Does it look right and make sense now?	teacher asked child to confirm/check response using two sources of information
C: Yes.	child confirmed response

T: Good work. teacher praised action
Read on.

In this example, the child had an opportunity to monitor, to use what he knew, and to search for and check meaning against visual information. The reader was actively exploring possibilities and learning ways to solve problems. Error played an important role as it stimulated the child's active search for a solution. Errors, then, can be viewed as opportunities for early problem solving.

Active searching behaviors are essential for building a strong reading process.

Active learners solve new words by these means. When children actively engage in search and check processes, they seem to become more aware of what they are doing. Clay's (1991) observations of children showed that readers displayed a variety of active, observable behaviors that indicated a set of complex strategies to solve new words during text reading:

- making an estimate that is right
- making estimates that are wrong, noticing them, and correcting them
- selecting rapid or slow processing to facilitate the use of information
- attending more fully to selected features of the text as needed
- choosing to search for just enough information to solve the problem
- deriving unknown words by analogy from known words
- partially sounding words and completing these using meaning cues
- sounding parts and linking to other known words
- sounding a word but unable to make a link to other knowledge
- asking for help.

From the beginning, a child builds a repertoire of these processing experiences across time. To solve problems with text, children must learn to choose flexibly from this repertoire of alternatives, and teachers must encourage children to believe that using such strategies gives them control (Pressley et al.,