Student-Centered Reading Strategies

A Look at the Motivation of Third Grade Readers

A Teacher Inquiry
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Introduction and Context

My inquiry project was conducted within my third grade classroom at Radio Park Elementary School in the State College Area School District. I worked with ten students in my lower achieving reading group on a variety of activities to strengthen their reading abilities through the use of the Great Eight reading strategies. The Great Eight, a reading plan designed by Mount Nittany Middle School's Dave Rockower, includes activities surrounding eight important reading strategies to use with children: monitoring, previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, summarizing, and evaluating (see page 15 for a description of each of the Great Eight strategies). In an attempt to explore the boundaries and contexts of these reading strategies, my main intention was to motivate my students to enjoy reading and to become stronger readers.

Within my reading group are ten students, all of which have consistently tested on an average achieving reading level. Of the seven boys and three girls, one student is in Title I Reading, one would probably benefit from Title I Reading help, and two are pulled from the classroom for assistance with their below grade level spelling. In planning my lessons, I differentiate for each individual student, incorporating extra monitoring and assistance to ensure comprehension and an appropriate challenge of the students' abilities. Many of my students work on a similar ability level, which allows me to plan my lessons to address their needs as a group, but also tailor the lessons to meet their individual needs. Though my students have been placed into just one reading group, I often divide them into two smaller sub-groups to work more efficiently with the needs of the students.

When it is beneficial to all students, we work in a whole group setting. In discussions, for example, the students work more efficiently as a whole group to contribute and share ideas. When the students are working on specific activities, such as constructed responses, I generally split them by need. In many instances, I divide the students into two sub-groups, each of which consists of five similarly leveled students with like needs. The sub-groups have been fairly consistent, though one or two students have been switched in and out of the sub-groups as necessary. I work through each step of the activities with my lower half, incorporating independent practice within guided reading and writing. I have found that these students exhibit more focus when we work through the activities step-by-step in their sub-group. The other sub-group of students does not appear to need as much structure within the activities and can work well independently. This sub-group is often kept within the whole group setting just for directions, then permitted to work independently if they are comfortable with the expectations of the activity. All of my students are very capable and have done extremely well thus far in book group, which I feel is partly because their individual needs are being addressed.

Rationale

When I first began to work with my reading group, I noticed that all of my students were incredibly talkative. It was very difficult to give directions and hold discussions because all of the students wanted to talk. They were easily taken off topic and had trouble focusing on the current questions. I began to wonder if the students were bored with our book or if they needed a source of motivation to enjoy using the reading strategies with which we were working. I decided to implement new activities with the

students to see if their motivation and focus improved.

In determining to work on this inquiry, I considered the benefits of my current and future students. I felt that this inquiry would benefit my current students and provide an excellent resource to use in my future classroom. I was hopeful that my students' exceptional potential could be unlocked through motivating and exciting activities during our reading group meetings. I had already seen an improvement in my students since the beginning of the year, bur wanted my students to continue to improve and find something about reading that they truly enjoyed. I would love for my students to leave third grade with a love for reading and a tool belt of activities they can use on their own to become stronger readers. When students enjoy reading, they are given many more opportunities to learn. Their worlds are opened to countless authors, genres, and interests, which they may then want to explore on their own. A love of reading will benefit the students in all aspects of their education and enhance the students' lifelong learning.

I felt that this inquiry would help me uncover more information about myself as a teacher, as well. I planned to keep an updated journal throughout the inquiry as a resource guide of activities to use with my future students if they proved beneficial. I was excited for such an excellent opportunity to explore creativity and its benefits with my students.

Wondering: How can I enrich book group time to motivate and engage my students in the use of effective reading strategies to become strong independent readers?

Sub-wonderings:

- What types of activities would be beneficial to my students?

- What types of activities would motivate my students?

- What are my students' backgrounds – strengths and weaknesses – with reading strategies?

- How can I differentiate activities to include my one Title I reader in appropriate activities that he can share with the rest of the group?

Data Collection and Analysis

In seeking to measure the motivation levels of my students, I relied mainly on anecdotal notes from observations and interviews with my students as data. During observations, I was looking for any changes or patterns in behavior in terms of effort, excitement, and general quality of work. I made several notes about the students each day, looking specifically for patterns in individual behavior and within the group. I also looked at student work samples and grades to compare quality of work and effort based on the excitement the students had exhibited about each task. To measure excitement, I recorded students' specific responses to the activities and listened closely to their conversations with group mates during and after the activities. I also watched for student's engagement levels, recording any indication of a lacking focus. To avoid subjectivity in my observations, I attempted to monitor each student in the same fashion. I recorded specific conversations and followed up with the students when I needed more clarification about their feelings. Instead of leading the children to an answer that would support my inquiry, I probed students to explain more about what they were enjoying and a reason for their enjoyment of the activities.

I worked with my students in two different books throughout my inquiry. The majority of the activities I completed with the students were tailored to meet the specific content of our first book, a fictional chapter book from the Explorers Unit, <u>Polar Bears</u>

Past Bedtime. The story follows two siblings, Jack and Annie, through an adventure in the arctic and is from the popular children's series The Magic Treehouse. Recognizing that most of my children were already excited about the series and to observe my students in more than just a fictional chapter book setting, I also observed the students throughout our nonfiction trade books about the various items traded by explorers. The students were split into their sub-groups to read about either silk or spices. Both trade books were designed to include the same layout and directions, but at the specific reading levels of the students. Even though the content of the books was different, the students were still able to have discussions together about the books because of their thoughtful design (see page 23 for an example of the similarities between the books). Having worked with the students first in a fictional, exciting book, I was able to pinpoint specific patterns in my students' thinking and motivation levels. I was then able to test those patterns within the nonfiction trade books for consistency.

After the conclusion of our first reading group book, I sat down with the students to discuss their opinions of the various activities we completed. To limit subjectivity, I wanted to hear the specific opinions of the students before I analyzed my recorded data. Before meeting with the students, I made a logical plan of questions to ask and a list of ideas for how to probe student thinking without leading the students to any conclusions. My main purpose was to determine which activities the students enjoyed and if they felt that they had been more motivated to participate as a result of those activities. I originally designed this discussion as a survey, which I have attached on page 24. I decided not to use this survey with the students, but to discuss the questions with them orally instead. Knowing my students' dislike of writing, I felt that they would provide more thoughtful answers orally. I first interviewed the students informally while taking notes, and then

video-recorded a similar discussion. It was important for me to establish consistency in the student's answers. I also felt that I might be able to pick up on patterns in the video that I may have missed while taking notes during the first interview. Included in the interview were questions about every activity that we completed during reading group, from routine question-and-answer packets to kinesthetic ball toss activities. Samples of each of these activities have been included starting on page 16.

During the initial interview, nine of the ten students answered exactly how I expected when questioned about the activities they enjoyed. They claimed to enjoy the hands-on activities because they were different from the typical reading group activities they had already experienced. For example, at the conclusion of the book, we played "Literature Beach Ball," in which the students tossed a question printed beach ball around the circle. When a child caught the ball, they had to answer a question about a specific part of the book, such as the setting, the beginning, the main characters, etc. A picture of this beach ball has been included on page 22, along with a list of the questions students could choose to answer. This activity was designed to enhance the students' motivation to use the summarizing strategy and required them to pull evidence from the book to make connections in their own comprehension. Many of the students agreed that this activity was their favorite because they enjoy sports and were excited to incorporate a sports activity into our reading group.

I was surprised by the response I received from one student. When I first began my inquiry, I thought that all of my students would choose the hands-on activities as their favorite. One student, whom I will call Alex, said that his favorite activities were the question-and-answer packets and the long responses completed after each section of the book. When probed, Alex said these activities helped him to focus on the important parts

of the book and made him think about aspects of the chapter that he may not have considered on his own. I was amazed by this comment, but after looking over the work he had completed, I was able to see a link between his excitement about the questions and his superior effort on the written activities. I have attached Alex's written response on page 26 to further demonstrate his exceptional work.

While videotaping the second interview with my students, I noticed that all students cited enjoyment of an activity because it was "fun." Realizing that "fun" could mean something different to each of my students, I created a follow-up survey for the students asking them to define fun and detail some activities that they find fun and not fun (see page 25). Knowing that the students may have difficulty determining a definition on their own, but not wanting to lead the students in any way, I asked them to define fun in terms of an activity we did during reading group that they enjoyed. Several students still had difficulty with this question, which led to many follow-up interviews to give me a better sense of their perspectives. I gave the students a few options to include as part of their definition, tailoring my questions to the activity the students chose as fun. I asked the students if the activity was fun because it was exciting, different, allowed them to work with other students or on their own, let them be creative, or for any other reason. Once prompted, the students were able to describe to me why they enjoyed specific activities.

While each student defined fun in his or her own way, all of the students agreed that fun is something positive and enjoyable. One student defined fun as "something that you like to do." Another student defined fun as "something different because you aren't expecting to be able to do that in school." When asked which activities they found fun, the majority of students again picked the hands-on activities. Alex remained consistent in

his answer, citing "school, reading, math, science, social studies, homework, and [even] testing" as activities he considers fun.

Claims

1. The majority of students exhibited higher motivation levels when presented with fun alternatives using the reading strategies.

2. Learning style and culture play a large role in the motivation of students.

Claim 1: The majority of students exhibited higher motivation levels when presented with fun, hands-on activities using the reading strategies.

I have seen a major increase in engagement and motivation in my students since we began working in book groups. Students beg for extra book group time and are excited to see "book group" written on our daily schedule when they arrive in the morning. Several students have asked me, "can we have extra book group time today?" and "can we start book groups early today?" The students have demonstrated major improvements in appropriate participation during the hands-on activities of our reading group and scored collectively an average of 99% on all hands-on activities! Their grades, along with their demonstration of excitement, have shown me that the students are more motivated while reading leading to increased enjoyment.

The greatest evidence for this claim comes from James, an active child that avoids writing whenever possible. Before conducting this inquiry, I was somewhat frustrated with James' lack of motivation to complete assignments. He would sit at his desk unproductively several mornings in a row when he only had two sentences left to write to complete the assignment. When we began working with art activities in book group

James became a completely different student. He would come to me several times a day to ask for more time to work on his board game. He was overheard yelling, "yes!" every time we talked about working in book groups. He even completed **22 sentences** during 15 minutes of morning work so he could work on his game board. I have attached this constructed response and a prior writing activity on pages 28 and 29 to show James' improvement in quality and detail. He exhibited excitement about his game board, asking several times once it was completed when he could take it home to play with his parents; a question he has never asked about any assignment or project in the classroom thus far. His scores drastically increased during reading group, receiving a close to perfect score on all hands-on activities!

To test patterns of motivation, I had the students complete a large poster board to describe the information they learned in their respective trade books. James, once again, took the lead. He completed detailed work quickly and accurately, and then assigned himself the role of designing the poster for the group. He spent a large amount of time planning and drawing a sketch of his design, asking for input from his group members when he thought beneficial. Even when he was seated next to his best friend, a pair that has consistently kept each other off task, he continued working on his plan and was overhead saying, "This is not play time, Cole." When interviewed, James admitted to enjoying the art aspect of the activity and said he was more willing to write (his least favorite activity) when he knew he would be able to do something he enjoyed afterward. While James has shown the most significant improvement, I observed increased motivation and engagement levels in all but one of the students.

Claim 2: Learning style and culture play a large role in the motivation of students.

Having never considered the backgrounds of my students to their motivation beforehand, I began to see its influential role in my students' behavior through patterns in Alex's engagement and quality of work. An environment where academics are top priority can influence a child to also believe the same. Traditional academics, such as science, math, reading, and writing, where the academic content is obvious, would be treated with the utmost seriousness and focus. Nontraditional activities, such as games and projects, may confuse a child from this type of environment because the academic content is less evident. It is my belief after working with Alex that culture plays a large role in the motivation of students.

When Alex was working on the question packets, he behaved as an ideal student. He remained focused and calm, despite the distractions of his best friends around him. He included great detail in each of his answers and followed all directions, a feat no other reading group student had been able to tackle thus far. I found myself constantly reminding the other students to use full sentences, which they seldom did even when extra time was given specifically for this purpose.

When participating in a hands-on activity, Alex found it incredibly difficult to focus and follow directions. He was given several redirections during each of the activities and was moved to work independently when he could not handle working with the group. He has yet to complete his board game, now over a month from when he began. In discussing this inconsistency with my mentor, it became apparent that Alex's culture may have been a factor in his motivation to complete certain activities. His father is very academic: an educator from Africa working on his PhD. Based on their interactions at school conferences and comments we have heard Alex make, it is possible

that fun and academics do not go together in his household. Alex appears to benefit from the structure of focus questions to keep his attention. During hands-on activities, where expectations are dependent on the student's own creativity, Alex has trouble staying on task. I paid close attention to his engagement during all of the hands-on activities after this discovery and was able to establish consistency in his behavior.

Conclusions/Implications for Future Teaching

Working with my students during my inquiry has helped me to start to discover the depths of my own creativity and its use in the classroom. Planning of reading group time required me to think outside of the typical realm of activities to explore new approaches to the exciting world of literacy. Having experienced the benefits of kinesthetics and hands-on projects, I anticipate using similar activities with my future students. In my planning, however, I will take each student's background and learning style into consideration to provide for the individual interests and needs of my students. I feel that I have become much more observant and considerate of the outside influences in my students' lives on their behavior in the classroom. I am currently researching various cultural expectations to better understand and plan for the needs of my students. I now know my students on a deeper level from working so closely with them on this inquiry project and am looking forward to designing similar activities to meet the needs of my future students.

New Wonderings

Working with my students on this inquiry inspired many new wonderings. My students are always very silly when they come to book group. It takes me a few minutes

to calm the children down to a level where they are ready and willing to focus. I have been noticing an increase in participation and focus when I am also silly with my students. To test this concept, I began our book group activities one morning by being silly with the students while still focusing on our topic. By being silly, I acted as though I were on the same developmental level as the children. I allowed them to have a little more fun and freedom with our initial discussion than I would have otherwise by behaving in a less serious manner than I usually am with my students. I was curious whether this silly time would help the students unwind from their special in order to better focus afterward or if the silliness would negatively affect the children's behavior. After this experiment, I had many more questions. Is my silliness/seriousness a factor in the students' behavior? Do the children need time to be silly in order to focus? Will my silliness cause the children to stay silly throughout reading group time? Will it negatively affect their behavior instead of creating positive changes? Will the effect change each time? What about when we do not have time to be silly? If I allow the children to be silly, will that set an expectation for the remainder of book group that they will always have time to be silly? If I treat a writing activity with a silly mindset, will the students be more motivated to participate? As in any inquiry, the teacher will come out of the project will more questions. I am looking forward to learning more about my students as I continue to conduct inquiry experiments in my classroom.

HOW TO USE "THE GREAT EIGHT"

The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to help students use a repertoire of strategies to comprehend text. In order to achieve this goal, we need to <u>teach</u> students comprehension strategies and a variety of ways to use them while reading.

These comprehension strategies generally include:

- **<u>Monitoring</u>** involves asking, "Does this make sense?" and clarifying by adpating strategic processes to accommodate the response. Monitoring is knowing if meaning is being constructed and knowing what to do if it is not.

- **<u>Previewing</u>** is a way of introducing the text. It includes activating background knowledge, predicting, getting a purpose.

- **<u>Self-Questioning</u>** involves generating questions to guide thinking while reading.

- **<u>Making Connections</u>** occurs when students think about the text in relation to self, text, and world.

- **<u>Visualizing</u>** involves picturing in your mind what is happening in the text.

- **<u>Knowing How Words Work</u>** refers to understanding words through strategic vocabulary development, including using the cueing systems of visual, meaning, and structure to figure out unknown words.

- **<u>Summarizing</u>** involves extracting essential information – including the main idea and supporting details – from text.

- **<u>Evaluating</u>** means making judgments.

This section of the LAC is divided into these "Great Eight" comprehension strategies. Within each tabbed section, you will find a number of "teaching ideas." These are used to help students understand what each of the "Great Eight" are, how they function, and when they might be used.

LAC, Fall 2003

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Knowing How Words Work: Mad Lib

The students went back through the chapter to find the most important words used to describe the plot. They then created a summary based upon those words and turned it into a mad lib for another student to complete. This activity helped the students practice the parts of speech and understand the importance of effective word choice.

Key Words:

snow   quiet   clam **calm**

happy   shocked   freezing

Summary:

First when Jack and Annie lost the polar bears, it was quit, until the huskies started to make noise. Then Jack and Annie (feger) out the riddle **figure** and they asked the seal hunter if he could give them a ride to the tree house. Then it begain to snow, then the became a blizzard. Then they had to feger out other riddle. They forer out riddle and they went home and they where not scared of the dark. Can you genss what the anser of the riddle?

Excellent summary! You used strong details from the chapter! Please watch your spelling - the words are in the book.

First when Jack and Anne lost the polar bears, it was scary until the huskies started to make noise. Then Jack and Annie figure out the riddle, they asked the seal hunter if he could give them a ride to the tree house. Then it begain to snow, then the snow became a blizzard. Then they had to figure out other riddle. They figure out the riddle and they went home and they where not scared of the dark. Can you geuss what the onser of the riddle.

Visualization: Arctic Picture Draw

The students were each given a picture of the arctic, the setting of <u>Polar Bears Past Bedtime</u>. They first completed a worksheet using several adjectives to describe their picture and created a detailed paragraph to trade with a group mate. The students then attempted to draw the picture from the paragraph and compared their picture with the original. We had a fantastic discussion after this activity talking about the importance of word choice in effectively describing a setting.

1. Who is the picture about? a big white bear jumping over water

2. What are they doing? jumping acroce ice and water

3. What can you see? a long white bear and ice

4. What might you hear? water and snow flying

5. What might you feel? coled and wat and covered in snow

6. What might you smell or taste? I would smell coled air and taste salt water

This picture has a big long white bear jumping over ice and water. And you can see a wet cold long white bear. You would hear water runing and snow flying. You might smell and taste cold air and taste salt water mist.
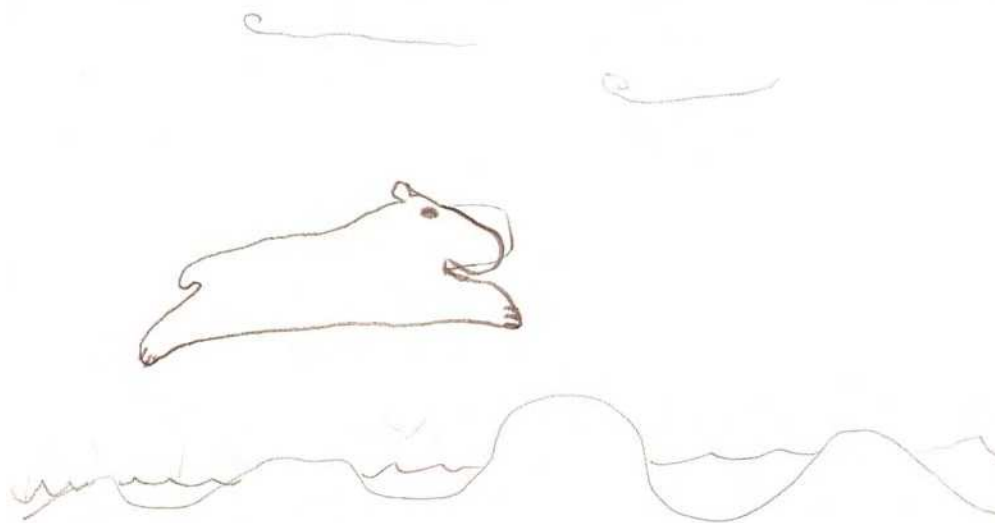
The Monitoring Strategy: Polar Bear Bookmarks

The students used their polar bear bookmarks to monitor their own reading throughout one chunk of the book. The eyes of the polar bear were scented with a chocolate marker and a special reminder: Every time you smell chocolate, check to see if you can add anything to your bookmark!
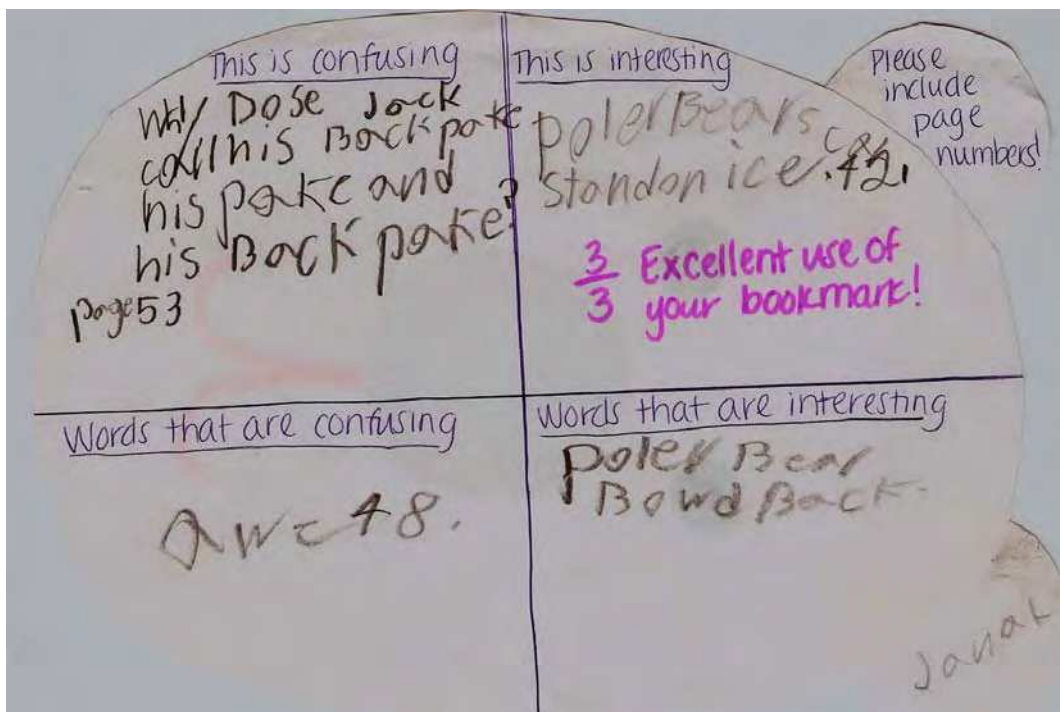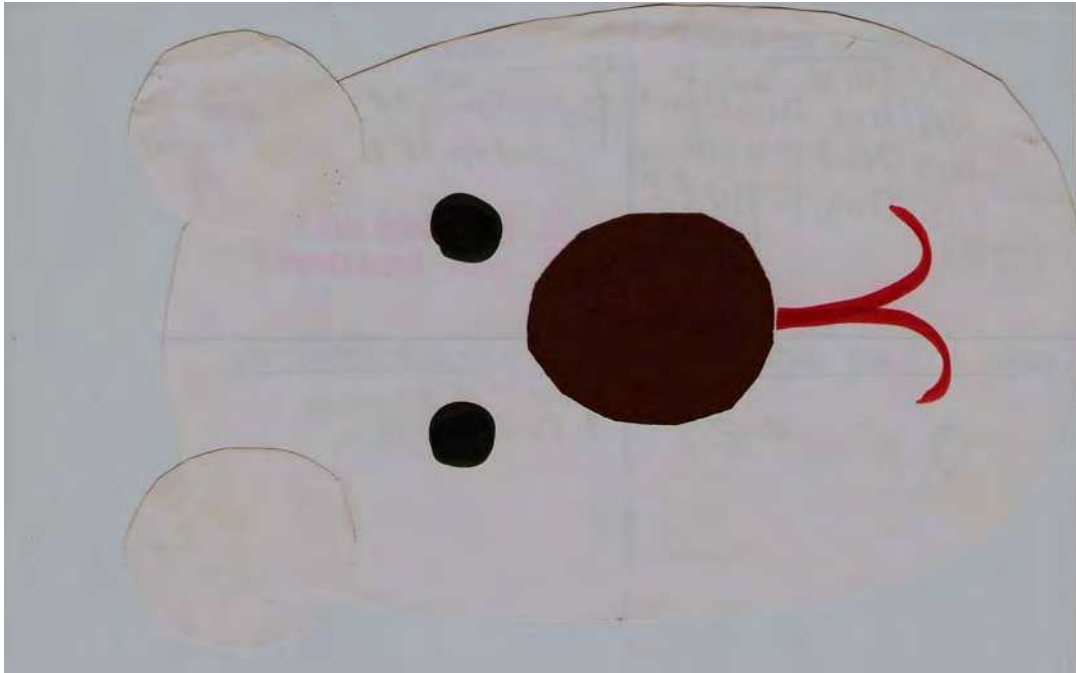
Summarizing Strategy: Arctic Board Games
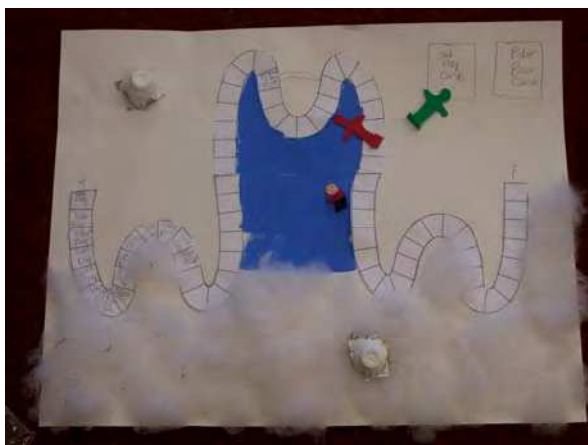
The Summarizing Strategy:
Trade Book Poster Activity

The poster project asked students to work together in their teams to reflect back on what they had read. Each student was assigned a specific job for the poster. The students had to go back through the text to determine what was the most important information relating to their job and topic. Job details are included on the next page. To the right, a few members of the Spice group proudly displays their poster. Below, the Silk group displays their poster.

Questions featured on the beach balls include:

1. The setting was…
2. My favorite part was…
3. At the end…
4. In the middle…
5. In the beginning…

6. The main characters were…
7. What happened in the story?
8. What is the setting?
9. What is the title and who is the author?

Pictured below are the Silk and Spice books in which the students were working.

Name _____

Circle your favorite activities from <u>Polar Bears Past Bedtime.</u>

  -Vocabulary worksheets

  -Answering questions in the packet

  -Discussion

  -Drawing the arctic picture from your partner's description

  -Mad libs

  -Popcorn reading

  -Using the polar bear bookmark

  -Beach ball book review

  -Making the board game

Did any of the activities that we did make you like the book more? Which ones?

Did any of the activities that we did make you like the book less? Which ones?

Do you think the activities that we did help you with your reading? Which ones?

What activities would you like to do with our next book? You may use any from the list above or suggest new activities.

Name _____

Please answer the following questions.

1. What does **fun** mean to you? Think of an activity we did during reading group that was **fun** to you and explain what made it **fun**.

2. What activities would you consider **fun**?

3. What activities would you consider **not fun**?

4. What **fun** activities could we do in book group?

Alex's Work

3/3 excellent detail from the book!

Jack uses a lot of the information he has learned from the arctic book and from the seal hunter to help him as he is exploring. Explain at least 3 examples of how these resources have benefited Jack and Annie. Provide examples from the book.

The arctic book and the seal hunter have been good resources for Jack and Annie. The first example would be that a female polar bear can weigh as much as 750 pounds and still balance on the ice without breaking the ice. Jack and Annie learned that from the arctic book. The 2nd example would be that Jack and Annie were a bit confused at first when they heard that polar bears can fly, that means they move quickly by sliding on their stomach on the ice. Jack and Annie learned that from the seal hunter. The 3rd example would be that igloo means house that is made out of blocks of snow. Jack and Annie learned that from the arctic book. The 4th example is that the seal hunter said that seals were used for lots of things, like fat to feul lanterns, skins for clothing, bones were made for needles and knives, meat for food. Annie felt bad for the seals because the seal hunter have to kill the seals. Jack actually understood why the seals were geting killed and Jack and Annie learned that from

Another Student's Work for Comparison

Name _____

Compare Jack's personality to Annie's. How are they similar? How are they different? Provide evidence from the book.

Jack and Annie's personalities are similar because they bot. like seeing morgenlafay and they like going to the majick tree house. They like to meet peoople and say hi they enjoy meo people. They are diffrent becose Jack get's scared esey and Annie dose no. Jack caries a back pack Annie dose not. Jack taks notes Annie dose4. Jack reads the books Annie dose not.

What does Annie like?

James' Constructed Response

Describe the setting as it is told on pages 4-5. What kind of night is it? Where are Jack and Annie? How do they feel? Then think about the setting as Jack and Annie arrive in the arctic. How has it changed? Provide evidence from the story.

In the beginning of the Story, Jack and Annie fellt warm and cosy in their beds because of the warm aer. Moths were Dansing on the front porch of Jack and annies house. Jack herd anoys he went to tern on the light and the soud was aowl Jack went to get Annie. They went to the tree hous and went to the artic it was cold. It was snoore. They landid on a ice Berg and they met a scol hunter. He was nice and he helped Jack and annie. they felt freesing and the artik was freving. It was cold and I sey allover. the snow wos Deap.

Great!

Wonderful descriptions! I can picture exactly what both settings look like!

James' Earlier Work

After three opportunities to look over his work, James still lost points for choosing not to answer all parts of the question and writing incomplete sentences.

Please use complete sentences! -1

2. Why does Jack take notes in his notebook? How will that help him?

½   to Right notes Down in his NoteBook Becase he was ta King nots of an igloo.

3. Why does the seal hunter put a snowball into the pot?

2/2   he was kooking food and ^froson meat. Makeing

4. How do Arctic people use seals? What parts can they use and for what do they use them? They use the

½   skins and feri

5. Why do the seals help the Arctic people? What do the Arctic people do in return? he gave the people

½   food and clothes from seals and knives from Bons. and the people helpt them.

6. What did the polar bear teach the Arctic people? Provide at least 2 examples. Play tag and take a

½   brak.

how to fish and fly

Steff Cranage
Inquiry Brief
February 13, 2008

Context
I will be conducting my inquiry with my reading group throughout the rest of the school
year. All lessons will be completed in my 3rd grade classroom, consisting of a variety of
activities to strengthen my students' reading through the use of reading strategies. We
will be exploring the boundaries and contexts of reading strategies to help motivate the
students to enjoy reading and become stronger readers.

My reading group consists of ten students with a lower achieving reading level, seven
boys and three girls. One of my students is in Title I Reading, one would probably benefit
from Title I Reading help, and two are pulled from the classroom for assistance in
writing. In planning my lessons, I always differentiate for these students, incorporating
extra monitoring and check-ins to ensure comprehension and an ability to explain that
comprehension. Many of my students work on a similar ability level, which allows me to
plan my lessons to address their needs as a group and as individuals. Though my students
have been grouped into just one level, I often group them into two smaller sub-groups to
work more efficiently with the needs of the students.

I do not always split my students into smaller groups. We work as a whole group when it
is beneficial to the students. In discussions, for example, the students work as a whole
group to contribute ideas and benefit from the sharing of those ideas. When the students
are working on specific activities, such as constructed responses, I generally split them by
need. Grouping my lowest students together allows me to work closely with my lowest
five students and monitor their progress. The other half of my group can work
independently, but is still benefited by frequent check-ins. I generally work through each
step of the activity with my lower half, allowing independent practice when it is
beneficial to the students. I have found that my lower students stay focused and benefit
more from the activities when I work with them step-by-step. My students are very
capable and have done extremely well thus far in book group, which I feel is partly
because their individual needs are being addressed. I often sometimes group the students
by specific needs on individual activities. If I see that students are struggling with similar
aspects of an activity, I will pull those students to work on that specific need. Grouping
varies by activity and by need.

Rationale
I decided to work with this topic because I feel it will benefit my students and will also
provide an excellent resource to use in my future classroom. My students' exceptional
potential can be unlocked through motivating and exciting activities during our book
group. I have already seen a wealth of progress in my students through the activities we
have completed with our first reading group book. I would like my students to continue to
improve and to find something about reading that they truly enjoy.

The main reason I would like to do this topic is because I feel that my students will
benefit from an assortment of reading strategy ideas and motivation. I have already seen
an increase in engagement and motivation in my students since we began working in

book groups. Students beg for extra book group time and are excited to see "book group" written on our daily schedule when they arrive in the morning. There has been major improvement in their work thus far, which I believe stems from their excitement about the activities in which we are working. I would love for my students to leave third grade with a love for reading and a tool belt of activities they can use on their own to become stronger readers. When students enjoy reading, they are given many more opportunities to learn. Their worlds are opened to countless authors, genres, and interests which they may then want to explore on their own. A love of reading will benefit the students in all aspects of their education and enhance the students' lifelong learning. While I understand that my inquiry may not change all of my students into enjoyable readers, but it may stem a chain reaction to enhance the reading abilities and enjoyment levels of my students.

I feel that this inquiry will help me uncover more information about myself as a teacher, as well. Working with my students through the diversity of activities we have already used has helped me to start to discover the depths of my own creativity and how it can be used in the classroom. This is an excellent opportunity for me to explore creativity and its benefits with my students.

Wondering: How can I enrich book group time to motivate and engage my students in the use of effective reading strategies to become strong independent readers?

Sub-wonderings:
- What types of activities would be beneficial to my students?
- What types of activities would motivate my students?
- What are my students' backgrounds – strengths and weaknesses – with reading strategies?
- How can I differentiate activities to include my one Title I reader in appropriate activities that he can share with the rest of the group?

Projected Timeline
I am anticipating working with my book group through the rest of the school year. We will be using nonfiction trade books in our next book group, which will give me information about nonfiction books to add to the data I collected from the fiction book with which we were working. Since the paper is due in April, I am planning on gathering information up until about a week before the paper is due to add in any additional information as it connects to my claims. Next week, I will begin surveying my students on the activities we used throughout the first book group. I wanted to wait until they had completed their last assignment before surveying them on their interest in the various activities we have done. I will continue to make observations and take anecdotal notes throughout the next book, as well as survey my students in the middle and at its completion. I would like to work with the nonfiction books a bit before synthesizing data to collect as much information as possible from both genres. I am anticipating starting to synthesize my data in the middle of March, allowing me to specify claims and plan additional lessons and activities accordingly.

Week of February 25th: Survey students on Polar Bear activities; interview students for further information; begin trade book and new activities; keep anecdotal notes on student motivation and level of engagement/excitement

Week of March 3rd: Continue trade book activities; continue anecdotal notes on student motivation; informally survey students during book group on latest activities
Week of March 10th: Spring break
Week of March 17th: Continue trade book activities; synthesize first two surveys to narrow down focus of anecdotal notes; start to make claims
Week of March 24th: Plan lessons and activities to strengthen claims; start to draft paper; survey students on latest book group activities
Week of March 31st: Plan lessons and activities to strengthen claims; work on draft
Week of April 6th: Continue to draft paper (due April 12th); final survey with associated interviews; wrap up any loose ends
Week of April 14th: Edit paper
Week of April 21st: Practice Presentations

Data Collection Ideas
The main data collection that I will be doing will be in the form of anecdotal notes, surveys, and individual and group interviews. I have been taking notes on students' reactions and other observations since the beginning of book group. I have also copied samples of student work and recorded conversations that I have had with individual students that I feel will help me in my planning. I am anticipating surveying the students about their interest in the activities we have completed thus far to see if there are any commonalities in student interest and also to compare the quality of student work to their interest levels. I anticipate surveying my students at least 4 or 5 more times as our work progresses. The surveys will be brief, but allow me to pinpoint specific students that I would like to interview further. I will also interview the group as a whole and in smaller sub-groups as necessary.

I will use the following data collection techniques for my sub-wonderings:
- What types of activities would be beneficial to my students?
  I will be using student work samples and anecdotal notes about strengths and weaknesses to collect data about the activities from which my students would benefit.
- What types of activities would motivate my students?
  I will be using student surveys and informal individual and group interviews to assess the motivation level of my students. I will also be taking notes about conversations I have with my students and other occurrences that would speak about my students' motivation.
- What are my students' backgrounds – strengths and weaknesses – with reading strategies?
  I will be using anecdotal notes on strengths and weakness and how the students handle each strategy, and also student work samples from the activities we are doing that address the various reading strategies. I have taken notes on their work with the reading strategies so far and have found my notes to be very helpful in distinguishing where my students need help and where they excel.
- How can I differentiate activities to include my one Title I reader in appropriate activities that he can share with the rest of the group?
  I will be working very closely with my Title I reader throughout book group, taking careful notes on the activities in which he completes. I will also be

surveying him informally and helping to assist him in the activities we are doing so that he can still be included in the activities, but at an appropriate level.

Steff Cranage
Annotated Bibliography
February 13, 2008

Burke, J. *103 Things to do Before/During/After Reading*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from
http://www.englishcompanion.com/assignments/reading/103readingactivities.htm

> This comprehensive list of 101 activities to do before, during, and after reading will be an essential resource to my inquiry project. It features various creative activities to excite children and motivate them to use their reading strategies. Some of the activities incorporate drama, writing, poetry, and art projects. I am anticipating using this website to inspire new ideas to use with my book group.

Curran, M. J. & Smith, E. C. (November 2005). The Imposter: A motivational strategy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49(3), 186-191.

> This article addresses a reading strategy known as the imposter, in which students search for a contradictory statement, idea, or number in a reading passage. The students can have fun with this strategy, while still working on focused reading. Students must identify and justify the imposter. I think this strategy would work really well with on of my students who reads the wrong words, but does not hear that what he has read does not make sense. He would have to focus on what he is reading to find the imposter. I feel that this strategy would interest my students and could be written in a fun way to initiate and maintain engagement.

Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

> This book emphasized the strong link between reading and writing and its importance to a comprehensive and engaging reading curriculum. Pictures, templates, student-teacher dialogues, specific lesson plans, planning suggestions for each phase of a lesson, and student samples are included throughout the book. I really enjoyed the special feature section of each chapter in this book, titled "Struggling Readers and Writers: Teaching That Makes a Difference." This section makes specific and realistic suggestions on how to improve the abilities of students in each aspect of the reading curriculum. I am anticipating trying some of these strategies with my students.

Frank, C. B., Grossi, J. M. & Stanfield, D. J. (2006). *Applications of Reading Strategies Within the Classroom: Explanations, Models, and Teacher Templates for Content Areas in Grades 3-12*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

    This book is an excellent resource for any classroom teacher. It begins with an overview of the importance and foundation of learning strategies, describing the origin, support research, necessity, standards, and modeling opportunities. There are eight chapters in the book, each of which details a variety of strategies and activities to aid the development and use of reading strategies. For each individual activity, an explanation, model and template is provided. The resources in this book would be very beneficial to most classroom teachers. The ideas presented are realistic and achievable in any single-teacher classroom. I may use some of the templates provided with my students or as a basis to inspire new activities.

Hoyt, L. (1999). *Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

    This book is a comprehensive collection of varying templates used to enhance reading comprehension. Student samples are also included with a recommendation for how the templates can be used. These ready-to-use activities are creatively designed to help children pick out the important parts of a story in a unique and fun way. Various reading strategies are used throughout the book to help strengthen the reader's comprehension. I am anxious to use some of the templates in this book with my students.

Jennings, J. H., Caldwell, J. & Lerner, J. W. (2006). *Reading Problems: Assessment and Teaching Strategies* (Fifth Edition). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

    This book is also an excellent resource for classroom teachers. It details the influencing factors on a child's reading problems from the home, social, and cultural environments. It also includes an assortment of information about environmental, emotional, intelligence, language ability, and physical factors that could contribute to a child's reading ability and associated problems. Sample tests are included to assess reading in various forms: norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, avoiding biases, ethical considerations, group surveys, normed oral reading tests, etc. This book is an extensive overview of determining problems and assessing informally and formally throughout reading instruction to design appropriate interventions such as those described. This resource will help me to understand my students' backgrounds to aid appropriate and effective planning.

Kelner, L. B. & Flynn, R. M. (2006). *A Dramatic Approach to Reading Comprehension: Strategie and Activities for Classroom Teachers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

This book details the advantages of integrating drama into reading comprehension. It analyzes each phase of an effective drama lesson step-by-step with a thorough background, objectives, effective preparation techniques, various sources of assessment, and strategies for story dramatization, character interviews, tableau, and human slide shows. This source would be appropriate for a teacher with even minimal drama experience that has the motivation to try drama with students. Each activity is deeply rooted in research and addresses coordinating national standards. I would be interested in seeing my students' reactions to drama and the effect it may have on their motivation levels.

Miller, W. H. (2002). *Reading Skills Problem Solver: Ready-to-Use Strategies and Activity Sheets for Correcting All Types of Reading Problems*. Paramus: The Center for Applied Research in Education.

This book is an excellent resource for any classroom teacher. It contains ready-to-use worksheets and activities for all reading levels. It also pinpoints possible reading problems, poor visual memory, for example, and offers many solutions for each problem. It also includes sight word lists, progressive phonemic awareness activities, and games for improving various reading abilities (sight word knowledge, phonic analysis, structural analysis, etc). Each section also includes a list of other helpful resources available for addition reading. This 400-page book is an excellent resource to help teachers determine reading weaknesses and strengthen the success of **all** students. I plan on using this book throughout my inquiry to plan activities that will strengthen my students' reading abilities.

Mountain City Elementary School. *Polar Bears Past Bedtime*. Retrieved January 20, 2008, from
http://www.mce.k12tn.net/reading26/polar_bears_past_bedtime.htm

This online resource provides a variety of information about Mary Pope Osborne's Polar Bears Past Bedtime. I used this website to inspire ideas to use with my book group. I used the activity section to find various other websites I could have used with my book group through technology. One activity that I would have liked to use with my students was an online arctic scavenger hunt. It was difficult to use this activity because of the amount of time I was out of the classroom for trainings, etc and because of the recent snow days. I am hoping to still use this activity with my students, as they have never yet been able to experiment with online resources as part of our book group sessions. I would like to see the effects on their motivation and interest in reading.

Opitz, M. F. (1998). *Flexible Grouping in Reading: Practical Ways to Help All Students Become Better Readers*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

This book outlines materials useful in grades 2 through 5. Its main purpose is to provide assistance for flexible grouping of students for advantageous reading instruction. The book begins with a motivation explanation of the benefits of flexible grouping, citing nine strong evidence proven claims. Ready-to-use reading records, charts, and other templates are included. Samples of student work are included with some of the activities, showcasing the importance of the activity and the benefit to the students. Student surveys are also included to gage interest and engagement in the varying levels. I will definitely be using some of the reading records from this book to help organize my notes about my students.

Pachtman, A. B. & Wilson, K. A. (April 2006). What do the kids think? *The Reading Teacher*, 59(7).

The article capitalizes on the effect of motivation on a child's reading ability. It claims that students will read more often if they are excited about what they are reading. The article advocates giving student a choice about their reading to increase motivation and engagement levels. It also claims that students have the ability to "articulate the procedures that work best to facilitate their independent reading lives." I anticipate using this resource to help strengthen some of my own claims as I gather data and begin to synthesize it.

Reutzel, D. & Cooter, Jr., R. B. (2007). *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping Every Child Succeed* (Third Edition). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.

This book includes an assortment of checklists to help the teacher manage reading instruction and assessment. It also provides pictures and templates of activities that could be used in an effective comprehensive reading instruction plan. There is an entire section on strengthening the home-school connection to raise student achievement in reading. An extensive look at the CLEP and its rating scales is provided at the end of the book to enhance the assessment of children's "print richness", along with a giant list of useful resources for further information. The checklists in this book could be beneficial to note-taking and planning for my inquiry activities. I would also like to experiment with the CLEP to evaluate my students throughout our work sessions.

Rief, S. F. & Heimburge, J. A. (2007). *How to Reach and Teach All Children Through Balanced Literacy: User-Friendly Strategies, Tools, Activities, and Ready-to-Use Materials*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is broken into four main sections: Comprehensive Reading Instruction, Organizing for Instruction, Assessment and Intervention Strategies, and Going Beyond the Classroom Walls. It provides possible mini-lessons for procedural, literary, and strategies/skills throughout the

sections. It also makes a variety of suggestions of literary works to use with children including stories, poetry, picture books, and novels. In each lesson provided, a purpose, list of materials, and step-by-step procedures, and possible forms of assessment are provided. This book would be an excellent source for classroom teachers looking to supplement the basic reading curriculum with creative strategies to help children succeed as readers. I plan on using many of the activities in this resource with my students.

Sibberson, F. & Szymusiak, K. (2003). *Still Learning to Read: Teaching Students in Grades 3-6*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers.

This book begins with the setting up of an effective literacy classroom and walks the reader through the first six weeks of instruction. What I found most useful were the websites and creative ideas given throughout the book to enhance the literacy classroom in ways that will motive students to enjoy reading. Also included are dialogues between teacher and student for varying problems and probing, creative ways to group students beyond levels, and how to support students' independent reading and thinking. A variety of student work samples and pictures are also provided.

The Language Arts Continuum: Reading, Listening, Speaking and Research. (2003). State College Area School District.

I have found the section on the Great Eight Strategies very beneficial thus far. It offers ideas and activities for each of the different reading strategies to use with children. I have based many of the activities I have done with my students on something I read about in the LAC. I am anticipating using many of the other sections in the LAC, including the Guided Reading Block and Reading Standards.

Walpole, S. & McKenna, M. C. (2007). *Differentiated Reading Instruction: Strategies for the Primary Grades*. New York: The Guilford Press.

This book is an excellent resource for differentiation in reading instruction. It includes various lesson plans on specific reading problems, an overview of reading differentiation in each grade from K-3, and background information on how to differentiate beneficially and fairly. Each section is broken into smaller sub-questions to help narrow the search and provide the most beneficial information. There are also many charts and templates for use in the classroom. I will be using this resource to help plan for differentiated instruction for my Title I and lower reading level students.