

# Teaching for Strategic Activity: The Power of Reading Recovery

## OVERVIEW

- Explore the idea of 'strategic activity' and what it means
- Items and strategic activity
- What is teaching for strategic activity and what is not?
- Continuum of social assistance
- Change over time



“The learner not only has item banks of knowledge needed to read more difficult texts but also has constructed the power source that will drive subsequent learning, what I call “a self-extending system.”.....In my theory of what happens(literacy processing theory), there are two powerful self-extending systems....

Talk at your table about what you learnt from these 2 activities:

What strategic activities were you engaged in?



Did you notice:

You did not make a random response-  
you had a network of strategic  
activities to draw on

Attending to knowledge

Searching

Selecting

Rejecting

Self-monitoring

Self-correcting



“ ...I believe it is the processing view of progress that is the main reason why Reading Recovery teachers consistently get good results....”

How the brain works with the text to get,  
or send, the message.



“Learning ‘how to do something’ (to work with input, mediation and output) is powerful learning.”

*Change Over Time, p 128*

“To learn to act strategically the learner must find some input information and act upon it.’



Input

Mediation or  
Processing

Output

“.....the child is processing information about the code, picking it up from the page, working on it, putting it together with other things he knows and making a decision.”



Child

Teacher

Task



The teacher has to help the child  
determine what the task is



“A few items and a powerful strategy might make it very easy to learn a great deal more.”

“It assumes that in order to read with understanding we call up and use a repertoire of strategies acting upon stores of knowledge to extract messages from print.”



What does this imply needs to happen?

What is teaching for strategic activity?  
What is not teaching for strategic activity?

A child comes to an unknown word and stops. The teacher says “break it”.

Is this teaching for strategic activity?  
Is there something we can do as teachers  
that might be more facilitative? Why



Why does Clay say teaching word families is not helpful?

- “...a child may have items of knowledge about letters and sound and words but be unable to relate one to the other, to employ one (say, letters) to check on the other (say, words), or to get the messages in print. He is unable to use his knowledge in the service of getting to the messages. He must learn how to check on his own learning... and how to orchestrate different ways of responding to complete a successful message getting process.”



In strategic teaching, a high degree of flexible decision making is required as the teacher observes and interacts with a child. The teacher's responses, prompts, reinforcing, statements, and actions are critical.

Partners in learning, p. 136.



The teacher must be able to design a superbly sequenced programme determined by the child's performance, and to make highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lesson.

“..teachers cannot teach or demonstrate strategies; they can infer them from behaviours they record, and they can encourage learners to be strategic by the ways in which they teach.”

*Change Over Time, p 128*



“The teacher is more concerned to reinforce how the child worked to get the response than whether the child arrived at the precise correct response.”



“For learning to occur it is very important to ensure that the difficulty level of the reading material presents challenges from which the child can learn and not difficulties that disorganize what he already knows.”

*Observation Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Edition, p 24*

# Continuum of Social Assistance

---

Telling    Revealing    Discovery

*Cazden, 1993*



“Assistance” offered at too high a level will disrupt child performance and is not effective teaching. Once independent performance has been achieved, “assistance” becomes “interference”.

*Rousing Minds to Life, p 41*



To facilitate the child's attempts to teach himself  
think about:

- Task difficulty
- Careful analysis of where the child is
- Responsive teaching

“There are two ways in which we can help the child to learn. One of them is attempting to teach him; the other is by facilitating his attempts to teach himself.”

*Cashdan, 1976 in BL p 343*

WRITING



Children need opportunities to initiate attempts at words and teaching interactions should maximize children's opportunities to initiate word-solving and to take control of the task when they can." P16, COT

Every interaction in the daily writing segment is a teaching move- not a memory task, nor a practice attempt, nor an analysis of sounds but ..... involves learning to do something, do it better, do it faster, link it up to something and prepare it for future independent use. ( Those things include much more than just attending to sounds in words.) COT



Generating words is not about building word families. It is producing a word you need to *write by any means at your disposal* and getting as close as you can to the way it is probably written in English” page 24 Cot



TO SUMMARIZE

“In general, teachers with higher student outcomes were described as more attentive to problem-solving strategies- both those initiated by children and those for which they prompted after observing a potential opportunity.”

*Partners in Learning, p 82*



- “Teachers contribute to the shifts in processing which children are able to carry out by,
- Altering the learning opportunities provided
  - Prompting to influence the choices made by the constructive learner
  - Altering the interactions between the teacher and learner.”

Are the children shifting from simple processing to more complex ways of working?

Are they initiating more independent solving on harder texts and getting better at it day after day?