

## **Independent Reading with Teacher Support**

*"Ironically, when teachers are pressed for time, independent reading is usually the first thing to be cut. Yet a carefully monitored independent reading program is the single most important part of your instructional reading program. What's more, it's fun, it's easy to implement and manage, and kids love it. They get to choose books they're interested in, to talk about those books with their friends, and to have uninterrupted time in school—to read!"*

*R. Routman, 2002*

*Reading Essentials: The Specifics You  
Need to Teach Reading Well, p. 87*

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#### **1. News from Enrique A. Puig, Director of FLaRE** [epuig@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:epuig@mail.ucf.edu)

In this issue of the FLaRE newsletter we address the importance of providing independent reading opportunities with teacher support. As classroom teachers, we are all familiar with the instructional practice of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) as part of a comprehensive literacy program. Over time we have learned that to improve on the practice teachers needed to be more involved other than simply model the behavior of silent independent reading. During independent reading teachers are provided with the opportunity to engage in brief conversations with individual students to informally assess students' strengths and needs on continuous text. This newsletter is full of specific examples to assist teachers in planning and organizing for independent reading with teacher support to encourage on-going monitoring of progress to guide instruction and support other instructional practices.

#### **2. Sharing the Good News**

##### **One Book – One School**

submitted by FLaRE Coordinator Pamela Craig, Ph.D. [pcraig@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:pcraig@mail.ucf.edu)

Ben Ajak, one of the Lost Boys from Sudan, joined teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators of **Lakewood High School** as part of a celebration after reading his book, *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky*. For the past eight weeks, teachers read the book to students one day a week. Ajak challenged the students to value their education and not take for granted all the benefits they enjoy as Americans. He shared that he believes he survived the many hardships as a lost boy in the Sudan because of two beliefs: confidence in himself and hope.

The project was spearheaded by Kristy Myers, the reading coach, with support from her principal, Dennis Duda. Kristy brought the idea to the Reading Leadership Team as a way to engage the whole school community in reading and talking about a book. After some review of different books, the team chose *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* because of the male protagonists and the subject matter. Teachers agreed to read for 10 – 15 minutes at the beginning of each class on Mondays. Kristy provided questions for each period to help teachers engage their students in discussions.

Ajak spoke at two assemblies and visited classrooms during the day. His message was inspiring and his demeanor welcoming. Both students and teachers were enthralled as they followed him around the school.

The project was such a success that Lakewood is considering choosing another book for the fall semester.



### **Dissect, Dialogue, and Digest: Study Groups in Action**

submitted by Nancy Lewis, Ph.D., FLARE Area Coordinator [nlewis@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:nlewis@mail.ucf.edu)

Teachers do not share a technical culture and that condition is exacerbated by the norms of not sharing, observing, and discussing one’s work with other educational professionals (Lortie, 1975). Simply put, teachers work mainly in isolation (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2000) and the isolation is a major contributing factor to lack of change in education. Classrooms today look very similar to the classrooms of 75 years ago. Fullan (2007) makes the case that for educational change to become a reality the primacy of teachers working together focused on their instructional practices and the impact on student learning cannot be ignored. Study groups as a vehicle for professional development are an effective way to create opportunities for deep change in teaching practice. They are helpful means of sharpening teachers’ classroom practice while eroding the norms of isolation that typically forms barriers to teacher growth.

At **Harmony High School**, under the strong direction of Principal Debra Pace, over thirty faculty members from a wide variety of content areas participated in faculty study groups. Three different study groups were created to provide choice for the teachers. Reading Coach Mary Field led a group that delved into effective vocabulary instruction. They used Janet Allen’s *Inside Words: Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary to Grades 4-12*. Another group consisted of mathematics and science teachers and was led by Mathematics and Science Coach Lisa Tindall. This group focused on such things as classroom management, inquiry teaching, in addition to other teaching strategies. Mrs. Tindall gathered different resources, but mainly focused on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics publication, *Empowering Beginning Mathematics Teachers: High School*. Learning Resource Specialist Kim Miller led a group that studied Cris Tovani’s work, *Do I Have to Teach Reading?: Content Comprehension, Grades 6-12*. The group considered both the book and the video series that complements the text.



“These groups were effective because they were practical, specific, and had no fluff,” said Mrs. Pace. The groups met from 3:00 to 5:00 four times over about a month period. The study groups provided a time for collegial dialogue focused on the content being analyzed and gave teachers rich experiences working together across content areas. “One reason these groups were so strong is there were a variety of people from different content areas and with different work experiences,” commented Mrs. Field. Even the football coach did ‘double

duty' and was a member of two groups! He was excited that the principal could see his growth and how he was able to apply his learning to his teaching. "We'll make a teacher out of him yet," teased Mrs. Pace.

Mrs. Tindall asked the mathematics and science teachers to video tape themselves and reflect on the video. "They reflect on the good, the bad, and the ugly," noted Mrs. Tindell. "It was extremely powerful; every one of them said that was the most effective thing they had ever done!"



"The three [leaders of the study groups] worked very well together and the staff has been responsive to them as a group," commented Mrs. Pace. Because Harmony High School was graded as a "D" school last year, there was money to pay the teachers to attend the study groups. The professional development books are kept in professional library once the study groups finish with them and are available for all teachers to check out. It is worth noting that the study groups were created around topics that the teachers chose. Faculty members were surveyed to find out their professional needs and desires.

In the end, the groups provided context specific professional development for faculty members across content areas. Faculty members had opportunities to share with their colleagues and forge new professional relationships on the campus. Teachers coming together to work on their classroom practice in collaborative groups created a high degree of synergy. Improving teacher practice through teacher collaboration in study groups will have a positive impact on student learning.

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## Critical Thinking at St. Lucie West Centennial High School

submitted by Jocelyn Downs, FLARE Central Area Coordinator, [jdowns@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:jdowns@mail.ucf.edu)

It's Critical Thinking Day again at **St. Lucie West Centennial High**. Reading Coach Cynthia Mahaffey, High School Reading Coach of the Year for St. Lucie School District, developed this instructional practice last year. Concerned that instructional time was lost on early out days, she constructed a series of lessons around a central text. Providing materials to each teacher, and with the support of the administrative team, she encouraged each teacher to participate. The result was two-fold. Content area teachers saw how to incorporate literacy across the content areas, and new teachers were able to experience an excellent, highly detailed model of in depth planning that promotes engaging activities.



These Critical Thinking Days at St. Lucie West have created discussions and strengthened the focus of the Reading Leadership Team, as content area teachers such as science and math become eager to incorporate topics crucial to learning. For example, science teachers Debra Messer and Jackie Boyle are taking the lead in planning April's Critical Thinking Day around an Earth Day "Go Green" theme.

Talking to students at lunch time, it was obvious that all classes were participating in the activities. The topic for the March 26 Critical Thinking was Bugs in Your Food. The topic leads students to think about what they

eat, how important it is to wash their food, and to think about what they buy and even how laws are made. Having a common topic gives students and teachers discussion points.

The St. Lucie West Centennial team, including Principal Gayle Pike, presented this information at the 2007 Just Read! Leadership Conference. Since then, schools across Florida have contacted Cynthia and she's shared information on her different topics and activities. You may contact Cynthia at [mahaffeyc@stlucie.k12.fl.us](mailto:mahaffeyc@stlucie.k12.fl.us) for more information about how to motivate your school to think critically across all content areas!

### **Critical Thinking Day, Island Style**

submitted by FLARE Coordinator Jocelyn Downs [jdowns@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:jdowns@mail.ucf.edu)

At **Merritt Island High School**, Reading Coach D. Annette Gutches wrote a school-wide "Critical Thinking Day" for their student body pertaining to teens and alcohol. The focus was on Author's Purpose and Inference, with math and science both contributing activities relevant to the topic for the day. The Reading Leadership Team assisted by offering their input on the activities, as well as the way directions were written for all of the teachers to be able to easily follow them, even if they didn't teach the subject that was presented for that period.

Every teacher and student in the school participated in the "Critical Thinking Day" every period throughout the day. In each period, every teacher taught whatever activity was scheduled for that time, whether a math teacher was teaching Science, or an English teacher was teaching Math. It was truly a collaborative effort, supported by administration, Principal Gary Shiffrin and Assistant Principal Catherine Haulber.

At the end of the day, the entire student body (in two groups) went to a presentation in the auditorium to listen to a guest speaker who had firsthand experience with drinking and driving. She really drove home the day's activities, as she was just out of high school and the students were able to relate to her, and therefore make that "oh so important" connection. At the last Reading Leadership meeting, they debriefed and decided to continue with these days, focusing on topics relevant to the students. They will be tackling "Cyber-Bullying" and "Drug Abuse," topics overwhelmingly suggested by students in their 7<sup>th</sup> period debriefing papers next school year, one each semester. Debra will be writing these as well, with assistance from the Reading Leadership Team again. Please feel free to contact her [[Gutches.Debra@Brevardschools.org](mailto:Gutches.Debra@Brevardschools.org)] should you need more information.

*\*Note by Jocelyn Downs:* My children attend this school, and it was the first time in a few years that they came home and spontaneously shared something that had happened at school that day, without my questioning or prying. I shared this at a parent meeting, and several other parents had the same experience. My daughter said they spent the day reading, writing and discussing, but it was obvious that all of that set the stage for the guest speaker, who made a huge impact.

### **"Cat Chat Café"**

submitted by FLARE Coordinator Joseph Cloutier [jcloutie@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:jcloutie@mail.ucf.edu)

**Palatka High School** Reading Coaches, Sandy Sharp and Diana Wilson have successfully transformed a room off the school library as a modern and hip Reading Place with a coffee house type of atmosphere. Students are able to bring a book or pick something to read from within the Cat Chat Café. While there, they may purchase cocoa, tea, coffee and breakfast snacks just like at a coffee house for a nominal price of 50 cents. The Cat Chat Café is open Wednesdays the hour immediately before school begins. PHS staff was not sure how it would be accepted by the students, but the fact that so many students are willing to come to school early AND read proves the success. Every



week, the Cat Chat Café is full to capacity with young minds reading and talking about books. Students can sit at bistro tables to discuss their current readings or sit along the wall at individual seating areas that can be grouped in twos or threes. It is exciting to see the students so enthusiastic about reading. Principal Karen Hughes is quick to point out that there are lots of good things happening at the school and this is a great example. It is just one more initiative that Palatka High School has in place surrounding reading. It complements the ongoing “Sophie’s Choice” reading group that Media Specialists, Sophie Ducote and Katie Purcell, sponsor and the *Reading Counts!* program that has been in place for a while now. The artwork on the walls of the Cat Chat Café was contributed solely by the students in art classes at PHS. It really adds to the feel of coffee house and adds to the warm inviting atmosphere. Adolescent books were donated by a local bookstore in Palatka.

### **3. FLARE FLASH – Independent Reading with Teacher Support**

#### **Thinking about Independent Reading with Teacher Support**

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Independent reading in the classroom has taken on many different forms in K-12 classrooms. In reviewing the current literature, and thinking about what works best for kids, this newsletter offers ways of thinking about independent reading, much like other instruction practices that we support through our professional development. That is, developing a common language to support similar understandings in the purpose and the process, and modifying those activities (understandings) to support all students’ growth in literacy. A model for independent reading with teacher support in the classroom proposed by Heidi Trudel (2008) includes the following five key elements from originally proposed by Fountas and Pinnell (2001):

- Student selection of text with teacher guidance.
- Students maintain reading logs that include the components of author, title, genre, dates read, and student’s rating of text read.
- Student and teacher discussion around read text and mini-lessons to support quality discussions, including book selection criteria, choosing where to read, ignoring distractions, and monitoring their own comprehension.
- Students reflect, in writing, to their reading on a regular basis.
- The teacher does not read during the entire independent reading time.

A complete discussion on her findings is in her article in the December 2007/January 2008 issue of the *Reading Teacher*.

Traditionally, independent reading was synonymous with Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), which has been the focus of much discussion as to the validity of SSR as part of the curriculum structure during the school day. As you read the following articles on independent reading, I think you will see a pattern of suggesting a more interactive and responsive approach that “provides students with the self-selected reading time they need and the social supports that foster reading engagement” (Trudel, 2008, p. 309).

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## Successful Independent Reading with Teacher Support

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*The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.*  
~ often attributed to Mark Twain

Independent reading with teacher support is the kind of reading students choose to do on their own; it is not assigned or formally assessed. It involves personal choice, reading widely from a variety of sources, and choosing what one reads.

Research indicates, however, that many students do not choose to read often or in great quantities. In a series of studies involving hundreds of students, Morrow and Weinstein (1986) found that very few preschool and primary grade children chose to look at books during free-choice time at school. Greaney (1980) found that fifth-grade students spent only 5.4 percent of their out-of-school free time engaged in reading, and 23 percent of them chose not to read at all. Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson (1988) found that students spend less than 2 percent of their free time reading. Furthermore, as students get older, the amount of reading they do, decreases.

The importance of independent reading with teacher support in schools cannot be underscored. Providing school time for independent reading can enrich the content areas while it promotes the lifetime reading habit. Today, many teachers use Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) in innovative ways that are vastly different from the traditional view. Some teachers use the SSR period to conference with students and provide individual guidance. Other teachers allow time at the end of the silent reading period for students to talk with a partner about what they have been reading.

During independent reading time, the key is to get students started and to ensure that they enjoy their experience with books and that it becomes increasingly sustainable (Allen 2000). Jodi Crum Marshall, a National Board Certified Teacher (Early Adolescence/English Language Arts) expanded SSR to include read-alouds, writing, and accountability to scaffold struggling students. In her book *Are They Really Reading?*, she discusses how to find out if students are using SSR time wisely and what to do if they are not. Motivated by these additional supports, her students dramatically increased their interest and ability in reading through a program they named Supporting Student Literacy (SSL).

Supporting Student Literacy consists of three elements: sustained silent reading (SSR), sustained silent writing (SSW), and reading aloud (RA). Rather than insisting on complete silence during SSR, she encourages teachers to hold quick conferences with students to help them choose books and talk about what they are reading. She also suggests having students listen to audiobooks while following along with an exact copy of the text. This allows many students to have higher-level reading experiences with their own text, independently. It gives lower-level readers the ability to read, enjoy, and understand a story that would otherwise be too difficult for them.

For independent reading to be successful, we must strongly believe in its worth. Developing positive feelings toward independent reading among teachers and administrators is very important. Implementing school-wide efforts or a modified plan to use school time effectively for sustained reading throughout the school year is also equally important.

At Mater Academy Middle/High Charter High School, Yolanda Alonso, 11<sup>th</sup> grade reading teacher gives independent reading a new twist. Ms. Alonso places her students in groups of no more than four. Each student chooses a book which is approved by the teacher and that is at the student's independent reading level. During the first 15 minutes of each class, Ms. Alonso models a mini-lesson on the reading strategy she would like her students to practice while they read.

Students read silently for 20 minutes, as they read, they are encouraged to use the strategic activity modeled by the teacher. During the next 20 minutes each student shares his/her information with the other members of the

group. During the sharing time, the teacher circles the groups and asks questions. She also makes sure students are discussing their journal information on the story and strategic activity presented.

To be a high quality teacher of an independent reading program, teachers must take the role of researcher, facilitator, listener, questioner, motivator, and most important, reader. Teachers must model positive behaviors by reading as much as they possibly can. As Jodi Crum Marshall puts it, "...you should think of your classroom as a giant book club" (p. 55).

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## Increasing Student Independent Reading with Teacher Support in the Content Area

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Increasing students' independent reading is a task that all teachers face. Often we look at the Language Arts or Reading teacher for this responsibility, however I want to challenge all content teachers to ask how they can assist with this endeavor. We need students to increase their independent reading not only with literary text but they also need to increase the time they read expository text.

As I work with a variety of schools, it seems as if our conversation always goes back to vocabulary and support for students across the curriculum with expository text. This is understandable since understanding key concepts is imperative to understanding text; especially content specific text. Strategic activities need to be in place in order for students to have multiple experiences with useful, difficult, and content specific vocabulary. This approach for attacking expository text (essays, speeches, lab procedures, journals, government documents, newspaper and magazine articles, and directions, among other things) will provide students the opportunity to understand how this type of text works so that when they attack this type of text independently they will have the tools to be successful.

While each type of text shares certain characteristics with the others, they each make their own demands on the reader through the unique use of structure, devices, features, and conventions. We need to teach students how to read each type as they encounter it if they are to read them successfully.

Expository text differs from narrative in a variety of ways. A narrative text includes such elements as a theme, plot, conflict(s), resolution, characters, and a setting. Expository texts, on the other hand, explain something by definition, sequence, categorization, comparison-contrast, enumeration, process, problem-solution, description, or cause-effect. This requires educators to provide practice with this text. Often educators think of practice as writing spelling terms or looking up definitions. Some more creative ideas may even involve flash cards. In the infamous words of Dr. Phil, "How's that working for ya?"

If you have tried a traditional approach and feel you have not provided the depth of support your students require, some examples for exploration may be found in Jim Burke's (2006) *Reading Reminders: Tools, Tips, and Techniques* and may provide alternative activities to explore. They include:

- identify the elements of a paragraph and read them
- recognize the transitional words that signal important information or a shift in focus
- establish the genre (e.g., cause-effect, definition, persuasive)
- organize the information within an expository text into an outline for subsequent analysis
- annotate such texts for a specified purpose
- summarize paragraphs or sections of the text as they read along
- pre-read these texts according to the current purpose
- use available information such as subheadings to orient and focus their reading
- identify the main ideas throughout the text
- develop their own questions and apply them to the text
- create their own study guides
- take effective notes for subsequent discussions or writing assignments

We know from research that new terms must be defined using language and examples which are already familiar to students, and that the more ideas from background knowledge with which the student can associate the new term, the more likely it will “stick” and become a permanent part of memory.

Because vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are so highly related, effective content area vocabulary instruction must provide students both with intentional instruction in specific content-related words and concepts and with strategic activities that help them to learn words independently. These skills are necessary for understanding and give the foundation needed for students to read expository text independently.

With teacher guidance, students practice using strategic activities as they read trade books or specialized content area supplements, as well as their content area textbooks. Students should be asked to demonstrate the application of a strategic activity and to be provided with reasons for using it. Encouragement for continued use comes in the form of teachers using prompting, elaboration, and continued explanation to foster students’ independent use of strategies.

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## Independent Reading with Teacher Support

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Independent reading with teacher support is one key to effective independent reading for students. Without teacher support, independent reading could very easily become silent reading, a time when students *pretend to read*. For struggling readers, independent reading can be a time of total frustration. Jan Hasbrouck asks a very important question, “What about those students who struggle with basic reading skills and who may not use their silent reading time well—either wasting time by doing little to no reading or writing, or trying to read materials that cause frustration because they are too difficult?” (2006, ¶ 4) Teacher support during independent reading does not mean teachers should interrupt students as they are reading, but rather help to make the reading flow smoothly as the student progresses in their reading. With teacher support, students can be motivated to read and gain more knowledge about what they are reading. Independent reading with teacher support offers students a variety of tools good readers use as they read. With teacher support, students are awarded with the choice of selecting rich literature, using important strategies before, during and after reading, and time to set and reach personal reading goals.

***The power of choice!*** When teachers give students the opportunity to choose books at their reading and interest level, they empower their students to select and read rich literature comprised of both fiction and non-fiction text. Where there is no interest there is no motivation. The critical component of independent reading is providing children access to enticing books (Allington, 1998). Having a wide variety of books, magazines, articles and short stories in the classroom would make choice more available to students.

Classroom libraries are needed to offer these choices. Teachers beginning to build or add to existing libraries will find it very valuable to involve students in the text selection process. They will begin to take ownership since their interests were considered from the beginning and they have a choice in what to read during their independent reading time. Choice and interest along with finding just the right text for the right kid are huge motivating factors towards getting to participate in the independent reading process.

Having given them their choice of their individual interest in the materials available, they are now reading independently. Next, it is equally important for students to have time to discuss with the teacher or their peers the text they are reading. This contributes to expanding their knowledge and comprehension of the selected text.

Giving students their choice and engaging them in independent reading will lead to educating a group of critical and independent thinking adults. As Fisher and Frey in their latest book, *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility*, state, “The ultimate goal of our instruction is that students can independently apply information, ideas, content, skills, and strategies in unique situations” (p. 9).

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## Reading Independently: Evidence of the Emergence of a True Reader and the Implications

Marlene Cabrera, FLARE Area Coordinator [mcabrera@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:mcabrera@mail.ucf.edu)

Many of us have had to read a novel or two as part of a course or through our educational journey, but did we as an adolescent pick up a book to read for pleasure? Do we as adults read only what is asked of us at the workplace or do we have the desire for that quiet time when we can read something of our choice just for pleasure? The answers to these questions and many more were addressed by the National Endowment for the Arts in a report, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*, published in November 2007. The report is a current thorough analysis of reading behaviors of children, teens, and adults. It documents how “nearly half of all Americans ages 18 to 24 read no books for pleasure” (p. 7). Furthermore, the “percentage of 18- to 44-year-olds who read a book fell 7 points from 1992 to 2002” (p. 7). The study goes on to say that the percent of college students that read literature has declined 18%.

Why is this significant and how would it impart learning? Simple—time spent reading independently impacts learning. The NEA report correlates the number of books at home with test scores and voluntary reading and found as the number of books at home declined, so did the test scores of the twelfth graders in the study. Secondly, looking across demographic groups, different age groups are compared as well finding that “reading test scores for 9-year-olds—who show no declines in voluntary reading—are at an all-time high” (p. 12) while “17-year-old average reading scores began a slow downward trend in 1992” (p. 12). A research report from the National Center for Educational Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1997*, also illustrates the importance of independent reading and states that “research has found that reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally” (p. 84).

Based on the research, we can conclude that independent reading has an impact on student achievement. The declining reading of adults who can be role models for our children and teenagers will continue to have an

effect as well. Therefore, the role of the teacher and the culture of the school is imperative in fostering that love of reading and promoting independent reading. Many educators might say that we are encouraging our students to read by assigning novels and sponsoring school wide initiatives as SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) or DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) but are these programs on their own fostering independent readers once students have left the school grounds?

Independent reading is reading that a person does based on their personal preference or choice and it is voluntary. Yet many students do not come with that ‘habit’ or passion. Therefore, schools can begin to foster this behavior with programs previously mentioned or with in class novels. One of the schools I work with, Miami Senior High, for example, has a program called “Reading Rocks” where students are given the first fifteen minutes of every class period for independent reading. This program is only effective because the teachers are committed to help students choose the ‘right’ book. The ‘right’ book looks differently for each student based on his/her reading level, interests, and genre preferences. In a recent Washington Post article by Valerie Strauss, the question of maturity and age appropriateness seem to be factors for selecting the ‘right’ text for each child especially for younger children including gifted children. Teachers use a variety of accountability measures. Dr. Denight, a teacher at Miami Senior High, says that he uses technology to do the things he cannot do, which is read every book the students are reading; he uses the software to help him monitor and acknowledge the student’s reading progress. Many of his students had read six to eight novels on their own by mid school year and are now avid readers.

Kelly Gallagher, a classroom teacher and author, published *Reading Reasons* based on the premise that students need to have rationale of why reading is valuable for intrinsic reasons rather than extrinsic motivators. In some cases, for example, students are often bribed into reading to get a pizza coupon or other rewards and therefore the students do not understand the intrinsic reasons why reading for pleasure can be beneficial. These literacy conversations help students reflect and ‘buy-in’ to the idea that reading is a good thing.

In addition, in his most recent text, *Deeper Reading*, Gallagher provides teachers with a framework model for teaching challenging text in the classroom: framing the text, read carefully, return to the text, collaboration, metaphorical and reflective response. How would a classroom assigned text impact independent reading? For many adolescents, it is the classroom experience that can hook them into reading. Because there is an evident decline in independent reading, it is often the classroom assigned reading materials that students use to judge themselves as readers. Based on the success, failure or enjoyment of a class novel students create judgments or labels for themselves and place themselves in categories of either ‘reader’ or ‘non-reader’. According to Pamela Mueller in her book *Lifers: Learning from At-risk Adolescent Readers*, we as educators also stifle students: “once the kindergarten teacher places the child in the low reading group, she is doomed to stay there forever” (p. 9). By using Gallagher’s framework or other instructional practices, the teacher can make independent readers of his/her students. Gallagher suggests bringing relevancy, real life concerns to text conversations, aiding students to think metaphorically by the kinds of questions or through re-reading, and providing support through discourse, read alouds, and reflection.

Reflection can be guided by using the following rubrics to either assess the students or to have them complete it as a self-assessment. Sometimes as an educator, parent, or individual we can make assumptions. Knowing the research and trends for independent reading, I decided to complete this survey about my daughter’s own behavior as a reader and then of myself as the adult role model. I realized that I thought my daughter was proficient reader because I was remembering that elementary child that read more than a dozen books in a year. What I found supported the research—she was now a progressing reader and in some categories perhaps developing. I also reflected that I too was in the same category using my time for work required reading and infrequently reading for pleasure. My daughter recently came home with a book title that a friend of hers, who happens to be a proficient reader and is always recommending books, suggested my daughter read. So my daughter and I are now progressing and hopefully becoming emergent independent readers. I hope this independent reading rubric from Linda L. Cornwell (2002) helps others reflect on their own reading progress and that of the students they encounter in order to promote independent readers.

### Materials Selection

Developing	Progressing	Proficient
Rarely selects materials at his or her independent reading level.	Frequently selects materials at his or her independent reading level.	Consistently selects materials at his or her independent reading level.
Limits reading choices to a narrow range of topics or a single genre.	Reads beyond favorite topics, genres, and authors.	Reads a wide variety of genres, authors, and topics.
Often has difficulty in selecting appropriate independent reading materials without assistance.	Occasionally needs assistance in finding appropriate independent reading materials.	Finds appropriate independent reading materials without assistance.

### Engagement/Attitudes

Developing	Progressing	Proficient
Often complains about reading and fails to exhibit pleasure in independent reading.	Generally exhibits a positive attitude toward independent reading.	Frequently expresses pleasure regarding independent reading.
Does not exhibit confidence as a reader.	Generally exhibits confidence as a reader.	Consistently exhibits confidence as a reader and sees himself/herself as a reader.
Fails to set reading goals and reads a minimal amount during the allotted time.	Sets realistic reading goals and usually achieves those goals during the allotted time.	Sets high reading goals and reads the maximum amount during the allotted time.
Rarely finishes the material chosen for independent reading.	Finishes most selections chosen for independent reading.	Rarely abandons an independent reading selection before finishing it.

### Reading Behaviors

Developing	Progressing	Proficient
Seldom has material available and ready to read.	Generally has material available and ready to read.	Consistently has material available and ready to read.
Is unable to sustain focus or read without interruption for the allotted time.	Usually sustains focus and reads without interruption for the allotted time.	Reads continuously without interruption for the allotted time.
Continuously seeks peer or teacher assistance in reading the material.	Self-corrects before seeking peer or teacher assistance and requires a minimum amount of help from others in reading the material.	Rarely requires peer or teacher assistance in reading the material.
Uses reading time inappropriately: disrupts others, daydreams, doodles, wanders about the room, doesn't read, etc.	Generally uses reading time appropriately.	Consistently uses reading time appropriately.

## Accountability

Developing	Progressing	Proficient
Rarely completes the reading log after independent reading.	Generally completes the reading log after independent reading.	Consistently and accurately completes the reading log after independent reading.
Rarely reflects upon and/or shares thoughts about what he or she has read.	Generally reflects upon and shares thoughts about what he or she has read.	Consistently reflects upon, shares thoughts about what he or she has read and makes connections to self and others.
Rarely recommends reading materials to others.	Frequently recommends reading materials to others when asked.	Voluntarily and continuously recommends reading materials to others.

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### 4. Suggested Professional Resources

The following are suggested professional resources; many are available for checkout from the FLARE library:

- Allen, J. (2000). *Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to Independent reading 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Barton, M. (2001). *Teaching reading in science*. Aurora, CO: McREL.
- Beers, K. (2003). *When kids can't read: What teachers can do: A guide for teachers 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Billmeyer, R., & Barton, M. L. (1998). *Teaching reading in the context areas: If not me, then who?* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Brozo, W. G. (2002). *To be a boy, to be a reader: Engaging teen and preteen boys in active literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Calkins, L. M. (2001). *The art of teaching reading*. New York: Longman.
- Chapman, C., & King, R. S. (2003). *Differentiated instructional strategies for reading in the content areas*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Cole, A. D. (2004). *When reading begins: The teacher's role in decoding, comprehension, and fluency*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Collins, K. (2004). *Growing readers: Units of study in the primary classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Daniels, H., & Zemelman, S. (2004). *Subjects matter: Every teacher's guide to content-area reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Doty, J. K., Cameron, G. N., & Barton, M. L. (2002). *Teaching reading in mathematics*. Aurora, CO: McREL.
- Doty, J. K., Cameron, G. N., & Barton, M. L. (2003). *Teaching reading in social studies*. Aurora, CO: McREL.
- Fitzpatrick, J. (1998). *Reading strategies that work: Helping young readers develop independent skills*. Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press.
- Flippo, R. F. (2005). *Personal reading: How to match children to books*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guiding reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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- Gipe, J. P. (2002). *Multiple paths to literacy: Classroom techniques for struggling readers*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement* (2nd ed.). York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
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- Keene, E. O., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lenski, S. D., Wham, M. A., & Johns, J. (2003). *Reading and learning strategies: Middle grades through high school*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Lesesne, T. S. (2003). *Making the match: The right book for the right reader at the right time, grades 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Lyons, C. A. (2003). *Teaching struggling readers: How to use brain-based research to maximize learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Miller, D. (2002). *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in primary grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Moore, D. W., Alvermann, D. E., & Hinchman, K. A. (Eds.). (2000). *Struggling adolescent readers: A collection of teaching strategies*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Opitz, M. F., & Ford, M. P. (2001). *Reaching readers: Flexible and innovative strategies for guided reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Peterson, B. (2001). *Literary pathways: Selecting books to support new readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Rasinski, T. V., Padak, N. D., Church, B. W., Fawcett, G., Hendershot, J., Henry, J. M., et. al. (Eds.). (2002). *Motivating recreational reading and promoting home-school connections: Strategies from the Reading Teacher*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- Routman, R. (2002). *Reading essentials: The specifics you need to teach reading well*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Smith, M. W., & Wilhelm, J. D. (2002). *Reading don't fix no Chevys: Literacy in the lives of young men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Strickland, D. S., Ganske, K., & Monroe, J. K. (2002). *Supporting struggling readers and writers: Strategies for classroom intervention, 3-6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Tierney, R. J., & Readence, J. E. (2005). *Reading strategies and practices: A compendium*. Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.
- Wilhelm, J. D., Baker, T. N., & Hackett, J. D. (2001). *Strategic reading: Guiding students to lifelong literacy, 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Worthy, J., Broadus, K., & Ivey, G. (2001). *Pathways to independence: Reading, writing, and learning in grades 3-8*. New York: Guilford Press.

## 5. On-Line Independent Reading with Teacher Support Resources

### *Literacy Matters – Content Literacy*

Do you teach social studies, science, or mathematics? Do you have students who struggle with the reading and writing needed to develop concepts and content knowledge in your discipline? If so, this section of **Literacy Matters** offers you “the best of the best on the Web”—web sites containing background information, research-based instructional strategies, lesson plans, sample activities, guidelines, book lists, and resources to strengthen your students' literacy skills, and thus, strengthen their content learning.  
<http://www.literacymatters.org/content/intro.htm>

### *Secondary Content Teacher Reading Strategies*

This resource from **Omaha Public Schools** provides reading strategies for comprehension and vocabulary.  
<http://www.ops.org/reading/secondarystrat1.htm>

### *Read About Best Practices in Independent Reading*

**Benchmark Education** shares these tips for best practices in K-2 and 3-8 independent reading. Topics include: Introduction/Overview, What Is Independent Reading?, Determining Each Student's Easy Reading Level, Organizing for Independent Reading at the Emergent and Early Levels, Instructional Framework for Independent Reading at the Transitional and Fluent Levels, and Sample Management Mini-Lesson for Independent Reading.  
<http://www.benchmarkeducation.com/educational-leader/reading/k-2-independent-reading.html>  
<http://www.benchmarkeducation.com/educational-leader/reading/3-8-independent-reading.html>

### *Developing Reading Plans to Support Independent Reading*

**ReadWriteThink** provides this lesson plan. Headings include: Overview, From Theory to Practice, Student Objectives, Instructional Plan, and Student Assessment/Reflections.  
<http://www.learnnc.org/lessons/Readwritethink2006062154>

### *Research and Best Practice Resources – Independent Reading*

**AdLIT (Advancing Adolescent Literacy Instruction Together)**, a project of the Ohio Department of Education, provides access to 90 different resources focused on research and best practices in independent reading.  
[http://www.ohiorc.org/adlit/professional\\_resources.aspx?topicid=6](http://www.ohiorc.org/adlit/professional_resources.aspx?topicid=6)

### *Literative – Teaching Children to Read*

**Literative** provides an online program that is comprised of carefully leveled guided readers, comprehensive phonic activities and a wealth of supplemental reading material which gradually develop a child’s reading skills in a sequential and enjoyable manner. All the material is available for free from this site but you need to register.

<http://www.literative.com/Home/index.asp>

### *Plan for and Monitor Independent Reading*

An excerpt from R. Routman’s *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well*, 2002.

<http://books.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00492/chapter6.pdf>

### *Independent Reading*

PowerPoint from M. Page and E. Owens that describes the independent reading model they use with their first graders.

<http://coe.winthrop.edu/corps/Independent%20Reading%20in%20the%20Lower%20Grades%20by%20Owens%20and%20Page.ppt>

### *Guided Reading Process to Support Independent Reading*

PowerPoint from FLARE Coordinator Pamela Rader that adapts from Fountas & Pinnell’s *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*, 2001.

<http://flare.ucf.edu/prader/Guided%20Reading%20Process%20to%20Support%20Independent%20Reading.ppt>

### *Guided Reading with Emergent Readers*

Article from J. Clidas that defines guided reading and discusses how guided reading supports emergent readers.

<http://www.bebopbooks.com/images/pdfs/intro.pdf>

### *Making the Most of Guided Reading*

C. P. Miller shares a checklist of how you can make the most of guided reading in your classroom.

[http://www.education-world.com/a\\_curr/columnists/miller/miller011.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/columnists/miller/miller011.shtml)

## **6. Upcoming Conferences and Activities**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>April 2008</b>
4	UCF COE 10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Literacy Symposium <i>Literacy for Now and Beyond: Celebration, Inspiration, and Innovation</i> Orlando, FL <a href="http://education.ucf.edu/litsymposium/index.cfm">http://education.ucf.edu/litsymposium/index.cfm</a>
18 - 20	2008 Secondary Reading Council of Florida Conference Panama City, FL <a href="http://www.flsrc.org/">http://www.flsrc.org/</a>
<b>Dates</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
4 - 8	53rd IRA Annual Convention <i>Engaging Learners in Literacy</i> Atlanta, GA <a href="http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/annual.html">http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/annual.html</a>
<b>Dates</b>	<b>June 2008</b>
21 - 27	2008 ALA Annual Conference Anaheim, CA <a href="http://www.ala.org/ala/events/eventconferences.htm">http://www.ala.org/ala/events/eventconferences.htm</a>
6/26 – 7/2	NECC 2008 San Antonio, TX <a href="http://web.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2007/program/NECC2008.php">http://web.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2007/program/NECC2008.php</a>

<b>Dates</b>	<b>June 2008</b>
6/29	Florida Literacy Coaches Association First Annual Institute Orlando, FL <a href="http://www.floridaliteracycoaches.org/">http://www.floridaliteracycoaches.org/</a>
6/29 – 7/2	7th Annual Just Read Florida Leadership Conference Orlando, FL <a href="http://www.justreadflorida.com/conference/">http://www.justreadflorida.com/conference/</a>
<b>Dates</b>	<b>September 2008</b>
4 - 7	FRA 46 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference <i>Reading: Your Passport to the World</i> Orlando, FL <a href="http://www.flreads.org/Annual%20Conference/annual.htm">http://www.flreads.org/Annual%20Conference/annual.htm</a>
28	2008 National Book Festival Washington, DC <a href="http://www.loc.gov/bookfest/">http://www.loc.gov/bookfest/</a>

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**FLaRE is a Project of the University of Central Florida College of Education and administered under a grant from the Florida Department of Education and Just Read, Florida!**

