

# Higher Order Questions and Higher Level Talk About Text

## CIERA School Change Project

Patterson Elementary

### Timeline

Spring/Fall 2002

August 28, 2002

October 21, 2002

#### **I. Development of a School-wide Focus for Literacy**

#### **II. Data Report**

#### **III. Professional Development Session I**

##### A. Talk about it

##### 1. What and Why?

##### a. What are we talking about? What are higher order questions (HOQ's)? What is higher level talk about text?

(1) Higher order questions invite students to *make connections* between a given text and their experience, between a text and the world, between a text and its author, between one part of a text and another.

(2) Cognitive moves associated with HLLT: explaining, interpreting, predicting, evaluating, inferring beyond the information given.

##### b. Why are we talking about this?

(1) Addresses specific needs at Patterson based on teachers' observations and student assessment data.

(2) Relates directly to school-wide literacy goals established by teachers.

(3) Research points to the efficacy of HOQ and HLLT.

##### c. How does this connect to what we are already doing?

##### 2. Dispelling Myths about HOQ & HLTT

a. Myth 1: Higher order talk about text is a good thing to do only after we are sure that kids can get the words right and the facts straight.

b. Myth 2: Students must be able to read thematically complex texts on their own in order to have higher level conversations about text.

c. Myth 3: Higher level talk about text is mainly opinions and personal response.

d. Myth 4: Questioning is a natural teacher behavior that requires little planning.

##### 3. How to promote higher level talk about text

##### a. Comprehension strategies and routines:

##### b. Conventions of "book talk" discourse:

(1) Conversational norms

(2) Conversational moves

##### c. Types of higher level questions

##### B. See it

##### 1. Fishbowl with PD team

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2. Show video tapes of classrooms using HOQ & HLLT. Identify: (1) Types of teacher talk/questioning; (2) Types of student talk; (3) Established norms/conventions of the conversation
3. Discussion: What foundational work was likely required to get the kids on the video engaging in this type of discussion? What would be required to get us to the point where we felt comfortable posing these kinds of questions? What would be required to get students to the point where they could engage in these kinds of discussions?

C. Try it

1. Small group discussions of same text

D. Apply it

1. Brainstorm places where these kinds of questions can be posed (where these conversations can take place).
2. Using actual text from classrooms, develop HOQ's that can be used to lead discussions

October 2002

**IV. Check-in with Teachers**

- A. Conduct interviews and informal conversation with teachers: What have they done? What more they would like to know? Where they would like us to go next? What difficulties have they confronted? What conventions of book talk are most and least difficult for students?

Examples of questions gleaned from these discussions:

1. When working with small group, what is everyone else doing? How are the other kids getting the maximum learning and impact from their time? How can the work the students do independently support the book discussions?
2. How can this be done with students who are too young to read thematically rich books? What are some ways to initiate student who can't read complex texts into higher level conversations?
3. What is coaching versus telling versus modeling versus scaffolding?
4. How can we structure the class so kids can work cooperatively? How can we get students to talk to each other, instead of the teacher?
5. What is the process for developing higher level questions for book discussions?
6. How does all of this apply to written response?
7. How does all of this apply to nonfiction texts—social studies and/or science?

November 4, 2002

**V. Professional Development Session II: Planning and Problem-solving**

- A. Model planning process for book discussions using HOQ's

1. Two examples of the planning process: How did we select a text? What characteristics did we look for? How did we develop questions and plan a discussion? What are the meaningful differences between the higher order questions we developed and the basal questions?
2. Grade-level and genre modifications: How would we plan differently using different texts—fiction versus non-fiction, read aloud versus student-read text? What should we do before and after reading? When does it make sense to take more than one pass

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through a text? When using read aloud, how do we interject opportunities for discussion without breaking the flow of the text and interfering with meaning-making?

3. Conceptualizing book discussions using a gradual release model

B. Discuss/demonstrate ways to initiate students into conventions of book talk

**1. Preparing students to participate in high-level discussions about text.**

- a. Make the goals and expectations of book talk clear.
- b. Explicitly teach strategies (conversational and comprehension). Clarify *how to discuss* and *what appropriate responses sound like*.
  - (1) E.g., Clarify the differences between classroom talk and out of school talk—ways that we take turns, etc.
- c. Model the strategies.
- d. Provide guided practice.
- e. Scaffold the discussions to support the development of interpretations (evolution from impressions into supported interpretations) and conversational skills:
  - (1) Use questions to invite students to use their strategies and to enter conversation in appropriate ways.
  - (2) Provide sentence stems aid.

**2. Modeling Methods**

- a. Arrange for students to observe video demonstrations or fishbowls with adult models or expert student models. (Adults can model both discussions that work and discussions that do not work for various reasons.) Lead an analysis of these models.
- b. Have students read (alone or aloud, taking parts) a transcript of their own discussion. Teachers ask what was going on, what went well, what needed improvement.
- c. Think aloud for students while reading to model various strategies. This is more applicable to comprehension strategies, but can also model preparation for discussion

**3. Getting the Conversation Started**

- a. Pose a higher level question.
- b. Invite students to pose questions.
- c. Invite students to read from their reading logs/journals.

**4. Writing Connections**

- a. Reading logs or journals: encourage students to respond to their reading and to use specific comprehension strategies. The response logs become the basis for book club discussion (Raphael & Boyd, 1997). Invite students to make predictions based on what they know about the genre, another book by the same author, etc.

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- b. Quick writes that tap into students' initial understandings (Langer and Close, 2001). E.g.:
    - (1) Jot down what you were thinking as you finished the piece.
    - (2) List the questions we need to talk about.
    - (3) Write about what bothered (concerned, interested, delighted) you at the end of the story or tell your partner about the part that stands out for you.
    - (4) Draw a picture of what you see.
    - (5) Write down words or phrases that seem important or puzzling.
  - c. Think sheets: more structured response format: specific models or prompts support students' use of newly acquired strategies. E.g., comparison/contrast think sheet.
  - d. Extended writing opportunities (Raphael & Boyd, 1997)
    - (1) Developing theme-related essays: gives students the opportunity to think about the big issues raised within their discussions and step back and reflect about how the readings and discussions influenced their beliefs. Students review their earlier writing about the text (if any), brainstorm ways they now think about the issue, connect current beliefs to personal experiences, ideas from the text and ideas from earlier logs, and develop an essay to share their beliefs about the issue.
    - (2) Writing about genre (e.g., compare two folktales; write about features of folktales)
    - (3) Informational writing (as preparation for upcoming reading)
  - e. Written conversations between pairs of students: communicate ideas and ask questions
- C. Teachers work in groups to prepare a discussion of texts from their classrooms.
- D. Discuss next steps.

February 24, 2003

**VI. Professional Development Session III: More Problem-solving: Practical Solutions and Activities**

- A. Distribute summary of related approaches (Questioning the Author, Reciprocal Teaching) and activities (anticipation guides, double-entry journals, read arounds), and articles (e.g., Weincek & O'Flahavan, 1994)
- B. Practice using anticipation guides, conversational moves, and read arounds as small group centers.

April 7, 2003

**VII. Professional Development Session IV: Sharing and Problem-solving**

- 1. Videos of teachers using HOQ/HLLT
- 2. Video of centers for primary grades (watch/try)
- 3. Center applying Questioning the Author for upper grade teachers.

June 2, 2003

**VIII. Closing: Taking stock**

- 1. Discussion and Survey

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- (1) What have you tried?
- (2) What were your successes/what worked?
- (3) What were your obstacles/what didn't work?
- (4) Which students benefited most—which presented challenges, which took to it right away?

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