



Using Collaborative Strategic Reading

by Janette K. Klingner and Sharon Vaughn

CSR [Collaborative Strategic Reading] is an excellent technique for teaching students reading comprehension and building vocabulary and also working together cooperatively. I think it is wonderful. We have been using it with the social studies text and it's turned out beautifully (Lucille Sullivan, fifth-grade teacher).

CSR is great for kids with learning disabilities because they contribute to their groups and feel successful, and they get the help they need with their reading (Sallie Gotch, Special Education Inclusion Teacher).

Lucille Sullivan and Sallie Gotch teach heterogeneous intermediate-grade classes that include students with learning disabilities. They learned Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional approach for multilevel classrooms and have been implementing it for a year or more (see box, "What Is Collaborative Strategic Reading?"). These teachers are enthusiastic about CSR because they believe it has improved their students' reading comprehension, increased their vocabularies, enhanced cooperative skills, and enriched content area learning.

In this article, we describe how to teach CSR to your students.

PHASE 1. TEACHING THE STRATEGIES

Students learn four strategies as part of CSR's Plan for Strategic Reading: Preview, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap Up (see Figure 1). *Preview* is used only before reading the entire text for that lesson, and *Wrap Up* is used only after read-

ing the entire text for the lesson. The other two strategies, *Click and Clunk* and *Get the Gist*, are used many times while reading the text, after each paragraph or two.

In the following sections we provide an overview of how to teach each of the strategies:

Preview

Students preview the entire passage before they read each section. The goals of previewing are (a) for students to learn as much about the passage as they can in a brief period of time (2-3 minutes), (b) to activate their background knowledge about the topic, and (c) to help them make predictions about what they will learn. Previewing serves to motivate students' interest in the topic and to engage them in active reading from the onset.

Introduce previewing to students by asking them whether they have ever been to the movies and seen previews. Prompt students to tell you what they learn from

Figure 1 CSR's Plan for Strategic Reading

Before Reading

1. Preview

- a. **Brainstorm:** What do we already know about the topic?
- b. **Predict:** What do we think we will learn about the topic when we read the passage?

R E A D (the first paragraph or section)

During Reading

2. Click and Clunk

- a. Were there any parts that were hard to understand (clunks)?
- b. How can we fix the clunks? Use fix-up strategies.
 - (1) Reread the sentence and look for key ideas to help you understand the word.
 - (2) Reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after the clunk looking for clues.
 - (3) Look for a prefix or suffix in the word.
 - (4) Break the word apart and look for smaller words.

3. Get the Gist

- a. What is the most important person, place, or thing?
- b. What is the most important idea about the person, place, or thing?

R E A D (Do Steps 2 and 3 again, with all the paragraphs or sections in the passage.)

After Reading

4. Wrap Up

- a. **Ask questions:** What questions would show we understand the most important information? What are the answers to those questions?

provided for students to write down their predictions of what they might learn, followed by 1 minute to share their best ideas.

You may teach students the previewing strategy from the beginning of the school year and before they read aloud or silently. Like most of the CSR strategies, you may apply it across the curriculum. By using previewing in different subject areas, students become highly familiar with the strategy and its use. They will also have had opportunities to watch you model and apply the strategy with the class as a whole, making its implementation in small groups easier.

Click and Clunk

Students click and clunk while reading each section of the passage. The goal of clicking and clunking is to teach students to monitor their reading comprehension and to identify when they have breakdowns in understanding. *Clicks* refer to portions of the text that make sense to the reader: “Click, click, click”—comprehension clicks into place as the reader proceeds smoothly through the text. When a student comes to a word, concept, or idea that does not make sense, *Clunk*—comprehension breaks down. For example, when students do not know the meaning of a word, it is a clunk.

Many students with reading and learning problems fail to monitor their understanding when they read. Clicking and clunking is designed to teach students to pay attention to when they are understanding—or failing to understand—what they are reading or what is being read to

previews by asking questions like the following:

- Do you learn who is going to be in the movie?
- Do you learn during what historical period the movie will take place?
- Do you learn whether or not you might like the movie?
- Do you have questions about what more you would like to know about the movie?

When students preview before reading, they should look at headings; words that are bolded or underlined; and pictures, tables, graphs, and other key information to help them do two things: (a) brainstorm what they know about the

topic and (b) predict what they will learn about the topic. Just as in watching a movie preview, students are provided minimal time to generate their ideas and discuss their background knowledge and predictions.

Tiffany Royal teaches in a fifth-grade inclusion class with 34 students (nine with learning disabilities and the others of mixed achievement levels). She gives her students 1.5 minutes to write down everything they already know about a topic in their CSR Learning Logs (see the description of CSR Learning Logs in the “Materials” section). Students then share their responses with one another for about 1 minute. Another 1.5 minutes are

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them. The teacher asks, “Is everything clicking? Who has clunks about the section we just read?” Students know that they will be asked this question and are alert to identify clunks during reading.

After students identify clunks, the class uses “fix-up” strategies to figure out the clunks. Tiffany Royal teaches her students to use “clunk cards” (see above) as prompts to remind them of various fix-up strategies. On each of the clunk cards is printed a different strategy for figuring out a clunk word, concept, or idea:

1. Reread the sentence without the word. Think about what information that is provided that would help you understand the meaning of the word.
2. Reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after the clunk looking for clues.
3. Look for a prefix or suffix in the word.
4. Break the word apart and look for smaller words you know.

As with the other strategies, you may teach students the *click and clunk* strategy from the beginning of the year and use it in various contexts. Students apply these fix-up strategies at first with help from the teacher and then in their small groups.

Lucille Sullivan encourages her students to click and clunk throughout the day. She noted:

Another reason I like this technique is that there is a transfer. The students will be reading in the cafeteria, and they say “Hey, look at this clunk word, what does it mean?” and that just thrills me.

Get the Gist

Students learn to *get the gist* by identifying the most important idea in a section of text (usually a paragraph). The goal of getting the gist is to teach students to restate in their own words the most important point as a way of making sure they have understood what they have read. This strategy can improve students’ understanding and memory of what they have learned.

When you teach students to “get the gist,” prompt them to identify the most important person, place, or thing in the paragraph they have just read. Then ask them to tell you in their own words the most important idea about the person, place, or thing. Teach students to provide the gist in as few words as possible while

What Is Collaborative Strategic Reading?

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) teaches students to use comprehension strategies (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) while working cooperatively (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Students of mixed achievement levels apply comprehension strategies while reading content area text in small groups of five students each.

Initially, the teacher presents the strategies (*preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap up*) to the whole class using modeling, role playing, and teacher think-alouds. After students have developed proficiency applying the strategies through teacher-facilitated activities, the teacher asks them to form heterogeneous groups, where each student performs a defined role as students collaboratively implement the strategies.

Although CSR was designed to be used with expository text, it can also be used with narrative text. It is highly compatible with a range of reading programs, including literature-based instruction, basal reading programs, and eclectic or balanced approaches.

The goals of CSR are to improve reading comprehension and increase conceptual learning in ways that maximize students’ involvement. Developed to enhance reading comprehension skills for students with learning disabilities and students at risk for reading difficulties, CSR has also yielded positive outcomes for average and high achieving students (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, in press).

conveying the most meaning, leaving out details.

Carmel Johnson taught the gist this way. She would ask students to think about the passage they had just read and to write down the most important person, place, or thing in the sentence. She would then call on individual students to obtain their responses. She would ask other students which answer was best and why. Then she would ask students to work alone or in pairs to write the gist of the passage. She would then ask students to read their *gists* aloud and to invite other students to comment on the effectiveness of the gists, thus refining the skills of all the students.

Wrap Up

Students learn to *wrap up* by formulating questions and answers about what they have learned and by reviewing key ideas. The goals are to improve students' knowledge, understanding, and memory of what was read.

Students generate questions that ask about important information in the passage they have just read. The best way to teach *wrap up* is to tell students to use the following question starters to begin their questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how (the 5 *Ws* and an *H*). It is also a good idea to tell students to pretend they are teachers and to think of questions they would ask on a test to find out if their students really understood what they had read. Other students should try to answer the questions. If a question cannot be answered, that might mean it is not a good question and needs to be clarified.

Teach students to ask some questions about information that is stated explicitly in the passage and other questions that require an answer not right in the passage, but "in your head." Encourage students to ask questions that involve higher-level thinking skills, rather than literal recall.

With her fifth-grade students, Tiffany Royal emphasizes that every question can be made into an even better question with the addition of the phrase, "Why do you think that?"

To facilitate students' ability to generate higher-level questions, you may provide *question stems*, such as the following:

- How were ___ and ___ the same? Different?
- What do you think would happen if ___?
- What do you think caused ___ to happen?
- What other solution can you think of for the problem of ___?
- What might have prevented the problem of ___ from happening?
- What are the strengths (or weaknesses) of ___?

To review, students write down the most important ideas they learned from the day's reading assignment in their CSR Learning Logs. They then take turns sharing what they learned with the class. Many students can share their *best idea* in a short period of time, providing the teacher with valuable information about each student's level of understanding.

PHASE 2. COOPERATIVE LEARNING GROUP ROLES

Once students have developed proficiency applying the comprehension strategies through teacher-led activities, they are ready to learn the roles they will perform while using CSR in their peer-led cooperative learning groups.

Roles are an important aspect of CSR because cooperative learning seems to work best when all group members have been assigned a meaningful task. Roles should rotate on a regular basis so that students can experience a variety of roles and so that everyone takes a turn being the Leader. Students can perform more than one role at a time, if necessary. Possible roles include the following:

- *Leader*. This student leads the group in the implementation of CSR by saying what to read next and what strategy to apply next. The leader asks the teacher for assistance, if necessary.
- *Clunk Expert*. This student uses clunk cards to remind the group of the steps to follow when trying to figure out a difficult word or concept.
- *Announcer*. This student calls on different group members to read or share an idea. He or she makes sure everyone participates and only one person talks at a time.
- *Encourager*. This student watches the group and gives feedback. He or she looks for behaviors to praise. The stu-

dent encourages all group members to participate in the discussion and assist one another. He or she evaluates how well the group has worked together and gives suggestions for improvement.

- *Reporter*. During the whole-class wrap-up, this student reports to the class the main ideas the group learned and shares a favorite question the group has generated.
- *Time Keeper*. This student sets the timer for each portion of CSR and lets the group know when it is time to move on (the teacher might do this instead of students).

MATERIALS

The following materials may be helpful as you assist students to use both cooperative learning techniques and comprehension strategies. For example, cue cards or sheets can be effective reminders of cooperative learning roles.

Cue Sheets

Cue sheets outline the procedures to be followed in cooperative learning groups and provide structure and support for students while they are learning CSR. Each role comes with a corresponding cue sheet that explains the steps to be followed to fulfill that role (see Figure 2, page 36, for a sample). Cue sheets seem to help students stay focused and on task, and increase their confidence. Students should discontinue use of the cue sheets when they feel secure in carrying out their roles.

CSR Learning Logs

CSR learning logs enable students to keep track of learning "as it happens" and provide a springboard for follow-up activities. Logs furnish an additional way for all students to participate actively in their groups. Logs can be used for recording ideas while applying every strategy, or only used for some of the strategies (e.g., for writing down clunks and key ideas). Logs might be kept in spiral-bound notebooks or journals made by folding paper in half and stapling on a construction paper cover.

You may create a different learning log for each social studies or science unit; these logs provide written documentation

The best way to teach wrap up is to tell students to use question starters: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

b. Review: What did we learn?

Figure 2 CSR Leader's Cue Sheet

Before Reading Preview:

- S: We know that today's topic is _____.
- S: Let's brainstorm and write everything we already know about the topic in our Learning Logs.
- S: Announcer, please call on people to share their best ideas.
- S: Now let's predict and write everything we think we might learn about from reading today.
- S: Announcer, please call on people to share their best ideas.

During Reading READ:

- S: Who would like to read the next section? Announcer, please call on someone to read.

Click and Clunk:

- S: Did everyone understand what we read? If you did not, write your clunks in your learning log.
- S: (if someone has a clunk): Announcer, please call on someone to say their clunk.
- S: (if someone has a clunk): Clunk Expert, please help us out.

Get the Gist:

- S: What is the most important idea we have learned about the topic so far? Everyone think of the gist.
- S: Now we will go around the group and each say the gist in our own words. Announcer, please call on someone to share their answer.

Go back and do all of the steps in this column over for each section.

After Reading Wrap Up:

- S: Now let's think of some questions to check if we really understood what we read. Everyone write your questions in your Learning Log. Remember to start your questions with who, when, what, where, why, or how.
- S: Announcer, please call on people to share their best questions.
- S: In our Learning Logs, let's write down as many statements as we can about what we learned.
- S: Announcer, please call on people to share something they learned.

Compliments and Suggestions:

- S: The Encourager has been watching carefully and will now tell us two things we did really well as a group today.
- S: Is there anything that would help us do even better next time?

of learning and become excellent study guides. Some special education teachers have even used CSR learning logs to document that students were meeting the objectives on their individualized education programs (IEPs) (Chang & Shimizu, 1997).

Reading Materials

CSR was designed primarily to be used with expository text found in social studies and other content area textbooks, yet CSR can also be used with narrative text. You should select reading material with well-formed, interesting passages that are conducive to strategy application. Such material is characterized by the following:

- Providing clues that help students predict what they will be learning.

- Having one main idea in a paragraph.
- Providing context that helps students connect information.

We recommend that when you begin CSR you use the *Weekly Reader*, *Junior Scholastic*, or a similar nonfiction publication that captures students' interest and can be read in a short time.

Timer

A timer is optional. Kitchen timers that students set by themselves can help groups to remain on task and not get excessively bogged down with any one strategy or step in the CSR process. For example, the timekeeper might say, "We have 10 minutes to write down everything we already know about the topic."

Then the timekeeper would set the timer for 10 minutes.

An alternative is for the teacher to set one timer and direct students in their groups to carry out the strategies for a set period of time. We recommend using this procedure for at least the first few days that students work together in groups so that they can develop an understanding of how the process works. Yet once groups can function more autonomously, they should be encouraged to do so.

TEACHER'S ROLE IN MONITORING GROUPS

Once you have taught the strategies and procedures to students and they have begun working in their cooperative learning groups, your role is to circulate among

the groups and provide ongoing assistance.

You can help by actively listening to students' conversations and if necessary clarifying difficult words, modeling strategy usage, encouraging students to participate, and modeling a helpful attitude. It is expected that students will need assistance learning to work in cooperative groups, implementing the strategies, and mastering academic content.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

You may use many activities to reinforce the key vocabulary and important ideas students have learned from reading the day's passage, and also to assist you in monitoring students' learning. Each group might complete a different follow-up activity, and then share their products with the rest of the class.

For example, one group might prepare a semantic map; another group, mnemonic devices; another, "Clunk Concentration"; another, a Venn diagram; and another, theme pictures. Students can also prepare games and activities as homework.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The teachers we have worked with like what happens in their classrooms: Once students learn the strategies (preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap up), they can apply them in cooperative groups. Teachers also value the demonstrated gains that students make on their reading achievement tests. Tiffany Royal, an inclusion teacher and expert CSR implementer, stated:

What I like best is that my students learn how to understand what they read while they improve their vocabulary. Also it helps on our end-of-the-year Stanford Achievement Tests.

CSR can be used in general education classrooms where students with special needs are included for instruction (Klingner et al., in press) as well as in special education settings (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996).

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Read More About It

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