

STUDENTS LIVE AND BREATHE *CRISS* IN SUE DAILEY'S CLASSROOM

The hallmark of success for those of us involved in Project *CRISS* occurs when students *live* *CRISS* theory. Strategies are part of a student's life when students apply them independently to their own learning. As teachers, we know and breathe theory; it has become the "heart and life" of our teaching. Yet, how can we spread this deep internalization of theory to our students. We can't keep it to ourselves. We must give it away, but how?

Sue Dailey, one of our national trainers, provides some answers through a magnificent series of lessons with her seventh grade social studies students. Her students could talk a good line about theory, but did they really know and use it? Sue had already taught her seventh graders how to do a variety of *CRISS* strategies. During this teaching, she also stressed theory as students discussed when and why to use certain techniques. But, did they really get it? She decided to hit this question head-on during a unit on the Oregon Trail.

She began by dividing her students into small groups of three to four students and asking them to brainstorm within their group ways that they could prepare themselves for reading the assignment about the Oregon Trail. After the brainstorming and a class discussion of possibilities, each group responded to a question about their pre-reading plan and wrote about it in their journals. One group responded:

Entry 1: WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO FOR A PRE-READING PLAN?

My group decided to find the definitions of the vocabulary words because we want to understand what the words are when we read the chapter later. We decided to read the introduction because we thought it would help to set us up for what we are going to read and learn. Then we put our ideas on a KWL sheet.

After making this decision, the students carried out their plans individually as homework and shared with each other the following day. Yet, Sue didn't stop here. She wanted them to think "metacognitively" and so asked for a response to another question.

Entry 2: HOW DID YOUR PRE-READING STRATEGIES HELP YOU TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO READ? DO YOU FEEL READY TO READ TODAY?

Doing these things before we read helped me to gain some background knowledge. If you know a little bit about what you're going to read, you can understand it a little better. Also, knowing the vocabulary words I think will help me understand what I'm reading. If you know all the words, the facts all fit together and you can remember longer and understand what you're reading.

Next, the groups made decisions about strategies for processing the information during reading and discussed why they thought these particular strategies would be helpful. Again, they wrote in their journals:

Entry 3: WHAT ACTIVE STRATEGIES DID YOUR GROUP DECIDE ON AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THEM?

My group decided to underline and take marginal notes while we read. We thought that it would help to underline, but some things are kind of confusing and you don't know for sure what to underline, but you understand what it means, so you just have to jot down the facts on the side.

After making their strategy decisions, they used them as they completed their homework assignments. The next day, they talked about what they learned and how well the strategies worked. Then they wrote in their journals again.

Entry 4: HOW DID YOUR DURING-READING STRATEGIES HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE MATERIAL? WHY WAS THIS CHOICE A GOOD ONE FOR YOU?

Journal entry 4 strategy: underline and discuss what we underlined. This helped me

understand the material because I had to think about what I read, so it stuck in my head more. This is a good strategy for me because it's easy to re-read for the test or when I need quick information.

After talking about these issues, students discussed which transformation strategies would be most helpful and then assigned themselves homework. Again, Sue asked them to process further through writing.

Entry 5: WHAT AFTER-READING STRATEGIES DID YOUR GROUP DECIDE TO USE FOR TRANSFORMING THE INFORMATION?

Carrie is doing a web. Sarah is doing a drawing map. And I will do a time-line to show the important parts of the Oregon Trail.

The following day, the groups talked about whatever strategies they had selected (picture maps, concept maps, summaries, power notes) within their groups. Sue then reminded them that they were the only ones who could evaluate how their learning was going and challenged them to come up with a plan for self-testing.

Entry 6: EXPLAIN HOW YOU PROCESSED YOUR INFORMATION IN YOUR GROUP. NOW, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SELF-TEST?

My group made picture conceptual maps to process the information. This really helps me to understand because while I am drawing the information goes into my memory and stays there. To self-test, I look at my pictures and tell myself out loud what they mean.

The next day, Sue led a whole class discussion reviewing major concepts about the Oregon Trail. She also told them about certain items that would definitely be on the test so they could add them to their self-testing plans. Sue doesn't believe in surprises. Everyone has the right to do well! When the students felt ready, she gave them the test. After finishing, Sue asked them to reflect on the strategies they had used.

Entry 7: THINK ABOUT ALL OF THE STRATEGIES YOU USED TO LEARN ABOUT THE OREGON TRAIL. WHERE DO YOU THINK REAL LEARNING TAKES PLACE?

With all the strategies that I used I think they really helped me. I think these strategies don't really help unless you know what your purpose for doing all this work is for. You could just copy right out of the text and hand in your work and when test time comes you'd be clueless. I did as much as I could to learn metacognitively about the Oregon Trail. The strategy that helps me the most with these reading strategies is a picture map or conceptual map. I understand the Oregon Trail very well now. I think two-column notes and self-testing helped me a lot, too.

Including discussion and writing about learning as part of content instruction gives students an opportunity to begin *living* strategies. Students don't really "get it" unless *strategy processing* occurs as part of daily assignments. Sue also warns that a one-time lesson sequence like the one just described is not enough. Talking and writing about learning must be a year-long, daily event. Every learning situation is different; task demands change; students' knowledge about learning changes. Learning is dynamic, not static. One "learning fix" won't stick. Our job in turning CRISS theory over to our students is an unending, daily challenge!

About the author: Sue Dailey has taught junior high in School District 5, Kalispell, Montana, for many years.

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