

One Speech Therapist's View

By Jill Shedd, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

As a speech pathologist in an elementary school, I am always trying to find new and interesting things to do with my students. I teach in a small group setting, which affords me the opportunity to get right into the students' brains in ways the general classroom teacher can't. Because I have previously worked with brain-injured adults as well as children in various settings, I enjoy multimodal presentations of curriculum or language re-training.

One afternoon, while looking for innovative materials to rejuvenate my repertoire, I happened across a book that introduced different kinds of visual organizers. Being the cheapskate I typically am, I thought I would be able to adapt one of the forms without having to buy the whole book. What surprised me was the more I tweaked the form, the more I began thinking of my training in CRISS. I pulled the big book of magic tricks (as I refer to my CRISS manual and notes) off the shelf, and found similarities in a few of the ideas presented there. (See Chapter 6 in the CRISS training manual, pages 147-149, Story Plans.)

With the fifth grade writing assessment coming up, I thought I would use some CRISS organizers as springboards for my literature-based language activities in the speech room. I used the frameworks to help my students organize their ideas. I was able to help students arrange their information into key ideas to formulate concise paragraphs and summaries about the stories they read. I could facilitate

the use of rehearsed phrases or sentences to bridge to other ideas, and it was a great way for me to assess the students' learning for different literary concepts.

With some students, I could show success by engaging them in cooperative learning situations. Other students, who usually complain any time you put a pencil in their hands, were able to come up with more than one simplistic sentence to review the book we read together. Finally, the students who usually meet challenges that lead to nonsuccess were able to see where certain key components of a book review came from.

Although I am afforded a small group setting, I have to push my speech and language impaired students into the curriculum. My scope of practice in the school setting is contingent on the students' success in general academics. In an Individual Educational Plan, some of the goals I write might include determining the main idea, providing supportive details of a passage, and using descriptive language and fluent ideas. These have typically been taught through literature-based language intervention. The Story Plan organizer is useful to address all these goals. Students who are exposed to these organizers can see the benefits of outlining information and experimenting with different organizational aids. Two sample book report forms follow this article.

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About the Author: Jill Shedd has worked as a Speech and Language Pathologist for the past fifteen years. She currently works at Pate's Creek Elementary School in Stockbridge, Georgia. She and her husband (also an educator) have two boys, ages 15 and 11. Jill tells us she enjoys the school's wonderful library, where she finds books for most of her language and speech lessons. It is rumored that she hopes to become a professional Storybook Reader when she grows up.



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