

Conference Notes by Susan [srldmo@yahoo.com](mailto:srldmo@yahoo.com)  
2005

I was at the Literacy Conference at the American International College in Springfield MA and Stephanie was the keynote speaker. Ann Goudvis, Karen Szymusiak and Franki Sibberson were also at the conference, but unfortunately I couldn't be in 3 places at one time!

Stephanie said some things that I think are worth repeating:

The keynote was about **The Inner Conversation**. She spoke about increasing "purposeful talk" between kids. She uses the **Turn and Talk** method. She frequently stops when working with a group and has them talk to each other. If she senses that she's not getting a response, she tells the kids to turn and talk.

During the keynote she spoke about an interactive read aloud. Teachers model the thought process and then kids sit with clipboards and jot down what their inner voice says as they read. This allows them to **make their thinking visible**. Then they turn and talk about their thoughts.

The whole day was definitely anti-worksheet kinds of activities. The message was to have the students read, write, talk and investigate. She showed a picture of a classroom from the 50's (?) where the desks are in straight rows as opposed to what we would expect in a classroom now where kids are in groups so they can talk. She talked about the acronym STR= Stop Think & React. Having kids develop their inner voice is essential. 70% of what kids read should be their choice, while 30% should be "managed choice" (teacher chosen materials for a purpose).

Interesting method called Read, Write & Talk. The kids read a text (she used non-fiction as an example) and write their thoughts in the margins as they read. Then they share their inner conversations with a partner. On the back of the paper she has them answer 2 questions: 1. Write something you learned (content); 2. How did turn and talk help you understand what you read? She stressed that reading textbooks requires the MOST interaction if kids are to make sense of the material.

She spoke a lot about using poetry and gave us poems to use to practice hearing our "inner voice".

She had a list of all of the strategies but she really only made it through Inferring.

Connections: She talked about "common connections" students make which are connections that might be considered birdwalks. But she said that it's important to acknowledge these types of connections even if they don't help the student dig deeper into the text. We should always support student thinking. She suggested making a sheet that has the headings: My Connection/ Why it's important to me/ Why it's important to understanding the text.

Visualizing: while visualizing in fiction is a movie in your head, visualizing in non-fiction is like a slide show. (Great analogy that she got from a student). While you may use post-its for areas of confusion in fiction and getting lost in it are positive, in non-fiction getting lost is a negative and you need post-its to show tracks of your thinking.

Inferring: She talked about the equation for this: Background Knowledge + Text Clues = Inferring. She used the term **merge** instead of plus, which I think is a wonderful explanation of what you do when you infer. When using non-fiction, many times the subheadings require that you infer the idea since they are using terms to get your attention. For example, if an article was about energy, one of the subheadings might be Blowing in the Wind.

She showed a session from Strategic Thinking videos for grades 4-8 where she worked with an eighth grade class on inferring. I would get the set!!! She uses the term Big Idea instead of main idea.

In discussing testing, she encouraged the thinking that test taking is a genre. When they have questions about the author's purpose, they really are asking what the test writers thought the author's purpose was. It's important to discuss this with your students and make them understand that what they do day to day is NOT what is required on a test. It's just life.

Here are some books and materials she mentioned:

Do I Really Have to Teach Reading? by Cris Tovani

Things I Learned Today by Stafford

The Place My Words are Looking for by Paul Janeczko

[www.comprehensiontoolkit.com](http://www.comprehensiontoolkit.com) for grades 3-6

Choice Words by Peter Johnston (Stenhouse)

Gleam & Glow by Eve Bunting