CHAPTER 2

Responsive Instruction for Student Independence

Teaching to foster student independence is one of the distinguishing features of the ISA and ISA-X. We begin this chapter by defining responsive instruction and student independence, and provide a rationale for why responsive teaching that promotes independence may be useful. We describe continua of reading accuracy and comprehension, and how these can be used to plan instructional content that is responsive to the needs of different readers. After describing some of the factors that influence how independently a student can think and solve problems, we detail some aspects of responsive teaching that promote student independence.

Rationale: What Is Responsive Instruction, and Why Is It Important?

In this book, we use the term *responsive instruction* to describe a process in which a teacher collects information about what an individual reader already knows how to do and what that reader is ready to learn. That information is used by the teacher to set instructional priorities and to select appropriate learning activities and reading materials for the reader. Responsive instruction includes monitoring the student's progress toward attaining the objectives that the teacher has set and revising and updating these objectives as appropriate. This view of responsive intervention is similar to the process described in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; 2004), which recognizes the right of all learners to receive instruction that appropriately addresses their individual needs.

We also use the term *responsive instruction* in a second way, to describe the "in-the-moment" decisions that teachers make as they respond to and support learners. In their interactions with intermediate and middle grade students, intervention teachers offer challenge so that students grow, and support so that students have positive and meaningful reading experiences. In this chapter, we detail ways to appropriately balance challenge and support for readers, with the goal of promoting students' abilities to read and learn independently.

As we noted in the previous chapter, each reader in grades 3–8 presents a unique set of characteristics, because each reader has learned some things but not others in the years of reading instruction that occurred previously. Because of their unique characteristics, it seems unlikely that a single program of instruction could be successful with all intermediate and middle grade readers, and research confirms this supposition. When teachers use a "one-size-fits-all" program in an effort to improve older readers' comprehension, it may result in little to no improvement, at least as indicated by performance on standardized tests (Wanzek et al., 2013). Even when older readers are selected for intervention because they all have the same type of instructional need (e.g., they all need to improve reading accuracy), uniform or scripted instruction has often not produced the desired improvements in comprehension (Vaughn et al., 2011; Wanzek & Roberts, 2012).

In contrast, research has shown that helping teachers to learn a responsive approach has positive effects on comprehension. Several investigations of responsive teaching for intermediate grade readers have resulted in significant effects on students' reading comprehension (Connor et al., 2011; Coyne et al., 2013; Gelzheiser et al., 2011, 2017; see also Simmons, 2015).

In this book, we advocate a responsive approach; we seek to enhance teachers' knowledge and skill related to reading processes and instruction so that they may better respond to readers. We suggest ways that teachers can observe and listen to students as they read, in order to identify students' abilities to apply word identification strategies as they puzzle through words they cannot readily identify. In later chapters and on the website for this book (see the box at the end of the table of contents), we include more structured interviews and assessments that can be used to identify students' interests, their understanding of the reading process, and where they stand with regard to basic reading skills. For each observation tool or assessment, we provide suggestions as to how the findings can guide the development of appropriate instructional plans to help the students attain the goals listed in Chapter 1.

To facilitate responsive planning, we encourage teachers to record observations of their students during each lesson. These ongoing observations allow teachers to determine the focus and support that will be appropriate in future instruction.

In responsive instruction, teachers plan differentiated instructional content that responds to students' current reading skills. Individual students may be taught different skills, strategies, and information. They may engage in different kinds

of practice activities and read different texts. For purposes of clarification, we describe students' needs relative to continua for reading accuracy and comprehension. This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Rationale: What Is Student Independence, and Why Is It Important?

In this book, we use the term *independent reader* to describe someone who:

- Is alert to situations in which a problem has arisen (e.g., a word has been misidentified).
- Has tools and knowledge that are useful for tackling puzzles or challenges encountered while reading (e.g., words that the reader doesn't recognize).
- Has the inclination to solve these puzzles without support from the teacher or peers.
- Spontaneously and willingly does the thinking that is needed when puzzling words or ideas are encountered in text.

Many intermediate and middle grade readers in intervention are not independent readers. Thinking is difficult, so students may avoid it (Willingham, 2009). If readers have previously encountered too many challenges while reading, this can convince them (and perhaps their teachers) that they can be successful only if they rely on teacher support.

Of course, the intervention teacher is available to provide support for only a limited part of the day. If during intervention students develop the motivation to read and tools that they can use independently to solve words and understand puzzling ideas, then they are positioned to continue to grow as readers throughout the day and, ideally, eventually they will no longer need intervention services. However, if students do not become motivated to read and do not develop the confidence that they can address word identification and comprehension challenges on their own, this growth may not occur. Throughout this book, teachers will see reference to developing student independence. Fostering independence involves providing students with the skills and strategies that will enable them to be independent thinkers as they read, and then providing appropriate opportunities for students to practice their new ways of thinking.

To promote student independence, teaching changes as students develop proficiency. When readers are in the *acquisition stage* and just learning a new skill, a new way of thinking, or new knowledge, the teacher provides explicit modeling and a purpose for what is being learned. This initial phase is brief; most instruction involves the teacher gradually reducing the support provided to students as they progress through *consolidation* of the skill. This reduction in support is

often called a *gradual release of responsibility* (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The amount of support a teacher provides responds to what students know and can do independently.

Student independence and teacher support may vary depending on the challenge presented to students at a particular moment. At times during the consolidation stage, the language or ideas in what students are reading may be more challenging, so the teacher may need to step in temporarily and assume more responsibility, or even provide more teacher-led instruction if needed.

Reading Puzzles

Readers may encounter several different types of puzzles to solve while reading. A reader who can readily identify only a limited number of words will frequently need to solve the puzzle of the identity of an unknown word. In Chapters 5 and 6, we describe how to teach students to independently solve these puzzles by using strategies that we refer to as *word identification strategies* (the reader will find these listed in Chapter 5, Figure 5.1).

Written materials often offer clues from the author that the reader must puzzle over to discern their meaning. For example, in a chapter called "Dragons and Giants" in *Frog and Toad Together,* Frog and Toad decide to test themselves to see whether they are brave. They encounter a snake, an avalanche, and a hawk. Each time, the author has them say, "I am not afraid!" but also describes them as "shaking," then "trembling," and finally, "they ran all the way to Toad's house." Toad hides under the covers, and Frog shuts himself in the closet, and "they stayed there for a long time, just feeling very brave together" (Lobel, 1971, p. 51). A reader who independently notices these conflicting clues and makes appropriate inferences will feel a sense of accomplishment and have learned a wonderful lesson about human nature. In Chapter 15, we describe how to help students to more independently engage in thinking about text.

A puzzle that the reader can solve with some effort leads to a feeling of accomplishment. However, putting effort into a puzzle and being unable to solve it can lead to discouragement. As detailed in Chapter 3, appropriate challenge during reading will encourage students to see themselves as readers and thinkers. If the teacher does too much of the thinking about a text or a word for the students, it will not promote students' sense of themselves as effective thinkers (Johnston, 2004).

In this text, we use the term *puzzle* deliberately, and avoid language such as "being stuck on a word." Solving a puzzle is enjoyable, while encountering a hard word and being stuck may be discouraging. In our work with teachers, we have also encouraged them to try to avoid using words like *tricky* and *hard* in referring to challenging words or passages in text because for some students, knowing that the teacher perceives a word or passage to be tricky or hard, may lead them to not even bother trying to solve the puzzle.

Understanding the Reading Process: Factors That Influence Student Independence

Human minds, when engaged in thinking, problem solving, and comprehending spoken or written language, have a certain amount of capacity that limits how much information can be processed at one time. Mental capacity can be allocated flexibly, but the mind can do only so much and no more. If a reader is asked to process too much information, and the demands exceed the limit of the reader's processing capacity, the system may function less well or shut down altogether.

The electricity available on a given circuit breaker is a useful analogy to the limits of mental capacity. Electricity can be allocated flexibly—that is, it can be used to run a toaster or a hair dryer or lights. But there is a limit to the capacity of a circuit breaker. Running the toaster, hair dryer, and air conditioner all at the same time will probably overload the system, causing the circuit breaker to trip and all the appliances to shut down. Similarly, people's ability to think will become overloaded or shut down if they are asked to do a task that is too complex for them and/or involves processing too much information at one time, especially information that is not well understood.

"Information overload" is especially common when learners are acquiring a new skill, strategy, or knowledge. This is because conscious, deliberate, and effortful mental activity uses up much more capacity than a skill or activity that has become fluent and automatic. Teacher support during the acquisition of a new skill, strategy, or knowledge helps to prevent information overload. It is often not possible for students to independently do something that they are just learning.

As skills and strategies become practiced and, ultimately, automatic, they require little mental capacity to perform. For example, when a student no longer has to puzzle through a word to identify it but can identify it automatically, reading that word requires little capacity. Practice to the point of automaticity has the effect of increasing the readers' available capacity because less thought needs to be devoted to the previously deliberate skill. This newly available capacity may then be allocated to other aspects of reading, such as constructing meaning. As a reader's proficiency with a newly learned skill or strategy increases, less teacher support is needed, and more independence can be expected of the reader.

Student independence is enhanced if teachers *respond to the unique needs of students in intervention by teaching for success*. The teacher can prepare students to be successful as they read by teaching them appropriate ways of working together in the group, providing them with resources that support independence, communicating how the instruction in the intervention setting supports the general education curriculum, and engaging them in lots of reading and thinking in which they can succeed. These practices are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Instructional Decision Making: Planning Differentiated Content That Is Responsive to Readers' Current Abilities

In learning about the ISA-X intervention approach, teachers have found it useful to organize the diverse capabilities of intermediate and middle grade readers along two independent continua: reading accuracy and comprehension. Students' positions along these continua give teachers some general instructional priorities and help teachers to decide how to allocate instructional time in a way that will maximize learning. Of course, along the continua individual readers will vary widely. The purpose of the continua is to provide some general patterns that we have observed in work with readers and that teachers may find useful, while acknowledging that each student is unique.

The Accuracy Continuum

At one end of the continuum for reading accuracy are some intermediate and middle grade readers who are extremely limited in their ability to identify words fluently and accurately. Our research samples included some third, fourth, and even seventh graders who could not accurately read text that a typical beginning first grader is expected to read. For these students, instructional goals included daily instruction and practice in word identification strategies. They also had goals to learn to quickly and automatically read the most commonly occurring words, often referred to as *high-frequency words*, and to acquire knowledge of decoding elements. Chapters 4–9 provide detailed guidance about addressing the accuracy skills of such students. In the ISA-X research, because of their extreme accuracy difficulties, these readers did not participate in formal comprehension instruction, although comprehension was addressed throughout as students were reading and discussing the meaning of a variety of texts.

At the opposite end of the accuracy continuum are readers who can readily identify most of the words in grade-level texts, but who do not yet meet standards for comprehension. Our research sample included many students who qualified for intervention because of their comprehension scores, but whose reading accuracy was at or above grade level. The needs of these readers are not addressed specifically in this book, although teachers may find that Chapters 3 and 10–12 on motivation, comprehension, knowledge development, and vocabulary provide useful instructional guidance for these readers.

Many of the intermediate and middle grade readers we have encountered fall somewhere in the middle of the accuracy continuum. They have acquired some, but not all, of the decoding knowledge that can support strategic word identification. They know some, but not enough, of the high-frequency words, and often they are not fully strategic in how they use their knowledge to identify unfamiliar words. Some of these readers need additional reading practice so that they use their knowledge and strategies more fluently and build their knowledge of the

writing system in so doing. Assessment and observation, as described in Chapters 6, 7, and 9, can allow teachers to determine the strategies for word identification, high-frequency words, and decoding knowledge that each reader has not yet learned, and then to target instruction and practice so that it addresses these gaps. A focus on developing these word-level skills will be a daily feature of instruction for these students, but depending upon the unique pattern of students' knowledge and skills, the teacher may choose to alternate among strategy, high-frequency words, and decoding elements instruction instead of addressing all of the areas daily. These readers may also benefit from instruction focused on comprehension skills and strategies, depending upon where they fall on the comprehension continuum described below.

A student's position on the accuracy continuum should change as he or she is provided with responsive instruction. Using what they observe during oral reading and in discussion, teachers can update their instructional objectives on an ongoing basis. As a student progresses on the accuracy continuum, the number of occasions and the amount of time devoted to accuracy instruction would decrease.

The Comprehension Continuum

At one end of the continuum for reading comprehension are some intermediate and middle grade readers who are much better at reading the words than in constructing meaning from text. Our research samples included some third, fourth, and seventh graders who demonstrated comprehension of text only when the text was two or more grade levels below the level at which they could read text with accuracy. This book does not address comprehension instruction for readers with this profile, although Chapters 3, 11, and 12 on motivation, knowledge development, and vocabulary are relevant to such readers.

At the other end of the continuum for reading comprehension were students who were active thinkers and problem solvers in relation to the meaning of what they read. Many of the intermediate and middle grade readers in our research sample made appropriate inferences and thoughtful observations about what they were reading; these were students who required intervention only because of limited reading accuracy. These students had already learned most of the content and routinely engaged in the ways of thinking discussed in Chapter 15, and so explicit instruction for these students mainly focused on developing reading accuracy and engaging them in as much reading as possible. Early in the intervention, teachers were encouraged to have students read as much as possible so as to enable them to guide the development of the readers' word-solving strategies and skills.

Many of the intermediate and middle grade readers we have encountered fell somewhere in the middle of the comprehension continuum. They demonstrated some, but not all, of the ways that proficient readers think as they read. Chapter 15 provides guidance on fostering these readers' thinking, while maintaining a focus on developing reading accuracy. These students may be in need of some

accuracy-focused instruction, depending upon where they fall on the accuracy continuum.

A student's position on the comprehension continuum should change as he or she is provided with responsive instruction. Using what they observe during oral reading and in discussion, teachers are encouraged to update their instructional plans on an ongoing basis. As a student progresses on the comprehension continuum, the number of occasions and the amount of time devoted to comprehension fostering instruction will decrease as it becomes habitual for the student to focus on meaning construction while reading.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how the ISA-X lessons might vary, depending upon students' accuracy and comprehension skills. These lessons assume a group of three students, as was used in the ISA-X research.

	Students with Very Limited Accuracy	Students with Moderate Accuracy and Moderate Comprehension Needs
Rereading	Two students reread texts that provide practice with a specific decoding element while the teacher reviews high-frequency words with the third student.	All students silently reread an informational text with the purpose of sharing additional information they learned by rereading.
Teacher-led instruction	The teacher provides an activity to develop knowledge of a new decoding element to all students.	The teacher provides an explicit introduction to marking important information in the text to all students.
Reading and discussion	Before reading novel text, students are reminded to apply the word identification strategies they have been taught.	Before reading novel text, students are reminded to apply the word identification strategies they have been taught and to mark new information they encounter in the text.
	Students read a new book that allows them to practice the newly learned decoding element, and a book related to the content theme that includes some unfamiliar words so that students can practice the word identification strategies they have been learning.	Students read several short books related to the content theme. These books are relatively challenging, to provide students with opportunities to apply their word identification strategies. Students mark new information while they are reading.
	The teacher observes and provides support and feedback about strategy use.	The teacher observes and provides support and feedback about strategy use.
	Students take individual turns reading orally to the group; later, they read orally to a partner.	Students read orally to a partner and read silently.
	The teacher encourages students to comment on one major idea of the text. Students are encouraged to reflect on strategy use.	The teacher encourages students to comment on the major ideas of the texts. Students are encouraged to reflect on strategy use.
Written response	Students briefly note one fact they learned from the theme book.	Students write a short paragraph about information they found interesting in the reading.

FIGURE 2.1. Sample lesson formats for two different reading groups.

Instructional Decision Making:
Providing Teacher Support That Fosters Student Independence

Overview

To efficiently promote student understanding, instruction needs to be explicit as students are acquiring new knowledge. As students begin consolidating their skill or understanding, instruction provides carefully structured support and practice that allows students to act more independently. Student learning culminates with opportunities for students to perform independently and reflect on what they have learned. What follows is a summary of how instruction and the level of teacher support varies with the phase of student learning. It is based on a detailed description provided by Meichenbaum and Biemiller (1998).

Careful observation and record keeping by the teacher will reveal students' phase of learning, which can be used to adapt instruction accordingly. Knowing how instruction changes with student competence can help teachers to plan and teach more effectively and responsively.

Acquisition

When students are first acquiring new knowledge or a new skill or strategy, they can be described as being in the *acquisition phase* of learning. Assessment or observation by the teacher can be used to decide whether a skill, strategy, or concept is not yet known by students. Often, intervention students in the intermediate and middle grades have gaps in their knowledge, so explicit and comprehensive lessons may be required to fill those gaps. In other cases, somewhere in students' educational careers they have acquired some knowledge of an element, topic, or strategy, but they have not consolidated that knowledge. Learners who have some knowledge are in the consolidation phase, and instruction can begin with a brief review followed by consolidation activities, rather than an extended acquisition lesson.

The acquisition of new skills and strategies places heavy demands on the readers' thinking. Teachers are encouraged to set priorities for the learning of new content, and to carefully pace that instruction so that learners are not overwhelmed.

Explicit Introduction

During the acquisition phase of student learning, the teacher's role is to provide an explicit introduction, while the students' role is to listen and begin to learn. The most efficient introduction is highly explicit and the result of careful planning on the part of the teacher. When skills and strategies become automatic (as they are to the teacher), it is sometimes difficult to make them explicit. Planning provides the teacher with the opportunity to carefully consider the demands of the skill or strategy to be learned, and to identify ways to make them accessible to the student. In subsequent chapters, we provide many examples of explicit introductions, with

the expectation that these can serve as models for other lessons that teachers plan on their own.

A teacher introduction during acquisition provides precise information about *what* the reader is learning to do. It also specifies *when* this new skill or strategy will be used and *why* it is useful (Duffy, 2009; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). For example, in introducing a strategy, the teacher is encouraged to point out to students when and why the strategy will be helpful. The teacher introduction also includes a demonstration that shows students *how* to execute the strategy or thinking. Demonstration might include an explanation of how to do a particular thing. Further, when students are first learning a strategy or a way of problem solving, it is often useful for the teacher to share his or her thinking using a *think-aloud model* of the strategy's application. In a think-aloud model, the teacher provides an example of the kind of thinking and problem solving that he or she would like the reader to use (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011). Examples of think-aloud models are provided in the acquisition lessons throughout this book.

Precise Language

Some ISA-X teachers have found it helpful to script out what they want to say in an explicit introduction. Others preferred to list the key phrases and examples that they planned to use. The website for this book (see the box at the end of the table of contents) includes templates that teachers can use as they write their own explicit introductions for some of the types of lessons illustrated in the text. In any case, instructional language will be most helpful to students if it is both precise and accessible (understandable) to students.

Consolidation

After an acquisition lesson has been taught, there may be some students who can start to apply the new knowledge with limited independence. However, most students, especially those in intervention, need additional support if they are to learn to use new ways of thinking or strategies independently. They benefit from teaching that allows them to *consolidate* and *reflect* on what they are learning.

Practice

If a skill or strategy is truly new to the learner, or when the learner has some knowledge of the strategy but does not use it consistently, then guided practice in the use of that skill or strategy is often required before it becomes a part of the repertoire of things the student can do independently. During the early part of consolidation, students are more dependent upon the teacher to carefully guide selection and execution of the strategy. With regard to strategies, as students demonstrate their understanding, teacher support and prompting should be gradually reduced,

allowing/encouraging the student to act more independently. Students take on (and teachers release) the roles of *selecting* and *executing* the strategy.

By practice, we mean multiple opportunities for the student to use a particular strategy during reading, or multiple opportunities for students to apply a particular decoding element or read new high-frequency words in both isolation and while reading connected text. If a teacher has introduced a strategy such as *check the pictures* to help identify an unfamiliar word, then the student should read a text that includes several challenging words for which identification would be assisted by implementation of that strategy. Or if the student has been taught a new decoding element, practice activities can be planned, including having the student read text containing several instances of that decoding element. Similarly, vocabulary words need to be encountered and used several times and in different contexts if it is expected that the student will fully learn their meaning.

In our experience, in order to consolidate new learning and function independently, students in intervention may require more practice than their peers who are achieving on grade level. For that reason, we suggest that the bulk of teaching time be spent on consolidation, rather than acquisition instruction. Responsive teaching includes observing and making notes about the extent to which students have consolidated what they have been taught and the degree of support needed by the student. A teacher may need to continue to provide practice (or possibly reteach) if students are not yet accurate and independent in utilizing newly taught skills or strategies.

Structuring Practice for Success

When students are first practicing a new skill or strategy, they will be more independent if the teacher reminds them to use the skills and strategies they have recently learned just before they begin reading. This *preset* can be as brief as noting the importance of using what they are learning—that is, talking about why students will benefit from using the new strategy or knowledge.

We recommend that when students are first practicing a new skill or strategy, they be provided with *resources* such as a strategy list or a key word to help them remember a decoding element. We provide examples of such resources throughout this book. These resources are designed to allow the student to independently select a strategy or remember the sound of a letter or letter combination, rather than relying on the teacher, or the student's already taxed memory, for the information. During consolidation, the preset might remind students that they have resources in front of them that will be helpful as they are reading.

Such initial reminders and resources are often sufficient to encourage students to problem solve independently, and may reduce the need for the teacher to "jump in" with reminders and support while students are reading. This book provides several examples of consolidation lessons with presets and resource support.

Once students have become more accomplished with their new learning, the need for teacher presets and student resources will be reduced. Students can be

encouraged to remind themselves of ways that they have learned to be independent, and resources can be moved off the table and onto a bulletin board where they are still available if needed.

Resources for Groups with Very Different Needs

Some teachers have found it useful to have a different resource display for each group of students with whom they work. They do this by using a trifold presentation display (available at office supply stores) for each group.

On occasion during consolidation, the teacher will need to provide support to students as they read. The goal is always "just enough" support. Practice tasks should be structured so that the student is successful, but since the goal is student independence, the teacher is encouraged not to promote dependence by being overly involved in the student's problem solving. As students are first learning a new strategy, the teacher or another student may direct the reader to try a specific newly learned strategy (i.e., the teacher selects the strategy and the student executes it). But most of the support during consolidation includes less direct approaches that release the responsibility to the student to *select* and *execute* the strategy:

- Waiting for the reader to solve the word.
- Reminding readers to use resources such as a strategy list.
- Using open-ended prompts to problem solve (e.g., "What could you do to figure out this word?").

During consolidation the amount of support needed will vary depending on the context. If the language or content in a text (or part of a text) is more challenging, students may become overloaded and it may be appropriate for the teacher to step in, temporarily.

The Importance of Wide Reading

The amount of reading that students do is an important determiner of their success as readers. Reading widely is an important way for students to consolidate reading skills and strategies. Wide reading will foster independence if teachers provide students with extensive opportunities to read appropriately challenging texts and gradually provide them with full responsibility for puzzling through unfamiliar words and for making sense of what they read when the ideas in the text are more complex. To foster independence during wide reading, once they have been taught, teachers encourage students to use strategies to identify unfamiliar words, to try to resolve the problem when they encounter words for which they don't know the

meanings, and allow students to take responsibility for gathering evidence to support their interpretation of text meaning.

The major activity during consolidation is providing students with ample opportunity to read and thus practice their newly learned skills and strategies, and to be engaged in meaning making as they read. For this reason, we recommend that at least half of an intervention session be devoted to reading and discussion of text, and with the further expectation that the majority of that time will be spent reading, not discussing. Time spent reading was the best predictor of growth in both accuracy and comprehension in the ISA-X research (Gelzheiser et al., 2017). The more students read, the more opportunity they have to consolidate the skills they have been taught, and to fluently apply what they are learning. This, in turn, enables them to add new words to their sight vocabularies through effective word solving and to build new knowledge related to the topics they are reading about. Chapter 14 provides guidance for teachers on how to maximize reading time.

Reflection and Independence

As students learn new strategies for identifying unfamiliar words or solving comprehension problems, it is useful for them to talk about those strategies and to link the strategies to their success. Full learning involves students reflecting on how they have solved puzzling words and ideas. A student who can name or recite the strategies may or may not yet connect these with the ability to problem solve. The goal of this aspect of instruction is student awareness of the *tools* they have in their repertoire.

**Understanding the Reading Process:
Factors That Influence Student Reflection**

Meichenbaum and Biemiller (1998) make the interesting observation that, of all the students in a class, it is the lowest-performing students who are offered the fewest opportunities for reflection. Proficient students who finish their work promptly may have a bit of time to look back at what they have done. They may also be asked to assist another student, and engage in reflection as they explain the task or guide the other student. In contrast, students who work more slowly and deliberately often do not complete the work in the allotted time, and so have few moments for looking back. Less proficient students are seldom asked to assist other students, and thus miss those chances for reflection as well. Meichenbaum and Biemiller hypothesize that one of the reasons that some students fall further and further behind is that reflection is missing from their school experiences. Therefore, they encourage teachers to provide systematic opportunities for all students to make connections between the academic work they do and the progress they make.

There are several reasons why students reflections are a useful part of instruction as they are learning new skills and strategies. One is that if students are to be able to solve word identification puzzles independently, they need to have conscious access to a repertoire of strategies, and they need to know what these strategies help them to do. Once learned, the reader can then draw upon this conscious knowledge while reading independently.

Another reason that reflection is helpful is that it enables students to attribute success in reading to strategies that are under their control. If students believe that success in reading is the result of tactics that they use and control, they will be more motivated to engage in reading because they have a sense of efficacy and accomplishment. We discuss this idea more fully in Chapter 3.

Teachers can encourage reflection by using explicit language that connects strategy use to student success when they notice and name[1] what students do. A statement like "You tried different sounds for some of the letters and you read past the puzzling word to get a better idea of what would make sense, and that helped you to identify this word" is more likely to encourage reflection than is "Nice job using your strategies." The linguistic difference is subtle but powerful in the way that it guides student thinking.

Teachers can also encourage reflection by providing opportunities for students to think about what they have learned and how it is helping them. This reflection can be prompted by questions or comments like "What strategies helped you today?"

Skilled versus Strategic Reading

Proficient readers generally are not consciously aware of how they go about problem solving while reading. Rather, their cognitive resources are fully devoted to engagement in meaning construction. They are thinking about the text; they are not thinking about strategies—unless they encounter a particularly vexing problem that they cannot solve using their well-practiced problem-solving *skills*. Eventually, the objective of intervention is for readers to become so automatic in the application of the strategies they learn that word solving and comprehension would largely become *skilled* processes (which don't require conscious, strategic thought).

Instructional Decision Making:
Organizing an Instructional Group That Fosters Independence

How We Work Together

In a whole-class setting, for reasons of efficiency and safety, it is often necessary for the teacher to lead and for students to comply. Students may come to

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[1]The phrase *notice and name* is attributed to Johnston (2004).

intervention having only experienced behavioral expectations that are designed to ensure that teachers maintain control over their classrooms. We recommend that in an intervention setting teachers consider expectations that are designed to promote a group that allows each student to grow as much as possible as a reader.

In a small-group setting designed to foster student independence, we have found it helpful to use expectations that stress student self-regulation and cooperation, and that encourage all members of the group to be actively engaged in learning. The goal of intervention is for each student to have ample opportunity to independently think when he or she encounters unfamiliar words or confusing ideas. If other students are silently engaged in parallel puzzling and solving, they too will learn.

In a small-group setting, peers can support a student who is thinking about a word or idea if they have learned to *wait while others think,* rather than calling out the answer. If the student runs out of ideas, a peer can show support if he or she *gives help when asked*. Peers can also *show interest and support for others* by acknowledging another's successful thinking or strategic action.

Peers can learn during another student's puzzling if they *listen to others* as they think about puzzling words or ideas. Peers can *choose to keep learning* if they reflect upon how they would solve the word or idea that is puzzling their peer. While reading independently, students can choose to keep learning if they stay fully engaged, and select another book to read when they finish early.

These expectations encourage students to take advantage of every opportunity to learn and to become more independent readers. They are designed to minimize student behaviors that might interfere with the learning of other group members: interrupting other speakers, calling out when a student is trying to identify a word, or not following along while one student is reading aloud. Figure 2.2 describes how the expectations might look during different group activities.

It is likely these expectations will need to be taught to the group, using the process of acquisition, consolidation, and reflection described in the previous section, as applied in the text that follows.

Acquisition

An overview of the expectations that the teacher will use and their purpose (to allow students to grow as independent readers) is a useful way to start. A written copy of the expectations should be made available and be clearly visible. As each expectation is introduced, it is helpful to ask students to share their ideas about what the expectation means—for example, what it means to "listen to others." If there are schoolwide behavioral expectations, the teacher can connect the expectations to those so that students understand that the desired behaviors are similar. For example, if a school expectation is to "be responsible," the teacher can explain that this is similar to the expectation to "choose to keep learning."

Expectation	During Word Identification	During Discussion
Listen to others	Follow along as others are reading and solving individual words in a small-group or partner reading settings.	Attend to others as they share their ideas during group discussion; think about what the speaker is saying.
Wait while others think	Wait patiently while another student in the group or pair is solving a word.	Allow members of the group time to think before and while speaking; wait for your turn to talk.
Give help when asked	When asked, suggest one or more strategies that another student might use.	If a student is confused and asks for help, a peer can suggest something that will provide clarification, such as a place to check in the text or a word meaning.
Show interest and support for others	Acknowledge the effort a peer has shown.	Acknowledge or disagree with an idea that has been shared by a peer; add to a peer's response.
Choose to keep learning	While someone else is trying to identify an unfamiliar word, think about strategies or resources that would be helpful.	Follow along when someone else is reading aloud; contribute ideas that help to build the group's understanding of the text.

FIGURE 2.2. How we work together in different contexts.

Consolidation

As the group is first learning the expectations, at the outset of the session, they should be reminded of them. Clear instructional language will help students to internalize and remember the expectations. Early on, before group members have learned the instructional language related to the ISA-X strategies, teachers might set the expectation of *listening to others* by saying:

> "Today we will be practicing 'listening to others.' That means that when someone is reading, the rest of us will listen and follow along. And, if we need to, we'll wait patiently while the reader figures out some of the words. Or if we are talking about what's in the book, we won't interrupt the person who is talking."

When students have begun to learn the ISA-X strategy language, the reminder to listen to others would be followed by:

> "That means we will be attending to how others are puzzling through unfamiliar words as they read."

> "Discussion is a good time to practice 'show interest and support for others.'"

Further, teachers will be most effective if they discuss only the agreed-upon expectations, and refrain from making comments that refer to other behavior systems—for example, stating "Eyes on me" rather than "Remember, we attend to the speaker to show that we are listening to others."

During reading, teachers can label any appropriate instance of the expectations. This is especially appropriate when behavioral expectations are being established.

> "Wow, we remembered to 'wait while others think' here. Everyone waited while Emily puzzled through that word."

> "Did you notice how Jessica and Trevon waited while Juan was looking for parts he knew in that word? They showed us what it means to 'wait while others think.'"

After reading, the teachers with whom we have worked found it helpful to provide students with feedback about their developing collaborative skills. Noticing and naming collaboration will create an environment in which it is clear that cooperation is valued. A teacher's feedback will be especially useful if it fosters student independence and self-efficacy. When a teacher says, "I like the way Jessica is listening to others," it seems as though the purpose of the expectations is to please the teacher. Instead, the teacher could convey that working together promotes understanding.

> "Juan was able to understand this idea because Jessica offered help when asked."

> "Our group was able to read and enjoy lots of books today because of the way we worked together."

It can also be useful to take a minute and have students share how the expectations have helped them to grow as readers. Students will be encouraged to act on the expectations if they hear a peer share, "I could really think about that puzzling word because I didn't feel rushed. I knew that others would wait while I was thinking." A teacher can prompt this with questions like:

> "Jessica, how did you feel when Juan said he agreed with your idea?"

> "Today we practiced listening to others. How did this affect our reading group?"

In our experience, it is motivating for students to understand how their behavior can contribute to their own and others' learning. In the next chapter, we discuss other approaches that teachers can use to promote students' motivation for reading.

Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the importance of responsive instruction for students in grades 3–8 who are participating in intervention. These students have participated in many years of language arts instruction and have learned some, but not all, of what has been taught. For these students, observation and assessment can

be used to identify what they still need to learn, and then instructional time can be used efficiently to address those needs. We also described the importance of fostering students' independence as readers, and how using appropriate levels of teacher support can promote such independence.

In the next chapter, we address motivation for reading. For many intervention students, their experiences with reading have not encouraged them to see reading as valuable, or to see themselves as readers. Intervention can provide such disengaged/discouraged readers with experiences that will promote readers' motivation for reading.