Skills focus: Evidence and Support
A Principal's Perspective

Alicia Hunter, Principal
Farristown Middle School

Teaching students to provide evidence may be one of the most "real world" ways we can prepare them. It should flow logically from the work we do ourselves: as educators we constantly seek and provide support and evidence for our decisions. We use data to make assessment decisions, we take anecdotal notes to provide evidence for a placement, we rely on examples of best practice and student behavior for our instructional focus. As an administrator I observe, formally and during "walkthroughs," to gather evidence for conversations I regularly have with teachers.

In our team meetings, we talk about students. We think of them individually, as learners, and collectively, as data. Sharing a school-wide goal of influencing and noting student growth (a clear and productive cycle as it occurs through intentional formative assessment), teachers share specific strategies used during the week. These conversations supplement information I gather as I spend time in classrooms, watching students and teachers at work. As teachers talk about what's going on in their rooms,

the question we routinely return to is "How do you know the strategy is working?" In answering, teachers provide evidence. They talk in specific terms about what they do; they explain why they do it; they collaborate to analyze why it works. They tell each other what they've done so that others may try the same thing, recycled to fit their classroom and teaching style, and so that they have a sounding board for when things don't work exactly as planned.

And it's the same kind of thinking, really, that lets them model real world experiences for students. Language Arts teachers don't rely on just one set of data. MAP scores alone, for example, don't tell them nearly everything they need to know about students' abilities and progress. Thus, they apply the same kind of thinking to their instruction: their students read multiple texts, often on multiple levels and in multiple genres, about the same topic. Students are encouraged to find conflicting evidence within the texts, and must go to a third or fourth source to resolve questions they bring to their reading. This creates a natural inquiry process: students develop their own

reasons to read, they accumulate details that let them develop a full impression of initial questions, and in reporting answers they identify new questions and find new reasons to investigate related issues. This is authentic, student-driven, research. And it becomes a practice students can use beyond the classroom; they understand the relationship between informing themselves and making decisions, and they understand the process of asking complex questions and synthesizing answer possibilities.

Similarly, math teachers have recently talked about helping students develop their ability to provide evidence by allowing students to explore multiple ways to solve problems. For example, while students in one class were working collaboratively to solve problems, I overheard a teacher conferencing with one student about a recent assignment. She asked, "How do you think you could have solved the problem in a different way?" The teacher followed the student's response with another question: "How would it change your answer if you made that decision?" Excellent questions for all students *(Continued on pg. 6)*

Proving With Evidence

Global Warming "For or Against" Evidence T-Chart
Lisa Antoniou, Science

FOR GLOBAL WARMING	AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING
A. Source B. What did they say? (evidence)	A. Source B. What did they say? (evidence)
A. Source B. What did they say? (evidence)	A. Source B. What did they say? (evidence)

For More Information and Resources
Visit us and follow this link: www.ekuwritingproject.org
See the Content Area Literacy page for resources, or
check out the application to become a part of EKUWP!

Empower Learning for Life

"Where's the evidence, Sherlock?"
"It's elementary, my dear Watson, it's in the text!"
Jennifer Bernhard, Literacy Specialist

As much as we would prefer to think that we teach students to support their ideas with evidence from a text in order to hone their critical thinking skills, if we are honest we know that what we are really doing is preparing them to write for a test. However, take heart, this can indeed be an honorable task.

When we teach students how to dissect a passage-based prompt and prepare to write, we should convey the very important message that testing is a genre of its own and that it is very nice people who create assessments knowing that they, the students, are the audience, so we can set the stage for a more positive experience.

If we also tell them that it is not the intention of those assessment people to trick them or trip them up and they are very likely to come away from the test having learned some astounding facts, we are a big step closer to preparing them for success.

Also, it doesn't hurt to assure them that when, like Watson, they ask, "Where's the evidence?" that like Sherlock, they will hear the response, "It's elementary my dear Watson, think and search so you will find it in the text."

For a sample of passage-based prompts across contents with annotated written responses citing textual evidence, FOLLOW THIS LINK!

Like this strategy? Want more info?
See Jennifer present with other members of the CALTF at the KCTE conference Saturday, February 23 in Covington

Evidence and Support for Elementary Math
Amanda Terry, Mathematics

In my classroom having evidence to support your answer is important, however it is going to look different than many other content areas. In math much of the evidence and support comes from the background knowledge or the process for completion. For my students there are a few questions I use to guide their thinking and lead to the support need for their problem. The questions I use are the following:

How do you know?

What steps did you take to get there?

If you were reading this, would you know what the problem is and how to do it?

In my classroom I most often do this through conferencing with my students. While working with a student one on one the rest of the students are working in partners using the questions as a guide. The expectation is that their explanations are written clearly enough so that anyone could pick it up and complete the problem.

Recommendations From the Library Media Specialist

Katie McClain

-*Reading History: a Practical Guide to Improving Literacy* **by Janet Allen**

-*Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* **by Janet Allen**

-*Classrooms that Work: They Can All Read and Write* **by Patricia Cunningham**

-*Writing in Science: How to Scaffold to Support Learning* **by Betsy Fulwiler**

-*Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Time-tested Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension* **by Linda Hoyt**

-*QAR now: Question Answer Relationships* **by Terry Raphael**

-*They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* **by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein**

-*Texts and Lessons for Conent-Area Reading* **by Harvey Daniels and Nancy Steineke**

-*Teaching Argument Writing: Supporting Claims with Relevant Evidence and Clear Reasoning* **by George Hillocks, Jr.**

-*Everything's an Argument* **by Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz**

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:
June 8, 2013
EKUWP Summer Conference:
Critical Conversations
Keynote Speaker
James Frederickson**

Safe Evidence in Social Studies
Maggie Brewer, Social Studies

When helping students to write in Social Studies, I am always asking them to determine what makes good evidence. Is it simply their opinion? The opinion of an adult? Information from a textbook? Something from the internet? What makes a credible source?

In their book, *Oh Yeah?!: Putting Argument to Work Both in School and Out*, Michael Smith, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and James Fredricksen describe data as something that needs a "safe starting point." That is, whether the reader would accept the data and continue reading or whether "they'd challenge the data and require" the writer to explain or establish it further.

The process they describe to rate the safety of the data includes creating a "semantic differential scale" where one end of the scale is labeled "completely unsafe" and the other end of the scale is labeled "completely safe." Given a piece of data, students would mark where on the scale they think the data should fall. The book explains that it is not so much placing the data on the scale that is important, rather the discussion of the thought process that leads to their decisions.

A sample lesson includes possible claims which have four pieces of data that students might use as support. Students rank each on the scale and discuss their rankings. A follow-up activity is also suggested.

Pass out an article from a newspaper, magazine, or internet source and have students identify evidence used by the author. Ask half of the class to look for the best piece of evidence in favor of the topic and the other half to look for the best piece of evidence against the topic. Next, students would move into groups to formulate and explain their answers. Their explanation would include the criteria regarding how they chose the "best" evidence; how carefully designed a study, how expert a witness, how detailed a story. When writing in the future, students will be better prepared to determine what makes safe and strong evidence for their own claims.

Question/Answer Relationships (QAR)
Rhonda Orttenburger, Social Studies

Teaching students how to think and read critically is very important because it can begin to help students decide what information is relevant when communicating their thoughts and ideas. To prepare my students for discussions and assessments, I use a strategy that helps my students think critically and read critically. This strategy is Question/Answer Relationships (QAR), which was developed by Taffy Raphael.

The four types of QAR can be divided into two groups – in the text or in my head. Answers to the first two types of questions – r*ight there* and *think, search, and find* – are found in the text.

Answers to the other two types of questions – *author and me* and *on my own* are in a student's head. When teaching this strategy, I also teach students how to refer to or cite evidence from the text to support their comprehension.

When teaching my fourth graders how to support their comprehension with evidence from the text/passage, I begin by briefly explaining the four types of question/answer relationships (QAR) and provide anchor charts as a resource.

Then we use Jeff Wilhelm's 3-step model of *show me, help me, let me.* I model (show me) the question/answer relationships one by one and help students gain an understanding of this QAR through oral discussions and guided practice (help me). Before I begin teaching another QAR, students are given an assessment using the particular question to prove they are able to show they learned how to categorize the QAR to be able to answer the question (let me).

Initially, students learn about a *right there* question, which is the easiest question to answer because you can find the answer to the question right there in the text in one place, which means evidence to support their answers are "right there." Although they are not required to cite evidence from the text to support comprehension when answering a multiple choice question, having a student underline the answer in the text/passage shows him/her the importance of locating information (answers) in the text. This begins to prepare them for citing constructed short answer and extended response questions.

Most *right there* questions are found in the multiple choice section of an assessment. For example, the question might ask a student what is the name of Jeff's best friend. Teaching a student to go back to the text and scan or skim it for the key words "best friend" will help them see that the answer is located right there in the text.

Next, we tackle *think, search, and find* questions. The answer is still right in the text, but not in one place. To find the answer, you must put information (evidence) together from more than one part of the text. Putting it together into an answer is often difficult for students so having them "mark" the places they find answers in the text is important.

Marking where they find answers in the text when answering a t*hink, search, and find* question is impor-

tant because students have to read critically so they can assemble the parts to write their answer. It is important at this time in instruction for the elementary teacher to begin teaching them how to refer to information in the text, whether they are paraphrasing or using direct quotes. To show their readers they are using information from the text to answer the question, I teach them how to use phrases, such as a*ccording to the text, in the passage,* or *the text states* in their answers. Of course, students must also be taught the correct way to cite a direct quote.

The third type of question is *author and me* questions. The answer to this type of question is not explicitly stated in the text, but students need information that the author has given them. They then combine that information with what they already know so they can answer the question.

To answer this type of question, students must actively recognize and analyze evidence from the text as well as use their background knowledge to construct their answers. They must think about what they know and what the author says to answer the question. For example, students may be asked to give an opinion and back it up with information from the text. Again, marking information the author gives them is important. Referring to the author by name or by saying a phrase, such as *the author states* also is important so the reader knows students are using information from the text.

Kentucky Writing Project at
Kentucky Council of Teachers of English

This year members of the Kentucky Writing Project will be presenting a special strand at KCTE. The focus for Saturday, February 23 will be "A Day on the Common Core." We hope that if you are able to attend KCTE in Covington this year you will visit the Kentucky Writing Project.

The morning will begin at 8:30 with a session offered by CALTF member and Clark County District Literacy Specialist Jennifer Bernhard. In her presentation, **"Where's the evidence, Sherlock?"** Jennifer will help participants teach their students to analyze text in order to locate evidence to respond to a passage-based prompt.

The next session is led by Sabrina Back, a social studies and English/Language Arts teacher who also directs the Mountain Writing Project. Her session, entitled, **"How Do We Get There From Here?"** will help participants work with complex texts and ideas in argumentative readings.

A break for a box lunch will be followed by the option to pick one of the following five two-hour sessions:

Making the Connection – presented by CALTF science teacher Lisa Antoniou and CALTF social studies teacher Maggie Brewer. Participants will leave with a toolbox full of literacy strategies they can use to meet the Common Core Standards in content area classes.

Text Complexity – University of Louisville Writing Project Teacher Consultants Missy Callaway and Suzanne Jackson demonstrate how to teach close-reading and help students navigate complex texts while using a variety of sources about the Vietnam War.

Approaching Field Trips in Modes – middle school English teacher Amy Vujaklija takes participants on a virtual field trip to analyze visual text and explore argumentative, narrative, and informative texts.

Using Drama to Enhance Listening and Speaking Across the Curriculum – University of Louisville Writing Project Teacher Consultants Dr. Elizabeth Best and Mary Kenzer demonstrate how they use drama to motivate students to listen actively and make connections to reading and writing across all subject areas.

Text-Dependent Questions – Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project Director Dr. Sally Martin will guide participants in strategies to create text dependent questions that that will engage students in comprehending complex texts.

For questions regarding KWP at KCTE registration please contact
Linda Satterlee – McFadin at 502-852-4544

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to consider, as it not only teaches them math skills but also the problem-solving or decision-making skills that will transfer to other situations in their lives. This type of feedback is integral for student growth because it's real, as opposed to the canned, assignment-driven assessment that could otherwise be given. And by being pushed to answer in real ways, students are given the chance to think in multiple dimensions. They develop on their own a range of strategies to apply as the situation dictates, and they develop the authority to make decisions about when a particular strategy might be the right choice. I was most pleased at the end of that conference: the teacher was intentional and pushed the student to think critically. And this is the kind of thing she'll bring to the next team meeting, because she's figured something out, something that needs to be shared. Because demonstrable evidence of a student's growth contributes to a teacher's growth, and one teacher's success spreads when she has the chance to lead others to look for answers to questions about teaching we all share.

The fourth question/answer relationship is *on my own.* This type of question is not text-based and is not found on assessments, but is often used to help students connect their life experiences and background knowledge to the text before reading.

In conclusion, students need to understand question/answer relationships, use critical reading and thinking skills, and refer to or cite information from the passage to answer questions. With this understanding, students will be able to apply their learning and show their readers what they know. Knowing how to answer a constructed response is important in this day and age of testing mania, but finding meaning from texts is the ultimate goal of a reader. Teaching students the importance of finding meaning from text prepares students for the real world.

Content Area Literacy Task Force Members:

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For more information, please contact any of these teachers or Maggie Brewer, margaret.brewer@boyle.kyschools.us

CALTF Recommended Reading:
Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading
by Harvey "Smokey" Daniels and Nancy Steineke
Recommended By: Tricia Mckenny

This text has become one of my go-to resources for reading and writing argument skills. I constantly struggle to find strategies and resources that work, and this book combines both. The entire book is based on using non-fiction texts and articles and condensing them to what Daniels and Steineke call "one-page wonders." These "one-page wonders" are great texts that can immediately be used in a classroom with students. All of the articles are interesting and engaging to students and come from sources like *The New York Times, The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Tribune*. I can't imagine the time it would take me to track down all of these resources, and thanks to this book I don't have to.

The first half of the book presents 23 "Strategy Lessons" each with its own text provided. The lessons cover everything from annotating and coding texts, to taking notes to organize thinking, to finding support for a position and arguing both sides. Each lesson is presented in a very teacher-friendly format that provides examples, steps in the process, materials needed, and even an estimated time frame ranging from 20 minutes to an entire class period. Once the lesson is completed with the text provided, it is easy to adapt the strategy to cover another text or topic. The lessons have stemmed great conversations and deeper thinking in my students than ever before and the skills they are using have greatly improved their reading and writing.

The second half of the book provides "Text Sets" that can deepen understanding with a focus on reading strategies centered around topics like Invasive Species, PTSD, and global issues that could be used in a variety of content areas. All of the materials and strategies could be used with any text, but the authors save teachers the time of searching to find them.

Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading has become a standard fixture on my desk with many pages marked and referenced often. I share the strategies from it with colleagues frequently, and I am glad to have the opportunity to share them with you, our readers.