



Now We Get It!

Boosting Comprehension with
Collaborative Strategic Reading



Janette Klingner • Sharon Vaughn

Alison Boardman • Elizabeth Swanson

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More Praise for Collaborative Strategic Reading and *NOW WE GET IT!*

We are so fortunate to work with CSR in our schools—our teachers have seen student comprehension increase and the flexibility of the strategy lets all the teachers in a school work together as a team in increase achievement.

—**SUSANA CORDOVA**, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, DENVER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CSR is a great tool for teachers, students and parents that can amplify literacy and comprehension skills across grade levels and content school wide!

—**ANTHONY A. SMITH**, PRINCIPAL, MARTIN LUTHER KING,
JR. EARLY COLLEGE

Collaborative Strategic Reading is the most complete package of strategies for reading instruction that I have found. The collaborative structure helps students work through the before, during, and after reading framework to better comprehend information in any core subject area. Students in elementary and secondary grades can use these strategies and work together to become better readers.

—**TERRY FIELDER**, DIRECTOR, INTERVENTION SERVICES,
HAYS CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT,
TEXAS

Now We Get It!

Boosting Comprehension with Collaborative Strategic Reading

Janette Klingner
Sharon Vaughn
Alison Boardman
Elizabeth Swanson

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also a lead researcher at the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. She is currently the co-principal investigator on a series of studies sponsored through the Reading for Understanding initiative funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), investigating the prevention and remediation of reading comprehension difficulties among students in seventh through twelfth grades.

We dedicate this book to the many teachers, principals, and students in the school districts in which we have worked: Del Valle Independent School District (Texas), Denver Public Schools (Colorado), Hays Independent School District (Texas), Jefferson County Public Schools (Colorado) and St. Vrain Valley School District (Colorado).

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INTRODUCTION: COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING IN A NUTSHELL

The fisherman of Minamata began protesting against Chisso Corporation in 1959. They demanded compensation, and that Chisso quit dumping toxic waste.

—TEXT EXCERPT FROM A MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE
TEXTBOOK

Daniel: What does *compensate* mean?

Alex: I am not sure, but I know what *recompensa* means in Spanish—it means to pay back someone when you hurt them.

Daniel: Oh, so you think they wanted money from the company?

Alex: Yeah, that makes sense. I guess it's pretty cool to be bilingual.

—STUDENTS IN A CSR GROUP

Daniel and Alex are using CSR's Click and Clunk strategy to identify words they do not understand while reading and to take steps to figure out what they mean. They are working collaboratively in Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) cooperative learning groups. In this book, you will learn how to implement CSR and also how to teach others to use CSR.

This book has multiple purposes. First and foremost, it is intended to be used by teachers and professional developers who would like to implement CSR and instruct others on how to do so. But it also can be used by administrators, support personnel, and parents who have

heard about CSR and wish to study it on their own, or perhaps who have participated in a CSR professional development workshop and would like to learn more about it.

In the 2001 book *Collaborative Strategic Reading*, which Janette and Sharon coauthored with Joe Dimino, Jeanne Schumm, and Diane Bryant,¹ we introduced CSR, presented the research base behind it at that time, and offered suggestions for using CSR in high school classrooms. In the years since, many changes have been made to CSR. The program has been fine-tuned after being implemented in diverse fourth- through eighth-grade classrooms across the country. We have learned a great deal from the many teachers who have participated in our research studies about how to use CSR during language arts, reading, science, and social studies lessons in feasible, effective ways. One of our primary goals in this book is to share those many changes and improvements to CSR.

Our second goal is to provide explicit instructions in how to conduct CSR professional development activities. We focus on what it takes to implement CSR well. Since 2001, we have revised how we provide professional development and how we support teachers' usage of CSR in their classrooms. Participants in our workshops and in our research studies have offered us valuable feedback that has enabled us to hone our professional development and coaching techniques. In a nutshell, in writing this book, we draw from almost twenty years of experience developing, fine-tuning, and teaching CSR.

An Overview of CSR

CSR is a research-based intervention that has been implemented successfully in culturally and linguistically diverse inclusive classrooms from fourth grade through

middle school.² CSR includes strategies for monitoring comprehension, reviewing and synthesizing information, asking and answering questions, and taking steps to improve understanding. It also incorporates peer discussion.

CSR is divided into before-, during-, and after-reading activities. The Preview strategy is used before reading a designated text. The text can be multiple paragraphs or multiple pages but previewing occurs only once—prior to reading the entire selected text. The Click and Clunk and Gist strategies are used during reading and occur more frequently because they are applied to a one-, two-, or three-paragraph section of text. Thus, if the entire text is six paragraphs and the teacher has divided the passage into three sections of two paragraphs each, students would Preview once (before reading) and then Click and Clunk and Get the Gist three times. Wrap Up is like Preview in that it occurs only one time; however, it is used at the end of the six-paragraph text rather than the beginning. We like to think of Preview and Wrap Up as the bookend strategies with previewing occurring before students read and Wrap Up occurring after students read.

Before Reading: Preview

Before reading, the teacher and students *Preview* the text together to activate background knowledge, make connections between the day's topic and prior learning, predict what might be learned, and set a purpose for reading. During this phase, the teacher guides students to scan the title, headings, pictures, and charts or tables in the day's reading. The teacher prompts students to brainstorm what they already know about the topic and invites them to share their ideas with their classmates. The teacher helps students build background knowledge as needed and also introduces two or three key vocabulary terms and proper nouns. Teachers may use real objects, pictures, short video

clips, or demonstrations to make connections explicit for students. Students then use the information provided to build background knowledge as well as to understand the text to make predictions about what they will learn. Finally, the teacher sets a purpose for reading. This purpose might relate to how the reading connects to the “big ideas” the students are learning in their unit of study or to a specific strategy the teacher wants them to pay particular attention to while using CSR.

During Reading: Click and Clunk and Get the Gist

During reading, students use a strategy called *Click and Clunk* to monitor comprehension and identify confusing words or concepts. When the text makes sense, it clicks; when it does not, it clunks. Once the students have finished a section, they apply fix-up strategies to the unknown words and concepts: (1) reread the sentence with the clunk in it and determine if they can find the meaning from the context clues; (2) reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after, looking for clues to help figure out the clunk; (3) break the word apart and look for a prefix, suffix, or a root word; and (4) look for a cognate that makes sense. In order to ensure the accuracy of the definition they have generated, students return to the text and insert the new definition to confirm that it makes sense.

After students repair their clunks, they move on to the Get the Gist phase, where they determine the main idea in the section of text they have just finished reading. This generally requires integrating information across multiple paragraphs in a longer section of text. Students first agree on the most important who or what in the section. Next they each write their own gist statements in their CSR learning logs and share them with one another. They are challenged

to limit the word count of their main idea statements so they can condense only the most important information and avoid adding too many details. Students are encouraged to discuss the quality of each other's gists, providing evidence from the text to support their ideas. Groups sometimes come up with a "super gist" that takes into account the best aspects of multiple gists.

After Reading: Wrap Up

After reading, students *Wrap Up*. They do this by formulating and answering teacherlike questions about the text they have just read and by identifying the most important ideas in the passage. They try to think of easier and more challenging questions that require an understanding of the passage as well as connections with prior knowledge. Finally, students write down one or two of the most important ideas from the passage. They must be prepared to justify why they think their ideas are important.

CSR is distinctive in its emphasis on students co-constructing knowledge through peer discussion while working in cooperative groups in which each student learns to perform an expert role. The expert roles include Leader, Clunk Expert, Gist Expert, and Question Expert. These roles are different from what they were when we first published our work. Each member is responsible for guiding learning as the group uses the before-, during-, and after-reading strategies. Cue cards prompt students as they take the lead in their designated roles. The goal is for the strategies to guide students in engaging in meaningful discussions about the content they are learning. Although group discussions and shared ideas are important aspects of CSR group work, individual accountability is also essential. For each strategy, students think about and record individual responses in CSR learning logs. This process provides wait time so that all students are prepared to share their ideas with one another.

Group discussions also provide comprehensible input, which is particularly important for English language learners when gleaning meaning from content. The learning logs also become an important source of information for teacher feedback as well as a springboard for follow-up activities.

A RESEARCH-BASED PROGRAM

CSR was developed with and for teachers. Over the years, we have collaborated with numerous teachers to help them implement CSR in their classrooms and to learn from them as they have tried CSR with their students and made adjustments to make it more feasible and effective. We have learned much from teachers, including (but not limited to) Tiffany Bart, Juan Cabrera, and Lucille Sullivan. We include some of their ideas in the pages of this book. To learn more about the evolution of CSR and the research base behind it, consult Appendix B.

CSR is not a curriculum in a box, but rather a flexible set of strategies used by students working collaboratively, guided by their teachers. CSR can be used in science, social studies, reading intervention, and language arts classes. CSR helps students to access content, to improve their understanding, and to be more thoughtful, purposive readers.

Notes

[1.](#) J. K. Klingner, S. Vaughn, J. Dimino, J. S. Schumm, and D. Bryant, *Collaborative Strategic Reading: Strategies for Improving Comprehension* (Longmont, CO: Sopris West, 2001).

[2.](#) J. K. Klingner, S. Vaughn, M. E. Argüelles, M. T. Hughes, and S. Ahwee, "Collaborative Strategic Reading: 'Real World' Lessons from Classroom Teachers," *Remedial and Special Education*, 25, 2004, 291–302. J. K. Klingner, S. Vaughn, and J. S. Schumm, "Collaborative Strategic Reading During Social Studies in Heterogeneous Fourth-Grade Classrooms," *Elementary School Journal*, 99, 1998, 3–21. S. Vaughn, G. Roberts, J. K. Klingner, E. Swanson, A.

Boardman, S. J. Stillman, S. Muhammed, and A. Leroux,
“Collaborative Strategic Reading: Findings from
Experienced Implementers” (under review).

Part I: Getting to Know Collaborative Strategic Reading

CHAPTER 1

How CSR Works

Of probably all of the things I have done, with pre-AP or the differentiation or the other things the district has thrown at me in seven years, this is probably the only one I will keep and I'm hard to convince. I'm hard to convince and this one has.

—MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER

I think CSR is wonderful. It's an excellent program. It's practical; it focuses kids; it has all the elements in reading that they need and it's lifelong.

—MIDDLE SCHOOL READING INTERVENTION TEACHER

CSR is an excellent technique for teaching students reading comprehension and building vocabulary and also working together cooperatively. I think it is wonderful. We have been using it with the science text and it's turned out beautifully.

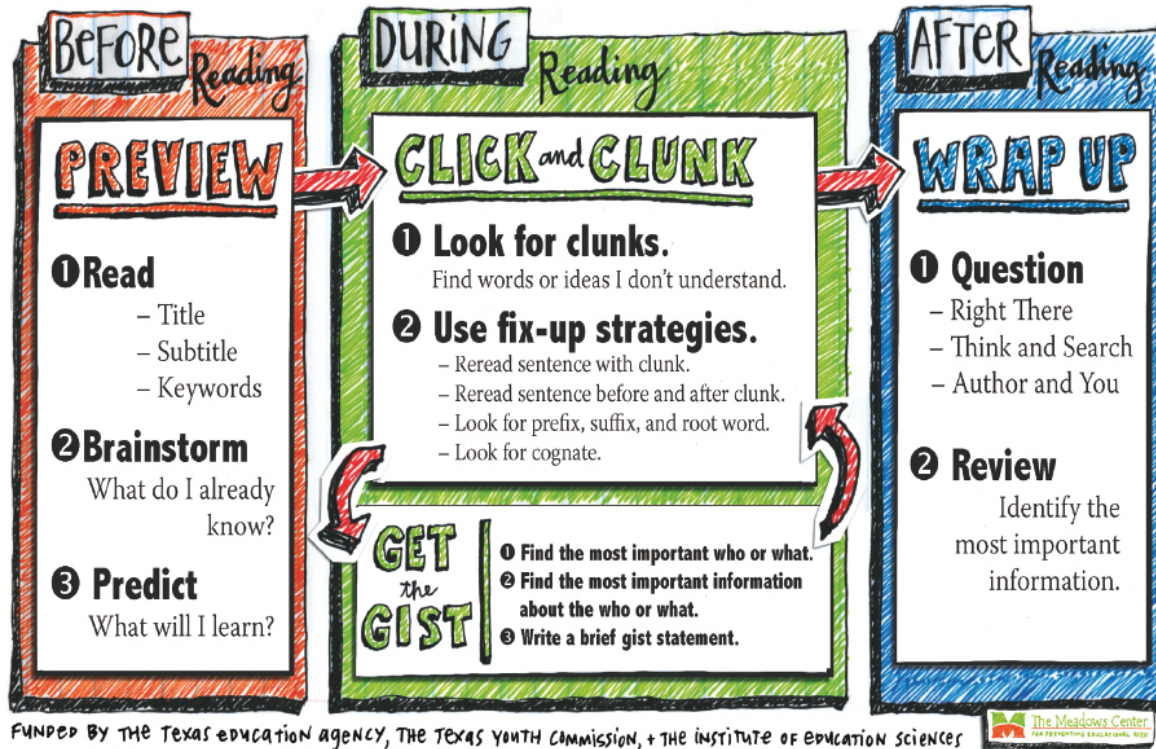
—FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER

In this chapter, we describe CSR. We discuss each of the strategies and provide examples of students working together in small groups. CSR strategies occur before, during, and after reading (see [Figure 1.1](#)).

FIGURE 1.1. CSR Comprehension Strategies

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CSR STRATEGIES



Before Reading: Preview

Students preview the entire passage before they read each section. The goals of previewing are (1) for students to learn as much about the passage as they can in a brief period of time (two to three minutes), (2) to activate their background knowledge about the topic, and (3) to make predictions about what they will learn. Previewing serves to motivate students' interest in the topic and to engage them in active reading from the onset. Preview also provides opportunities to help students develop background knowledge about the reading, and build vocabulary and concepts to enhance their understanding of the passage.