

*Early Learning  
for a Powerful Start*

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*Working with Low Repertoire  
Urban Children*

No Quick Fix



*This session will examine these questions:*

- ◆ What are the characteristics of low repertoire urban children?
- ◆ What are factors that may influence a child's difficulty with learning to read and write?
- ◆ How do teachers scaffold and teach children who have very little in place?
- ◆ What does change over time look like for these children?
- ◆ What can we learn from teaching them?



## *Andre's Story--School Setting, 2002-2003:*

- ◆ *In Academic Watch*
- ◆ Met one indicator out of 11 (attendance)
- ◆ 97% Non-white
- ◆ 94% Economically Disadvantaged.
- ◆ 38% of students at and above the proficient level in reading and writing.



## *School Setting, 2004-2005:*

- ◆ *In Continuous Improvement*
- ◆ Met 1 indicator out of 14.
- ◆ 97% Non-white
- ◆ 97.8% Economically Disadvantaged.
- ◆ 67% at and above proficient level in reading
- ◆ 78% at and above proficient level in writing.



# *Andre's Observation Survey*

## *Scores:*

- ◆ 10 Capital and 11 lower case letter names-- mostly capital and lower case pairs
- ◆ 0 on Word Test
- ◆ 12 on CAP; did the best here
- ◆ “Andre” and “A” on Writing Vocabulary
- ◆ B for “bus” on HRSIW
- ◆ Text Reading Level 1



## *Thinking about Andre:*

- ◆ What does he know?
- ◆ What is he able to do?
- ◆ What does he need to learn next?
- ◆ What might get in his way?



*How did he get here? Information from Children's Literacy Initiative:*

- ◆ Some children entering Kindergarten may have as much of a vocabulary gap as **eight** years--even before they begin school.
- ◆ A child who has not been read aloud to may have the limited vocabulary of a two-year old, while a child who has been read aloud to may have the vocabulary of a ten-year old.



## *How did he get here, cont.*

- ◆ The average middle income child has 1200 hours of being read aloud to, compared to 25 hours for low income children.
- ◆ Poor CAP knowledge.
- ◆ Children with less prior knowledge are more likely to have difficulty. (Snow and Burns)



*Where do I begin?*

Emotions



# *Motivation*

- ◆ “Motivation is self-generated and happens *within* the child; it is not done to the child.”
- ◆ “Teachers must provide opportunities and experiences that enable children to reveal, know, understand, and use their knowledge, skills, inner strengths, inclinations, desires, and competencies.”

– Lyons, pp. 77, 79.



## *Attachment*

- ◆ “Teachers familiar with children’s interests and concerns are more likely to create a safe, trusting, and supportive context for learning and to demonstrate a concern for and commitment to students’ achievement.”

– Lyons, p. 92.



## *Autonomy*

- ◆ “A strong sense of self and a feeling of ownership. Children who have chosen a course of action to take are intrinsically motivated.”
- ◆ “Teachers can support a child’s autonomy when they encourage self-initiation, experimentation, and responsibility, and do not pressure children.

– Lyons, pp. 82, 83.



## *Challenge:*

- ◆ “Appropriate levels of challenge and complexity can stimulate curiosity, which, in turn, motivates children to learn.”
- ◆ “Those who have persevered and succeeded are more willing to take another risk. Working hard, surmounting challenges, and ultimately succeeding build intrinsic motivation.” Lyons, p. 83.



*Where do I begin?*

Cognition



## *Oral Language*

- ◆ “In most cultures there are specific rules about how conversations should be conducted--rules about who may speak to whom, when, with what kind of language, and who speaks first. Children...may have learned conventions for conducting conversations in their communities that are very different from the rules of the majority group or from a teacher’s expectations.

– Clay, 1998,p.25.



## *Oral Language, cont.*

- ◆ “Unless we ‘talk more’ with less advantaged children and encourage them to talk more we are very likely to make the wrong inferences about what they understand. In particular, any children with limited language skills need more opportunities to talk.”

– Clay, 1998, p. 32.



## *Linking Oral Language to Book Language: Compton-Lilly*

- ◆ “Over-correction of linguistic variations in oral reading actually increases the percentage of non-standard speech.” (Cazden, 1999; LeMoine, 1999.)
- ◆ “Teachers are more likely to correct reading miscues that are *dialect-related* even though these miscues rarely affect meaning.” (Delpit, 1998).



## *Knowledge of the world*

- ◆ “The cultures of home and community will have created for children very different stores of knowledge about the world and what can happen in it.”
- ◆ “The individual differences in knowledge about literacy are multiplied when we consider the further differences in knowledge of the world that the reader must bring to the reading and comprehension of texts.”

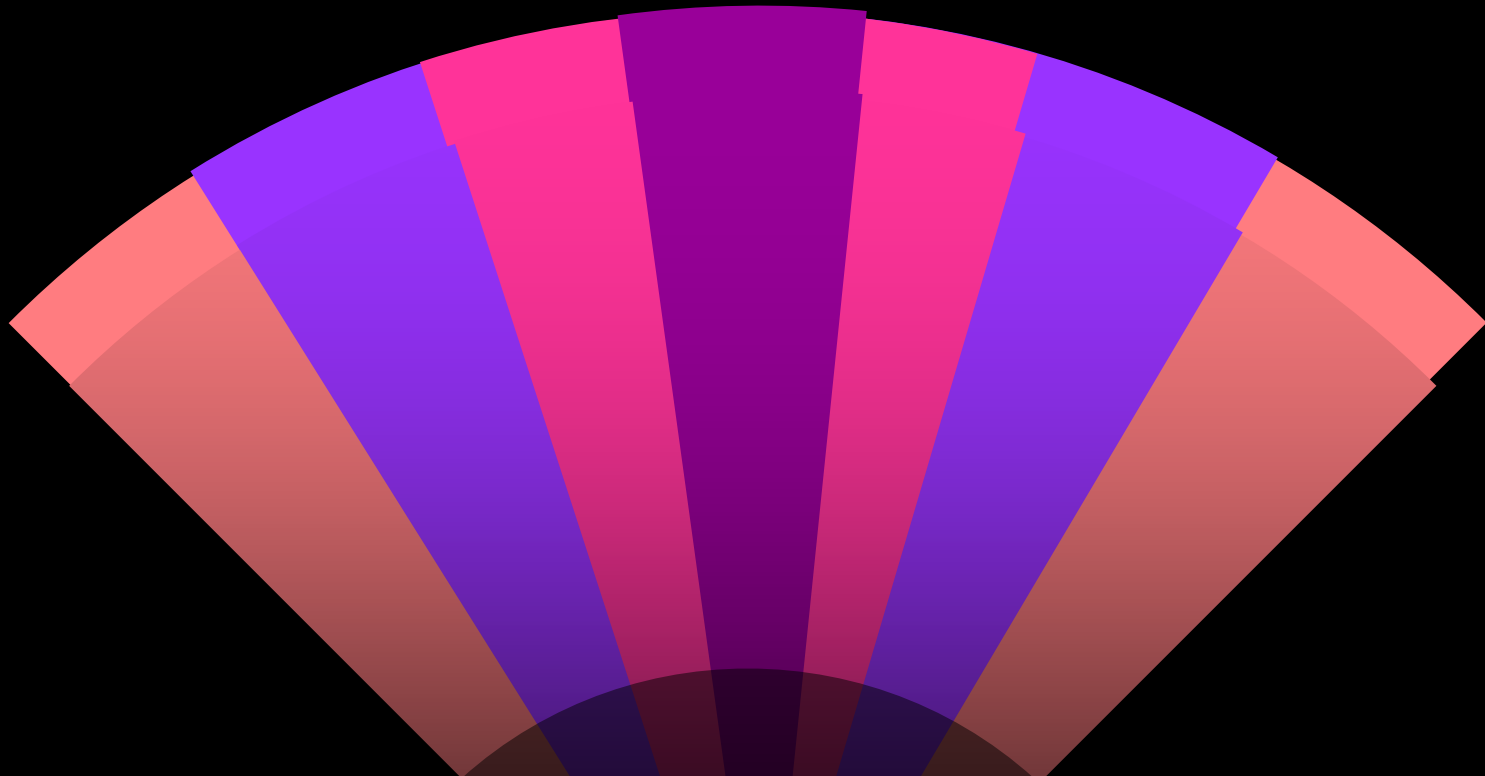
– Clay, 2001, p.116.



# *Capacity*

- ◆ “The word capacity combines two separate but interrelated concepts: will and skill.”
- ◆ “If the child does not have the will to learn, there is no interest, no motivation, no focused attention, and few opportunities for the child to develop higher-order reasoning.”
- ◆ The child must [also] develop some fundamental cognitive skills in order to make continuous progress.”

– Lyons, p. 71.



# *Application*

Using the Lesson Framework to  
Support Useful Strategic Activity



## *During Familiar Reading*

- ◆ Still offers some processing challenges
- ◆ Consolidates learning that is not yet secure
- ◆ Provides opportunities to compile the reading across working systems and orchestrate the processing.
- ◆ SC and decision making are at their most effective
- ◆ Increases the volume of reading



## *Video: Familiar Reading*

- ◆ What is the student able to do?
- ◆ What is the student learning?
- ◆ How is the teacher supporting the child?
- ◆ What strategic activity is occurring?



## *Extending a Meagre Knowledge of Words:*

- ◆ Linking item knowledge to strategic processing
- ◆ Ability to discriminate features of letters
- ◆ Repetition
- ◆ Over-learning
- ◆ Serial Order
- ◆ Movement



## *Writing a Message-- Clay says:*

- ◆ “As each child learns more about writing it is as if he or she were putting the same jigsaw together but solving it in different ways.”
- ◆ “[Writing] is about constructing sentences from ideas, and about constructing words from their parts, all in the context of getting down a message.”

– Clay, 2001, pp. 15, 27.



*“Writing forces children to bring many things together:*

- ◆ the ideas,
- ◆ the composing of their own messages, constrained both by meaning and structure,
- ◆ the search for ways to record them,
- ◆ the monitoring of that recording
- ◆ and the reading of the record made.”

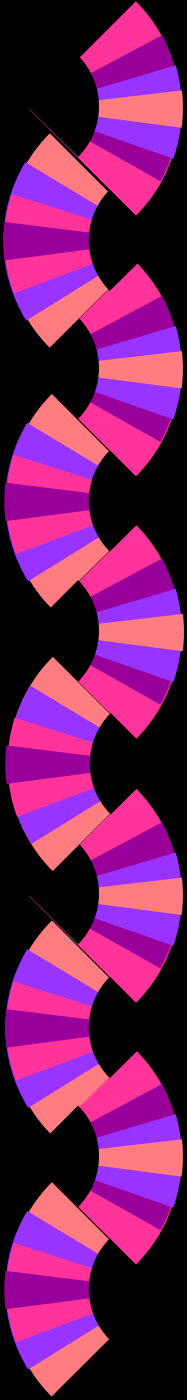
– Clay, 2001, p. 26.



# *Assembling the Cut-up-- They can learn:*

- ◆ attending
- ◆ monitoring
- ◆ self-correction
- ◆ shifting attention
- ◆ new learning
- ◆ assembling messages
- ◆ giving letters minimal attention

– Clay, 2001. P. 29.



## *Orientation to the new book and first reading*

- ◆ Role of prediction
- ◆ Tapping the knowledge sources
- ◆ Motivation
- ◆ Role of story
- ◆ “Less well prepared children need more careful anticipation by the teacher of which text features might make problem-solving easier for them.”

– Clay, 1998. P. 173.



## *What about Andre? After 20 Weeks*

- ◆ 53 on Letter ID
- ◆ 16 on Word Test
- ◆ 21 on CAP
- ◆ 48 on Word Test
- ◆ 36 on HRSW
- ◆ Text Reading Level 8



## *Andre's End of Year Scores*

- ◆ 54 on Letter ID
- ◆ 20 on Word Test
- ◆ 20 on CAP
- ◆ 36 on HRSW
- ◆ Text Level 20



## *Where is he now?*

- ◆ “Andre is a third grade student in my class. When he came into my room I could not tell if he was having problems academically or if he was a candidate for testing in a special program. I was so wrong in both cases!
- ◆ Andre is a very quiet little boy with a lot of untapped potential. He is like a race horse; the last one out of the gate but continually gaining and getting stronger.”



## *Where is he now, cont.*

- ◆ “His first Rigby Benchmark in the fall placed him at level F.
- ◆ His mid-year Benchmark places him at level N.
- ◆ Andre attends Reading Intervention everyday for half an hour besides guided reading instruction in a small group setting.
  - Carol Rappach, 3rd grade teacher



## *Conclusion: What can we learn?*

- ◆ Take time to build a solid foundation:  
“Some children with relatively poor levels at 10 weeks make accelerated progress after that time” (GB p.89).
- ◆ Use repetition, movement, and clear teaching by demonstration and provide links to what is known.



## *What can we learn? Cont.*

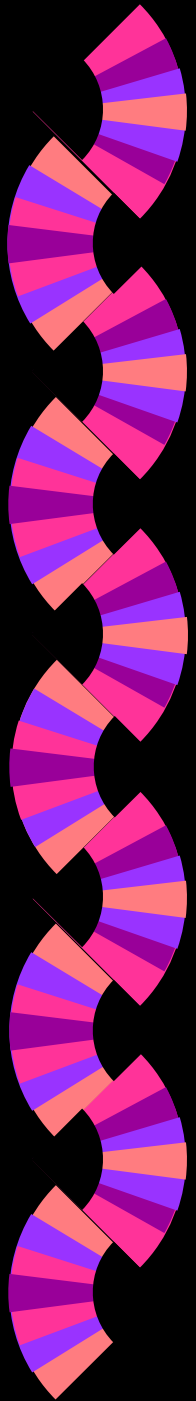
- ◆ Value the partially correct.
- ◆ Let some things go. (GB, p. 15)
- ◆ Stay calm.



## *Dr. Clay asserts:*

- ◆ “[Teachers] often substitute an environmental explanation for school failure that denigrates the child’s home experiences, an explanation that has come to be known as the deficit model. They talk about this environmentally determined inability as though it were permanent and unalterable, yet they rarely respond to missed opportunities to learn with make-up opportunities.”

– Clay, 1998, p.233.



*So,*

- ◆ Be explicit
- ◆ Be encouraging
- ◆ Be empowering



## *Elliot Eisner:*

- ◆ “Teaching that does not promote learning makes as much sense as selling that does not promote buying.”

– p. 46