

## Teaching Decisions Examined through the Conditions of Learning

### Guided Reading from Chapter 7, Language: The Bridge between Learning and Teaching

Text: First Reading of *Spiders* (Feely, 2009)

Teacher: *Debra Crouch*

Lesson	Teaching Decisions	How the Conditions and Processes are Affected by these Teaching Decisions (Specific Conditions and Processes are in bold)
<p>The students independently looked through the book <i>Spiders</i> (Feely, 2009), unreservedly sharing things they already knew about this topic as prompted by the vivid photographs. Several children strengthened their claims by drawing the group’s attention to specific photographic details that linked to their declarations. The discussion moved quickly and enthusiastically.</p> <p><i>They have eight legs. See, I can count them, one, two, three, four ...</i></p> <p><i>Spiders make webs to catch bugs. I saw a spider web like that at my house.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes they’re furry—ewww!— and different colors, too.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes they’re big or really little. Spiders are scary.</i></p> <p>At this point, Joseph, who had been nodding along as each of these ideas emerged, added, <i>They eat insects. Well, they don’t really eat them. They suck their blood.</i></p> <p>The other first graders were appropriately horror-struck and amused by this idea, which delighted Joseph.</p>	<p>Debra asked the students to introduce the book to themselves rather than having them follow her page by page through the book.</p> <p>She was quiet while the students shared ideas, neither confirming nor denying the validity of their ideas.</p> <p>She laughed along with the children, including Joseph, at the “horror” of his idea.</p>	<p>When teachers support learners to take <b>responsibility</b> for their own learning, they nurture the students’ belief in themselves as learners. This supports student <b>engagement</b>.</p> <p>By accepting all their ideas as equally valid, Debra encourages <b>approximation</b> and communicates an <b>expectation</b> of them as capable learners.</p> <p>By engaging with the group’s meaning-making (the group’s “horror” at Joseph’s idea), Debra’s <b>response</b> expresses her acceptance of all ideas. This encourages students to participate without judgment or harm, a key factor in <b>engagement</b>. This also supports the Process of <b>Evaluation</b>, through which students determine how they’re doing with the meaning-making being constructed.</p>

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<p>As the lesson moved on, the group returned to the beginning of the book to read, think, and talk more about author's ideas shared on each of the book's pages. A distinctive change seemed to occur in the group's dynamic. For some reason, rather than continuing to share easily and excitedly, the readers now settled for rote recall of factual information read in the book. In other words, the ideas from the book became the focus for their discussion. They rarely link what they already knew and had shared to what they were learning from the author. Debra believed they were capable of more complex thinking.</p>	<p>Debra attended to the change in the group's discussion and confidence.</p>	<p>Recognizing the unspoken lack of confidence about their abilities to make sense of a text is important for <b>responses</b> to the learners. As the children shared, Debra continued to accept all <b>approximations</b> from the learners.</p> <p>Her observations about how their thinking changed influenced subsequent <b>demonstrations</b> for the class.</p>
<p>Later in the lesson, after students read about various ways spiders catch insects to eat, Debra decided to remind Joseph and the other students of an idea shared in the initial discussion.</p> <p>Debra: <i>Joseph, you shared earlier you thought that spiders don't actually eat the insect, they just suck the blood. Did you find out about that idea in this book?</i></p> <p>Joseph: <i>No, it just says they eat the insects.</i></p> <p>Debra: <i>Hmm ... why do you think the author didn't include your idea?</i></p> <p>Joseph, after pondering the question for a few seconds, sagely replied, <i>The author didn't say 'suck the blood' 'cause this book is for little kids. That might be too scary.</i></p>	<p>Debra recalled Joseph's idea about spiders from the earlier discussion and brought the idea back for deeper consideration.</p> <p>She phrased her question to elevate Joseph's idea to those in the book: <i>Did you find out about that idea in this book?</i></p> <p>She probed to offer Joseph the opportunity to consider why the author had made a decision about how the book was written.</p>	<p>Lifting up a student's ideas in this way validates their <b>approximations</b> and encourages <b>responsibility</b> for thinking.</p> <p>Phrasing her question in a way that elevates the students' thinking to that of the book's author communicates a belief in the learner to make sense of a topic and text. This kind of <b>response</b> to a learner increases <b>engagement</b> and <b>responsibility</b>. <b>Engagement</b> increases as readers see themselves as capable.</p>

**What decisions might you make next time? How will this affect each of the Conditions?**

Read aloud and shared reading lessons should emphasize that the ideas found in a text are not the "right" answers or the only ideas to value. Shared and independent writing will also be important for thinking about topics from varying perspectives.

Demonstrations in both reading and writing will support engagement for learners. Thinking critically about what is not included in a book will be an important focus while reading and writing texts. This will help students form their own expectations of and beliefs in themselves as capable of making sense of a text. This will also help students recognize that just because a text differs from their thinking doesn't invalidate that thinking.