

*Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading*

By: Janet Allen

Stenhouse Publishers, 2000

Janet Allen's new book *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading* is a worthwhile guide for veteran and new teachers alike. In the book, Allen likens teachers to Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz* searching for answers to ensure student literacy success.

According to Allen, the first step on the path to literacy success is to ensure that students have a supportive environment in which reluctant and struggling readers are expected to succeed, motivated to learn, and feel comfortable taking risks as they become better readers. Allen promotes a reading rich environment through reading aloud to students. The purpose of a "read aloud" is to engage students in the printed word. The read aloud can be designed for students to see a connection to other course information or simply to share in a great reading experience. Any passage, news article, or poem may be shared as a read aloud including small pieces of pertinent text from longer novels.

Many strategies are illustrated in *Yellow Brick Roads* including shared and guided reading. Shared reading utilizes the support of the teacher reading the material aloud to model effective reading while students read along silently. Shared reading can also take the form of audio CDs or tapes. By sharing the reading either through the teacher's voice or a recorded audio version, students are able to focus on comprehension with the support of hearing and seeing the text.

Guided reading is used as a scaffold with smaller groups of students in order to delve deeper into strategies and comprehension. The teacher directs students to read certain passages, then encourages them to gain meaning from the text through a variety of strategies including questioning, connecting and reinforcing. Students are reading independently, but they are using the support of a teacher to interpret the text. Guided reading allows students an opportunity to try strategies learned during shared reading time.

If guided reading is the next step on a continuum of reading, independent reading would be the last step. Allen advises that independence for students means letting go for teachers. It means allowing choice of materials and time for students to read. One of the many engaging activities presented in *Yellow Brick Roads* was Book Pass. This short activity has students in a circle with a book in their hands. The student reads the title, the back of the book and any reviews before perusing the book for approximately two minutes. The student then rates the book on his or her own scale. After an allotted amount of time the books would be passed on for the next student in the circle and the process begins again. At the end of the Book Pass each student has an extensive list of books to choose from for his or her own reading pleasure. When asked to choose a book for reading the student would reference their list to select a book. By allowing students to

use their own judgment regarding the interest and readability of a book, students experience independence while being exposed to a variety a reading material.

Throughout *Yellow Brick Roads* Allen gives ideas and strategies to allow all students to become successful readers. The value of background knowledge is discussed in an adapted form of K-W-L (Know, What to Know, Learned) (Ogle, 1986). Allen adds the steps of building background and creating new questions (B-K-W-L-Q) to provide students with enough information to create the desire to want to know more about a topic.

*Yellow Brick Roads* is a valuable resource for the literacy classroom. Allen provides insight as well as tangible strategies and activities in order for all teachers to find their path to OZ and the land of reading success for all students.

Reviewed by: Judy Sidley