



(...mostly, kinda)

An unfinished book of *mostly, kinda true ideas* about classroom supports for self-regulated learning.

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Introduction

From December 2nd to December 13th, three teachers and their students took part in a research study to try to identify the classroom factors that make group problem solving work better. These teachers self-selected into the study, from a school that itself had self-selected. It became apparent that both the school and the teachers had self-selected because they were capable of taking on more challenge, eager to learn new things, and deeply passionate about education.

This book presents four preliminary theories based on these two weeks of research. We detected several classroom factors that seemed to support the use of a whole-class problem solving approach called 'The Barriers and Strategies Protocol' (see appendix). These factors are part of a larger model, proposed earlier by Canadian researchers Nancy Perry, Simon Lisaigo and colleagues (see appendix). We used Nancy and Simon's work to help guide our search for the specific factors that needed to be turned up to enable whole classes of children to engage in strategic thinking together. We knew that supporting children's strategic was important, and also that teachers very rarely have time to do this one-on-one.

Three teachers and a researcher met every morning for 45 minutes to discuss which of Nancy and Simon's factors to tweak. Then, every day, the teachers rolled out a slightly different version of their lesson and the results were observed. The following day, the results were discussed and more tweaks were planned. The teachers' skillful, rapid iteration of approaches yielded great insight in WEEK 1 of the study.

In WEEK 2, a story like this was used as a tool to elicit student's insights about the theories developed in WEEK 1. We enriched and expanded our story by integrating in-depth insight from the children at the center of the study.

Our team: One Ontario school board, three teachers and their students (36 Grade 3-4, 27 Grade 6). The study was designed by Dr. Laurie Faith (UT), Dr. Simon Lisaingo (UBC), and Chris Keane (HPEDSB). Dr. Rachel Ault (UT) will assist with analysis.

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Once upon a time, there was a little school.
Its students and teachers were kind,
helpful, and hardworking.



At the school, there were good days
and less good days.



Interesting days and less interesting days.



Great days and less great days.



It was a nice, normal school.

Every day, the teachers taught the kids.

**Most days,
the kids learned!!**

Every day, the teachers assigned work.

**Some days,
the kids did it!!**

Some days they did not.

Yeah, no. Some days the learning and the work did not get done.

But, like, not because the kids were bad.

Nobody really thought that.

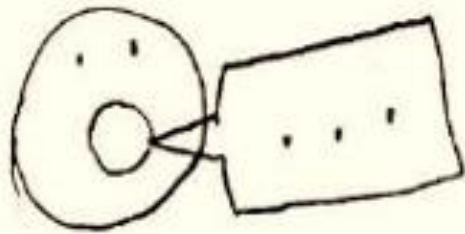
It was something else.

They were sure of it!

Because the kids were great!
They were funny, brilliant, creative,
interested, kind, and caring.

(But yeah. No... Sometimes the work didn't get done.)

The teachers had two good ideas
for how to help:



Talking About
Your Learning



Your Ideas Count

They told the kids that their ideas counted!
They told the kids that talking about their
learning would help!

When they assigned hard work, they asked
the kids to talk about their...

Barriers
and
Strategies

They wanted them to be **READY** for anything. So, they tried to help them to imagine barriers and plan strategies.

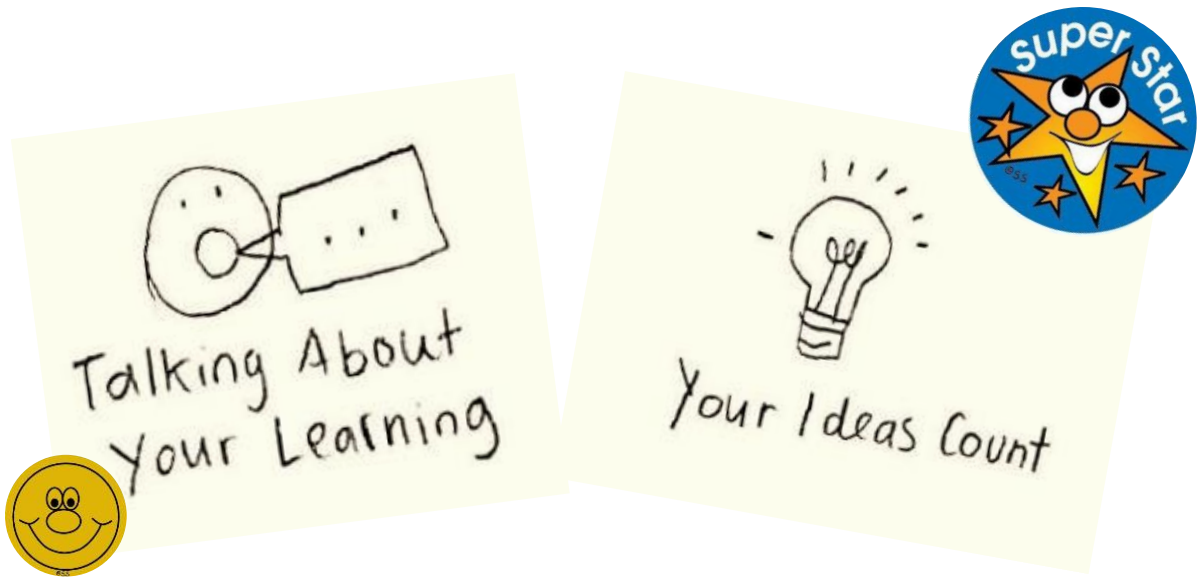
**If I'm
stuck...
I'll ask a
friend**

**If I'm
distracted...
I'll move**

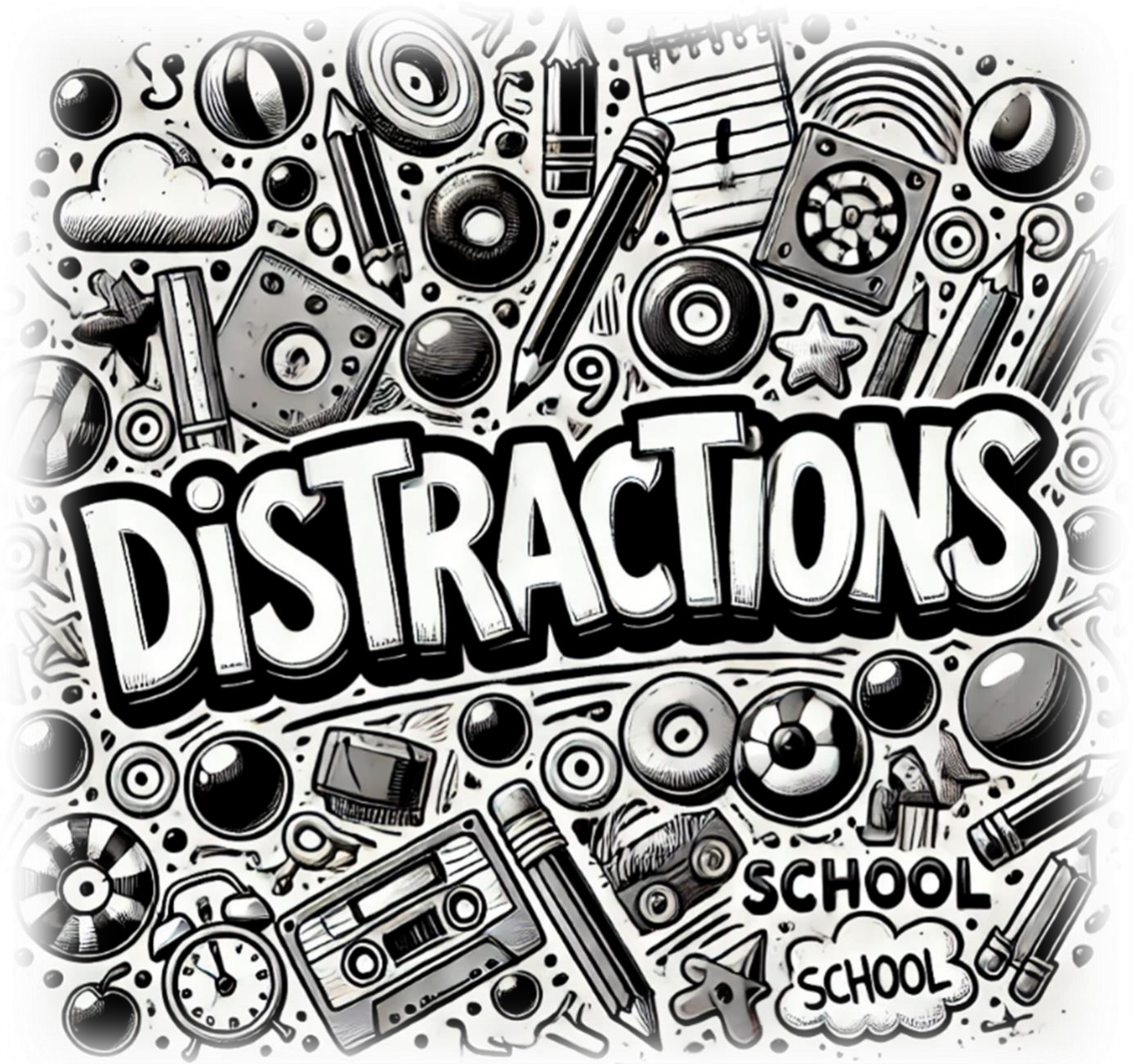


As the kids talked, they got better at school.
Also, the teachers learned a little more
about what they needed.

Their two good ideas worked!
(...*mostly, kinda*)



Oh, hey. Also...
guess what
the number one
barrier was
across
all
of the classes?



Did you guess that?
Anyhow, back to our story.

Even though these Barriers and Strategies talks *mostly, kinda* worked, the teachers wanted them to work better. They wanted the kids to be ready for anything, so nothing could stop them.



They wanted the kids to look into the future
to see all of the problems,
pitfalls, and challenges they might face
and figure out how to smash them,
like in a video game.

They wanted the kids to win,
succeed, and be happy.



They really cared about the kids.

So, every day, the teachers got up in the dark, had a strong coffee, and came to school extra early. They had meetings to try to figure out how to make it easier for kids to have great barriers and strategies conversations. They loved it.



(mostly, kinda)

They learned four important things, which they kinda, sorta understood.

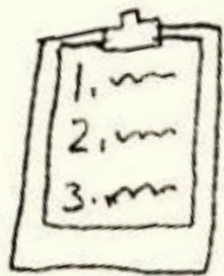
But they needed the kids to help them understand those four things.

So get ready to tell part of this story.

It is almost your turn!



Kay. First idea. To predict barriers and figure out strategies, kids need MUCH clearer and simpler instructions than anyone realizes. Kids can't be strategic if they didn't know what the &%\$#@!! they are trying to do.

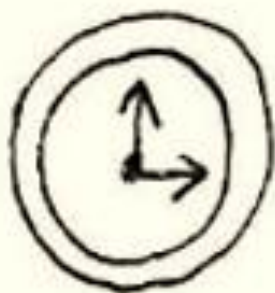


Clear
Instructions



Showing You
How

Ready, second thing! To have great barriers and strategies conversations, kids liked to do the same sort of activities a few times so they could get in a groove and feel confident. This also helped them to understand the task. The more they felt like confident experts on the task, the more strategic they could be.



Easy-to-Follow
Routines

Thirdly, the kids needed the tasks to matter and count – they needed to know if they met expectations or didn't. Otherwise, who cares about being strategic?

They needed to know if they were on the right track.



And then, they needed a little bit of help sometimes.



Fourthly, kids need *smaller* and more specific work. They needed stuff they could actually get done.

Like, because, you know... if the task was impossible to get done, why even try to be strategic?

Having a little bit of choice or differentiated options also helped with this.



The teachers felt proud celebrated their learning. But... is there anything missing?
What do kids need at school
in order to smash their challenges?





These factors were transformed for discussion by children based on resources created by Perry, N. E., Lisaingo, S., Yee, N., Parent, N., Wan, X., & Muis, K. (2020a). Collaborating with teachers to design and implement assessments for self-regulated learning in the context of authentic classroom writing tasks. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 27(4), 416-443. Drawn by Kay Liang (2024).

Independent Math Questions #1

Barriers

- * not starting
- * forgot how to do the strategies
- * worried about time
- * were not sure how to show strategies
- * forgot tool
- * confidence

Strategies

- throw away the thought
- pep talk ✓
- look at examples ✓
- start in first minute
- deep breaths ✓
- teacher pep talk

Independent Math Questions #2

Barriers

- * forgot how to do the strategies
- * not sure how to show my thinking
- * worried strategy won't work - wrong answer

Strategies

- look for an expert
- look at an example
- try a different one
- whiteboard
- pep talk
- try your best
- it may not work the first but maybe another time

Sustained Attention

Barrier	EF	Strategy(ies)
- Topic is tricky ↳ give up	GDP	- use a class tool - try a strategy I know - ask for a 1st step.
- Distraction are hard to ignore	SA	- Focus \leftarrow ^{teacher} smart board, task at hand - Cue / Ask to stop
- Worried \rightarrow not good enough (emotions)	EC	- Thinking Time (on topic)
- I don't know where to start	TI	- Break it up into parts you know - Reread the instructions - Try a strategy, OK CMT - Skip ahead, & come back - start with an easy spot (give confi)
- I missed the instructions at carpet / desk	SA	- Ask 3, Ask an expert
- Your ^{strategy/} knowledge isn't solid	GDP WM	- Ask a friend / teacher ↳ Can you help me with... ↳ I don't understand this YET, - "Quick check" - rely on a strategy you know

Barriers

Getting Started

Strategies

- Forget
 - Distracted
 - ↳ ppl
 - ↳ stuff
 - Haven't finished previous activity
 - Absent minded
 - Skip / avoid because it's hard, or more interested in doing something else
 - Something happened with friends / or at home
- Visual prompt
 - ↳ notebook
 - ↳ note
 - ↳ remind peers
 - out of sight / out of mind
 - work on it at home
 - Remember the goal
 - Chat w/ friend / teacher
 - read / doodle