



# English Scholar

— WRITING CENTRE —

*Providing the Pieces for Academic Excellence*

## ***Gradual Release of Responsibility (English Language Arts: Integrated Resource Package 2007)***

In effective literacy instruction, teachers choose their instructional activities to model and scaffold composition, comprehension, and metacognition that is just beyond students' independent level. This is called the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978), and it is where learning can be most effectively supported and extended with instruction. That is, students engage in activities that are new and challenging, but not so difficult that they become frustrated. Teachers introduce students to approaches, skills, and strategies to help them navigate these activities and tasks (i.e., creating texts, reading texts).

As students become more proficient in using their new strategies through guided practice and interaction with one another, the teacher gradually releases responsibility for the use of strategies to students in order to encourage independence (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This process is called the “gradual release of responsibility,” or the gradual release of support. The ultimate goal is for students to make the strategies their own, and to know how, when, and why to apply them when speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing, representing, and thinking about their thinking (Miller, 2003).

Students need to be able to select, adapt, and apply strategies as tasks require. With this in mind, teachers select tasks and texts that require the deliberate and flexible use of strategies for speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing, and representing (Cambourne, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2004). By explicitly addressing key literacy skills and strategies across tasks, teachers can help students understand that they are transferable and adaptable. Similarly, when teachers develop instructional sequences, they should strive to provide students with opportunities to personalize and adapt their approaches and methods.