With the rise of the digital age, if there is one artifact of our classrooms that needs rethinking, it is the textbook. No longer can teachers rely on a single source of information to meet our curricular needs. With many states subscribing to adoption models, the textbooks stay around too long and their content is frequently outdated.

For this reason, strategy guides can be useful vehicles for bridging textbook content and the myriad of information available to us via digital sources. Strategy guides are not the study guides of yesterday—essentially a series of questions students had to answer while reading a textbook chapter. With the increasing need to develop strategic readers and writers, strategy guides (Wood, Lapp, Flood, & Taylor, 2008) use a modified Phased Transfer Model of Teaching and Learning to take students outside of a chapter and into multiple sources of information, touring virtual worlds, blogging about issues, and synthesizing information from websites, online encyclopedias, and so forth.

In this column, I show how two strategy guides can be used in a classroom to guide students through the process of comprehending using analysis, synthesis and discussion of both printed and online text. The first strategy guide is the Reading Road Map (RRM). A typical RRM consists of missions (interspersed questions and activities), road signs (reading rate indicators), and location signs (related websites, text page or paragraph numbers, etc.). Teachers are encouraged to be creative in designing the guide activities, questions, and graphics to capture the attention of reluctant learners. A guide should be a blend of textbook content and related digital content. An excerpt from a guide on Afghanistan is shown in Figure 1 and a brief procedural description follows here.

- Begin by explaining the purpose and drawing parallels between the “text and online journey” and an actual trip to another location. As with any journey, it is less confusing to look ahead, plan the course, and know where you are going before you get there. So, have the students skim over the map so they can see where they are headed.
- Allow students to work in pairs to engage in the activities. With any trip, it is always more enjoyable to have a “traveling companion.” They can write their responses on a separate paper, preserving the guides for later use.
- Model one or two examples and assist students in locating and composing a response, often from more than one source.
**Figure 1  Reading Road Map: Afghanistan**

**Directions**: Welcome to South Asia. The first country you will visit is Afghanistan, then on to Pakistan and Bangladesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecting to Your World</td>
<td>Skim</td>
<td>Share your thinking about what you already know about Afghanistan and then skim over this opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 385</td>
<td>Slow Down</td>
<td>Read and discuss with your partner why Afghanistan is a strategic location and so important to other countries through the years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detour to the World Wide Web</td>
<td>Slow Down</td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.nationalgeographic.com">www.nationalgeographic.com</a> Look at the links on the toolbar with your partner and jot down some facts about the following (remember to use the key at the bottom of each map): Ethnic Groups Drought and Vegetation What does this information tell you about Afghanistan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 385</td>
<td>Stop &amp; Write</td>
<td>With your partner, draw a chart that illustrates the control of Afghanistan from the 1800s to the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fork in the Road</td>
<td>You choose an online source to determine the role of the Taliban today. (Be sure to use the website verification form we discussed in class) Are they still a threat? Why and how are they able to survive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use in South Asia</td>
<td>Turn Here</td>
<td>Look at the key to the left and study the map on this page. Develop a circle graph that depicts how the land is used in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, &amp; India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics and Culture</td>
<td>Slow Down</td>
<td>What is subsistence farming? Explain why most Afghans live by this method?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What happens when a teacher wants to show a DVD or videotape (yes, they still exist), or maybe visit a virtual world on the Internet? Too often the viewing of material is not treated like an actual lesson, with pre-, during, and poststages. Using a accompanying strategy guide avoids the experience of putting in the DVD or movie only to have students pass notes to friends, or put their heads on their desks and drift off to sleep as soon as the lights go out. Today, however, we see the value of visualization as a learning tool with the proliferation of books devoted to the topic (see Flood, Brice, & Lapp, 2008, for additional information). In addition, state curricula across the country include visual literacy as part of the standard course of study.

A second strategy guide, the Collaborative Listening Viewing Guide (CLVG) works well with material that is viewed or heard: a science experiment, an outside speaker, a virtual tour to a foreign country, an online interview with an author, a field trip, a virtual field trip. The list is endless especially in today’s digital world. In this example, a DVD entitled Lost Treasures of Afghanistan was selected from National Geographic website (www.nationalgeographic.com) to complement the study of South Asia in a social studies classroom. As with any effective lesson, students should be provided an instructional framework for the material that is viewed or heard.

The form provided in Figure 2 illustrates the phases or components of this framework: previewing/reviewing; recording, elaborating, synthesizing and extending the content. The CLVG calls for whole class, small group, paired, and individualized learning, documented as the best combination for effective learning.

Figure 2  Excerpt From a Collaborative Listing-Viewing Guide for Social Studies

What they already know. This is the time when the teacher can model how to start thinking about the topic of study.

Record—In this phase, students jot down important concepts they see or hear using abbreviated notes, drawings, or what best represents what they heard.

Elaborate—In this phase, the predetermined group members “put their heads together” to recall details; flesh out their abbreviated notes; contribute what they heard or saw; and combine, elaborate on, and extend their individual responses. The responses in the “group” column are noticeably more detailed than the “individual” column because students are using their collective recall to reconstruct the material.

Synthesize—After the groups have met to discuss their responses, students go back to the whole class format to provide a broader view, synthesize the main concepts, and make some generalizations. This can be accomplished via
a graphic organizer or chart such as the one excerpted in Figure 2, or group and whole class writing activities, brainstorming, or any other activity that fits the content.

- Extend—This optional phase allows students to work in pairs to extend, apply, and research the content more extensively.

The next logical question is how do all of these forms of information fit together in a classroom? Let’s take a look at a representative weekly schedule in Figure 3. I do not advocate showing a DVD or any other form of media in one setting. Instead I advocate “chunking,” or dividing the content to make it more manageable. Chunking text in all its forms (digital and traditional) has proven to be more beneficial to student learning because there is less of a cognitive strain to process and assimilate shorter amounts of material (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). In this way, the students and the teacher engage daily in discussions synthesizing the content from varied sources. Anyone who has taught at the middle or high school level knows that students of the “sound bite” generation are accustomed to information that is presented in smaller amounts and in a variety of media formats.

A final note on using online resources: It is imperative as educators that we help students learn how to judge the validity of online material as they navigate the Internet. One option is to do what we have done in these examples, carefully screening the media forms and websites in advance and including them as part of the instructional lesson. However, if students are asked to do their own research, you will want to consult one or more of the various resources available for helping students evaluate website quality. See Literacy Strategies Across the Subject Areas (Wood & Taylor, 2006) as well as the Baildon and Baildon (2008) article in The Reading Teacher for a few examples.

References

Figure 3  Sample Weekly Schedule Using Two Strategy Guides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce the</td>
<td>Introduce</td>
<td>RRM—Students</td>
<td>RRM—Teacher and</td>
<td>RRM—Teacher and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topic, elicit</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>work in pairs to</td>
<td>students discuss</td>
<td>students discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background</td>
<td>Listening-Viewing</td>
<td>continue answering</td>
<td>and review content</td>
<td>and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge;</td>
<td>Guide (CLVG),</td>
<td>questions/activities;</td>
<td>from the text/online</td>
<td>engage in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce and</td>
<td>engage in preview</td>
<td>Student-led</td>
<td>sources; CLVG:</td>
<td>synthesis of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>model sample</td>
<td>phase of DVD;</td>
<td>discussions;</td>
<td>Teacher and</td>
<td>DVD and begin the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questions on</td>
<td>Reading Road Map</td>
<td>Continue with DVD/</td>
<td>students;</td>
<td>extend phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Road</td>
<td>(RRM)—</td>
<td>CLVG and group</td>
<td>CLVG: Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map (RRM)—</td>
<td>Allow students</td>
<td>discussions</td>
<td>and students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to work in pairs</td>
<td></td>
<td>engage in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td>synthesis of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>content as a</td>
<td></td>
<td>DVD and begin the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class</td>
<td></td>
<td>extend phase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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