CHAPTER 4

# Implementing the Kidstation Model

The emphasis in education today and probably well into the future is accountability. Since the No Child Left Behind initiative began in 2001, greater emphasis has been placed on schools to demonstrate their efforts to be accountable for the education of their students. High-stakes testing and regular benchmark assessments are designed to identify individual student's weaknesses, provide targeted instruction, and support those areas in need of direct instruction (Booher-Jennings, 2006). To ensure that our students become lifelong learners, the students must be part of the accountability equation. Along with administrators, teachers, and parents, students must assume their role in becoming more accountable. Students must be held to high standards of accountability and be called on to demonstrate their competencies as they are learning. While there is certainly a great deal of discussion about this subject, educators are moving toward performance-based and other alternative assessments for students rather than just norm-based testing because they provide authentic assessment and give students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned (Capper, Hafner, & Keyes, 2001). The kidstation model provides students with opportunities to use their creative abilities and modality preferences to demonstrate what they have learned.

## Student Accountability

As teachers begin to implement the guided reading groups with the appropriate activities in the kidstations, the element of accountability must be clearly established and maintained. Teachers need to change the students' mind-set that these

activities are not "busy work" but, rather, extensions of their guided reading session. Their work at these kidstations is evidence or proof that they can apply the skills they are being taught. Furthermore, students are expected to demonstrate their accomplishments on presentation day.

Teachers often ask, How does all of this grouping come together? How do I manage these groups during the literacy block? How do I manage the rest of the class? This looks great on paper, but is this framework really possible? Table 3 provides the five-day model we created for implementing guided reading and the kidstations, but we believe that the best way to explain this model is to share the experience of one of the teachers who implemented it in her classroom. Mrs. Jacobs, an inner-city school teacher, has a very diverse population of 29 students. Recall how we mentioned that students are typically shown many literacy activities during the first few weeks of school. Mrs. Jacobs gives the three remaining groups of students a writing project related to what they had already read in the shared reading group. She has her three groups working independently on creating a diorama depicting the setting of a story the class read together during shared reading. Each student, after making the diorama, has to write a description of the setting in the story using the diorama to help recall and describe the important details of the setting. The students sit at a

**Table 3. Five-Day Implementation Model for Guided Reading and the Kidstations**

| Group | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Guided Reading** | Kidstation One: Word Study | Kidstation Two: Understanding the Literature | Kidstation Three: Responding to the Literature | Presentations |
| 2 | Kidstation Three: Responding to the Literature | **Guided Reading** | Kidstation One: Word Study | Kidstation Two: Understanding the Literature | Presentations |
| 3 | Kidstation Two: Understanding the Literature | Kidstation Three: Responding to the Literature | **Guided Reading** | Kidstation One: Word Study | Presentations |
| 4 | Kidstation One: Word Study | Kidstation Two: Understanding the Literature | Kidstation Three: Responding to the Literature | **Guided Reading** | Presentations |

designated area, have the materials they needed, and work independently on their project. They know that they are accountable for completing this project, just as they would be for the work at their kidstations in the days to follow.

## Day 1

**Group 1—Guided Reading Session**

Initially, we recommend that teachers work with one group each day. Mrs. Jacobs begins her first day with the first group while the other three groups work on their diorama project independently. Many grouping models propose that teachers see two guided reading groups each day (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). However, for very practical reasons, especially having worked with teachers over the years in large-size classes, it's a good idea to start out with one group each day. Again, the teacher must feel comfortable with this process, and it takes time to get the flow of giving brief introductions, setting a purpose, listening to students read, making notations on the chart, interacting with individuals who may need support, and then conducting the follow-up discussion with the group within a 30–35 minute time frame. Realistically, teachers need at least that much time to conduct a meaningful guided reading session. Students also need time to demonstrate how they can read aloud to the teacher and discuss issues related to the purpose of reading. Likewise, the students in the kidstations need a reasonable amount of time to complete the activities that are intended to reinforce or enrich their reading experiences.

In time, as teachers become familiar with the task, the pacing of the session, and the flow of the group, it is possible to meet with more than one group for guided reading. Another point to mention is that the teacher does not necessarily need to listen to every student in the group. A teacher may spend more time with one student than another, but the teacher will make a note of who she did or did not meet with for that session. The next time the group meets, if the same students are in the group, she can listen to the other students. It also is important to note that if a teacher has listened to each student read aloud and the students are not finished reading the text, a teacher can certainly move among the students in the kidstations (other than on the first day) to monitor their progress or address their concerns.

The first group focuses on using keywords from the title and picture clues to make predictions about the story. Students make their predictions before reading the passage and some students adjust those predictions as they read the story. After the students read the story independently, Mrs. Jacobs initiates the discussion with the key questions for their group that address the purpose for reading and then they revisit their predictions. Students share their rationale for making their predictions during the course of the postreading discussion. Mrs. Jacobs asks the students if making predictions helped to improve their comprehension. Several students remark that by using their prior knowledge and context clues to predict how the story would unfold, it helped them to recall and remember details of the story. Mrs. Jacobs also helps students work through some problems they encountered with vocabulary when they read the text.

**Group 2—Guided Reading Session**

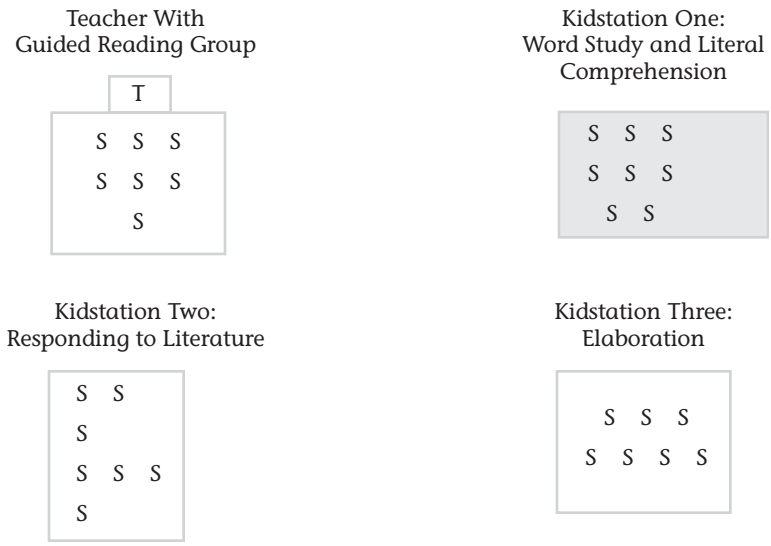
**Group 1—Kidstation One**

## Day 2

On the second day, Mrs. Jacobs prepares a word study task for the students in the first group. She bases this activity on the observations she made as the students read with her on the previous day. The students in the first group sit together in a cluster (see Figure 15) and Mrs. Jacobs brings their assignment to them. She places the materials in a box, with enough materials for each student, and stresses the point that all work must be completed by reminding them that she would decide on the project to be presented on the fifth day. In the box of materials are the directions for the activity and a sample of the assignment. The students work on a vocabulary quilt with key words and other related words from the text. Although the students sit in a group, they work independently.

Many times students will ask if they can work together on a group project. We recommend that students work independently in the beginning of the process and most of the time. When students work as a group, there are always some who sit back while others take the initiative for the group. By having students work independently in the beginning of the process, teachers let students know the clear expectations for working at the kidstations, and more important, students learn to be responsible and accountable for their work. On presentation day, if a student has not completed the work at the kidstations and is not ready to give a presentation,

**Figure 15. Arrangement of Mrs. Jacobs's Class for Guided Reading and the Three Kidstations**




he or she will be graded accordingly. Typically this won't happen more than once as no student wants to be left out of the presentations. However, a way to prevent this from happening is for the teacher, when he or she is done with the guided reading group discussion, to go to the kidstations and take a minute to assess the students' progress. A literacy specialist, English as a second language (ESL) teacher, special needs teacher, or teacher's aide also can perform the same work to keep students on task. It's not likely that after three days at the kidstations, the student would not have anything to present, but it could happen.

When each student has demonstrated responsibility and accountability and when a project lends itself to it, group work can be initiated. If a teacher does assign a group a cooperative project, we recommend that only one group in the kidstation area work on a cooperative project at a time in order to effectively manage students and maximize student accountability. It also motivates other groups to be accountable when they see another group working cooperatively.

As students in Kidstation One complete their work, they place it in the box and return all the materials and their books, if necessary. Later that day, Mrs. Jacobs collects, checks, and responds to their work. The next day, the students will review her feedback before beginning their task at Kidstation Two.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Jacobs addresses the second guided reading group in the same manner as the first group. The second group uses a different story than the first group and reads the story to determine the main idea using inference skills. The third and fourth groups continue to work on their dioramas.

**Group 3—Guided Reading Session**

**Group 2—Kidstation One**

**Group 1—Kidstation Two**

## Day 3

On the third day, the first group moves to Kidstation Two where their assignment includes determining the elements of the story. Mrs. Jacobs gives the books to the students in the event they want to reread the text, as well as the Story Grammar Wheel Base, the Story Grammar Wheel Overlay, and a paper fastener (see Appendix E, "Story Grammar Wheel Base and Overlay"). After students complete the base, they place the overlay on top of it using the fastener so they see only one element of the story at a time, starting with setting. By focusing on each element separately, students are able to elaborate on each element and then begin to write a first draft of a story summary. Students focus on characters next and continue until they have examined each element.

Next, Mrs. Jacobs assigns the second group their work at Kidstation One. They work on a Seek and Find activity that reinforces their understanding of compound words and contractions (see Appendix E for an example of such an activity, which can be adapted to different stories). After completing the activity, the students use these words in sentences or short paragraphs about the story, using the contractions and compound words they learned.

Then, the third group begins their guided reading session with Mrs. Jacobs. She decides to use the same story as she did with the second group but for a different purpose. Mrs. Jacobs knows that this group needs to develop an understanding of the author's point of view. The students use their ability to analyze the text to provide the evidence to support their interpretation of the author's point of view.

Finally, the fourth group completes their diorama, and they edit and revise their first drafts of their descriptive essays. These students plan to meet with Mrs. Jacobs later in the day before completing their final pieces.

## Day 4

**Group 4—Guided Reading Session**

**Group 3—Kidstation One**

**Group 2—Kidstation Two**

**Group 1—Kidstation Three**

On the fourth day, the first group moves to Kidstation Three where Mrs. Jacbos provides them with a task for elaborating on the skill they were taught in Kidstation Two. At Kidstation Three, students have the opportunity to move beyond the text to apply the skill in different situations. The students select another text and make predictions based on their ability to use the new text clues to validate their predictions. After they read the text, the students provide a rationale for each of their predictions.

Mrs. Jacobs assigns the second group a sequencing activity at Kidstation Two, while the third group, at Kidstation One, is asked to answer the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) that reinforce literal comprehension. Finally, the fourth group engages in the guided reading session with Mrs. Jacobs. In a short time, Mrs. Jacobs finishes listening to each of the students in the fourth group. She makes several notations regarding a few students in the group and thinks that, although this group may not need an activity at Kidstation One because there were no issues with word recognition, vocabulary, or literal comprehension, she may give them an extended project at Kidstation Two. Subsequently, that is what she decides to do.

Based on their work from Kidstations One and Two and observations of their work in Kidstation Three, Mrs. Jacobs informs each of the students in the first group of which activity she wants them to prepare to present to the class on the following day. Initially, she decides which students would present which activities for several reasons: (1) She wants to capitalize on students' strengths to build their confidence; (2) she wants the class to see a variety of presentations; (3) she wants the presentations to include a variety of media; and (4) by not knowing which assignment Mrs. Jacobs will select, students are inclined to complete all their assignments, further reinforcing their accountability. The first group presents in the first five-day cycle.

Presentation Day

# Day 5

In the beginning of the process, a different group is scheduled to make their individual presentations each week. Table 4 depicts the rotation of the groups, so that once every four weeks a group is presenting. As their finished product for word study at Kidstation One, the first group in Mrs. Jacobs's class presents their vocabulary quilt (see Appendix E for directions on making a vocabulary quilt). Each student in the group presents the word that he or she was responsible for researching.

The idea of giving an oral presentation can be frightening for some children. The earlier they become comfortable with the process, the better. Some teachers start out by having students view newscasters, talk show hosts, political candidates giving speeches, and even people in commercials, where they see how important it is for them to be good speakers, as well as good readers and writers. This is one way they can come to understand how effective communication skills are an integral part of their literacy development.

It is equally important to model good presentations for students so they are aware of the elements necessary for effective oral communication. This can be done as part of the language arts class where teachers demonstrate voice quality, pronunciation, diction, expression, eye contact, poise, and the appropriate use of

**Table 4. The Five-Day Model Incorporated Into a Four-Week Cycle**

| Week 1 | | | | | Week 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GR** | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | **PR** | GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | |
| KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | | KS-3 | **GR** | KS-1 | KS-2 | **PR** |
| KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | | KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | |
| KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | |
| **Week 3** | | | | | **Week 4** | | | | |
| GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | | GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | |
| KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | | KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | KS-2 | |
| KS-2 | KS-3 | **GR** | KS-1 | **PR** | KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | KS-1 | |
| KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | GR | | KS-1 | KS-2 | KS-3 | **GR** | **PR** |

GR = guided reading group
KS = kidstation
PR = presentation

gestures. When you really stop and think about it, teachers actually engage in these practices every day. However, we don't call the students' attention to these aspects of speaking. Depending on the grade level and type of presentation, teachers also can demonstrate how to create transparencies and use overhead projectors, computers, and simple props in their presentations.

Giving a demonstration is a means for students to develop their oral presentation skills, and it provides teachers with a venue for assessing students' accountability for the work completed at the kidstations. As much as possible, teachers should provide the means and materials for students to incorporate multimedia and technology into their presentations. Oral communication skills, enhanced by the power of technology and multimedia, have become paramount in global society. While for years educators have placed heavy emphasis on reading and writing, we have not approached the development of oral communication with the same vigor (Guastello & Sinatra, 2001). Through the experiences of developing students' presentations, teachers help students develop, refine, reshape, and use oral language as they integrate visual and technological tools. As students engage in conversations and discussions about their work, they learn to be active and attentive listeners as well, in order to respond to other's statements.

Presentations will vary according to length, topic, materials used, and the nature of the activity. It could be a simple prop or puppet animated by a first grader as he recites a fairy tale and talks about the character in the tale or something similar to a show-and-tell by a second grader who creates a flip book to illustrate and retell the sequence of events in a story. After reading several picture books and stories about pumpkins and Halloween, a kindergarten student might make a picture or use a computer software program such as Kid Pix Studio to show how he would grow pumpkins in his backyard. We've watched primary-grade students demonstrate phone etiquette and emergency phone calls after reading books about home safety practices for children. Primary-grade students reading expository leveled readers present weather reports and how-to demonstrations. Third graders have given presentations on how to care for flowers, using props and illustrating the gradual growth of plants using transparencies. The presentations allow for a great deal of integration with content area subject matter. Middle-grade and junior high students may design a costume of a character they wish to portray, or they may

draw or import pictures or images from the Internet in their presentations. From using overhead transparencies to creating a PowerPoint presentation with animation, students are given ample time to create and demonstrate the tasks completed at the kidstations. Presentation may include story telling, creating biographical sketches, creating commercials, and designing photo essays on story boards. Students using computer-created semantic maps can explain concepts from both narrative and expository texts. From producing simple diagrams to creating sophisticated graphs, students learn multimedia technology to enhance their presentation skills.

At first, the teachers should orchestrate who presents which completed task. However, as students gain confidence with the process of presenting and demonstrating accountability, they can confer with their teacher in making decisions as to what they would like to present. Pleased with the response of his first-grade students, after three months, Mr. Henry gives a group of students the opportunity to select an activity of their choice for their presentation. Jason uses a transparency he made with the help of the computer to show how he was able to sequence the events in the story using a marker. Marsha makes a book jacket and writes a review of the story she read. Karen displays her vocabulary quilt and explains how she used the thesaurus to complete the activities on the quilt. David creates a PowerPoint presentation depicting a description of the characters in the story. Brian writes several riddles that incorporated the new vocabulary words he learned from this story. Jasmine retells her story summary but in the form of a poem, and Jorge demonstrates how the story grammar wheel helped him write his story summary. Allen acts out his favorite scene in a play he read.

Later, group presentations also can be conducted. For example, a group of third graders explained and demonstrated how to create a fish tank for their classroom after reading about it and visiting the neighborhood pet store. A group of fifth graders presented a panel discussion of the dangers of the greenhouse effect on the environment. Such group discussions at the kidstations allow all students to interact and collaborate on problem-solving skills (Page, 2002), which is the development of the third English language arts standard. Decisions on how and when to make modifications in grouping and presentation types is determined by each student's increased accountability. When students demonstrate their ability to complete their individual

activities effectively and responsibly, they are given the freedom to work as a group and select their own projects for presentation.

The presentation aspect benefits not only the students who have developed the task but also the students observing the presentations. Watching and listening to their classmates give the presentations is a means of sharing ideas and is motivational. Figure 16 shows a group of fifth graders presenting to their classmates their autobiographies, while taking great pride in reading portions of the autobiographies and showing how they designed them. Their enthusiasm with this task is contagious, and even the most reluctant writers inquire as to how they might write their own autobiographies.

While their classmates give the demonstration, the rest of the class observes and evaluates the presentation. The process of evaluating is equally important because, in many cases, it supports and affirms the efforts of the students presenting, thus boosting their confidence and self-esteem. In the primary grades, the teacher may use a simple rubric (see Appendix F, "Oral Presentation Evaluation") to evaluate the student's presentation or ask the class (after they finish applauding) to comment on a particular aspect of the presentation, always accentuating the

**Figure 16. Students Presenting Their Autobiographies**

positive. For example, the following exchange took place in a second-grade classroom:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs. Johnson: | Well, class, what do you think of the way Jason gave his presentation today? |
| Alice: | Jason, I liked the way you used the puppets to make the story funny. |
| Jamal: | I could hear Jason, loud and clear. |
| Jose: | Jason looked at us when he spoke and not at the floor. |
| Shayna: | Jason, you made the two characters seem so real that I want to read the book now. |
| Jason: | Thank you (and he took his seat) |
| Mrs. Johnson: | Well done, Jason, and thank you to those of you who shared your reactions with Jason. |

Notice that the teacher initially does not make a judgment on the presentation, which might influence the students' responses. The teacher will meet individually with Jason and review the rubric with him, emphasizing the positive and making a suggestion or two on how to improve on a particular aspect of the presentation. The feedback will enable Jason to improve his future presentations.

With older students, teachers encourage the students to use a rubric (see Appendix F, "Multimedia Presentation Four-Point Rubric") to score their peers and share their observations with those who have presented that day. Subsequently, the teacher individually discusses the presentation with the students, complimenting their strong points and making suggestions for improvement. Sometimes, teachers videotape the students as they give their presentations. Then, the students view the presentation and self-evaluate their performance. This proves to be very effective with older students, who often can determine their needs for improvement along with their teacher and their peers. When teachers provide students with instruction that challenges them to use multimedia and technology in creative ways, they support the enhancement of oral language development and presentation skills (Guastello, 2003).

Audiences for presentations do not need to be limited to the classroom. Presentations can even be part of school assemblies

where parents and community leaders are invited to attend. One group of sixth-grade students who read a series of articles on the homeless in major cities in the United States prepared a PowerPoint presentation, complete with statistics about the number of homeless people, and demonstrated how, by using resources within our cities, we could provide homes and work for these individuals. These students invited the mayor and two other officials to the assembly. Presentations such as these give the students a sense of purpose and accomplishment. The opportunities students have to present to varied audiences also helps to reduce the anxiety they feel when they get to high school and college. Speaking and presenting in front of varied audiences, participating in group and individual presentations, and mastering descriptive vocabulary and communicating effectively are essential skills for students from every linguistic and cultural background (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2001). ELLs benefit from the presentations because they provide a forum for students to practice correct syntax and academic language (Guastello & Sinatra, 2001). Presentations not only make the students more accountable for their work but also enhance their oral and written communication skills.

## Conclusion

The aspect of student accountability is paramount as teachers initiate the Guided Reading Kidstation Model as a viable learning process. The students' beliefs about their ability to achieve have a direct impact on their learning. They are influenced by the purpose and nature of the tasks, the level of difficulty, the kind of evaluation used to assess their work, and the feedback they receive from their teachers and sometimes their peers (Stipek, 2006). Their self-confidence is improved and maintained by working on tasks that require some effort, challenge, and creativity so that students can complete the tasks at the kidstations and experience a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. The kidstation model provides students with the opportunity to improve and enrich their learning experiences as they share them with others. The nature of the evaluation focuses on what they have learned and perhaps have mastered and what they need to learn to become more proficient and responsible readers and communicators. Working at the

kidstations and eventually presenting their work also gives the students a sense of control in monitoring their progress.

Mrs. Jacobs reported that, in less than two months, all of her students improved in their ability to complete and present their activities from the kidstations. She noted that when she conducted group work in the past, the students might complete 60–70% of the work. After two months, all of her 29 students completed 95–98% of their work. She attributed this increase to the tailored work at the kidstations and the rotation of presentations. Mrs. Jacobs was one of 67 teachers we worked with who noted marked improvement not only in completed work but also in the quality of the finished products their students produced with pride.

Perhaps a contributing factor to the increased productivity of students is the fact that teachers can incorporate other resources in the kidstation model. In chapter 5, we discuss how teachers can utilize the material such as in basal reading series, trade books, leveled books, and textbooks to diversify students' reading experiences and their opportunities for applying their literacy skills. Without reinventing the wheel, we will show how teachers can use readily available materials.