I attended a seminar titled “Schools as Thinking Communities” at UCLA to hear Randy Bomer speak about valuable forms of thinking during reading. Randy Bomer is an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin. He has authored two books and several journal articles. Randy outlined seven forms of thinking about text including listening, envisioning, knowing, monitoring, relating, interpreting and judging. He stressed that teaching these reading strategies to our students is not enough for the students to internalize them.

Randy Romer spoke about a study (which I’ve been unable to locate) that was conducted with two groups of students where one group consisted of struggling readers and the other did not. Both groups were taught the seven thinking strategies and both groups gained the same level of comprehension of the text. However, when the groups of students were not explicitly told to employ those strategies, the difference between the groups was discovered. The struggling readers did not use the thinking strategies on their own while the advanced readers did. Students must explicitly be told to use these strategies even when the class activity is not centered on them.

I received Randy’s book and read two of his articles. His ideas mostly stem from constructivist views of learning and Vygotsky. He does not mention any data collection, thus I do not believe that he himself has done actual research to support his assertions. However, I do not believe that his ideas regarding thinking about text are necessarily novel ones. Randy’s articles and his book center around a main idea of political and
social responsibility that can be taught and incorporated as part of responsible reading. The study he spoke about during his seminar was very vague and he neglected to mention the number of students and the author of the study. This leads me to believe that either the study was in some way not significant or it has not been published yet.

When analyzing his speech, I found some of his ideas very intriguing. Randy asserted that during the envisioning process of reading, if students are asked to draw, they should not draw stick-figures because people don’t visualize stick figures in their minds. I did not agree with this part of his speech, after all, in science often times students may be asked to draw abstract ideas and it is not how realistic their drawings are but whether they can envision the concept that are reading about that is most important. However, I do agree that envisioning is a very important part of understanding any text, including scientific text.

Another eye opening moment during the seminar was Randy’s assertion that most struggling readers are used to living in a constant state of confusion. They are used to not understanding what they read, and they do not monitor their own reading for meaning. I never considered that this could be the reason that I am forced to repeat instruction so many times with my students when they may have read the same exact content the day before in class. My students, unlike me or any other fluent reader, do not stop during reading if they do not understand the text, *they keep going!* I agree with Randy that the skill of monitoring your own reading for meaning is important to teach to students.

Upon reflection, the greatest alignment I see with Randy’s presentation and science is the thinking skill of interpretation. Randy described it as forming a hunch about the text, finding out if you are right or wrong by reading it, confirming your hunch
with evidence from the text and discussing it with a community of readers. This process embodies the scientific method. As I think about its applicability to my action research proposal, I appreciate that if I want greater literacy success in my classroom, I must try to incorporate the seven thinking processes outlined in Randy’s lecture into the science notebooks. I realize that students should be taught to transfer their familiarity with the scientific method, or the inquiry process, from their science notebooks to their daily lives and other content areas.
References

