Using Peer Collaboration to Support Online Reading, Writing, and Communication: An Empowerment Model for Struggling Readers

LAURIE A. HENRY
University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, USA

JILL CASTEK
University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA

W. IAN O'BYRNE
University of New Haven, West Haven, Connecticut, USA

LISA ZAWILINSKI
University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut, USA

This comparative case study investigated the implementation of an empowerment model for struggling readers that utilized the Internet as a context for reading, writing, and communicating in three different classroom contexts. Through student-centered techniques, such as flexible grouping and peer teaching, we designed Internet Reciprocal Teaching to support the development of the new literacies of online reading comprehension among elementary and middle school students. Results suggest that peer collaboration was the primary means of strategy exchange and that students who were previously perceived as struggling readers became active in coaching, leading, and sharing new strategies. In effect, peer collaboration appeared to reconceptualize struggling readers' role in the classroom and set the context for greater engagement in literacy activities and investment in learning.

Struggling readers are found in nearly every public K-12 classroom in the United States; thus, addressing the needs of struggling readers is an important...