Darts

PINPOINT

*DARTs are strategies for processing texts...
They encourage pupils to read a text carefully, to go beyond
literal comprehension and to think about what they read.*

DFES: Key Stage 3 National Strategy, Pedagogy and practice, Unit 13: Developing reading

Where does it come from?

DARTS stands for **Directed Activities Related to Texts**, the invention of Eric Lunzer and Keith Gardner. They wrote the book **Learning from the Written Word** in 1984 outlining how it was developed in secondary schools.

What is it?

"Reading should be a part of learning", claimed Lunzer. And so DARTS is an approach to learning that models and makes explicit what expert readers do.

Why are diagrams so central?

Diagrams help students get to the meaning often *hidden* in the text. They by–pass the barriers of only accessing information through syntax. Lunzer claimed diagrams *"are ideal for helping them to see the relevant structure"* because a diagram *"makes the structure more salient"*. They scaffold the meaning–making of students reading texts.

What about lists?

Lunzer found that *"Lists fail to bring out the causal structure of the ideas contained in the passage as effectively as one could do using a diagram."*

And revision?

Lunzer even discovered that *"diagrammatic representation at its best can be used as a visual resource when revising."*

> It is always advisable to gain a good working knowledge of the structure

> If children are to gain the maximum benefit from making their own diagrams...these will need to be taught

> Preparing such material demands high levels of knowledge and skill
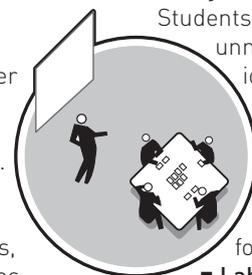
What do you actually do?

There are two main parts to DARTS: **Reconstruction** and **Analysis**. Both approaches involve active learning and engage students as they appear much like puzzles and card games.

Reconstruction

Students work with teacher–modified texts. They use either completion or prediction to reconstruct the text.

- **Text completion**: fill in missing words, sentences or phrases.
- **Diagram completion**: fill in missing parts
- **Table completion**: same as above as a Table is a diagram!
- **Ordering text**: sequence or categorise disordered text
- **Prediction**: predict the next part(s) of a text

Analysis

Students work directly on unmodified texts. They identify different parts and represent it in different formats.

- **Underlining or highlighting**: search for target words
- **Labelling**: label segments of text
- **Segmenting**: cut up units of text
- **Diagrammatic representation**: construct diagrams
- **Tabular representation**: extract information from text, and put in a table

How do you integrate it?

DARTS can easily be integrated into other top strategies. And enhance them.

Cooperative learning: the diagrams give students a visual focus to frame their thinking and dialogue.

Assessment for learning: the public nature of the diagrams and cut–up texts give the teacher a clear idea of students' understanding. Or lack of it.

Whole–class interactive teaching: teachers can capture and build on dialogue to model expert thinking when building diagrams.

Manipulatives: partial diagrams involve moving words about and talking about it, helping communication among boys particularly.

Independent learning: scaffolding learning through the use of part–completed diagrams supports independence.

REFERENCES

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Decision Making and the Language of Manipulative Display, School of Education, University of Nottingham