SREB

Making Middle Grades Work

Literacy Across the Curriculum:

Setting and Implementing Goals for Grades Six through 12

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Regional
Education
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Site Development Guide #12

Foreword

Lengthy publications like this one are often put on a shelf where they take up space, look important but are forgotten. I don't want that to happen with this one because the crisis in student literacy across the curriculum is an issue demanding prompt attention — from you.

I encourage superintendents and principals to lead your faculty in studying this guide. The best way is to follow an eight-step strategy to gain the maximum benefits from what this guide has to offer.

Organize a study group. Get started by recruiting a representative group of faculty from a variety of disciplines with an interest in improving the literacy skills of your students to study the guide. If there needs to be a greater understanding of the literacy problem, **Chapter 1**, *Why We Need an Across-the-Curriculum Emphasis on Literacy*, is a good place to start. This will help the group realize that there is a need for action. If your group members are already aware that students need stronger literacy skills than they currently possess, they can start by reviewing **Chapter 3**, *Launching Your School's Literacy Campaign*. This chapter offers a blueprint for getting started and will spark a lively discussion about first steps.

Gather data. Chapter 3 offers a detailed strategy for developing a literacy profile for your school that can serve as baseline information. By going through the exercises described in the chapter, the team will get a clearer picture of the school's problems and the areas of greatest need.

Inform others. Use a series of informal meetings to familiarize key groups of faculty, parents and others with the issues and to solicit their support. Some of the research findings presented in **Chapter 2**, *Why Students Don't Read and What Schools Can Do About It*, can help bolster your case and suggest strategies to consider in addressing identified problems.

Organize school-wide study teams. Organize a separate study team for each of the five literacy goals that are discussed in **Chapters 4 – 8**. Schedule a separate session for each team to report on what it learned from studying its assigned chapter. Once the reports are complete, work together to decide what might be the highest priority for your school. Will you choose to start with just one of the goals or will you take initial steps to implement them all?

Arrange professional development. Successful implementation of any of the goals will not occur unless teachers receive in-depth workshops, opportunities to see strategies modeled by master teachers, frequent chances to discussion implementation concerns with colleagues and regular chances to network with others inside and outside the school.

Use forms, surveys and other resources. This guide is filled with planning forms, sample surveys and suggested strategies that can make implementation of any of the goals much easier. Feel free to use them as presented or to modify them to meet your needs.

Explore other resources. Each chapter features a resources section at the end that directs readers to valuable publications, Web sites, software and other sources of help. Further, the Appendices list other publications and Web sites currently available to provide support for your literacy initiatives.

Evaluate your efforts. It is important to take time to evaluate what you have accomplished. Put the findings together in a report or PowerPoint presentation to share with the faculty, parents and students.

Don't let the guide be a dust-catcher on your shelf! Let it be a stimulus for new thinking, fresh ideas and concrete actions that result in more literate students who master reading and writing — the essential tools required for success in all aspects of our lives.

Gene Bottoms
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CHAPTER 1

Why We Need an Across-the-Curriculum Emphasis on Literacy

By Gene Bottoms

In this chapter, we explore —

- How literacy skills affect future success.
- Assessing the literacy skills of high school and middle grades students.
- Making a commitment to a literacy initiative for older students.
- Providing experiences that help students become Proficient-level readers.
- Why every school must meet the five literacy goals.

Tater was what you would call an average student; well, honestly — below average. He came from a working-class family in a small rural community in Indiana. He was a good kid, according to his high school principal, but in his sophomore year, he decided he would quit football despite being a talented player. Quite frankly, he was thinking about dropping out of school entirely at age 16. Tater heard that he could make a decent wage in the area's woodworking industry. But Tater was lucky. He had a principal who cared enough to encourage him to return to the football team and to stay in school. He attended the Success Program before school twice a week where he got help to improve his literacy skills, among other things. He worked hard to meet the minimum requirements for graduation. During his senior year, the school won the state football championship with Tater playing a major role.

A few weeks before graduation, the principal ran into Tater in the hall at school. He was proudly wearing his football championship ring and seemed quite happy. "What did you enjoy most about your senior year?" the principal asked, thinking he knew the answer. "Thanks for talking me into playing football this year, but what I enjoyed most was reading 16 books. I'm really proud of that," Tater quickly replied. "Were these big books?" asked the surprised principal. "No sir," came the quick response. "But I read 16 books!"

Tater's experience is only one success story to come out of Heritage Hills High School in Lincoln City, Indiana, since it began its reading initiative almost a decade ago. Principal Al Logsdon sees what Tater told him in that brief meeting as having a profound impact on the young man's future. Because Tater developed a love for reading in high school, he now has different goals for after graduation. He will think differently about whom he will marry, most likely choosing someone who shares his love for reading, and he will read to his Tater tots. And they will develop a love for reading too! It has started a cycle that will continue through generations. That's what this school's literacy campaign is all about!

There are thousands of Taters in high school today, but they are not all as lucky as he was. One in 20 students leave high school prior to graduation; most have difficulty with reading and writing. They are not alone. During the past 15 years, 15 million students have graduated from high school without the ability to read at the Basic level, First Lady Laura Bush reported in an address to Congress. Literacy is a national problem — an urgent education priority for the federal government and for educators across the nation.

Actions to date are not enough to help the millions of young people lacking adequate literacy skills. Most federal and state programs emphasize helping preschool, kindergarten and elementary students read and write better. While starting early to address these critical skills is appropriate, these programs do not help the multitude of students already beyond those early years who cannot read and write well enough to succeed in higher-level courses that prepare them for higher education or employment. **The notion that the development of reading skills does not extend into the middle grades and high school years is simply false.** Much of what students learn in the earlier grades is lost if it is not reinforced in the middle grades and high school. Students must continue to develop skills to comprehend, analyze and apply what they read.

Janet Angelis, associate director of the Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA), said it best in the CELA fall 2001 *English Update*:

> "In the current rush to support reading achievement in the primary grades, we as a nation are in danger of abandoning a generation of children. These are the students in grades four and higher who need to learn and practice a whole set of complex reading, writing and language skills so that they can handle the variety of texts they will encounter and produce as they go through school and beyond."

This guide is designed for middle grades and high school educators looking for ways to help their students overcome the reading and writing barriers preventing them from reaching their potential.

How literacy skills affect future success

□ Today's jobs demand greater literacy skills.

Reading and writing proficiency is a key to success in higher education and in the workplace. The transition over the last decade to an information-centered economy guarantees that the greatest rewards, both financially and personally, will go to those who communicate effectively. There are few jobs — and almost no high-paying ones — not requiring proficiency in reading for understanding and communicating clearly orally and in writing.

Auto technicians must read and interpret highly technical manufacturers' manuals to repair modern computer-based vehicles. Engineers must not only be able to conduct design studies, they must be able to communicate findings and recommendations in non-technical language to lay audiences. For those working in the burgeoning service industries, their very livelihoods depend on how well they communicate with the general public. Job requirements are rising, especially in the manufacturing, wholesale and retail segments of the economy.

It's hard to think of an industry not demanding high literacy levels. In the report, *What Jobs Require: Literacy, Education and Training, 1940-2006*, published by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), Paul Barton found that the 25 fastest-growing jobs today "have substantially higher prose/literacy requirements than jobs that are declining with a net effect of raising average literacy requirements." Barton even found that within specific levels of education attainment, earnings of adults increase with literacy proficiency levels. For example, individuals with bachelor's degrees having high literacy scores earn more than those with lower scores.

A 2001 report, *Youth At the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond*, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education's Commission on the Senior Year by The Education Trust, stressed that high school graduates without postsecondary education are finding it tougher to qualify for good jobs. Failure rates on employer tests of literacy and mathematics skills grew from 19 percent in 1996 to 36 percent in 1998. The decrease in passing rates is attributed to rising workplace requirements.

Employers today are less likely to provide remedial programs. Only 15 percent of companies provided such programs in 1999, compared to 24 percent in 1993. This places greater importance on the level of skills applicants bring with them.

□ Technology is demanding more.

As if the demand for higher levels of worker literacy wasn't enough, advances in technology have added more pressure. Everyone today must learn new ways to read. Billboards now change messages as we drive. Internet reading requires new skills for maneuvering through the jungle of information and for manipulating it to suit an array of needs. We now rely on more tools in our homes and workplaces and the literacy demands they impose are far more complex than in the past.

Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley succinctly summed up the impact of technology on adult literacy requirements in a November/December 2000 statement posted on the TeachingK-8.com Web site:

> "In some cases, e-mail and the Internet have actually allowed us to substitute reading and writing for the spoken word. In a rapidly changing workplace, reading skills continue to be important for adults. And lifelong learning — meaning lifelong reading — is more crucial than ever as workers move from one job to the next."

Technical Literacy: An Essential Focus for Career/Technical Studies

One aspect of technical literacy — the ability to read, understand and communicate in the language of a technical field — is increasingly important to workplace success. Today's high-performance work environments demand employees who can read, gather and analyze information from many sources to solve problems and meet customer needs.

Unfortunately, most career/technical programs don't emphasize technical reading and writing skills. On the 2002 *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* Assessment, too few students said they were asked to read and write to complete career/technical assignments. Only one-third said they'd been asked to prepare a written report or research paper once a semester. Fewer than half — 46 percent — were asked to read a career-related article at least once or twice a month.

When career/technical teachers make frequent reading and writing assignments, students' reading scores improve as does their technical knowledge and ability to become independent, continuous learners. Students who experienced moderate to intensive emphasis on reading and writing in their academic and career/technical classrooms had reading scores significantly higher than students in classes with little emphasis.

□ It pays to be educated.

Recent government data illustrate the payoff from higher levels of education. A report released in July 2002 by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau shows people with doctoral and professional degrees make three to four times more than high school graduates over their working lives. Looking at annual mean earnings, the report, citing 1999 data, showed high school dropouts earned $18,900; high school graduates, $25,900; associate degree holders, $33,000; college graduates, $45,400; and those holding professional degrees, $99,300.

□ Higher literacy equates to more education.

The correlation of literacy to education is significant. The issues of low literacy standards and achievement gaps are addressed in *The Twin Challenges of Mediocrity and Inequality*, published in February 2002 by ETS. The authors analyzed results from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). These large studies, undertaken in 1992 (NALS) and from 1994 to 1998 (IALS), yielded similar results: the average literacy scores of U.S. adults are at best average compared to their peers in other high-income countries. For many subgroups, the United States ranks in the bottom half.

These findings would be less alarming, according to the authors, "if literacy proficiencies were not so strongly associated with social, educational and economic outcomes in our society." They note the following influences:

> "…young adults' basic academic skills influence the types of courses they take in high school, the amount of homework they do, whether they graduate from high school or obtain a GED certificate, whether they attend college upon graduation, their choice of a major field of study, their persistence in college and the types of academic degrees they obtain."

Further, the direct correlation between the education level of adults, the kinds of jobs they qualify for and the pay they receive makes the situation even more urgent.

Assessing the literacy skills of high school and middle grades students

If literacy is so important in determining success in and graduation from high school and college, and if the education level attained affects earnings power, then how well are our schools doing in helping students become literate adults? The Education Trust's *Youth At the Crossroads* presents a compelling case for more stringent standards for high school students and addresses the gap separating low-income and minority students from other students.

The report confirms that literacy is a major component of the problem when looking at students' skills in the middle grades and high school. There have been slight declines among 17-year-olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading exam over the past decade. At the same time, scores on the verbal portion of the SAT have been flat. This is especially disturbing given students today are entering high school with somewhat better reading skills than their predecessors. In high school, the gains made in the elementary and middle grades disappear. By age 17, only about one in 17 students comprehend specialized texts like the science section of the newspaper. For students of color, the disparity is even greater. Only about one in 50 Latinos and one in 100 African-American students can read at this level. For whites, the ratio is one in 12.

The Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) experience with the *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* initiative over 15 years has provided additional convincing evidence that literacy is a problem facing high school graduates. Recent research from the *Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW)* network confirms that problems start well before high school and are worsening.

Sites in both networks are required to participate in a biennial assessment using NAEP-referenced exams plus teacher and student surveys. To help sites evaluate progress in raising student achievement, performance goals have been set for reading, mathematics and science exams. The reading goal is somewhat above the middle of the Basic level. (*Descriptions of what students in the eighth and 12th grades who achieve at each level and what those who meet the* HSTW *performance goals are able to do are on pages 15–16.*)

How well are students doing in reaching higher proficiency levels? On the 2002 *HSTW* and Middle Grades Assessments, more than one-fourth of the students tested scored below the Basic level. (*See Table 1.*) At the high school level, five percent more of the students tested scored at the Proficient and Advanced levels in 2002 than in 2000, and the overall mean reading scores of all students during that period increased from 274 to 277.[1] In contrast from 1998 to 2002, the mean reading score of students nationwide on NAEP showed a decline from 290 to 287.

[1] Mean reading scores on the *HSTW* Assessment are based on a range of 0 to 500.

Table 1: Students' Reading Proficiency Levels

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Grade 8				
2000	30%	42%	27%	1%
2002	28	43	28	1
Grade 12				
2000	26	40	30	4
2002	24	37	33	6

Sources: Special Analysis of 2000 and 2002 Middle Grades Assessments;
2002 *HSTW* Assessment Report for Sites that tested in both 2000 and 2002.

On the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, slightly over half (53 percent) of the seniors tested met the *HSTW* reading performance goal. On the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment, slightly less than half (44 percent) of the eighth-graders tested met the *MMGW* goal of 160.[2] The mean reading achievement scores for all students participating were 157 for eighth-graders and 277 for seniors. (*See Table 2.*)

Table 2: Mean Reading Scores of Eighth and 12th Grade Students

	Mean Score	Performance Goal	Percentage Meeting Goal
Grade 8	157	160	44%
Grade 12	277	279	53

Sources: 2002 Middle Grade Assessment Report and Special Analysis of 2002 Middle Grades Assessment data for all sites;
2002 *HSTW* Assessment Report at All Sites

These data do not tell the entire story of literacy in these schools — almost twice as many males as females perform at the lowest reading performance level, Below Basic, in both middle grades and high school. (*See Table 3.*)

Table 3: Percentages of Students Scoring Below Basic and at Basic or Higher By Gender

	Males		Females	
	Below Basic	At or Above Basic	Below Basic	At or Above Basic
Grade 8	35%	65%	18%	82%
Grade 12	30	70	19	81

Sources: Special Analysis of 2002 Middle Grades Assessment at all sites; and 2002 *HSTW* Assessment Report for All Sites.
Of all students participating in the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment, 52 percent were females and 48 percent were males.
Of students participating in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, 51 percent were females and 49 percent were males.

[2] Mean reading scores on the Middle Grades Assessment are based on a range of 0 to 300.

In the middle grades, the racial/ethnic gap is even wider — 19 percent of white students scored in the Below Basic range, while nearly half (45 percent) of the African-Americans performed at this level. On the *HSTW* Assessment, one in five white students scored Below Basic compared to one in three African-American students. (*See Table 4.*)

Table 4: Percentages of Students Scoring Below Basic and at Basic or Higher By Ethnicity

	African-American		White	
	Below Basic	**At or Above Basic**	**Below Basic**	**At or Above Basic**
Grade 8	45%	55%	19%	81%
Grade 12	35	65	20	80

Sources: Special Analysis of 2002 Middle Grades Assessment; and 2002 *HSTW* Assessment Report for All Sites.
Of students participating in the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment, 21 percent were African-American, 65 percent were white and 13 percent had other ethnic backgrounds.
Of students participating in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, 23 percent were African-American, 64 percent were white and 13 percent had other ethnic backgrounds.

Making a commitment to a literacy initiative for older students

In 1999, the International Reading Association (IRA) published *Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement.* (See the IRA's Web site at http:www.reading.org.) The statement says the ongoing literacy development of adolescents needs as much attention as that focused on beginning readers.

Adolescent readers need support in seven specific areas:

1. access to a wide variety of reading material that appeals to their interests;
2. instruction that builds skills and the desire to read increasingly complex materials;
3. assessment that shows strengths as well as needs;
4. expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction across the curriculum;
5. reading specialists who assist students having difficulty learning how to read;
6. teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers; and
7. homes and communities that support the needs of adolescent learners.

SREB supports these goals. The literacy campaign envisioned in this guide addresses each of these areas. Older students have been neglected in the drive to make literacy a national priority. **This situation must change.**

IRA's Adolescent Literacy Position Statement

In 1997, the International Reading Association (IRA) appointed 21 teachers, parents and researchers to work together on its Commission on Adolescent Literacy. The Commission was formed because IRA was concerned that almost all federal efforts on literacy were being focused on grades kindergarten through three, and it wanted to make sure that adolescents were not forgotten in terms of instruction, research and funding. One of the main tasks of the commission was to develop an action proposal to enhance adolescent literacy development and instruction. IRA's *Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement* was approved by the Board of Directors in 1999 and disseminated soon after in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* and on the IRA Web site (http://www.reading.org/).

Providing experiences that help students become Proficient-level readers

High Schools That Work (HSTW) has set an ambitious goal to help schools in the network get 85 percent of their career-oriented students to meet the *HSTW* performance goal in reading by 2006. This is achievable despite only 53 percent of seniors at *HSTW* sites meeting this goal in 2002.

However, this will not happen unless schools take concerted action to implement those practices that have a documented impact on raising reading achievement. A performance analysis of students exposed to certain experiences has allowed identification of the practices most effective in raising students' reading achievement scores. *MMGW* research indicates eight experiences that have a positive impact on students reading in middle grades and 10 similar experiences from *HSTW* research for high school students. (*See Table 5.*)

In the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, students reporting seven to 10 of these were considered to have had intensive literacy experiences. Students reporting having four to six were considered to have had moderate experiences. Students with zero to three were considered to have had "low" literacy experience. High school students with intensive experiences scored 18 points higher than students with "low" experiences. **Only 18 percent of high school students reported having had intensive literacy experiences.**

Middle grades students with intensive experiences scored 22 points higher than students with "low" experiences. **However, only 23 percent reported having had intensive literacy experiences.** (*See Table 6.*)

Table 5: Things That Raise Students' Reading Achievement

Action	Middle Grades	High School
Reading	Read an hour or more outside of school each day. Read 11 or more books each year.	Read two or more hours outside class each week. Read a book outside class and demonstrate understanding of the significance of the main idea each month. Read technical books or manuals to complete career/technical assignments each month.
Writing	Complete short writing assignments in English classes at least once a month. Revise written work to improve quality occasionally or often. Use word-processing software to complete assignments sometimes or often. Write a major research paper at least once a year. Write a few sentences about how to solve a mathematics problem at least once a semester.	Complete short writing assignments that are graded in English classes at least monthly. Complete short writing assignments that are graded in science classes at least monthly. Complete short writing assignments that are graded in social studies classes at least monthly. Revise writing often to improve quality. Use a word processor often to complete an assignment or project. Write in-depth explanations about a project or activity occasionally or often.
Speaking	Make an oral presentation in English class at least once a semester.	Discuss what was read with other students in English class occasionally or often.

Looking at the experiences with the greatest impact, six are similar for both middle grades and high school. The more time students spend reading outside class and the more books they read, the higher the achievement. Completing short writing assignments at least monthly and revising writing to improve quality are also significant. Using word-processing software to complete assignments and being expected to complete challenging writing assignments were associated with higher reading achievement for both groups.

Table 6: Reading Achievement According to Degree of Emphasis on Literacy

Emphasis on Literacy	Middle Grades 2002 Reading Goal: 160		High School Reading Goal: 279	
	Percentage	Mean Reading Score	Percentage	Mean Reading Score
Intensive	23%	169*	18%	288*
Moderate	45	158	40	281
Low	32	147	42	270

* Score is at the Proficient level of achievement.
Note: All scores are significant at <.05.

The mean score for high school students who reported intensive literacy experiences was at the Proficient level. Students who finish high school reading at the Proficient level are less likely to have to take remedial courses when they go to college. Of middle grades students having intensive literacy experiences, 60 percent met the reading goal, compared to only 33 percent with "low" experiences. Students who have not met the reading goal by the end of the middle grades are unlikely to have the reading skills they need to take college-preparatory courses in the ninth grade without concentrated extra time and help.

Why every school must meet the five literacy goals

Schools will not see significant improvements in the reading, writing and oral communications skills of students until they commit to an **across-the-curriculum emphasis on literacy**. Assessment data from middle grades and high school students framed five goals that will result in significantly higher reading achievement outcomes. (*See page 17 for a complete description of the goals.*) The goals involve every class and all teachers in the campaign. Let's discuss each goal briefly.

HSTW and _MMGW_ Five Literacy Goals

1. Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.
2. Write weekly in all classes.
3. Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes.
4. Write research papers in all classes.
5. Complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like college-preparatory/honors English.

Goal 1 — Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum. Getting students to read more results in higher reading achievement. This goal not only contributes positively to overall student achievement, it bonds all teachers in a common effort. The evidence from the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment shows the more students read, the higher their reading achievement scores. The 18 percent of seniors reading five or more books in English classes had a mean achievement score of 12 points higher than those reading no books. (*See Table 7.*)

Table 7: Reading Scores of High School Students According to Books Read in English Class

Books Read	Students Reporting	Mean Score
None	21%	272
1–4	61	277
5 or more	18	284

The *HSTW* recommendation is 8-10.
Source: 2002 *HSTW* Assessment

The 2002 HSTW *Assessment results showed that:*

- 18 percent of students said they read five or more books outside class; and
- 22 percent of students said they spent two hours or more weekly reading outside of class.

Students in the middle grades who did a great deal of reading had the highest reading achievement scores on the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment. Reading 11 or more books a year resulted in performance scores at least 30 points higher than students who said they read no books; and at least 20 points higher than students who read two or fewer books. (*See Table 8.*) The downside is that 43 percent of middle grades students said they read five or fewer books each year; 25 percent said they did no reading outside school and 39 percent reported reading only half an hour or less per day.

Table 8: Impact of Reading More Books In and Out of School on Reading Scores of Eighth-grade Students

Books Read	Students Reporting	Mean Score
None	3%	131
2 or fewer	10	142
3–5	30	153
6–10	25	161
11 or more	32	163

Note: The recommendation is 25 books annually.
Source: 2002 Middle Grades Assessment

The 2002 Middle Grades Assessment showed that:

- 32 percent of students said they read 11 or more books each year across all classes; and
- 25 percent of students said they spend two hours or more weekly reading outside of class.

Goal 2 — Write weekly in all classes. Students who write regularly transfer new learning into their own language, discover their voices and learn how to effectively address others. Seniors participating in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment who completed short writing assignments graded at least once a week improved their reading scores by 13 points compared to students who had such an experience only once a semester. Editing and revising writing assignments prior to grading at least once or twice a month resulted in scores eight points higher compared to students who had such experiences only once a semester.

Again, *HSTW* Assessment results show such practices are rare. Only 27 percent of high school seniors reported completing short writing assignments graded daily or weekly. Revising written work before receiving a grade was a more common practice, with 53 percent reporting they had to do so at least once a month. (*See Table 9.*)

Table 9: Impact of Frequent Writing Experiences on Reading Achievement of High School Seniors

Frequency	Short Writing Assignments That Were Graded		Revising Written Work Before Receiving a Grade	
	Percentage	Mean Score	Percentage	Mean Score
Never	2%	252	7%	263
Once a Year	10	261	14	268
Once a Semester	21	270	27	275
Once or Twice a Month	39	282	35	283
Weekly/Several Times a Week	27	283	18	280

Source: 2002 *HSTW* Assessment

Frequent writing experiences make a difference in achievement for middle grades students as well. Completing short writing assignments of one to three pages, graded once a month or more was associated with an increase of 15 points in reading achievement scores in the middle grades, when compared to those stating this was never required. Fifty-nine percent of students said they had to complete short writing assignments for a grade once a month or more. When students regularly revised written work to improve quality, the results were even more dramatic. Students reporting they often had to do so had mean reading achievement scores of 27 points higher than students who never were expected to revise their work. Yet, only 28 percent of students said they frequently had to revise written work. (*See Table 10.*)

Table 10: Impact of Frequent Writing Experiences on Reading Scores of Middle Grades Students

Frequency	Short Writing Assignments That Were Graded		Frequency	Revising Written Work To Improve Quality	
	Percentage	Mean Score		Percentage	Mean Score
Never	8%	144	Never	6%	137
Once a Year	10	148	Rarely	19	149
Once a Semester	23	158	Sometimes	47	157
Once or More a Month	59	159	Often	28	164

Source: 2002 Middle Grades Assessment

Goal 3 — Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes. Reading and writing are critical for learning all content. Proficient readers can use strategies to get the most from what they read and communicate their thoughts effectively. Struggling students face problems learning how to construct meaning from assignments in mathematics, science, social studies or career/technical classes. They cannot make sense of what they read and report few teachers help them learn reading and writing strategies. On the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, students who reported that teachers often gave them opportunities to discuss or debate texts had reading performance scores significantly higher than those who said their teachers did not provide such opportunities. (*See Table 11.*)

Table 11: How Certain Learning Experiences Across the Curriculum Affect High School Students' Reading Achievement

In classes other than English, we discuss or debate topics we have read		
Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
Never	5%	264
Seldom	19	275
Sometimes	48	278
Often	28	279

Source: 2002 *HSTW* Assessment at all sites

In the middle grades, students receiving the opportunity to practice reading and use what they read to discuss, write and complete projects scored 13 points higher on the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment than their peers who did not. (*See Table 12.*)

Table 12: How Certain Learning Experiences Across the Curriculum Affect Middle Grades Students' Reading Achievement

In classes other than English/language arts, we practice reading and use what we read to discuss, write and complete projects.		
	Percentage	**Mean Score**
Yes	84%	159
No	16	146

Source: 2002 Middle Grades Assessment

The greatest barrier in getting more students to the Proficient level is most teachers lack expertise in engaging students in reading, comprehending, talking and writing about the language of the field being studied.

Goal 4 — Write research papers in all classes. By participating in the research process, students learn to identify problems, seek appropriate materials to address problems, draw conclusions and put into their own words what they have learned — all skills critical in postsecondary studies and real-world professions. Seniors participating in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment stating they had to write major research papers once a year had reading achievement scores of 13 points higher than students reporting they were never required to do so. Making an oral presentation on a project or assignment once or twice a month was associated with scores of 13 points higher than those for students never making such presentations.

Goal 5 — Complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like a college-preparatory/honors English course. Enrolling all students in college-preparatory English classes breaks down the barriers of lower standards for some students; it is a way to set the same intellectual standards and the same level of effort for all students. The tendency to put lower-achieving students in watered-down English courses with titles like Basic, General or Technical English is a sure formula for further poor reading achievement.

HSTW *defines college-preparatory English as having three characteristics for each student:*

- reads at least eight books per year and demonstrates understanding;
- writes a short paper for a grade each week; and
- completes a major research paper each year.

HSTW Assessment data on students placed in college-preparatory-level English courses are associated with reading achievement of 15 points higher than for those in less demanding courses. Seniors enrolled in academic English had a mean score of 286 on the 2002 assessment — only two points below Proficient. (*See Table 13.*)

Table 13: Reading Performance of High School Seniors Based on English Course Enrollment

Course	Percentage	Mean Score
College-preparatory	34%	286
Non-college-preparatory	66	271

Source: 2002 *HSTW* Assessment

One in five students participating in the Middle Grades Assessment were enrolled in advanced English/language arts classes. Their mean reading score was 172, which ranks at the Proficient level, while all eighth-graders had a mean score of 156.

Enrolling all students in higher-level language arts classes is the one action schools can take that is likely to have the greatest impact on improving literacy skills. Changing the content of language arts courses needs to begin in the middle grades. As high school graduation requirements rise, many students enter high school unable to do rigorous college-preparatory-level work. The failure rate in grade nine is three to five times higher than that in any previous grade.

Leaders in schools making the most progress in raising student achievement address the transition from the middle grades to high school by focusing on students traditionally enrolled in "watered-down" academic courses taught by the least experienced teachers.

Middle grades schools identify seventh-graders not ready for high school and take one or more of the following actions:

- provide them with more intensive studies in language arts and reading in grades seven and eight;
- offer summer catch-up programs to entering high school students who are still behind;
- provide a support class in seventh through ninth grades for students who need extra help; and
- assign the **most** experienced teachers to instruct these students.

Watered-down courses and low expectations do not work. In a study of 3,000 students during their eighth- and ninth-grade years, *HSTW* found that schools placing higher percentages of ninth-grade students in college-preparatory-level language arts classes have a success rate comparable to schools that enroll fewer students in these courses. (This was also true for mathematics and science.) *HSTW* found that students in the lower half of reading achievement in grade eight were twice as likely to fail ninth-grade English if in a low-level course than if enrolled in a high-level course.

Conclusion

There is ample evidence supporting the need for an intensive literacy campaign in America's middle grades and high schools. Further, there are promising findings that show when literacy is made a priority, student reading achievement will improve. The goal of this guide is to show educators how they can mount a successful campaign resulting in more literate graduates with a greater chance of completing postsecondary education and qualifying for well-paying jobs with promising futures.

Reading Proficiency Levels[3] — Eighth Grade

Basic **Scores:** 135 – 171

Eighth-grade students performing at the Basic level demonstrate understanding of explicitly stated information by retrieving it from text. At the Basic level, students use text details to make simple inferences and predictions using explicitly stated information and supporting details to identify a character's emotions and recognize their cause. They use context clues to define and interpret a phrase. In addition, these students can use surface details to draw a logical conclusion or interpret meaning from texts. They can explain why information is included and recognize the purpose of a title and illustration. They can form an opinion in response to a text, but may not be able to cite supporting passages.

Proficient **Scores:** 172 – 221

Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate understanding by using explicitly and implicitly stated information to identify and summarize the main idea of a text. At the Proficient level, students are able to extend text ideas to formulate an appropriate question or make a relevant connection to real-life experience. They can use surface details to make a comparison. In addition, these students demonstrate some knowledge of literary elements and devices by recognizing poetic imagery and using details to explain the meaning of a symbolic phrase. When discussing a title's appropriateness or expressing a text-based opinion, they can provide general support from the text.

Advanced **Scores:** 222+

Eighth-grade students performing at the Advanced level demonstrate a thorough understanding of theme, point of view and characterization by using specific ideas from across a text and by connecting ideas between two texts. At the Advanced level, students can explain the relevance of a question by extending text ideas and using a connection between the text and real-life experience. In addition, advanced students can derive meaning from whole texts to make overarching evaluations. When analyzing content or expressing text-based opinions, advanced students can provide specific support.

Performing at Goal **Score:** 160

Eighth-grade students performing at goal demonstrate understanding by using explicitly stated information to identify the main idea of a text. They use surface details and context clues to make predictions, draw conclusions and draw comparisons within the text and to real life. Students provide a simple explanation for a symbolic phrase and identify literary elements within a passage. They express an opinion based on the text with some general support.

[3] Skills are evaluated in reading materials for information or to perform a task. Eighth-grade tests assess literary reading and reading for information.

Reading Proficiency Levels — 12th Grade

Basic **Scores:** 262 – 287

Twelfth-graders performing at the Basic level demonstrate a general understanding of grade-level texts. They locate specific information and identify the main ideas and purpose, make simple connections between ideas within a text and provide general evaluations of the meaning or purpose. In addition, they identify interpretations and provide text-based support for those interpretations.

Proficient **Scores:** 288 – 316

Twelfth-graders performing at the Proficient level demonstrate understanding of grade-level texts. They understand explicitly stated ideas, compare and contrast information in different parts of a text, determine the relative importance of different ideas and provide overall interpretations of a text's meaning. Proficient readers recognize connections between ideas in the text, with other texts and with real-life experiences. They recognize general organizational features and can extend ideas in the text through inferences such as predictions and conclusions.

Advanced **Scores:** 317+

Twelfth-graders performing at the Advanced level demonstrate a thorough understanding of grade-level texts. They integrate text ideas, explain causal relationships and evaluate complex information and organizational features. Students analyze text ideas to provide specific and extensive support for evaluations and interpretations. They evaluate an author's opinion and explain how it is conveyed. They make connections between complex, deeply embedded ideas within the text with other texts and with real-world experiences. They can interpret and explain specialized terminology.

Performing at Goal **Score:** 279

Twelfth-graders performing at goal demonstrate specific and general understanding of grade-level texts. They use explicitly stated ideas to support interpretations, identify and evaluate relevant information and connect ideas from across a text to make simple inferences. Students use examples and specific information to support straightforward interpretations and evaluations. They use knowledge of common structures and types of texts to describe and evaluate how information is presented.

Five Goals for High-level Literacy Programs

Students will

1. **Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.** Students' reading skills and understanding of content will grow if they read more and are exposed to a wider range of materials. Teachers should assign eight to 10 books in English/language arts and another three to four or their equivalents in all other classes. Teachers in every class should assign reading appropriate to course content and expect students to demonstrate understanding of what they read. Expect students to read both fiction and nonfiction, including technical manuals, journal articles and magazine articles. Give students choice in the selection of materials within parameters that will allow them to meet course goals. Ask students to prepare written reports, make oral presentations and perform tasks related to what they have read.

2. **Write weekly in all classes.** Expect students to complete short writing assignments each week in all classes. These can take many forms, including journals, letters, editorials, essays, process descriptions, open-response questions, reports and written summaries. Some writing assignments can be for audiences and purposes outside the classroom. Provide frequent opportunities for students to revise their writing to improve quality. Expect teachers to use common grade-level rubrics for evaluating student work.

3. **Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes.** Proficient readers summarize what they have learned; ask clarifying questions; use pertinent vocabulary; and analyze the content, purpose and structure of a text. Prepare and expect all teachers to demonstrate a variety of reading and writing strategies enabling students to learn the content and language of their disciplines and to communicate effectively.

4. **Write research papers in all classes.** Uncovering what has already been written and learned about a topic is a valuable learning process. Research is an integral part of most real-world occupations and is therefore a skill that must be learned in school. Individual research allows students to become experts on a particular topic and contribute to their classmates' learning. Research includes multiple steps — defining the question, locating and evaluating information, summarizing and paraphrasing information, combining information in cogent writing and documenting sources. Expect students to write some research papers in the traditional format; others may be formatted as proposals, laboratory reports or journal articles.

5. **Complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like college-preparatory/honors English.** To reach this goal, students read eight to 10 books each year and demonstrate understanding, write short papers each week that are graded and complete a research paper. Students will complete some summer reading assignments. Assigned materials can include a wide variety of grade-level selections, including young adult and classic novels, biographies, poetry, drama, short stories and essays. Students will formulate and respond to questions and reflect on what they have read. They will identify connections among various reading materials and relate what they read to personal experiences and real life. Students use written work to demonstrate understanding of what they read and demonstrate a growing ability to organize thoughts and communicate clearly.

Developed by *HSTW* and *MMGW* for their network schools.

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CHAPTER 2

Why Students Don't Read and What Schools Can Do About It

By Gwynne Ellen Ash

In this chapter, we explore what research tells us about —

Why Students Don't Read	What Schools Can Do About It
Content-area teachers don't think incorporating reading is their job.	Provide professional development and encourage teachers to consider benefits of using content literacy strategies.
Teachers aren't held accountable for their students' literacy development.	Study how perceived roles, content boundaries and institutional expectations interfere with using content literacy strategies.
Less is expected of students in lower-track English classrooms.	Eliminate lower-track courses; expect all students to take rigorous college-preparatory courses and provide extra student support where needed.
"Teacher telling" is the most common method of instruction.	Provide instruction emphasizing more reading; teaching strategies for planning, organizing, completing and reflecting on content; and peer interaction.
Good readers read more; poor readers read less.	Expect students to read broadly in content-area classes, encompassing all genres and formats.
Students need help before, during and after reading.	Offer ongoing professional development enabling teachers to learn appropriate strategies fitting content requirements.
Some students need extra help.	Study various intervention models and select one or more that best meet students' needs.
The assigned reading does not interest students.	Offer students a mix of required reading materials and some they choose themselves.
The right materials aren't available.	Reconsider how funds for reading materials are allocated; include more purchases beyond textbooks.

"We don't really read books in any of the other classes, just in English, basically."

— Rebecca, rising 11th-grader, Texas

This review of literacy practice and instruction in America's secondary classrooms begins with a student. Sixteen-year-old Rebecca is a bright, personable and attractive young woman. Of Anglo descent, she grew up in an intact, stable middle class family. Her older brother studies firefighting at a two-year college and her father earned his associate's degree as an adult. This fall, Rebecca is beginning her junior year at a high school with more than 2,000 students in a medium-sized central Texas town. A good student who works hard in school, Rebecca is in the college-preparatory track, but does not take honors English due to difficulty with reading. She plans to attend college and hopes to become an elementary school teacher.

I asked Rebecca to tell me about reading in her high school classes. Her reply was succinct, "We don't really read books in any of the other classes, just in English, basically." When prompted by a follow-up question, "Do you mean you just read the textbook?" she responded, "Well, my freshman year in world history, my teacher didn't have us read at all; we just copied notes off the board and took open-note tests. And then this year in world geography, we didn't use the book because she says it's way outdated; we just used it for vocabulary. We mostly used *UPFRONT* magazine for our reading; it's a good magazine. Also she uses a lot of *National Geographic* and such. We don't read books in any other classes."

She recounted her sophisticated hands-on science instruction, which ranged from dissecting a fetal pig to taking samples from a doorknob to grow a bacteriological colony. However, her two years of science instruction, like her freshman year of history, might be described as "alliterate" — devoid of any print-based texts, save those created by the teacher. **During her sophomore year, Rebecca was required to read three books — all in English class.**

Were Rebecca's experiences atypical, this guide might not be necessary. However, there is strong evidence that many students' secondary school experiences lack wide-ranging exposure to texts and literacy instruction. The causes are complex. An interplay of factors — low expectations for reading, lack of teacher skills, inadequate materials, varying standards — creates conditions not conducive to the development of strong literacy and critical thinking skills. **Research indicates the less students read and write and the less support they receive in reading and writing instruction, the lower their literacy achievement.**

Content-area literacy is key to students' learning in every subject. Teachers — and students — can discover how reading and writing influence and shape understanding of new knowledge. Since at least 1925, researchers have cited the advantages of every teacher using literacy strategies to help students learn the content and language of their field. Yet, nearly 80 years later, using reading in content areas is still limited. Several factors embedded in secondary school culture impede effective teaching strategies for understanding print-based material.

Content-area teachers don't think incorporating reading is in their job.

In many middle grades and high schools, the English teacher is seen as solely responsible for literacy instruction and development. Unfortunately, it is unlikely these teachers have any more education in literacy instruction than other content teachers (Romine, McKenna and Robinson, 1996). To provide secondary students exposure to a wide range of texts and to ensure students are successful in understanding them, content-area literacy support is essential. William Bintz (1997) asked middle grades and high school content-area teachers what their greatest worries were related to reading in their classrooms. Overwhelmingly, teachers felt uncertain about how to help students who had difficulty comprehending what they read.

However, even when teachers receive professional development in instructional strategies, research indicates they are still unlikely to incorporate them into everyday teaching. There are complex reasons why teachers resist teaching content-area literacy strategies, according to studies conducted by Daisey and Shroyer; O'Brien; O'Brien, Stewart and Moje; Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, and Dishner; and Stewart.

Teachers:

- do not see content-area strategies as meaningful in communicating content-area knowledge;
- see literacy strategies as violating their primary obligation to teach content;
- view use of literacy strategies as outside their job expectations; and
- find that teaching content-area literacy strategies violates unstated school expectations and norms for instruction.

Content-area literacy support will become incorporated into instruction only when teachers are encouraged to "… weigh the risks and benefits of using content literacy strategies within the secondary institution" (O'Brien, Stewart and Moje, p. 454). **Teachers must understand that student achievement in their discipline improves when they adequately engage students with the written language of their field.** Further, teachers must examine assumptions about methods of instruction (teacher-driven vs. student-centered), methods of delivery (teacher telling vs. student construction of meaning) and expectations for learning (specific details or mastering processes). In their examinations, teachers should look at the literacy focus in their instruction and at how students gain content knowledge from improved involvement in literacy-related assignments.

Teachers aren't held accountable for their students' literacy development.

Teachers are unlikely to embrace literacy strategies until held accountable to produce graduates who can comprehend, analyze and apply written materials in their fields. Teachers rightly want their content to retain primacy in their classes. However, effective content-area literacy instruction promotes a deeper level of understanding and implementation. Students are better prepared to pass today's state and industry exams when they can read and interpret technical materials in all classes.

Schools need to look at how they reinforce perceived roles, content boundaries and instructional expectations that may interfere with using effective literacy strategies. For example, does the school prefer students take tests that primarily cover lecture content? Is there an expectation that the teacher will "get through the book" by the end of the semester or year? **Schools should evaluate whether the current curriculum engages students in learning and using content-area language.** If not, teachers and administrators should work with a literacy partner, such as a reading specialist, to evaluate current routines and try out new teaching methods (Henwood).

Less is expected of students in lower-track English classrooms.

Differences in the quantity and quality of curricula affects the amount of student reading and literacy instruction in secondary schools. In examining instruction and curriculum in 25 schools, Jeannie Oakes found that students in the lower tracks experienced less instruction, read less text and were taught less "culturally valued" content. This produced lower expectations for student performance. These students were unlikely to move into higher tracks and were unable to learn the content necessary for postsecondary education.

Only 41 percent of seniors in the 2002 assessment at *High Schools That Work* sites were in either college-preparatory or Advanced Placement English. The other 59 percent were in lower-track English courses. The students not in college-preparatory-level English classes read less, wrote less, had less homework, made fewer oral presentations and were less likely to analyze what they read than their peers in higher-track classes. Students in lower-track English classes were less likely to meet the *HSTW* reading assessment goal and overall their mean scores were significantly lower than for students in college-preparatory English courses, regardless of demographic subgroup or gender.

Requiring all students to take rigorous college-preparatory English courses works to increase reading achievement scores because the more rigorous courses engage them in critical reading, writing, speaking and listening tasks (Bottoms and Bearman). Exposure to more rigorous academic coursework is a key factor in explaining the turn-around in literacy achievement experienced by some students (Capella and Weinstein). Eliminating lower-track courses, while still providing students with the literacy support they need, has also been recommended in other studies by Tatum and Wheelock.

"Teacher telling" is the most common method of instruction.

"Teachers give it to us in their perspective. Like William Shakespeare, I didn't understand his poetry at all. They explain it like they thought it was and they bring it down on our level. They give us their interpretation, which isn't necessarily right, but it's right to us 'cause they're the teachers."

— Rebecca

Like Rebecca, students don't have to read because the most common instructional method used by content-area teachers is lecturing, also called teacher telling. This method consists of teacher-dominated discussion, teacher-led question-and-answer sessions or teacher-provided description of the content to be learned, expressly conveyed to passive and receptive students. This instructional method, married with limited reading assignments, leads to the not-so-subtle message to students that developing and using literacy strategies is not important in content learning. Further, research indicates that overuse of teacher telling actually interferes with attempts to incorporate content-area literacy instruction into the curriculum. Researchers infer teacher telling results from a strongly perceived need to cover content.

In its 1999 position statement on adolescent literacy, the International Reading Association (IRA) said, "Adolescents deserve instruction that builds both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials." (*See Chapter 1, pages 9 and 11, for more information about the position statement.*) However, students identified the teacher, not what they read, as the primary source of information for content learning in class, according to several studies. By contrast, teachers identified the textbook as the primary source for content learning (Murden and Gillespe and Smith and Feathers, 1983 a and b). The theory offered by researchers as to why students recognized the teacher's central role while teachers did not is that teachers telegraphed their information to students as more important than what was in the textbook (Rieck; Hinchman; Smith and Feathers, 1983b). **The students understood, like Rebecca, that they were to learn what the teachers taught them and their own interpretations, evaluations or opinions of the content learned were irrelevant** (Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith)**.**

Students do not read when they perceive what they need to learn comes from the teacher or if they do not have the opportunity to make personal connections with the content through active learning activities. These trends are incompatible with recent studies on improving literacy development and expanding the breadth and depth of student reading. Langer's research indicates that less teacher-centered instruction — and engaging students more in the active processing of content materials and peer interaction — leads to more reading, both in and out of school. Further, middle grades and high schools excelling in literacy performance on standardized tests beyond predicted levels engage in the "overt teaching of strategies for planning, organizing, completing and reflecting on content and activities." They also provide time for students to "work together to develop depth and complexity of understanding in interaction with others."

The National Reading Panel

The National Reading Panel was established by the United States Congress in 1997 "to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read" (NRP, 2000, p. 1).

The 14-member panel, composed of medical doctors, researchers and one teacher, reviewed a specifically chosen set of studies on reading. These studies had one or more groups receiving a "treatment" or intervention and one or more groups as a "control," receiving no intervention. Studies also had to meet other criteria to establish a "scientific" basis for reading instruction. Several forms of the 2000 published report are available, for free, online at http://www.nichd.nih.gov/.

"Adolescents deserve expert teachers that provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum," according to the IRA Adolescent Literacy Position Statement. The lack of focus on reading in content-area instruction dissuades teacher implementation of content-area literacy instruction (O'Brien). **Incorporating content-area literacy strategies into instruction would mean abandoning teacher telling as the primary method of content teaching.** Nevertheless, the National Reading Panel (NRP), in a 2000 report (*See sidebar on the previous page.*) said that reading strategy instruction has a powerful influence on content-area achievement and literacy development. To achieve school-wide use of literacy strategies, schools can work with teachers to evaluate content instruction and support instructional change that meets teacher content and student literacy development needs.

Good readers read more; poor readers read less.

"In sophomore English, we read *Dances with Wolves*, *A Separate Peace* and *1984* (that was weird). I think those are the only books that I read."

— *Rebecca*

Schools are key in determining how much reading students do and its breadth and depth. To explain why some students are better readers than others, Keith Stanovich proposed the "Matthew effect" theory in 1986. The Matthew effect, drawn from a parable in the New Testament book of Matthew, suggests that in reading, as elsewhere, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. That is, students who are good readers are likely to become better readers as their schooling progresses; however, students with difficulty in reading will only find their troubles increase as they progress. Students who struggle with reading have lower achievement in all their content classes. If they cannot use reading skills and strategies to learn the content of the field, they will fall further behind each year in all classes.

Schools provide better readers with much more exposure to texts than to readers who struggle. **Traditional school practices thus widen the gap between strong readers and struggling readers.** The Matthew effect has been supported by other research showing the amount of reading students do can predict their vocabulary, general knowledge and spelling development, as well as high school reading comprehension performance.

HSTW found that eighth- and 12th-graders who read at least an hour a day outside school outscored their peers who read less than 30 minutes a day by 13 and 12 points respectively. Extended outside reading provides students with opportunities to try out comprehension and self-monitoring strategies learned through classroom instruction. Time spent reading, both inside and outside school, is an effective predictor of success in literacy development and in content-area achievement.

Therefore, it is surprising that repeated studies show that in American secondary schools very little reading is assigned and even less is completed. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that approximately half of middle grades and high school students read less than 10 pages per day for school. *HSTW* data reveal similar findings. Eighty-two percent of seniors participating in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment reported reading at most four assigned books outside class per year. Twenty-one percent reported reading none.

Schools must expect students to read broadly and deeply in their content-area classes. Student reading need not be limited to books. Included can be news magazines, Internet texts and technical materials plus visual sources such as charts, graphs and multimedia texts. Schools can encourage students to read texts critically and to make connections across texts and content areas, as these literacy skills are essential for modern living (Freebody and Luke; Moje, Young, Readence and Moore). Teachers need to increase their expectations for student learning from various texts. **The trend of "alliterate" secondary content classrooms coupled with non-existent literacy instruction in those classes must be reversed.**

Students need help before, during and after reading.

Students are not taught how to apply effective strategies before, during and after reading. When students become more adept at attacking texts, their learning rises accordingly. For example, prior knowledge on a topic is the single best predictor of how well a reader will understand a given text (Alexander; Alexander and Jetton). Students lacking prior knowledge on a topic or students without strategies for applying prior knowledge effectively will have more difficulty learning content. Again, greater exposure to texts leads to greater knowledge and experience on different topics. **Steven Stahl and his colleagues found that lack of prior knowledge made it more difficult for readers to organize ideas learned from a passage into a coherent summary.** Prior knowledge can influence how students look at the text, how much effort they put into reading and their level of interest.

Students who are better readers have the best ability to determine when, how and why to apply prior knowledge. Less proficient readers are more likely to have difficulty identifying main points because they use prior knowledge ineffectively (Williams, 1993). **In contrast, when students are given instruction by teachers on using prior knowledge effectively, it can help make up the differences in comprehension between students who read well and those who struggle.** Students need instruction on activating what they already know or to build up experiences related to unknown topics. This building up of prior knowledge can be done through teaching comprehension strategies or through wider reading to build intertextual connections (Pearson, 1984). (*See Chapter 6 for information on strategies to improve students' abilities to use prior knowledge*.)

As with prior knowledge, most secondary students have difficulty applying sophisticated comprehension strategies to challenging texts. Students identified as "gifted" are much more likely to know which reading strategies support comprehension. Further, good readers can use a variety of strategies in different situations to understand the text. As texts become more difficult, students who struggle with reading are less likely to use strategies to aid comprehension.

To address reading difficulties, teachers can engage in ongoing scaffolding strategy instruction as students become more proficient with reading and the strategies themselves. The NRP identified seven instructional strategies effective in teaching students to comprehend text. These strategies include

- *comprehension monitoring* — identifying those having difficulty reading and correcting that difficulty with a strategy;
- *cooperative learning* — working with peers in heterogeneous (mixed-ability groups) to learn material;
- *graphic and semantic organizers* — improving comprehension and organization through the use of visual aids/organizers such as Venn diagrams;
- *question generation* — creating questions while reading to support inferential thinking;
- *question answering* — identifying question types and question-answering strategies;
- *summarization* — identifying main ideas and supporting details from a reading; and
- *multiple strategy use* — using multiple strategies as appropriate for the demands of the assignment or the text.

Ongoing professional development that allows teachers to learn about, evaluate and revise their instruction strategy will help them become proficient in teaching comprehension strategies. This proficiency, in turn, enables students to become more aware of and proficient in using strategies to improve comprehension and potentially score higher on standardized reading and content-area assessments.

Some students need extra help.

Certain students in secondary schools have profound literacy learning needs extending beyond assistance with comprehension. They require instruction in content-area learning strategies, word identification, spelling, vocabulary and fluency. (*See Chapter 9*, Extra Support for Struggling Readers.)

Students who struggle with reading at the secondary level come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Some are non-native speakers of English. Others have learning disabilities. Still others might not have developed literacy skills in their elementary years due to developmental, physical, social and affective factors. They have difficulty with word identification strategies, fluency, self-monitoring, integrated strategy use, vocabulary and spelling. Nevertheless, these students want to become better readers (Ivey, 1999b; Kos; McCray, Vaughn and Neal). **There is evidence that nearly all students can become better readers through good instructional interventions** (Alfassi; Curtis and Longo, 1999; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams and Baker; Klinger and Vaughn; Lauterbach and Bender; Mercer et al.; Morris et al.; Tatum).

Little effort is spent helping struggling middle grades and high school readers compared to students in primary grades. Only 10 states require developmental reading classes for middle grades teacher certification candidates. Only four states require such courses for high school candidates (Romine, McKenna and Robinson). Further, in the 1980s and 1990s, secondary schools dismantled many remedial reading programs, replacing them with content-area literacy programs that have been less than successful in helping students with needs beyond comprehension. **These results led the IRA in its 2000 position statement on adolescent literacy to call for schools to employ reading specialists to assist individual students having difficulty.**

Several successful intervention programs have been proposed for middle grades and high school readers having difficulty with reading comprehension. Some programs operate within English classes, others as complementary classes. Typical intervention or acceleration programs focus on an assessment of individual student needs, followed by a customized program mixing word study (word identification, vocabulary and spelling), fluency (the ability to read text with natural rate and expression) and comprehension instruction.

In addition, reading in these classes should engage students in social and textual critique. Good instruction for students having difficulties with school-based reading should encompass all four of Freebody and Luke's roles of critical readers — code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst — both in their English/language arts and content-area classes.

The assigned reading does not interest students.

"I like to read *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* books, and *Ella Enchanted*, that's my favorite book, and *UPFRONT* magazine, that's really interesting, especially around the 9-11 time period."

— Rebecca

If wider reading improves literacy achievement and if changes in secondary content-area literacy instruction are connected to students reading texts critically, then the texts themselves are a critical consideration. *Gatekeeping texts* are those considered to have educational, cultural and economic relevance for students' futures. These texts, as well as high-interest texts, should form the focus of secondary instruction.

In several studies, disengaged student readers said having a choice in texts, even a limited choice from a list of books, would increase their interest in reading and literacy learning (Baker; Ivey and Broaddus; Worthy, 1998). However, research indicates that students are unlikely to be allowed this for two reasons: teachers' perceived need to cover required texts and lack of access to high-interest texts.

Adolescents like texts that are personally engaging and culturally relevant (Tatum). Students' preferences may vary according to gender, socioeconomic status, reading proficiency and attitude toward reading. Nevertheless, preferences are very individualized (Ivey and Broaddus). Evidence suggests, however, that students' preferences and the texts assigned are increasingly incompatible as students grow older (Worthy, Moorman, and Turner). Furthermore, it is typical that boys and African-American, Latino, Asian-American or multi-racial students are less engaged with assigned school reading (Baker; Thompson and Mixon; Worthy and McKool).

Divergence between student interest and required reading can result in students becoming disengaged in reading assigned in school. **Books from the *canon*, the list of books teachers perceive every student must read, are often those least interesting to students.** Disengagement with these assigned texts, coupled with teacher telling, can lead to students not reading critically. Some researchers have argued for a curriculum largely focusing on self-selected student reading, even in the content areas, to promote student engagement and fight the passive learning of canonical content. **However, Schoenbach and her colleagues suggest that protecting students from difficult texts can result in "keeping low-performing students at the tail end of the educational opportunity curve."** This tactic may contribute to a widening gulf of unequal access in today's increasingly knowledge-based society. The conflict between culturally-sanctioned texts and texts appealing to students may result in less reading of both.

To avoid this problem, teachers should engage students with both popular and canonical texts. When the canon is expanded to include texts that might more closely connect to students' experiences and interests, students respond favorably. However, not just the texts must be changed; teachers must change the ways they look at texts and the ways they guide students to take meaning from their reading.

Students can be taught to analyze texts closely and yet resist textual meanings contrary to their experiences (Rabinowitz and Smith). Students obtain these multiple perspectives through understanding their roles as a part of the audience the author intended and also as members of an audience they construct based on their own experiences and beliefs.

Students assigned an "authorized reading" of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn *first would read the text as if part of the author's original audience. Students would try to understand that audience's perspectives on race and slavery.*

- How common were the racial epithets used in the book?
- Would they have been acceptable?
- What was unusual about the friendship between a white boy and an African-American man?
- How would students expect a contemporary audience to react to the text?
- Was the text meant to persuade them that Jim was a real person?
- Did Twain use satire to expose societal shortcomings?

Once students have read the text through the eyes of the original, intended audience, they are asked to react as part of its modern audience. Are they, because of their life experience, offended by the use of racial epithets in the book, regardless of their appropriateness to the time and setting? Is the portrayal of Jim stereotypical and how does that portrayal relate to their sensibilities on race and class? How can the conflicting views of contemporary readers and modern readers be evaluated? **By reading the text through both the eyes of the intended and modern audience, students comprehend the text on a deeper level and can offer critiques grounded in historical, textual and personal experiences. The strength of these multi-layered readings is that they can be applied to all kinds of texts.**

The IRA adolescent literacy position statement says in order to "understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences and respond to their characteristics." **Teachers should value reading interesting to students and recognize individualized as well as author-sanctioned responses to text. Coupling critical reading of canonical texts with student-preferred texts has the potential to increase student engagement in reading and thus literacy and content learning.**

The right materials aren't available for students to read.

"Like *UPFRONT* magazine, we had to buy that on our own because they only have the geography book. It's really old, like 30 years old, so it's not any good to learn about geography now."

— *Rebecca*

High school classrooms and libraries are unlikely to have the popular magazines, newspapers and nonfiction texts teenagers prefer. This might be because teachers value "good" literature over popular literature or that they lack funding to buy popular materials for their classroom. Teachers in one study indicated that secondary classroom libraries are often funded through personal contributions, limiting their growth (Worthy et al, 1999).

This finding is problematic for secondary literacy development in several ways. **A well-organized, extensive classroom library — including all genres of literature as well as magazines, comic books and other reading material — is critical for maintaining students' motivation and interest in reading** (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale, 1993; Worthy, 1996, 1998). Classroom library size is also connected to student literacy achievement. Unfortunately, the older students get, the less often they encounter classroom libraries. Fractor and colleagues found only 25 percent of fifth-grade classrooms have libraries; middle grades classrooms are even less likely to have them.

It is disturbing that funding for student-preferred texts in secondary school libraries, library media centers and classroom libraries is almost non-existent. This lack of funding is more alarming when one considers that school sources offer the main access to texts for low-income students. To ensure these students are not shortchanged, library purchases should be targeted to meet their needs. The IRA has suggested that schools and districts reconsider priority funding for text purchases beyond content-area textbooks.

Conclusion

"Adolescents deserve homes, communities and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed" (Moore et al., 1999).

By examining factors limiting students' literacy experiences and instruction in secondary content areas, schools can begin to formulate programs to support literacy instruction. The many issues identified in this chapter must be addressed. Schools can critique and evaluate their perspectives on adolescent literacy learning and, as a result, offer their students increased opportunities to engage in meaningful reading and writing tasks, conduct critical evaluations of varied texts and employ strategies for content-area literacy learning. Research suggests schools adhering to high standards have the best opportunities for exemplary student literacy achievement.

Adolescents deserve schools that prepare teachers to take responsibility for students' literacy learning, provide opportunities for rigorous coursework, offer ongoing instruction in strategies for learning essential content in all academic and career/technical classes and support multiple and varied occasions to engage in critical use of their literacy expertise. **Most of all, students deserve schools where reading doesn't happen just in English classes.**

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CHAPTER 3

Launching Your School's Literacy Campaign

By Renee Murray and Ione Phillips

In this chapter, we explore —

Nine Actions to Launch a School Literacy Campaign

- Establishing a literacy committee.
- Determining what students need to know and do.
- Assembling data about current student literacy skills.
- Developing a literacy plan with long-term goals.
- Sharing plans with stakeholders.
- Assigning a literacy coach.
- Providing appropriate professional development opportunities.
- Finding necessary funding to support your plan.
- Assessing and celebrate progress.

Improving the literacy skills of your students may seem like an overwhelming challenge. If your students' levels of proficiency are reflective of the average student performance discussed in the first two chapters — or perhaps even lower — you may feel discouraged and uncertain about where to begin. In this chapter we present a plan of action adaptable by any school as it seeks to boost student reading and writing skills while enhancing achievement in academic and career/technical courses. The nine recommended actions are shown above. Let's explore each of these actions in detail.

Establishing a literacy committee

Launching a school-wide literacy campaign is not a job for a single person, whether he or she is the principal, the curriculum coordinator, the literacy coach, the head of the English department or any other committed school leader. The task is too large to be undertaken without the leadership of a strong team. The first step is to form a literacy committee. **Charge the committee with the responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring the progress the school makes in getting students to read and write for learning in all academic and career/technical classes.**

The composition of the committee can vary, but at a minimum should include the principal; curriculum coordinator; literacy coach and/or reading specialist; media specialist; chairs or representatives from the English, mathematics, science, social studies and career/technical departments; parent(s); and community representative(s). Others might be representatives from local businesses, the public library, students and local media.

Carefully select committee members based on their interest in the issue. Select teacher members who use literacy strategies effectively or have a strong interest in helping all faculty learn to help students deepen content understanding through literacy strategies. All should have a deep interest in helping students become better communicators. Above all, select committee members willing to share their experiences in improving reading and writing.

As the committee begins, it should review this guide chapter by chapter over several weeks. Each committee member can read an assigned chapter and then discuss how the findings and recommendations apply to classrooms in their school. Designate a committee member to lead each chapter discussion.

Determining what students need to know and do

Once an organizational structure is in place, it is critical that the team determines what literacy skills students need for success in rigorous English/language arts classes and in using reading and writing to learn in other courses. SREB convened a panel of university educators and experienced language arts teachers to develop guidelines for what middle grades students should know and be able to do to be ready to meet high school literacy standards. (Similar studies have been conducted in mathematics and science.) The results are published in a report, *Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors English: What Middle Grades Students Need to Know and Be Able To Do*, available on the SREB Web site, www.sreb.org, or for purchase from the SREB Publications Department. Table 14 shows the indicators that enable entering high school students to be successful.

High schools must focus on what students need to be able to do if they are ready for postsecondary studies without remedial courses. ACT has defined standards for what students can do, indexed to various point scores on the ACT college admissions test. Generally, students scoring in the 20-23 range (of 36 possible points) are considered adequately prepared. The standards for what students have to do to reach that score are included in Table 15 on page 34.

You would like all of your students to meet these standards tomorrow. The sooner you start, the sooner your students will meet these standards.

Table 14: What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do for Success in Meeting High Literacy Standards in High School

Process Indicators

1) **Reading:** Read the equivalent of 10 – 12 books of various types and lengths each year, including
   - six novels,
   - 15 short stories,
   - four nonfiction texts,
   - 20 to 30 poems,
   - five technical pieces (e.g., instruction manuals) and
   - articles from magazines or newspapers (one per week).

2) **Writing:** Write every day, including a paper to be graded each week. Writing takes many forms and lengths and should include
   - a short response to reading, listening or viewing (writing-to-learn activity) daily;
   - a short paper of one to three pages weekly;
   - a longer paper (over five pages) monthly, including a variety of fiction, persuasive, technical, practical and reflective pieces; and
   - a research paper (at least five pages) annually with appropriate documentation.

3) **Speaking:** Speak and present information frequently in a variety of formats, including
   - three to five speeches annually presented for different purposes,
   - reading aloud or acting a role in two to three plays annually,
   - leading a discussion or delivering instructions monthly and
   - weekly group discussions.

4) **Listening:** Listen to presentations frequently for a variety of purposes. Students should
   - respond to a live or recorded performance three to five times annually,
   - use a specific format to take notes from lectures or speeches weekly and
   - organize information gained from listening weekly.

Content-Specific Indicators

Language
- Develop vocabulary appropriate to reading, writing and speaking proficiency.

Reading Comprehension
- Summarize, paraphrase and categorize information.
- Compare and contrast information, ideas and structures to clarify meaning of various materials.
- Make inferences and predictions.
- Connect what is read to personal experience and the world beyond the classroom.
- Identify and interpret literary structures, elements, devices and themes.

Writing
- Use an appropriate process to prepare for writing.
- Compose writing that conveys a clear main point with logical support.
- Revise and edit writing for the strongest effect.
- Use appropriate English language structure and grammar to communicate effectively.

Research
- Use research skills to locate, gather, evaluate and organize information for different purposes.

Speaking
- Use appropriate organization, language, voice, delivery style and visual aids to match the audience and purpose of oral presentations.

Listening
- Use active listening strategies for organization of and response to information presented in different formats for different purposes.

Table 15: Standards for Students Scoring in 20-23 Range on ACT (Prepared for Postsecondary Study)

English

- Identify the main theme or topic of a straightforward piece of writing.
- Determine relevancy when presented with a variety of sentence-level details.
- Use a conjunctive adverb or phrase to express a straightforward logical relationship, such as chronology.
- Decide the most logical place to add a sentence in an essay.
- Add a sentence that introduces a simple paragraph.
- Delete redundant material when information is repeated in different parts of speech (e.g., "alarmingly startled").
- Use the word or phrase most consistent with the style and tone of a fairly straightforward essay.
- Determine the clearest and most logical conjunction to link clauses.
- Recognize and correct marked disturbances of sentence flow and structure (e.g., participial phrase fragments, missing relative pronouns, dangling or misplaced modifiers).
- Identify the past and past participle forms of irregular but commonly used verbs and identify when prepositions are idiomatically appropriate to their context.
- Ensure that a verb agrees with its subject when there is text between them.
- Use commas to set off simple parenthetical phrases.
- Delete unnecessary commas when an incorrect reading of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between verb and direct object clause).

Reading

- Draw simple conclusions using details that support the main points of more challenging passages.
- Locate important details in uncomplicated passages.
- Order simple sequences of events in uncomplicated literary narratives.
- Identify comparative relationships between ideas and people in uncomplicated passages.
- Identify clearly stated cause-effect relationships in uncomplicated passages.
- Use context clues to define some words and interpret figurative language in uncomplicated passages.
- Make more specific generalizations about people and ideas in uncomplicated passages.
- Make generalizations about the author's or narrator's attitude toward his or her subject in uncomplicated passages.
- Understand the overall approach taken by an author or narrator, including point of view, in uncomplicated informational passages.

Assembling data about current student literacy skills

You must first know where you are before determining the shape of your school's literacy initiative. The facts needed are available now in your community. They may not all be at your fingertips. They may need to be unearthed from databases, file cabinets, a school district office across town or even from your state department of education. Getting the facts together is essential to help you determine goals, priorities and progress.

You will look at two types of data — one determining how successful your students are on literacy assessments and the second determining how successful your school is in engaging students in reading and writing for learning. The performance indicators are usually the easiest to locate. They include data on how well your students perform on the *HSTW* or *MMGW* Assessment; state assessments of reading, language and writing; ACT or SAT performance; placement exams from local community or technical colleges; or other standardized reading tests your school may administer. You can collect information on how your current students are doing compared to earlier years and how they are performing compared to their peers in other schools, communities and states.

The second type of data reflects how, in individual classrooms and across the curriculum, students are using reading and writing strategies for learning. *HSTW* has developed a series of literacy indicators that can guide schools in assessing student experiences in reading and writing for learning. The indicators are statements of practice shown effective in advancing student reading skills and achievement in different courses. As a starting point, schools can determine their current status in meeting these indicators. To establish this baseline information, school leaders will need to examine their own assessment data plus information from school records. In some cases, schools may want to survey faculty and students to obtain the most current data on certain practices. (*The indicators are found in two documents* Establishing Benchmarks of Progress for Middle Grades Sites *and* Establishing Benchmarks for New and Maturing *HSTW* Sites. *Literacy indicators from the* HSTW *and* MMGW *benchmark documents related to school literacy practices are in Appendices 1 and 2, pages 194 and 197, respectively.*)

The questions in Table 16 will help gauge the literacy achievement of the school's students. Additional information can be obtained through surveys of teachers, students and families. *(An example of a teacher survey is in Appendix 3 on page 199.)*

Once the data-gathering team has finished, the literacy committee will get a clear idea about the strengths and weaknesses of students and about current instructional practices. With this information, teams are better able to determine where to focus first.

Table 16: Helpful Questions About Students' Literacy Achievement

Indicator	Data Source
How many of our students meet standards on assessments in reading and writing? — state assessments? — ACT English and reading scores 20 or above? — *HSTW* or *MMGW* Assessment? — standardized test scores?	Test data files
What are the mean scores of our students on assessments in reading and writing? — state assessments? — ACT or SAT? — *HSTW* or *MMGW* Assessment? — standardized test scores?	Test data files
Are there gaps in performance based on gender, ethnicity, poverty, course-taking patterns?	Test data files
How many of our graduates must take remedial courses at the postsecondary level?	Obtain from colleges admitting a high percentage of the school's graduates
How many of our students need extra help to be successful in English classes?	Teacher survey, extra help attendance

Developing a literacy plan with long-term goals

□ Step 1: Set goals.

Once the committee has a clear picture of literacy achievement at the school, it can get to work developing its initial action plan — and determine the most serious concern or top priority.

Whatever its initial goals, it is important that the first actions the committee takes are realistic and achievable within a year. The five literacy goals outlined in Chapter 1 are a good place to start in developing a plan. Some schools may decide to focus on only one or two the first year. When overly-enthusiastic teams attempt too much too quickly, they are likely to fail. Faced with limited success, the team may become disillusioned and unwilling to continue. However, success with a few initiatives inspires the faculty to aim higher each year. The cumulative effect over three years can be truly impressive.

Key organizational strategies the committee can apply are as follows.

Organizational Strategies for Developing a Literacy Plan

- As an entire committee, reach consensus on first-year goals.
- Divide the committee into sub-committees with each assigned one of the goals.
- Provide each subcommittee with reading materials that offer suggestions for achieving its assigned goal. Ask each committee member to study the materials.
- Schedule one or more sub-committee meetings to discuss ideas and determine the best strategies for the school.
- Hold one or more meetings of the entire committee to discuss sub-committee proposals and agree on strategies.
- Put the strategies in writing.
- Share the plan at one or more faculty meetings. Better yet, schedule a one- or two-day retreat to discuss the plan and get input from the entire faculty.
- Include a schedule of professional development activities to support teachers as they implement new classroom strategies.
- Offer opportunities for parent and community involvement.

Create measurable goals to improve student performance and change school practices. For example, schools can adopt a goal matching their state standard of getting all students to the Proficient level in reading by 2014 or earlier. However, incremental steps must be planned. If only 25 percent of students currently score at or above Proficient, the goal must be a higher percentage each year. A realistic goal: increasing the number of students performing at the top levels by 10 percent each year.

The committee must go beyond simply deciding that the school will meet the specified performance targets in a designated time. The most important goals — the only ones educators really can control — are committing to the implementation of certain practices. Putting those practices in place provides schools the best chance of ultimately seeing improvements in student achievement.

A literacy practice goal can be that students will read 25 books. For example, if 50 percent of eighth-graders or 12th-graders read that many books in 2002, school leaders might set a goal of 65 percent in 2004. In 2006, the goal can be 75 percent, increasing to 85 percent in 2008. This establishes smaller short-term goals and allows time for practices to be put in place.

If your school's target goal is having all students write weekly in each class, you might choose to set incremental goals differently. In one plan, students would write every other week in each class this year and every week next year. A second option: have students write every week this year in English and social studies classes. Next year, add mathematics and science; the following year, add all other classes.

As goals focused on changing classroom practices are set, make plans to provide staff development that assists teachers in gaining necessary new skills. For instance, as teachers implement weekly writing in content areas, they will need assistance in developing appropriate assignments and grading practices. Phasing in the requirements will allow more teachers to be trained each year. You may choose to have all teachers in a specific grade level or department trained the first year and add others in subsequent years. (*A sample literacy plan is in Appendix 4 on page 201.*)

□ Step 2: Establish literacy standards.

One of the first challenges schools face as they develop a literacy campaign is the diversity of expectations from teacher to teacher. In the absence of common standards for achievement, there are bound to be major differences from class to class in what is expected. Teachers are variously identified by students as "the easy ones" and "the tough ones." These labels are usually based on the amount of work students are assigned and the standards required for a good grade.

An early task for the committee is to develop common literacy standards that all students and teachers will be expected to meet. Table 17 provides suggestions for school-wide literacy standards. This list is based on evidence from assessments and work designed to determine what students should be able to do to meet high literacy standards. The decision on your school's standards requires extensive input from all faculty and a commitment to uphold the standards in every class and for every student.

Table 17: School-wide Literacy Standards

The following are areas where schools will want to consider school-wide standards.

Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.

- What makes the equivalent of a book?
- How many should be read in each class?
- How will we determine if students have actually read the books?
- Will all reading be specifically assigned or how will students make choices?
- Will we develop grade-level reading lists?
- What are our requirements for summer reading?

Write weekly in all classes.

- How will writing be graded?
- What are appropriate forms for writing?
- Will any tasks be joint assignments?
- How do writing assignments and scoring vary by grade level?

Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes.

- How will teachers document this?
- How frequently will these strategies be used?
- Who will teach the strategies?
- Are certain strategies to be implemented across the curriculum?

Write research papers in all classes.

- How many will be "formal" papers?
- What documentation style will we adopt school-wide?
- How many sources will be required?
- Must papers be word processed?
- How long must the papers be?
- What common rubric will we use?

Complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like college-preparatory/honors English.

- How many books do students have to read?
- How many presentations should students make?
- Are different criteria expected for student work?
- How will we support students struggling to meet standards?

□ Step 3: Determine first-year actions.

Once broad goals are defined, it is time to plan specific actions for the campaign's first year. To help committees jump start the planning process, we have developed some suggested first steps related to each of the goals. (*See Table 18.*) More information about each of the goals and strategies for achieving them are offered in Chapters 4 – 8. The list of possible actions is quite extensive. **It is up to each school to develop a list of manageable first-year priorities.** Again, planning teams should be guided by what data review has shown to be the most pressing problems.

One recommended action is to review the school's *HSTW* or *MMGW* Assessment items dealing with specific school and classroom strategies. If evidence shows that students with certain experiences are performing at much higher levels than students without, implementing these practices school-wide is a good place to start.

□ Step 4: Assign responsibilities.

A common mistake in planning is failing to assign responsibility for each action. Although all actions will require team effort, someone needs to be in charge. It is best to ask each member of the literacy committee to assume lead responsibility for one or more actions. The literacy coach will be very helpful in keeping all initiatives moving forward but cannot take the leadership role for every action. When committee members are actively involved in reaching goals, they are more supportive and have much greater ownership of the outcome.

In addition to naming a coordinator, it is important to set both interim and final deadlines for work to be completed. Establish a regular process for gathering progress information for each goal. Schedule times throughout the year to assess progress and take corrective action when required. Report the status of each initiative at least monthly to the literacy committee and faculty.

Sharing plans with stakeholders

Once the literacy committee has established goals, some literacy standards and a first-year plan for the school, it is time to go public and gauge the reaction of others. This is best done in meetings with stakeholder groups during which the principal, literacy coach and one or more articulate team members lay out the problem and the vision for the future. Since there are multiple audiences with different roles to play in the campaign, the committee might consider a series of meetings. The first should be with teachers and held during initial planning.

When plans have been tentatively developed, schedule meetings with students and parents. Another meeting can be held to garner community support.

There are several purposes for community meetings:

- Use your school's data to convince key groups there is a problem.
- Offer potential solutions.
- Solicit suggestions and support.

Table 18: Possible Actions for Year One of the Literacy Campaign

Goal 1: Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.

- Conduct a survey to determine how many books students are currently reading in each class.
- Develop a plan for increasing reading requirements incrementally over a three- to five-year period.
- Implement a silent sustained reading (SSR) program.
- Provide resources for teachers to expand their classroom libraries with materials related to the subject matter being taught. Solicit community funding for this purpose.
- Ask teachers to develop reading lists for each class.
- Establish a school-wide homework policy requiring students to read an hour or more outside class each day.
- Select a reading motivation program that rewards students for reading and reporting on a specified number of books.
- Purchase newspapers or magazines for classroom use.

Goal 2: Write weekly in all classes.

- Provide coaching for teachers in appropriate writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing activities to help students learn class content.
- Require all students to write weekly reflections on what they have learned in class.
- Develop a common rubric for evaluating student writing.
- Establish periodic school-wide writing prompts and evaluate student writing using the common rubric.

Goal 3: Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes.

- Provide professional development to help teachers learn classroom strategies enabling students to learn more deeply the content of the field being studied.
- Select a small number of reading strategies to emphasize in all classes to help students more deeply learn the materials of their field. Provide teachers training in their use.
- Provide follow-up support that includes watching an expert teach model lessons, additional coaching and one-on-one assistance to address problem areas.
- Decide on a common strategy for all classes for a month. Provide time for teachers to discuss their use of the strategy and problems they encounter.

Goal 4: Write research papers in all classes.

- Expect students to complete one formal research paper at each grade level and one or more pieces of "researched" writing in each class annually.
- Develop progressively more challenging requirements for research papers at each successive grade level.
- Establish a senior project requirement that includes development of a formal research paper.

Goal 5: Complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like college-preparatory/honors English.

- Begin a curriculum alignment process involving all language arts teachers in middle grades and high school.
- Provide professional development on "honors" strategies.
- Begin implementing requirements for college-preparatory English — reading at least eight books, completing a research paper and writing weekly.
- Explain to parents the new higher standards and why they are important.
- Eliminate one lower-level English class.

A presentation grounded in facts will go far toward convincing teachers, parents, students and community supporters that there is a problem. Start with a few compelling facts about the importance of good literacy skills to students' futures drawn from Chapter 1 or from other data the committee might gather. The literacy committee will want to invite one or more articulate spokespersons from the community to take part in the presentation.

Speakers might include

- local employers (possibly a panel) discussing workplace reading requirements and how reading skills are linked to good jobs;
- higher education personnel discussing how the inability to read and process information increases the likelihood that students will have to take remedial courses in college; and
- former students discussing how literacy has been important in their success in education or employment beyond high school.

Employers and higher education personnel might make the most effective spokespersons for presentations to parents and teachers while former students might have a greater impact with current students.

Provide your audiences facts about the literacy status at your school. Include the following information:

- overall reading and writing achievement scores of students at the school based on results from state assessments and the *HSTW* and *MMGW* Assessments;
- information about school practices provided by students on the *HSTW* and *MMGW* Assessments and from your own surveys; and
- information about teacher attitudes and what they say about practices reported on the *HSTW* and *MMGW* teacher surveys and on your own surveys.

This information can be communicated through a carefully crafted PowerPoint presentation. Make sure to provide participants with a copy of the presentation or one or more fact sheets for future reference.

After presenting the facts, have speakers discuss actions they are proposing. It is important to have a beginning plan, but be careful to stress that one reason for the meeting(s) is to solicit input on possible actions. Give participants a chance to share their views. Make sure someone takes notes or make arrangements to record the sessions. It is easier to win support when key groups feel their views have been heard and considered as possible implementation strategies.

Be clear about the kind of support you want from each group. **Teachers** must agree to try new strategies, hold students to higher standards and use multiple instructional approaches to ensure students master the written language of their subject matter. **Students** need to commit to read more, work harder, aim higher and commit to become life-long, independent learners. **Parents** agree to encourage students to read and write for pleasure and for learning, ask daily about schoolwork, provide a quiet place to study, monitor the completion of homework and remain in contact with teachers about how well their students are doing. **Community supporters** can serve as role models and mentors, and make resources available for motivational campaigns promoting and rewarding student reading and writing achievements in academic and career/technical classes.

End each meeting by asking for a definite commitment of support. Instruct teachers to complete a survey about current reading and writing strategy use and their need for professional development. The survey might include a statement of commitment for each faculty member to sign. (*See a suggested teacher survey instrument in Appendix 3 on page 199.)*

Students and parents can be asked to sign compacts to meet certain conditions regarding classroom assignments, homework, extra help and redoing work. Community supporters can be asked to complete surveys providing the literacy committee with good information about what each community partner is willing to contribute. *(A sample school literacy compact and a community supporter survey are found in Appendices 5 and 6, pages 202 and 204, respectively.)*

Assigning a literacy coach for the school

A school's literacy campaign will move faster and be more effective if led by a professional literacy coach. Traditionally, middle grades and high schools focus attention on remedial programs for struggling readers — if indeed literacy concerns are addressed at all. As a result, teachers with training in reading, frequently known as reading specialists, tend to work intensively with small groups of students most in need of reading assistance. These services may include diagnostic testing, tutoring assistance and help with class assignments.

While programs targeting struggling readers are desirable, they do not represent a school-wide commitment to literacy learning. The remedial approach places responsibility for the reading development of a few students in the hands of one or two individuals, while the needs of other students are overlooked and most teaching staff is uninvolved.

The job of the literacy coach is to develop and guide a program integrating reading and writing strategies across the curriculum, ultimately reaching the entire student body. Because most teachers of content classes lack training and experience with building reading and writing skills, they need support and guidance in learning literacy strategies. They need an expert to assist in identifying appropriate texts to use with their students, collaborate in devising lessons that help students learn effectively from content texts and model activities that engage students in reading and writing to learn new content. Yet several studies have found fewer than 10 percent of middle grades and high schools employ reading specialists.

□ Qualifications and characteristics of a good literacy coach

It is important to select a literacy coach with in-depth training and experience in reading and writing strategies and in coaching colleagues to implement them. There are various approaches to getting that training. SREB offers regular reading and writing workshops focusing on a school framework for improvement as well as literacy strategies. SREB's *Reading and Writing for Learning* Web-based professional development course keys on strategies proven successful in the classroom. The course, designed to complement *HSTW* and *MMGW* programs, provides some 50 hours of professional development experience. Content-area teachers learn strategies they can use to improve student literacy skills, implement strategies and review their success as a group.

The National Writing Project, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, has a highly regarded five-week training program offering in-depth training in teaching writing across the curriculum. Educators who complete the program receive graduate credit and become National Writing Project fellows. (*For more information about the National Writing Project, visit the project's Web site, http://www.writingproject.org.*) Some states offer similar training programs in reading.

Literacy coaches are not necessarily English teachers or reading specialists. However, they must comprehensively understand appropriate strategies enabling them to assist faculty members to become more proficient in helping students use reading and writing to learn and demonstrate understanding of subject matter.

□ Primary responsibilities for a literacy coach

The literacy coach demonstrates that engaging students in reading and writing about their subject area will increase student achievement, reduce failure rates, improve the percentage of students graduating and produce more independent learners. This job can be broken down into various roles.

Interacting with teachers. A literacy coach must work with a diverse group of colleagues. Since many teachers feel strongly that teaching reading and writing "is not my job!," **a skilled literacy coach should have diplomatic tact and the ability to guide teachers into helping students become more effective and efficient learners of the subjects they teach.** The literacy coach understands and helps teachers address the unique characteristics of reading and writing from subject to subject.

Leading professional development initiatives. Staff development opportunities initiated by the coach can encompass providing forums to share new ideas, modeling literacy activities and offering workshops and follow-up support. The literacy coach makes presentations at faculty meetings and consults with departments, teams and individual teachers. He or she can disseminate useful information to keep staff members informed about new ideas and practices. Frequently, literacy coaches prepare newsletters or otherwise create a community of learners among the faculty.

The literacy coach can serve as the site facilitator of online professional development experiences, such as SREB's *Reading and Writing for Learning* course. Teams of teachers can thus collaborate to learn and implement successful practices.

It is vitally important that a literacy coach be committed to personal self-growth, engaging in extensive professional reading, attending and presenting at conferences, networking with other colleagues and producing professional writing. One way to "stay current" on the latest knowledge in the field is to maintain membership in both the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Both of these groups offer many professional development opportunities and an array of current literature. The coach will be most successful when others see that individual as someone making the journey with them.

Helping school leaders keep the initiative moving forward. The literacy coach works with the principal and other administrators to ensure reading and writing strategies are progressing across the curriculum. Because school leaders want to see results, the literacy coach must track student performance on reading and writing assessments and the impact of practices used for student academic and career/technical achievement.

The literacy coach will track information such as:

- grade improvement in classes where the strategies are being used,
- improved performance on end-of-course tests,
- improved performance on program exams in career and technical fields,
- changes in state and *HSTW* or *MMGW* student performance and
- changes in teacher practices.

The coach can help the school amass an information base by periodically engaging in action research projects. For example, a teacher group might use the same rubric to evaluate student work over time. They can then review samples and offer insights into how the rubric worked. This feedback will enable the team to refine and improve the instrument.

The principal will expect the coach to develop priorities for additional professional development. In turn, the coach should view the principal and other school leaders as learners. They should participate in all planned professional activities. Administrators cannot evaluate teachers' use of literacy strategies if unaware of them. The coach can also suggest strategies specifically for administrators to follow up on professional development activities.

Over time administrators should increasingly trust the coach as someone helping them solve problems. The coach can build that trust by constantly sharing new ideas with school leaders and being available to discuss literacy issues and solutions. It is important that the principal honor the work of the literacy coach by not assigning additional duties.

Working with the school library media specialist. The literacy coach and library media specialist should forge a close partnership to support the literacy campaign. Together they can identify needed resources, research potential sources for teachers and develop a plan maximizing library media center use.

Communicating with parents. The literacy coach can help parents understand the importance of literacy initiatives and gain their support. The coach should welcome opportunities to make presentations before parent organizations and conduct special parent workshops. Contributing articles to a parent newsletter or putting key information on the school's Web site are other ways to spread the word.

Creating community partnerships. The literacy coach works closely with the principal and other members of the literacy committee to build partnerships with civic organizations, chambers of commerce, local libraries, bookstores, higher education institutions and others.

Leading the literacy committee. The literacy coach can serve as chair of the literacy committee, scheduling meetings and recommending school-wide activities for committee consideration. While all committee members share in the work, the coach can serve as the "spark plug," making sure planned activities move forward.

□ First actions for the literacy coach

Out of all the activities designated for the literacy coach, something must take priority. Often, in a school just adopting a literacy focus, its coach is the first person in the position. Doug Buehl, an experienced literacy coach at East High School in Madison, Wisconsin, notes that the best way to get started is to help the faculty develop an understanding of what is involved. "Start with the handful of teachers who are interested and develop momentum from there," Buehl advises. This may mean starting in one department, one grade or with one school team.

Another early priority is developing fact sheets for educators and parents about the literacy skills of students in the school, based on surveys and other data outlined earlier in this chapter. Include plans for meeting the challenges and offer suggestions for what educators and parents can do to improve the situation.

In summary, the literacy coach plays an essential role in the success of any school's literacy campaign. Many teachers feel they have inadequate backgrounds for successfully integrating reading and writing activities into their classroom routines. The literacy coach is there to allay these concerns and assist teachers in developing techniques that can elevate the reading and writing achievement of all students.

□ The principal's role

The linchpin of school literacy is the principal. The principal must bring program focus by highlighting successes, enlisting partners, monitoring instruction and measuring progress. The principal bears ultimate responsibility for whether students use reading and writing to learn the content of their classes and demonstrate understanding.

Specific roles for the principal of a school with a literacy focus include

- facilitating teacher meetings for planning literacy activities;
- highlighting the need for improvement through using school data;
- sharing successes with the faculty and community;
- enlisting parents as partners through presentations at PTA meetings;
- advocating partnerships with community organizations and businesses;
- monitoring literacy activities in classrooms and examining displayed student work;
- seeking and providing funding for supporting materials, such as classroom libraries;
- serving as a role model by reading and writing publicly and discussing the importance of literacy;
- providing avenues for teacher growth through staff development; and
- keeping the spotlight on literacy through constant conversation and attention.

Providing appropriate professional development opportunities

Not providing adequate professional development for teachers implementing new initiatives is a common cause of failure. Alleged teacher resistance to change often is due simply to a lack of knowledge of how to do what is expected. This problem can be overcome with a supportive professional development program.

A program adequately meeting teacher needs goes far beyond one-shot workshops. This approach seldom results in a change of classroom practices.

A comprehensive approach to help teachers acquire new skills must include all of the following components:

- Teachers understand there is a problem and that new strategies can help address it.
- Adequate in-depth training is provided to prepare teachers to implement the desired strategy(ies).
- Follow-up is comprehensive and continuous. Teachers are given opportunities to discuss their implementation efforts and help in resolving problems.
- Classroom observations from a caring coach are part of follow-up support. The coach offers suggestions for how the teacher can improve strategy implementation.
- Additional workshops are offered to reinforce concepts learned and help with problem areas. Formal training equaling at least 40 hours over a three-year period is desirable.
- Teachers keep journals reflecting their successes and challenges in implementing the strategies. The journals are reviewed and assistance is provided where needed.
- Teachers understand evaluation will be partly based on efforts made to implement new strategies.

Job Description: Literacy Coach

Purpose: To help teachers improve student skills in reading and writing and enhance student achievement in all content areas.

Professional qualifications:

- Deep knowledge of middle grades and high school reading and writing requirements and how students can become proficient in these areas.
- Essential knowledge of the role of reading and writing in improving understanding of major concepts in academic and career/technical courses.
- Competent with technology, particularly word processing and desktop publishing.
- Competent with effective instructional strategies such as cooperative learning and project-based learning.
- Ability to work with all teachers and students.
- An effective leader who can serve as a catalyst for change.
- Willingness to develop professionally.
- In-depth training in adolescent literacy.
- Ability to create a climate focusing on literacy by helping administrators effectively communicate literacy goals, enlist cooperation of the faculty and create partnerships with parents and other community partners.

Possible duties:

Literacy Committee

- Organize and conduct regular meetings of the school literacy committee.
- Coordinate school-wide literacy initiatives with the assistance of the literacy committee.

English/Language Arts Faculty

- Work with English/language arts teachers to incorporate new instructional strategies.
- Team-teach lessons with English/language arts teachers to demonstrate new strategies.
- Facilitate vertical planning sessions for literacy.

Content-area Teachers

- Work with content-area teachers to develop good reading and writing assignments.
- Assist teachers to develop grade-level rubrics for reading and writing.
- Work with teachers to develop reading lists for each grade level and class.
- Assist teachers to develop and implement a protocol for assessing student writing.
- Assist teachers with developing student revision and editing strategies.

Professional Development

- Present reading- and writing-across-the-curriculum strategies at faculty meetings.
- Facilitate team participation in the *Reading and Writing for Learning* online course.

Administrative, Data Gathering

- Help identify students for placement in extra-help courses (e.g., double-dosing, summer gear up) or accelerated courses.
- Work with the school library media specialist to identify resources for students and teachers and to plan for maximizing use of the library media center for carrying out literacy activities across the curriculum.
- Develop strategies to showcase proficient student writing.
- Maintain current data on literacy skills of students and effective literacy practices.
- Facilitate faculty use of data to evaluate instruction and inform future instructional decision making.

Families

- Work with parents to improve family literacy.

□ Achieving an appropriate balance of professional development experiences

A rich ongoing program of professional development experiences depends on teacher development and improvement being continuous and varied. While implementing new practices, teachers need regular feedback and support. Most schools cannot afford high-priced consultants on a regular basis nor are they necessary for a successful professional development program.

Try a Journal Club or Table of Contents Service

A Journal Club is an effective means of getting the most recent information out to staff. Interested individuals gather periodically after school to share what they are reading in the journals and news sources for their particular areas of expertise. Another strategy is the "Table of Contents Service." Teachers and specialists identify the journals and Web sites they are interested in following. The media specialist then prints the table of contents or homepage for the members of the professional group as new editions become available. Individuals put their initials next to the article they want. A small fee can be charged to cover the cost of duplicating articles if necessary.

Schools supporting teachers adequately have a variety of options, including

- targeted hands-on workshops to help develop initial strategy understanding,
- in-school mentors with an in-depth understanding of the strategy,
- model classroom visits to see the strategy practiced by an experienced teacher,
- regular observations and coaching support,
- frequent opportunities to discuss the strategy with colleagues in study and/or discussion groups and
- chances to network with experienced colleagues from other schools.

Expect the school's literacy coach or another staff member with responsibility for professional development to develop a plan including a mix of these opportunities. Periodic surveys to solicit teacher views of approaches used can provide meaningful information for improving and expanding professional development activities.

□ Selecting the professional development emphasis

There is an understandable tendency to offer professional development experiences fitting the expression "a mile wide and an inch deep." Teachers get a smattering of knowledge about many things but not enough to effectively use a new strategy. Schools need to avoid this tendency to overwhelm faculty with too many topics. In planning a professional development program to support the literacy initiative, the planning team should focus on one or two topics each year. For example, an initial workshop on reading strategies across the curriculum might present no more than four approaches. When teachers have mastered and are regularly using these strategies, additional training can be provided on other strategies.

To determine which area should receive attention first, the planning team should consider three factors:

- What is the top priority identified in the literacy plan?
- What can be concluded from teacher surveys about the most serious gaps in teacher knowledge that would prevent achievement of literacy goals?
- What would provide the greatest impact on student assessment scores?

Conducting a teacher survey is an important first step to determine teacher attitudes about reading and writing instruction, their current knowledge and professional development needs. Use the survey as a springboard for discussion with teachers about the literacy campaign and specific actions that can be taken. (*A sample survey is provided in Appendix 3 on page 199.)*

Finding necessary funding to support your plans

All schools have enough resources to launch literacy campaigns. Many of the actions necessary for success are dependent more on a change in direction and emphasis than on money. Even when funding is necessary to support professional development, to buy more books for libraries and classrooms or to launch motivational campaigns, it is often possible to redirect existing dollars. The principal and district office can be quite resourceful in coming up with the necessary funds to launch initiatives when they see a solid plan and committed faculty.

The literacy committee will want to explore all channels of possible support, including

- state programs that support literacy initiatives;
- local and state humanities councils;
- community library cooperation for joint efforts in providing books for summer reading programs or other motivational programs;
- PTAs or PTSAs sponsoring a book drive or fund-raising effort for classroom libraries; and
- adoption by local chambers of commerce and civic organizations of initiatives such as expanding classroom libraries, supporting a book fair or a community-wide reading emphasis program.

A sub-committee of the literacy committee can be formed to solicit outside support and monitor announcements of grants programs. Money is not really the issue. It's commitment that makes the most difference!

Assessing and celebrate progress

Keep the literacy campaign constantly before teachers, parents and students. This signals that the school takes the literacy focus seriously and expects support and participation from all parties. Create large displays containing the goals for strategic positions throughout the school. As progress is made, record the achievements on the displays. The art teacher might be asked to involve students in planning the displays and keeping them updated.

We recommend that the literacy committee target goals for a three-year plan, but begin with implementation strategies for the first year. Tentatively outline activities for years two and three, building on anticipated success of the first year's efforts.

Plans must be reviewed at the end of each year to assess two issues:

- What progress was made in achieving the goals for the year?
- How do next year's plans need to be adjusted based on this year's achievements?

As the initial plan is developed, team members should decide and record in their plan how progress will be measured. In other words, how will you know if you have achieved your objectives? What data are needed to determine the results of your efforts? To obtain the necessary information for an analysis of its initiatives, the school will need to conduct teacher surveys and to evaluate test results, course grades, failure rates and other key indicators.

On the same planning form used for baseline data, add results at the end of the first year. Determine where progress has been made and where it has not. Share the findings with all faculty and ask for their input on why certain results were more favorable than others. Determine what actions might be taken in year two to continue progress in successful areas and to improve results in others. Based on this analysis, revise the second-year plan.

Finally, plan some type of end-of-year celebration including students and parents. Use the occasion to report progress; include hard data illustrating your achievements. This is also a good time to announce tentative plans for the next year and to solicit continued support. If all first-year data are not available in time for an end-of-the-year activity, plan an early fall event.

Conclusion

Developing a solid literacy plan is essential for the success of your campaign. Schools starting out without a plan are no different than a traveler starting out without a map. They are apt to wander, get lost and be frustrated at the lack of progress.

Planning takes time, particularly when the goal is to involve all stakeholders. Ultimately, it is the surest way to guarantee success and wholehearted support for common goals. Take the time to plan. In the end, it will save time and speed success!

CHAPTER 4

Getting Students to Read More: How Do You Do It?

By Renee Murray and Ione Phillips

In this chapter, we explore —

Eleven Strategies to Get Students To Read More

- Setting school-wide reading goals.
- Promoting the reading goals.
- Getting school administrators to promote the goals.
- Developing reading lists.
- Using selected strategies across the curriculum.
- Drop Everything and Read!
- Expecting students to read outside class.
- Using technology.
- Creating activities to motivate students.
- Involving the library media center.
- Establishing classroom libraries for each content area.

Students who read more read better. Scores on the *HSTW* and *MMGW* Assessments increase the more students read outside of class, even if the reading is non-school-related. Students reading one or more hours weekly typically have a mean score approaching the Proficient range on the *HSTW* reading exam. Students reading one or more hours outside of school weekly had scores 11 points more than those reading less than one hour. (*See Table 19.*)

Thirty-seven percent of middle grades students reported reading at least an hour a day. Students reading 11 or more books yearly had mean scores 32 points more than students reading none. Scores rose as the number of books read increased. (*See Table 20.*)

The percentages at your school may differ from those on these tables but not greatly, unless you have school-wide goals specifying the quantity of annual reading expected of students.

Table 19: Impact of Reading Outside Class on Student Reading Performance in High School

Time Spent Reading Non-School-Related Materials Outside Class Weekly	Percentage of Students	Mean Reading Score
Less than 1 hour	60%	272
1 hour or more	40	283

Source: 2002 *HSTW* Assessment

Table 20: Impact of Time Spent and Number of Books Read on Student Reading Performance in Middle Grades

Time spent reading outside class on a typical day	Percentage of Students	Mean Reading Score	Number of books read per year both in and out of school	Percentage of Students	Mean Reading Score
Less than 1 hour	63%	153	**None**	3%	131
1 hour or more	37	161	**1-2**	10	142
			3-5	30	153
			6-10	25	161
			11 or more	32	163

Source: 2002 Middle Grades Network Assessment

Setting school-wide reading goals

The goals set for high school and middle grades students are not figures plucked at random from the sky. The 25-book target reflects the number necessary to make reading an intrinsic part of the curriculum in every class. Although there is no hard and fast rule about how the reading is to be distributed from course to course, the goals can be reached by reading eight to 10 books in English and two or three books in each of a student's other classes.

Teachers can meet and decide how they want to distribute the requirement across all classes. There might be less reading required in mathematics than in social studies, for instance. Every class will have a reading goal and specific requirements directly applicable to the learning standards teachers set for their courses.

Can students really read 25 books a year? That is probably the first question for the literacy committee. **Yes, they can! They have the time.** Teachers compete daily with a multitude of forces that vie for student time and frequently win. Over half (52 percent) of seniors in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment reported spending at least two hours a day watching television or playing video/computer games. **Yet there is hope! The percentage of students watching that much television dropped 18 percent from 2000 to 2002.** If students cut viewing time by 30 minutes a day, they gain three and a half hours weekly — about the time necessary to meet the *HSTW* goal of reading 25 books a year. Look at the sidebar on page 54 to see how this might work.

Promoting the reading goals

There are several guiding principles that schools can follow to promote their reading goals.

- **Implement goals incrementally over three years.** If students are currently reading no more than four or five books a year in all classes, it is unrealistic to jump immediately to the 25-book requirement. Schools can set a goal of 10 to 12 books for year one, raising the bar annually over the next two years until reaching the 25-book level.
- **Inform teachers, students and parents from the outset that more reading is expected**.
- **Decide what constitutes a book.** Reading may include short stories, scientific or technical articles, editorials, opinion pieces, newspaper or magazine feature articles, technical manuals or other printed material relevant to course goals.
- **Determine the number of pages of shorter materials necessary to equal one book.** We recommend students read 100 pages of technical text to receive credit for one book. That does not mean an assigned text of 300 pages should count as three books! Novels typically have about half the number of words per page as technical articles, manuals and other materials. Therefore, novels averaging 200 pages might be the equivalent of 100 pages of other material.
- **Use every means possible to publicize the school-wide reading goal.** This includes talking about the goal at parent meetings, including group sessions and individual parent/adviser conferences. Keep the goal in front of all teachers with regular discussions about the reading initiative at faculty meetings. Involve the community by talking about your goals before civic organizations and by displaying posters around the community. Posters in all classrooms and in school hallways focus additional attention.
- **Develop a process for monitoring teacher implementation of individual class goals.** Expect teachers to record student progress in their professional journals and to discuss how well each of their classes is doing during evaluation sessions. Make sure all teachers are aware of the expectations before the school year begins.
- **Determine how students will be held accountable for what they read.** It is not enough for students to log how many pages or books they complete; have them also demonstrate understanding of what they read. Students will write reflections on their reading, discuss what is read, draw comparisons between the text and other texts and use their reading as a basis for writing. Set school-wide standards for having students exhibit essential comprehension skills.

How much reading are students doing at your school right now? If yours is the typical middle grades or high school, you may not even know how much reading is expected of your students or how many meet these expectations. The first step in setting a reading goal is getting the facts by examining syllabi for all courses, which typically specify the amount of required reading, or by distributing a simple questionnaire asking each teacher to provide reading requirements. (*A sample teacher survey can be found in Appendix 3 on page 199.*)

In most schools, the results are quite startling — and far short of the 25-book goal. In middle grades, almost half (45 percent) of teachers in the 2002 survey said they had no reading requirement. Almost a third of high school teachers (32 percent) had the same response. As the number of books required increased, the percentage of respondents with the expectation decreased. (*See Table 21.*) **Only 28 percent of middle grades teachers and 32 percent of high school teachers expected students to read three or more books annually.**

The literacy committee can examine data for your school and determine what is happening grade by grade. This information becomes your benchmark for tracking your success in getting students to do more reading. With this information, the literacy committee can decide where to set its initial goal and how to increase the goal each year.

Table 21: How Much Reading Do Teachers Expect From Students?

Number of Books	Middle Grades*	High School*
None	45%	32%
1-2	26	36
3-5	14	19
6-8	6	7
9+	8	6

Source: 2002 Middle Grades Network and *HSTW* teacher surveys
* Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

How to Read 25 Books a Year

The average reading rate equals 250 words per minute.

The average page equals 500 words of densely printed material or 250–300 words per page in a typical novel.

Therefore, on average, students can read one page of densely printed material every two minutes or one page a minute of other material.

The average book length is 200 pages.

Therefore, on average, students can complete a book in 200 minutes, or three hours and 20 minutes.

One hundred and eighty school days with 30 minutes daily spent in reading equals 5,400 minutes.

Thus, in 30 minutes per school day, students can read 25 books or the equivalent with minutes to spare!

Cowpens Middle School Students Read 25 Books a Year and Then Some!

At Cowpens Middle School just outside of Spartanburg, South Carolina, the 535 students, their teachers and the school's administrators are proving that reading 25 books a year is an achievable goal. In fall 2002 — its third year of participation in Making Schools Work (MSW) — Cowpens adopted all five literacy goals. The school had been working on each since becoming a MSW site in 1999 but determined the school culture was now ready for full commitment.

One of the greatest challenges was to see if students could read 25 books by year's end. The result: 200 students and more than half the teachers met the goal. The remaining faculty and many of the students came close, according to former Principal Ron Garner, who read 27 books. All students significantly improved the amount of reading compared to the previous year. Circulation in the library media center doubled. Excitement about reading was at its highest level ever. At the school's end-of-year Beach Bash Celebration, all students who met the 25-book goal participated in all activities free of charge.

"I want our students to love to read and to realize they can use literacy skills to help achieve lifelong goals," said Garner, the driving force behind this school's strong commitment to literacy. "Early success in reading is important in building that appreciation."

Garner credits the entire faculty for the enormous success the school achieved. Several practices helped Cowpens reach the 25-book goal:

- Every class has a reading expectation. To meet the goal, students may also read shorter works. Each teacher decides what constitutes the equivalent of a book for the shorter readings.
- Reading logs are maintained in students' language arts classes.
- Teachers' reading logs, with brief reviews of what they have read, are on display in their classes; the principal's log is displayed in every classroom.
- Teachers require students to read several grade-level novels each year.
- Teachers are encouraged to read aloud to students for about 10 minutes daily to further whet students' appetites for reading.
- Teachers hold structured book conferences weekly with students who have completed books. The conferences are designed to help students go beyond simple comprehension to develop skills in evaluation, application and synthesis of what they read.
- Parents are fully aware of the goal and are asked to help ensure that students spend at least 20 minutes daily reading outside of school.
- Twice a month, everyone spends 45 minutes in STARS (Stop Talking and Read Something).
- A reading rack full of high-interest magazines in the cafeteria is extremely popular with students and further encourages reading during free time.
- An annual Community Readers' Day brings community leaders and regional celebrities to the school to share their favorite reading selections during classroom visits.
- A community-wide book club involving parents, students, teachers, administrators and other community members meets twice monthly.
- Summer reading has been encouraged and every grade level has a summer reading list. Future plans call for instituting a summer reading requirement.
- When a student meets the 25-book goal, the accomplishment is highlighted as part of daily morning announcements. Each student gets a small prize for meeting the goal.

For more information about how Cowpens Middle School gets students to read 25 books a year, contact Principal Vernon Prosser, (864) 463-3310 or by e-mail at vpross@spa3.k12.sc.us.

Getting school administrators to promote the goals

School leaders, especially the principal and the literacy committee, will set the tone for making more reading a school-wide goal. Their enthusiasm and willingness to provide the necessary support as requirements are raised are essential for success. Here are suggestions for what the leadership team can do to make reading a high priority.

Require reading. Expect all teachers to require reading outside the classroom during the school year and in summer. Although certain texts specific to a study topic will be required reading in a class, students can also be given some choice about what they read. Reading lists, discussed in more detail in the next section, offer options for students. Select all materials for their relevancy to the course.

Evaluate lesson plans and student products regularly for an emphasis on reading. Administrators inform teachers that this will be part of their evaluation. Evidence of the use of effective reading strategies can be collected during classroom observations and discussed during evaluation conferences.

Model enthusiasm for reading. Many readers are motivated by another reader's excitement. Discuss with teachers and students your personal reading. It may be as simple as the sports scores or a recipe in the morning paper. Carry a book and talk to readers. Join in conversations about what students or teachers are reading. Ask others in your building for recommendations. Have books and magazines on obvious display in the principal's office, the school reception area and the teachers' lounge.

Use data to create a sense of urgency. This strategy, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, is an essential first step in introducing your reasons for advocating more reading to faculty, students, parents and the community. Use SREB assessment information, national career statistics, state test scores and any other relevant facts.

Model reading strategies. Use reading strategies in faculty meetings and study groups. A jigsaw reading activity (*See an explanation of jigsaw on page 61.*) is a good way of quickly sharing multiple viewpoints on a new topic. Encourage professional growth among staff by providing materials for a reading study group. Teach model lessons using the Socratic Method.

Incorporate technology. The Internet, word processing, presentation software and a range of other technologies can help whet students' appetites for reading. Make sure technology is readily available to all classes. Later in this chapter we discuss ways to use technology to enhance student reading skills.

Plan professional development. On the 2002 *HSTW* teacher survey, only 15 percent of high school teachers said they participated in over 40 hours of professional development in the last three years to learn to integrate reading, writing and communication skills into their classes. Forty-eight percent said they needed professional development in this area. Make reading a priority when scheduling required professional development. When professional development is offered in content areas other than English, work with presenters to include reading strategies appropriate for academic and technical fields as part of their presentations. Enlist students in follow-up activities. Choose a strategy learned in the last professional development course and ask students if they know what it is and which teachers are using it. Reward teachers who are using the new strategy.

Include parents. They are aware that reading is important although they may not know how to help their children improve. Use your school's Web site, newsletter and parent conferences to share strategies to improve reading. Encourage parents to read and discuss the same books as their sons or daughters.

Provide time and materials. Set aside time in the school schedule for everyone to read. (*See section on sustained silent reading on page 65.*) Make sure materials are available in every classroom and in the library media center. **Each classroom should have a variety of reading materials addressing the needs of male and female students with varying interests. They should relate to particular content areas and include reference books, magazines, journals and fiction.** The library media center needs an up-to-date collection appropriate for research as well as pleasure reading. As a goal, the library media center should have 10 books per student with the majority acquired within the last five years and subscriptions to at least 35 periodicals.

Honor reading. Establish ways to recognize students and teachers who have met the school goal. Try a "varsity reader team" or "reading honor roll" for those meeting the goal. Another approach is creating a book challenge or "battle of the books" in *Jeopardy*-style format.

Support teachers as they try new strategies. Encourage creativity and innovation among teachers as they work to make reading an intrinsic part of their strategy to enhance student mastery of subject matter. Let teachers know it is okay to fail but not okay to do nothing! Provide ongoing help as they try new things and address the inevitable issues as they arise.

Publicize your program. Use local media to publicize your school's reading emphasis. Use statistics to show how students are performing and why they need to read more. Use your local-access cable station to produce a read-aloud program or a series of "book talks" by students and faculty. Ask the local newspaper to print student book reviews. Place displays of favorite books with student reviews in storefronts.

Enlist partners. Partnerships with outside groups can provide invaluable additional resources — both financial and human — for extending the literacy initiative. They can provide funding to expand classroom libraries and launch motivational programs. Further, they are a rich source of information about how literacy skills affect future career success — and success in adult life. Adults can serve as mentors or lead classroom discussions on books touching on their areas of expertise.

Use all available time. Promote student reading in various settings. "Bus buddies" can read and share books during travel time to and from school. Students can be assigned reading during school breaks and provided a way to report on what they read. Postcards or e-mails from the teacher, principal or another adult reading buddy can encourage participation. (*See sample e-mails in Appendix 10 on page 209.*)

Developing reading lists

Many teachers in content areas other than English may not be familiar with appropriate reading materials for course use. Outside assistance may be necessary. Even language arts teachers, when faced with the challenge of expanding reading beyond "great literature," may need fresh ideas.

There are many sources of reading lists. *HSTW* does not endorse any one list. Instead, we encourage teachers to peruse many sources prior to developing their own. The library media specialist can help compile these lists. There are two important principles to follow. First, look for titles directly related to key concepts taught in the course. Second, ensure that chosen lists allow for different student interests and for varying reading levels. Lists should offer many choices related to each topic or unit. (*Sources of reading lists are included in Appendix 7 on page 205.*)

Teachers will want to consider periodicals as well as books. *Scientific American* is a source of appropriate reading for mathematics or science students while *Prevention* magazine has many articles fitting well with topics covered in science or health occupations classes. Articles from *Money* and other personal finance magazines can be appropriate for mathematics classes. (*See Appendix 8 on page 206 for a list of magazines and newspapers for students and Appendix 9 on page 208 for Web reading resources for mathematics classes.*)

Using selected activities across the curriculum

Students will meet the 25-book goal largely through classroom reading assignments. Teachers will assign some specific materials for all students, such as technical articles. Other reading assignments offer more choice. As students read current events articles, each will read and report on something different. In other cases, several students in a group may read the same novel or short story, while other groups explore similar texts. No matter how reading is assigned, teachers can help students improve comprehension and understanding of content in all courses — if they use effective reading and writing strategies. This will require new approaches in daily class work, expanded expectations for work outside class and increased use of technology to enhance student interest and understanding. In this section, we will discuss approaches all teachers can use to enable students to get more out of their reading.

□ Create a reading log.

A reading log is a good way to keep track of each student's progress toward reading 25 books.

> *During the first two weeks of class, the language arts teacher can have students create a comprehensive log by:*
>
> - asking students to record reading completed each day in all classes, which becomes a record of all reading students complete toward the goal;
> - providing a convenient place for students to jot down comments about each reading assignment completed; and
> - having teachers review the log periodically to assess students' progress and how they are relating to books and other materials they read.

In creating the log, students would keep separate records for each class. This will allow all teachers to make a quick check of student reading in their classes. (*A sample follows.*)

Reading Log

Class: _____ **Reading Goal:** _____

Date	Title/Author	Pages I Read From ___ to ___	My Response: Examples — I liked ___; I'm wondering about ___; I connected to ___ .

□ Three components of effective reading instruction

Integrating effective reading strategies into classroom learning involves three phases: pre-reading, during reading and after reading.

Pre-reading. It is important to determine what students already know about a topic, help expand their knowledge and show how to overcome text problems. Unfortunately, researchers have discovered that pre-reading activities are frequently neglected in middle grades and high school classrooms. It is common for students to receive reading assignments "cold" with little preparation for learning. The best reading practice would have teachers engaging students before they read an assignment rather than after.

Pre-reading prepares students for learning by **activating** their prior knowledge. Pre-reading activities can benefit those whose background knowledge, command of key concepts and vocabulary may be insufficient. In addition, pre-reading activities help students **focus** attention on what is most important. As a result, students are more likely to read about a topic because they have already had an opportunity to utilize background knowledge and experiences. Pre-reading strategies often used by Proficient-level readers involve making connections, generating questions and determining important concepts.

During reading. During-reading activities continue to emphasize the Proficient reader traits of making connections, generating questions and determining important concepts. During-reading activities prompt students to visualize, make inferences and monitor their comprehension.

In particular, help students **select** what is most important from a text and **organize** new information they encounter. **Using during-reading activities, the teacher can help students prioritize what is most essential and connect this information in a meaningful and organized way.**

After reading. The ultimate goal of reading instruction is improving the student's ability to demonstrate learning, to extend reading experiences to other situations and to retain more. Design activities that build students' critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills — characteristics of Proficient strategic readers. After-reading activities deepen understanding, helping students summarize and understand what they read. Hence, after-reading activities go beyond merely identifying what was read and assist students with **integrating** new learning with previous knowledge.

Students forget much of what they read unless they process it at a deeper level by making connections to things they already know and have experienced. Students need to verbalize their new understanding and probe the implications of what they have learned for a variety of situations. **Asking students to merely recall specific factual information for a test will not provide the necessary impetus to really wire new learning into their memories.**

Although writing activities are central to learning throughout the three phases of reading, they are especially critical after students complete a reading. Writing compels students to personally explore new insights and verbalize understanding. Writing answers to questions, especially questions targeting low-level thinking, **does not** sufficiently engage students in expanding and consolidating new learning. Instead, make writing assignments challenging, requiring students to go beyond the text to arrive at conclusions and judgments about the author's intent. This will enhance understanding. (*More information about using writing to expand students' understanding of key concepts in all courses is provided in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.*)

Reading assignments made in every class must involve all three parts of the process. This chapter and Chapter 6 address each part and offer strategies for helping students gain a better understanding as they proceed through an assignment.

□ Three types of essential reading activities for all classes

Integrate three types of reading activities into students' schedules every week in all classes.

- **Shared reading:** The teacher reads a short selection from a book or textbook related to an assignment and leads the class in a discussion.
- **Guided reading:** Students read silently and the teacher helps them through the passage, periodically stopping to ask questions, make connections and introduce or reinforce strategies for understanding the text.
- **Teamwork:** Students mutually discuss reading assignments and help each other derive deeper levels of knowledge than they would individually.

Shared Reading. All books on reading instruction attest to the proven value of shared reading. This process can contribute to vocabulary knowledge and thinking ability. Reading a passage aloud can spark a discussion of concepts from a study unit, build interest in the topic and extend information from the textbook.

Read-aloud sessions enable teachers to learn how students respond to what is read and to keep them actively involved.

The teacher will model his or her thinking process about the material and will want to stimulate students' analysis by asking leading questions, such as:

- What new information did you get from what was just read?
- What do you think about (name of character)?
- What do you think may happen next?
- What is significant about what we just read? How does it relate to what we have previously studied?

Students can also record their responses in their journals. Put questions on their desks or on the board the day after a read-aloud as the journal prompt for the day. *Reading and the Middle School Student: Strategies to Enhance Literacy* by Judith Irving contains guidelines for read-alouds. *The Read Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease is considered the definitive source for information on this strategy.

Guided Reading. Students' reading skills improve when guided through a deliberate set of steps during reading. Several approaches can be used in any academic or career/technical classroom that will enhance students' understanding of subject matter content. In summary, after a pre-reading activity, students are asked to read a short passage. Next, students discuss the passage as a class or in study groups. Facts recalled by the students are listed and inconsistencies debated. Students then return to the book to determine correct information when there is disagreement. Finally, some type of assessment is conducted to test their short-term recall of the information.

Teamwork. Effective groups can increase learning for all students. Here are nine shared and guided reading strategies that can be used with teams before, during and after reading.

Strategy 1 — Backgrounder. Students often engage in a unit of study more readily if the teacher introduces it by reading an interesting article or engaging passage. Films based on books are another way to pique student interest. Each content-area teacher will identify appropriate choices for this purpose. It is usually not feasible to view an entire movie, but showing students a key clip can spark interest.

After the teacher has read the selected piece or students have viewed the video clip, the entire class or individual teams can discuss what was learned or create a KWL chart (Know, Want to Know and Learned. *See example in Chapter 6.*) Another approach: give students reading material matched to their reading levels. Students in the same class can be given different selections; those reading the same selection can work together on a KWL chart.

Strategy 2 — Jigsaw. This approach makes each student an expert on some portion of an assignment. A reading selection introducing a new concept is subdivided by the teacher or a number of short articles related to the assignment are selected. Each student reads only one section or article. Students then report to the class what they learned in their section. Each student becomes "the expert" on his or her assignment.

Jigsaw grouping and reporting may be done in various ways; one common way follows.

- Divide the class into equal groups — probably four to five — depending on the reading.
- Each group reads a different passage, either a section of a longer piece or a complete short piece.
- Students who read the same passage compare notes to confirm the main ideas.
- Students then group so that each member has read a different passage. As "experts," they share what they have learned.
- The group then determines the main ideas from the combined reading and shares with the entire class. Students can prepare graphic organizers, make short oral presentations or use technology such as PowerPoint or overhead transparencies.

Strategy 3 — Paired Reading. Students can work in pairs on reading assignments. One student can be designated as the speaker and the other as the listener.

Paired reading works like this:

- Each student reads the same short assignment silently.
- When both are finished reading, the speaker tells the listener what was read without looking at the text. The listener should only interrupt for clarification.
- After the speaker is finished, the listener points out and corrects any ideas he or she believes were incorrect and adds any ideas not included in the speaker's comments. The goal is for the two together to come up with as many ideas as possible from the passage.
- Students then refer back to the text to confirm the correct information.
- Students alternate roles to read the next segment.

Students working with partners recall more information than if they work alone. This process will work even better if teachers ask students to share reasoning strategies with each other. Reading short segments coupled with speaking about what they read and listening to another discuss it increases understanding.

Strategy 4 — Paired Questioning. This is another way pairs increase students' understanding of reading material. This activity was devised by Vaughan and Estes (1986).

Paired questioning uses the following steps:

1. Pairs of students read the title or subtitle of a short section of text.
2. Each student asks the other questions about the title.
3. The students read the text silently.
4. Reader A questions Reader B about information and ideas in the text. The student answers, referring to the text if necessary.
5. Reader B then asks a question of Reader A. That student answers, referring to the text if necessary.
6. Reader A explains what ideas are important and the process for drawing these conclusions.
7. Reader B agrees or disagrees, offering reasons why.

Strategy 5 — GIST (Generating Interaction between Schemata and Text). After students become accustomed to using several strategies to discuss and list ideas about a text passage, the teacher can use this activity to help them learn to write summaries of what they read.

GIST, developed by Cunningham in 1982, involves the following steps:

1. The teacher selects a short passage with an important main idea. Three to five paragraphs works best.
2. Show students only the first paragraph and ask them to individually write a summary in 20 words or less.
3. Have students generate a class summary of the paragraph on the board using 20 words or less. Their individual summaries will serve as guides for completing this step.
4. Reveal the next paragraph and have students revise their summaries to encompass the first two paragraphs, still using only 20 words or less.
5. Continue the procedure paragraph by paragraph until students have a GIST statement for the entire passage.

Over time, students will be able to write a summary for the entire segment in a single step. After some experience as a group, students can work in pairs. **GIST helps students learn to delete unimportant information, select key ideas and write about them in their own words.** After substantial practice, it can become a reflection activity after reading.

Reviewing Professional Journals Should Start in the Classroom

Knowing how to read and review information from professional journals is an essential skill for continued learning in the workplace. Career/technical teachers can help students develop this lifelong skill by assigning students to read and report on technical journal articles. Once every two weeks, ask students to select and read an article from a technical journal and alternate preparing an oral or written report about the article. For a written report, students can write one to two pages summarizing the article and their reaction to it — how the information increases their expertise on the subject, how the new information differs from their previous perceptions or how it could help them obtain and sustain employment in the field. An oral report might include a three-to-five minute presentation on the same information. Using this strategy, students would read about 18–20 articles a year — the equivalent of about two books.

Strategy 6 — Vocabulary Clues. The following strategy is discussed in Laura Robb's book, *Teaching Reading in Middle School: A Strategic Approach to Teaching Reading That Improves Comprehension and Thinking.* With it, students can discover a word's meaning by exploring clues found in its sentence, in sentences before or after the unknown word, or in illustrations, diagrams, photographs and charts.

Here's how the vocabulary clues strategy works.

- On an overhead transparency or chart paper, print three or four difficult sentences and/or passages taken from student reading.
- Uncover these one at a time. Read the sentence with the new vocabulary word. Then, read the previous sentence.
- Think aloud, showing students how you use clues to determine a word's meaning.
- Continue the process with the second sample.
- Have students study the third sample. In their journals, students can jot down the context clues they used.
- Call for volunteers to share the clues they uncovered.

Repeat the demonstration during several guided practice sessions with the entire class. Have partners work together using their independent texts. They can help one another use context clues to solve unfamiliar words. Work one-on-one with students who need additional practice.

Example from *The Brain: Our Nervous System by Seymour Simon* (Morrow).

If you usually kick with your right foot and point with your right hand, then your left hemisphere is in control. But if you usually use your left foot and left hand, your right hemisphere is **dominant**.

Teacher's think-aloud:
"I couldn't find the meaning of *dominant* from the sentence, so I reversed and read the sentence starting with *If*. In that sentence it uses similar examples, but with the right hand. It explains that with right-handed people, the left hemisphere of the brain is in control. So *dominant* must mean *in control* for the right hemisphere."

Strategy 7 — My Daily Newspaper. There is no better way to tie reading and writing to the real world than by using newspapers or weekly news magazines as classroom resources. Teachers can assign students key articles in preparation for class discussion or a writing assignment. For example, before students write editorials, they can review several newspaper editorials to see how they are constructed. The teacher can use a news article as an example as students learn about summarizing and paraphrasing. Newspapers can also be used in other classes. In *USA TODAY*, for instance, students can study graphs in mathematics, the weekly science page in science class, health updates in medical technology, weather maps in geography or stock market summaries in economics. Let students count articles from the newspaper toward their reading requirements.

Many major media outlets offer student editions of their newspapers, including excellent curriculum guides and ideas for classroom use. (*On the next page is a list of some of the best Web sites on classroom newspaper use.*)

Ideas for Using Newspapers in the Classroom

The following Web sites offer tips for using newspapers and magazines in the classroom and links to other Web sites.

***USA TODAY* Education** — This nationally syndicated newspaper offers a discounted subscription to schools in *HSTW* and *MMGW*. Each subscription includes lesson plans and access to unique electronic resources for teacher use in connecting classroom activities to items in the news. For more information, visit the Web site at www.usatoday.com/educate/home.htm or call 800-872-3415, ext. 5911.

The *New York Times* Newspaper in Education Program — Educators in school districts in over 200 cities can order daily delivery and receive curriculum guides (grades six–12) with a minimum order. The *Times* offers professional development workshops on use in specific courses. An electronic edition is available allowing teachers to download daily editions for 21 days. For information about a print subscription, call 1-800-631-1222 during the day. For information about the electronic edition or to order a subscription, visit www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/NIE.

***Newsweek* Education Program Resources** — *Newsweek* claims more teaching resources than any other weekly news publication. With a classroom order of 15 copies or more, subscribers receive a weekly teacher's guide and quiz. Lessons are aligned to major curriculum standards. Additional resources are provided every semester including three Issues Today Maps with teaching guides, NewsSource units to explore topics in depth and Skills Builders. For more information and to order, visit http://school.newsweek.com.

Newspapers in Education — Many metropolitan newspapers participate in this program to provide newspapers to classrooms and activities for teachers. Many Newspapers in Education partners offer professional development opportunities as well. Educators should check with the major newspaper in their area to see if a similar service is provided. To locate sample activities and lists of participating news organizations, visit the Newspapers in Education Web site at http://nieonline.com.

Strategy 8 — Literature Circles. Literature circles can engage students in discussion of books being read for the course. The activities within the groups can be highly structured or open-ended. Students are asked to introduce books, articles, manuals or other things they have read with short talks. Included should be the author, title, a brief retelling of the story (but keeping the ending a surprise) or a short summary of a nonfiction piece and the reader's reaction to what he or she read. After the talk, students ask questions or offer thoughts about the talk. (*Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels provides good suggestions for using literature circles.)

Strategy 9 — Reader's Theater. One way to make an otherwise boring textbook assignment come to life is to try reader's theater. This activity captures students' imaginations, helps them get more from an assignment and offers an opportunity to practice writing skills. To conduct the theater, choose a chapter from the textbook. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups to study the chapter and decide on the main concept. Working as a team, each group can brainstorm a script.

Here are several suggested steps to be followed in the reader's theater process.

- Ask each group to select a narrator to introduce everyone.
- Prepare the script to teach an essential concept.
- Conduct a review or wrap-up at the end.

Classes have performed reader's theaters on such non-theatrical topics as finding the value of "*x*," the scientific method or how to spot a run-on sentence. It is almost guaranteed that students will never forget a concept they learn in this way!

Drop Everything and Read!

Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), also called sustained silent reading, is an easily-implemented approach ensuring every student spends a regular specified time period reading. School leaders assign space in the schedule for DEAR. This practice builds fluency and whets the appetite for reading. DEAR is most effective when scheduled each day at the same time.

Here are a few rules guiding this process.

- All adults should read along with the students.
- Classrooms must have libraries from which students can draw.
- Allow students to choose what they will read during this period. However, schools may want to develop guidelines defining appropriate and inappropriate selections. For example, some schools do not allow comic books, magazines, textbooks or newspapers. The latter three, however, could be sources of pertinent information directly related to course content.
- Have materials on hand at appropriate reading levels for all students in the class. Expect students to read materials at their reading levels. Do not reward students for reading materials below their levels.
- Provide time for students to discuss what they have read.
- Post signs during reading time to prevent outside interruptions.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "Research has shown that reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally." Several studies indicate students engaged in sustained silent reading improve in both reading achievement and attitude toward reading. Further, this kind of wide reading broadens background knowledge, providing students a better base for relating to their subject-area texts.

Studies show that benefits continue beyond the school years; adults who participated in a sustained silent reading program read more than other adults. Since adults who read more enter the workforce at higher levels, this strategy is a solid approach for schools.

Read-In at Heritage Hills High School Builds Love of Reading and Improves Test Scores

The school bell has just rung to start the day, and everyone at Heritage Hills High School in Lincoln City, Indiana, (grades seven through 12) is reading. And we do mean everyone — from the principal to teachers to staff and all 1,100 students. The Read-In program allocates the first 20 minutes of every school day to sustained silent reading. Students are free to choose what they read (No pornography allowed!) — one of the most important features of the program, according to Principal Al Logsdon.

The school's commitment to reading earned it an Exemplary Reading Program Award from the International Reading Association in 2001. The daily reading time has turned on many students to reading since its start nine years ago. As students' reading habits have improved, so have students' reading comprehension and writing scores on the Indiana state assessment required of all 10th-grade students. The number of students scoring at the higher levels has grown. In 2002, 187 of 190 students scored at mastery level on the writing development section of the ISTEP+ exam. On this same exam, all students scored at mastery level on the language development writing prompt. **Students with positive reading habits will improve their writing skills.**

The daily reading period has made readers out of both students and teachers. One teacher initially opposed to the initiative later admitted to Logsdon that his objections were because he was not a reader himself. Last year that same teacher read 34 books.

Other actions have strengthened the focus on reading. Money from concession sales is used to fund an annual trip for seventh-graders to the nearest Barnes and Noble bookstore, 45 miles away. For the majority of students, this is their first visit to a bookstore. After a presentation by store staff, students use $7.50 provided to each to purchase a book for their classroom library. Since this program started, classroom libraries have grown significantly, with each class now having 150 to 300 books. Teachers also receive earmarked funds for their libraries. Purchases are based on specific student requests. Despite the extensive classroom libraries, students use the school library media center regularly. Circulation has increased by 50 percent.

Support for teachers has been substantial. Extensive training has been provided on teaching reading across the curriculum. "Literacy is a part of every staff development session," Logsdon says. "We have taken away the fear teachers had about using reading to teach their courses." Consultants from the Indiana Department of Education work one-on-one with teachers during planning periods. The faculty started a Read, Eat and Discuss Club during their lunch period. They read the same books and discuss them during club meetings. They truly "Walk the Talk."

For more information about the focus on reading at Heritage Hills High School:
Principal Al Logsdon at (812) 937-4472 or by e-mail at alogsdon@ms1.nspencer.k12.in.us.

Expecting students to read outside class

The expectation that students read 25 books a year will require significantly more out-of-class reading than currently expected in most schools. Some of this reading will involve student-selected materials; some will be assigned by teachers as a way of learning more for a particular class. All outside reading should be recorded in students' reading logs and monitored regularly by all teachers. If students are responsible for reading five self-selected books outside class in a given course, for instance, they will need interim goals preventing them from reaching the last quarter with all five books still to be read.

Assignments and deadlines can be developed as a group by all grade-level teachers so that due dates are frequent but not simultaneous for all classes. A possible schedule might resemble the sidebar on this page. School teams may decide on any schedule consistent with their academic goals, including one requiring more reading during one period of the year. However, there should never be a time when students are not expected to read at all.

A Plan for Reading 25 Books Per year

Summer Reading —
Five books — two in language arts and three in other courses

First Quarter —
Two in language arts and four in other courses

Second quarter —
Two in language arts and three in other courses

Third quarter —
Two in language arts and three in other courses

Fourth quarter —
Two in language arts and two in other courses

□ Summer reading

A long-standing common practice for students enrolled in honors or Advanced Placement classes or in private schools is to leave for the summer with a reading list and follow-up assignments to complete during vacation. It is one of the reasons why these students typically score well on the verbal portion of the ACT or SAT and on state exams in reading. Weaker students, who might benefit most from summer reading, are seldom given such assignments. **In order to read 25 books a year, all students need to start the process during the summer — before school begins.**

Align summer reading assignments to content recently covered to help students retain knowledge otherwise lost during the summer or to content to be covered early in the school year. Expect students to complete some type of activity to demonstrate understanding of the reading assignment.

Studies of Title I students confirm the importance of summer reading, especially for at-risk and low-income students. These students at all grade levels lose a significant amount of the reading gains and content achievement made during the school year if they do not read during the summer. By comparison, their more affluent peers show small but continued growth during the summer months.

Following up on summer reading assignments. Asking students to complete summer reading is only the first step. For each assignment, there must be some follow-up activity allowing teachers to assess students' understanding of what they have read. (*On the next page, we suggest a number of follow-up activities that might be appropriate.*)

Assessing Summer Reading

Here are some possible follow-up activities that allow teachers to gauge students' gains from summer reading. Expect students to turn in their assignments soon after school begins.

Fiction —

- Create a graphic organizer to show the relationships among all characters in a book.
- Analyze a character or characters from the book.
- Describe a conflict, how it was resolved and how it might have been resolved differently.
- Create a poster or other pictorial representation illustrating important scenes or characters.

Nonfiction —

- Write a letter to the editor about an issue you encountered in the book.
- Incorporate some action you learned about in a brief business proposal to a local business, civic group, city or county government or your school.
- Create a graphic organizer showing your new learning from this book.

Any Reading —

- Write a letter to the teacher or a friend about the book. Answer questions such as why you selected the book, whether or not it met expectations, how it relates to your personal knowledge or experience, how it might have changed your thinking and whether you would recommend it to a friend.
- Select quotations and write paragraphs explaining what each means.
- Create a double-entry journal for use in completing later assignments related to the book.
- Write an essay about one of the books read, using notes as a reference.

Promoting summer reading in schools where this has never been expected will require motivating strategies with both students and parents. Begin the discussion of summer reading several months before summer break. Talk about why the program is being instituted at parent meetings, in students' classes and at parent/teacher/student conferences held to plan students' schedules for next year.

Here are some additional ideas:

- Distribute the reading list early. Include titles that families might enjoy reading together on vacation. Encourage parents to read along with the student and to discuss what they are reading.
- Ask the art teacher to have students produce posters promoting summer reading and display them throughout the school.
- Consider having students start one of the assigned books for language arts in this year's class.
- Review the process for reporting on summer reading assignments with students prior to the end of school.

Addressing concerns about summer reading. The availability of materials for summer reading can be a problem. Ideally, keep the school library media center open for a time each week so students can check out books. If that is not possible, allow students to take home books from the library media center to read over the summer. Some schools have even secured support from community sponsors or through state programs to obtain enough copies of assigned books for each student. The local library may be of help in obtaining materials.

Ways to monitor progress during the summer. One way to maintain momentum through the summer is to send students and their families weekly e-mails. Look at the suggestions in Appendix 10 on page 209 for some starter ideas.

Sample Summer Reading Lists. Ideas for summer reading lists can be gleaned from any of the reading list sources cited in Appendix 7 on page 205. Two other lists that might provide useful suggestions are:

http://www2.evansville.edu/mgrnweb/summerreadinglist.htm (middle grades)
http://www.paideiaschool.org/library/reading/2001/hsrd01.htm (middle grades and high school)

It is best to give students a list of approved books, allowing them to choose from a number of options. Follow the example of one network teacher who wrote to students, "Please don't be intimidated. I have chosen the books carefully for readability."

Using technology

Students who use word processing to complete assignments show significant improvements in middle grades and high school reading achievement, according to findings from 2002 *HSTW* and *MMGW* Assessments. Every student entering high school should be proficient in word processing.

Combine technology with reading through Web-based literary clubs, books reviews on the school Web page or reading student "webzines" (online magazines). A source for online magazines is www.suite101.com. An Internet access policy may be necessary to establish clear ground rules for appropriate and inappropriate uses of the Web by students.

□ Choose technology carefully.

Not all technology is equal in helping students increase their reading and writing skills. **Some computer software programs are just multiple choice questions that encourage only lower-level thinking.**

Ways to incorporate technology into literacy include

1. **Web-based literary clubs.** Students respond to books and authors with drawings and comments regarding their reflections about a particular book. Take the classroom bulletin board one step further by posting students' comments on a Web page.
2. **Web-based literacy chat rooms.** Teachers and/or schools can use chat rooms to engage students in peer discussions regarding assigned or independent reading. A structure should be in place for student participation. For instance, a class reading the same book can be divided into study groups. Group members could spend time in a secure chat room asking and answering questions regarding the book. Printed logs of the conversations should be kept in the students' notebooks.
3. **Multi-media book reports and reviews.** These reports can be more challenging and effective learning experiences for either group or individual projects than traditional book reports. Ask students to outline the book, article or short story with a PowerPoint presentation, then include an evaluation. Reviews should be based on pre-established criteria for good writing.
4. **Create multiple endings.** Let the reader make choices which affect the outcome. This can be an engaging project using simple programs like Hyperstudio with active "buttons" and video links.
5. **Retell the story to a younger audience.** Let students choose the type of multimedia presentation to use.
6. **Multimedia presentations** rather than poster boards can accompany research papers. Record mock interviews with famous people as part of the report. Use laser disk research materials to program presentations, reports or lessons for the class.
7. **Pen pal e-mail exchanges** allow students to discuss books, stories or articles with students in other areas to see if they have different views on the same readings. Printed copies of e-mails can be used to verify the discussions.

Don't forget about using **technology to encourage technical and nonfiction reading** as well. Students can use digital cameras or their own sketches to improve or rewrite parts of technical manuals. Have students use audio/visual aids to report the findings of a technical or scientific article.

Creating activities to motivate students

Engage members of the literacy committee, other faculty and community supporters in focusing greater attention on reading as an exciting undertaking. Here are some ideas to start the process:

Student book clubs. From Oprah to *USA TODAY*, many public figures and organizations have promoted book clubs. Schools can organize book clubs, selecting books for each grade level. Ask students to submit short reports about the book, perhaps answering questions developed by teachers. Then hold a discussion, naming students with the best reports as discussion leaders. Establish a breakfast club where all members meet one morning a week to discuss a current book. Use your school's TV access channel to "drop in" on an Oprah-style conversation. Encourage teachers to read books their students are reading in other classes. Students will be intrigued by conversation with their teacher adviser about a book they are both reading.

Student incentive and recognition programs. One strategy: start a recognition program for students meeting or exceeding the annual reading goal. This can be something as simple as publishing an honor roll in a central school location and in the local newspaper. Approach individual merchants about contributing prizes for these students.

As an alternative, the school can participate in the state book award program. Many states have a "student's choice" book award similar to the International Reading Association's (IRA) program. (*See IRA listing in Sources of Reading Lists in Appendix 7 on page 205.*) Students read books from a list and vote for their favorites. Information about the state program is usually available from the school media specialist. State affiliates of the IRA may also be sources of information on special programs.

Organize a "Read 'n' Feed." Students voluntarily read a pre-selected book and take a simple computer quiz to qualify for this special event. For each Read 'n' Feed, designate a special room in the school for the ensuing beehive of activity as teachers prepare elaborate decorations recreating scenes and/or events from the book. After eating foods mentioned in the book, students engage in a teacher-created game which promotes critical thinking and book discussion. Adult facilitators such as teachers, other staff members and parents help students participate in Read 'n' Feed activities. Students receive books as prizes. *Fiction, Food, and Fun: The Original Recipe for the READ 'n' FEED Program* by Kathryn Closter, Karen Sipes and Vickie Thomas provides detailed plans for learning events based on selected young adult novels.

Storyteller visits. State humanities councils can often provide free or low-cost storytellers who can entertain students with tales about local sites or historic events. Students can learn more about the topic through recommended reading. This works well if the storyteller's topic is related to a current study topic.

Reading on the job. Invite guest readers from the community at least several times a year to read to classes and discuss how essential reading is to their professions.

Make-it-and-take-it. Local organizations such as a garden club, ham radio club, model railroad group or cooking school can set up stations where students must read directions to make a product. Volunteers can assist students in comprehending the text, but they should rely on student reading to accomplish the task.

Learning about the community. Set up a brochure rack in a high traffic area such as the cafeteria. Ask local brochure distributors to stock the rack regularly. Brochures may include everything from new car pamphlets to local restaurant menus, from tourist attraction information to community service booklets.

Adopt a career/technical program. Invite a business partner to donate training or promotional materials to an applicable career/technical program. The business may also send speakers to discuss how literacy impacts their success.

Used book exchange. Have students donate books, tapes or magazines from home. Students take home one item for every item contributed.

Classroom library builder. This is a variation of the used book exchange. Students contribute books from home. However, instead of having students mutually exchange the books, use contributions to build the classroom library. After sorting contributions to eliminate inappropriate materials for the grade level or class, help students become familiar with new books by periodically playing a game. Have students sit in a circle. Give each student one book. Allow a few minutes for each student to note the title, author and a short statement about his or her book; information is gained from scanning the table of contents, book jacket, the introduction and back cover material. Each student then passes a book to the person on one side and gets a book from the person on the other side. The process continues until every student has seen every book. This is a particularly useful exercise to help students select materials for sustained silent reading time.

Tag team. Organize students into 10-member teams. The goal is to complete a book in a day by assigning each team member to read a part. Then jigsaw the book together in order to pass a comprehension test at the end of the day.

Participate in promotions. Many professional organizations sponsor campaigns to encourage reading. Teen Read Week occurs each October; International Literacy Day is in September. Plan activities to engage the whole community in reading around such an event. Sponsoring organizations often provide ideas and free materials to participating schools.

There are many ways schools can promote increased student reading. Teachers working together can come up with more innovative methods.

Ten Ways To Promote Reading in Your School

- Each week have a different student select a book for prominent display in a "Student Picks" spot in a classroom or library media center.
- Have students design bookmarks to promote a particular book, genre or nonfiction topic.
- Have students complete "Reading Recommendation" slips and post in a classroom or library media center.
- Have student journalists write reviews of new library media center books and publish them in the school newspaper.
- Have students write and record book talks and check the tapes out to other students.
- Give students time to talk with each other in an informal one-on-one or small-group basis about books they have read for assignments or provide them time to visit other classrooms to share short reviews.
- Have students select books for teachers to read aloud.
- Have students select books for the library media center or a class collection.
- Have students read aloud to younger students. Have students create books including writing the story, designing the book cover and illustrating the book for younger students.
- Have students design poster advertisements about books and display them in hallways.

Involving the library media center

Both school and public libraries are important partners in the campaign to get students to read more. Schools taking key actions to build their library media centers have seen circulation figures skyrocket. Further, when schools and public libraries work together, they create a high-level community awareness about the importance of reading.

Possible ways to connect with the public library include

- Extend student resources by asking the local public library to obtain materials not available in the library media center;
- Plan class field trips to the local library;
- Ensure that all students have library cards; and
- Encourage students' families to obtain library cards and check out books regularly.
- Make sure the local public library has a copy of all school reading lists and obtains as many materials as possible.
- Partner with the library to sponsor a community-wide reading recognition program or promotional event such as a book fair.

Possible school library media center activities:

- Assess the current library collection by cataloging its age by decades. Determine the last date each book was checked out and judge its lasting quality. Books that are more than 10 years old, have not been checked out in the last year and are not of lasting quality should be donated to the library book sale.
- Obtain new materials that present critical issues in a way more engaging to students. Materials should be age-appropriate and matched to the reading levels of students.
- Set a goal of adding two books per year per student.
- Determine circulation on a per student basis and work to increase circulation each year. (*See below for what schools with high circulation totals do to increase reading.*)
- Have all teachers work with the library media center specialist to select materials to support their curriculum.
- Arrange classroom visits to the library media center to familiarize students with resources relating to the course content and/or of interest to them.
- Establish comfortable spots for students to study and read.
- Increase hours to accommodate students before and after school, on some evenings and during specified summer hours.
- Distribute books throughout the school during silent sustained reading.
- Have students prepare brief book reviews for bulletin boards, the library's Web site, continuous loop videos or bookmarks.
- Display the library media center collection throughout the building. Books applicable to certain academic or technical areas could be "checked out" to those rooms. Back issues of magazines can also be distributed to classroom libraries.

Top 10 Ways To Improve Library Media Center Circulation

A survey conducted of 173 middle grades schools (grades six through eight) in May 2000 found the top 25 percent had an average circulation of 35 books per student (average rate of all schools surveyed was 18 books per student). Reasons for their high rates:

1. Librarians and teachers work closely together to promote reading.

2. School provides silent reading time.

3. Contests, reading clubs, fairs, author visits, guest readers and other activities are used to promote reading.

4. School offers Accelerated Reader or Reading Counts (formerly Electronic Bookshelf) programs.

5. Library collection is updated annually with local and state funds.

6. School offers reading classes for all students.

7. Teachers regularly bring students to the library media center and help them find books of interest.

8. The library media center is open before, after and throughout the school day.

9. The school participates in a state book award program.

10. Students and teachers help select new books for the library media center.

Establishing classroom libraries for each content area

Teachers can develop classroom collections relating to their academic or technical content areas so students can have ready access to appropriate materials. Some of these will be for assigned reading and others to encourage reading.

These activities will build classroom collections:

- Ask local businesses to provide promotional or training material. Automotive dealers, for instance, can provide brochures with vehicle specifications for automotive technology classes.
- During magazine subscription drives, ask school supporters to purchase additional subscriptions for your classroom. Teachers can develop a "wish list" for periodicals.
- Public libraries often hold used book sales. Ask them to donate materials relative to your content area.
- During textbook adoption, ask sales representatives to provide review copies of supplemental materials for the classroom library. Most textbook series include paperback supplemental materials.
- If your school has a book fair, ask the company representative to provide damaged books free of charge.
- Ask school supporters or a civic organization to adopt classrooms by purchasing one or two books each month. You can provide a list of topics or specific books.
- Teachers can bring magazines, journals, newspapers or books from home.
- Select exceptional student projects or research reports to laminate and place in the classroom library for other students to read.

Conclusion

It is critical that reading is embedded deeply in the school's curriculum. Getting students to read 25 books a year means reading must become an integral part of their courses. Focus reading efforts on helping students enhance their mastery of content in each academic and career/technical course they take and on helping students to become independent, lifelong learners.

No single action will realize the goal of getting students to read 25 or more books a year. Tackle this challenge on several fronts. First, understand that educators need to help students learn strategies allowing them to understand and find meaningful connections in what they read. Second, motivating students requires introducing them to a wide range of reading materials. Providing choices of meaningful materials will ensure that all students learn to enjoy reading. Finally, use creative approaches to promote reading among students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole.

Resources

Allen, J. *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading 4–12.* Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2000.

After reading only a few pages, you will undoubtedly conclude that any student would be lucky to be in Janet Allen's classroom. Written in a witty, entertaining and engaging style, this idea-packed book from a former high school language arts teacher reflects a clear understanding of problems teachers face. But Allen is about solutions and she helps teachers see how they can create a love for reading in their students. Along with suggestions for shared, guided and independent reading strategies, the author offers ideas for using reading to help students become better writers. Includes extensive Appendix offering many more resources.

Closter, K., K. Sipes and V. Thomas. *Fiction, Food and Fun: The Original Recipe for the READ 'n' FEED Program.* Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 1998.

This book tells everything you need to know to plan and conduct successful READ 'n' FEED events.

Cunningham, J. W. "Generating Interactions Between Schemata and Text." In J.A. Niles and L.A. Harris, eds, *New Inquiries in Reading Research and Instruction Thirty-first Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*, Rochester, N.Y.: National Reading Conference, 1982: 42–47.

Includes information on the GIST activity referenced in this chapter.

Daniels, H. *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2001.

Get students excited about reading with a book club or regular literature circles. This book will show you how to use this approach to get students hooked on reading.

Irvin, J. L. *Reading and the Middle School Student: Strategies to Enhance Literacy, Second Edition*. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

An excellent resource aimed directly at students in middle grades. Includes hundreds of ideas for helping students improve all aspects of reading including vocabulary, comprehension, remembering and reflecting. Includes short vignettes of several exemplary middle grades literacy programs.

Richardson, J. S. and R. F. Morgan. *Reading to Learn in the Content Areas*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2000.

This comprehensive guide to teaching reading across the curriculum uses the authors' PAR framework: Preparation, Assistance and Reflection. Many ideas for use with students before, during and after reading are provided. The book itself is faithful to its framework, asking readers questions to prepare them for reading at the beginning of each chapter, setting objectives as they read and then offering reflection activities at the end.

Robb, L. *Teaching Reading in Middle School: A Strategic Approach to Teaching Reading That Improves Comprehension and Thinking*. New York, N.Y.: Scholastic Inc., 2000.

As a classroom teacher, Robb presents a number of strategies that will help all students become strategic readers. She offers lesson plans, an extensive bibliography, helpful appendices and a wealth of answers to very practical questions about how to frame instruction that will improve comprehension across all content areas.

Trelease, J. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2001.

This book, considered the premiere resource on this topic, will show you how to help your students get more out of reading through "read alouds."

Vaughan, J. and T. Estes. *Reading and Reasoning Beyond the Primary Grades*. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1986.

Includes suggestions for organizing cooperative study groups and for cooperative learning activities.

CHAPTER 5

Weekly Writing

By Elizabeth Dick

In this chapter, we explore —

Three Types of Writing For Every Classroom

Type	Examples
Writing-to-learn	Journals, learning logs, writer's notebooks, exit and admit slips, inquiry logs, mathematics logs
Writing-to-demonstrate-learning	Paragraphs, essays, essay and open-response questions, lab reports, research assignments, creative tasks, on-demand writing, project reports
Authentic writing	Articles, editorials, letters to the editor, speeches, letters, proposals, reviews, personal narratives, memoirs, personal essays, poems, short stories, plays, scripts, business plans, proposals, how-to manuals, memos, resumes, e-mails

For each, the following areas are presented

- possible activities
- best uses
- assessment
- management concerns
- resources

"Learning requires an act of initiative on [the students'] part. We [educators] can only create conditions in which learning can happen. Writing can help create those conditions by encouraging students to ask questions, to notice and wonder, and connect and inquire."

— *Lucy Calkins,* The Art of Teaching Writing

When facilitating a workshop with teachers about the kinds of writing that can be a part of all classroom instruction, I often begin by asking, "What do you remember about writing when you were in school?" The answers vary, but always I hear comments about lots of red marks, dreaded research papers, five-paragraph essays, essay tests, lab reports and book reports. Occasionally someone will remember writing a poem or story. However, there is little mention of keeping journals or learning logs and even less mention of being taught strategies used by writers to communicate successfully with people outside the classroom and in the workplace.

Fortunately, times have changed. We are learning much more about how to assist students in becoming successful at communicating to others what they know about a given topic in academic or career/technical classes. We have found that writing is a tool for improving achievement and, as such, must be an integral part of every student's educational experience across the curriculum.

Writing is about thinking and effective writing comes from clear thinking. Clear thinkers are those who have internalized what they see, read, hear and experience. They mix these inputs with their own prior knowledge and experiences and communicate their own ideas to others.

To develop students' thinking and writing skills in ways that enhance achievement in all classes, all teachers need to address three kinds of writing: writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing. The intended audience, purpose and form differentiate these writings. Teachers who expect students to do all three types and provide them opportunities to write in all classes can help students become clearer thinkers and achieve a greater depth of subject matter learning. (*See below for a list of each of these types of writing and the recommended amount of each.*)

What and How Much Writing Should Students Do?

All students should

- Participate in a writing-to-learn activity daily in all classes.
- Complete a short paper (one to three pages) each week that will be graded.
- Complete papers of more than five pages at least monthly in English/language arts classes.
- Complete at least one paper involving research annually in each class.

Writing-to-learn

Data from the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment show

- Forty-three percent of teachers assigned more than two writings per month.
- Twenty percent of students said they often had to write in a journal or notebook about new ideas learned in school.

While often the most neglected form of writing in school, writing-to-learn is arguably the most important. Simply put, writing-to-learn activities hone students' thinking skills by encouraging them to connect personally with content taught; to raise questions; to make connections with other learning and experiences; and to capture their own thoughts during a variety of learning experiences. Although the audience for writing-to-learn is usually the student, teachers also use students' writing to assess informally the effectiveness of their instruction and students' level of understanding of concepts and skills. It also enables them to understand their students' thinking processes. Thus, writing-to-learn is the best tool teachers have to engage more students in learning, to develop students' thinking skills and to gain inside knowledge of their students' learning processes.

What are some possible writing-to-learn activities?

- **Response journals** are student responses to reading, viewing of a video or film, experiencing a lesson, observing an experiment, taking a field trip or listening to a guest speaker. Because students have these experiences in all classes, this strategy is useful across the curriculum. One advantage to using response journals is that all students have the opportunity to record their thoughts prior to small- or whole-group discussion.
- **Learning logs** have regular student entries, which can include reflections on homework, responses to reading, responses to specific teacher prompts, reflections on the process of learning, notes on content studied, research notes or observations.
- **Writer's notebooks** contain observations, memories, favorite quotes, personal experiences, responses to literature, family stories or descriptions of scenes. These musings often become "seeds" for more polished pieces. Writer's notebooks should be a part of all school writing programs. While most often used in language arts classes, students may include notes or entries from other classes.
- **Exit slips** are brief student responses to learning experiences written before leaving class. Students might state two things they have learned, two questions they have or one of each. Students hand in the slips before leaving class. Teachers review them to determine instructional relevance. It was through the use of exit slips years ago that I had to face the startling revelation that teaching does not always equal learning! Often my next lesson became a response to misunderstandings or questions from the day before.
- **Admit slips** are similar to exit slips, but students give them to their teacher at the *beginning* of class. They may reflect students' experiences with homework assignments from the previous night or responses to a prompt. Teachers collect and respond to these at the beginning of class to clarify homework issues and to set up the lesson for the day.
- **Inquiry logs** are notes about explorations, experiments and interviews during an inquiry process. Students record notes on learning, responses to learning, reflections on the inquiry and questions raised in their minds. These are particularly helpful to students in science class or during a research project in any class as they gather information and capture ideas.
- **Mathematics logs** are notes about specific mathematical concepts or problems. Students can write about a problem they have solved and then reflect on strategies used. Log entries give teachers an opportunity to "read the minds" of their students as they deal with mathematical concepts and calculations.
- **Double-entry journals** are entries with a vertical line down the center of the page. On the left students record what they saw, read, heard or observed in any class. On the right they record opinions, reflections, connections, concerns, questions and reactions in response to what they have written on the left. These can also be used for homework assignments. Students can record questions about an assignment in the left column and answers in the right.
- **Study guides** are developed by students and include both materials read and notes from classroom lectures. Such guides should be organized logically and delineate clearly major ideas and supporting details. Notes will also reflect whether the information was contained in multiple sources, such as an article read in class and a teacher lecture.

This long list seems to imply multiple notebooks for students. Students may simply use the strategies for different kinds of entries within the same notebook.

Keeping Career/Technical Lab Journals

One way to get students to write at least weekly in career/technical classes is through a lab journal — a written reflection on what they are learning as a result of their lab experiences. Students write a one- to two-page entry describing

- the procedures, principles or skills used in lab and how they could be applied in a real-world job situation;
- how problems were solved and what was accomplished;
- ways work habits were used, such as managing time and organizing materials; and
- how they worked with others.

To encourage writing in-depth, give students particular prompts based on what happens during the week. For example:

- Describe how you attacked a problem in the lab, such as not knowing what to do next or what to do when something unexpected happens. Give specific examples to illustrate. How would you use these problem-solving skills in a "real" job setting?
- How did you use reading skills to solve problems and enhance your learning in lab this week? Describe specific examples.
- What was the most valuable thing you learned in lab this week? How will you use this knowledge in a real job? What kind of employee would you be if you hadn't learned what you did this week?

Greater New Bedford (Massachusetts) Vocational High School electronics students keep such a detailed notebook of procedures and technical concepts that they take this personal manual with them into the workplace.

□ How can teachers make the best use of writing-to-learn activities?

Teachers should plan writing-to-learn activities carefully to logically fit with content being taught, targeted concepts and skills and instructional strategies being used. Teachers from each discipline select activities they feel are most appropriate for their courses.

Here are some examples of possible guiding questions:

- What lessons and activities do I have planned for a unit of study?

  Examples can include lectures, reading, hands-on activities, videos, guest speakers, field trips, mini-lessons, group work or research.

- What concepts and skills do I want students to practice or master?

- What writing-to-learn activities might be appropriate for lessons and activities?

  Examples can include reader responses, double-entry journals, viewer responses, inquiry logs or simulated situations — such as writing from an assumed role.

- What use will my students or I make of what they write?

  Reviewing writing-to-learn products provides an excellent way for teachers to assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies. They can also be used as springboards for class discussions or activities. Student writing can initiate small or whole-group discussion. Have volunteers read entries aloud; ask everyone to read one sentence to the class or have neighbors share one passage with each other. Student writing allows teachers to "shift gears" in class, to restructure lessons, to understand students' thinking, to assist students in designing their own more complex writing tasks and to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their own thinking and learning process.

The student effort invested in writing-to-learn activities is directly related to their perceived benefits by students and the teacher's use of them. Since most take under five minutes, teachers can easily use an activity in class each day. **Teachers should *always* have a reason for each activity and a plan for how the writing will be used. Otherwise, students will not value the activity; they will grow weary of and unresponsive to this kind of writing.** The frequency of a specific writing activity is governed somewhat by the plan for a given unit. Teachers should plan these assignments so students can use them in various ways to facilitate learning.

□ How should writing-to-learn activities be assessed?

When assessing writing-to-learn activities, teachers should keep in mind that they invite students to experiment and to try out ideas without correction or criticism. **Never mark writing-to-learn activities for grammar or other mechanical concerns — or grade for ideas.** Pointing out spelling and punctuation errors or responding negatively to ideas in this kind of writing contributes to "backslides" in students' fluency. When students know their writing will be scrutinized for mistakes, they write less. This is especially true of many special-needs students who often struggle with grammatical and conceptual issues. Though many educators feel that students should always demonstrate knowledge and application of conventions, it is more important we stay focused on the purpose of this kind of writing — teaching students to capture ideas and connect personally in a variety of ways across the curriculum.

To provide individual feedback to students, teachers can respond personally and positively to selected entries, usually using a soft pencil. (I recommend a pencil because comments made in ink carry the connotation that the entry is being graded.) We may make suggestions, raise questions and/or respond to students' questions. We can periodically award points for completion of writing-to-learn assignments. Particularly good entries might receive extra points or a "plus" added to a student's overall class grade. Teachers do not have to respond personally to every writing-to-learn activity. Instead, they can skim and write responses to entries that especially concern them.

□ What management concerns should teachers consider when using writing-to-learn activities in their classes?

These questions can assist teachers in managing students' journals and logs:

- What kind of log or notebook do I want students to keep — spiral, loose-leaf, steno pad, composition book or student choice?
- How often do I want to review them?
- Where will these records be kept — in class only, in students' lockers or brought to class each day?
- How will I give students credit for their entries and responses?

□ What resources are available to teachers?

Reading professional literature provides teachers with the "nuts and bolts" of how to use writing-to-learn strategies. The following books focus entirely on writing-to-learn across the curriculum: *Journals in the Classroom: Writing-to-learn* by Chris Anson and Richard Beach; *The Journal Book* by Toby Fulwiler; *Roots in the Sawdust: Writing-to-learn across the Disciplines* edited by Anne Ruggles Gere; *Learning to Write: Writing-to-learn* by John Mayher, Nancy Lester and Gordon Pradl; *Writing-to-learn* by William Zinsser and *Expanding Response Journals in All Subject Areas* by Les Parsons. Books of greatest interest to language arts teachers are *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You* by Ralph Fletcher and *Response Journals* by Les Parsons. *Writing-to-learn Mathematics* by Joan Countryman is "must read" for mathematics teachers.

I have found other professional books with excellent chapters devoted to writing-to-learn in all content areas: *Coming to Know* edited by Nancie Atwell; *Methods That Matter* by Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar; and *Invitations* by Regie Routman. Science teachers will want to read *Scientists Must Write* by Robert Barrass.

Journals from national professional organizations — the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council for the Social Studies and the National Science Teachers Association, among others — often include articles about writing-to-learn activities.

Writing-to-demonstrate-learning

Writing-to-demonstrate-learning gives students the opportunity to show what they have learned about content. In many forms of writing-to-demonstrate-learning, students also demonstrate knowledge of the research process, certain academic formats and/or mechanical skills. Writing-to-demonstrate-learning has long been a cornerstone of academic communities. It also forms a cornerstone of today's workplace, as we must be able to frame problems and propose solutions to an employer or a potential customer. **Thinkers and readers who have mastered content, concepts and ways of demonstrating that knowledge excel in academic and employment settings.**

In the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, students who said they completed short graded writing assignments at least once a week had reading scores 31 points higher than those who did not. Yet only 27 percent of students said they were required to complete graded writing assignments that often. (*See Table 9 in Chapter 1, page 13.*)

What are some typical forms of writing-to-demonstrate-learning?

- **Academic paragraphs** are formal paragraphs with a topic sentence, body sentences and a concluding sentence, often written in response to a teacher's prompt. Students can demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast, describe a scene, predict an outcome, discuss a topic, analyze a character or support an opinion.
- **Academic essays** incorporate an introductory paragraph ending with a thesis statement. They have a minimum of three body paragraphs, a concluding paragraph and are often written in response to a teacher's prompt.
- **Essay test questions** are responded to in a timed situation that assesses students' ability to demonstrate understanding of materials studied.

  Example: Unity in a work of art may be achieved by means of repetition, proximity, texture, color, harmony and dominance. Explain how each is used to create unity.
- **Open-response questions** assess students' abilities to apply their knowledge of content and concepts to new situations.

  Example: A bicycle is a composite of several simple machines. A. Describe where these simple machines are found on a bicycle: lever, pulley and wheel-and-axle. B. Describe how each is used to transfer energy. [Note: The analysis of the bicycle has not been used as an illustration during instruction.] (*1998-99 released item from Kentucky's assessment of core content taught in high school science*).
- **Lab reports** are write-ups associated with laboratory experiments performed by students.
- **Traditional research assignments** involve an inquiry process to compose a research paper on a topic. (*See Chapter 7.*)
- **Creative tasks** designed by students allow them to demonstrate their knowledge of content in a more flexible way than structured academic formats.

  For example, in a social studies class, students might write a dialogue between two historical figures or a letter from the point of view of a person in a particular time period. The assessment tool for this assignment would then focus on the students' demonstrated knowledge of content.
- **On-demand writing** requires student response to a "general knowledge" prompt in a timed situation (often a state assessment). Rather than testing knowledge in a particular content area, this kind of writing usually assesses students' abilities to focus on the prompt, develop ideas, adhere to standard academic form, compose effective sentences, use language appropriately and demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of standard written English. In a few states, such as Kentucky, the on-demand writing assessment requires students to write a letter, article, editorial or speech to a specified audience for a designated purpose. In this case, the writer's level of audience awareness becomes significant in the assessment process.
- **Process papers** are step-by-step descriptions of how to complete a process or use a product. These papers help teachers diagnose whether students not only get a right answer but also understand the steps involved, use the appropriate technical language and apply accurate content knowledge.

□ What can teachers do to promote student success in demonstrating knowledge through writing?

To be successful, students need practice across the curriculum in all forms of writing-to-demonstrate-learning. This kind of writing should be embedded in standards-based units of instruction. Students also need instruction on crafting these pieces and should be given models of what they have been asked to write. One of the most effective instructional strategies is to write the models ourselves. I have found this strategy enlightening and have learned first-hand what is involved in the process. Thus, I am better prepared to assist students.

In their book Writing: Self-Expressions and Communication*, Julia Dietrich and Marjorie Kaiser offer the following suggestions to students taking essay tests and producing quality responses:*

- In studying, anticipate all questions you might be asked; study with these in mind and think in advance about how you would answer them.
- Plan your answer before you write and then check your plan to be sure you have addressed all parts of the question. Exclude information not pertinent to the question.
- Remember that you are writing to demonstrate what you know. Do not rely on the teacher's knowledge of the content. Do not hesitate to state the obvious.
- You may only have time to write one draft of your answer. Plan accordingly.
- Begin your response by rephrasing the question, then begin your answer.
- When you finish a question, read over your answer. Ensure you have answered all parts of the question. Make any changes that will make the answer clearer, fuller or more specific.
- Check for misspellings, sentence construction problems and punctuation errors.

Students can find additional information about test-taking strategies in *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook,* third edition, by Sharon Sorenson and grade-level appropriate composition handbooks from Write Source publishers.

Effort plays a key role in the quality of students' responses. Students put forth their best effort when they know the content, have experience with the process and are familiar with the kind of writing-to-demonstrate-learning the assessment involves. To ensure that all of these factors are in place, teachers should plan units that address content-area standards and provide students with multiple opportunities to experience different kinds of writing-to-demonstrate-learning during successive assessments.

□ How should writing-to-demonstrate-learning be assessed?

Whether pieces are developed over several days or in a timed setting, writing-to-demonstrate-learning allows teachers to determine what students know and can do. Assessment of students' written work must be conducted regularly to allow early detection of problem areas and corrective actions. Teachers need rubrics and scoring guides that address all aspects of their expectations for student performance in the assessment (e.g., content knowledge; idea development and supporting details; organization/format issues; sentence structure and language usage; mechanical concerns). Focus rubrics on knowledge of the targeted content and concepts. Incorporate grammatical and mechanical concerns into either a holistic rubric, such as the one in Appendix 12, page 213, for the assessment of a research paper, or assign appropriate weight in point scoring. (For example, in a 100-point scoring guide for an essay test, 85 points might assess knowledge of content or concepts with only 15 points for the quality of grammar and mechanics.)

Teachers can also consider an analytical approach to evaluating student writing such as "The Six Traits" scoring guide suggested by Vicki Spandel and Richard J. Stiggins in their book, *Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction*. More information regarding the six traits of good writing, originally developed at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, lesson plans and an analytic rubric based on the six traits, can be found on the lab's Web site: http://www.nwrel.org/comm/topics/writing.html. **Regardless of the type of rubric used, provide it to students prior to their developing pieces or responses.**

Some kinds of writing-to-demonstrate-learning, such as essay and open-response items on tests or on-demand writing, can be assessed as drafts. However, other kinds may be developed over time, such as academic essays, creative tasks or research papers. These generally go through a process of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing. In these cases, students can receive one grade on process and another reflecting the quality of the final piece. However, the grade on the final product must count at least twice as much as the process grade. In addition, require the final piece to meet some minimum standards described on the rubric before it is accepted for a final grade.

6+1 Trait Writing

The 6 + 1 Trait Writing analytical model for assessing and teaching writing, developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, consists of these qualities that define strong writing:

- **Ideas —** the heart of the message;
- **Organization** — the internal structure of the piece;
- **Voice** — the personal tone and flavor of the author's message;
- **Word Choice** — the vocabulary a writer chooses to convey meaning;
- **Sentence Fluency** — the rhythm and flow of the language;
- **Conventions** — the mechanical correctness; and
- **Presentation** — how the writing actually looks on the page.

Visit the lab's Web site at http://www.nwrel.org/comm/topics/writing.html for more information about this model.

□ What resources are available to teachers?

Teachers wishing to learn more about teaching the different forms of writing-to-demonstrate-learning will find information in composition handbooks such as *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook* and others from publishers such as Laidlaw, Write Source, and Holt, Rinehart and Winston. In addition, excellent examples of open-response questions for writing, reading, mathematics, science, social studies and the arts are found on the Web site of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard, and on state assessment or curriculum Web sites. Questions from all areas of the curriculum are also posted on the Massachusetts Department of Education Web site: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student.

Authentic writing

□ What is the purpose of authentic writing and who is the audience?

Authentic writing instruction prepares students to communicate successfully with different audiences for a variety of purposes, using a multitude of real-world forms. It is the best writing students do because it "counts" in the real world. They care about their audiences and the reasons they are writing the paper. In developing authentic pieces, students learn to engage readers not required to read the piece and help them understand its content and relevance. They also learn to analyze models and examples of a particular form in order to create a similar piece. Students are prepared to write in a variety of future personal and business situations.

What are some possible authentic real-world forms for students to develop?

- **Articles** can include feature articles, scientific journal articles and "how-to" articles.
- **Editorials and letters to the editor** expressing an opinion on a current issue can be written.
- **Speeches** can be delivered to specific audiences for stated purposes.
- **Letters** can be produced to persuade specific audiences.
- **Proposals** are formal requests for action accompanied by needed documentation, such as rationales, plans and cost factors. One example is a work order.
- **Reviews** can be written on books, games, media events, cultural events, products, movies, works of art or restaurants.
- **Personal narratives** communicate the experience of the writer during a single event.
- **Memoirs** focus on the relationship between the writer and a person, place, animal or object.
- **Personal essays** develop ideas by making references to multiple events in the writer's life.
- **Poems** can include free verse, lyric and narrative forms.
- **Short stories** should contain a focus on theme, characterization, plot development and setting.
- **Plays and scripts** should focus on the writer's message, characterization and plot development through dialogue and stage directions.
- **Business plans** are proposals for jobs or projects in the fields students are planning to enter.
- **Resumes and cover letters** for part-time jobs, scholarships or college admissions can be prepared.
- **Evaluations** of products or services, often as a basis for a proposal, can be written.

□ What is the teacher's role in assisting students to develop effective authentic pieces?

To produce effective authentic pieces, students need to be well-versed in the strategies of process writing (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing and publishing). Teachers may use the following steps, which Sharon Hatton and I developed while working for the Kentucky Department of Education, as a guide for teaching any authentic form.

Pre-writing

□ Step 1: Reading models

As a part of their pre-writing experiences, have students read examples of the kind of writing they will be producing. In groups, they compare the models and identify characteristics common to all. Technical language is particularly important — if students cannot use the language of the field, their writing will not be credible.

Teachers can facilitate the process by asking questions such as these to focus students' discovery:

- What do you notice about beginnings and endings of the pieces?
- How or where does the writer state his or her purpose?
- What is the voice or tone of each piece?
- What kind of supporting details do the writers use?
- What specific organizational and formatting features do you see?
- What do you notice about the sentences and language?

□ Step 2: Deciding on a topic

Students invested in their writing are motivated to put forth their best effort and do their best work. When they write about topics selected for them, they often lack the motivation necessary for producing effective writing. Letting students select topics is a critical factor in the writing process. Students may find ideas for topics in their reading response journals, observation logs or learning logs (places where student have made personal connection with content as it was being taught and learned). Teachers must set parameters for the topics students select so that they are related to specific course content.

□ Step 3: Narrowing the focus

Students tend to write too generally, resulting in a lack of idea development and specific detail in their work. They usually have transition problems as well.

Help students focus on a purpose for writing by asking these questions to identify an audience:

- Who might want or need to know what you know?
- Why?

□ Step 4: Analyzing the audience

Authentic writing must be for a real audience. Students must first identify an audience, then analyze it to make important decisions about the purpose for the communication, specific information to include, organization, and appropriate sentence structure and language.

The following questions may serve as a guide for students to write for a specific audience:

- Who is my audience? Is it one person or a group?
- What does the audience already know about the subject?
- What will the audience want or need to know? Why?
- What do I want the audience to know after reading my piece?
- Does the audience have authority to take an action I might propose?
- What features does the audience prefer in format, style and organization?

□ Step 5: Defining the writing task

Ask students to write a one-sentence description of the writing task. Filling the blanks in the following sentence, developed by Charles Whitaker of Eastern Kentucky University, will help students stay focused on their audience, purpose and form as they gather ideas and information for their drafts:

As a (role), I am writing a (form/genre) for/to (reader) to (purpose).

Examples

- As a concerned citizen, I am writing a brochure for other residents of my community to convince them to dispose of hazardous waste properly and to tell them how to do it.
- As a student at this school, I am writing an editorial for the school newspaper to voice my opinion about the low attendance at girls' volleyball games.

This sentence also provides teachers with a means of knowing whether students have a feasible plan before they continue to pre-write and then draft.

When using the writing task sentence with students, it is important to consider these points:

- While it is an acceptable practice to ask students to write from someone else's point of view in some types of writing-to-demonstrate-learning students should write from their own viewpoint to produce effective authentic pieces. When teachers ask students to assume someone else's role, they handicap them as writers.
- It is better to give students as much choice as possible about their authentic writing tasks, although teachers can specify the genre or general purpose on occasion.

□ Step 6: Planning the supporting details and doing the research

Students who are already focused on why they are writing and to whom are ready to gather the information needed to communicate successfully.

Information for successful writing might come from:

- personal experiences;
- other situations or examples from the past or present;
- interviews;
- statistical information from surveys or personal interviews;
- magazines, newspapers, other periodicals;
- films or videos;
- children's picture books;
- reference books;
- Internet sites;
- experiments, field studies, observations; and
- other primary sources.

As students gather information (especially when they are using reference books and Internet sites), teachers need to familiarize them with plagiarism, show them strategies to avoid it and check their work periodically. (*See the discussion of plagiarism in Chapter 7.*)

□ Step 7: Organizing the details

Beginning writers have a tendency to present information without considering the reader's needs. Before drafting, they need to consider different ways of presenting the information and formulate a plan. Students may find that graphic organizers, such as outlines, webs or Venn diagrams, will help. Sometimes their organization plan will be dictated specifically by the genre, such as articles about scientific research, where information is always presented in sections: abstract, introduction, materials used, procedure, results and discussion. In those cases, students should study examples of the specified genre carefully to determine organizational patterns.

Suggestions for Writing a Good First Draft

- Use the notes you have taken during pre-writing.
- Focus on the reader and purpose stated in your writing task.
- Follow your drafting plan.
- Keep in mind the characteristics of the piece you are writing.
- Do not worry about spelling, punctuation and capitalization as you write.

Drafting and revision

□ Step 8: Following the plan

The most important aspect of drafting is putting thoughts on paper. Students need some class time to draft, but must also be expected to do some writing and revision outside of class time. By allowing class time, students see that the teacher values writing. The teacher is also available to conference with students who need assistance. The suggestions to students shown in the sidebar on the previous page, "Suggestions for Writing a Good First Draft," will help them focus and stay on task.

Students with keyboarding skills can draft using a computer. Saved drafts enable them to make revisions easily and to use tools such as spelling and grammar checkers during editing. Those lacking keyboarding skills should write their drafts by hand on every other line and one side of a page. This strategy provides students with room for revision, including cutting the draft to tape in additional paper.

□ Step 9: Revisiting and polishing the content

In the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment,

students who said they used word processing often to complete an assignment or project had reading achievement scores 29 points higher than students who did not.

Revision involves changing content: adding, deleting, rearranging or substituting information. It is an ongoing process — not a one-time event. Yet it is not common at many *HSTW* sites. Data from the 2002 *HSTW* teacher survey revealed only 13 percent require students to revise written work weekly or more often to improve quality. Yet the 18 percent of students taking part in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment who said they rewrote writing assignments at least weekly before receiving a grade had mean reading scores 17 points higher than students who did not. (*See Table 9 in Chapter 1, page 13.*)

It is often difficult for student writers to know what to add, delete or change. Teachers can provide questions like these to help students focus on what to change:

- Is my beginning (lead) appropriate for my audience?
- Does my piece match the characteristics of the genre?
- Have I stayed with my purpose or have I included details that are not relevant?
- Have I developed my ideas clearly? Will my readers have unanswered questions?
- Have I provided enough supporting details?
- Do I need visuals?
- Do I need documentation for any information?
- Do I have repetitious details?
- Have I followed an organizational plan that meets the needs of my readers?
- Have I used transitions to connect and show idea relationships between paragraphs?
- Will my readers understand the language I have used?
- Have I used appropriate tone and voice?
- Does my ending bring satisfying closure? Does it leave the reader with something to think about?

Muscle Shoals Middle School saw its writing scores on Alabama's writing assessment as an opportunity to make some changes. Fifth-grade scores were low, declining even further by seventh grade, and there was little emphasis on writing except in grades five and seven when students were assessed. With the help of the assistant superintendent, the school participated in a task force to examine the curriculum and teaching practices from grades three through eight. The task force met five times over the summer to develop common editing and grading practices. It also planned professional development to help teachers select the appropriate materials and instructional practices to match different writing modes.

In semi-monthly meetings after school, teachers developed writing notebooks containing examples of writing prompts, of papers for students to examine and score and of papers meeting state writing standards to share with parents. Additionally, teachers collected writing samples and worked together on learning to score like the experts scoring the state assessment. As a result, all students write once a week in every class. In one year, the percentage of students who scored Proficient and Advanced on the state writing assessment rose from 25 to 88 percent. On the MMGW *Assessment, ninety percent of Muscle Shoals's eighth-graders report intensive or moderate literacy experiences; their mean score in reading, 167, is nearly at the Proficient level (172).*

The teacher may need to review the questions on the previous page with students as they learn about revising their work. Students also benefit from interaction with others during revision. In order to know how successfully they have addressed their readers and achieved their purpose(s), they need reactions from others, including peers, teachers and other adults. These responses may be oral or written.

Teachers can train students to be effective response partners using the following strategies:

- **Identify writing mentors and models of touchstone texts,** specific pieces from published writers that students can use as model texts. (Sources of these model texts might be newspapers, magazines, collections of age-appropriate short stories, poetry anthologies, children's picture books or collections of student work from previous years.) Use these to teach the criteria for effective writing and the characteristics of various genres. Remind students to consider these as they respond to peer writing.
- **Model peer response** using the fishbowl technique. The class sits in a circle while two students (or the teacher and one student) sit in the middle and model the process of responding to each other's writing. Try this approach with several teams to make sure all students understand the process for responding to others' reading.
- **Prepare students to respond to work written by their peers**, using the following process:

  1) Provide students with peer response sheets appropriate for the pieces they are reading. These sheets should give the student author meaningful, useful feedback. (*See a sample response sheet on page 92.*)

  2) Have the class respond to a common piece. Ask students to work in pairs or groups of three to respond to the same writing. In a large group discussion, combine responses from all groups.

  3) Shuffle students within the groups and repeat the process with another piece.

  4) Give students another piece to respond to individually. Review these to determine each student's response level. Work with individual students or small groups needing additional assistance.

  5) Once students have experienced response practice and received any necessary additional instruction, you can assess their response skills. Give them another piece for individual response. Award grades based on response quality.

In content-area classrooms, it is especially important for teachers to provide students with feedback about the accuracy and adequacy of their supporting details. In addition, students must understand they should make their own revision decisions.

Editing

□ Step 10: Checking grammatical/mechanical accuracy

In the editing stage of process writing, have students examine their work for errors that will interfere with reading and lessen its value for readers.

> *As in revision, encourage students to self-assess and seek assistance from others, focusing on these editing concerns:*
>
> - Spelling
> - Punctuation
> - Capitalization
> - Grammar and usage
> - Sentence construction
> - Accurate documentation of sources, if applicable

Just as in the revision stage, students must understand that regardless of who their editing partner(s) might be, they make their own editing corrections. In addition, teachers in all content areas must hold all students accountable for acceptable editing. No piece with editing concerns should be given a final grade until those concerns have been addressed.

Response Sheet for Editorial Writing

Writer _____ **Response Partner** _____

1. What do you like about this editorial or letter to the editor?
2. What is the writer's opinion?
3. Why is the writer interested in this topic?
4. Does the beginning acquaint the reader with the issue? If not, suggest another way for the editorial to begin.
5. What does the writer want the reader or someone else to do?
6. Does the writer pay attention to the reader's possible objections?
7. What questions do you have for the writer?
8. What details or words are repeated too often?
9. What words or phrases might offend the reader?
10. What unnecessary phrases do you see (like *I think, in my opinion, it seems to me*)?
11. How could the writer improve the editorial or letter to the editor? (Make at least two suggestions.)

Publishing

"Publishing" simply means a piece of writing has been shared with the writer's intended audience. It does ***not*** mean it is printed in a newspaper, book or magazine. Publishing may include actually presenting a business plan to a customer or creating a work order for a client. Authentic writing must incorporate a publishing plan beyond giving the piece to the teacher and a purpose beyond assessing knowledge and/or getting a grade. Students are most engaged in their writing and put forth the most effort when they know the intended audience is real and will read their work.

I remember a 10th-grade student who had completed a letter to Michael Jordan and suddenly realized that I intended to mail it. "Oh! I want that back," he demanded. "I need to be sure it makes sense and everything is spelled correctly!" One of my ninth grade students, never interested in writing, spent hours working on a letter to our local governing body requesting a skateboard park for the community. He researched liability issues and potential sites before drafting a highly persuasive letter. His desire to have his letter taken seriously motivated him to revise content and edit carefully.

To engage students in authentic writing, publishing plans might include

- sending letters to the editor of the school or local newspaper;
- sharing personal narratives with their classmates;
- creating a classroom anthology of poetry to be bound and placed in the library;
- creating a magazine of feature articles focused on different aspects of a particular time in history;
- delivering persuasive letters to the school's principal or cafeteria manager; or
- submitting manuscripts to publications that publish student work.

If students are interested in submitting to national publications, a resource teachers will want is *Magazines for Kids and Teens*, edited by Donald R. Stoll and published by the International Reading Association. It has an alphabetized list of magazines with information about targeted readers and types of writing accepted for publication.

Above all, teachers in all content-area classes should provide opportunities for students to produce authentic pieces. Whenever possible, these should mirror the kind of writing actually produced in a particular field.

How should authentic writing be assessed?

Because the goal of authentic writing is to communicate successfully with a targeted readership for a specific purpose, rubrics to assess authentic writing would consist of the following elements:

- **Interesting leads inviting the reader into the piece.** Writers must "hook" their readers to accomplish their purpose. To engage readers, writers turn to a variety of strategies, such as statistics, quotations, scenarios, dialogues, descriptions of people, connections to current events and issues or use of rhetorical questions.
- **Focused purpose for the writing.** Effective writers communicate a clear sense of why the piece was written. Writers are most successful in doing this when they connect with the interests of the targeted readership.
- **Idea development and supporting details.** Writers develop original ideas effectively. To communicate those ideas to readers, they use reasons, facts, examples, personal experiences, charts, diagrams, illustrations, sensory details, quotations from interviews, setting details, checklists, analogies or references to past events. Effective writers, keeping in mind that their targeted audience knows less, regularly ask themselves, "What information do I need to provide?" and then provide it.
- **Organization and presentation.** Effective writing flows from one idea to the next: sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, item to item. The physical appearance of text on the page also influences the reader. Effective writers meet the organizational needs of their readers with paragraphs (reader rest stops); bulleted lists; headings and subheads; boxed, inserted information; inserted diagrams, charts or illustrations; transition words, phrases or ideas; creative use of white space; or boldface type.
- **Diverse sentences.** Effective writers purposefully create sentences with a variety of lengths, beginnings and complexity. They make sure sentences convey a complete thought to the reader. Any fragments are inserted for a specific impact.
- **Language precision.** Writing manuals agree: effective writers use strong verbs and precise nouns. They choose adjectives and adverbs carefully and sparingly. Effective writers also define unfamiliar terms for readers and make word choices appropriate for their targeted audiences. They pay attention to conventional usage (subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement). In technical pieces, the vocabulary is not only clear — it is correct.
- **Mechanical correctness.** Writers "honor" their readers by presenting ideas clearly, adhering closely to standard conventions of correctness: correct spelling, punctuation, paragraphing of dialogue and capitalization. They appropriately document words or ideas taken from other sources. Writers "honor" themselves by putting the necessary finishing touches on what they have to say.
- **Provocative endings.** Successful writing should leave the reader with more to consider. Writers use different strategies to stimulate the reader's mind: rhetorical questions, reflective passages, projected outcomes and attempts to connect to the reader's own experience or calls to action.

When creating a rubric for the assessment of authentic writing, teachers must consider the genre or writing type to be assessed (e.g., feature article, short story, brochure, personal narrative); the elements of effective writing discussed above; and other rubrics already on hand. Allow students to participate in rubric creation when possible.

The rubric for a persuasive authentic piece is in Appendix 11 on page 211. Developed for middle grades and high school students, it takes these elements into consideration. During the final evaluation, teachers can highlight different areas of the rubric to give students specific feedback about the strengths and needs of their writing. A piece may have some elements of an "A" or "B" paper but be missing others that would raise it to that level. By highlighting a paper's inadequacies, students will have a better idea about what they need to do to improve it. Holding students accountable for some level of acceptable performance also ensures that students do not leave the assignment behind with a "D" (for done) or "F" (for finished), not having internalized and demonstrated basic understanding of the process and the expected outcome for the assignment.

Without doubt, the teacher's most important objective in having students complete authentic writing is encouraging them to think in terms of engaging and assisting a less informed reader rather than following rules or unquestioned directions. Help students learn that their audiences vary widely — from the potential customer who will read a business proposal or work order to the supervisor who will read a technical report. **Authentic writing is a way to communicate with colleagues, transact business, solicit new orders or share reviews of artistic endeavors.** If we are successful at helping students understand the importance of authentic writing beyond school, they will have a clearer sense of the writer's obligation to the reader.

□ What resources are available to teachers?

The field of authentic writing instruction is flooded with excellent professional books. Teachers will find the following invaluable: *Teaching Idea Development: A Standards-Based Critical-Thinking Approach to Writing* by Sharon Hatton and Pam Ladd; *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook,* third edition, by Sharon Sorenson; Marcia Freeman's *Listen to This: Developing an Ear for Expository*; and Randy Bomer's *Time for Meaning*.

For language arts teachers interested in taking a reading/writing workshop approach to their teaching, I would suggest Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle: New Understanding about Writing, Reading and Learning,* second edition; *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi; Linda Reif's *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents*; and *The Writing Workshop* by Katie Wood Ray. Other books of special interest for language arts teachers are Carl Anderson's *How's It Going?; Live Writing* by Ralph Fletcher; *After THE END* by Barry Lane; Georgia Heard's *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School*; and *Risking Intensity: Reading and Writing Poetry With High School Students* by Judith Rowe Michaels.

Middle grades and high school science teachers will want to read *The Craft of Scientific Writing* by Michael Alley and *Scientists Must Write* by Robert Barrass.

Becoming An Exemplary Writing School Takes Commitment Across the Curriculum

Cowpens Middle School in Spartanburg, South Carolina, earned statewide recognition as an Exemplary Writing School by ensuring that writing is an integral part of the curriculum in every class. Students in physical education classes might be asked to write about their perceptions of the Super Bowl or to develop a profile of an athlete. Students in science classes write results of experiments; in mathematics classes they write about how they solved a problem. In music, they might write about why they like a certain musical genre. Whatever the class, you can be sure that students will write every week.

As part of its commitment to improve students' communications skills and performance on state-mandated tests in language arts, the faculty developed a common writing process from idea development to finished product. Students know they will be held to common standards from class to class. They get regular opportunities to practice and hone their skills. Students must complete a research paper in every grade with requirements progressively more stringent from sixth to eighth grade. Rubrics are used to evaluate all writing with significant peer review used.

An annual Author's Day, held for the past three years, has been a big motivator in getting students excited about writing. Popular authors of adolescent books have keynoted each event. Visitors have included Neal Shusterman, Heidi Stemple and Carol Gorman. Students attend writing workshops led by the author, participate in an assembly where the featured guest talks about his or her experiences with writing, ask questions about the speaker's experiences and even get autographed copies of the author's books.

Former principal Ron Garner covered costs of the visits with concession sales or the student activity fund. "I don't believe in using lack of money as an excuse. If you believe in something, you should put your money there," he says.

A weekly after-school writing lab is open to all students seeking help in improving their skills. It is led by certified teachers with Americorps volunteers serving as one-on-one mentors. Student writing samples are displayed in school halls and are a source of pride, motivation and assurance for adolescents who often struggle with low self-esteem.

These activities encourage student writing:

- *All students keep journals.*
- *Students are given regular opportunities to have work published through a school anthology, a local college publication and through participation in writing competitions.*
- *Students create brochures and commercials for marketing projects.*
- *Teachers require students to rewrite the ending to a novel based on what they believe should happen.*
- *Students write letters to Navy personnel on the USS Cowpens, an Aegis-class guided missile cruiser named after their town.*

For more information about writing programs at Cowpens Middle School, contact Principal Vernon Prosser, (864) 463-3310 or by e-mail at vpross@spa3.k12.sc.us.

Conclusion

Students become clearer thinkers and better readers who get more out of their assignments when they write weekly in every class. As students learn to express their thoughts in writing, they become more adept at making connections and transferring knowledge to new situations. **These are critical skills for deepening their understanding of subject matter materials and communicating in the language of the field.**

Expect teachers to engage students in a variety of writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing experiences — not just to improve writing skills, but to help students learn subject matter content and to share that learning with various audiences for various purposes. The bottom line: writing is an inescapable expectation of professional life.

What Can Administrators Do Now To Enhance Writing Instruction?

- Be a good role model. Allow others to see you writing and revising pieces for authentic audiences.
- Provide teachers with professional development opportunities to learn instructional strategies related to the three kinds of writing (writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing).
- Emphasize repeatedly to teachers that the three types of writing are ways to deepen students' understanding of content and thus enhance their achievement.
- Participate with teachers during professional development sessions to become familiar with the three kinds of writing and to show your support for writing in your school.
- Encourage teachers to engage in book studies about writing instruction as a part of their professional development.
- Encourage the development of instructional units that integrate writing into content presentation and outcome assessment.
- Expect to see evidence of writing instruction in lesson and unit plans, in classroom observations and in analysis of student products (review working folders as well as finished products).
- Provide time for teachers to analyze student products to determine instructional implications.
- Create a risk-free environment for the staff to experiment with different kinds of writing in their classrooms. Encourage them to learn from failures and help them celebrate successes.

What Can Teachers Do Now To Enhance Writing for Learning?

- Be writers themselves. Develop the pieces they expect their students to write and share what they write with their students.
- Create a writing environment by making writing an integral part of instruction.
- Provide opportunities for students to experience all three types of writing (writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing) and help students understand the differences in the three types.
- Provide class time for students to work on their writing.
- Provide resources such as reference materials, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, thesauruses, graphic organizers and supplies for drafting and publishing.
- Connect reading experiences across the curriculum with writing by pointing out strategies writers in various disciplines use, such as types of leads, idea development strategies, format concerns or types of conclusions.
- Gather models of writing that professionals in their field produce and share with students.
- Allow students choice about their writing tasks, especially in authentic writing.
- Invite students to write to authentic audiences for authentic reasons about which they truly care.
- Help students analyze their intended audiences for authentic pieces, anticipating the reader's questions and knowledge level.
- Provide students with prompt feedback about content as well as mechanics.
- Focus on content before mechanics — value what students write.
- Help students develop the technical language and style of typical content-area publications.
- Analyze student work to determine instructional requirements and make adjustments as needed.
- Read professional literature about teaching students to be writers.

Resources

Alley, M. *The Craft of Scientific Writing*. New York, N.Y.: Springer, 1996.

Written for use as a text in courses on scientific writing, the book demonstrates the difference between strong and weak scientific writing.

Anderson, C. *How's It Going?* Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2002.

The best book I have read on one-on-one student conferencing. It highlights Carl's work with elementary and middle grades students, but the strategies can also be applied to high school students.

Anson, C. M. and R. Beach. *Journals in the Classroom: Writing-to-learn*. Norwood, Mass.: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1995.

A thorough discussion of journals: their purposes, their uses and their assessment.

Atwell, N., ed. *Coming to Know*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1990.

Written by teachers of grades three through six about their work with students in developing effective content-area writing. One appendix features writing-to-learn prompts as learning log entries.

Atwell, N. *In the Middle: New Understanding About Writing, Reading and Learning*, second edition. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1998.

This book invites language arts and English teachers to turn their classrooms into writing and reading workshops. It includes mini-lessons and examples for teaching grammar, systems for record keeping and forms for keeping track of individual student performance.

Barrass, R. *Scientists Must Write*. N.Y.: Chapman and Hall, 1978.

Reprinted numerous times, this book often is used as a text for college students majoring in science or engineering. It provides a concise guide to all the ways in which writing is important to both those fields with numerous suggestions for those wishing to improve their writing skills.

Bomer, R. *Time for Meaning*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1992.

Focuses on writing as a tool for thinking and inquiring. Bomer addresses the use of writers' notebooks with ideas for developing fiction and nonfiction pieces in the English/language arts classroom.

Countryman, J. *Writing-to-learn Mathematics*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1992.

Describes writing activities mathematics teachers can use. It includes examples of student writing and addresses the use of journals, learning logs, letters, investigations and formal papers.

Daniels, H. and M. Bizar. *Methods That Matter*. York, Mass.: Stenhouse Publishers, 1998.

The chapter on "Representing to Learn" includes many ideas for using a notebook.

Dietrich, J. and M. Kaiser. *Writing: Self-Expression and Communication*. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

A complete text about writing, addressing writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing. It also includes an editing guide and guidelines for MLA and APA documentation.

Fletcher, R. *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*. New York: N.Y.: Avon Books, 1996.

A handy pocket-sized book that speaks directly to students about how to create and use a writer's notebook.

Fletcher, R. *Live Writing*. New York, N.Y.: Avon Camelot Printing, 1999.

Another pocket-sized book that speaks to students about strategies that will improve their literary writing.

Fletcher, R. and J. Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2001.

A practical guide to the process of creating a writing workshop classroom.

Freeman, M. *Listen to This: Developing an Ear for Expository*. Gainesville, Fla.: Maupin House, 1997.

Focuses on nonfiction writing and connects reading experiences with teaching the craft of writing. An excellent tool for teachers whose students write informational pieces, articles, editorials, letters-to-the-editor, process pieces and persuasive pieces. Included are read-aloud samples for each genre.

Fulwiler, T., ed. *The Journal Book*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1987.

Chapters, written by teachers across the curriculum, describe the use of journals in classrooms. More suitable for high school than the middle grades.

Gere, A. R. *Roots in the Sawdust: Writing-to-learn Across the Disciplines*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1985.

Chapters, written by teachers across the curriculum, describing their use of a variety of writing-to-learn activities in their classrooms.

Hatton, S. and E. Dick. "Steps for Teaching Any Genre." Frankfort, Ky.: Kentucky Department of Education.

A Kentucky Department of Education handout, outlined in its entirety in this chapter.

Hatton, S. C. and P. L. Ladd. *Teaching Idea Development: A Standards-Based Critical-Thinking Approach to Writing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, Inc., 2002.

A practical book filled with activities teachers can use to help students improve idea development in their authentic writing.

Resources *continued*

Heard, G. *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1999.

A book which will empower teachers to become teachers of poets — and poets themselves!

Lane, B. *After THE END*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993.

A complete book of practical and often-needed revision strategies.

Mayher, J. S., Lester, N. and G. M. Pradl. *Learning to Write: Writing-to-learn*. Portsmouth, N.H., 1983.

One of the first good books dealing with writing-to-learn and writing across the curriculum. Intended for those who teach writing, write themselves and also work with other teachers to get them to use more writing in their classrooms.

Michaels, J. R. *Risking Intensity: Reading and Writing Poetry With High School Students*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

An excellent book written especially for high school teachers interested in teaching poetry and poetry writing in their classrooms. Includes samples of poems written by students and teachers.

Parsons, L. *Expanding Response Journals in All Subject Areas*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1994.

Focuses on the use of response journals across the curriculum and includes sample prompts and examples of student responses.

Parsons, L. *Response Journals*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1990.

Published before Expanding Response Journals in All Subject Areas*, this book serves as a basic guide for using journals in the classroom, including information on uses and evaluation of journals.*

Ray, K. W. *The Writing Workshop*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

A practical, complete guide to creating a writing workshop classroom. The concepts and practices apply to all levels of English/language arts classrooms.

Reif, L. *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents*. Portmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1992.

A complete guide to creating a writing workshop classroom. Although written specifically for the middle grades, the concepts will apply to intermediate, middle and high school English/language arts classrooms.

Routman, R. *Invitations*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1991.

Contains an excellent chapter on personal journal writing.

Sorenson, S. *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook*, third edition. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1997.

A valuable resource for teaching a variety of genres.

Spandel, V. and R. J. Stiggins. *Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction*. New York, N.Y.: Longman, 1990.

Outlines a clear set of standards for evaluating writing and connects assessment with effective instructional strategies.

Stoll, D. R., ed. *Magazines for Kids and Teens*. Newark, N.J.: International Reading Association, 1997.

An annotated, alphabetized listing of magazines written for children and teenagers. Includes information about those that accept student work for publication and indices that cross-reference the publications by content area and age of targeted readers.

Zinsser, W. *Writing-to-learn*. New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row Publishers, 1998.

A classic book that deals with how to write clearly about any subject and how to use writing as a learning tool.

CHAPTER 6

Reading and Writing Enhances Learning in All Classes

By Doug Buehl

In this chapter, we explore —

Ideas for Using Reading and Writing in All Classes

- Traits of proficient readers.
- How to integrate literacy strategies into content curriculum.
  - Pre-reading — Preparing to learn
  - During reading — Processing new learning
  - After reading — Consolidating new learning
- Strategies for classes in —
  - Social studies
  - Science
  - Mathematics
  - Career/technical education

Students will become better independent learners in all their courses if they are taught to use reading and writing strategies to learn meaningful content.

Imagine for a few moments how adults use literacy strategies as an integral part of a day's routine. For example, let's say you are in the market for a new vehicle. You begin your research by consulting magazine and online sources which detail strengths and weaknesses of various makes and styles of cars, minivans and SUVs.

As you read, you focus on information especially pertinent to your family's desires and needs. You consider past experiences with various cars and recall what you have previously read as well as what others have reported about various models.

Questions occur to you such as:

- "Will this particular vehicle be convenient for our family camping trips?"
- "How important is fuel efficiency compared to other variables?"
- "What would be the disadvantages of this vehicle if we chose to keep it several years?"
- "How expensive is it to maintain this vehicle?"
- "What is its safety record?"

These questions help you prioritize the most important information as you continue your research. You may need additional sources to ensure satisfactory answers to your most critical concerns. Throughout your reading, you find yourself visualizing how various options relate to you. As you visualize embarking on a camping trip, you may ponder the advantages of an SUV, but when you visualize hauling materials for home improvement projects, you realize that the versatility of a minivan might be the better overall choice.

Throughout this process, you are constantly making inferences about your reading. You generate predictions about how various models might be ranked based on an article. You infer the personal values of the "expert reviewer" when you scan his "best buys" advice. You make inferences between the advantages and disadvantages of buying low-cost versus high-cost options. As you complete your research, you create a synthesis of what you have learned, including a summary of key aspects of your choices and a conclusion about what makes the most sense for you.

To assist in assembling a coherent compilation of information and ideas, you have been jotting down notes. Writing helps gather relevant details and analyze ideas. Your lists of strengths and weaknesses have helped you eliminate choices and identify those models worthy of a test drive. Included in your notes are key dealer questions concerning features, maintenance, reliability and other factors. You consult with friends to amplify and revise your list. When you walk into a showroom, you are prepared to make a decision matching your needs and interests.

Traits of proficient readers

Proficient readers . . .

- make connections.
- self-question.
- visualize.
- determine importance.
- make inferences.
- synthesize.
- monitor comprehension.

What you have been doing is what proficient readers do as a matter of habit. Research on proficient readers reveals that they employ a host of comprehension strategies as they read and learn. These provide the bedrock for learning in content classrooms. What are these "traits of a good reader?"

Proficient readers actively **make connections** between what they already know and new material. These connections activate previous learning and tap into past experiences, helping readers understand new information and establish interest and motivation for reading a specific text.

Proficient readers pose questions to themselves as they read. They realize that **self-questioning** helps them sort through and make sense of information.

Proficient readers **visualize** while they read, using their imaginations to picture in their minds what an author says. They can "see" what an author is describing.

Proficient readers are able to **determine what is most important** in a text. They differentiate key ideas and information from details so that they are not overwhelmed by facts. They target main themes and salient details.

Proficient readers **make inferences**; they "read between the lines" to discern implicit meanings as well as explicitly stated messages. They make predictions, read critically and realize that authors do not always state everything they wish to communicate.

Proficient readers are adept at summarizing what they read into a **synthesis of meaning**. As a result, they are able to make evaluations, construct generalizations and draw conclusions from a text. In addition, their perceptions of the gist of a text influence how they might decide to act upon what they have read.

Proficient readers **monitor their comprehension** while reading. They make extensive use of *fix-up strategies*. If they encounter comprehension breakdowns — difficult vocabulary or references to unfamiliar information — they pause to determine whether to adjust their reading or use additional strategies to clarify an unclear passage. Proficient readers are comfortable choosing from a variety of problem-solving options to guarantee they understand a text and achieve their purposes for reading it. Proficient reading abilities are integral to the literacy challenges and choices we face daily as adults.

Students hone their thinking while learning through writing. Writing helps to clarify and refine understanding and is especially important for synthesizing learning. For students to achieve learning success in social studies, science, literature, mathematics and career/technical courses, they need to develop strategic literacy behaviors. **In short, students will become better learners across the curriculum if they are taught reading and writing strategies to learn meaningful content.**

How to integrate literacy strategies into content curriculum

Proficient reading develops throughout the years of schooling. Middle grades and high school teachers cannot assume their students will automatically and skillfully employ these strategies as they complete assignments. In fact, teachers can readily attest that many students struggle with these thinking behaviors when attempting to learn.

How teachers integrate reading and writing can make a significant difference in students' abilities to use these learning strategies to enhance achievement. The following three descriptions of classroom reading are typical illustrations of student behaviors indicating ineffective use of literacy strategies.

Ping-pong reading. Many text materials overemphasize reading for details or literal understanding. When answering questions of this sort, students soon realize they can skim a text, locate clues like bold-face vocabulary and then copy down definitions and pertinent details which follow. Students can satisfactorily complete assignments of this nature without careful reading or truly learning the new material. These students interact with a text for the minimal amount of time necessary to complete the assignment. Frequently, they engage in "ping-pong" reading: glancing at a question, skimming for the answer, checking the next question, moving back to the text for more skimming and so on. **In essence, they read to "get done" rather than read to learn.**

Phases of Reading and Learning

Pre-reading — Preparing to Learn

- Activate prior knowledge.
- Focus attention on what's important.

During Reading — Processing New Learning

- Select what's most important.
- Organize new learning for understanding.

After Reading — Consolidating New Learning

- Integrate new learning into memory.
- Apply new learning to more meaningful situations.

Students who use ping-pong reading often complain that they are poor test-takers even though they experience no difficulty completing homework. In reality, they were able to work through assignments without learning, leaving them unprepared for testing on the material.

Mindless reading. Another indicator of ineffective reading occurs when students dutifully "read" an assigned passage, but do not think about what is being communicated. Their eyes may be looking at the print and they may indeed be reading words, but the thinking process, described above as traits of proficient reading, is absent. They may tell a teacher, "I read it, but I didn't understand it!" Clearly, their reading did not result in learning; as a result, frustrated teachers lose confidence in student independent reading. Instead, teachers may resort to other means, such as lecturing or class presentations, to explain "what the book said." **Students soon realize that they really don't have to rely on their personal reading to be successful because the teacher will tell them everything they will need to know.** They do not develop independent reading and learning behaviors and therefore become limited learners dependent on the teacher as the sole information source.

Forgetful reading. A third indicator is how quickly students forget what they read. **Because many students are not connecting to personal knowledge; posing questions as they read; or predicting, inferring and synthesizing; they are engaging in superficial reading.** As a result, much of what they read "doesn't stick." Students may hand in homework, but learning remains tenuous at best. Many will have trouble relating reading assignments to class discussions and will struggle with tests. Even students who perform satisfactorily on exams may forget much content in a short time.

Because students do not employ literacy strategies involving deeper processing of class content, information never proceeds beyond "working memory," learning retained for a short period then discarded. Obviously, teachers want important concepts and information wired into the student's long-term memory, becoming permanent knowledge influencing perception and understanding of the world.

Effective teachers help all students learn the essential content of their classes by devising lessons that encompass three phases: pre-reading, during reading and after reading.

Pre-reading. The pre-reading components of a lesson prepare students for learning by **activating** prior topic knowledge and building new knowledge. In addition, pre-reading activities help students with **focusing** attention on what is most important during reading. Proficient reader traits typically emphasized in pre-reading strategies are making connections, generating questions and determining importance.

Pre-reading activities are often referred to as **frontloading**. This involves teaching before reading. Unfortunately, researchers have discovered pre-reading activities are frequently neglected in middle grades and high school classrooms and that it is common for students to be given a reading assignment "cold" with little preparation. **Researchers argue that classrooms must emphasize more frontloading activities, repositioning much instruction prior to reading, rather than after — the prevalent practice.**

During reading. During-reading activities prompt students to visualize, to make inferences and to monitor their comprehension — the types of thinking characteristic of proficient readers.

In particular, teachers are expected to help students with selecting what is most important from a text and with organizing it. Students then learn to prioritize information and connect it in a meaningful and organized way.

Six common ways information is organized in a text are *cause and effect, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, concept/definition, proposition/support and goal/action/outcome*. In effect, these **text frames** provide the structure for segments of text and enable a reader to connect information in a meaningful way. Activities incorporating these text frames help students avoid just reading for isolated details. Instead, students recognize informational relationships and are better able to detect which material is most important and warrants close attention.

After reading. After-reading activities can deepen understanding by helping students summarize and synthesize what they read into coherent personal understanding. Students who go beyond merely identifying what was read learn to integrate new learning with previous knowledge and apply the new knowledge to their lives.

After-reading activities recognize that students will probably forget much of what they read unless they process learning at a deeper level and make connections to what they already know and experience. In particular, students need to verbalize their new understandings and probe the implications of what they have learned to a variety of situations. **Asking students to merely recall facts for a test will not provide the necessary impetus to really wire new learning into their memories.**

Most after-reading strategies involve writing as a way to express new understandings. Writing answers to questions, especially questions targeting low-level thinking, does not engage students in the meaningful thinking that will consolidate and expand new learning. Instead, writing assignments that require students to go beyond the text to derive conclusions and make judgments about the author's intent result in deeper understanding and retention of key concepts.

Text Frames

Information is connected in one of these ways —

- cause and effect
- comparison/contrast
- problem/solution
- concept/definition
- proposition/support
- goal/action/outcome

Strategy 1: KWL–Plus is an excellent model classroom activity. What types of classroom activities engage students in reading and writing as an integral learning process? One popular activity is the KWL–Plus procedure (Ogle, 1986; Carr & Ogle, 1987), consisting of a three-column grid graphic organizer designed to guide student thinking through all three phases of learning. (*See Volcanoes example in Exhibit 1 on the next page.*) KWL is an acronym for *Know, Want to Know* and *Learned*. The graphic organizer can be a worksheet or developed by the teacher on the chalkboard or overhead transparency.

The KWL–Plus activity involves the following steps:

Step 1: The teacher lists the main topic of a selection at the top of the KWL grid and asks students to contribute what they know, or think they know, about it. Student contributions are recorded in the first column (*K — What We Know*). For example, science students preparing to read about volcanoes might contribute: "…are mountains that explode," "lava flows from them," "…have red-hot material," "Mount St. Helens was an example," "…can be dormant," and so forth.

Step 2: As this information is shared, questions are likely to emerge. "Why are volcanoes located in certain areas?" "How can you tell when a volcano is ready to explode?" "Why are some volcanoes dormant and others active?" "Could there be volcanoes in our state — why or why not?" These natural questions that students might pose about this topic are recorded in the middle column (*W — What We Want to Learn*).

Step 3: The teacher guides the students in categorizing their knowledge and questions in lists labeled "Categories of Information We Expect to Use." Categories for volcanoes might include where they are found (location), what causes them (causes), what they are like (description) and their impact on the environment (effects).

Step 4: Students read the selection, seeking information to answer their questions or expand their understanding. When they encounter specific answers to questions, they use the third column (*L — What We Have Learned*) to record their notes.

Step 5: After reading, students identify new information which is also included in the third column. New information is integrated into the previously identified categories with additional categories added as needed.

Step 6: When the KWL grid is completed, students create a concept map connecting all the information under each category into a visual display. (*See Volcanoes Concept Map Example in Exhibit 2 on page 107.*) In this way, information is organized for student writing assignments, test preparation or other projects. Questions from the middle column (*Want to Know*) not answered by the reading provide impetus for independent projects and research.

Exhibit 1
KWL Grid for a Reading on Volcanoes
Topic: Volcanoes

K (Know)	W (Want to Know)	L (Learned)
Are exploding mountains Lava flows out of them. Mount St. Helens in Washington blew up. Can be inactive for years Hawaii has several volcanoes. After blowing up, they leave craters, big holes. Lava forms into smooth black rocks. Are fiery when they are exploding	Why are volcanoes located in certain areas? How can you tell when a volcano is ready to explode? Why are some volcanoes active and others inactive? Are there volcanoes in our part of the United States? What is lava made of? How hot is the lava?	D — release magma, which is molten rock D — when magma reaches surface is called lava C — magma created by underground pressure L — boundaries of tectonic plates create pressure D — silica major ingredient in magma E — gases released are poisonous to plants & animals D — gases are water vapor, carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide E — highly destructive, in few minutes kills life within miles L — rift system in Africa L — Pacific Island chain L — Rocky Mountains (certain ranges and basalt plateaus)

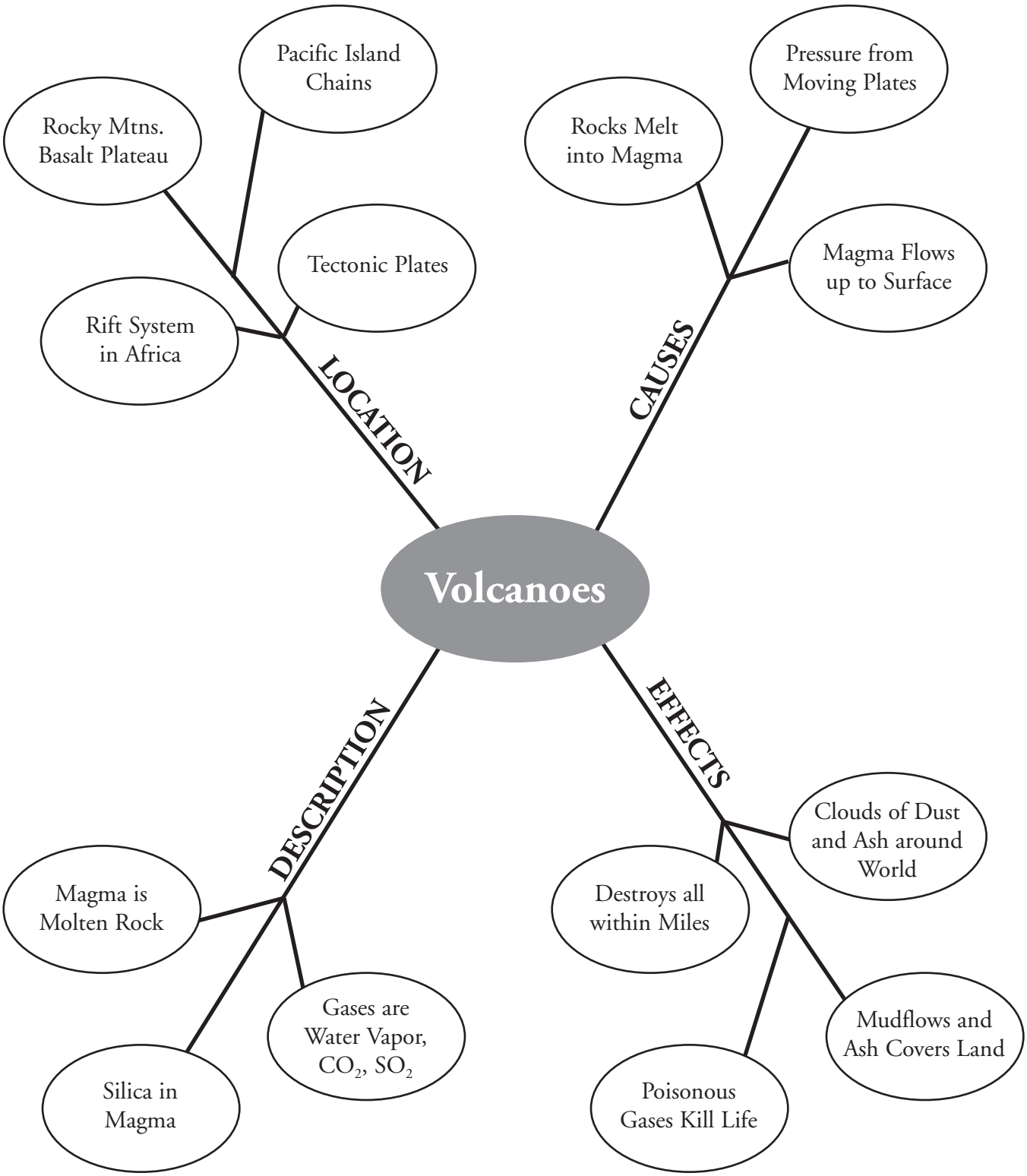
Categories of Information We Expect to Use:
1. Where they are found (L — Location)
2. What causes them (C — Causes)
3. What they are like (D — Description)
4. What impact they have (E — Effects)

The KWL–Plus activity imbeds reading and writing into content learning before, during and after an assignment. In addition, traits of a proficient reader are encouraged throughout. The activity begins by activating students' knowledge so they can make personal connections as they read. In addition, the teacher is provided with an inventory of student background knowledge about a topic. Student descriptions about what they know elicit visual topic imagery.

Students are encouraged to generate topic questions of interest to them and answered by the text. These questions help students decide what is most important as they read and to make predictions about new information. Students are prompted to make inferences as they decide which are answered and which remain unknown. Finally, the categorizing and mapping activities guide students into meaningful organization of new information, making it easier for them to summarize it into a personal synthesis.

KWL–Plus can be integrated into social studies, literature, science, mathematics and all other subject areas. It is a literacy activity applicable across the curriculum and not only promotes more in-depth learning but also provides practice for students to refine their reading and writing skills. Further, a KWL grid can be used as students explore a topic from multiple sources, rather than a single source.

Exhibit 2
Volcanoes Concept Map



Strategies for classes

Imagine placing several typical texts from middle grades and high school classrooms side by side. Let's say you are looking at a short story from English/language arts, a driver's education handbook, a lesson in mathematics, a section of a science chapter, directions for a procedure in applied technology and a social studies textbook. As any student can tell you, these various texts are very different. The style of writing, the purpose for reading, the way concepts are organized, the nature of activities to follow are all content dependent. Students also say it is very possible to be a competent reader of some of these texts and to struggle with others.

This distinction is especially pronounced between narrative and expository texts. **Narrative texts, such as fiction or biographies, are usually easier for students to read than expository texts, which emphasize reading for information.** It is not uncommon to encounter students who are quite comfortable with narrative texts but have difficulty coping with the expository texts of many of their classes. Although all reading requires the traits exhibited by proficient readers, the specific nature of a text mandates different approaches to reading.

As a result, students who learn to successfully read narrative texts in their English/language arts classrooms are not necessarily prepared to read science, social studies or mathematics texts. Because learning to read science texts cannot be separated from learning science, the only place where students will refine their science reading abilities will be in the science classroom. Likewise for the other subjects students will study in middle grades and high school.

The following sections will highlight social studies, science, mathematics and career/technical classrooms and will pinpoint specific approaches necessary for reading in each area. **Reading and writing activities will be modeled for each subject discipline, but these activities can be adapted for use in all content areas.** An activity highlighted in the science section can just as easily be applied to teaching in social studies or career/technical subjects.

□ Reading and writing in social studies classrooms

Social studies texts are predominately expository, although students may also read biographies and autobiographies, as well as fiction related to a subject such as history. Textbooks are typically used in social studies classrooms, but students also read primary source documents, from the Declaration of Independence to political speeches. An increasing number of electronic texts — CD-ROMs and online sources — are read in social studies classes.

Students do not necessarily find social studies texts difficult in terms of writing style and vocabulary. Instead, their struggles center on wading through a wealth of factual information replete with unfamiliar names, events and locations. In their attempts to get everything straight, students may miss why it is to their advantage to know more about a time period or how a branch of government functions.

Vocabulary demands in social studies texts require readers to construct understandings of sometimes quite abstract concepts, such as *imperialism, states rights, culture, monarchy, socialization, populism and separation of powers*. Such concepts are often open to multiple interpretations, and the complexity of becoming conversant with such terms requires students to apply their learning in a number of contexts as they refine and elaborate initial understandings.

Text frames in social studies vary, depending on the discipline. For example, history texts frequently connect information using problem/solution relationships as authors describe problems, their causes and actions taken to solve them. Geography texts often emphasize comparison/contrast connections as different cultures are explained. Psychology and sociology emphasize key concepts (concept/definition connections) and cause and effect in discussions about why people behave in certain ways. Proposition/support connections occur throughout the social studies curriculum as various arguments, points of view and interpretations are analyzed.

Strategy 2: Interactive Reading Guides. Interactive reading guides (Wood, 1988) are a variation of the study guide; they involve students working with partners or small groups to discuss essential ideas as they read. The teacher previews a reading assignment to identify key information and to notice text features that students might overlook, such as pictures, charts or graphs. The teacher is especially alert for mismatches between students and the text. Does the author assume knowledge that some students might lack? Does the author introduce ideas and vocabulary without providing sufficient explanation or examples? Does the author use language or a sentence style that will prove tough reading for some students?

Questions for an interactive reading guide are designed to engage students in the kinds of thinking exhibited by proficient readers. (*See Immigration example in Exhibit 3.*) Therefore, students need to brainstorm personal knowledge that connects to a passage and to make predictions, to create visual images, to raise questions of their own and — most certainly — to make inferences. Unlike traditional study guides, the interactive reading guide takes students far beyond identification of facts and helps them pull together a personal synthesis of what they are learning as they read.

Exhibit 3
Interactive Reading Guide — "Immigration"

Section 1: Coming to America **pages 122–126**

1.	**Both partners:**	Skim Paragraph 1 silently to yourself.
	Individually:	Locate one name of a famous immigrant you have heard of and briefly write something you know about this person.
	Both partners:	Share what you know about the person you selected.
2.	**Both partners:**	Read Paragraphs 2 and 3 silently to yourself. Decide together: Why were so many "common people" motivated to come to the United States?
3.	**Partner A:**	Read Paragraph 4 aloud.
	Partner B:	As you listen, decide: How did ship lines try to attract people to sail to America?
	Decide together:	Think of at least two reasons why poor people might be attracted by these offers.
4.	**Partner B:**	Read Paragraph 5 aloud.
	Partner A:	As you listen, decide: What are two ways poor people found the money for sailing to America?
5.	**Both partners:**	Read Paragraphs 6 and 7 silently to yourself.
	Decide together:	Look for evidence that these immigrants were acutely poor.
6.	**Both partners:**	Silently read Paragraphs 8 and 9.
	Decide together:	Describe three bad conditions for immigrants on the ships.
7.	**Partner A:**	Paragraph 10 is a direct quote from an immigrant. Read it aloud.
	Partner B:	Summarize why this person would leave Italy and risk coming to America.
8.	**Both partners:**	Silently skim Paragraphs 11 and 12.
	Decide together:	Write one sentence which summarizes the tough times immigrants had on the ships.
9.	**Both partners:**	Examine the photograph on page 126.
	Individually:	Imagine you are one of the immigrants leaving this ship. Which person would you select? Based on what you have learned in this section, write a diary entry about what traveling on this ship was like for you.
10.	**Both partners:**	Share your diary entries when you have finished writing.

Strategy 3: Story Impressions. The story impressions activity (McGinley & Denner, 1987) introduces significant terms and concepts before students encounter them in a text. The teacher previews the material and selects a series of terms or short phrases related to significant information or plot events. The terms are listed in a vertical column in the order students will encounter them. This step cues students to a sequence of events or cause and effect relationships. Students activate what they already know about items on the list and then speculate what the passage will be about. Students then create a short piece representing their hunches about how the items might be included in an actual reading assignment. (*See Reforming the Cities example in Exhibit 4 on the next page.*)

Students can either work independently or with partners to brainstorm possible connections in the chain of "clues" on their worksheets. They will likely be familiar with some terms but will have to form conjectures about others. This process involves students in making predictions about text content and the meanings of key words.

In the box adjacent to the word chains, students write a paragraph representing their prediction of the text. All terms from the chain must be used in their paragraph in the order they appear on the list. Their task is to create a version of the text they will read — textbook passage, short story, newspaper article, biographical excerpt or other material — based on their knowledge of key terms and their hunches about the unknown items. When students read, they compare their impressions to the actual information in the text.

The story impressions activity engages students in making connections with prior knowledge, predicting meaning, making inferences and synthesizing their learning through writing. Students encounter key content in advance of learning and have an opportunity to connect information in potentially meaningful ways. When students have completed the reading passage, they revisit the chain of terms and verbalize their new learning in writing. This allows them to contrast what they knew before reading with what they know after.

Strategy 4: RAFT Writing Activity. The RAFT activity (Santa, Havens and Macumber, 1996) allows students to personalize their responses to learning. RAFT is an acronym for Role/Audience/Format/Topic. A RAFT activity asks students to assume a particular persona and write from that perspective as they dig deeper into a topic. The assignment is not specifically written with the teacher as an audience, but with an eye toward a potential real audience for the person whose identity they are assuming. They use information gained from their research as the basis for their writing. When students assume a false persona, they are writing to demonstrate what they have learned.

For example, one student studying the Great Depression in American history might write a diary entry to herself about unfolding events as her family loses its farm to a foreclosure. A student in a world history class might assume the identity of a key historical figure and write from the perspective of a guest on a talk show, explaining his or her role in societal change. A student in a geography class might write a travel brochure for tourists about what to expect when visiting Peru.

RAFT activities encourage students to think about what they are learning from another angle and to apply new knowledge in a meaningful context. They also allow students to add their personal touches and creativity. Students are more motivated to do RAFT writing than other types of assignments because they become personally invested in their role and are using information rather than merely reporting it. RAFT assignments are tailor-made for sharing among students in small groups or for inclusion in a collection of student writing about topics within a study unit that can be shared with the entire class. (*See sample RAFT assignments in Exhibit 5 on page 112.*) RAFT activities involve students in visualizing, determining importance of information, making inferences and most specifically, synthesizing.

Exhibit 4
Story Impressions
Chapter 14 — Section 4: "Reforming the Cities"

political machines
corruption
immigrants
slums
tenement
typhoid and cholera
settlement houses
Jane Addams
Hull House
soup kitchen
how the other half lives
building codes
sweat shops
child labor

Story Prediction:

Write your prediction paragraph about life in American cities in the late 19th Century below. You must use all the terms in the left column, in the order they appear on the list.

Exhibit 5
Examples of RAFT Assignments

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Newspaper Reporter	Readers in the 1870's	Obituary	Qualities of General Custer
Lawyer	U.S. Supreme Court	Appeal Speech	Dred Scott Decision
Abraham Lincoln	Dear Abby	Advice Column	Frustrations with his generals
Oprah	Television Public	Talk Show	Women's suffrage in early 20th century
Frontier Woman	Self	Diary	Hardships in West
Constituent	U. S. Senator	Letter	Need for Civil Rights legislation in 1950's
News writer	Public	News Article	Ozone layer is being destroyed.
Chemist	Chemical Company	Instructions	Dangerous combinations to avoid
Graham Cracker	Other Graham Crackers	Travel Guide	Journey through the digestive system
Plant	Sun	Thank You Note	Sun's role in plant's growth
Scientist	Charles Darwin	Memo	Refute a point in Evolution Theory
Square Root	Whole Number	Love Letter	Explain relationship
Repeating Decimal	Set of Rational Numbers	Petition	Prove you belong to this set.
Cook	Other Cooks	Recipe	Alcoholism
Julia Child	TV Audience	Script	How yeast works in bread
Doctor's Association	Future Parents	Web Page	Need for proper prenatal nutrition
Advertiser	TV Audience	Public Service Announcement	Importance of fruit
Lungs	Cigarettes	Complaint	Effects of smoking
Huck Finn	Jim	Telephone Conversation	What I learned during the trip
Josef Stalin	George Orwell	Book Review	Reactions to *Animal Farm*
Comma	Ninth-Grade Students	Job Description	Use in sentences
Trout	Self	Diary	Effects of acid rain on lake
Mozart	Prospective Employer	Job Interview	Qualifications as a composer

Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*, 2nd Edition. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, page 115.

□ Reading and writing is mandatory in the science classroom.

Science texts present an array of special challenges for adolescent readers. They are typically densely packed with detailed information and technical vocabulary. **Although science texts describe our physical and biological worlds, many students struggle with making connections to their personal experiences.** Students become overwhelmed by factual information and unfamiliar (even esoteric) terminology. In fact, researchers have compared reading science to reading a foreign language because of the vast amount of science-specific vocabulary that students must master.

> *Writing in science tends to be organized around cause and effect connections. Scientists ask cause and effect questions like:*
>
> - "Why does this happen?"
> - "What would be the result if we did this?"
> - "Why did these features (or phenomena) develop?"

Science also features concept/definition text frames, especially in a course like biology, which emphasizes classification and identification of key traits.

Science texts contain a great deal of visual information. Pictures, diagrams, drawings and graphic representations like tables, charts and graphs must be understood to fully learn new material. **As a result, visual literacy skills are an integral part of science reading.**

Strategy 5: Anticipation Guides. The anticipation guide (Herber, 1978; Readence, Bean and Baldwin, 1989) is a series of statements that provoke students to inventory their knowledge and opinions about a topic prior to reading. The students respond to several statements that challenge or support preconceived ideas about key concepts. This process arouses interest, sets purposes for reading and encourages students to pose their own questions. Anticipation guides prompt students to make connections to their own background knowledge as they read, assisting them in determining what is most important in a passage.

When creating an anticipation guide, the teacher first identifies the major ideas in the text. The teacher then anticipates student experiences and beliefs that might either be supported or challenged by the reading. In science, students may actually harbor misconceptions about a topic. **The anticipation guide is developed to feature five or six statements addressing major ideas, especially those contradicting student beliefs.** The most effective statements are those about which students have some knowledge but not necessarily a complete understanding. (*See Forest Fires example in Exhibit 6 on the next page.*)

As students discuss their agreement or disagreement with each statement, they justify their responses in small groups or in a class discussion. As a result, the group or class is able to hear what their classmates know and understand about the topic.

When students read the text, they focus upon information that confirms, elaborates or rejects each of the statements in the anticipation guide. If the material being read can be marked, students can underline or highlight sections germane to each statement. Alternatively, they can affix self-adhesive notes to textbook pages alongside information supporting or rebutting each statement. When students have completed their reading, the teacher asks them to revisit their anticipation guides to evaluate how well they have understood the material and to ensure misconceptions have been corrected.

Exhibit 6
Anticipation Guide: Forest Fires

Directions: Each of the following statements concerns forest fires in national parks and forests. Take a few moments and think about each statement. Put a check next to each statement with which you tend to agree. Be prepared to support your decisions with any arguments or information with which you are familiar.

_____ 1. Forest fires that burn thousands of acres are among our worst natural disasters.

_____ 2. Forest fires prove extremely harmful to wildlife, plants and people.

_____ 3. Forest fires have destroyed much of the natural beauty of national treasures like Yellowstone National Park.

_____ 4. Forests need fires to be healthy.

_____ 5. Government policies that allow naturally-occurring fires to burn uncontested in national parks need to be changed.

_____ 6. Natural disasters, such as forest fires, are beneficial in many respects.

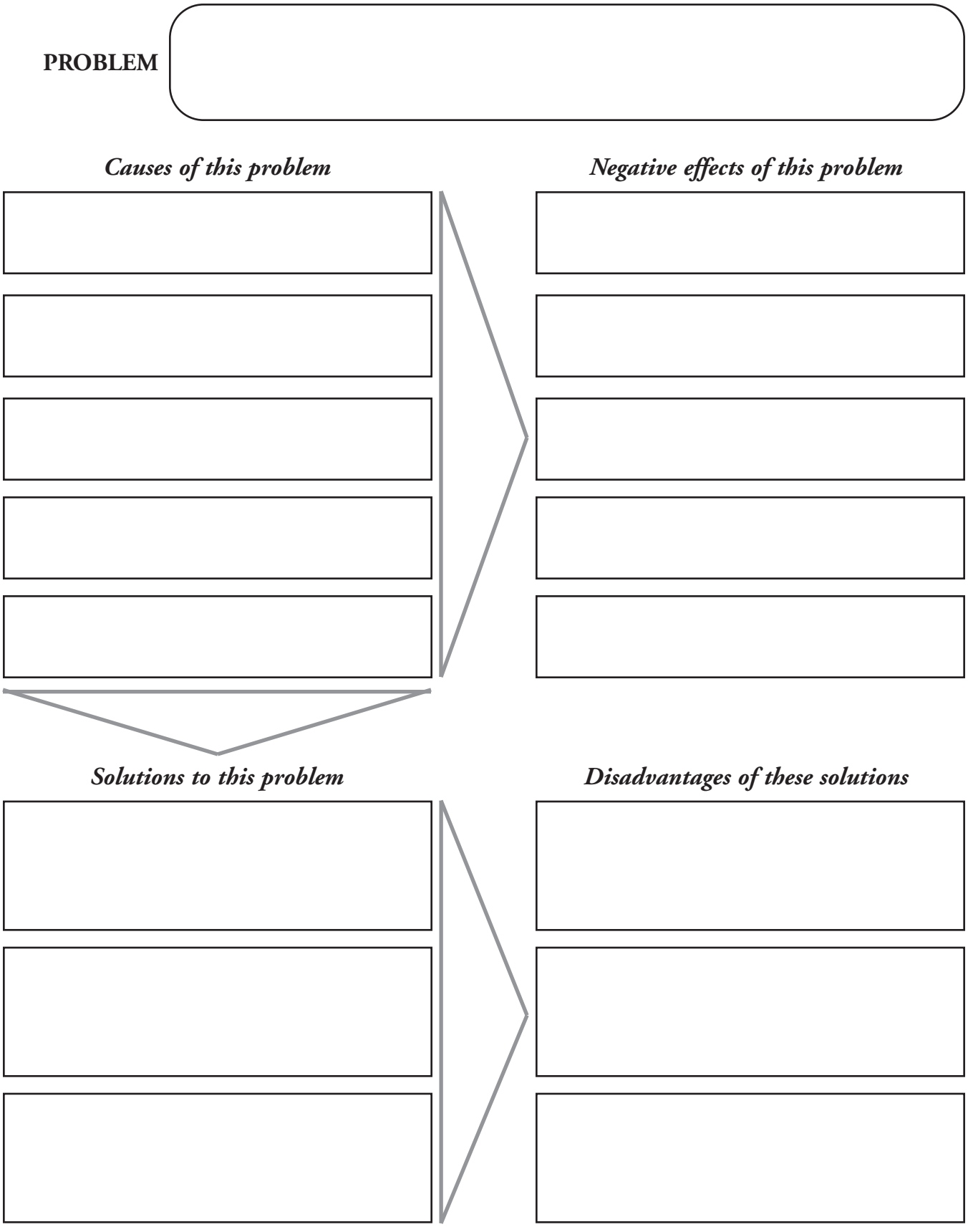
Strategy 6: Graphic Outline Organizers. Graphic outline organizers provide students with a visual representation of important information in a text. **Unlike assignments which involve answering questions about text, graphic outlines offer students highly organized study guides for taking notes on key material.** They mirror the predominant text frames in a passage: problem/solution, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, proposition/support, goal/action/outcome and concept/definition.

A graphic outline organizer consists of a series of geometric shapes and visual features — boxes, circles, arrows and the like — which help students see how important information is connected in a reading passage. The graphic organizer is distributed to students as a note-taking "study guide." They take notes by recording relevant information in the appropriate spaces in the graphic outline. (*See Acid Rain example in Exhibit 7.*)

Graphic outlines provide students with a template for determining and organizing important information from a text. Students perceive relationships between ideas as they take notes; their note-taking is more than writing down isolated pieces of information. Students take notes that are coherent and easy to use for study and future learning. As students gain practice in using graphic outlines, they can develop their own graphic organizers to structure their notes. Teachers will need to cue students with an appropriate text frame, such as cause and effect, when they develop their personal graphic representations of important material and help them learn how to select the most appropriate forms to use.

Strategy 7: Concept Definition Maps. Concept definition mapping (Schwartz and Raphael, 1985) is a vocabulary activity that provides students with a graphic organizer that encompasses the key components of a definition: class or category, properties or characteristics and illustrations or examples. In addition to understanding the "formal" definition of a term, this activity also encourages students to integrate their personal knowledge into a definition.

Exhibit 7
Graphic Outline For "Acid Rain"

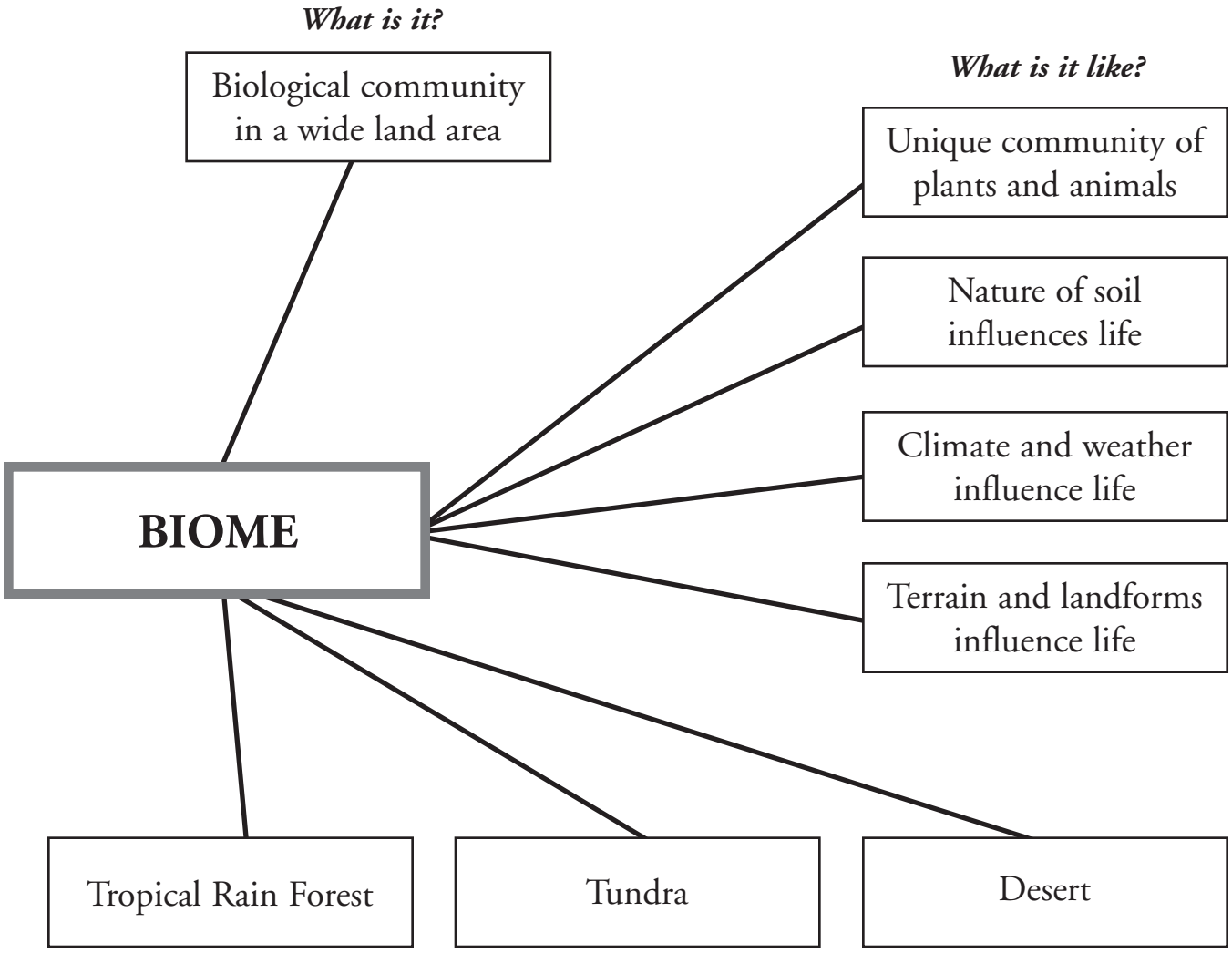


Concept definition mapping is especially well suited for teaching key vocabulary and concepts in science. Students are guided into considering questions that a complete definition would answer: What is it? What is it like? What are some examples of it? (*See Biome example in Exhibit 8.*)

Students can work in pairs to create a word map for new concepts in a science unit. Relying upon information from the reading passage, a glossary, dictionary and their own background knowledge, they flesh out the different facets of a concept by completing their word maps. When finished, students consult their maps to write a comprehensive definition of the new concept. Their definitions should include the category of the word, some of its properties or characteristics and specific examples. These definitions will be more involved than simplistic dictionary statements and will usually contain several sentences. For example, a student definition of the term "biome" based on the concept definition map in Exhibit 8 might be: *A biome is a unique community of plants and animals covering a wide land area. Life in a biome is influenced by the nature of soil, the climate and weather, the terrain and land forms. Examples of a biome include rain forests, tundra and deserts.*

Concept definition mapping engages students in determining importance when reading, making connections and synthesizing their learning of new concepts.

Exhibit 8
Concept Definition Map



□ Reading and writing in mathematics classrooms

Students naturally come to mathematics classes preoccupied with number manipulation. They do not generally consider reading and writing as central to learning. Typically, many students attempt to bypass the reading passages in mathematics texts and launch right into solving problems. Too many students are taught to rely on teacher explanations to clear up misunderstandings. Increasingly, however, mathematics textbooks and assessments are requiring students to use reading and writing to learn and demonstrate knowledge.

Prose in mathematics textbooks presents special challenges for students. Reading in mathematics is very "sentence-heavy." Every sentence is significant and communicates important information. In addition, visuals, especially in the form of sample problems, convey much of the critical content in mathematics textbooks. As a result, reading in mathematics is very recursive; a reader does not expect to obtain full meaning the first time through. Instead, successful students cycle through a passage two or three times — reading, working through the examples and then re-reading — until the concept makes sense.

Further, textbook authors assume that readers are already versed in some of the content being presented. **Students must adopt a different approach when reading mathematics compared with social studies, science or literature.**

Although problem solving is clearly a predominant text frame in mathematics texts, concept/definition is also very evident. Many students struggle with mathematics learning at the conceptual level. They attempt to apply rote problem-solving formulas while not truly understanding the principle exemplified. In addition, mathematics texts employ goal/action/outcome text frames, generally as a sequence of steps that must be followed to arrive at a solution or to analyze a mathematics scenario.

Vocabulary in mathematics texts is critical for learning. Some mathematics terms have precision meanings at variance with common word usages. For example, *point, negative number, is equivalent to* and *is similar to* indicate special signs and symbols often embedded in the prose of a passage.

Strategy 8: Questioning the Author. Questioning the author (Beck, et al., 1997) is an activity that can help students cope with challenging texts. It conditions students to think about what the author is saying, not what the "textbook states."

> *Questioning the author (QtA) begins as a dialogue between the teacher and students about an author's intentions and goals in a text. At first, the teacher walks students through a segment of text by asking questions like:*
>
> - "What does the author seem to think is most important?"
> - "What is the author's message?"
> - "How does this connect with what the author has told us before?"
> - "Does the author assume we already know something here?"
> - "Does the author tell us why?"
> - "Did the author explain this clearly?"

The QtA activity helps students assume a problem-solving attitude toward difficult texts. Students are asked to consider implied as well as implicit meanings: What does the author expect students to know? What isn't clear or easy to understand? What clues does the author provide that help the reader construct a reasonable interpretation of the meaning? (*See Questioning the Author model questions in Exhibit 9 on the next page.*)

Exhibit 9
Questioning the Author

Model Questions

- What does the author seem to think is most important?
- What is the author's message?
- Does the author assume we already know something here? Is so, what?
- How does this connect with what the author has told us before?
- Is this consistent with what the author told us before? If not, what is different?
- Does the author tell us why?
- Did the author explain this clearly? If not, what was unclear?
- How could the author make this easier to understand?
- What is the author's "attitude" toward this?

Questioning the author reinforces for students the natural tension between readers and writers. Authors have a responsibility to clearly communicate their ideas to a target audience. Readers also have responsibilities. As outlined earlier in this chapter, proficient readers make connections, ask questions, visualize, determine importance, make inferences and synthesize meanings. In particular, QtA engages students in monitoring their reading and adopting a problem-solving attitude toward what an author is telling them.

Unlike most textbook lessons, which involve discussion before or after reading, a QtA activity is a teacher-led discussion **during** reading. Students might read a paragraph or two before the teacher interjects a discussion break and poses some QtA questions. The teacher's role during QtA discussions is to model how a proficient reader uses strategies to make sense of confusing or difficult text. As the discussion about what the author is trying to communicate unfolds, the teacher affirms key points offered by students, sometimes paraphrasing them and encourages students to examine the text for clarification. The QtA discussions can be used to introduce selections that students will continue to read independently, perhaps as homework. With practice, students begin asking QtA questions on their own when they encounter a difficult text.

Strategy 9: Mathematics Reading Keys. Especially significant questions for mathematics are "What does this author assume I already know?" and "What previous mathematical concepts does this author expect that I remember?" The mathematics reading keys (Buehl, 2001) provide students with a protocol that guides them through how to read mathematics texts.

The mathematics reading keys can be printed on a bookmark that students keep in their mathematics textbooks. (*Exhibit 10 shows the bookmark.*) Initially, to provide practice using these reading strategies, students work with a partner to read portions of the mathematics text during class time. Typically, such reading is assigned as independent work, and many students overlook it and attempt to solve problems by trying to mimic the examples provided in the text. As students follow the mathematics keys and reach points of confusion, they use their peers as resources or as a final resort, consult the teacher.

Exhibit 10
Mathematics Reading Keys Bookmark

1. Read carefully and make sure each sentence makes sense.
2. Try to summarize what you read in your own words.
3. When you encounter a difficult word, try thinking of easier words that mean that same thing and substitute.
4. Talk over what you read with a partner —
   a. To ensure you got it right,
   b. To clear up anything you don't understand.
5. Be on the lookout for —
   a. Things the author thinks you already know,
   b. Things you have learned in mathematics before.
6. "Read" with a pencil —
   a. Work the examples as you read them,
   b. Reread each section after trying the examples.
7. Make your own definitions for key terms and keep them in a section of your notebook.

A critical study requirement for students is mastery of the language of mathematics. This activity encourages students to develop working definitions of key terms to "translate mathematics" into language meaningful to them. They then file their definitions, along with formal mathematics language, in a section of their notebook or on index cards.

The mathematics reading keys activity emphasizes many of the traits of proficient readers: self-questioning, determining importance, making inferences, synthesizing and, most especially, monitoring comprehension.

Strategy 10: Frayer Model. The Frayer model (Frayer, Frederick and Klausmeier, 1969) is a graphic organizer that differentiates characteristics, defining an important concept from those merely associated with it. As students complete a Frayer model grid, they are prompted to distinguish between examples representing the concept and non-examples. As a result, students construct rich and sophisticated meanings of important vocabulary terms.

A Frayer model grid contains four compartments for recording information about a concept: essential characteristics, nonessential characteristics, examples and non-examples. (*See Rhombus example in Exhibit 11 on the next page.*) A Frayer model can be given to students as a worksheet or developed by the teacher on the chalkboard or overhead transparency. It can serve as a study guide for students as they read.

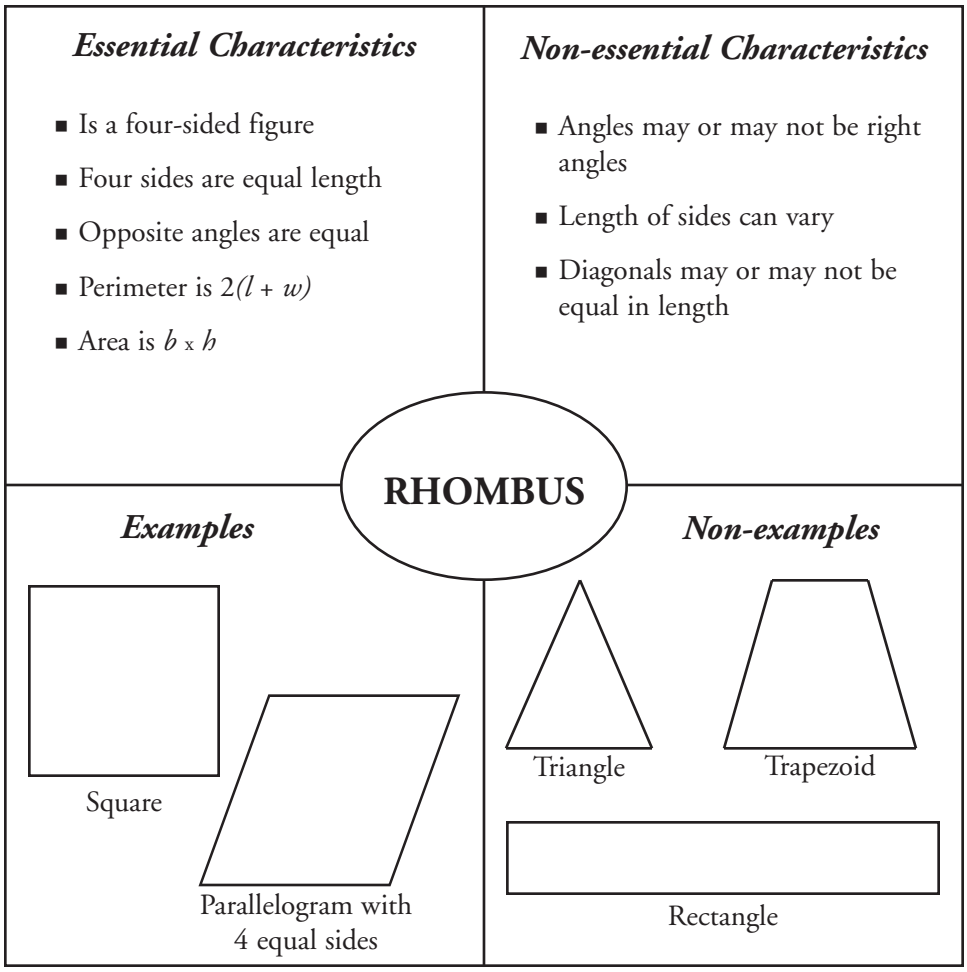
To introduce this activity, the teacher will break students into cooperative groups tasked with listing as many concept examples as possible. These examples are recorded on the chalkboard and students are encouraged to add to the list or to challenge examples already offered. Then students analyze these examples to ascertain what all have in common. In so doing, students identify key characteristics of a concept.

As students read, they locate information which belongs in each of the four Frayer model quadrants: *essential characteristics* (what all have); *non-essential characteristics* (what some have and others don't); *examples* (these are . . . "a rhombus"); and *non-examples* (these are not . . . "a rhombus"). A natural result of this activity is that students confirm or reject information generated earlier from the class as they complete the grid.

After reading, the teacher leads a discussion on the examples and characteristics that students were able to confirm from the text. Other characteristics and examples are then placed in the non-essential and non-example sections. Further study may be needed to determine whether some items are examples or non-examples.

As a final step, students write a definition of the concept including all key or defining characteristics. The Frayer model activity emphasizes making connections, self-questioning, determining importance, making inferences and synthesizing.

Exhibit 11
Frayer Model



□ Reading and writing are vital in the career/technical classroom.

Although there is much variation in the nature of career/technical texts, many involve an explanation of steps to be followed to accomplish a specific task. Materials used in career/technical disciplines range from textbooks to technical manuals to actual documents used in the workplace. These texts frequently follow a goal/action/outcome structure as students read to follow directions or to learn a process or procedure. Often students read to apply knowledge, to understand equipment operation, to make an item or to create work of some nature.

For example, textbooks in applied technology introduce various tools and equipment plus instructions for use. In addition, students read plans, blueprints, diagrams and other information as they engage in hands-on projects. In computer classes, students will most likely work from a manual specifying steps for various computer applications. Family and consumer education texts also deal extensively with "how to" materials. An accounting course in business will introduce systems and practices and emphasize key concepts for understanding the field.

Technical texts are often straightforward descriptions that do not attempt to motivate a reader. Instead they may just "present the facts." In addition, these texts contain an extensive array of technical vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to people outside the field. As the technology becomes more advanced, so does the language. Students must develop effective routines to become confident users of the new terminology.

An advantage of career/technical texts is they are pragmatic. Readers expect to apply the information to useful situations. **However, technical texts are also notoriously problematic reading. The prose may be quite terse, without information that expands or embellishes the basic facts.** Readers may need to read the material more than once before truly understanding it.

Strategy 11: Visual Prediction Guide. Visual information — charts, tables, graphs and illustrations — are often key components of career/technical materials. Publishers tend to adopt an "either/or" policy to satisfy space demands: information is either presented in words or in visuals, but rarely both. As a result, students need to pay careful attention to visual information if they are to successfully learn from many current texts.

The visual prediction guide (Irvin, 2001) is an activity that guides students in "reading" visual information in texts. Because students may skip over this information when hurrying through an assignment, they can benefit from more in-depth study of how visuals contribute to understanding.

To help students use visual information effectively, the teacher first talks students through a text offering only visual information. Students note its form: charts, diagrams or illustrations. Next, the teacher asks students to consider why the author included this information in visual form and how it enhances their understanding of a text. At this point, students also brainstorm two to three questions a visual addresses.

During reading, the teacher provides study questions requiring students to connect visual elements with information provided as prose. In addition, students can be asked to evaluate how the visual contributed to their understanding and whether additional visuals might enhance their learning. Finally, students can be asked to create their own visual alternatives. For example, they could work with partners or in cooperative groups to create visuals for text lacking them, or they can improve a text's visuals by examining what made a visual difficult to understand. Student visuals can be affixed to the text page on sticky notes. In effect, students become illustrators for their own textbooks. Creating charts or diagrams to represent written texts is an especially powerful strategy to integrate visual learning into a content text.

The visual prediction guide emphasizes visualizing while reading and self-questioning. A final variation of this activity is to encourage students to copy important visuals into their notebooks. This requires students to carefully notice elements of a visual that might otherwise be overlooked.

Strategy 12: Two-Column Notes. Note-taking is central to learning in all disciplines — learning from print, from classroom presentations and discussions, video and electronic texts. **Two-column (or Cornell) notes (Pauk, 2001) provide students with an organized format for recording notes and for determining importance, self-questioning and synthesizing.**

To prepare notebook paper for two-column notes, students draw a vertical line down the left side of the page, leaving a left column of about two and a half inches. This is the recall column, left blank during initial note taking. The right side column, about six inches wide, is where students write notes in whatever manner preferred. Their notes represent decisions about what is important and should be detailed enough to make sense and be useful as a future study aid. (*See example in Exhibit 12.*)

Exhibit 12
Family and Consumer Education Example
Two-Column Notes — Habits

Definition of habits	1 — Habits — patterns of acting, thinking, feeling are repeated until automatic 90% of our behavior habitual
Why we have habits	2 — Hab. Are Survival Techniques — can do one thing while thinking of something else (ex., talk while driving a car) — helps us adapt to change — calms body — reduce stress, just act automatically
Some effects of habits	3 — 1st Hab. = eating to feel good, not just for hunger
Why practice important in school/sports	4 — Hab. In School From practice (ex. Doing mult. tables in mathematics) Music — habits of playing notes right Athletics — form bad hab. In sports if don't practice right or enough
Why are habits hard to break	5 — Hard to Break Hab. Need to Unlearn — Brain cells have to be programmed for new behavior Why Neg. Hab. Hard to overcome (ex. Smoking, overeating, biting nails)
Types of bad habits	6 — Fears — Neg. Hab. (ex. Heights, animals — snakes, spiders, dogs)
Habits are necessary for our survival, because we can do many things at one time, without thinking. But bad habits are hard to get rid of.	

Commonly, students take very sparse notes, making them ineffective for further learning. Worse, they may merely copy verbatim lists from an overhead transparency or chalkboard. Meaningful note-taking involves more; students need to consciously determine what would be helpful for remembering when deciding what to write. Initially, to reinforce good note-taking habits, teachers can permit students to use their notes for quizzes and even exams. When comparing their notes to the demands of various learning tasks, students learn what constitutes useful notes.

After initial note-taking, students start the second stage of two-column note-taking — they flesh out the recall column. **The recall column involves re-reading notes and then writing a key phrase that sums up a section or poses a question not answered by information in a section.** Students begin to see how notes answer significant questions and are not isolated conglomerations of facts. When students have completed the recall column, they have a perfect study system in place. By covering the right side notes column, they can read the question or key word phrase and then try to remember what their notes have to say about it. This system prompts students to verbalize their learning as a means of studying their notes.

The final step is a synthesis of the notes. On the bottom of the last page, students write a two- to three-sentence summary of key concepts and main ideas. This will be a personal summary using both language from the notes as well as the student's understanding of the "big picture" presented in the notes.

Two-column notes are an excellent way to process information from print materials, as students condense information to more focused and manageable ideas. Note-taking is especially valuable in classrooms that emphasize application of information, so that students can leave their texts behind and yet retain valuable notes which can be consulted while they are engaged in projects and other activities.

Strategy 13: Reciprocal Teaching. As experts in their disciplines, career/technical teachers frequently teach via modeling and demonstration. Students get to see an accomplished person performing the task, giving them insight into handling the process. Reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) is an activity for building reading comprehension that capitalizes on this master/apprentice relationship for learning. **This activity models four essential components of comprehension: questioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting.**

Teacher think-alouds are an excellent method for modeling the cognitive behavior involved in reading comprehension. The teacher shares a piece of challenging text and models the reasoning necessary to understand it. During a think-aloud, the teacher makes explicit reference to the four comprehension behaviors indicated above. Some questions will relate to salient details, but many should target understanding of the whole passage. The teacher may include questions that address several processes such as summarizing, clarifying and predicting.

The teacher may model questioning by asking the following:

- "Why does the author tell me this?"
- "What seems to be the most important point or idea?"
- "Did I understand this correctly?"

Next, the teacher recaps what was read by summarizing: "Basically this section is about..." When modeling summarizing, the teacher notes that a proficient reader hits the pause button every few paragraphs and paraphrases what was read to ensure understanding.

Clarifying is the process of identifying aspects of the text not totally clear. **A proficient reader might use several fix-up strategies to clarify: re-reading, continuing in hope that confusions will be resolved, zeroing in on difficult vocabulary or consulting with another reader.** Clarifying might also point out shortcomings in the text and focus on what an author might have done to make a passage more understandable.

Finally, a proficient reader is constantly thinking ahead, predicting where a passage may be going. Sometimes the predicting goes beyond a text, as a reader infers certain attitudes or beliefs on the part of an author. Predicting helps to develop a purpose for reading, as readers continue on through a text to confirm or disprove their hunches.

Using reciprocal teaching for technical materials packed with detailed information and unfamiliar vocabulary helps students talk themselves through dense and challenging material. As students become experienced with the thinking behind reciprocal teaching, they can follow this procedure in cooperative groups. Rather than read a text independently, students work with their peers to ensure all understand it. The students trade off the role of "teacher" in their groups as they lead their classmates through the four comprehension phases. The student "teacher" asks questions about a section and members of the group answer. The leader looks for anything that was confusing or unclear and comments as the group tries to resolve the problem. Finally, the "teacher" summarizes the section and makes a prediction for what might be next. The group reads the next section of text and a new student assumes the role of "teacher."

Conclusion

Successfully teaching all students challenging content requires that all teachers incorporate literacy strategies into their teaching methods. **Teachers who integrate reading and writing activities into their classrooms make it possible for many more students to become successful in college-preparatory-level courses in social studies, science, mathematics and advanced career/technical courses.** Literacy strategies are an essential component of learning in content classrooms. Of course, teachers expect students to exhibit a variety of sophisticated reading and writing behaviors when completing assignments. But teachers also know that many students fall far short in demonstrating these literacy skills independently. Teachers can no longer be satisfied to have many of their students resort to "getting-the-assignment-done" tactics, like ping-pong reading, mindless reading or forgetful reading.

This chapter advocates classroom activities that teachers can use to make students more independent learners with mastery of their subjects by engaging them in the key comprehension strategies of making connections, asking questions, visualizing, determining importance, drawing inferences, synthesizing and monitoring reading. Some of these activities prepare students for reading assignments by frontloading — the critical teaching preceding reading that helps students activate what they already know and builds background knowledge. Other activities guide students as they learn during reading and then engage students in further thinking about a topic as they synthesize new understandings.

This chapter details many highly useful literacy activities that can be employed across the curriculum. For example, even though graphic outlines, organizers and anticipation guides are presented in the science section, these activities are also excellent choices for social studies, mathematics and career/technical classes.

Teachers are expected to read about the activities in the entire chapter to identify those best matching their curriculum and students. Successful school principals tell teachers in their weekly instructional plans to identify the primary literacy strategy they will use to engage students in more deeply learning the material assigned.

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CHAPTER 7

Research Writing

By Elizabeth Dick

In this chapter, we explore what research tells us about —

Formal Research Paper Process

- Selecting a topic or compelling question
- Conducting research
- Outlining and planning the paper
- Drafting the paper
- Revising the paper
- Editing the paper
- Evaluating the process and the final paper

Ideas for "Researched" Pieces in

- Foreign language classes
- Science classes
- Mathematics classes
- Social studies classes
- Physical education/health classes
- English/language arts classes
- Career/technical classes

It is time we stop thinking of research papers as a product and start thinking of them as a way of learning — of assisting students to gain deeper knowledge and become independent learners. The ability to research possible solutions to problems is fundamental for advancement, promotion and higher salaries.

— Gene Bottoms

It is important that all students learn to conduct research on compelling topics or questions that enable them to make connections, draw conclusions and present their findings in a variety of written forms. Formal research can serve to deepen knowledge, develop independent learning skills and improve students' abilities to present ideas clearly. The process begins with identifying a topic, narrowing that topic and developing a preliminary outline to identify information to seek during the research process. Students generally follow a set system for recording potential sources on bibliography cards, taking notes from those sources on index cards and then organizing the cards in outline order to facilitate drafting. At the conclusion of the process, the finished pieces reflect attention to revision, editing and adherence to the guidelines of the specified manuscript form.

It is also important for students to learn how to develop less formal "researched" pieces such as feature articles, persuasive letters, proposals, commentaries and brochures — pieces more often produced in real-world situations.

To produce "researched" pieces, students follow the guidelines for authentic writing discussed in Chapter 5. These include

- considering an audience and purpose for their writing;
- studying models of the real-world form that best suits their targeted audience and purpose;
- gathering information through research to provide support for the idea(s) they need to develop; and
- writing, revising and publishing the piece to reach the identified audience.

Creating a research continuum

How Much Research Writing Should Students Experience?

High Schools That Work (HSTW) recommends that students prepare a research paper in every class every year.

School districts must design a research continuum that has students, beginning in the middle grades, complete progressively more difficult research projects each year.

At many *HSTW* sites, students are required to complete a senior project which typically includes a research paper that is a joint requirement for English/language arts and the students' career/technical concentrations. In these cases, students meet the requirement for research writing in both classes.

In classes other than language arts, expect students to do at least one "researched" piece each semester. Researched papers can be written for authentic audiences and therefore can meet part of the recommendations for authentic pieces discussed in Chapter 5.

Develop a continuum of standards and expectations for student research and preparation by grade level. **Beginning in the middle grades, expect all students to participate in a research process in each class that results in a paper.** However, research papers will not look the same for sixth-graders as they do for seniors.

Schools can choose different ways to define the progression of standards and expectations. Distinctions can be made in the number of required sources, paper length, documentation format, topic complexity, paper type and research type. For instance, all eighth-graders might be required to include an interview while all ninth-graders may have to conduct a survey. Similarly, sixth-graders may refer to three to five sources while 12th-graders may be required to document 10 or more. The literacy committee will work with English/language arts, academic and career/technical teachers to determine these requirements.

Formal research papers

English/language arts teachers will provide basic instruction on writing research papers. This does not mean that students should only write research papers in English/language arts. **Since writing research papers is a way to deepen students' knowledge about a topic, they need to engage in the research process in every class beginning in the middle grades.** Expect all students to do assignments that match grade level standards and expectations. Determining suitable assignments requires teachers to address factors such as the number of required sources, length, topic, focused purpose, form and targeted audience. Assignments become increasingly complex as the student progresses in grade level. Once students are acquainted with the process, teachers in other content areas can expect them to follow that process in their classes as well.

□ Selecting a topic

The first step in helping students develop a successful research paper is assisting them to select a topic that will deepen their subject matter knowledge on a given topic or concept. When we allow students to make poor topic choices, failure is the result. To increase motivation, we can encourage students to pick topics they actually want to know more about and provide time for extensive exploratory reading prior to final topic selection. Students need the opportunity to "wallow" in a topic before narrowing the focus of their research. We can assist them in developing their own ideas about what they read through the use of reader response journals. (*See the section on writing-to-learn in Chapter 5.*)

Guide students in narrowing topics sufficiently and focusing on a purpose, such as answering a question or supporting an opinion, before allowing them to begin their research. Teachers can help students select focused topics in academic and career/technical fields that are related to material they must understand thoroughly to pass required exams. Unknowingly, teachers actually encourage plagiarism when they assign or allow students to select overly broad topics such as the environment, the Holocaust, gun control or real-life mathematical applications.

Focused research questions might include

- How does acid rain affect my community?
- Why did some Jews survive the Holocaust while others did not?
- What effects, if any, has the Brady Bill had on our community?
- What geometric figures are displayed in the buildings in my community?

Typically, traditional formal research papers reflect writing-to-demonstrate-learning rather than writing for authentic audiences. Students who begin with original ideas related to what they are studying and then focus on specific research questions or opinions have a greater likelihood of producing original, well-developed papers. Whenever possible, we should help students plan research papers on topics that could interest an authentic audience (someone besides the teacher) and be developed into other forms of "researched" pieces. For example, the focused research questions mentioned above all could be interesting to readers outside the classroom.

□ Conducting research

Prepare for research. To prepare students for a positive research experience, three areas must be addressed:

1. **Discuss topics students have chosen with the library media center director.** This ensures needed resources are available either in the library media center or online and are developmentally appropriate. Plan with the director how to supplement sources as needed. Teachers will also need to schedule sufficient library media center time for research to ensure staff are available to assist students in locating sources. Some students may need help in conducting Internet research.

   To be kind to our students and ourselves, we should consider scheduling different classes for research papers at different times during the semester rather than having all classes using many of the same media resources at the same time. However, many classrooms today have multiple computers or wireless labs available, making technology resources more readily accessible to students.

   Plan ahead and schedule computer lab time if students will be word processing their drafts. Allow keyboard-literate students the opportunity to draft at the computer.

2. **Acquaint students with the research procedure they are to follow.** Students need a due-date schedule for different stages in the research process, and they need to understand what is involved in each. Provide clear explanations, examples and due dates for each of the following: statements of research focus, preliminary outlines, bibliography cards, notes, drafts and final products.

3. **Teach students the skills necessary to locate potential sources and to take notes ethically and efficiently.** Students need to learn about plagiarism — what it is, why it is serious and how to avoid it. (*See sidebar on next page.*) Teachers need to review and practice note-taking skills with students, giving them ample opportunities to practice paraphrasing (restating someone else's ideas in your own words) and summarizing (presenting the main points of an issue in a condensed, shortened form). One effective way: give students a short passage to read and then model a paraphrase and summary of it. In modeling the paraphrase, emphasize the importance of fully and clearly explaining the meaning of the passage. In modeling summarizing, demonstrate how to identify key words and phrases to support a one-sentence statement of the main idea.

After students have learned what is meant by paraphrasing and summarizing, they can first work with a partner and then individually to paraphrase and summarize additional short pieces of text. (Review the chapter on paraphrasing in *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook* by Sharon Sorenson for additional information and samples.)

Create an outline of potential subjects. Students need a preliminary outline of potential subject headings related to their focused purpose. Help students initially to brainstorm types and categories of information (subject headings) they will need to find for their research questions. The preliminary outline need not be in traditional format. It might be a graphic organizer like a fishbone or cause and effect organizer.

Gather information. The list of potential subjects will expand as students read and gather information from printed documents and other sources, such as the Internet, electronic databases and the library media center's vertical file. As an additional resource, students may visit the following Web site: www.ri.net/schools/East_Greenwich/research.html, where they will find links to online reference tools, online libraries and information about using the Internet and search engines.

We can encourage student primary research when appropriate. Included can be observations, interviews, surveys and reviews of primary source documents. Ken Macrorie outlines how to develop assignments that rely almost exclusively on primary research in his book, *The I-Search Paper*. Of course, lessons on skills may be needed, such as how to conduct an interview, how to write effective survey questions and how to review primary source documents.

Teaching Students about Plagiarism

We do students a huge disservice when we do not instill in them at an early age the "theft" implications of passing off someone else's words or original ideas as their own. Too many students are expelled from colleges and universities for plagiarizing.

Obviously, schools are not doing an exemplary job of addressing this issue. For additional information, read "Teaching Practices that Encourage or Eliminate Student Plagiarism" by Susan J. Davis in the *Middle School Journal* for January 1994.

Composition handbooks from publishers such as Laidlaw; Holt, Reinhart, and Winston; and Write Source provide information about plagiarism and examples of appropriate summaries and paraphrases. The following Internet sites enable teachers to locate the source of plagiarized materials: www.turnitin.com and www.plagiarism.org.

Prepare bibliography cards. As students locate sources, they need to prepare bibliography cards for each potential source and number the cards consecutively. The cards will include all necessary information for the works cited, including title, author, publication date, publisher, city of publication and pages used. Have students gather more bibliography cards than required as they may not find useful information from all potential sources.

Take notes. Regardless of the source, students need to analyze information carefully to determine its relevance before taking notes.

Questions to analyze information for relevance:

- How does this information relate to the purpose of my paper?
- Is the source reliable?
- Is the information current?

Expanding Career/Technical Projects with Writing Assignments

Career/technical courses often include many hands-on projects that could easily include writing assignments. Research papers of two to five pages can be completed on topics related to the project. Encourage students to use and properly cite at least five research sources such as professional journal articles, books and Internet readings.

Students might also be asked to keep a research log that documents the time they spend in researching and a description of the resources used. A project plan — a description of the goals, expected results, action steps planned and criteria for assessing progress on the project — is another possible assignment.

Finally, a reflection paper might be assigned at completion. This one- to two-page paper describes what was learned, how problems were solved, what skills were developed and how the project prepared the student for the workplace.

Students who do not analyze and evaluate information often gather unrelated and/or inappropriate notes that they fail to discard. Thus, their finished papers ramble on and on with fragments of unconnected information.

For formal research papers, students most often use index cards for note-taking. They should place the number of each source's bibliography card in the upper right-hand corner along with the page number from which the notes were taken. Instruct students to place the subject heading of the information on the top line of each note card. Notes on one card should pertain only to the subject heading listed on that card. Place on different cards notes about different subject headings taken from the same source. Hence, students may have several note cards taken from only one source. Expect students proficient in word processing to enter this information in a computer file so they can cut and paste directly from their notes.

As students take notes, remind them to practice paraphrasing and summarizing skills and place in quotation marks any passages copied verbatim. Students often need guidance to avoid taking too many direct quotations. A finished research paper with many quotes indicates the writer has put little independent thinking into the text. Caution students to select direct quotations carefully, picking only those that are interesting, unique or written by noteworthy figures.

□ Outlining and planning the paper

Develop a formal outline. Once students have gathered appropriate and relevant information, it is time to plan drafts. Writing a formal research paper usually involves first writing a formal outline. This outline is more comprehensive than the initial planning outline discussed earlier. Even when completed, it may require further revisions as the paper is developed. Assist students to use the subheadings on their note cards to flesh out a logical progression of the major points they will use to answer their research questions or support their opinions. At this point most students would benefit from a review of the established conventions of formal outline format and discussion of a guide model.

Select and arrange appropriate notes. Once students have developed their outlines, they should arrange their note cards in order of use for supporting major outline points. Teachers can assist students by reminding them to choose the most directly relevant references. As a note card is selected, code the card with the letter or number of the part of the outline where the information will be used. For example, *IV. B. 2.* written at the top of a note card would indicate the information on that card will be used in the discussion of main heading four, subheading B, division two of the outline. After students have selected and coded their cards, they would arrange them in outline sequence.

□ Drafting the paper

Select a research form. When students are drafting a formal research paper, teachers need to provide them with a specific research form to follow, such as those developed by the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA). Provide students a condensed version with clear directions about aspects such as format, citations and bibliography form.

In a school where I previously taught, all students across the curriculum used a small MLA format guide, *Writing the Research Report*, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. The library media center director supplemented that guide with additional up-to-date handouts about citing non-print sources. We found it was best for our school to adopt the same form across the curriculum. This continuity gave our students a level of comfort with the mechanics of the process and more opportunity to focus on developing the content of their pieces. However, students need to know different forms exist and that the most important goal is not mastering one particular form but learning and following the guidelines of the form specified. A Web search for APA or MLA style will bring up numerous college Web sites with information on using these styles.

Provide models. Students need to see finished examples from composition handbooks and former students. Teachers can write a piece themselves to use as a model. "Teaching Composition," a recent position statement from the National Council of Teachers of English states, "Writing teachers should themselves be writers. Through experiencing the struggles and joys of writing, teachers learn that their students will need guidance and support throughout the writing process, not merely comments on the written product. Furthermore, writing teachers who write know that effective comments do not focus on pointing out errors, but go on to the more productive task of encouraging revision, which will help student writers to develop their ideas and to achieve greater clarity and honesty." This statement applies to teachers in any content area who assist students with pieces developed using a process approach.

Prepare drafts. Provide some class time for students to work on their drafts, whether handwritten or word processed. During this time students can seek assistance and teachers can monitor progress. Teachers can ask students to include bibliography card numbers and page numbers in the draft to assist them with final documentation later. In addition, students need to be reminded that if they find gaps in their idea development while drafting, they need additional sources.

As a part of their drafts, students must prepare a bibliography/reference page. First, they need to alphabetize the bibliography cards for the sources they actually used and then create a bibliography/reference page using the specified format. Teachers can give assistance in determining the appropriate way to list any unusual sources.

Review drafts. The drafting stage is a good time for teachers to check students' work carefully for possible plagiarism. When the "voice" and/or quality of the work is not consistent with previous writing submitted by the student, teachers should suspect plagiarism and address the issue before the student completes the final draft.

□ Revising the paper

Once students have completed first drafts, they require quality feedback to ensure effective addition, deletion or rearrangement of content. Teachers can provide a revision guide such as the one on the next page.

Teachers can teach and encourage peer response for the purpose of revision. (*See the section on peer response in the discussion of authentic writing in Chapter 5.*) However, we also have a responsibility to our students to provide appropriate and sufficient feedback on content to guide their revision decisions. (Often the neediest aspect of students' content is lack of idea development. A valuable resource for assisting students in this area is *Teaching Idea Development* by Sharon Hatton and Pam Ladd.) **Most importantly, revisions are never optional.**

Revision Guide

Consider these questions as you "re-visit" the content of your research paper. You are encouraged to use response partners — but you must do all content revision yourself.

Audience and Purpose —

- Will the reader know the purpose of your paper after reading the first paragraph or two?
- What evidence is there in the beginning of your paper that you have attempted to engage the reader?
- Have you given your reader sufficient background to provide a context for your research question or opinion?

Idea Development and Support —

- Are there places in your paper where more details, examples or specifics are needed?
- Do any paragraphs seem shorter and in need of more material than others?
- Ask someone to read your paper and comment if something is unclear and needs more description, explanation, support or documentation.
- Is all information accurate?
- Does your paper clearly address your research question?
- Does your conclusion leave the reader with something to think about?

Organization —

- Does your paper progress in an organized, logical way?
- Read your paper aloud to someone (peer, family member). At the end of each paragraph, ask the person to forecast where the paper is headed next. If the paper goes in a direction other than the one predicted by the listener, is there a good reason or do you need to rewrite something?
- Is there any part of your paper that would be more effective in another place?

□ Editing the paper

When students have completed revisions, it is time to address editing concerns including grammar — language usage, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization — as well as documentation and manuscript rules. We can provide students with an editing guide, such as the one on this page.

Editing Guide

Consider these questions and suggestions as you review your research paper for proper use of grammar including language, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and for documentation and manuscript rules. You may use editing partners, but all corrections must be made by you.

- Varied sentence structure engages a reader. Are your sentences varied in length? Do they begin in different ways? Are they complete sentences rather than fragments?
- Are any words in your paper used too often? Are there any terms that the reader may need explained?
- If you word processed your paper, have you used the spelling and grammar check functions?
- Read carefully for spelling errors the spelling check function does not identify, such as homophones and words spelled correctly but not the words you intended.
- Read your paper aloud to see and hear if there are any missing words, incorrect words or other errors.
- Ask yourself why you put punctuation marks in certain places. Do you need to check any punctuation rules? (Pay particular attention to the punctuation of direct quotations.)
- Have you followed the guidelines for parenthetical documentation when citing sources in your text?
- Does your references page meet all the bibliography guidelines for order, content and punctuation?
- Have you followed all manuscript rules for your paper: (title page, margins, spacing, page numbering)?

We need to remind students to replace the bibliography card numbers and page numbers in their drafts with appropriate documentation (endnotes, footnotes or parenthetical) for the format they are using (APA, MLA or other).

We can encourage the use of editing partners. **However, insist that the writer make the corrections, not the partner.** The partner should only discuss mistakes and possible corrections with the writer. Similarly, teachers have a responsibility to provide quality feedback to students about editing concerns, being careful to indicate problems but not to make corrections for them. Doing so only teaches them that they do not need to because a teacher eventually will.

Most importantly, teachers in all content areas should not accept a formal research paper for a final grade that has not been edited to some reasonable standard (few errors relative to the length and complexity of the piece).

□ Evaluating the process and the final paper

Regardless of the assessment method used, students need to know from the start how their work will be evaluated. Because the development of a research paper involves a process, teachers must assess students' ability to follow that process as well as the final product. Teachers can give points or grades at various checkpoints for meeting research and writing process deadlines, using due dates for the preliminary outline, bibliography cards, note cards, first draft, revised draft and editing draft. On days when nothing specific is due, teachers may award "on-task" points.

Assess the final paper using a rubric focusing on the elements of effective writing and the general characteristics of a formal research paper. A general rubric gives students a clear understanding of the expectations of their final pieces. (*An example is in Appendix 12 on page 213.*) During the final evaluation, teachers can highlight different areas of the rubric providing specific feedback about the strengths and needs of their work. Holding students accountable for acceptable performance ensures they do not leave the assignment behind with a "D" or an "F," not having internalized and demonstrated basic understanding of the process and the expected outcome.

"Researched" pieces

Do not limit students' experiences in conducting research to formal research papers. Teachers might consider rethinking traditional research assignments to give students authentic experiences, inspiring them to make their best effort.

Traditional research assignments had students writing to the teacher solely for the purpose of demonstrating their ability to write a formal research paper. The end products were often tedious, voiceless pieces lacking reader appeal and authentic purpose. **However, students can use the same research skills to write to a targeted audience for a focused purpose — a much more challenging and engaging task.**

The majority of student research assignments should involve developing authentic pieces, such as editorials, letters, speeches and feature articles. All these forms can be addressed in language arts classes. Once students are familiar with them, they can use their knowledge to develop these pieces around content in other classes. In addition, content-area teachers can introduce their students to other authentic forms, such as proposals, scientific journal articles and brochures. What may differ in these researched pieces is the required number of sources and how teachers expect students to document those sources within the text. Teachers in various content areas might consider some of the following suggestions as they rethink traditional research assignments.

Foreign language classes

- As a part of culture study, students could prepare a brochure for American tourists planning to visit a particular country, explaining local customs and tips about important "do's and don'ts."
- Students might research a famous person, either living or dead, from another country and write a feature article focusing on a particular aspect of that person's contribution to that country's history. These articles could then be bound as an anthology of biographical pieces and placed in the classroom or school library media center.

Science classes

- Have students research a particular area of interest, design and conduct their own inquiry experiment (primary research), and then write a scientific journal article about their work. Consider publishing articles in the school's own *Scientific Journal, Volume 1*.
- A student writing a commentary about human cloning would need to research the topic thoroughly — including facts as well as others' opinions — before writing a well-thought-out piece supporting his or her opinion.
- During a study of the environment, expect students to discuss recycling, reuse and conservation. They could address concerns within the nation and their own communities, discussing ways communities approach those concerns. Subsequently, their assignment could be to identify one area of environmental concern within the school or community not addressed successfully and conduct research to determine key factors, such as cause, area involved, public attitude, current legislation and potential future complications. They could then identify an audience and communicate their findings, using specific details from research to support conclusions.
  - A student responding to this assignment might design a comprehensive school recycling plan and submit it to the principal for implementation on a one-month trial basis.
  - Another student might identify an environmental concern requiring legislation and then write to an appropriate governmental official expressing reasons for concern and proposing ideas for future legislation.
  - Another student might write a brochure proposing better neighborhood environmental practices. It would include justification for the practices and implementation specifics.

Mathematics classes

- Students can create a "Mathematicians Wall of Fame" by researching prominent mathematicians and their achievements. The wall of fame would include photographs, examples of their work and biographical information.
- Since students often ask about real-life applications of mathematics skills, a group of students could interview business people in various occupations to determine how they use mathematics. They could compile what they learn into a brochure or PowerPoint presentation teachers or counselors could use with students.

Social studies classes

- Have students read a historical fiction book, research its time period and then write a review focused on an evaluation of its historical accuracy.
- Students studying a particular time or country might choose different aspects of the period or culture as the focus of a series of feature articles to be bound as a magazine. For example, students studying the Civil War might write about surgery on the battlefields, the "air force," the submarine *CSS Hunley*, the role of women during the war or the destruction of Southerners' personal property during Sherman's march to the sea. Students studying the ancient Egyptians might write articles about the mummification process, the worship of cats, the building of the pyramids or typical recreational activities.
- During a comparative study of their county and two adjacent counties, students might gather statistics about federal aid, industries, population, number of high school and college graduates, average income, employment and housing. Students make observations based on the differences and similarities between the counties and their relationship to one another. They then decide who might want or need to know what they found and why. (Students would use details from their research to support their key points.)
  - One student might write a feature article for the local newspaper about the impact of education and industry on those counties.
  - Another might write an editorial defending her prediction about the prospect for future growth in those counties.
  - A third student might write a brochure for the county he or she believes has the most to offer prospective residents.

Physical education/health classes

- Students might write a brochure for teens on healthy choices to address concerns over the number of young people developing Type 2 diabetes. Students would research the issue by reading current articles in magazines and newspapers and by exploring Internet resources.
- After researching different leisure sports, students might write feature articles for other teens espousing the health benefits of adopting one as a "lifestyle choice."

English/language arts classes

- Students might take a "client-centered approach" to their research, as suggested by Jennie C. Cooper in her article, "Writing for Real People: A Client-Centered Approach." Teachers can solicit "research questions" from other teachers on the staff, local citizens and celebrities. These might include "How can I attract hummingbirds to my yard?" "What can the community do to provide more evening entertainment for middle grades students?" and "What would be the most durable, cost-efficient, and engaging playground equipment for the local elementary PTA to purchase with the $6,000 raised at the Fall Festival?" Once the research has been done, students' pieces might take the form of letters, proposals, formal reports or memoranda for the "clients" who submitted the questions.
- Three or four students could work together on a group research project such as writing a history of the school. If the school has been in existence for some time, the history could be divided into decades with each group assigned a different decade. Research would involve interviewing former students and staff, as well as reading newspaper articles from local archives. Another way to divide the groups would be by categories such as changes to the building, student scholastic achievements, sports, former staff, famous graduates or typical daily schedules. As is the case with any group project, teachers need to hold individuals accountable for their contributions to the total group performance and product.
- Students might identify a concern in the school or community. They can research the concern and then present their opinions, supported by research evidence, in persuasive letters to school leaders or government officials or in letters to the editor.

Career/technical classes

- Students can produce how-to manuals for their career/technical areas. After researching a process and identifying essential steps, the manual could be directed to other students or consumers. For instance, HVAC students could produce a manual on simple repairs any homeowner could make on their heating and cooling systems. Electronics students might write manuals for winning certain computer games. Students would research the process, read models of other brochures and research characteristics of their audiences.
- Students could work together to create a business proposal for a local company. The proposal would specify how the prospective project would benefit the company, based on research into its needs.
- Students can trace the history of their career/technical area by researching how advances have changed the field. For instance, construction students could research how paint advances have impacted home building and repair. Hospitality students could investigate how computers have changed hotel booking and billing systems. Findings could be presented in a set of career brochures used to recruit students to the career cluster.
- After creating a product, students can prepare a Web page for people who will use the same process. Students should research potential problems and include cautionary notes. Visuals will help others replicate the process in the correct sequence.
- After conducting an experiment, students assume the role of a researcher asked by the company research director to develop a short proposal on how the results can be used in new product development. The proposal should include information on similar products and results of the experiment as justification for the new process or product.

Students developing any of these authentic pieces would use the process outlined in Chapter 5 for authentic writing, with special attention to Step 6, "Planning the supporting details/doing the research." Teachers can use the suggested rubrics in the Appendix to evaluate final products. In addition, other resources for teachers' use in developing authentic writing assignments are provided in the chapter.

Conclusion

Regardless of form, research assignments take time and effort for both students and their teachers. However, the return is significant. **The research process helps students deepen their knowledge of a specific content area by immersing them in the language, concepts and intellectual work of the discipline. It helps them become independent learners and competent problem solvers in any career field.** When teachers structure research projects appropriately, students explore their own interests, learn to form and support opinions, make judgments and predict outcomes and learn how to gain in-depth knowledge independently. In doing so, students achieve higher levels of thinking and are ready for the challenges they will face in continued education and preparation for a career.

High-achieving schools involve students in doing research across the curriculum as they perform experiments, make observations, solve problems, conduct surveys and read and discuss issues with others. Such schools recognize that all these activities constitute ongoing research — an activity not occurring only when students are working on a formal research paper.

School leaders and teachers must provide ongoing opportunities for students to read, observe, listen, discuss and reflect in all subject areas. They must encourage students to explore topics leading to a deeper understanding of content. They must craft assignments that challenge students as learners. Only then will students become high-level thinkers capable of developing effective writing using information gleaned from outside sources to develop their own ideas and solve problems.

Resources

Cooper, J. C. "Writing for Real People: A Client-Centered Approach." *College Composition and Communication*. Vol. 44, No. 3: 1993.

Discusses a unique way to engage students in the research process by pairing them with people outside the classroom needing answers to questions or research on a topic.

Davis, S. J. "Teaching Practices that Encourage or Eliminate Student Plagiarism." *Middle School Journal*. January 1994.

A "must read" for middle grades and high school teachers concerned about helping students avoid plagiarism.

Farmer, M., S. Zemelman, S. Yesner and B. Boone. *Composition and Grammar: Steps in the Writing Process*. Irvine, Calif.: Laidlaw Brothers Publishers, 1985.

A grammar and composition textbook with a chapter on writing research papers. Includes a sample research paper.

Gibaldi, J. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. New York, N.Y.: Modern Language Association, 1999.

A style manual for research papers, especially those written in the areas of English, arts and humanities. Ordering information can be found at www.mla.org.

Hatton, S. C. and P. L. Ladd. *Teaching Idea Development: A Standards-Based Critical-Thinking Approach to Writing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, Inc., 2002.

A practical book filled with activities teachers can use to help students improve idea development in their researched pieces.

Macrorie, K. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1998.

A non-conventional approach to the research process and the research paper. Students conduct research about issues of burning interest to themselves and then write about the process they followed and what they discovered.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, fifth edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001.

A style manual for research papers. Ordering information can be found at www.apastyle.org.

Sebranek, P., V. Meyer and D. Kemper. *Writers INC: A Guide to Writing, Thinking, and Learning*. Burlington, Wis.: Write Source Educational Publishing House, 1996.

A very student-friendly grammar and composition handbook with a chapter on "Searching and Researching," including sections on the research process, summarizing, paraphrasing, MLA guidelines for parenthetical references and a sample research paper.

Simmons, E. A. "Rethinking Research." *English Journal*. September 1999.

A reflection about the author's enlightening experiences guiding her students through the process of developing an I-Search paper rather than a traditional research paper.

Sorenson, S. *Webster's New World Student Writing Handbook*, third edition. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1997.

Contains a chapter on writing the traditional research paper, including characteristics of an effective paper, a process to follow, MLA citation guidelines and a sample research paper.

"Teaching Composition: A Position Statement." *Language Arts*, Vol. 61, October 1984.

A position paper prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Composition, which states the essential principles for the teaching of writing.

Warriner, J. *High School Handbook*. Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1993.

A grammar and composition handbook, including chapters on the writing process, composition structure and research papers.

Writing the Research Report. Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1991.

A handy, pocket-sized guide for students engaged in the research process. Follows MLA style guidelines.

CHAPTER 8

Honors English for All Students

By Jeanette Hodges and Renee Murray

In this chapter, we explore —

Raising Expectations in English Courses for All Students

- Why students should take honors English.
- Setting quality standards in an honors class.
- Requiring effort to meet honors standards.
- Organizing instruction in an honors English class.
- Using interdisciplinary connections to inspire effort.
- Making high-quality assignments in honors classes.
- Developing instructional units meeting "honors" criteria.
- Developing a sound restructuring plan.

Holding all students to the high standards of honors English is not an outrageous goal. Only 33 percent of the 54,000 students assessed in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment had mean scores at the Proficient level with just six percent at the Advanced level. (*See Table 1 on page 5 in Chapter 1.*) The exam is referenced to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test. On the same assessment, 47 percent failed to meet the *HSTW* reading goal, indicating they did not read well enough to continue education without remediation or to function effectively in the information age. (*See Table 2 on page 5 in Chapter 1 for complete information on how students scored and the reading goal.*)

Further, only 34 percent of all students completed the *HSTW*-recommended college-preparatory language arts curriculum based on three essential criteria — reading at least eight books, writing a weekly short paper and completing a research paper. **Such data have led Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of SREB and founder of *High Schools That Work*, to categorize language arts as the most tracked course in the American high school.** This pattern begins in the middle grades, according to data from the Middle Grades Assessment. Only 19 percent of eighth-graders participating in the 2002 assessment reported they were enrolled in an advanced English/language arts class.

Enrolling students in the right courses impacts achievement. Significantly more students score at or above the Proficient level when they engage in the right curriculum. Over half (54 percent) of the high school seniors who had taken college-preparatory/honors English scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, compared to 31 percent of those who had taken lower-level courses. On the 2002 Middle Grades Assessment, 53 percent of the students enrolled in advanced English scored at the Proficient or Advanced level, compared to only 27 percent of those not in advanced classes.

The poor performance of students on state and national standardized tests in reading and writing calls for drastic restructuring of both middle grades and high school language arts. *High Schools That Work* believes strongly that the way to get more students to a higher level of proficiency in reading and writing is to ask more — not less. English/language arts must be at the center of any effort to raise the literacy of middle grades and high school students.

Why students should take honors English

Although few take "honors" English, students need the intellectual rigor expected in such courses to prepare them for college and the workplace. In reality, many schools still offer three categories, or "tracks," of language arts: general education, college-preparatory and honors.

The general track English course asks students to do less reading and writing and fails to ask them to complete intellectually demanding and quality work. **Too often, the teacher assumes that students in general-level classes have neither the thinking skills nor the motivation to understand anything beyond rudimentary materials.** Students may be exposed to practical/workplace experiences, such as learning to fill out a job application or practicing for a job interview, but they are rarely presented with a realistic view of the demands of today's work world. Opportunities for problem solving, creative thinking and teamwork are usually lacking. Taking this course virtually ensures the need for remedial English or reading in college and the inability to handle the written communication skills required for the modern workplace.

The college-preparatory class has changed little in recent decades. The assumption: since these students are being prepared for higher education, college teaching methods and curriculum should be the focus. Lecture and discussion are the prevalent teaching modes. Classic literature is the core curriculum; academic writing and tests are the primary means of assessment.

In many schools, the highest-performing students in the college-preparatory track are labeled the "honors" class. Generally, the curriculum is taken at a quicker pace and in more depth than in the college-preparatory class.

Teachers have been slow to change this approach. English teachers love the written word — as printed in a book. They like the old canon and think all students should, too. That's not the world awaiting students today. Few if any will become classical scholars of English literature! **The current structure must change!**

The honors class envisioned for all students begins with the most positive elements in current honors classes: more reading and writing, opportunities for teamwork and problem solving and a strong emphasis on connecting academic concepts to real-world situations. Yet even this is not enough. The "ideal" honors class offers students a more diverse learning experience than typically in the most rigorous honors classes. Table 22 provides a view of the general and college-preparatory strands of language arts commonly offered today and a summary of the characteristics of an ideal honors class.

Table 22: Characteristics of English Classes by Levels

General or Regular English Class	Ideal Honors/College-Preparatory English Class
■ Factual knowledge valued ■ Teachers assign grades. ■ Writing focused on one draft ■ Writing focused on teacher as audience ■ Students' reading limited to literature anthology, generally read in class ■ Few or no interdisciplinary connections ■ Limited resources ■ Ability or social grouping ■ Skill sheets ■ Limited oral communications opportunities ■ Traditional assessments	■ Mastery of skills valued ■ Teachers and students evaluate work based on rubrics and standards. ■ Frequent revision required ■ Balance of writing including writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing ■ Students read widely, often outside class. ■ Intentional interdisciplinary connections ■ Variety of resources ■ Heterogeneous grouping ■ Application of learning through writing and speaking ■ Extensive oral communication opportunities ■ Mix of authentic and traditional assessments

When honors English becomes the standard rather than the rarity, much more is expected of both students and teachers. All language arts classes must provide environments where students can become engaged and take risks in their learning. **Teachers become the facilitators for learning, not the fonts of all knowledge.** They fulfill this role by probing with questions, making interdisciplinary connections and, most importantly, maintaining high expectations of achievement for all students. Instruction will shift from content coverage to meeting content standards. This new approach will require a variety of resources and a balanced approach to reading and writing.

The next few pages outline a new vision of language arts class based on putting these guiding principles into practice. To understand how this class is different from typical general classes, we discuss the effort expected from students, the quality of work necessary to make proficient learners and how to organize instruction to help students reach these goals.

Great Caesar's Ghost!

There I was in front of a classroom of sophomores, excitedly flailing my arms and rambling on about *Julius Caesar*, a play my students would study intensely for six weeks. I had been thoroughly indoctrinated in Shakespeare and *Julius Caesar* was one of my favorites.

As I droned on, I glanced out at a sea of blank faces. But I would not be daunted. I trudged forward. Finally, one brave soul broke my reverie, "Mrs. Hodges, why do we have to study this Shakespeare stuff?" I stammered. I steamed. I spewed. "Shakespeare is a classic playwright. Besides, since most of you are going to college, you need the discipline of analyzing great literature!" They weren't convinced. I didn't even convince myself.

At that moment, I realized that for the language arts classroom, the reading passage becomes the vehicle for content standards rather than an end in itself. Instead of teaching a unit on *Julius Caesar*, it would make better sense to first establish a broader context, such as a life issue, problem or question as a guiding principle.

That student who questioned why we studied "this Shakespeare stuff," had a valid point.

Setting quality standards in an honors class

Often the emphasis in language arts classes is on covering content, not on helping students meet standards. The aim of instruction, however, is to help all students meet the standards that will prepare them for the next study level and for life.

All of us are passionate about our content or we wouldn't be teachers. The difficult task: sifting concepts and facts within the content framework to determine what our students **need** to **know** and be able to **do**. What are the guiding principles and critical concepts of our content areas? **We need to face the realization that much of what we teach is interesting but not necessary for conceptual understanding.**

SREB took a further step recently in defining what students should know and be able to do as they enter high school to be successful in a rigorous English curriculum. A new report outlines recommended prerequisite skills for all students that are aligned with state and national standards. The focus is on the essential core that will allow students to become successful readers, writers, speakers, listeners and researchers. (*See information about this report in the sidebar on the next page, in Chapter 3 and on the SREB Web site, www.sreb.org.*)

ACT has also defined standards for what students need to know and do to be ready for the rigors of college courses. Its transition standards outline requisite skills in each range on the ACT assessment. To avoid remedial reading courses at most colleges, students need to score above 18. The skills necessary to score in the 20-23 range on reading and English are identified in Table 14 on page 33 in Chapter 3.

Asking **why** students need to know what we teach takes us to broader concepts such as betrayal, power or political struggles. It takes us into content connections, a bridge from prior knowledge to new knowledge and into the realm of knowledge application. **When we take this leap, we give students a reason for learning content.**

Making the curriculum relevant will require intensive planning to determine how to teach students critical standards and incorporate them into meaningful instructional units relating to issues beyond the classroom. Later in this chapter we discuss in more detail how to develop instructional units meeting this criteria.

Students, Start Your Reading!

After many years of teaching, I encountered a mainly male class of sophomores that seemed to be a bit of an enigma. They were just so passive and none of the strategies I tried seemed to work. They certainly didn't like reading, be it young adult fiction or classic literature.

When my son entered college that fall, he offered me his magazine subscriptions that he no longer had time to read. It was worth a try. I casually placed them on the bookshelves.

I could not believe the transformation. Those formerly unmotivated boys actually raced to my classroom to steal a few minutes to read *Autoweek* before class began. Their lively discussions completely changed the tone of the classroom. They were actually arguing about the articles, challenging the authors and each other.

I got more magazines for my classroom, and my units were completely revamped to include a nice mix of different types of reading. The students were more engaged in their learning, were learning at higher levels and producing better work. Some of them even wrote such cogent letters to the editor and feature pieces that they were published. Now that's "authentic."

SREB Publishes Report on What Students Need To Know for Success in High School

Getting Students Ready for High School College-preparatory/Honors English: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do outlines the essential readiness components necessary to prepare all students for a rigorous high school English sequence. The new SREB publication explains 17 key indicators and includes Proficiency-level descriptors for each. Also included are sample assignments and assessments to meet proficiency. The guide and companion documents in mathematics and science are available from the SREB publications office and at www.sreb.org.

Requiring effort to meet honors standards

Effort means that students will be expected to read, write and speak more and better. Conveying a sense of high expectations for all students has a great impact. If we believe in our students, they will believe in themselves. Motivation plays an important role. Shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom and grouping students flexibly by interests and learning needs is motivational. Yet it would be naïve to imagine that all students will succeed in an environment where expectations are higher and the work load is greater without adults assuming the responsibility for seeing that students get the extra time and help to meet honors standards.

□ Doing More

Sports team coaches understand that when players are weak in a skill, the players must practice more and work harder to improve. This idea has little credence in many language arts classrooms. Students who don't like to read or write often tend to slide by with minimum effort and are not exposed to a wide range of reading materials or routinely asked to construct their own meaning of assignments. Doing work sheets, answering end-of-chapter questions and doing few — if any — reading and writing assignments outside class does not inspire students to make their best efforts.

In a restructured language arts class, students will experience a balanced reading, writing and speaking program and will work much harder to do more of all three. Table 23 on the next page offers an overview of what a more demanding list of expectations might include for middle grades and high school English/language arts classes.

Table 23: Meeting Higher Expectations in Middle Grades and High School

In a more rigorous language arts course, students will complete the following:

Reading	Novels	Six per year
	Short stories	15 per year
	Nonfiction books	Four per year
	Poems	20-30 per year
	Magazine and newspaper articles and essays	One per week
	Instructions, manuals, directions and other technical material	Five per year
Speaking	Individual speeches or presentations	Three to five per year
	Reading aloud or acting in a play	Two to three per year
	Leading discussion or delivering instructions	One per month
Listening	Response to live or recorded presentations	Three to five per year
	Take notes	Weekly
	Organize information from listening	Weekly
Writing	Response to reading, listening or viewing	Daily
	Short papers of one to three pages that are graded	Weekly
	Longer papers (over five pages) including variety of fiction, persuasive, technical, practical and reflective pieces	Monthly
	Formal research paper with appropriate documentation	Annually

Organizing instruction in an honors English class

□ A balanced approach excites students.

Teachers can engage many more students in learning when they provide a balanced reading and writing program. Although reading the classics, writing academic essays and writing formal research papers remain essential parts of language arts courses, they are not the only focus.

Ideally, the language arts curriculum reflects the wide variety of reading that students will encounter in college and in life. A balanced program includes opportunities for students to read for three different purposes, as defined by the NAEP Reading Framework.

The three purposes for a balanced reading program are

- **Reading for literary experience:** Readers explore human emotions and events by reading novels, short stories, poems, plays and essays.
- **Reading to gain information:** Students gain information by reading magazines, newspapers, textbooks, encyclopedias and books.
- **Reading to perform a task:** Readers apply what they learn from materials such as bus or train schedules, directions for repairs, games, classroom procedures, tax forms or maps.

Since our goal is to make the majority of students Proficient readers, what will they need to learn to attain this goal? Let's look at what Proficient readers look like near the end of high school when reading for each of the three purposes.

Literary reading is designed to teach students to identify and analyze literary elements, general structures and common themes. It allows students to explore the human condition and consider interconnections among events, emotions and possibilities. Proficient readers can identify significant literary devices in various genres that define a writer's style, such as metaphor, symbolism, dialect, irony, personification and foreshadowing and use those elements to interpret the work. The readers' orientation when reading for literary experience involves assessing how the author explores or uncovers experiences and engaging in vicarious experiences through the text.

Reading to gain information requires determining the author's purpose, main points, supporting details and examples. Students are expected to use organizational features such as prefaces, afterwords, appendices, citations, endnotes, bibliographies, menus and hypertext links to locate information and increase understanding. Depending on what they are reading, readers need to know the rules of literary criticism, historical sequences of cause and effect or scientific taxonomies. Students read to find specific information needed for a research project or general information. Proficient readers are adept at summarizing, paraphrasing and categorizing information. This type of reading provides opportunities for high-level thinking. It involves predicting, making inferences, identifying relevant and irrelevant information, distinguishing fact from opinion and identifying bias. Editorials, letters to the editor, speeches and personal essays challenge students to synthesize information, to connect ideas to personal experiences and current events, to agree or disagree with the author and with their peers and to assess the quality of writing.

Reading to perform a task requires students to learn a logical, sequential process to achieve a concrete goal, such as putting together a piece of furniture, learning how to play a game or following instructions provided by a teacher or textbook. Readers apply the information, not simply understand it. The ability to follow printed instructions and apply them is an essential skill for virtually any career path.

Teachers must determine the appropriate balance of each of these types of reading in their language arts classes. One way is to look at your state standards. Assessment frameworks will indicate the priorities placed on each of these types of reading. Typically, less than half of a state's reading assessment will be literature-based. The *HSTW* reading assessment covers only reading skills for adult life and not literary reading. The Middle Grades Assessment includes a small number of literary passages and questions. The content of other classes also impacts the balance. Most task-related reading is done in classes other than language arts. Although comprehension skills for these passages should be included in all English classes, they are not the primary focus of an honors English curriculum. **The honors class includes a balance of all three types of reading materials and corresponding skills for comprehension.**

While the teacher is expected to integrate a variety of reading types within standards-based units, there must be provision for some self-selection or student choice. Allowing for some choice in reading selections engages students and nurtures a classroom community of learners. Giving students choices does not mean there are no guidelines, however. It does allow students to select from teacher-identified options to meet a goal. For example, if the topic is characterization techniques, the teacher can offer a choice of books or short stories providing varied examples.

Student choice includes more than reading selections, however. If students are to become life-long readers, they need to have classroom time for various levels of reading difficulty. Some reading is to be analyzed critically, some to be connected to prior knowledge or experience and some simply to be savored. Exposing students of any reading ability level to a steady diet of difficult text can be counterproductive, turning good readers into reluctant readers.

In a rigorous language arts curriculum, expect all students to read eight to 10 books each year. This goal will likely entail summer reading.

Expect students to generate and respond to questions and reflect on what they have read in a variety of ways that include

- **Text to text** — connections among various reading materials;
- **Text to world** — connections to real life; and
- **Text to self** — connections to personal experience.

In **writing**, students would have experiences in writing-to-learn, writing-to-demonstrate-learning and authentic writing, as detailed in Chapter 5. In that chapter, we lay out a plan for balancing the three types of writing and provide many examples. In addition, Chapter 7 discusses research writing in depth. Certainly, the language arts class bears major responsibility for teaching students various forms of writing, but other classes must reinforce use of these forms to help students learn the content of those subjects.

A language arts class taking the honors approach engages students in some type of writing-to-learn activity every day. A popular approach: expect students to respond to a daily writing prompt. Frequently, the prompts will be directly related to that day's lesson. At other times, students may be given choices regarding their journal entry. Typically, no more than five or 10 minutes at the beginning of class will be devoted to this activity. However, many pieces starting as short journal entries may be developed into longer authentic pieces such as feature articles, letters to the editor, editorials or proposals for presentations.

Students in a rigorous language arts class will submit one piece of writing weekly for grading. This one- to three-page paper can come from the writing-to-learn activities described above. Another source will be papers used to demonstrate learning, such as open-response questions or essays. The third type will be authentic writing. Students are not likely to submit an authentic piece each week because of the extensive revision required; however, these papers should be a regular part of classroom work and assessment.

Expect students to always be working on an authentic piece in language arts class with the goal of completing at least one or two each month that have gone through the process described in Chapter 5. This is a powerful way of connecting learning to the outside world. Some of these writing assignments can be used to meet requirements in another class as well. For example, a student might write an editorial on environmental issues related to topics studied in science class. Another student could write a feature article for the local newspaper about a historical site or event as part of a social studies assignment.

These types of assignments meet the criteria of giving students some choice about how they meet a requirement and maintain strong connections to authentic issues outside the classroom. Another example can be to identify an area where students are having difficulty, such as in providing supporting details. The teacher can allow students to write in a variety of formats — a business letter, a proposal, a news article and an editorial — but the goal will be to look at how they support their theses.

It's important to look for variety in the types of materials used as well. New textbooks can be almost seductive with their "bells," "whistles" and ancillary materials. Beware of claims that textbook publishers sometimes make about being aligned to state or national standards. Such claims may lead the teacher into a textbook-driven rather than an outcome-driven approach to teaching. **With a textbook-driven approach, it is easy to de-emphasize critical concepts or standards.**

Within every school, many resources go untapped. Once critical concepts are identified, colleagues such as the library media specialist and other teachers may offer suggestions. The Internet provides a wealth of additional resources such as virtual museums, virtual libraries, online articles and WebQuests. For instance, the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association and Marco Polo recently launched a new Web site project, *ReadWriteThink*, that includes standards-based lesson plans, peer-reviewed Web resources and classroom-tested activities for teaching reading and language arts. The Resources list at the end of this chapter include additional sources of information.

□ Oral communication facilitates higher-order thinking.

"Literacy" includes **oral communication**. Without proficient speaking and listening skills, students will be ill-prepared to meet the demands of the workforce, especially in problem solving and team building. There are two types of oral communication that are important components of an effective emphasis on listening and speaking: learning conversations and presentations.

Learning conversations are instructional tools that involve students in topic discussion as teams or as a whole class. In a restructured language arts class, students have many opportunities to present their own views, listen to others' viewpoints, arrive at conclusions and benefit from the collective wisdom of the group.

Effective learning conversations allow students to:

- apply critical listening, observing and thinking skills in a variety of situations;
- analyze persuasive techniques when listening and observing to make informed decisions; and
- collaborate to solve problems or to analyze situations.

Students will be more at ease and better skilled in formal speaking situations, such as speeches and presentations, if they have ample opportunities to hone their thinking, speaking and listening skills in informal "learning conversation" situations.

Some strategies that teachers can use include

- **Socratic Seminars** — Structured sessions on a specific topic featuring student-led questions and discussions.
- **"Fish Bowl" Discussions** — A technique facilitated by questions posed by the teacher. An inner circle of students — "the fish bowl" — has the responsibility for the discussion. An outer circle of students has the responsibility of listening and observing the inner circle. Any person in the outer circle may tag a student in the inner circle to add information or to replace the student, depending on the format chosen.
- **Roundtable Discussions** — These discussions are led by the teacher.
- **"Soapbox Debates"** — An informal debate technique where students present a topic within time restrictions followed by rebuttal from other students within the same time restrictions.
- **"Four Corners" Debates** — Four debate teams are established according to *strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree* and *disagree* positions. The teams each meet in a corner of the room to plan their argument for class presentation. Students may use the discussion as a springboard for further investigation or writing.

Oral presentations are an effective way for students to demonstrate what they know and can do. In addition, they hone students' abilities to think clearly and logically about a topic and to develop and present their understandings to peers or outside audiences.

Oral presentations allow students to:

- demonstrate awareness of audience, purpose and situation — with or without using technology;
- use correct and appropriate language in speaking/presenting; and
- develop and apply appropriate verbal and nonverbal techniques such as sufficient volume, modulation of voice, inflection, tempo, feeling, expression, tone, enunciation, physical gestures, body movement, eye contact and posture to enhance delivery.

When students have frequent opportunities to hear and critique their own and others' oral presentations, they become more adept at responding appropriately and evaluating presentations.

Using interdisciplinary connections to inspire effort

The ideal language arts class will offer students numerous opportunities to connect reading, writing and speaking to other disciplines and to real-world applications. In order to make interdisciplinary connections for students, teachers first must make them for themselves. Teachers need to clarify their own understanding of critical content and then share that understanding with colleagues from other disciplines. That's when all the rich connections are made. However, interdisciplinary connections will not be sustained or consistent unless teachers have collaborative planning time. **Creative scheduling may be necessary to provide for team planning and reflection — it must be a priority.**

Helping students make interdisciplinary connections means providing opportunities for students to engage in reading and writing that connects directly to their other courses. Often a reading assignment permitting student choice can lead to interdisciplinary projects that bring together students' work in mathematics, social studies, science, art, music or career/technical subjects with their language arts studies. When this occurs, students can see the vital role of language arts in their lives. School-wide projects provide wonderful avenues for students and teachers to collaborate across the curriculum. (*See the sidebar for an example of one such project.*)

On a smaller scale, interdisciplinary projects still provide many benefits. Students learning about the history of mathematics, for instance, may read a biography and write a review. The review can be taught in English for format and style while it is assessed in mathematics for content and relevancy to current studies. Business proposals are a vital part of career/technical studies. Students in a construction class may write a proposal to a local bank for funding the construction of a home, for example. The English class can again be the arena for developing the skills to address this specific audience and purpose, while the construction trades teacher collaborates on accuracy and feasibility of the plan.

Toxic Substances Provide Focus for In-depth School-wide Project

Vincent Middle/High School (Alabama) students participated in a school-wide project concerning toxic substances at the Anniston Army Depot. Students researched, experimented and interviewed as they learned about a general topic in depth. Their learning was displayed through oral presentations, poster exhibits, videos, models, research reports and other publications.

English teachers played a significant role by teaching the writing skills necessary for authentic publication. They also included works of fiction and nonfiction that supported student learning about toxic substances. Their teaching was critical in "raising the bar" so that all students produced work at higher levels.

Students rose to the challenge by creating top quality work for real-world audiences that translated their communication skills into many content areas. One teacher said, "We were amazed by what good work all of our students could do."

□ Student-centered instruction

When a classroom is teacher-centered rather than student-centered, individual student differences are rarely considered. By contrast, a student-centered teacher recognizes that students don't all learn in the same way and at the same pace. The savvy teacher realizes it is his or her role to discover students' interests and learning styles and to differentiate instruction accordingly in order to get all students to meet the same high standard. This does not mean the teacher relinquishes control to the students, never requiring all students to read the same selection or write the same type of paper. **Rather, the teacher designs learning activities that address standards while allowing students some choice when appropriate.** For instance, all students will write a research paper, but they will select their own topics.

Differentiation of instruction encompasses three broad areas: content, process and product. To differentiate by **content**, the teacher offers student choice of text or reading materials, based on the student's interests and learning needs. If outcomes (i.e., what students should know and be able to do) frame the standards-based unit, then the materials or topics are vehicles for learning, not the learning itself.

To differentiate by **process**, the teacher can employ various teaching or learning strategies addressing students' learning style preferences to enhance the learning process. In differentiating by process, the teacher ensures all students are meeting the same standards and are more motivated to do it.

To differentiate by **product**, the teacher offers various options for knowledge assessment. If the unit focus has been on critical concepts and skills, there should be a variety of ways students can demonstrate what they have learned.

Strategies That Inspire Students' Thinking

Ask follow-up questions:

"Why?"

"Do you agree?"

"Can you elaborate?"

"Tell me more."

"Can you give an example?"

Play devil's advocate:

Require students to defend their reasoning against different points of view.

Ask students to unpack their thinking:

"Describe how you arrived at your answer."

Cue student responses:

"There is not just a single correct answer for this question. I want you to consider alternatives."

From: Division of Instruction,
Maryland State Department of Education

□ Grouping by interests

All students benefit if the class is a mixed-ability group or if students are grouped according to their needs or interests. If the teacher truly shifts from being the dispenser of all knowledge to a more balanced approach of developing students, an independent learner results.

There are many ways to **flexibly group** students. After introduction to a unit, the teacher can have the students choose reading materials or topics relating to the same theme. Students selecting the same novel may be grouped into **literature** or **reading circles** to share responses to their reading and to work together on a culminating book project. If students select a group based on the topic, they can **jigsaw** or subdivide their work to share the workload and conduct meaningful research. Individual "experts" on a given subtopic add strength and insight to the group project. The work of an individual team member, sometimes referred to as a "jigsaw piece," is then inserted into the larger "puzzle."

Students will have the opportunity to work with many others in the class throughout the school term. Student inventories for interests, learning styles or multiple intelligences are useful in helping the teacher determine how to set up balanced groupings of students. Keep the groups small and structured enough to keep the students on task.

Groups work especially well for writing instruction. In a writing workshop setting, the teacher may be conferencing with one student or a small group of students while others are working individually or in small groups on specific writing or grammar skills.

□ High expectations promote high achievement.

All students can learn at high levels if the teacher remains focused on what students should know and be able to do at the end of a unit and provides a step-by-step process ensuring student success. To learn at high levels and ultimately to become life-long learners, students need structured tasks to guide them through the process of investigation including generating and testing hypotheses, problem solving and decision-making. (*The sidebar on the previous page provides examples of open-ended questions or problems that teachers can use to extend students' thinking.*)

Eventually, students must move to a higher level of thinking by generating questions in small groups or in pairs. The teacher can cue students with question stems such as, "How can. . . When would. . . Why will. . . Why is. . . How might. . ." **By being the facilitator for learning rather than the dictator of knowledge, the teacher creates a community of learners within the classroom that will enable all students to become independent learners and thinkers.**

□ Provide extra help.

Some students —from 10 to 80 percent — will not succeed in a rigorous language arts class unless they are given extra time and help. The approach that will get more students to the Proficient level is supplementing challenging classroom instruction and assignments with extra support. This can take the form of a second course focusing on reading and writing strategies designed to help students become more adept in these areas. Or, students can be provided tutorial support outside of class. Many schools are now adopting summer programs for students in middle grades and high school who have been identified as deficient in literacy skills based on state-mandated assessments. (*See the sidebar for one such program.*)

A Summer Program to Help Students Meet High Standards

Polytech High School in Woodside, Delaware, has implemented a summer program for entering students scoring "well below standards" or "below standards" on the state's eighth-grade assessment in reading. (Mathematics is also included in this program.) Effective in 2002, students who score "well below standards" are required by state law to attend summer school. In 2002, 100 percent of the mandated students and 73 percent of the students scoring "below standards" attended the summer program. The program follows an integrated approach to instruction. Students solve real-world problems and participate in hands-on activities. Instructional teams include academic, technical and special-needs teachers working together.

Results so far have been encouraging. In 2002, 59 percent improved their reading scores and 51 percent improved their scores overall from "well below standards" or "below standards" to "meets standards." Students still not meeting state standards by the ninth grade take a reading course and a college-preparatory English course. Additionally, they receive academic coaching after school as needed.

When a school decides to enroll all students in rigorous language arts courses, it must match that commitment with a strong program of extra assistance. With such support, the majority of students can become Proficient-level readers, writers and speakers who are able to demonstrate their knowledge on rigorous assessments and in future higher learning and careers.

Making high quality assignments in honors classes

When we think of **quality**, we must examine the level of assignments and their adequacy to evaluate student achievement. We cannot expect students to meet high standards with low-level assignments. Performance evaluations must be designed to accurately measure what students know and can do.

□ Quality work starts with quality assignments.

Assignments allowing students to exemplify the highest standards of excellence are a critical dimension of the "honors" approach to language arts. Laser-like attention to those details that cause assignments to rise from low-level to high-level will allow students to get more out of their learning. Quality work doesn't happen by accident. It takes careful planning, clear expectations and authenticity.

Quality assignments are

- aligned to unit concepts or standards;
- designed to be grade appropriate;
- designed to be developmentally appropriate;
- varied in type, difficulty and in time to complete;
- designed to encourage risk-taking;
- designed to encourage collaboration;
- organized in a way to make sense to students;
- presented in a way for students to see connections;
- presented in multiple ways;
- presented so students can develop the skills for mastery;
- designed so students build on previous skills or knowledge;
- linked to the culminating performance, task or product;
- presented with examples of "good" work;
- presented so that students can self-assess; and
- critiqued by multiple assessors, including the teacher, peers and others.

Quality assignments are essential if students are to reach Proficient levels of learning. Table 24 provides guidelines to help teachers develop assignments that will inspire high-level learning. This scoring guide addresses the quality of assignments, not student work.

Table 24: Teacher Assignment Scoring Guide

Criteria	Comments		
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Assignment is clearly connected to standards.			
Student instructions are clearly written.			
Assignment accurately measures objective.			
Assignment and content are appropriate for grade level.			
Assignment is presented in engaging and motivating style.			
Assignment calls for higher-level thinking.			
Assignment addresses student understanding of the unit's essential question(s).			
Content is accurate.			
Assignment has no errors in grammar and spelling.			
Assignment encourages student self-assessment.			
Assignment includes examples of "good" work.			
Rubrics accurately measure the identified content and task.			
Scoring guide is fair.			
Scoring guide is written in student language.			

Quality assignments come from reflective teaching — teachers willing to examine student work to inform instruction, teachers critical of themselves and teachers always searching for ways to improve their craft. Teachers need many opportunities for reflection about their teaching practice. In a broad sense, reflection is at the heart of meaningful teaching and learning. Teaching becomes more effective and intentional when teachers analyze student work to inform their instruction. In sampling class work, they should look for patterns to determine what worked, what didn't and next steps in instruction.

Learning also becomes more meaningful and relevant to students when they are encouraged to reflect about their learning. **The teacher can cue students with questions such as, "What is important: did you learn that today? What are you still having trouble with? What do you need to learn about next?" This process helps everyone remain focused on critical concepts and important interdisciplinary connections.**

One important dimension of engaging students in quality assignments involves exploring new ideas and forms beyond their comfort zone. This includes working frequently in teams, being expected to participate in regular learning conversations, making presentations in front of peers, going beyond worksheets and fill-in-the-blank answers to more open-response assignments and exams. Students will start more frequently with a blank page, requiring them to search for answers, rather than with a drill sheet.

□ Authentic ways to measure achievement

No one can argue that there is a place for traditional assessments such as quizzes, tests and academic essays. Good traditional assessments require students to think and perform at high levels. Such assessments are needed to check for understanding. However, we must also give students opportunities to extend and apply what they have learned. Relevant and meaningful culminating performances, assignments or products and authentic writing assignments provide such opportunities.

Finding new ways to assess student learning takes careful planning. After the teacher identifies the critical concepts or standards for a unit of study, he or she needs to determine what type(s) of culminating assessments address those critical concepts or standards in a real-world context. This can involve completion of a project, making a presentation involving technology, writing something for submission to an outside audience or developing another type of exhibit.

Six Features of Effective Instruction in High-performing Schools

- **Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple-lesson types.** These include **separated** instruction to learn a particular skill, item or rule; **simulated** activities in which students apply concepts and rules within a targeted unit of study; and **integrated** activities that provide a way for students to put their understanding to use in completing larger, more meaningful activities.
- **Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.** Curriculum is aligned to address the underlying knowledge and skills necessary to perform well on high-stakes tests. Overt test preparation is limited to a brief time just before testing begins.
- **Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum and life.** Lessons are connected to students' lives in and out of school in ways that enable them to see how the skills and knowledge they are gaining can be used productively in a wide range of situations.
- **Students learn strategies for doing the work.** They discover how to think about, approach and do assignments in each subject. Teachers divide new and difficult tasks into segments and overtly teach the processes that will enable students both to complete tasks and learn how to think about them.
- **Students are expected to be generative thinkers.** Teachers engage students in creative and critical uses of their knowledge and skills through activities that generate deeper understandings.
- **Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration.** Students work in teams and learn how to take part in thoughtful dialogue with others. They play the multiple roles of learners, teachers and inquirers; they can also consider issues from multiple perspectives.

Based on a study of 44 classrooms in 25 schools in four states, comparing typical programs with those that get outstanding results. Full report, Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well *and other reports and case studies resulting from this study can be found at http://cela.albany.edu.*

Source: *National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement*

Although authentic assessments are a meaningful way to measure student achievement, traditional paper and pencil exams will still remain an essential part of language arts courses. In fact, common end-of-unit and/or end-of-course exams should be developed at each grade level. These exams offer an effective way to evaluate the achievement of all students against common standards. They also provide school leaders with valuable insights about the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and differences in instruction from class to class.

Even in traditional assessments, expect teachers to include more constructed response items. Questions must move beyond simple recall. For instance, after a unit in which students studied short story techniques, the evaluation will assess reading skills beyond simple recall of the main characters, themes or new vocabulary words. Students will read new passages to demonstrate the skills they have learned, not just facts recalled. The rubric in Table 25 on the next page measures the effectiveness of teacher-written questions to assess reading skills.

Table 25: Rubric to Evaluate Quality of Teacher Questions for Assessing Students' Reading Skills

Criteria	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Reading Level	Explicitly stated information	Connections within paragraphs required, overall impressions, some "reading between the lines"	Comprehension of both literal and figurative meaning; extend text by connecting to other information; summarize
Thinking Level	Factual recall	Comprehension level, may include simple predictions or other inferences	Requires students to go beyond the literal to make comparisons, connections to real life or evaluations
Type of response	Answers *what, when, where* or *who* in brief statements — only one correct answer	Answers *how* in brief statements with some details — one "best" answer	Answers *why*, explaining reasoning with full support — allows multiple responses if supported by student
Correlation with standards	Aligned to the big ideas	Aligned with standard	Closely aligned with standard and proficiency exemplars
Correlation with reading passage	Question requires little reading; may address general information	Requires specific information within passage	Aligned with both literal and inferential meaning of the passage
Scaffolding	Multiple, disconnected parts	Multiple parts that are clearly labeled	Multiple parts are arranged so that student makes a logical progression to the answer
Language	Main ideas can be understood by student, although some language may be above grade level or contain jargon	Uses grade level language; question is stated correctly	Simple language that specifically guides student to the required answer

Developing instructional units meeting "honors" criteria

In the previous sections, we presented a vision of restructured language arts courses that meet "honors" standards regarding structure, level of effort and quality of work. To help readers understand how this might occur in a language arts class, let's look at strategies for use in developing study units. **Four broad areas merit strong consideration as teachers plan standards-based units as part of a more challenging curriculum for all students:**

Focus on significant content and skills that foster meaningful interdisciplinary connections and that relate to real-life learning situations. Identify a manageable number of district, state or national standards that can be addressed through the study of a significant problem, issue or question. Next, dissect this central focus by identifying what constitutes essential learning. Determine what students are to know and do at the conclusion of the unit and why this is important. Finally, make sure the unit is related to real life.

Instruction should include a variety of strategies and many resources. By putting together a rich array of student-centered learning experiences addressing the range of learning styles and special needs of students, teachers can lead students to in-depth study of the assigned topic.

Make evaluation relevant and meaningful to students and ensure that it provides for continuous assessment. Identify how essential learning will be assessed. **All units need to include a culminating product or performance with a clearly defined task, audience, purpose and role for the student.** The assessments will measure student progress against established quality standards.

Cohesiveness of the unit requires careful linking of instruction and assessment. This is achieved by ensuring the essential questions are student-friendly and sequential. Connect all assessments to the learning focus and to the instruction/experiences students have had.

The goal is to develop units that will enable students to achieve at the Proficient level or greater. The rubric in Table 26 (*See next page.*) provides a self-evaluation tool teachers can use to consider each of the areas discussed above. Using the rubric's guidelines, teachers can evaluate units to determine the level of proficiency achieved. **Students cannot achieve at higher levels with low-level expectations and assignments.**

Zach was the classic underachiever, very bright but content with B's and C's. Besides, his long hair and disheveled appearance did not conform to the look of most of his classmates. A band student, Zach was at least passionate about one thing — his music. That particular advanced sophomore class was an interesting group. All through the fall, they drifted into English class after lunch often talking about politics. Occasionally, just to get them riled up, I would play devil's advocate. One day, after a particularly heated political lunchtime debate, I segued right into our discussion of the previous night's reading of Orwell's Animal Farm. *The discussion was lively. Students were making connections right and left between the concepts satirized in the novel and modern politics. And there was Zach. Disengaged. Quietly composing music. He seemed to ignore me. I did what any good teacher would do: I called on him. To my surprise, he casually looked up from his music and made an insightful response. This must have been a fluke. Two more times I called on Zach with the same results. Finally I had an epiphany. Zach was paying attention. He was listening intently to the discussion and even taking notes, just not the kind of notes that a very traditional teacher like me would understand. I had a Mozart in my class whose talents were being ignored. From that day forward, I did my best to nurture this gift. Years later, I happened to see Zach and he mentioned the "*Animal Farm *piece." It was a turning point for him as a student and for me as a teacher.*

Table 26: Standards-based Unit of Study
Scoring Rubric for Teacher Self-Assessment/Reflection

Scoring Criteria	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Focus ■ Includes *manageable* number of district, state, or national *standards* ■ Defines *problem, issue* or *question* for unit that addresses selected standards ■ Identifies *essential* learning ■ Indicates *what* students are to know and do and *why* ■ Relates to *real life* and is *meaningful*	Identifies *random* or *disconnected* learning	Identifies *clearly defined outcomes* (knowledge and skills) but importance isn't clear	Identifies *significant* content and skills	Identifies *significant* content and skills, *why* it is important, and *how* it relates to real life
Instruction ■ Requires students to use a variety of resources ■ Focused on student-centered learning ■ Uses a variety of strategies to address multiple intelligences, learning styles and special needs ■ Leads students to in-depth study	Uses *limited* variety of instructional strategies with *minimal* student-centered learning	Uses *some* variety of instructional strategies with *some* student-centered learning	Uses a *variety* of instructional strategies with *many* resources and *active* student-centered learning	Uses a *variety* of instructional strategies based on *student needs*, involving *numerous* resources, *active* student-centered learning and *meaningful* practice
Evaluation ■ Provides for continuous assessment ■ Identifies how essential learning will be assessed ■ Includes a culminating product/performance with clearly defined task, audience, purpose and role ■ Measures student progress against established standards of quality	Includes *irrelevant* assessments that do *not* measure continuous progress	Includes *relevant* assessments that measure student progress *periodically*	Includes *relevant* assessments that measure *continuous* progress	Includes a *variety* of relevant and meaningful assessments that measure *continuous* progress using *established criteria*
Cohesiveness ■ Ties together all components through student-friendly, sequential essential questions ■ Connects all assessments to the learning focus ■ Includes assessments that reflect the instruction	Connects *few* assessments to the learning focus	Connects *some* assessments to the learning focus	Connects *all* assessments appropriately to the learning focus, *linking* instruction and assessment	Connects *all* assessments appropriately to the learning focus, *unifying* instruction and assessment

Educators can use these guidelines to develop units of study dealing with essential concepts and skills.

The Hook

The language arts curriculum can be built on a series of guiding questions that form the underpinnings for the year's instruction. For example, for a middle grades language arts class, the following guiding questions might be used*

- How can I relate literary writing to events in the real world and to other literary writing?
- How can I use the inquiry process to help me learn about my world and share what I learn with others?
- What techniques do writers use to persuade me and how can I use those techniques to affect others?

For a ninth-grade language arts class, these questions might be used to frame the year's content

- How do reading and inquiry help me identify and define the important places in my life and clarify thoughts about them?
- How do people use different artistic forms and techniques to communicate meaning about important places and their influences?
- Through reading, speaking, listening and observing, what conclusions can I reach about my places and about how well I fit into places with important influences on me?
- Through my inquiry, what conclusions can be reached about places in my life and about places I would like to be?

The Core Content

The larger guiding question needs to be broken down into **essential questions** focusing on core concepts to be learned. For any standards-based unit, creating, posting and referring to the essential questions keep both the teacher and the student focused on key critical concepts. All activities, strategies and assessments should directly relate to at least one of the essential questions. To maintain focus on concepts pivotal to the curriculum, limit questions to two to five per unit. To engage students and to foster inquiry and higher-order thinking, make the questions open-ended and written in language that every student can understand.

The Big Bang

Planning assessment is as important as planning instruction. The last essential question must address the "so what" questions that students frequently ask: "Why do I need to learn this?" "How will I ever use it?" The last question will require students to demonstrate what they have learned with the focus on real-world applications or connections.

In the sidebar on the next page and in Table 27 on page 165, we use the essential questions framework to show how a sample unit might be developed. Teachers can use this same format to create other model units. By following this process, they can keep a good inventory of the English/language arts (ELA) priorities addressed, ensuring every unit offers students choice and a variety of reading, writing, listening, viewing and speaking activities.

** Questions are taken from the Kentucky Department of Education,* Implementation Manual for Program of Studies*, 1998*

A Sample Instructional Unit on Internal Conflict

The guiding question — or the hook — for this unit is, *"How does internal conflict affect relationships and society?"* The following essential questions establish the core content that show students specifically what they need to know:

- *What causes internal conflict?*
- *Is conflict a part of human nature?*
- *Is internal conflict a necessary part of growing up?*
- *How can we deal with it?*

The **outcomes** for the unit, specifically what students will know and be able to do, are listed in the column marked *"Correlation to ELA Priorities"* on Table 27. The many resources, including literary, informational and practical/workplace pieces, shown in the table below are not the focus for the instructional unit. Instead, they become the vehicle for the outcomes or skills. All of the rich reading, writing and listening/viewing/speaking activities support the guiding question.

The next step in planning the unit is to examine differentiation of content and process. The wide array of literary resources provides opportunities for student selection and student inquiry. Within this unit, students may choose to work individually or in small groups to explore the theme of internal conflict within various texts. Their journal entries can include comparisons of genre, style, argumentation, information and bias in several texts. Students could make comparisons of the relationship between conflict and decision-making and the influence of conflict on society. They could also make personal connections by exploring the relationship between internal conflicts and growing up.

Learning assessments can include various forms of writing, such as speeches, personal essays, personal narratives, short stories or poems. Students might choose to deliver or videotape a speech or perform a play or monologue about conflict resolution. Imagine the richness of the unit for possible collaboration with other classes. War, civil rights, labor disputes and political parties are just a few of the many social studies topics related to the theme of *conflict*. Arts, humanities and science connections would add another dimension.

Table 27: Framework for a Model Unit
The guiding question:
How does internal conflict affect relationships and society?

Sample Reading Activities	Sample Writing Activities	Sample Listening/ Viewing/Speaking Activities	Correlation to ELA Priorities	Sample Literary Resources
■ Read literary works with strong themes of internal conflict to identify causes and consequences and to analyze how authors portray conflicts. ■ Identify techniques in speeches, advertising and editorials that are used to resolve personal conflicts. ■ Read accounts of conflicts in organizations such as political parties, clubs or teams to determine how their conflicts affect society. ■ Respond to modern periodical articles that promote strategies for decision-making by determining which strategies are most realistic and the most positive.	■ Write journal entries in response to conflict in literary works. ■ Develop critiques of literary works to evaluate how authors use conflict to achieve their purposes. ■ Use notes from reading to write character sketches of people who are struggling with internal conflict. ■ Create descriptions of "Utopia" in which no internal organizational conflicts exist. ■ Write speeches that offer solutions to bring unity to groups in conflict. ■ Develop personal narratives/essays that describe poor decisions made in certain situations, evaluate the results of those decisions and recommend solutions that would produce different, positive outcomes.	■ Listen to and observe speeches by famous authors, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., or Patrick Henry, to identify the author's use of language, argument and historical references to persuade their audiences. ■ Prepare and deliver speeches, using appropriate verbal and nonverbal elements to offer group unity solutions. ■ Evaluate speeches of classmates based on persuasive techniques, delivery, language and organization.	■ Identify and clarify confusing words or phrases. ■ Understand the differences between types of texts. ■ Show an understanding of a wide variety of written and non-written texts. ■ Extend the information in a wide variety of texts. ■ Use organizational features to aid in understanding. ■ Identify and analyze literary elements, structures and themes. ■ Identify and interpret literary devices. **Writing** ■ Produce clear, well-supported written compositions. ■ Use an appropriate writing process. **Listening/ Viewing/Speaking** ■ Use techniques for oral presentations.	Brancato, Robin. "Fourth of July" Brancato, Robin. "Furlough 1944" Greene, Bette. "An Ordinary Woman" Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace* Milosz, Czeslaw. "A Song of the End of the World" Peck, Richard. "Priscilla and the Wimp" Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Tell-Tale Heart" Stockton, Frank. "The Lady or the Tiger" Strasser, Todd. "On the Bridge" Strasser, Todd. "The Wave"

Developing a sound restructuring plan

Transforming the language arts curriculum will take time. However, it shouldn't take several years to restructure the curriculum in grades six through 12 to match the vision presented here. There are several important steps necessary to facilitate the process. Two essential actions are outlined below.

Aligning the curriculum. Students cannot meet high standards without an incremental grade-by-grade approach moving them sequentially from one competency level to the next.

> *Two important questions must be answered by every school:*
>
> 1. What are the most important things for students to do and learn in each grade?
> 2. What is the required level of proficiency for each of the identified items?

There are numerous high-quality curriculum documents at the national, state and district levels that outline what students should be learning at each grade level. To transfer these global statements to the classroom, curriculum planners and teachers must decide what is most essential. Although comprehensive frameworks exist in most districts, teachers are left to make their own decisions about which parts to teach and which to omit. This wide diversity from classroom to classroom and grade to grade can result in a disjointed approach. Some competencies may never be taught while others are repeated grade after grade. **However, when educators teaching a common course make decisions about what is most important to know and when it should be taught, the result is a seamless curriculum built on essential competencies students must have.**

Answering the second question is more difficult and there is less guidance available. The following statement from the SREB report *Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors English: What Middle Grades Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do* addresses the importance of adding more specificity to curriculum statements:

> "There are numerous documents at the national and state levels that provide a plethora of standards and frameworks, but they give little guidance about the depth of understanding students need on essential readiness indicators. As a consequence, too many teachers repeat sixth-grade language arts in seventh and eighth grades rather than focusing on developing proficiency in these indicators. …Without a clear and consistent understanding of what does and does not meet standards, it is possible to claim that students are meeting standards when they have only the most basic skills."

Answering the two questions about what students need to know and do and the Proficiency level they should demonstrate are the essential components of the curriculum alignment task. It is not a simple assignment. Schools that have undertaken the process have typically taken two to three years to complete all alignment. You start by determining what it is that students should know and do as they graduate from high school to ensure success in college, work and life. Then, work backward, grade by grade, to determine the competencies to be taught at each level to arrive at the ultimate goal.

While educators may start at the senior year to align curricula, implementation should not wait until all work is complete. Although early implementation at all grade levels may find some students with gaps in skills and knowledge, an extra-help system can provide support for all students at the new higher levels. The revised curriculum can be implemented over several years by starting with the middle grades and the ninth grade in high school. Other classrooms can choose to implement certain elements while work continues on revising priorities and proficiency standards. Restructuring will take time, but that should not preclude changes taking place before all revisions are complete.

There are many excellent curriculum alignment resources and qualified individuals who can work with schools on the alignment process. (*A number of sources of help are listed in the Resources section at the end of the chapter.*) Two good resources are the readiness guide referenced above and the ACT Standards for Transition covered in Chapter 3.

Professional development. The class we have described in this chapter differs significantly from those taught in the past. To introduce new curriculum and instructional approaches, most teachers will require extensive professional development. It is not enough to say teachers will now use more cooperative learning in their classes unless training has been provided. Many will need help introducing a more diversified reading and writing program.

One way to determine critical needs for teachers is to survey them regarding strategies they feel call for professional development. The training offered by The College Board on vertical teaming to increase the rigor of all levels of English might be an effective way to restructure language arts. Some schools deciding to make English/language arts more rigorous for all students have sent their language arts teachers to an AP workshop or summer institute. These training sessions, led by experienced AP teachers, cover all aspects of AP course content, organization and methodology. Administrators also benefit from the ideas presented on how to introduce, develop and support a more rigorous English program. The ideas presented offer a starting point for revising the curriculum and instructional strategies to make all language arts courses more challenging and engaging for students. The College Board's Pacesetter English is an alternative to the traditional honors and Advanced Placement curriculum that is also based on high standards. (Information about these programs is available on The College Board Web site: www.collegeboard.com.)

Although this chapter is devoted exclusively to restructuring language arts, the chapters on the other four goals of a school-wide literacy campaign are also a source of many ideas for language arts teachers. The chapter on reading can help with building a structure and plan for expanding expectations and diversity and creating excitement about reading. The chapters on weekly and research writing can be used to guide development of a new approach to writing. The following chapter on reading and writing across the curriculum presents many valuable strategies that will work in language arts and in other courses.

Table 28 on the next page offers a three-year plan schools can follow to have more students become Proficient-level readers, writers and speakers. No one change will make a dramatic difference in the performance level of students. Rather, a combination of changes appropriate to the school's specific priority needs that are implemented incrementally and consistently will make a sustained impact. Achieving systemic change requires school leadership to think in terms of phased change over time.

Table 28: A Three-year Plan for Restructuring English/Language Arts

Year One

- Begin the alignment of curriculum to state and national content standards. Training in the alignment process will be needed. Provide time for teachers to establish entrance expectations and exit outcomes for each grade level.
- Examine *HSTW, MMGW* or other school data to determine which school practices are happening in which English classes. Using the practices discussed in this chapter that define a quality program, measure all classes. (*You may want to use the Literacy Indicators Checklists in Appendix 1 on page 194 for this purpose.*)
- Determine that 25 percent more students each year will be placed in the honors or college-preparatory curriculum, so that in four years only one track will be offered. If you begin with the freshman class, students will not know that there is any other expectation.
- Build a community need for moving more students into high-level programs through sharing data with parents, students and faculty members.
- Begin administrative observations to verify that content standards are communicated to students. Post meaningful student work and essential course or unit questions. Expect students to articulate what they are learning and *why* it is important.
- Provide professional development for teachers on strategies to raise expectations for literacy.
- Establish a school-wide reading list ensuring students have access to certain touchstone texts.
- Establish a requirement for all students to read the equivalent of five books in English/language arts and one book in every other class. Determine how students will be held accountable for the reading.

Year Two

- Complete the curriculum alignment process and have teachers work in content teams annually to revisit and revise their curriculum alignment program.
- Continue staff development with faculty study groups on appropriate instructional strategies.
- Establish "critical friends" teacher groups to help each other analyze student work to inform their instruction. Teachers should be encouraged to revise their unit/lesson plans according to the patterns or performance trends of student classroom work.
- Evaluate use of the library media center and technology for support of the accelerated curriculum.
- Begin development of common end-of-course exams for all English classes.
- Raise the common reading requirements to six books in English/language arts and two books in every other class.
- Explore implementation of a school-wide silent sustained reading period or other motivational reading and writing strategies.

Year Three

- Ensure that all faculty members understand the new common standards for literacy.
- Provide professional development for all teachers so they can maintain the same standards in reading and writing in all classes.
- Provide collaborative planning time so interdisciplinary connections can be intentional and explicit.
- Continue development of end-of-course exams and common unit exams.
- Raise the common reading requirements to eight books in English/language arts and three books in every other class.
- Explore ways to reward students for exemplary reading and writing, such as a school literary magazine, monthly awards or community rewards.

Conclusion

Parents don't keep the good ones at home; they send us their very best. As educators, we **must** establish and maintain high standards for **all** students. If we don't, the achievement gap just gets wider, leaving a large segment of our student population unable to meet the demands for a good job and postsecondary studies.

The language arts curriculum must be at the forefront in improving the literacy skills of America's students. Significant progress will not be made without the integral involvement of language arts teachers. Yet today's typical curriculum cannot help students achieve the literacy goals that *High Schools That Work* has set for students. **The restructuring of language arts in the middle grades and high school is imperative if we want all our students to become proficient, literate adults able to use these essential skills in all aspects of their lives.**

Resources

Allen, J. *It's Never Too Late*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995.

This book is a research chronicle that offers a dual approach: proven methods and pure inspiration. As a teacher-researcher, the author demonstrates how at-risk students can be reached with pragmatic strategies.

Allen, J. *Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4–12*. York, Maine: Stenhouse, 1999.

This is an outstanding book on vocabulary strategies, appropriate for all levels and all content areas.

Allington, R. L. *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs*. New York: Longman, 2001.

Nationally-recognized scholar Dick Allington offers easy-to-understand interpretations of research and shows teachers how to use a variety of best instructional practices with children who are struggling readers.

Beers, K. and B. Samuels. *Into Focus: Understanding and Creating Middle School Readers*. Norwood, Mass.: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1998.

This book deals with how to make readers active learners and promotes literature discussions.

Billmeyer, R. and M. L. Barton. *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me, Then Who?* Aurora, Colo.: Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998.

This very teacher-friendly book and accompanying blackline masters offer numerous strategies for three troublesome areas in informational text: text features, vocabulary and organizational patterns.

Burke, J. *I Hear America Reading*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1999.

English teacher Jim Burke invited readers of The San Francisco Chronicle *to write to his high school students, telling them what role books and literature have played in their lives. The results were astounding — over 1,000 pages of letters. The best are collected in this funny, poignant and inspiring book.*

Burke, J. *Reading Reminders: Tools, Tips, and Techniques*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000.

This book features Jim Burke's 100 best techniques for teaching reading.

Cunningham, P. M. and D. P. Hall. *Month-By-Month Phonics for the Upper Grades: A Second Chance for Struggling Readers and Students Learning English*. Greensboro, N.C.: Carson-Dellosa, 1998.

This book offers sequential lessons to help students in the upper grades who are having trouble decoding.

Daniels, H. *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. York, Maine: Stenhouse, 1994.

The literature/reading circle approach that is thoroughly described in this book motivates students to read and promotes critical thinking. This method is appropriate for both fiction and nonfiction.

Daniels, H. and M. Bizar. *Methods That Matter*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1998.

Daniels and Bizar discuss six structures for best practices in classrooms: integrative units, small-group activities, representing-to-learn, classroom workshop, authentic experiences and reflective assessment.

Fletcher, R. and J. Portalupi. *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8*. York, Maine: Stenhouse, 1998.

This book offers many suggestions for mini-lessons in writing.

Fogarty, R. *Literacy Matters: Strategies Every Teacher Can Use*. Arlington Heights, Ill.: Skylight, 2001.

This book explores 15 practical literacy strategies that can be used across grade levels and content areas.

Harvey, S. *Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3–8*. York, Maine.: Stenhouse, 1998.

Stephanie Harvey focuses on specific ways to engage students in nonfiction reading and writing. Though targeted at grades three through eight, this book is appropriate for high school students as well.

Harvey, S. and A. Goudvis. *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*. York, Maine: Stenhouse, 2000.

Harvey and Goudvis offer numerous, practical reading strategies appropriate for all content areas.

Keene, E. O. and S. Zimmerman. *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1997.

This book is a "must-read" for anyone interested in a reader-writer workshop structure. The methods presented here are considered to be the cornerstone for many literacy teachers and researchers.

Lane, B. *After the End*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1993.

A nationally-known writing teacher, Barry Lane presents some very powerful strategies, designed to lead students of all ages to develop a sense of ownership and authenticity in their writing.

Nagy, W. *Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1988.

Many vocabulary strategies are offered in this book that can be used in all content areas and all grade levels.

Opitz, M. F. and T. V. Rasinski. *Good-Bye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1998.

This is an excellent guide for involving students in meaningful shared reading opportunities.

Resources *continued*

Robb, L. *Easy-to-Manage Reading and Writing Conferences: Practical Ideas for Making Conferences Work*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1998.

Writing conferences are essential to students' sense of ownership and metacognition, but they can be daunting to many classroom teachers. Linda Robb offers many suggestions for managing conferences while making them truly meaningful.

Stoll, D. R. *Magazines for Kids and Teens*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1997.

This very extensive guide describes in detail many magazines that are appropriate for classroom use. Each entry includes audience, topic, cost and whether student writing samples are accepted for publication.

Web sites

Blue Web'N, www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn

This online library of over 1,200 Internet sites, categorized by subject, grade level and format, is very user-friendly.

Education World, www.education-world.com

This site provides teachers professional development information and opportunities to share lesson plans.

Family Literacy Foundation, http://cls.coe.utk.edu

Promotes families reading together.

International Reading Association, www.ira.org

The International Reading Association provides many resources for teachers on current research and practice in reading instruction.

National Council of Teachers of English, www.ncte.org

The National Council of Teachers of English offers a comprehensive array of resources for reading/writing/thinking in the language arts classroom as well as across the curriculum.

ReadWriteThink, www.readwritethink.org

This site, created by the MarcoPolo Education Foundation, the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association, provides standards-based lesson plans and Web resources that focus on integration of the Internet and language arts.

Scholastic Network, www.scholasticnetwork.com

This site offers numerous standards-based lessons and activities to support English/language arts.

CHAPTER 9

Extra Support for Struggling Readers

By Mary Ellen Lewis

In this chapter, we explore —

- why some students struggle with reading.
- how school personnel must help struggling readers.
- how classroom instruction can support struggling readers.
- how to help students outside the school day.

Remember the 17 to 83 time ratio — six hours per day for 180 days per year equals approximately 17 percent of the time. That is all the teacher influences and not really all of that when you consider that content teachers in middle grades and high schools only see students for 45–50 minutes a day — 90 minutes if there is block scheduling. Think of what can be done or undone in the remaining 83 percent of the time.

In education, we frequently despair of the struggling student because of the behaviors we see — boredom, sleeping, chronic lateness or truancy, violent outbursts of language or physical abuse. We have to look at all learning as behavior, and it is our responsibility to shape all behaviors in the classroom — scheduling, teaching, writing, reading, questioning, answering, researching, grouping and discussing. The "pay off" from appropriate learning behaviors is decreasing inappropriate behaviors.

If the classroom is designed for only the on-task, on-grade-level and engaged learner, then those who differ will feel estranged from the learning community and will disengage. The despair of the teacher will be nothing compared to that of the student with no future.

The plateau that many students reach as they enter the middle grades or high school is a troublesome reality that must be addressed. Since the goal is to get at least 85 percent of students to the Proficient level in reading, we know that there is much work to be done. Only about 40 percent of the graduates were able to meet Proficient or Advanced standards on the 2002 *High Schools That Work* NAEP-referenced reading assessment.

This guide is devoted to helping educators discover ways to get more high school graduates to the Proficient and Advanced reading levels. In this chapter we will discuss ways to address the special needs of students with the most serious problems. They are the students who score well below grade-level standards on state or other recognized tests in reading and writing. They are among the 25 percent of seniors scoring Below Basic.

Additional resources must be directed toward giving these students the practice both in and out of school that will help them:

- accurately comprehend reading matter;
- summarize with fluent and accurate written language;
- take notes;
- communicate messages; and
- listen and speak accurately.

Why some students struggle with reading

Struggling adolescent readers often display the following learning behaviors when engaged in content-reading tasks:

- unable to see how the text message connects to them;
- erratic in their abilities to find details that support big ideas or concepts;
- unable to restate ideas from text in their own words;
- physically active while reading silently — rocking, twisting hair, biting nails, sub-vocalizing, looking around at others for cues, putting their faces too close to text or heads down;
- unable to retrieve and use vocabulary related to content — no understanding of synonyms, antonyms or multiple meanings;
- only producing short answers, both orally and in writing, when demonstrating comprehension of text or extending meaning to original ideas;
- confused by graphics — maps, charts, tables, pictures — and cannot see the relationship of the graphic to the text;
- not organized when reading text — they cannot see how text organization (paragraphs, chapters, headings, sidebars) assists with understanding the message;
- not initiating independent reading — no use of magazines, books, even computer sites; and
- hard or impossible to motivate — they see no value for reading or think they are too far behind to be helped. (This sometimes comes from years of poor-quality assistance from adults.)

How do students get through elementary school and into the secondary level of education without the most basic reading skills? Let's look at some of the possible reasons why this happens.

□ Family issues: mobility, attendance, literacy

When families move a great deal in the earliest years of a child's education, the sporadic nature of school attendance influences instructional consistency. Districts do not necessarily use the same reading strategies, curricula or approaches; therefore, as children move from school to school, their exposure to skills may be much segmented and they may not get opportunities for consistent practice. Even if a family does not move around, anything that contributes to a child's lack of attendance (e.g., health issues, chronic lateness, lack of adult supervision for getting the child to school, inappropriate role models) affects the smooth exposure to and practice of skills.

The value of family reading, which influences how reading instruction is supported and supplemented through home assignments and extended reading for pleasure, is affected by the literacy level of the adults and older siblings. If there is no modeling of reading and writing among family members, children have no reason to see reading and writing as valued skills that apply outside the schoolhouse door. If the adults in the home are struggling readers, the child likely will have difficulties.

□ Learning disabilities

Findings from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) conducted by the National Institute for Literacy reveal that three percent of adults over 16 say they have a learning disability. Of those adults who reported learning disabilities, almost 45 percent of women and nearly 58 percent of men dropped out of school. Of the young people with learning disabilities who attended postsecondary school, 56 percent dropped out before acquiring a degree.

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education show that the number of children identified as learning disabled grew by a third over a period of 10 years ending in 1999. Approximately 2.8 million students were considered learning disabled and were receiving services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Sixty-three percent of these students were white, slightly over 18 percent were African-American and almost 16 percent were Hispanic.

These dismal statistics indicate the need for specialized instruction and innovative strategies for keeping students in the classroom. Working adults with self-reported learning disabilities earn substantially less money than those without learning disabilities. NALS showed that only 13 percent of the adults who reported learning disabilities were employed in professional, technical or managerial jobs. The remainder of the employed adults worked as laborers, service workers or in sales.

The impact of limited education on future opportunities makes it clear that educators must design classrooms that allow the most challenged students to see how learning relates to workplace performance.

□ Second-language learners

As we entered the 21st century, nearly eight percent of the students in America's public schools, or 3.5 million children and adolescents, were not native English speakers, according to the Center for the Study of Language and Education. This number is expected to grow considerably during the next decade.

As students from non-English-speaking families enter elementary school, the services of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are frequently available to help integrate them into the learning environment and to provide support as they increase their ability to use English for learning. Unfortunately, when these students enter American schools at the middle grades or high school level, few resources are available from trained ESL staff. Also, secondary schools have fewer reading and speech/language specialists on staff. This lack of support increases the risk that these students will drop out of school. Further, it is difficult to assess language skills, disabilities or strengths of second-language learners adequately because foreign language versions of standardized tests are not readily available.

□ The competition: media literacy

Some students have poor literacy skills because they don't need them. As adults, we often rely on media sources for our information. We rarely take time to read the newspaper from front to back, so we rely on television or radio to provide daily information. Adolescents are not only influenced by television, they often only know literary sources by the movies that have been made from them. More people have seen the film versions of *Gone With the Wind* or *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* than have — or ever will — read the books. When school reading requirements, especially those expected of poor readers, are minimal, students can get by without improving their skills. On the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, only slightly over half of the seniors said that they analyzed works of literature at least once a month. Even honors students often say they never have to "really read books," because the teacher either shows the movie or tells the students everything they need to know about the plot and characters.

Additionally, the demand for adolescents' attention is often commanded by video games that call for much more hand-eye coordination than word recognition or comprehension skills. Although the Internet has a high potential for building reading and writing skills related to research and personal correspondence, educators have failed to use it as a tool for engaging the struggling reader.

Media literacy is an area of interest and concern in schools. The effect of violent images, games whose goal is destruction, life goals that are unrealistic (super-stardom in entertainment or sports) and models of behavior and language that do not value education or literacy have great impact on the decisions of adolescents to engage or not engage in academic activities.

□ The stigma of labels

When students consistently lose ground as they move through school, teachers often refer them for evaluation and additional assistance. The evaluations, however, may result in labels such as "learning disabled," "communication disordered," "intellectually limited" or some other characterization requiring special education services. Some families are opposed to the labels, fearing they will stigmatize the child and lead into the maze of special education. Some parents view entry into special education services as the beginning of a "sentence" that does not lead to re-entry into regular education settings. **Special education must be viewed as a service, not a sentence.**

As students enter the middle grades, their concern with fitting in and not needing special attention increases. Teachers need to realize the importance of a "universal design" for classroom instruction so that the varied experiences of students are accommodated within a heterogeneous classroom.

□ Lack of trained reading specialists

Ironically, just as the need for specialized educational support for students at risk of not succeeding in reading becomes most acute during middle grades and high school, the availability of literacy support staff (reading teachers, reading specialists) decreases. Some middle grades schools have reading specialists available to work with struggling readers, but most high schools do not. (*See other information about reading specialists/literacy coaches in Chapter 3.*)

□ Variability of teacher experience, training and attitudes

The skill and knowledge base of teachers is vital to the success of students as they learn how to read and use language skills. Yet teachers' abilities to help students appear to be declining. Advance preparation of teachers for helping students improve reading and writing skills is inadequate. In fact, two-thirds of the *MMGW* teachers surveyed in 2002 said that they needed staff development in using reading and writing for learning. On the *HSTW* survey of high school teachers, only five percent said they had received in-depth training during the past three years in using reading and writing for learning.

Colleges and universities that offer teacher training vary in the emphasis they place on reading instruction. Many agree with the commonly held conviction of high school teachers that they do not have the responsibility for teaching reading — students are presumed to have learned the basics of comprehending text by the time they reach high school. The emphasis is on mastery of the content curriculum with little regard for how important reading and writing skills are for student success in all subjects.

For students headed into the workforce from high school, career path programs typically focus on providing learning experiences that promote an understanding of technical content and job skills. Students in their first jobs are frequently surprised to learn just how much literacy skills are needed in their daily work. This gap in the perceived need and the actual demand for reading and writing in the workplace was discussed earlier in this guide, but this chapter will elaborate on ways to reach the student-as-worker to refine literacy for future employment.

How school personnel must help struggling readers

This section explores some proven strategies to help struggling readers. Some suggestions will be equally effective in meeting the needs of all students. This is appropriate since the goal is to develop a classroom structure and design that effectively addresses the needs of all students from the most gifted to the most challenged.

□ Teamwork for best results

As important as well-trained teachers are in middle grades and high school classrooms, they need to partner with each other and with specialists to help struggling readers improve reading and related language skills. Schools can arrange for grade-level teachers to meet and plan as a team to address the disabilities of students, consult with experts in the field to learn the limits of students with disabilities and to learn innovative methods to advance those students' reading skills through strategies that advance both reading and subject matter achievement.

When teachers plan as a team, students can learn to connect similar tasks that extend over multiple content areas. For example, thematic units of instruction based on big concepts can be used to connect learning across disciplines. A theme like "money" can connect language arts classes to mathematics and social studies by providing opportunities to explore stimulus materials such as newspapers, magazines or financial planning documents. Students can explore economics, write advertising copy, learn to recognize propaganda devices, use the language of buying and selling, and understand savings or writing checks. If students see how basic skills needed for one task connect to other tasks, they put much greater value on learning them.

Teachers can share with each other the structures they use in their classrooms: how they set standards and expectations, how much variety they provide in instruction, how much independence they feel is appropriate in content instruction and how they fully engage students in completing challenging assignments. They can ask each other questions such as: How much talking for learning occurs in each class? How are peer learning and collaborative groups used? How much writing is expected? When teachers and reading specialists work together to understand the strengths and weaknesses of students, more effective methods are used, resulting in improved achievement and students feeling more confident in the school setting.

□ Reading specialists

A recent study published in *The Reading Teacher* (Quatroche, Bean and Hamilton, 2001) indicates, that at the secondary level, highly trained reading specialists are most often used for the following roles (in descending order of importance): consultation/collaboration, professional development, instruction/prescription, diagnosis/assessment and advocacy.

Reading specialists are especially important as direct service providers for students with extreme reading difficulties. In Chapter 3 we discussed many of the responsibilities for a reading specialist/literacy coach. Reading specialists and literacy coaches have responsibilities to assist all teachers implement strategies to use reading and writing to help all students learn the content of their classes. This chapter covers, in a little more detail, the services that directly relate to helping struggling readers.

Consultation/Collaboration. When teachers, parents or administrators are concerned about student performance in reading, the reading specialist is often asked to design plans for intense intervention. Intervention can be a **tutorial experience** for the student while consultation can extend to include demonstration lessons for staff.

Professional Development. Although professional development is discussed in some detail in Chapter 3, it is appropriate to discuss how the reading specialist can be especially helpful in assisting teachers improve their abilities to help their weakest students. While the reading specialist can provide traditional staff development presentations, direct consultation with teachers will be more valuable. The specialist can work with teachers individually or in small groups to target particular teacher and/or student needs. The reading specialist helps teachers define the skills to be used daily in the specific content classroom. For example, in a science class, students are expected to observe, then use precise vocabulary to describe their observations in a notebook or log. Daily listing of observations, therefore, becomes a regular skill for that content classroom. This skill may not be used every day in mathematics. **Content teachers must establish with students what basic literacy skills are expected daily in their classes.**

Teachers can overdo the demands for certain skills. They must, therefore, make clear what three to four skills will be used almost every day (e.g., writing, summarizing, discussing, graphing) and what skills might be used less frequently (e.g., interacting with a software program, reading long chapters for the main idea).

Once the most-needed skills are determined, teachers give students ample opportunities to practice them. **Research has shown that until a student uses a skill 60 to 90 times, he or she is likely to lose the skill or use it inconsistently.** Reading specialists can create and demonstrate lessons to show teachers how to embed skills frequently throughout the curriculum.

Additionally, reading specialists share research on effective methods all teachers can use with special disabling conditions, such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder or behavior disorders of learning-disabled students, by sharing specific articles or strategies or suggesting Web sites for further investigation.

Instruction/Prescription. Reading specialists consult with teachers to design a program of corrective experiences for small group or individual special help sessions. “Pull-out” work is a common tool of the reading specialist. The specialist takes a student or students out of the regular class to provide practice and instruction in identified areas of need. This is effective only if the specialist is communicating with the teachers about how to integrate the practiced skills immediately into classwork.

Innovative practice would include team teaching by the content or language arts teacher and the reading specialist with groups of students who require greater organization and practice. Classroom instruction can include techniques designed to give practice to a struggling student. Teachers report that using strategies such as breaking down tasks and giving extra practice helps all students in the class.

Diagnosis/Assessment. Reading specialists select and administer informal and formal assessments to determine the specific skill deficits of students. Assessment drives instruction, and the results of diagnostic testing can be used to connect corrective classroom instruction. Teachers work with the reading specialist to plan and use strategies to give practice in needed skills while advancing achievement in content areas. The reading specialist consults with teachers to find out what tests give information on which specific reading skills, how those deficits are displayed in classroom performance and the types of learning experiences that can both address the deficit and advance content achievement.

Innovative practices in diagnosis and assessment include

- **Observation.** A teacher may invite the reading specialist to the classroom to watch how students are interacting with the teacher as a strategy or technique is being used. Feedback can help the teacher adjust teaching approaches for better results.
- **Instructional Logs.** When teachers keep brief daily or weekly logs of their work, they can see patterns in the preparation and delivery of instruction that need to be corrected. The instructional logs describe the general goals of lessons or sessions, the design of lessons, the response of the students and the things they would change if they could do the lesson again. The reading specialist can review the logs and suggest alternative strategies.
- **Informal, Quick Assessments.** Teachers can evaluate student progress regularly with quick, informal (not standardized or especially scientific) testing of how well students are learning and using skills. Reading specialists usually know a range of tests to assess a variety of student competencies. (*See the sidebar on the next page.*) Quick assessments can also be a valuable source of information on how well students who are new to the school or class can read. Share results from diagnostic testing to help students understand their problems and what they can do to improve. Teachers can use the information to plan learning experiences that can help students advance both reading skills and content knowledge. Share assessment results with parents so they can encourage students to use strategies learned at school to complete reading assignments and to select reading as a leisure activity.

Advocacy. Reading specialists are advocates for students who struggle to read. As members of multidisciplinary teams, reading specialists can see the content demands placed on students and can help content teachers organize how those demands will be incorporated into practice for the student. The reading specialist also helps in determining the intensity of intervention a student requires and advocates for the kinds and amounts of service that the student gets. At the secondary level, reading specialists often try to unite teachers in seeing and practicing instruction that connects the essential skills of the content areas. The reading specialist works with potential employers and higher education representatives to incorporate their expectations into daily student practice of required skills.

Inventories to Assess Student Skills

Using inventories such as the following can give teachers important information about the skills of their students. The school's reading specialist or literacy coach can obtain the necessary inventories and conduct the necessary evaluations.

An **Informal Word Recognition Inventory** allows teachers to find out how quickly students recognize words without extensive decoding when they see them on word lists and not in context. This lets the teacher know how much preparation students will need as a new unit of study starts. Students with continuing problems recognizing the connection of letters to their sounds in words will struggle with new vocabulary in content subjects. Another advantage of quick assessment of word recognition is the view it gives the teacher or reading specialist of what sound patterns may be troubling to students and how close they are to mastering longer and longer words. Teachers may generate lists for an upcoming unit of study.

The **Informal Reading Inventory** shows how students read to gain information, to remember details and to be able to answer increasingly difficult questions. The teacher and reading specialist can determine which level of text is easy enough for homework, which level is best for daily instruction and which level of text frustrates students and causes them to stop wanting to read. Passages can be selected from content texts to determine whether students can comprehend information presented at the text's level.

Products of both types are also available commercially. (*See the Resource List on page 191.*)

□ Media and technology specialists

These two individuals provide materials that take students to the level of independence that is the goal of all learning. The right materials help students learn to form and answer questions and to recognize and solve problems.

Teachers and other educators working with struggling readers should ask these questions when accessing media and technology services:

Is the library media center user-friendly? Does the center invite the reluctant reader with materials that cater to adolescent interests (e.g., cars, hair, music, entertainers, sports, computers, money) and a balance of gender interests (libraries often are much more female-oriented)? Are there inviting places to sit and read, use computers and consult up-to-date materials?

Is the library media specialist trained to work with struggling readers? Work done recently by the Center for Reading Excellence at Johns Hopkins University has shown that library media specialists, although knowledgeable about books, are not that well acquainted with the reading process *per se*. They generally work with people who enjoy reading, not struggling readers who only come into the library because they must. **Library media specialists need to know how to engage these other clients and motivate them to visit the library media center regularly.**

Professional development for library media specialists working with the Center for Reading Excellence has had a dramatic effect on library use by struggling readers and their families. Results have included increased library use (especially on weekends), more parent/child reading together, students selecting more difficult reading material and more communication with library media specialists. In particular, readers are asking for help in locating material and for assistance in using technology and the Internet. Library media specialists also reported they feel better equipped to match appropriate material with the readers they meet through asking appropriate questions.

Does the teacher plan with the media and technology specialists to support content instruction? Teachers can let these specialists know what content and concepts are part of current and upcoming units of study. The specialists can recommend supplementary resources to support specific units of study. The school can also establish links with the public library staff. This connection is a step educators can take to influence the 83 percent of students' time not spent at school.

Does the school have technology that supports the interest and skill level of struggling readers? This starts with a realistic view of the purpose and potential of technology for improving literacy. Schools must understand that computer software and the related technologies of such innovations as distance learning, wired school and virtual classrooms are only as good as the connection of that technology to classroom practice in reading. Students who cannot read books will find reading from a screen just as problematic.

How classroom instruction can support struggling readers

Struggling readers need daily support from teachers if they are to be successful in mastering course content and improving literacy skills. Here are some suggestions for organizing a learning environment that supports struggling readers.

□ Content reading

The notion that all teachers use reading and writing to engage students in learning their content has certainly been stressed throughout this guide. When students are disabled, struggling or otherwise at-risk, the responsibility for engaging them in reading and related literacy skills is imperative. Students with reading problems are often still struggling with the initial skills of reading (decoding, gaining speed and fluency, recalling literal details, associating details to state a main idea) when they enter middle grades or high school. By that time, however, they are expected to manipulate proficiently with more and more complex sentences, paragraphs and text structures. Students are expected to handle expository, informational, procedural (such as science or mathematics) and narrative texts with ease. Textbooks are organized for different purposes and students must learn to collect, note, retrieve and use information from these multiple sources efficiently.

To be successful in such an environment, learning-disabled students need to have tasks organized in parts, have directions repeated multiple times and have tasks demonstrated for retention and productivity. **Standards cannot be changed for students who struggle to master them. However, effective teachers must assist students to learn and to demonstrate that they have mastered the essential learning in all classes.** These adjustments in instruction do not require lowering standards. Students may, for instance, use a word processor rather than handwriting an essay, but their work will be measured by the same rubric as all other students.

Knowledge is power.

Expecting teachers to be able to support struggling readers without providing some specific training in this area is both unrealistic and unfair. The reading specialist can assist educators with becoming familiar with current best practices in reading instruction by sharing information and helping teachers upgrade their skills through ongoing professional development. Schools need to provide such opportunities and educators should be encouraged to enthusiastically welcome such chances to become more knowledgeable and proficient in helping their neediest students. (*Chapter 3 provides more information about providing appropriate professional development services to help all teachers become more effective in developing their students' reading and writing skills.*)

□ Organizational skills

Struggling readers are often disorganized both in keeping up with materials and in putting one piece of information together with other pieces to create answers and to design and extend tasks. Whenever possible, graphic organization reinforced by verbal descriptions of tasks will help. Seeing relationships among ideas and objects is a weakness for some learning-disabled students. Reading specialists can help teachers look at the kind of assignments that assist students to see relationships among ideas in the content they are teaching.

Graphic organizers, also discussed in Chapter 6, allow students to map out ideas visually. These visual representations of important concepts then become study tools for students. Teachers should see the graphics used in instruction as ever-growing note pages, creating a pathway that shows how learning builds on itself from day to day. **That way, students who have trouble making the connection between one day's instruction and another can see how new concepts build on previous ideas and how the number of connections can grow as more information is acquired.**

Struggling readers, especially those with learning disabilities, will probably require special types of assignments to complete a series of tasks involving reading a passage and demonstrating their understanding of it. They need to have tasks broken down into chunks. A sequence of tasks can be outlined in parts with a graphic or chart to show the student how the parts connect to each other. Teachers can outline reading, written work and listening/speaking tasks so that students will know what they are expected to do. Before students begin their work, the teacher can model oral descriptions of tasks.

If the task includes a large amount of reading, such as a textbook chapter, the text should be presented in a previewed form — segmenting paragraphs and allowing students to stop, review and answer questions at several points. The questions allow students to verify their understanding of the text message up to that point. Teachers must allow time to verify students' comprehension so they can engage the text more independently as they gain confidence and understanding. If the student cannot consult the teacher, there should be some method of checking progress, such as an answer self-check or a peer check with another student.

□ Schedules

Some schools believe that all students can accomplish more during the school day if they move to block schedules. They argue that longer periods give students more time to get into and stick with tasks, interact with each other and conclude lessons with a better understanding of what is expected of them. In their book, *Teaching in the Block*, authors Canady and Rettig stress the value of using a block schedule to create a Socratic classroom. That approach allows for more questioning and research to find answers, use of collaborative groups to foster communication and greater contributions by students with all skill levels. A longer class schedule increases opportunities for reading specialists and tutors to work with students who need their assistance.

Whatever the class time frame, struggling readers need innovative scheduling of tasks, usually involving extra time, in order to be successful. When tasks given to struggling readers are rushed or inadequately planned, the students are frustrated and may refuse to practice the skills. Students with problems demonstrating consistent skills need to work on expanding their abilities to remain on task and complete work on an increasingly demanding schedule. Students have to learn to judge how long they need to do a job. This allows them to identify those tasks they will need to take home or revisit the next school day. Teachers can assist students in estimating time needed for tasks and developing appropriate timelines.

Teachers help students understand the timelines for all assignments and allow them to take work home to complete it if it is not done during class. Students should be aware of and encouraged to participate in after-school services to give extra time to work on assignments or to provide remedial or catch-up assistance.

□ Relevant course content

Social and physical changes that adolescents face are demanding their attention at a time when teachers are "upping the stakes" by pressuring students to become coordinated, smooth learners of multiple-content areas. If school work is to compete favorably with all the other issues that are claiming students' attention, teachers must work hard to make their content relevant to their students' experiences. Improved performance will result.

□ Teamwork

Often, students perform better when other students work along with them. The pairing or teaming of students can be a stimulus for creativity and for learning how to divide a task for efficiency. Teachers can outline large projects with a visual or graph so that students can see where their work fits with the work of others.

Teamwork has many advantages for all students and especially for those who are struggling. Students get the opportunity to act out concepts before writing them out and move around the learning environment to get information, including visiting the media or computer center. Teamwork provides the opportunity to integrate writing, speaking, listening and acting out thoughts.

Learning-disabled, attention-disordered or other struggling readers may not necessarily produce evidence of their understanding when they are required to sit and work alone at a desk and create a written product. Paired with peers possessing organizational skills, good memories and possibly greater vocabularies, struggling readers can learn from them and get support to achieve productive learning experiences. Time is used more effectively when students work in teams or pairs. The teacher moves among the teams, determining the status of their work, making suggestions and giving comments to assist and encourage.

Teachers can assist students in learning how to identify other adults who will work with them to get a job done correctly, such as a library media specialist, reading specialist, technology specialist, another content teacher or someone in the community.

□ Technology

Technology is an essential tool for accessing and using information effectively. Students sitting in classrooms today will enter an adult world that includes technology for banking, shopping, recreation and communicating efficiently for business and social purposes. The ATMs, Palm Pilots, calculators and laptops of today will be replaced with more sophisticated, complex and demanding technological innovations. Our students need to learn how to use the most current technology for tasks needed to get, give, use and transfer information.

Teachers can demand a variety of methods for getting, sharing and interpreting information from a wide range of sources. Whether distance learning or other telecommunication sources are available or only videos on the content being covered, encourage students to use technology to gain information. With computer technology becoming a common teaching tool, students must become comfortable consulting news and other content sources regularly online.

Home pages and Web sites are unique configurations of information, usually having multiple notation areas, links to other information and other "cues" that lead the user to find additional information. With daily practice, the struggling student can become empowered to use these sources of information. Summary news articles are on the Internet daily, and students can learn how to access the information. For instance, a struggling reader can be the class reporter, giving the class the daily news report obtained from the Internet.

One of the most common skills used in daily life is communicating with those who cannot see us as we deliver our messages. Students need to learn how to communicate so clearly that they can get their messages across to those who cannot see them — using the Internet to communicate with teachers, pen pals and others is a vital skill. **Provide time each day for students to receive and give messages. The power of a real-life audience can encourage struggling students to revise and edit their messages for clarity.**

Modeling the use of telephones, pagers and other telecommunication devices is also important. Modern restaurants use computerized notepads for wait staff to communicate orders to the kitchen. Most stores use sophisticated cash registers that not only ring up sales but also control inventory. Telephones are our banks and ordering from catalogs and the Internet is routine. Students need to practice using technology to meet their own needs. For students, any future as a worker in sales, inventory control, taking and filling orders and many other fields will require these skills. (*See below for additional ideas for using technology to enhance reading instruction.*)

Seven Ways To Use Technology To Enhance Reading Instruction

- Obtain reading software that provides practice and schedule frequent practice sessions for poor readers. Among the series that provide practice in reading across the curriculum is the *Reading for High School* series from PLATO (www.plato.com). This series includes practice software for history, science, literature and social studies. PLATO has also produced a secondary reading software program with over 50 modules, providing practice in vocabulary and comprehension strategies at all levels and in all skill areas. The total package is advertised at less than $400.
- Find software or Web sites that connect reading to writing. The educational publishers and software companies mentioned above also produce programs that practice writing skills. Some of the programs, such as Mindplay, offer assessments as well.
- Expose students to computer innovations such as touch screens and voice-activated programs.
- Make the Internet readily available to all students as a research tool and a way to connect students and staff to daily events. An excellent resource for research for both students and teachers is Marco Polo. (www.marcopolo.worldcom.com) This extensive program connects to all subjects across the curriculum in a multimedia format.
- Teach students to understand the visual demands of using computers — scrolling instead of turning pages, viewing crawling messages at the bottom of the screen, taking in the big picture of information on a Web site screen.
- Engage students by having them design their own Web sites or contribute to class Web sites.
- Use on-site lessons and activities designed by teachers and accessible to students through class e-mail. The teacher leaves assignments and comments by e-mail and the student must respond and provide information and assigned tasks via the computer.

□ Work package

Provide struggling readers with a list of the materials they need for a task — paper, texts, reference books, maps, calculators — so that they are not interrupted mid-task by the need to retrieve a piece that is missing from the work package. This can be a list with blocks to check off as the student notes the materials present before starting the task. The student also needs to be able to judge the space needed for the task such as a single desk, a table for group work or a computer lab. This knowledge up-front allows the student to demonstrate judgment and to predict and anticipate the dimensions of a task.

Once those steps are completed, students will develop checklists of the tasks to be done so they can mark them off the list when finished. The teacher helps students through this process each time until they are able to develop lists on their own.

An example of a checklist for writing a letter of complaint about a defective or poor product might include

- Use library or Internet sources to get the address of the company and the name of the person who should get the complaint.
- Look at the product to get serial numbers, model numbers or other identifying information.
- Write two to three statements about what specifically is wrong.
- Ask a classmate or an adult to confirm that these things are actually problems.
- Write two to three sentences about what you would like to have done.
- Use your writing handbook to check the exact format of a business letter.
- Use the computer to draft your letter.
- Have two classmates read your letter and make suggestions to improve it by using the scoring guide.
- Submit the draft for the teacher to review.
- Make suggested corrections and submit a final draft.
- Mail the final letter to the company.

Evaluating Educational Software

Be sure that decisions about purchasing educational software are based on both a review of the program's research base and consultation with technology specialists in your school or district. There are Internet sites that provide reviews of software, including customer views on user friendliness, motivational factors and long-term results.

The SREB Evalutech initiative reviews and recommends instructional materials and resources. See www.evalutech.sreb.org.

Two additional sites offering reviews are www.TheReviewZone.com, www.superkids.com and Colleges or universities with technology-for-educators programs are another potential source of guidance.

□ Non-textual resources

Struggling readers need to learn the sources of information often found in textbooks that are not textual — pictures, graphs and tables. Students can be taught how to highlight or otherwise mark (e.g., self-adhesive notes) essential information. Most important, learning how to do this helps students describe pictures in words and graphs. Practice with interpreting weather maps, stock market graphs, circle and bar graphs and illustrations (e.g., political cartoons) can allow students to become proficient in translating nonverbal sources into simple sentences.

Conversely, help students learn how to put words into graphic representations, such as graphs and tables. This is when the teaming of teachers from multiple disciplines can be useful. Graphic information is important in most content areas — consistent use of techniques such as graphing and making tables can reinforce the skills of the struggling student in collecting and interpreting information.

□ Class notes

One of the most common tasks in any class is taking notes. Expect students to demonstrate the organization and maintenance of notebooks and note systems. Help students understand the importance of keeping and reviewing their notes daily by providing regular opportunities for students to share the information they have collected with peers. The two-column or Cornell notes format allows the teacher to provide initial support in a specific process and then give students increasing independence as they gain expertise. (*See discussion about two-column notes in Chapter 6 on page 121.*)

Support Classes for Struggling Readers

Many schools in the *MMGW* and *HSTW* networks are offering support classes for students who are significantly behind in the development of effective literacy skills. These classes, offered usually as elective courses, are often required for students who are below standards on state assessments or have previously received failing grades in language arts. The support class supplements the work of the language arts class with curriculum planned in close consultation with the language arts teacher. Often students selected for these classes share common teachers for all classes with curriculum planned cooperatively by the entire instructional team. (For more information about how to plan and implement a support class, educators may want to obtain the guide, *Successful Transitions: A Guide for Creating a Support Class* from SREB.)

Student-teacher conferences that allow the teacher to periodically review the notes of students to see how organized the information is can be the means by which the teacher determines how well the struggling student is using the note-taking format practiced in class. The conference can also prepare the student to share information from notes with classmates. Asking a student to explain a content concept or lesson goal from notes is a way to determine how well the student retrieves and uses material organized earlier and how well the student can summarize ideas for presentation to others.

How to help students outside the school day

In the previous section, we discussed ways that educators can assist struggling readers by revising and extending certain classroom practices. Despite these efforts, many students who are significantly behind in reading will require help beyond the school day. Many schools offer before- or after-school services and weekend or summer academies. Here are some suggested approaches that can be highly beneficial to students who are behind.

□ Homework academy

Students who cannot get homework done at home can be encouraged to attend an after-school "Homework Academy." This academy is spread throughout the school, including the library media center, labs, classrooms and cafeteria. Students with better skills can be consulted as experts, along with teachers or other staff members. One purpose of homework is to have students practice skills until they are well mastered. Students can use the Homework Academy to get a small amount of assistance, to get some reassurance that they are preparing assignments correctly or to have work checked.

The Homework Academy offers an excellent opportunity for the roles of student and expert to be played out among adolescent peers, with peer learning and collaborative activities encouraged. Once assignments are completed, students are encouraged to take some additional time to read for pleasure, play a game that practices a skill, work with a tutor on building a skill or prepare for the coming day's assignments. The successful Homework Academy is dependent upon teachers giving clear assignments. Further, everyone in the school community sees the Academy as a place to succeed and share, not a place to be frustrated. A Homework Academy is definitely not a study hall, which can be wasted time with students working in isolated silence. Instead, a successful academy has the sounds and sights of learning — conversation, encouragement, laughter and smiles of success.

□ Study groups

Study groups provide students with the chance to learn from each other under guidance from teachers and resource staff. Researchers such as Slavin and Johnson and Johnson have shown cooperative study groups to be beneficial, with one of the major benefits being improved social confidence and self-esteem.

Effective study groups engage students in helping each other achieve a designated standard or produce quality work. Study groups work best when students collaborate on a challenging assignment, receive both an individual and group grade and are assessed individually to ensure understanding.

Study groups can be designed to match the strengths of certain students with the needs of others. By putting students with similar needs in smaller groups, guided by specialists, teachers or instructional assistants, tasks can be made manageable and student frustration reduced. If the study group has a long-term task, such as a research project, members can work together by sharing parts of the larger task and eventually creating the final product. Individualization of effort, skill development and pacing of performance can be accomplished in study groups because they do not promote competitiveness.

□ Extra support from the reading specialist

The National Reading Panel Report identified five areas related to reading as essential to the development of effective literacy — phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency and comprehension. **Students in middle grades and high school who are still unable to unite sound to symbol need the intervention of a reading specialist to supplement the skills of the content teacher.** These students cannot acquire and demonstrate knowledge from multiple sources of print information — they are left to depend on an oral system to gain content knowledge. This is inefficient because it is limited and the student will eventually become frustrated when he or she cannot meet the demand for processing text like his or her class peers.

□ Tutors

Tutors are not necessarily educators, but usually have training in remedial techniques in reading or language skills. This may be specific training in a skill series or in a method, such as the Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood Bell or Wilson reading programs. Tutors are sometimes engaged by parents to assist students as they experience increasingly complex workloads. Tutoring works well when the tutor and the teacher communicate regularly and effectively. When tutors are used, several principles should be observed to make the relationship work:

Establish the purpose for tutoring. Is the tutor building student skills that are weak or refining skills that are fairly strong? Is the tutoring being done to assist a student with a single project or purpose, such as passing a test or battery of tests? Is the tutor's role to develop or maintain skills? Is the tutoring done to support existing instruction by a teacher or to help a student who has had sporadic exposure to skills and is in need of catching up?

Establish the timeline for tutoring. Assign students challenging work but don't overwhelm them with too much assistance. The teacher and the tutor need to communicate to determine how much the student can handle in support of daily instruction. One-hour sessions several times a week can help. One or two hours on a weekend could also be helpful.

Tutor in school whenever possible. This helps establish a productive, consulting relationship for the tutor and the school staff. This allows the tutor to meet the student in a place where the teacher, reading specialist, media specialist and technology specialist can help integrate and provide access to all aspects of materials and technology in use with the student during daily instruction.

Assessment drives instruction. Tutors should ascertain as much information about the abilities that students bring to the tutoring situation as possible. With that information, tutors can build on existing skills and address areas of need. If information is not available, tutors should be prepared to do some assessment of student ability with brief formal or informal tests.

Establish benchmarks of progress. The tutor, the teacher, the parent and most especially the student need to know what "success" looks like. A conference among parent(s), tutor, teachers and the student makes the time spent in tutoring more meaningful. Make the expectations in the classroom clear and understandable to the student and tutor. The tutoring sessions aim to achieve the same expectations. Make standards of success consistent — not 80 percent in the classroom and 95 percent for tutoring. When benchmark assessments are given in the classroom, the tutor should know not to "prep" the student, but to be aware of what demands for skills will be expected so that he or she can practice those skills.

Larger Group Tutoring Settings

Tutoring may be offered to students in formats outside school or personal one-to-one sessions. Camps, scout troops, church groups, summer programs offered by school districts, Saturday tutoring groups and reading clinics exist to help larger groups in a community. For example, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Inc. offer tutoring throughout the year as do many universities.

Expectations should be in line with the training of the tutor. If the tutor is a professional (reading specialist, reading teacher, language specialist or special educator), the expectations are higher and the communication with teachers is more detailed and coordinated. If the tutor is a volunteer, a college student or someone otherwise not trained in teaching, the expectations must be adjusted. **The less connected to the classroom the tutor is, the more organized the training of the tutor must be in order to ensure quality of instruction and better results.**

Communication is essential. Tutors should have a means of communicating with students' teachers. Such communication will enable them to learn what kinds of curriculum, schedules, assignments and learning activities have been and will be expected from the students. Teachers can describe their own impressions of students' needs and what the tutor's focus should be in order to reinforce or supplement existing classroom instruction. Determine how progress will be reported to all involved such as a log, a report card, notes, testing reports or a conference. Between progress reports, the tutor and teacher would exchange notes to keep each informed about what is working and not working with students.

Use class content to teach and practice skills. Have tutors use concepts and content related to what students are doing in class to teach and practice skills. Familiar content (even use of the content textbooks and materials) can allow the student to focus on a specific skill that needs improvement. Learning note-taking for instance from a text on world history when the student is currently taking U.S. history is not productive. Ask tutors to talk to teachers to determine what content and texts are being used.

Tutors should prepare to fade away. The goal of tutoring is eventual mastery by the student and independent management of learning tasks. Some students have had tutoring in reading or writing for years, and that does not indicate that the student has attained an independent attitude toward reading — only a dependence on an adult to organize and practice skills. The "Release of Responsibility" model should apply to this relationship — at the start, the tutor manages the time, sets the task and guides the student through the tutorial instruction. By the end of the defined tutorial period, expect the student to be working more independently and gaining confidence that he or she can do the work.

□ Reading programs for struggling readers

Students with the most severe reading difficulties, including problems with word decoding, may need reading programs specifically designed to address these problems with older students. Four programs of this type that schools may want to consider to help students significantly below grade level in reading are described below.

Orton-Gillingham and Gillingham-Stillman Methods. Much of what is used in tutorial and remedial practice with struggling students stems from the work of Samuel Orton in the 1930's. Originally called "alphabetic phonics" and designed for students with learning disabilities, the Orton approach offers struggling readers a way to learn and to practice reading skills through the use of motor skills by connecting writing to reading. Although originally designed for younger children, the method is adaptable for adolescents and adults and provides a hurdle over the initial phonemic problems of the lowest performing readers, even at the high school level.

The method includes a building process, working from the initial phonetic connections of sounds to letters, moving to building words from the sound base, connecting words and making sentences and then writing stories and descriptive text examples. Progress is noted by giving benchmark assessments throughout the program. As the student improves, the teacher moves into the next systematic stage of skill building.

An advantage of this method is that as students progress to higher levels, their own language can be used to write meaningful stories and text about information related to what they are learning in various content classes. **A tutor or teacher using this method communicates with the content teachers to find out what content is being covered and then connects that content to the activities in the tutorial or classroom sessions.**

Wilson and Lindamood Reading Programs. The Wilson Reading System is specifically designed for adolescent and adult learners and is intended for both tutoring and classroom instruction. This reading method addresses initial phonemic skill development, using a 12-part instructional model that introduces patterns or "codes" to students so that they learn syllables as consistent patterns of vowels and consonants. Once students have confidence that they understand the consistency of the formation of words, they then can apply their knowledge to text provided in leveled books that are part of the system. The final levels of the Wilson System include building words and then comprehending words as they appear in stories and expository text.

The Lindamood Bell Programs are intended to provide similar phonemic development as the foundation for later efficient reading. This system of learning to read involves integration of sounds, concept images and symbol images. Students learn to understand the entire physical process of making sounds with the mouth and voice, visualizing the differences in the shapes of letters and symbols used in language and practicing how to put the systems together for spelling, writing and comprehending text.

Great Leaps. Another program with strong potential for remediating reading difficulties in high school readers is Great Leaps. It is designed for an individual or small group format and addresses all aspects of reading skills. A full description of this program can be found at www.greatleaps.com.

Corrective Reading. This is a commercially-produced program which emerges from the Direct Instruction model, meaning that decoding and comprehension are taught from simple, phonemic patterns involving more and more complex examples and moving toward successful recognition of words in text. Oral reading is emphasized in the development of comprehension skills.

Other organizations that provide research-based, innovative and broadly applicable programs (skill-specific as well as cross-curricular) include Scholastic (www.scholastic.com) and Mindplay (www.mindplay.com).

Conclusion

Secondary students who do not read well will not "get better" on their own. Just as there are a variety of causes for students' reading problems, there are multiple approaches and tools to help students improve their literacy skills. Schools can employ many resources to ensure that all students are using reading skills and strategies to improve their performance in all classes.

The reading specialist and/or literacy coach provides additional assistance both to students and to teachers. Teachers help students by using content-area reading, developing organizational and time management skills, organizing students in teams and using technology. Some students will need additional help in specialized tutoring programs.

Web sites

www.marcopolo.worldcom.com

This is an excellent site for teachers who want great interactive ideas for motivating the most reluctant readers. Every content area is covered and all of the professional associations for the content areas (e.g., National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Science Teachers Association) have provided their standards to this site and have contributed to its content.

www.reading.org

This is the home of the International Reading Association. Teachers and tutors will find this an easy and organized link to all organizations and agencies interested in literacy. The entire bookstore of the organization is online; all materials are paperback and reasonably priced.

www.ed.gov

The home page of the U.S. Department of Education connects individuals with all educational resources that relate to the initiatives of the federal government. Statistics, organizations, the National Reading Panel homepage and other valuable resources can be accessed from this site.

www.pbs.org

This site offers a range of content and an archive of programs that have aired on public broadcasting stations. These programs include history, literature, science, languages and the arts. There is a link for teachers to see lesson plans that relate to the various programs. The site also connects users to other pertinent organizations and telecommunication resources.

Assessments

The costs associated with the reading inventories mentioned here are between $35-$50 (per student).

Burns, P. and B. Roe. *Informal Reading Inventory: Pre-primer to 12th Grade*. New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Frequently used by teachers as a convenient and reliable classroom diagnostic tool, the advantage to this inventory is its range from earliest to highest levels of word recognition and passage comprehension. This tool is often used as a "benchmark" assessment so that progress can be measured more often during the course of instruction.

Leslie, L. and J. Caldwell. *Qualitative reading inventory – 3*, third edition. New York, N.Y.: Longman, 2001.

This comprehensive set of word recognition lists and text passages for comprehension is very useful for gaining insight into the skills students use in decoding words, recognizing words as wholes and several levels of comprehension from elementary grades through high school.

Shanker, J., E. Ekwall and E.E. Ekwall. *Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory*, fourth edition. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

This is a comprehensive set of word lists and comprehension passages that are very user-friendly for use by teachers, student teachers, reading specialists and special educators to diagnose specific reading skill deficits. The inventory also connects well with research-based remediation systems such as those promoted in Thomas Gunning's Assessing and Correcting Reading and Writing Difficulties.

Steiglitz, E. *The Steiglitz Informal Reading Inventory: Assessing Reading Behaviors from Emergent to Advanced Levels*, third edition. Boston, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

This is a respected and reliable tool for continuous, periodic assessment of progress in reading at all levels. The inventory offers detailed explanation of the statistical information needed for understanding how the test is constructed, how the results should be viewed and used and how and why alternative assessments are used.

Woods, M. and J. Moe. *Analytic Reading Inventory and Readers Passages*, seventh edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001.

This reading inventory is useful because it presents a balance of narrative and expository passages and an array of pre-reading questions to determine the prior knowledge, prediction skills and retelling abilities of readers. Content passages are part of the test and can give an idea of how readers use skills for various content areas. Teachers and tutors should preview selections, as they are "real world" subjects — some may find the subject matter very mature for high school students.

Corrective and Remedial Programs

We recommend that schools consult and coordinate with school district reading professionals to ascertain how the remedial programs currently in use connect to district material selection and assessment. In light of No Child Left Behind, the alignment of assessment, instruction and other resources is essential to help students raise their reading levels.

www.orton-gillingham.com

This site provides information about the purchase of the phonologically based program for improving reading. Because the method requires training, the site also provides information about where and when training sessions are offered throughout the country. Both Orton-Gillingham and Gillingham-Stillman methods are addressed in these training and teaching tools.

www.ldanatl.org

This is the best-known organization supporting multi-sensory methods of reading instruction.

www.lblp.com

This site offers information about the research findings supporting the Lindamood Bell program, the cost of all components (individual and group instruction models) and the availability of training. The program, which ties closely to the linguistic basis for reading disorders, is comprehensive and offers professional development information that prepares teachers and tutors with a better understanding of the close relationship of reading to other neurological processes (speech, memory, language processing, visual cues).

www.wilsonreading.com

Teachers and tutors can learn more about the statistical and research basis of this phonologically-based program and lists training opportunities.

Resources

Alexandrowicz, V. "Effective Instruction for Second Language Learners: What Tutors Must Know." *Reading Improvement*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (2002): 71–8.

This article provides ideas for those who do tutoring with students for whom English is not the primary home language.

Alvermann, D. E. and S. F. Phelps. *Content reading and literacy: Succeeding in Today's Diverse Classrooms*, third edition. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2002.

This is a great resource for consultation on all aspects of reading for the secondary student in all content areas.

Babbitt, S. and M. Byrne. "Finding the Keys to Educational Progress in Urban Youth: Three Case Studies." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 43, No. 4, (2000): 368–78.

This journal is a wonderful resource for anyone teaching or tutoring the secondary student. This particular article is useful in understanding aspects of working with students attending schools in urban centers. The case studies present a range of students and all teachers have probably encountered at least one of them.

Bean, R., J. Grumet and J. Bulazo. "Learning From Each Other: Collaboration Between Classroom Teachers and Reading Specialist Interns." *Reading Research and Instruction*, Vol. 38 No. 4, (1999): 273–87.

The partnership of the reading specialist or reading resource coach with teachers is effectively explained in this article. Tutors will also find this information helpful in showing them how to obtain pertinent information about the classroom performance of students they are tutoring.

Bean, T. W. "Reading in the Content Areas: Social Constructivist Dimensions." in M.J.Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson and R. Barr, eds. *Handbook of Reading Research*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Vol 3, (2000): 631–646.

This handbook is a great resource to help teachers and administrators understand the science behind the methods used in reading for students at all stages of their school careers and especially those who have problems with the reading process.

Carter, S. C. *No Excuses: Lessons From 21 High-performing, High-poverty Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2000.

Any teacher who has heard all the reasons why methods or techniques won't work should read this book. It offers an altruistic and professional description of how to overcome problems and social issues that may seem to inhibit success. Teachers will learn about how a school must become a learning community in order to ensure student and teacher success.

Grabe, M. and C. Grabe. *Integrating the Internet for Meaningful Learning*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

This book gives a reasonable outline for using the Internet in secondary classrooms.

Kortering, L. and P. Braziel. "A Look at High School Programs as Perceived by Youth with Learning Disabilities." *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2002): 177–88.

This journal offers a great article in which the students themselves discuss how they feel about learning and how their teachers try to meet their learning needs, particularly in reading.

Means, B. and K. Olson. "The Link Between Technology and Authentic Learning." *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 51, No. 7 (1994): 45–55.

This article will show teachers how to use the Internet effectively in connecting classroom learning and daily life.

Moore, D. W., D. E. Alvermann and K. A. Hinchman, eds. *Struggling Adolescent Readers: A Collection of Teaching Strategies*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 2000.

This book allows teachers to cross reference the needs of students and the skills required for various content tasks.

Quatroche, D., R. Bean and R. Hamilton. "The Role of the Reading Specialist: A Review of the Research." *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2001): 282–94.

A good summary of research on how reading specialists can be used most effectively in schools.

Tovani, C. and E. Keene. *I Read It, but I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2001.

This paperback offers teachers good ideas for handling the reading and learning behaviors of struggling readers in middle grades and high school.

Vacca, R. "Making a Difference in Adolescents' School Lives: Visible and Invisible Aspects of Content-Area Reading." In Fartstrup, A. and J. Samuels, eds. *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*, third edition. Newark Del.: International Reading Association, 2002.

This resource gives an in-depth look at the broad range of skills for improved reading in content areas. The authors are well-respected experts in the area of content reading.

Vacca, J., R. Vacca, M. Gove, L. Burkey, L. Lenhart and C. McKeon. *Reading and Learning to Read*, fifth edition. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2002.

This is an excellent text to help teachers understand the range of effective reading instruction for all grades and all types of readers. An additional benefit is that the book is thoroughly cross referenced to the standards of the International Reading Association for the effective teaching of reading skills.

Zirinsky, D. and S. Rau. *A Classroom of Teenaged Readers: Nurturing Reading Processes in Senior High Schools*. New York, N.Y.: Addison Wesley-Longman, 2001.

High school teachers of all subjects will find this resource helpful for working with high-risk students.

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Appendix 1: High School Literacy Indicators Grouped By Literacy Goal

Indicator	Data Source	*HSTW* Goal
Students will read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.		
Students read 25 or more books (or their equivalents) across all classes.	Teacher/Student reports	75%
Students report they read two or more hours outside of class each week.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report having to read technical manuals to complete career and technical assignments at least weekly.	Assessment Report	80%
Students report being required to keep a folder/portfolio with a list of books or articles read, writing samples and products or pictures of products made.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report having to read an assigned book (other than a textbook) or article dealing with science at least monthly.	Assessment Report	75%
Students will write weekly in all classes.		
Students report often revising their essays or other written work several times to improve quality.	Assessment Report	60%
Students report completing a short writing assignment in all classes at least weekly.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for their career/technical assignments at least weekly.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report having to meet standards on a written exam to pass the career/technical course.	Assessment Report	85%
Students report having to prepare a written report/research study at least once a semester (career/technical classes).	Assessment Report	90%
Students report having to meet certain standards on a written exam to pass a course.	Assessment Report	75%
Students report having drafted, rewritten and edited writing assignments at least monthly before receiving a grade.	Assessment Report	85%

Appendix 1 ***continued***

Indicator	Data Source	*HSTW* Goal
Students will use reading and writing strategies to help them understand and use the content of all classes.		
Students report having to use a database or spreadsheet to complete an assignment or project at least once a semester.	Assessment Report	75%
Teachers use reading and writing strategies across the curriculum.	Teacher Survey	100%
Teachers use open-ended problems at least weekly for which there is no obvious method of solution.	Teacher Survey	70%
Teachers report they include all of the following forms of assessment in final course grades: teacher-composed, open-ended tests; projects or practical/lab exercises; portfolios of students' work; and an end-of-course exam in their content area that is used school-wide.	Teacher Survey	100%
Students report having joint projects directed by both an academic and a career/technical teacher that required reading and writing.	Assessment Report	60%
Teachers report receiving at least 40 hours of staff development during the past three years on using reading and writing for learning in content areas and across the curriculum.	Teacher Survey	75%
Teachers report receiving at least 40 hours of staff development during the past three years on using performance assessments such as presentations, writing and projects.	Teacher Survey	75%
Teachers report receiving at least 40 hours of staff development during the past three years on using applied learning strategies to teach higher level academic content to all students.	Teacher Survey	75%
Students will write research papers in all classes.		
Students report being required to complete a senior project that includes researching a topic, creating a product or performing a service and giving a presentation.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report having written a research paper on a subject they chose at least once a year.	Assessment Report	100%
Students report having completed a written report on a major mathematics project at least once a semester.	Assessment Report	65%
Students report having completed research projects in science that involve designing an experiment and preparing an oral report of the results at least once a semester.	Assessment Report	75%
Teachers require students to do computer-assisted research/assignments at least monthly.	Teacher Survey	60%

Appendix 1 ***continued***

Indicator	Data Source	*HSTW* Goal
Students will be taught as if they were in honors language arts classes.		
Students report having to read eight or more books (or equivalent) each year for English courses.	Assessment Report	85%
Students report having completed at least one short writing assignment weekly for a grade in English class.	Assessment Report	85%
Teachers require students to use word processing at least weekly to complete an assignment or project.	Teacher Survey	85%
Catching Up		
Students report receiving extra help in reading from their teachers a few times a week.	Assessment Report	75%
Teachers report the school is effectively implementing a summer bridge program in reading and mathematics to help eighth-graders get ready for high school (should consist of four to six weeks of instruction).	Teacher Survey	60%
Teachers report the school is using effectively a schedule allowing double periods in reading and mathematics for students needing extra help.	Teacher Survey	85%
The school requires students performing below the state or national average on the ACT or SAT mathematics and verbal sections to take a special English course during the senior year to avoid having to take remedial courses in college.	Schedule/Policy	40%
The school is decreasing the percentage of students needing remedial or developmental courses in reading, language arts, writing or mathematics at the postsecondary level.	Postsecondary Data	Evidence of Decline

Appendix 2: Middle Grades Literacy Indicators Grouped By Literacy Goal

Indicator	Data Source	Goal
Percentage of students at the Proficient and Advanced levels in reading	Middle Grades Assessment Report	70%
Mean reading score	Middle Grades Assessment Report	160
Male		160
Female		160
African-American		160
White		160
Other		160
Students will read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.		
Students report reading for about an hour or more outside of school each day.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	70%
Students report reading 25 or more books or the equivalent a year across the curriculum.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Students report that they read an assigned book outside class and demonstrated understanding of the main idea at least monthly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Students report reading an assigned book (besides the textbook) or article dealing with science at least weekly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Students will write weekly in all classes.		
Students report writing short assignments of one to three pages for a grade weekly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	70%
Students report that they are required to write a few sentences about how they solved a mathematics problem at least weekly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Students report completing written laboratory reports on scientific investigations at least weekly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%

Appendix 2 ***continued***

Indicator	Data Source	Goal
Students will use reading and writing strategies to help them understand and use the content of all classes.		
Teachers report that students use word processing to complete assignments weekly.	Teacher Survey	85%
Teachers report that students participate in class discussions about content studied weekly.	Teacher Survey	85%
Students will write research papers in all classes.		
Students report completing a major research paper that demonstrates readiness to do college-preparatory English in high school at least once a year.	School Data, Middle Grades Assessment Report	70%
Students will be taught as if they were in honors language arts classes.		
Students report that they use word processing to complete English assignments at least monthly.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Students report they revise essays or other written work several times to improve quality often.	Middle Grades Assessment Report	85%
Teachers require students to revise drafts of written work to improve quality weekly.	School Data, Teacher Survey	70%

Appendix 3: Teacher Survey
School Literacy Initiative

Name: _____

Subject Area: _____ **Grade Levels Taught:** _____

1) Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements on a one to four scale with one meaning that you disagree totally and four that you agree totally.

____ I believe that it is important to use reading and writing strategies to improve students' learning in my content area.

____ I currently use a variety of reading and writing strategies in my teaching.

____ I feel qualified to use a variety of reading and writing strategies in teaching my class.

____ I am interested in learning more about how using reading and writing strategies will improve students' learning in my content area.

2) Provide the following information about your current course requirements:

How many books are students required to read annually? _____

What must students do to demonstrate learning after completing reading assignments? (Check all that apply.)

❒ Complete a worksheet. ❒ Take a test. ❒ Answer questions at the end of the chapter.

❒ Complete a written report. ❒ Make an oral report. ❒ Participate in a class discussion.

❒ Participate in a team activity. ❒ Complete a project. ❒ Other (please describe)

_____

_____

How often are students expected to write in your class?

❒ Every day ❒ Once a week ❒ Once or twice a month

❒ Once or twice a semester ❒ Once or twice a year ❒ Never

What types of writing are expected?

❒ Journals ❒ Essays ❒ Letters ❒ Articles, editorials

❒ Short stories ❒ Class notes ❒ Formal research papers

❒ Other types of writing requiring research ❒ Lab reports ❒ Other (please describe)

_____

_____

Appendix 3 ***continued***

3) Please rank the following professional development topics with five representing those areas for which you have the greatest need for training and one representing those areas for which you have the least need.

____ Strategies for teaching reading related to my content area

____ Developing grade-level reading lists within each content area

____ A process for teaching writing from pre-writing through publishing

____ Authentic writing

____ Using cooperative teams to teach reading and writing

____ Helping students design and conduct research investigations and report their findings

____ Developing a common writing rubric

____ Using project-based learning to deepen understanding of content

____ Performance-based assessment of students' reading and writing skills

____ Using honors standards to teach English/language arts *(This topic applies only to language arts teachers.)*

4) Please rank each of the following formats for professional development that you feel would be most valuable to you on a scale of one to five with five being the most valuable and one the least valuable.

____ In-depth workshops with planned follow-up after you have had time to practice strategies learned in your own classroom.

____ Study groups in which you read professional literature and view professional videotapes and discuss their contents with the group.

____ Conducting action research in your own classroom to determine strategies that are most effective.

____ Having classroom observations with feedback from other educators.

____ Working with teachers who have been successful in raising students' literacy skills to learn about the approaches they have taken.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 4: A Plan for Meeting the Five Literacy Goals

School _____

Planning Team Members _____

Literacy Goal	Time Line *(What steps will we take each year toward the goal?)*	Person(s) Responsible *(Who are the literacy team members? Who is the leader?)*	Support *(What materials will we need? How will we get any needed funding? Is staff development necessary?)*	Communication *(What are our message points? Who are our audiences?)*	Accountability *(How will we know when we meet the goal? What process will we use to measure our progress?)*
I. Students will read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum.					
II. Students will write weekly in all classes.					
III. Students will use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes.					
IV. Students will write research papers in all classes.					
V. Students will complete a rigorous language arts curriculum taught like college-preparatory honors English.					

Appendix 5: A School Literacy Compact

Raising the literacy skills of students requires a partnership of the student, the home and the school. At (name of school) we are committed to helping all students become literate adults who can use reading, writing and oral communication skills effectively in further education and employment. Yet we cannot do the job unless students are willing to make their best effort and families provide their full support.

We have indicated what the school is prepared to do as part of this compact below. We ask students and parents to review the commitment we are asking them to make, discuss it, sign in the designated spaces and return to the student's language arts teacher. Here is what each of the partners agree to do.

(Name of School)

- Determine each student's current level of proficiency in reading, writing and oral communications.
- Expect students to read and demonstrate their understanding of the equivalent of at least 25 books annually.
- Implement new teaching strategies that will enable students to get more out of their reading.
- Provide opportunities for students to write at least weekly in all classes.
- Make sure that students are taught to use writing effectively to learn, to demonstrate their learning and to become familiar with the types of authentic writing used in everyday situations both at work and in adults' personal lives.
- Help students to become effective in conducting research and communicating their findings both in writing and orally.
- Expect students to complete at least one formal research paper each year from middle grades through high school.
- Expect students to complete at least one "researched" piece of writing annually in all classes.
- Introduce students to a variety of strategies that will allow them to improve their reading comprehension and their writing skills.
- Enroll all students in rigorous English/language arts courses that are taught like honors classes.
- Offer guidance to students to make sure they know what is required of them to be successful in higher education or employment.
- Maintain regular communication with families about students' progress and about what families can do to support students.

Students

- Commit to work hard to meet course goals.
- Read at least an hour a day outside class.
- Read the equivalent of 25 books each year.
- Maintain a reading log that will keep track of the amount of reading completed daily and the progress being made toward meeting the 25-book reading requirement.
- Complete summer reading assignments.
- Revise written work to improve its quality.
- Attend class regularly and be an active participant.
- Be punctual and prepared with all needed materials.
- Participate in study teams.
- Watch no more than an hour of television daily during the school week to free up more time for study.
- Complete assigned homework on schedule.
- Participate in extra help sessions available if I am experiencing difficulties with reading or writing.
- Always keep in mind the payoff from working hard today on my future success.

Families

- Help students understand how working hard today will have a positive effect on future education and career choices.
- Ask students about their schoolwork every day. Students whose families show they care do better in school than those who don't have such support.
- Particularly support students in completing reading assignments, checking frequently to see how many books they have read and what difficulties they may be experiencing in meeting the requirement to read 25 books during the year.
- Review students' reading logs at least weekly to determine the progress being made toward meeting the reading goal.
- Encourage students to complete summer reading assignments.
- Show students how important reading is by being a regular reader myself.
- Make it possible for students to take advantage of all extra help provided by the school, even when it involves time after school and may affect the time available for other activities.
- Provide a quiet comfortable place for students to do homework and check to see that it is done.
- Limit TV viewing during the school week. That's time needed to complete school assignments.
- Help students with assignments if possible and encourage students to ask for help at school when I do not have the knowledge or am not able to provide such assistance.
- Participate in all student/teacher/family conferences.

Please indicate your willingness to fulfill your part of this compact by signing below:

Student _____

Family Member _____

Appendix 6: Community Supporter Survey

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Your responses will help us determine the support we can expect from the community as we launch our school literacy campaign.

Employer: _____

Address: _____

Person Completing Survey: _____

Telephone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Volunteer Service

We are looking for volunteers to provide the following services. Please indicate in which of these areas your company could assist:

- ❒ Tutor students with reading difficulties (one to two hours per week). Training will be provided.
- ❒ Make classroom presentations on how literacy skills are used in your workplace.
- ❒ Lead a classroom literature circle in a discussion of an assigned book.

Sponsorships

- ❒ Support one class to build its classroom library.
- ❒ Support multiple classes to build classroom libraries. Indicate number of classes you would be willing to support. _____
- ❒ Provide a credit to be used by each student in a class to purchase books at a local bookstore.
- ❒ Donate books for a school book fair.
- ❒ Sponsor a school-wide reading competition, offering awards to students and classes that read the most books and complete designated reports on books read.
- ❒ Offer awards as one of several sponsors of a school-wide reading competition.
- ❒ Provide assistance to help cover costs of professional development training for teachers in effective reading and writing strategies.

Appendix 7: Sources of Reading Lists

As teachers search for appropriate reading materials, these lists can provide a starting place for literature considered appropriate by other teachers and organizations. Most lists are directed toward English/language arts. Teachers in other content areas will find some titles that apply to their courses, but they will also need to do independent research to arrive at recommended reading appropriate to their course content.

Arrowhead Library System, College Bound Reading List

http://als.lib.wi.us

This site, operated for public libraries and residents of Rock County, Wisconsin, offers a very comprehensive "College Bound Reading List." Categories of books include American literature, world literature, biography/history, science, drama and poetry, all with insightful annotations. From the main menu, select Booklists and Reviews.

Excellent New Literature for Grades Six–12, Cooperative Children's Book Center, University of Wisconsin

http://www.soemadison.wisc.edu/ccbc/bibs/gr6-12.htm

Selective bibliography of new books developed to accompany presentation at National Council of Teachers of English conference in November 2000.

Habits of Mind Student Book Lists

http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/books/hom_booklist.html

Extensive book lists for both middle grades and high school. Books are designed to complement the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Habits of Mind series. Books are listed in alphabetical order with short statements about the story's book line. Numbers assigned to each book correspond to which habit of mind the book illustrates such as: listening, thinking, accuracy, questioning and posing problems. Lists are fairly predictable, representing literature commonly read in English courses.

International Reading Association

http://www.reading.org/choices/

Annually the International Reading Association publishes reading lists chosen by young adults and by teachers. The listings can be found on the IRA Web site. The completed annotated listing of the young adult choices appears annually in the November issue of the association's Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy. *The teacher listing appears in the November issue of the association's journal,* The Reading Teacher.

The Internet Public Library

http://www.ipl.org/teen/teenread/

This site, operated by the School of Information of the University of Michigan, includes a Teenspace page with links to many Web sites. Listings are offered in the following categories of interest to young people: Arts and Entertainment, Books and Writing, Clubs and Organizations, College and Career, Computers and Internet, Dating and Stuff, Health, Homework Help, Issues and Conflicts, Money Matters, Sports and Style.

Nancy Keane's Children's Literature Webpage, eighth grade novels and AP English titles

http://nancykeane.com/

A very useful site with links to book talks and lists of recommended reading. The latter includes lists for reading in a variety of content areas. All grade levels are included but many lists focus on middle grades and high school.

National Science Teachers Association

http://nsta.org

The site includes very useful listings of science trade books from 1996 forward. Annotated listings include titles for all age groups from kindergarten through 12th grade and are coded to indicate the reading levels for each selection. All areas of science are covered. From the main menu, select Teacher Resources and then click on Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children.

Young Adult Librarian's Homepage

http://yahelp.suffolk.lib.ny.us/

Somewhat offbeat site with links to many lists, including one for reading that appeals especially to boys.

Young Adult Library Services Association division of American Library Association (links to various lists)

http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists/index.html

Offers a series of lists of award-winning books selected by a panel of the Young Adults Library Services Association, affiliated with the American Library Association. Of particular interest are the lists of Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers.

This list represents examples of many reading lists available to educators and parents. SREB does not endorse any particular reading list.

Appendix 8: Magazines and Newspapers for Students

Boys Life
1325 Walnut Hill Lane
PO Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015–2097

Calliope (world history)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Cicada (literary magazine for teens)
Cobblestone Publishing
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Cobblestone (American history)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Cricket (literature and art)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Contact Kids
Children's Television Workshop
1 Lincoln Plaza
New York, NY 10023

Dig (archeology)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Dolphin Log
Cousteau Society
870 Greenbrier Circle
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Dramatics: The Magazine for Students and Teachers of Theatre
Educational Theatre Association
3368 Central Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45225

Faces (people, places, cultures)
Cobblestone Publishing
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Footsteps (African-American history)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Junior Scholastic
Scholastic, Inc.
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012–3999

Kids Discover
170 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10010

Literary Cavalcade
Scholastic Inc.
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012–3999

Merlyn's Pen
Merlyn's Pen, Inc.
98 Main St.
PO Box 1058
East Greenwich, RI 02818

Muse (exploration and discovery)
The Cricket Magazine Group
PO Box 7434
Red Oak, IA 51591–0434

National Geographic World
PO Box 2330
Washington, DC 20013–2330

Odyssey (science)
Cobblestone Publishing, Inc.
30 Grove St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

Ranger Rick
National Wildlife Federation
8925 Leesburg Pike
Vienna, VA 22184–0001

Read Magazine
Weekly Reader Corp.
3001 Cindel Dr.
Delran, NJ 08370

Scholastic News
Scholastic Inc.
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012–3999

Science World
Scholastic, Inc.
2931 East McCarty St.
PO Box 3710
Jefferson City, MO 65102–9957

Smithsonian
Smithsonian Institute
900 Jefferson Dr. S.W.
Washington, DC 20560

Sports Illustrated for Kids
Time Inc.
Time-Life Building
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020–1393

Storyworks and Scope
Scholastic
2931 E. McCarty St.
PO Box 3710
Jefferson City, MO 65102–3710

TeenInk (student-written newspaper)
Box 30
Newton, MA 02461
1-800-363-1986
www.TeenInk.com

Time for Kids
PO Box 30609
Tampa, FL 33630–0609

Time Machine: The American History Magazine for Kids (history and current events)
PO Box 2879
Clifton, NJ 07015
1-800-742-5402

Tomorrow's Morning: News Stories for Kids
125 South Barrington Place
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Wild Outdoor World
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Box 1249
Helena, MT 59624

Wildlife Conservation
Wildlife Conservation Park
Bronx, NY 10460

Zillions (Consumer Reports for Kids)
Consumers Union
101 Truman Ave.
Yonkers, NY 10703–1057

Zoobooks
Wildlife Education Limited
3590 Kettner Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92101

Online Magazines
For links to many "ezines", check out
http://www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Language_Arts/Magazines/

Time for Kids
http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/

Scholastic News Zone
http://teacher.scholastic.com/newszone/

CNN Student News
http://fyi.cnn.com/fyi/

Appendix 9: Web Reading Resources for Mathematics Classes

http://cord.org/workplacelibrary/indices/student.html
This site is primarily for teachers, but includes articles that could be used with students.

http://www.mathmistakes.com/
A site dedicated to the listing of mathematical mistakes made over and over by advertisers, the media, reporters, politicians, activists and in general many non-mathematical people.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/math/html/resources.htm
This site reflects how mathematics has been used through history.

http://exploringdata.cqu.edu.au/
This Web site provides curriculum support materials on introductory statistics.

http://www.history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/
This site offers access to biographies and other articles about mathematics. There is an entire index of articles on curves.

http://www.magportal.com/c/sci/math/
This site is a search engine particularly for mathematics, science and technology articles. Make sure to check the archives.

http://www.nytimes.com/college/index.html
This site is the resource library set up by the *New York Times*. To get to the searches, you will have to sign on for a free membership. The search engine takes you to articles on specific subjects. Choose technology, engineering and mathematics. Then select either statistics or mathematics.

http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/USATODAY/
The search engine for *USA TODAY* identifies articles by their topic. While some hits may have only vague references to mathematics, many provide real-life applications.

http://www.tessellations.com/
This site not only has articles on tessellations, it includes links to other sites and recommendations for books and articles.

http://illuminations.nctm.org/pages/mathnews.html
This National Council of Teachers of Mathematics site also contains a link to mathematics news. Many of these articles address real-life applications in mathematics or discoveries of new applications.

http://www.webct.com/Communities/Math/library
WebCT's library site allows visitors to view links to mathematics classes.

Appendix 10: Samples of E-mail Summer Reading Messages

Week One

Select a fictional book to read this week. You might enjoy a fantasy or science fiction. Consider one of the following titles:

- ***Hatchet*** by Gary Paulsen (A 13-year-old boy survives a plane crash, but must also survive the Canadian wilderness.)
- ***Holes*** by Louis Sachar (A teenage boy is sent to a juvenile detention station in the Texas desert where he must discover his own courage.)
- ***Rules of the Road*** by Joan Bauer (A 16-year-old girl is given an unusual summer job: driving a shoe chain owner across the country.)
- ***Sarah Bishop*** by Scott O'Dell (A determined young girl flees Long Island during the Revolutionary War to take refuge in a cave.)
- ***The Last Book in the Universe*** by Rodman Philbrick (Far in the future, people insert computerized needles directly in their brain to learn, but Spaz needs to learn differently.)

To extend your reading, do one of the following:

- As you read, create a story web to explain the characters, setting, problem and solution.
- After you finish the book, summarize it by describing the main events.
- Write and illustrate a book jacket. Make sure you give a brief blurb of the book. Include some quotes that would interest a reader like yourself.
- Choose one of the characters to analyze. What do you like most about the person? How would you describe him/her, both physically and in terms of character? Is this someone you would like for a friend?
- Look up the author on the Internet. Find some facts that explain why the author might have written this story.

Week Two

Choose a biography, autobiography or memoir to read this week. Consider:

- ***Through My Eyes*** by Ruby Bridges (Ruby Bridges recalls what it was like to be the first child to integrate a New Orleans school in 1960.)
- ***Harry Houdini: Master of Magic*** by Robert Kraske (Houdini's escapes form the background for this story of a popular entertainer.)
- ***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*** by Maya Angelou (This modern American poet tells her moving story of childhood and adolescence.)
- ***Night*** by Elie Wiesel (This well-known Holocaust survivor tells a moving story of one young man's experience in the Nazi concentration camps.)

To extend your reading, do one of the following:

- As you read the biography, create a simple timeline of the life of the person you are reading about. Include the major events in his or her life with the date the events occurred or the age of the person at that time.
- You might want to learn more about the authors of some of your favorite books. Visit www.yahooligans.com and type your favorite author's name in the search box. See how much information you can find.
- Compare yourself to the subject of the biography you are reading. How are you like the person you are reading about? How are you different? Create a Venn diagram that compares you to the character.
- There is information about many interesting people in the newspaper each day. Look through the front section of today's paper and make a list of the people mentioned. Choose a few that interest you and see if you can find biographic information about them on the Internet.
- Write a letter or e-mail to the subject of the book. Explain what you have learned from the book. Will it impact your life?

Week Three

Mathematics in daily life can be fun. Select one of the books suggested below or another recommended by the media specialist. You'll want to have a pencil and paper close by as you read!

- ❒ ***Cool Math: Math Tricks, Amazing Math Activities, Cool Calculations, Awesome Math Factoids, and More*** by Ruta Daugavietis and Christy Maganzini
- ❒ ***It's Alive and Kicking: Math the Way It Ought to Be — Tough, Fun, and a Little Weird*** by Asa Kleiman and David Washington
- ❒ ***Miracle Math: How to Develop a Calculator in Your Head*** by Harry Lorayne
- ❒ ***Slicing Pizzas, Racing Turtles and Further Adventures in Applied Mathematics*** by Robert B. Banks
- ❒ ***Towing Icebergs, Falling Dominoes, and Other Adventures in Applied Mathematic*** by Robert B. Banks

To extend your reading, do one of the following:

- ■ Create a mathematics problem like one of the ones you read about. Solve it, then share it with three other people. See if they can get the right answer.
- ■ Take one of the problems from the book and write a short explanation of how to solve it.
- ■ Write a letter to your principal about how you would change the way mathematics is taught if you were the teacher.
- ■ What career do you plan to pursue? Did you learn anything that will help you in that career? Write a paragraph about how this will impact your profession.

Week Four

You aren't too old to read picture books. Sometimes these simple stories can help us understand more about a particular event. You have already studied *The Diary of Anne Frank* and we will be studying more about World War II this year. Select one of these picture books about the Holocaust to read.

- ❒ ***The Butterfly*** by Patricia Polacco
- ❒ ***A Picture Book of Anne Frank*** by David A. Adler
- ❒ ***Best Friends*** by Elisabeth Reuter
- ❒ ***I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust*** by Livia Bitton-Jackson
- ❒ ***Let the Celebrations Begin!*** by Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas

To extend your reading, do one of the following:

- ■ Before reading the book, do a KWL chart on what you already knew about the Holocaust. In another color ink, add what you have learned from this book. Write your new questions in the center column.
- ■ When you read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, you focused on the lives of teens. What have you learned about the lives of children during wartime? Complete a Venn diagram showing how the lives of children, teens and adults were different during the Holocaust.
- ■ There are other events in the world today that people relate to the genocide of the Holocaust. Write an essay that relates what is happening in another part of the world to the Holocaust.
- ■ Write a letter to one of your teachers suggesting another picture book that could be used in a class you have already taken. Explain how it could be helpful to students. Use this book as an example of what you learned from the reading.
- ■ Should picture books like this be used with young children? Write an editorial for a teacher's journal that explains why you believe they are appropriate or not.

Appendix 11: Rubric for a Persuasive Authentic Piece

(such as an editorial, letter, brochure, letter to the editor, feature article, proposal)

Characteristics of an "A" Paper

- Focuses on a purpose.
- Targets and meets the needs of a specific readership (audience), one with the authority to take the action the writer desires or one with an interest or involvement in the subject.
- Engages the reader with an interesting beginning that gives some context or reason for the information that follows.
- Demonstrates clear knowledge of content studied and independent thinking.
- Uses a variety of idea-development strategies and supporting details.
- Demonstrates a solid knowledge of strategies of persuasion. (Acknowledges and addresses the reader's anticipated point of view, expresses opinions clearly, helps the reader become personally involved in the issue, presents arguments in support of his/her opinion in the order of their importance from least to most important.)
- Uses organizational strategies appropriate to the authentic form selected.
- Moves the reader through the piece with logical, appropriate transition strategies.
- Provides a sense of closure at the end by leaving the reader with a vision of why the action desired would be beneficial.
- Uses a variety of sentences, structures and language forms appropriate for the subject matter and the targeted readership.
- Has few or no misspelled words.
- Has few or no sentence fragments, run-on sentences or punctuation errors.

Characteristics of a "B" Paper

- Has a focused purpose.
- Targets a specific readership (audience), one with the authority to take the action the writer desires or one with an interest or involvement in the subject.
- Engages the reader with an interesting beginning, one that gives some context or reason for the information that follows.
- Demonstrates knowledge of content studied.
- Uses some idea-development strategies.
- Demonstrates knowledge of strategies of persuasion. (Acknowledges and addresses the reader's anticipated point of view, expresses opinions clearly, helps the reader become personally involved in the issue, presents arguments in support of his/her opinion in the order of their importance from least to most important.)
- Uses organizational strategies appropriate to the authentic form selected.
- Moves the reader through the piece with some transition strategies.
- Provides a sense of closure at the end by leaving the reader with a vision of why the action desired would be beneficial.

- Uses sentence structure and language appropriate for the subject matter and the targeted readership.
- May have some misspelled words.
- May have some sentence fragments, run-on sentences or punctuation errors.

Characteristics of a "C" Paper

- Has some evidence of a focused purpose.
- Shows some evidence of targeting a specific readership (audience) but may fail to meet the needs of that audience or may have not chosen the most appropriate audience for the argument.
- Shows some evidence of engaging a reader at the beginning, but may fail to give the reader a context or reason for the information that follows.
- Demonstrates some knowledge of content studied.
- Attempts to develop ideas but does so in a general, superficial way, leaving the reader with unanswered questions.
- Demonstrates knowledge of at least two strategies of persuasion though application of the strategies may be somewhat awkward. (Strategies employed might be: acknowledges and addresses the reader's anticipated point of view; expresses opinions clearly; helps the reader become personally involved in the issue; presents arguments in support of his/her opinion in the order of their importance from least to most important.)
- Uses some organizational strategies appropriate to the authentic form selected.
- May have lapses in transition.
- Shows some evidence of providing the reader with a sense of closure at the end but may do so in an abrupt manner, leaving the reader with little to ponder.
- Uses simplistic sentence structure and language.
- May have some misspelled words.
- May have some sentence fragments, run-on sentences or punctuation errors.

Not Yet

A piece that fails to meet the characteristics of a "C" paper will be considered unacceptable. A student will be given an opportunity to improve the piece with assistance/specific feedback from the teacher or no credit will be given for the piece.

Appendix 12: Rubric for a Research Paper

Characteristics of an "A" Paper

- Focuses on a clear purpose that is communicated to the reader in the beginning paragraphs of the paper and maintained throughout the piece.
- Engages the reader with an interesting beginning that gives some context or reason for the information that follows.
- Demonstrates careful, comprehensive research and understanding of the topic.
- Uses a variety of idea-development strategies and supporting evidence, including paraphrases, summaries and direct quotations from source material.
- Provides careful, thorough documentation of sources.
- Adheres to the conventions of the assigned research form (MLA, APA, other).
- Moves the reader through the piece with logical, appropriate transition strategies.
- Provides a sense of closure at the end by leaving the reader with something to think about.
- Uses a variety of sentence structures and language appropriate for the subject matter and the reader.
- Adheres to manuscript rules (title page specifications, correct margins, spacing, numbering of pages).
- Has few or no misspelled words, punctuation or capitalization errors.
- Has few or no sentence fragments or run-on sentences.

Characteristics of a "B" Paper

- Has a focused purpose, communicated to the reader in the beginning paragraphs of the paper and maintained throughout the piece.
- Engages the reader with an interesting beginning that gives some context or reason for the information that follows.
- Demonstrates research and understanding of the topic.
- Uses some idea development strategies and supporting evidence, including paraphrases, summaries and direct quotations from source material.
- Provides documentation of sources, though may not always adhere precisely to the specified form.
- Adheres to most of the conventions of the assigned research form (MLA, APA, other).
- Moves the reader through the piece with logical, appropriate transition strategies.
- Provides a sense of closure at the end by leaving the reader with something to think about.
- Uses a variety of sentence structures and language appropriate for the subject matter and the reader.
- Adheres to manuscript rules (title page specifications, correct margins, spacing, numbering of pages) though there may be a few violations.
- May have some misspelled words, punctuation or capitalization errors.
- Has few or no sentence fragments or run-on sentences.

Appendix 12 ***continued***

Characteristics of a "C" Paper

- Has some evidence of a purpose, communicated to the reader in the beginning paragraphs of the paper, but may have lapses within the piece.
- Attempts to engage the reader in the beginning but the context or reason for the information that follows may not be entirely clear.
- Demonstrates some research and understanding of the topic.
- Attempts to use some idea development strategies and supporting evidence, including paraphrases, summaries, and direct quotations from source material but does so in a general, superficial way, leaving the reader with unanswered questions.
- Provides documentation of most sources, though some may not adhere precisely to the specified form.
- Adheres to some of the conventions of the assigned research form (MLA, APA, other).
- May have lapses in transition.
- Shows some evidence of providing the reader with a sense of closure at the end but may do so in an abrupt manner, leaving the reader with little to ponder.
- Uses simplistic sentence structure and language.
- Attempts to adhere to manuscript rules (title page specifications, correct margins, spacing, numbering of pages) though there may be some violations.
- May have some misspelled words, punctuation or capitalization errors.
- May have some sentence fragments or run-on sentences.

Not Yet

A piece that fails to meet the characteristics of a "C" paper will be considered unacceptable. A student will be given an opportunity to improve the piece with assistance/specific feedback from the teacher or no credit will be given for the piece.

Acknowledgements

This guide is the result of the efforts of many individuals who have contributed significantly to its development.

Gene Bottoms, who provided the original idea for this guide and wrote Chapter 1, is senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board and founder and director of the *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* initiative. This initiative is the largest effort in America to improve high schools for career-bound students and involves over 1,100 high schools in 30 states. Numerous other states and school districts throughout the nation are adopting the *HSTW* goals and key practices as a way to improve high school for all youth, especially career-bound youth. Prior to joining the Southern Regional Education Board, Gene served as Executive Director of the American Vocational Association, where he emphasized academics as an integral part of vocational education at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

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Douglas Buehl, who wrote Chapter 6, "Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum," is a reading specialist and teacher at Madison East High School, Madison, Wisconsin, with 28 years of teaching experience. He is a widely published author on classroom strategies for engaging students in reading with several published books and numerous journal articles. Doug is a member of the International Reading Association (IRA) Commission on Adolescent Literacy. In 1996 he received the IRA's Nila Banton Smith Award, presented to outstanding secondary reading educators. He is president of the IRA Secondary Reading Interest Group.

Elizabeth Dick, who wrote Chapters 5, "Weekly Writing" and Chapter 7, "Research Writing," served as a regional writing consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education's Writing Program for three years, working with teachers from grades K-12 in 27 school districts. She is a writing project Fellow from the University of Louisville's Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project. Currently, Elizabeth is Director of Instructional Support for the Oldham County Board of Education in Buckner, Kentucky. She is a former high school English teacher with 22 years of teaching experience.

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Renee Murray, who edited the publication and co-authored Chapters 3, 4 and 8, is an SREB school improvement consultant who also serves as SREB's secondary literacy content expert. As part of that focus, she presents dozens of workshops annually throughout the country and prepares materials for publication, including the new guide, *Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors English: What Middle Grades Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do.* Prior to joining SREB, Renee spent five years with the Kentucky Department of Education in the areas of curriculum and assessment with focus on literacy and middle grades. She also taught English/language arts in grades seven through 12 and postsecondary communications courses in Kentucky and Missouri.

Ione D. Phillips, who edited the publication and co-authored Chapters 3 and 4, is a freelance editor and writer specializing primarily in education and a former member of the *High Schools That Work* staff where she directed the New American High Schools project supported by the U.S. Department of Education. She has written and edited a number of other materials for SREB. She previously worked for several Washington, D.C.-based educational associations in communications position, and was a reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution*.

Our authors offer unique credentials in the area about which they write and have walked in the shoes of those for whom this publication is intended. Their insights are practical and based on personal experiences.

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About Us

SREB

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is America's first interstate compact for education. SREB was created to provide specific services to member states, to create ways to share resources, and to enable states to achieve together educational programs and improvements that would be impossible or financially impractical for a single state. Created in 1948 by southern states, the Southern Regional Education Board helps government and educational leaders work cooperatively to advance education and, in doing so, to improve the social and economic life of the region.

SREB's 16 member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. SREB is governed by a board that consists of the governor of each member state and four other individuals from the state.

HSTW

High Schools That Work (HSTW), established in 1987 by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), is the nation's first large-scale effort to raise the academic achievement of middle grades and high school students. The goals and key practices of *HSTW* form the framework for whole-school improvement efforts in more than 1,100 high schools in 30 states (including all 16 SREB states). The American Institutes for Research selected *HSTW* in 1999 as the nation's only initiative to reform high schools that shows "strong evidence" of raising student performance. Each July, *HSTW* hosts an annual Staff Development Conference for more than 6,000 high school and middle grades administrators, academic and career/technical teachers, and counselors. *HSTW* also holds at least 10 national and specialty workshops for more than 2,800 educators throughout the school year. The *HSTW* board, whose members are mostly state directors of career/technical education, and SREB work together to plan, coordinate and monitor the initiative.

MMGW

Initiated in 1997, the SREB's middle grades initiative, *Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW)*, is designed to help states, districts and schools look at what they expect, what they teach and how they teach young adolescents to prepare for success in further education. *MMGW* is a network of schools, districts and states committed to implementing 10 essential elements that focus on a rigorous and challenging academic core curriculum for all students and on the teaching and learning conditions that support continuous improvement in student achievement. *MMGW* staff provides member states and schools with technical assistance, publications, assessments and networking services. The *MMGW* board, which meets twice a year, collaborates with SREB to plan, coordinate and monitor the initiative.

Challenge to Lead Goals for Education

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

The Southern Regional Education Board has established these Goals for Education, which challenge SREB states to lead the nation in educational progress. They are built on the groundbreaking education goals SREB adopted in 1988 and on more than a decade of efforts to promote actions and measure progress.

HSTW Goals

- Raise the mathematics, science, communication, problem-solving and technical achievement of more students to the national average and above.
- Blend the essential content of traditional college-preparatory studies — mathematics, science and language arts — with quality career/technical studies by creating conditions that support school leaders, teachers and counselors in carrying out key practices.
- Advance state and local policies and leadership initiatives necessary to sustain a continuous school-improvement effort for both academic and career/technical students.

HSTW Key Practices

High expectations — setting higher expectations and getting more students to meet them

Career/technical studies — increasing access to intellectually challenging career/technical studies, with a major emphasis on using high-level mathematics, science, language arts and problem-solving skills in the modern workplace and in preparation for continued learning

Academic studies — increasing access to academic studies that teach the essential concepts from the college-preparatory curriculum by encouraging students to use academic content and skills to address real-world projects and problems

Program of study — having students complete a challenging program of study with an upgraded academic core and a major

Work-based learning — giving students and their parents the choice of a system that integrates school-based and work-based learning. The system should span high school and postsecondary studies and should be planned by educators, employers and employees

Teachers working together — having a organization, structure and schedule giving academic and career/technical teachers the time to plan and deliver integrated instruction aimed at teaching high-level academic and technical content.

Students actively engaged — getting every student involved in rigorous and challenging learning

Guidance — involving all students and their parents in a guidance and advising system that ensures the completion of an accelerated program of study with an in-depth academic or career/technical major

Extra help — providing a structured system of extra help to enable students who may lack adequate preparation to complete an accelerated program of study that includes high-level academic and technical content

Keeping score — using student assessment and program evaluation data to improve continuously the school climate, organization, management, curricula and instruction to advance student learning and to recognize students who meet both curriculum and performance goals

MMGW Goals

- Increase the percentages of eighth-graders who perform at the Basic and Proficient levels in academic subjects.
- Provide educational experiences that increase students' knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, language arts, science and social studies.
- Provide students with opportunities to apply their skills in the fine arts and to explore careers and new technology.

MMGW Key Practices

An academic core — All students in the middle grades need an academic core curriculum that accelerates their learning so they succeed in college-preparatory English, mathematics and science.

All students matter — Each middle grades student needs an adult who takes interest in his or her successful learning, goal-setting, educational planning and personal growth.

High expectations and extra time and help — Middle grades students need enough time and help to meet more rigorous, consistent standards in a curriculum that accelerates achievement for all students.

Classroom practices that engage students — Young adolescents need varied learning activities linked to challenging academic content and opportunities to use new skills and concepts in real-world applications.

Use of data — States, districts and schools continuously must use data on student, school and teacher performance to review and revise middle grades school and classroom practices as needed.

Teachers working together — All middle grades teachers need time to plan together, to develop and coordinate learning activities, and to share student work that meets proficiency standards.

Support from parents — Parents must understand clearly and must support the higher-standards for performance in the middle grades.

Qualified teachers — Middle grades teachers must know academic content and how to teach young adolescents.

Use of technology for learning — Middle grades students and teachers must have opportunities to explore and use technology to improve knowledge and skills in English/language arts, reading, mathematics, science and social studies.

Strong leadership — Middle grades schools need strong, effective principals who encourage teachers and participate with them in planning and implementing research-based improvements.

New Resources

The complete materials list is available online at www.sreb.org. To order materials, contact the SREB Publications Orders Department at (404) 875-9211 ext. 236.

A Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Middle Grades Classroom: What States, Districts and Schools Can Do

With teacher turnover on the rise, one of the most critical issues facing the middle grades today is the quality of middle grades teachers. This publication recommends seven key practices for increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the middle grades.

By Gene Bottoms and Sondra Cooney
(02V56); 20 pages; $2.50 each

Improving the Middle Grades: Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Even in times of fiscal austerity, states can strengthen middle grades education. This publication defines six steps states can take to raise achievement and meet the SREB challenge to lead goal that achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.

By Gene Bottoms, Kathleen Carpenter and Sondra Cooney
(03V02); 8 pages; $1 each

Good Principals Are the Key to Successful Schools: Six Strategies to Get More Good Principals

SREB recognizes that effective leaders are essential if all students are to achieve at high levels. The SREB leadership goal is very ambitious: "Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective principal." This report defines six strategies that state and local leaders can use to achieve that goal.

By Kathy O'Neill, Betty Fry, David Hill and Gene Bottoms
(03V03); 32 pages; $3 each, $1.50 each for 10 or more

Research Brief: Factors Affecting Mathematics Achievement for Students in Rural Schools

This research brief is based on a study of more than 2,400 eighth-graders and more than 1,900 12th-graders in 24 clusters of rural high schools and their feeder middle grades in seven states. It surveys the mathematics achievement of eighth- and 12th-graders in these rural schools and looks at how course-taking patterns and classroom practices have affected achievement. It also offers strategies that schools can use to raise student achievement in mathematics.

By Gene Bottoms and Kathleen Carpenter
(03V04); 20 pages; $2 each, $1 each for 10 or more

Doing What Works: Moving Together on High Standards for All Students

Schools that make big gains in achievement are those that set high standards and dig deep to discover effective practices. Everyone connected with such a school works together toward a common goal. This publication explains how to organize school study teams that can work cooperatively to understand what changes are need ed and to implement and refine the key practices accordingly.

By Gene Bottoms, Lingling Han and Alice Presson
(03V07); 40 pages; $5 each, $3 each for 10 or more

Update Newsletter Fall 2003: Positive School Culture

This issue of the *High Schools That Work* newsletter offers a framework for evaluating school culture and making necessary changes to improve student achievement. The lead article examines the male vs. female culture in our nation's high schools and how this gender gap affects achievement. Several articles provide school leaders and teachers with experienced practioners' insights on effective ways to assess school culture and transform it into one in which all students can succeed.

(03V58); 40 pages; free

Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors English: What Middle Grades Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do

This curriculum framework is an effort to ensure that students leave the middle grades with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college-preparatory/honors English. Educators can use this framework in developing course syllabi, lesson plans, assignments, assessments and professional development activities that will prepare students for rigorous English classes in high school.

(03V61); 60 pages; $5 each, $2.50 for 10 or more

What Works to Improve Student Achievement in the Middle Grades: A *Making Middle Grades Work* Research Report

In 1997 SREB launched a comprehensive middle grades improvement effort, *Making Middle Grades Work*. This research report examines the design and implementation of this comprehensive improvement effort in 52 middle grades schools in 16 states. The study addresses four basic questions: 1) Is student achievement higher for eighth-graders in the network than for other eighth-graders? 2) Why do schools with similar demographics perform differently? 3) Why is achievement higher for students in schools that have implemented the design more fully? 4) What can states, districts and schools do to improve middle grades achievement? The report includes a summary of findings and recommendations for states, districts and schools.

By Sondra Cooney and Gene Bottoms
(03V64); 36 pages; 2003; $5 each/$2.50 each for 10 or more

Research Brief: *Making Middle Grades Work*: School and Classroom Practices That Improve Student Achievement

In 1997 SREB launched *Making Middle Grades Work*, a comprehensive effort to improve the middle grades. This research brief summarizes the results of a research study of 52 middle grades schools in 16 states. The study revealed improvement in both reading and mathematics. This brief also recommends actions that states, districts and schools can take to improve achievement.

By Sondra Cooney and Gene Bottoms
(03V65); 4 pages; 2003; $1.50

Summer 2003 Materials List and Order Form

The catalog of SREB's school improvement resources has been updated to include new publications, videos and other items. The list contains books, special reports, research briefs, case studies, site development guides, outstanding practices publications, middle grades reports, videos and video packages, and school banners.

(03V06); 24 pages; single copies free, $.50 each for 10 or more

(03V63)