

Chapter 1

Notes

Strategic Reading in the Content Areas: Practical Applications for Creating a Thinking Environment

"Learning Teams"



As a result of working through this chapter you will:

- Understand the importance of creating a thinking environment through reading
- Understand the organization of this book

Questions to ponder before, during, and after reading



Before reading – Why is it important to develop strategic readers?

During reading – Think about turning points in becoming the strategic reader you are today. How might you use awareness of these turning points to support developing strategic readers in your classroom? Be ready to share turning points and the ways these experiences have impacted your teaching.

After reading – As you think about reading and studying the information in this book, which areas are of most importance to you? How will this awareness focus your thinking as you read through the text?

Process Activity



The process activity used for this chapter is Round-Robin Sharing. Each person will share responses to the before, during, and after questions listed above.

Participants answer the questions individually, and then in round-robin fashion, everyone in the group responds to the question. The process is a great strategy for balancing participation because everyone has the opportunity to respond without having to "jump in."





Chapter 1

Strategic Reading in the Content Areas

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, and act as citizens.

- Richard Vacca

Introduction

Children must be lured into the wonderful world of books; the joy of reading begins at birth through modeling, reading aloud, and exposure to quantities of reading material. Reading shapes our lives, positively or negatively. Think of turning points in your path to becoming a reader. What attracted you to reading books, magazines, or newspapers? Who influenced you as a reader? You may be surprised to know that reading was a struggle during my formal learning years. The first positive memory I recall occurred during my first year of teaching when a veteran teacher introduced me to an array of read-aloud books. Reading aloud not only helped me manage a class of ornery boys but also lured me into the exciting world of print. Thirty-eight years later, I not only am thankful for the guidance of that caring teacher, but I also have had countless conversations with adults and students about turning points in their becoming readers.

I am finding that readers are born every day, often as the result of one caring individual. What I also am noticing is that student responses differ from adult reflections. Adults tend to view reading as a meaningful way to interact with other adults. They value the opportunity to read and share thoughts with friends. Personal selection of materials based on where they are in their lives is important to them. For example, new mothers may read and converse about babies, whereas adults in their fifties may read and reflect on retirement.

As I continue to interview students some still report that their turning points occurred as a result of teachers reading aloud favorite books, getting to select books of interest, reading and sharing with friends, or through independent reading time. Unfortunately, too many students still respond, "I read to get the assignment done," or "I read to please the teacher." Sometimes daringly honest students admit they don't bother to read the assignment because the following day the teacher will tell them what they need to know.

When reading is connected to students' lives, they enjoy the experience and are motivated to read. Turning points occur as memorable moments, created when the reader connects and interacts with the printed word. These experiences energize readers, causing them to uncover insights about themselves and the world. **Meaningful turning points have the potential to turn fledgling readers into life-long readers.**

Rationale



Since the first publication of *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me Then Who?* (1996) the focus on reading processes K-12 has continued to grow. All educators are aware of the national emphasis on standards, accountability, and high-stakes testing; the pressure to test well creates a greater demand for students to develop the advanced literacy skills required to master academic content subject matter. Societal and economic changes have also caused districts to emphasize literacy efforts. Employability rests on the ability to read; the ability to read develops good learners, earners, and citizens (Hirsch, 2004).

Yet many children do not read, or they don't read often enough. Some admit that they don't see reading as an important or meaningful part of their lives. In 2008, Americans spent an average of 1704 hours watching television, up from 1553 in 2001, 183 hours using the internet up from 125, 168 hours reading daily newspapers, down from 199, 117 hours reading magazines, down from 127, and 106 hours reading books, down 1 hour (Stevenson, 2008).

Is it any wonder that some children in school have a disinterest and difficulty with reading. How can one compare 1704 hours of watching TV to 168 hours (at best) of reading anything? Excuses for not reading are plentiful – “I am too busy to read,” or “Reading is so slow and boring.” Yet reading can change our lives by taking us to all parts of the world and teaching us things we never knew before. Why then is reading not revered as a critical ingredient for living a good life? Teacher Donalyn Miller, in *The Book Whisperer* (2009) emphasizes the importance of educators modeling the love of reading and showing students what it means to be a life-long reader. She incorporates activities such as using authentic materials, reading with and aloud to students, and discussing favorite selections to turn nonreaders into avid readers. Schools on the path to success for student learning are schools that recognize literacy as a necessary thread woven throughout all content area learning. They are schools that provide rich, literacy-based learning experiences resulting in increased thinking and learning for all students.

As educators examine educational practices and recognize reading as a key ingredient for student learning K-12, they are beginning to ask the right questions:

- How does the journey to become a strategic reader begin?
- How many minutes do students read during the school day?
- How are students allowed choice when it comes to what they read?
- How can narrative and informative text be used at all levels and in all content areas?
- Do students read in every lesson, integrating phonics and vocabulary?
- What opportunities are there for students to engage in independent reading?
- Are all teachers adequately equipped to address content area reading?

The purpose of *Strategic Reading in the Content Areas, 2nd Edition* is to address these questions and to outline how all classroom teachers can support K-12 students in becoming strategic readers.



Advancement in reading abilities will not come about through emphasis on reading instruction in isolation from the other work students do in school. Sending students to the “reading room” seldom addresses their inadequacies in reading a math word problem or understanding how to read science concepts. Teachers are discovering that teaching reading in their content areas not only increases student performance, but it also is essential to be successful in the world in which we live. Math authors (Chapter 6) state, “When students intentionally are taught the meaning of mathematical terms through the use of strategies they become strategic readers who can reason and communicate mathematically.” Kevin Gerrity (Chapter 6) believes, “The integration of reading and music will augment the learning process and do much to produce musicians who have a greater appreciation and understanding of their work.” Primary authors (Chapter 7) emphasize, “The focus during the primary years must be on both **learning to read** and **reading to learn**! A delicate balance between phonics instruction and modeling before, during, and after reading strategies promotes the development of strategic readers.” The issue of students who snub reading yet spend hours online can be addressed through the appropriate use of digital media. Three sections in chapter 6 address online reading and provide meaningful ways to engage students as readers via the Internet.

Creating Communities of Readers and Learners

If we want to create a literate environment in which all teachers feel competent addressing reading problems and planning instruction to foster reading development, districts must invest in quality professional development. International Reading Association President Kathryn Au (2010) believes that professional development of teachers must be put at the top of the list. She also points out that a substantial amount of money has been invested in packaged programs with little success. A comprehensive professional development program must be sustained over time to impact student achievement.

As I work with teachers and principals across the country, I am witnessing professional development efforts that are making a difference. The Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Iowa area educational agency invested in a three-year program to train teachers and principals from 26 school districts. Teachers and principals participated in large group training sessions, small group networking sessions, and classroom observation and coaching opportunities. Student performance not only increased on the state assessment but students also were reading more and enjoying it. Massive amounts of independent reading led to students participating in class discussions about their reading and increased vocabulary skills.

In some districts teachers and administrators have created professional learning communities to read, study, and implement ideas for developing strategic readers. Research indicates that when adults model the importance of reading, student reading increases. *Strategic Reading in the Content Areas: Practical Applications for Creating a Thinking Environment, 2nd Edition* incorporates a learning team format. It is my hope that teachers and principals will read, discuss the process

activities, and ultimately will use new ideas with students. Effective professional development demands ongoing, long-term investments of time, energy, and effort from all staff members participating at all grade levels and across all content areas. Only then will students have the chance to excel as readers in all content areas.



Structure of the Book

So what will you find in this book? Chapter 1 provides you with the rationale for taking the time and energy to focus on developing strategic readers. Chapter 2 reviews the research supporting professional development for reading in the content areas. The research is organized into eight principles of learning and explains their connection to becoming a strategic learner and reader.

Chapter 3 delves into the title of the book *Strategic Reading in the Content Areas*. This chapter explains how to develop strategic readers, what strategic reading involves, and also provides a framework for strategic reading in all content areas. Chapter 4 revisits the importance of metacognition - "Thinking about your thinking" - during reading. Three metacognitive tools - questioning, talking, and writing - are described. To update yourself on the three interactive reading elements outlined in *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me Then Who?* proceed to chapter 5. There you will find research relating to the three interactive reading ingredients (reader, context, and text), as well as a multitude of examples provided by teachers with whom I have worked.

Chapters 6 and 7, written by classroom teachers, explore what it means to teach reading in specific content areas. Voices from the classroom include teachers who emphasize strategic reading through informative text with primary age children, teachers who focus on the needs of the English Language Learners, as well as teachers of content areas like science and social studies. They state why it is important that content teachers take responsibility for reading and provide examples for developing strategic readers. Two additional sections included in this edition are Strategic Reading and 21st Century Learners and Strategic Reading in Career and Technical Education. In recognition of the diversity of learners within the general classroom, a section entitled *Special Considerations for Developing Readers (Response to Intervention)* has been added to the core content areas in this edition.

Three reading staples, read-aloud, sustained silent reading (SSR), and family literacy, are explained in Chapter 8. Perhaps you are already a believer of strategic reading in the content areas and have been exploring the use of children's literature to motivate students to read. Your search for exciting literature selections has been made easier with Chapter 9, where you will find an annotated bibliography of more than 200 selections representing all content areas. Selections incorporated in the text as instructional examples are cited in chapter 10, p. 262. The Appendix also includes information on learning teams and contributors for chapters 6 and 7.

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