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In 1999 the International Reading Association issued a position statement on adolescent literacy which called for a renewed interest in and dedication to the rights and needs of adolescent readers:

"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, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed" (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 99).

This Digest provides a brief summary of the development of content area reading; it discusses a reconceptualization of adolescent literacy and content learning; and it offers an example of a new model for both secondary classroom practice and teacher education.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For several decades educators have been concerned about literacy development beyond the early grades. As early as the 1930's there was an emphasis on the different reading demands of various subjects and on improving the reading abilities of high school students (Moore, Readence, & Rickelman, 1986). The term "content reading" became prominent in the 1970's with the publication of Herber's (1970) book, Teaching Reading in the Content Areas where Herber distinguished between literacy development as reading instruction and literacy development to support subject matter learning (Alvermann & Phelps, 1994; Ruddell, 2001).

Much of the work in this area was based on developments in cognitive psychology in the 1970's and 1980's, which provided insight into the relationship between a reader's background knowledge (schema) of a topic and the reader's ability to make sense of a text addressing that topic. The term "schema" refers to a set of cognitive structures of interrelated ideas and concepts built from a person's experience (see the 1989 ERIC Digest "Schema Activation, Construction, and Application"). According to some views of schema theory, a reader's existing knowledge of the subject matter is the single most influential factor in what he or she will learn from reading a text about that subject matter (Anderson, 1984; Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson, 1979). Thus, theorizing and research in cognitive psychology led to the development of many instructional strategies that secondary teachers could use to increase students' comprehension of course materials. For example, the use of a pre-reading strategy such as an anticipation guide can serve to activate students' prior knowledge to improve comprehension. It can also

enable students to confront misconceptions about the topic at hand, or to arrive at new understandings by revising or constructing new schema (Dufflemeyer, 1994). Numerous content area vocabulary development strategies focus on activating students' existing word/concept knowledge so that they may build on the schemata they have, or develop new schemata for new concepts (Alvermann & Phelps, 1994; Lenski, Wham, M. A. & Johns, 1999; Ruddell, 2001).

While the focus on the cognitive dimension of reading has helped some students become more proficient readers of content area texts (Ruddell, 2001), some assessment data indicates the need to reconsider adolescent literacy and content area learning. Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller (2001) note that there are still persistent gaps in student achievement between students who are members of the dominant culture and those who are not. They also draw on data from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress Reading Report Card. It indicates that although the percentages of eighth and twelfth graders scoring above the proficient level have increased (33% and 40% respectively), these percentages still suggest that high levels of literacy are not being attained by most secondary students. Some research indicates that an emphasis on reading solely as a cognitive process has not adequately addressed the needs of adolescent readers as they face learning from texts in the various subject areas at the secondary level.

RECONCEPTUALIZING ADOLESCENT LITERACY AND CONTENT READING

A number of reading researchers and theorists believe the reading process to be much more complex, including not only the cognitive dimension addressed by schema theory and many existing reading strategies, but including a social dimension as well (e.g., Bloome, 1986; Goodman, 1996; Greenleaf, et al., 2001; Harste, 1994). The extent to which readers are able to construct meaning with texts is also based on the personal, interpersonal, and institutional contexts in which reading events occur. The work of sociolinguists, cultural anthropologists, and critical theorists has shown that it is not possible to separate classroom practices such as strategies for activating background knowledge from the larger social and cultural contexts in which the practices are enacted (e.g., Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996).

Drawing from some recent studies, Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore (2000) call for a conception of adolescent literacy that includes adolescents' literacy practices beyond the secondary classroom, their expanded notion of text (i.e., the Internet, television, and magazines), and the relationship between literacy and the development of identity. But they also caution that the issues of teaching and learning in the context of secondary school content areas are still critical areas for research. For example, what constitutes best practices depends on many factors: how students perceive themselves as readers, what their interests are at the time, the interactions of teacher and student, of student and student, the classroom environment in which the strategy is being used, and how

institutional structures shape daily events that occur in classrooms and schools. This fertile ground of literacy as a complex process and research about adolescent literacy and learning in secondary classrooms is providing a means for reinventing ways to develop students' academic literacies (Brynildssen, 2001).

A NEW MODEL FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND TEACHER EDUCATION

One model developed from the reconceptualization of content reading is Reading Apprenticeship (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999). This instructional framework is based on the dual notions of literacy as a complex cognitive and social process and of teaching as cognitive apprenticeship. In order for adolescents to move from being novices to experts in specific content area practices, an expert practitioner (the subject matter teacher) guides, models, makes explicit, and supports the novice in his or her development. Indeed, because ways of thinking, speaking, reading, and writing vary from discipline to discipline, some believe the most appropriate place for students to learn these discipline-specific discourse practices is from teachers who are already experts in these fields.
Briefly summarized, Reading Apprenticeship involves teachers and their students as partners in a collaborative inquiry into reading and reading processes as they engage in subject-area texts. This instructional framework explicitly draws on students' strengths and abilities to provide crucial resources for the inquiry partnership... how we read and why we read in the ways we do become part of the curriculum, accompanying what we read in subject-matter classes [emphasis in original] (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001, p. 89).

The framework consists of four integrated dimensions of classroom life that teachers and students explore together: social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge-building. The social dimension centers on building a community of readers who use literacy to make connections between their interests, each other, and the larger social world they are engaged in learning about. The personal dimension of Reading Apprenticeship develops students' awareness of themselves as readers, of their purposes in reading, and of their goals for improvement. Adolescents' resources and the multiple literacies that are part of their daily lives are part of the teaching and learning that occurs. The cognitive dimension is the part of the framework that incorporates instruction in and the use of comprehension strategies, providing tools for monitoring comprehension, for problem-solving to assist comprehension, and for developing flexibility in reading. The knowledge-building dimension focuses on such areas as developing content knowledge (building schemata), knowledge of the discipline-specific vocabulary, and text and language structures.

The four dimensions of classroom life are made visible to students through the metacognitive conversations that students and teachers engage in about the texts they

are reading. Metacognitive conversations occur through class discussion, small group work, writing, and individual reflection. The model provides a framework and means for teachers to explicitly show students how to reflect on their own and each other's ways of using language and how to connect their knowledge and experiences to academic literacy practices. In Reading Apprenticeship classrooms, students work toward advanced levels of literacy by developing skills and strategies, as well as the necessary dispositions required for the challenge of achieving academic literacy. Students are able to move from novice to proficient performance in content area literacies by being engaged in complex academic literacy tasks with support from the teacher and peers and with the teacher making explicit the knowledge and problem-solving skills teachers call upon as readers in their disciplines.

Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller (2001) report on the implementation of this framework in a course in academic literacy offered to ninth graders in one of the poorest neighborhoods in San Francisco for the 1996-1997 school year. Assessments of student reading development on multiple measures were not only statistically significant, but impressive overall, as students made gains of two years in reading proficiency in seven months of instruction. Follow-up studies indicated that students maintained their reading development and continued their growth as readers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement

http://cela.albany.edu/

WestEd-The Strategic Literacy Initiative

http://www.wested.org/stratlit/

National Institute for Literacy: Adolescent Literacy

http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/adolescent/

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