Supporting the
Development of

Reading

in the CTE Classroom

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BY CHESTER P. WICHOWSKI

Reading is a fundamental skill. It is central to all learning and contributes to success in school as well as in the workplace. The need for better reading skills is not just important to boost basic skill test results, it also enhances the learning environment of the career and technical education (CTE) classroom and serves to better prepare students to meet the ever-increasing literacy requirements in the workplace. The development of reading skills in the CTE classroom is important for several reasons. First and foremost, many students will benefit from the improvement of their reading skills since reading may not be their strongest skill. Other benefits include gains in student content knowledge, higher levels of participation in class discussion, better performance on classroom and standardized tests, increases in student self-concept, and a reduction in classroom discipline problems.

The development of student reading skills in the CTE classroom can be supported by any CTE teacher using proven reading strategies blended into his or her instruction. To do this, it is important to consider some advice from experienced practitioners as outlined in the following items. (Note that this article is based on the Temple University Reading Project, a project recognized as a Promising Practice by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education.)

A "To Do" and "Not to Do" List

First, let's look at a few of the classic "Not to Do" considerations:

- **Do not** avoid introducing reading strategies in your CTE instruction. (Yes, we know the development of good reading skills should have been done by someone else.) Although you are not a reading teacher, you can make a difference, and your students will benefit from this.

- **Do not** assign *more* reading as a way to integrate reading into the CTE classroom. The best thing a teacher can do to turn off students who may be marginal readers is to ask them to read more. Marginal readers have been avoiding reading because they are not good at it and/or do not like it.

- **Do not** ask the students to read out loud in front of the class if they are marginal or struggling readers—this can be very embarrassing. A significant fear for many is public speaking, which is very similar to reading out loud in class.

- **Do not** assign reading homework that may be too long or involve an entire chapter with any expectation of students being prepared to discuss the reading or answer questions at the end of the chapter—the results will likely be disappointing.

- **Do not** try to implement more than one reading strategy at a time. Select one that appeals to you and weave it into your instruction. Seek out advice from a colleague who has experience with reading strategies.

- **Do not** give up on the use of reading strategies in your instruction. It is okay if at first it doesn't work out as well as you expect. With any new teaching method, it takes several applications to be successful. You and your students will become more comfortable as you refine the delivery.

Now that a few of the "Not to Do" considerations have been identified, it is time to move on to the "To Do" list.

- **Do** read the texts and other printed materials that your students will be reading. Although you know the content due to your occupational experience prior to entering the classroom, it is important for you to read the material in order to gain an understanding of the difficulty or confusion that may be in the reading.

- **Do** provide assistance and empathy to your students in the reading process. Consider this: If you were giving driving directions to someone, it would be important to alert them to rush hour traffic problems or to allow for extra travel time due to a construction project. Difficult reading passages need the same kind of heads-up advice to readers as you might give to unsuspecting drivers.

- **Do** assign reading in small chunks. A unit sub-section or even a paragraph or two may be enough to use with most reading strategies. To students who do not like, or are not proficient in, reading, bigger is not better when it comes to reading assignments.

- **Do** let students know that it's okay and very often necessary to read and re-read something in order to gain insight and understanding. All readers at all levels need to do this to gain understanding. The marginal reader may find this unappealing, a sign of inadequacy, or consider it punishment.

- **Do** interact with your students so they can talk about, write about or outline what they have read. Provide them with a supportive setting to ask your help or answer any questions.

- **Do** be patient with yourself as you begin to introduce reading strategies into your instructional practice. It takes several applications to develop

Chart 1

K-W-L		
What do I **KNOW?**	What do I **WANT** to know?	What have I **LEARNED?**

Chart 2

RECIPROCAL TEACHING ROLE CATEGORIES

SUMMARIZERS
Describe the key points from the assigned reading

- *What was the most important information presented?*
- *What do you think the author would like you to remember?*
- *What did the author use to help make this information clear?*

QUESTIONERS
Identify points that are unclear or confusing

- *Is there anything that did not make sense?*
- *What new terminology was introduced?*
- *What are you curious about?*
- *What questions can you develop for the class to answer?*

CLARIFIERS
Answer any points raised by the Questioners

- *What do you think the answers are or may be?*
- *Can anyone in the class provide an answer?*
- *How can these questions be answered?*
- *Why are these answers important?*

CONNECTORS AND PREDICTORS
Describe how this reading connects to other content and what reading may be next

- *How does this reading connect to other content in this class?*
- *How does this reading connect to content in some other class/subject?*
- *How does this reading connect to what you have experienced or know about outside of school?*
- *What clues were provided to help predict what the next reading may be?*

proficiency. Don't give up after the first or second try.

- **Do** team up with colleagues experienced with reading strategies to discuss what works, what doesn't work, and to identify solutions. Continue discussions on a regular basis. Share your success.

A Proven Reading Program

The "To Do" and "Not to Do" lists, as well as the selected reading strategies listed in this article, have been proven to work by more than 300 practicing CTE teachers in Pennsylvania. They were identified, applied and modified throughout a six-year research and development effort by the Temple University Center for Professional Development in Career and Technical Education Reading Project. The project was evaluated annually and later on a longitudinal basis by Garnes and Wichowski (2004), and Wichowski and Heberley (2006). Ultimately, this reading project was independently reviewed and recognized as a Promising Practice by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (2010). Due to space limitations, only a few of the popular well-proven reading strategies used in the Temple Reading Project have been listed.

K-W-L

The K-W-L stands for "What do I Know?", "What do I Want to know?", and "What have I Learned?" By asking students what they know (the "K" question), and what they want to know (the "W" question) about a topic prior to reading, it provides an opportunity to engage students in an interactive conversational manner, thus establishing a connection to students' background and interests. The "K" and "W" segments are pre-reading activities that are best blended into the introduction of a lesson. The "L" question is an after-reading activity and is best blended into the lesson summary. This strategy can be applied in a conversation-

al fashion and/or on paper (see chart 1).

This reading strategy uses student-generated input and is primarily an after-reading activity. It is, however, necessary for the teacher to introduce the roles and student areas of responsibility associated with this strategy prior to any actual reading. Student responsibilities are defined in four distinct role areas (see chart 2). The worksheets in chart 2 identify the four role areas and provide sample questions that students or teams of students are to apply to the assigned reading. The teacher's responsibility in managing this activity is to introduce the strategy, assign role areas, and provide guidance to students throughout the application of the strategy. It is important that students do not always serve in the same role—they need to rotate roles and review their reading from a different perspective. Over time, the level of teacher support required will diminish as students become familiar with the four role categories in this strategy.

Think-Pair-Share

This strategy involves students working with partners to answer questions from the instructor such as: What do you think this reading assignment is about? Why is it important to you? What do you already know about this topic? A summary of their paired responses are shared with the class. It is important to provide time for students to think and summarize their thoughts. This pre-reading activity can be used in the "K" and "W" components of the K-W-L reading strategy.

Reading Walk-Through

During this activity, the teacher provides an annotated tour or "walk-through" of the reading as students follow along in their texts. The annotated walk-through should include an analysis of the chapter title and sub-headings; visual content, i.e., pictures, graphs, charts etc.; and identification of new vocabulary. In practice, the teacher should read out loud the first and maybe the second paragraph and

discuss important points. This strategy serves as an introduction to the reading and reduces the shock of any unexpected reading surprises students may encounter.

Sticky Note Graphic Organizers

Although technically not a reading strategy, the use of sticky notes greatly enhances the use of almost all reading strategies. They provide students with the opportunity to write margin notes or comments when writing in texts is not permitted, thus moving them toward the adoption of margin notes—a practice common to advanced readers. Sticky notes also help in the identification of key points, generation of questions, recording of predictions, creating summaries and in developing outlines. Students can also place sticky notes on a wall or poster board to create groupings of information or develop a procedure or task list.

Summary and Recommendations

Reading is an important skill that can be further developed in the CTE classroom. The integration of reading strategies into the CTE classroom is not difficult but does require planning and practice. The further development of reading skills will not only benefit the CTE student, they will also enhance the delivery of instruction, improve the classroom climate, and ultimately help students meet the literacy demands of the workplace. It is recommended that the advice provided in the listing of items in the "Not to Do" and the "To Do" lists be strongly considered to support the use of any reading strategies. In closing, please note that your class may be the only opportunity left for the marginal reader to develop better reading skills before they leave their secondary education. **T**
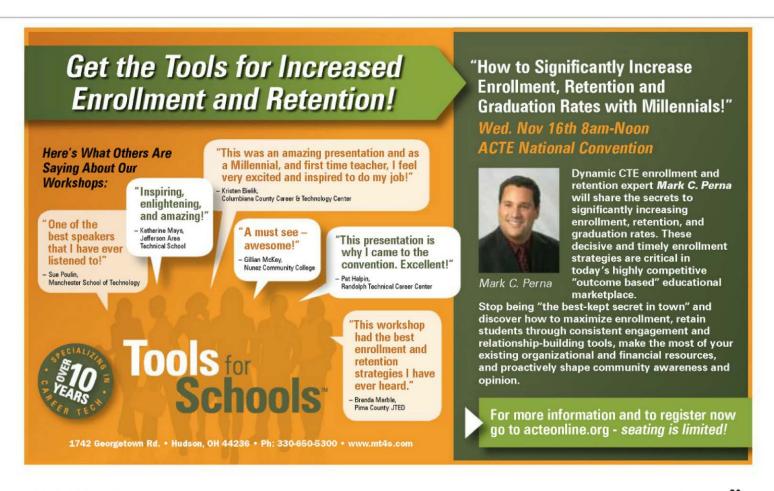
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