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Abstract

A major challenge of today's standards-based assessment movement targets the need to address and improve the achievement of struggling readers. As teacher education programs must prepare content teachers to address the challenges of teaching students who lack reading skills, we need to prepare our pre-service teachers to help students make meaning while reading any text. To accomplish such a goal, comprehension instruction must be explicit, direct, and effective. As VanDeWeghe (2004b) notes, even though students may still need development as readers at the secondary level, there may be confusion surrounding where reading instruction is addressed in the secondary curriculum. After talking with our cooperating teachers and tracking student teaching performances of our secondary English candidates, we believed that our pre-service teachers needed more effective preparation. To present important content conceptualizations, we realized our pre-service teachers must explicitly teach and use comprehension strategies with multiple texts at varying levels of difficulty. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the pilot of Gettysburg College's redesign and implementation of a reading apprenticeship model developed in collaboration with two practicing secondary English teachers. After field testing at the secondary level, the model was transported to the college level for preparing secondary English pre-service teachers. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

literacy, standards-based assessment, teacher education, reading comprehension, secondary education

Disciplines

Curriculum and Instruction | Education | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Educational Methods | Secondary Education and Teaching

A Reading Apprenticeship Model for Improving Literacy: A Pre-service Teacher Case Study

Divonna Stebick, Diana J. Pool and Jonelle Pool

A major challenge of today's standards-based assessment movement targets the need to address and improve the achievement of struggling readers. As teacher education programs must prepare content teachers to address the challenges of teaching students who lack reading skills, we need to prepare our pre-service teachers to help students make meaning while reading any text. To accomplish such a goal, comprehension instruction must be explicit, direct, and effective. As VanDeWeghe (2004b) notes, even though students may still

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need development as readers at the secondary level, there may be confusion surrounding where reading instruction is addressed in the secondary curriculum. After talking with our cooperating teachers and tracking student teaching performances of our secondary English candidates, we believed that our pre-service teachers needed more effective preparation. To present important content conceptualizations, we realized our preservice teachers must explicitly teach and use comprehension strategies with multiple texts at varying levels of difficulty. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the pilot of Gettysburg College's redesign and implementation of a reading apprenticeship model developed in collaboration with two practicing secondary English teachers. After field testing at the secondary level, the model was transported to the college level for preparing secondary English pre-service teachers.

The climate of assessment-based instruction provokes an innate dilemma for teachers. What is the best way to prepare students for high stakes tests while developing their reading comprehension skills? As Pearson stated in a 2005 IRA address, "Never send a test out to do a curriculum's job." We are challenged as educators who prepare pre-service teachers to determine the best approach for developing literacy skills instruction and finding the best classroom organization of multiple texts to support literacy learning. Langer (2002) found that effective teachers do not all teach in the same ways; rather, they share common ways of thinking about how reading develops, and that effective schools seemed to focus on students' literacy learning as the primary goal. A second body of research emphasizing skill awareness contributes to the discussion of how to help readers become aware of their comprehension skills.

Teachers need to intentionally model and to provide guided practice rather than expect that students develop effective literacy strategies on their own. Another important consideration discussed in the literature is the ability to recognize how and when to implement self-monitoring active reading strategies to make meaning. As Kucan and Beck (1997) suggest, struggling readers thrive in an explicit instructional environment; in contrast, proficient readers internalize these strategies and benefit from more implicit instruction. Struggling readers do not have the necessary tools for unlocking expository texts, and because of this, they need to adopt multiple reading comprehension strategies. Research is replete with examples of the importance of organized instruction to benefit readers of various proficiencies.

One successful strategy reported in the literature for increasing student comprehension is the reading apprenticeship model. The model focuses on making explicit the internal processes for reading and understanding a variety of texts (VanDeWeghe, 2004a). In order to help pre-service teachers become more effective teachers, teacher educators need to create opportunities to experience an apprenticeship model in their field experiences so that young professionals can practice reading comprehension skill instruction effectively.

The 2005 AERA Panel report, *Studying Teacher Education*, identifies the importance of field experiences for pre-service teachers, citing the linkage from university course work to classroom instruction in ways that increase students' knowledge gained during pre-service programming. The panel calls for a strong connection to the learning of K-12 pupils in helping preservice teachers accumulate knowledge, skills, and dispositions that encourage learning. Furthermore, when teaching practices in the field match teaching practices advocated by teacher education program instructors, it is much easier to help prospective teachers move from simply wanting to implement a desired practice to actually being able to do so. Therefore, field experiences that are most effective seem to be those guided apprenticeships that engage pre-service teachers in problem solving in regard to student learning and pedagogical practices.

Over a period of several years, we focused on the redesign of our secondary English internship as we investigated the most appropriate way to implement a new reading apprenticeship. The design of our new program included practicing teachers in the development of the instructional framework and incorporated Pearson's gradual release model of instruction (2002).

During the three year revision process we collected data from our students, field placement teachers, and secondary students to identify the needs and strengths of our current internship program. We used the data to devise a theory to practice model with a strong connection between campus-taught theory and field practice. Our strong professional relationship with respected field placement teachers assisted our efforts. The benefits of the collaboration were two-fold; the secondary teachers are field experts, and the college is committed to fostering a functioning partnership between professionals. After developing and revising the model with our field experts, we agreed on a format

that benefited both the pre-service teachers and the secondary students.

After developing the model, the field placement teachers provided the topics for instruction based upon curriculum standards, individual teacher preference, and student needs. On campus, we focused pre-service teacher instruction on finding high quality texts to fit the content, as well as suggesting and modeling appropriate instructional strategies, so that pre-service teachers would feel competent to implement the strategies on their own in the field.

Methodology

Participant

This case study focuses on Jen's (pseudonym) experience in the Internship for Teaching Composition (ED 411) at Gettysburg College during fall semester 2005. A senior, Jen planned to student teach during the spring 2006 semester. These were the last classes for her Education minor before student teaching. In addition Jen was completing the final course requirements for her English major.

The Apprenticeship Model

The redesign of the English Internship in Reading and Writing pilot included the critical elements of best-practice instruction by including the use of a variety of texts to support literacy, as well as the collaborative efforts of practicing K-12 and higher education professionals to improve student achievement. An important goal for the internship was to meet the needs of all readers by connecting multiple texts. The pilot also included direct instruction of active reading strategies (i.e.; questioning, inferring, determining important ideas, etc.) in different contexts using Pearson's gradual release model. In this model, the responsibility of learning is released to the students as they demonstrate their ownership of the reading strategies they are practicing. Two high school English teachers were involved in the pilot, Diana Pool from Winters Mill High School in Westminster, Maryland who designed and implemented the curriculum model in her own classroom, and Denise Schnur from Biglerville High School, Biglerville, Pennsylvania who supervised Jen's field placement. This type of collaboration offers students an authentic interface with curriculum currently in place at the high school level. Pre-service teachers need a framework for developing lessons and lesson cohesion over multiple days of instruction, which this model provides. Diana's curriculum model incorporated multiple literacies in the design including a picture book/short text, narrative, expository, and Web literacy to model, guide, and eventually scaffold students towards independent application of the targeted reading strategies to improve comprehension skills (Table 1). Because reading is a skill fundamental to academic success, we felt it was an appropriate focus for our apprenticeship. Furthermore, the model encourages students to apply analysis skills integral for successful reading with a variety of texts.

Table 1 Diana's Curriculum Model Matrix

Instructional Phase Based upon Pearson's Gradual Release Model of Instruction	Picture Book / Short Story	Narrative Literacy	Expository Literacy	Web Literacy
Modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read <i>Cinderella</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read "Catch the Moon" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read Narrative Writing Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model Vocabulary term : Short Story
Guided Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice Active Reading Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice Active Reading Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use plot diagram to plan a story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate how to find Web sites / definitions
Independent Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Handout: Fairy Tale characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compare <i>Cinderella</i> and "Catch the Moon" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Mysteries of Harris Burdick</i> writing project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present a word and its definition to the class

After Denise discussed her recommendations to Diana's model and approved our curriculum plans, Jen used Diana's matrix to create her own plan for using multiple literacies during the internship (Table 2). Diana's plan served as a model for Jen to construct her instructional sequence and to scaffold student learning.

Table 2 Jen's Curriculum Matrix

Instructional Phase Based upon Pearson's Gradual Release Model of Instruction Modeling Guided Practice Independent Application	Picture Book / Short Story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce questioning with <i>The Librarian Who Measured the Earth</i> ▪ Read <i>Pink and Say</i> ▪ Guide students through chapter in <i>Tomorrow When The War Began</i> ▪ Continue questioning while reading alone 	Narrative Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read part of <i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i> ▪ Practice questioning while reading novel ▪ Continue questioning while reading novel alone 	Expository Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Natural History of Australia</i> ▪ Practice as students read other reef books ▪ Research for Australian research paper and works cited 	Web Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modeled using the Internet as a reference source ▪ Practice locating authoritative Web sites for research project ▪ Used the Web sites to gather information for research paper

In addition to her plan, she completed the following additional requirements:

- Complete a pre and post assessment for writing.
- Complete a vocabulary project.
- Write thoughts, insights, questions, and teaching points within the text and margins when planning. Share these reflections with me.
- Reflect on each aspect of the lesson
- Post lesson plans and reflections to your Web page

Results and Discussion

We explored the effectiveness of the multiple literacies curriculum in two different settings. Diana implemented the curriculum in her class at Winters Mill High School, and our pre-service teacher, Jen, adapted Diana's ideas for use with her students at Biglerville High School. Jen was participating in a semester-long reading and writing internship to develop her skills in organizing and delivering content area instruction, and we explored her progress in developing reading and writing activities that used the gradual release model. We also examined student achievement of the secondary students in both Diana's and Jen's class using both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

Diana's Experience

Picture book/ Short story—Cinderella.

Diana placed the picture book/short story unit early in the academic year to establish good models for active reading and analysis skills using shorter works. Using the story of *Cinderella* (Perrault, 1969), the class focused on identifying archetypes and characteristics of fairy tales during reading. By rereading a familiar work, students were able to read with less teacher-directed focus on comprehension and more emphasis on an analytical reading of the text. Diana combined the modeling and guided practice instructional phases for this reading by first demonstrating active reading strategies on the overhead and then reading the text aloud and stopping paragraph by paragraph to make independent and teacher-prompted notes on the reading handout. Then, after reading the story, students completed a handout identifying specific characteristics of fairy tales seen in *Cinderella* with specific supporting evidence from the text.

The majority of Diana's students were able to complete the handout independently with great success, (class average=97), identifying numerous diverse examples supporting the use of archetypes and fairy tale characteristics in *Cinderella*. On the handout the teacher included a model response which helped many students complete the activity. However, those students who had previously shown low motivation and difficulty working independently continued with this trend. Diana felt that the activity served as good preparation for

reading “Catch the Moon,” (Glencoe Literature, 2002) a short story with many fairy tale elements. *Cinderella* served as a review of higher-level thinking skills used while reading, in addition to providing an introduction to some of the themes explored in the next work.

Narrative literacy—“*Catch the Moon.*”

The students used many of the same strategies employed for reading *Cinderella* with “Catch the Moon.” The class focused on using active reading strategies to analyze the text, identifying fairy tale characteristics in “Catch the Moon,” and comparing “Catch the Moon” and *Cinderella*. Once again the modeling and guided practice were combined, with Diana prompting student active reading responses while the class read the story aloud. The class would stop reading at set intervals to analyze elements of the story using post-it notes. After reading the story, students once again identified elements of a fairy tale present this time in “Catch the Moon,” and students compared how the author had used similar elements in the two stories.

After guided practice with the previous activity and the reinforcing of analysis skills, the students were able to make excellent observations as to the fairy tale elements present in “Catch the Moon.” Diana constructed a multiple choice reading quiz to test students’ comprehension of plot, the author’s use of literary device, and the inclusion of fairy tale elements in the text (class average=82). The students demonstrated story comprehension, performing better on this assessment than on other multiple choice reading assessments in the unit. A multiple choice format is challenging for who have difficulty reading because it requires close reading of the question and responses. This format is included on the Maryland High School Assessments, and is frequently incorporated into Diana’s class as a practice technique.

Expository literacy—*Narrative Writing Workshop.*

After reading *Cinderella* and “Catch the Moon,” students then explored in their own original compositions some of the elements of the writer’s craft seen in these two stories. Diana’s goal was for students to compose a story using a traditional plot structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action), with dialogue, characterization, setting, and literary elements or fairy tale characteristics such as those studied previously. Before composing, students read “Writing Workshop: Narrative Short Story” (Glencoe Literature, 2002) independently, a work that discussed the stages of the writing process and included examples of each step. Then, Diana’s class analyzed their newfound knowledge of plot structure by labeling the elements of plot seen in “Catch the Moon,” a familiar story. Before students began writing their own short stories, the class looked at images from Chris Van Allsburg’s (1984) *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, a picture book of mysteries. Using a graphic organizer that required students to brainstorm possible causes of conflict and developments for each picture, the teacher first modeled and then students independently practiced brainstorming story ideas. After looking at the pictures, students selected one to compose a story about. They then independently completed a plot

diagram that outlined the action and conflict of their proposed story as they continued to follow the stages of the writing process: composing, drafting, and revising their stories.

The students seemed to enjoy the short story activity, and they felt competent to approach the task of writing a story with confidence. After the first quarter grades, students completed a reflection where they commented on the work completed in the class so far. The students frequently selected the stories written using the images from *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* as their favorite pieces of writing composed during the class; many also identified this as the work of which they were most proud. The students demonstrated proficiency (class average=86) with plotting, characterization, and use of dialogue; scores on the assessment suggested that facility using standard written English and appropriate grammar, punctuation, and mechanics are still an area of weakness for many students.

Web literacy—Vocabulary.

In conjunction with reading “Catch the Moon,” students completed a vocabulary activity where they identified the word, part of speech, the word used in the text, an image, and several examples of the word used in other literature, accessed from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. On the graphic organizer detailing the expectations of the assignment, Diana gave the students an example for each part of the activity for students to use as a model. Then, the class went to the Media Center and listened to a brief presentation on the types of paper and online dictionary resources available for determining word meaning and usage. Also, they received brief, rudimentary instructions on how to create a basic PowerPoint presentation. To show their application of these skills, students used the PowerPoint format to present their information discovered about their vocabulary word to the class.

Diana assessed the students during their oral presentations to the class, using a teacher-developed checklist to monitor students’ effective inclusion of the identified elements: the word, its definition, appropriate examples from “Catch the Moon” and other texts, and visuals that represent the meaning of the word. Students enjoyed the activity, readily locating appropriate Web images and resources to help complete the project. Students scores varied based on how closely they followed the outlined criteria; however, all students submitted an assignment for a grade (class average=91). Though the activity took place at the beginning of the year, the definitions of these vocabulary words were still very present in students’ minds months later. After reading the Lewis Carroll poem “Jabberwocky,” (2003) Diana asked students to describe the condition of the Jabberwock after its battle with the boy, using a vocabulary word learned during our study of “Catch the Moon.” Numerous hands were raised to respond correctly with “decapitate,” evidence that the study of vocabulary was incorporated into many students’ long term memory.

After examining Diana’s students’ responses and achievement while using the model, we felt that it had an appropriate structure useful for preparing

pre-service teachers. Additionally, the format was such that it could be generalized to fit a variety of classroom instructional situations.

Jen's Pre-service Adaptations for Using Multiple Literacies

Picture book/ Short story—The Librarian Who Measured the Earth & Pink and Say.

Jen placed the picture book/short story unit early in the academic year to establish good models for questioning using shorter works. Using the book *The Librarian Who Measured the Earth* (Lasky, 1994), a picture book biography of Eratosthenes, Jen introduced the concept of questioning. She focused on why we ask questions and that not all questions are to be answered. Including *The Librarian Who Measured the Earth* in the curriculum provided an authentic example for explaining the importance of asking good questions. To provide further reinforcement for modeling questioning for students, Jen selected Patricia Polacco's (1994) picture book *Pink and Say*. Jen focused her examples on how questioning increases thinking during reading. The students learned how this cognitive strategy actually brings more meaning to the text. Jen modeled significant questions which could be answered within the text, answered through inferences or discussion, and questions which could not be answered at all. She consistently used "I wonder" statements to make the transition from her explicit instruction to the students' guided practice. Jen had prepared her questions on post-it notes so the question samples were deep enough to allow for higher level thinking. Then, after reading the story, students needed to ask five questions as they continued to read their novel.

The majority of students were able to ask five questions. However, they were literal questions. Those students who followed the pattern of "I wonder" were able to create higher level questions. Jen felt if she had more time with the students, she would be able to consistently reinforce high-level questioning in discussions. The anchor text, *Pink and Say*, provided a strong foundation for student reference as they continued to apply their newly learned questioning strategy in their next book, *Tomorrow When the War Began* (Marsden, 1993).
Narrative literacy—Tomorrow When the War Began.

The students applied questioning techniques as they read *Tomorrow When the War Began*. The class focused on questioning to analyze the characters. Once again the modeling and guided practice were combined, with Jen prompting student generated questions while the class read the story aloud. The class would stop reading at set intervals to analyze the characters of the story using their questions recorded on post-it notes. After reading the story, students once again identified questions which triggered their thinking.

After the guided practice with the previous activity and the reinforcing of analysis skills, the students were able to ask questions which promoted a class discussion. Jen used exit slips to evaluate her students' application of questioning. As she analyzed their character analysis projects, she was also able to determine their level of understanding of questioning and characterization.
Expository literacy—Applying questioning to determine what's important.

After applying the cognitive strategy of questioning throughout *Tomorrow When the War Began*, Jen transferred questioning to expository text. However the purpose for questioning while reading changed slightly. Once again, Jen began by explicitly modeling for students when and why to question when reading expository text. She selected a short text; *Natural History of Australia*, (Berra, 1998) in order to identify what is important for the research project. After extensive modeling of what information she wanted to find by asking many higher level questions, Jen was able to release the learning to the students. The students used many other texts related to coral reefs to apply their newly learned comprehension strategy. Throughout the research process, Jen coached students to find information that would support their questions and to skim and scan texts which would answer their created questions. Since the students generated their own questions, they were motivated to find the answers. Consequently they were able to write cohesive research papers.

As Jen reviewed the research paper drafts, she noticed that students demonstrated proficiency with locating pertinent information to answer their self-posed questions. Their writing was interesting and well focused.

Web literacy—Locating authoritative Web sites for research project.

In order to ensure that students used official educational websites when researching, Jen modeled how to identify quality sites and how to abstract information from the site and paraphrase information. As Jen made her daily observations, she found that her students needed much modeling of research skills. She moved slowly through the research, breaking it down into very simple steps: creating higher level questions with research potential, locating Web sites, evaluating Web sites, gathering important information, taking notes without plagiarizing, transferring notes to an outline, and using the outline to draft the paper. As students continued to move through this unit, Jen discovered that the extra time she spent early on was paying off. The students' content was focused and coherent, but she learned also that mechanics need to be addressed. Therefore, Jen will continue with this writing project when she returns to Denise's classroom in 2006.

Conclusion

With the emphasis on reading comprehension stressed by federal legislation (NCLB Act), it is critical to design curriculum that enhances student performance on statewide assessment measures. As supported in the literature, our project addressed both reading comprehension strategies and student achievement in addition to the preparation of pre-service teachers.

Instruction using multiple literacies provided excellent reinforcement of concepts previously covered and a seamless way for review without repeating the same content applications. Our design demonstrated that students began to build the experiences necessary to be academically successful and to make meaningful connections from these experiences. Students began to understand that the skills they were learning were connected and not isolated entities to be learned for the "test" and quickly forgotten. The variety of instructional methods also seemed to

motivate many students, particularly those methods that incorporated technology and familiar children's literature.

Our project provides further support for including opportunities for cooperative planning between college faculty and practicing teaching professionals. Besides the obvious benefit for increasing rapport and collaboration between teaching professionals and college faculty, shared curriculum decisions ensure that internship experiences are linked in ways that specifically target appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions that encourage learning.

Even though a case study approach offers limited generalizability of results, we feel the pedagogical methods developed for the study are transportable to a wide variety of subject areas and are easily adapted to current curricular guidelines. With interested K-12 partners, we feel that it would not be difficult as a matter of routine to design guided apprenticeships that utilize cooperative planning strategies. Our project provides further insights on how pre-service teachers should be prepared to effectively meet the instructional challenges for teaching reading in a variety of contexts to readers with varied levels of proficiency. Success of any reading apprenticeship depends upon a consistent instructional framework, appropriate field testing, and the collaborative efforts of practicing K-12 professionals, higher education professionals, and pre-service teachers.

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