



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

January 17, 2005
Volume 2 Number 19

Making Literacy Part of Every Student's Middle and High School Experience

from Adolescent Literacy Resources,
Meltzer, et al.

Reading and Writing

The research supports the common-sense notion that time spent on reading and writing will improve those skills. Examples of strategies that simultaneously increase content understanding and improve reading and writing skills are paired reading, quick writes, peer conferencing, rereading assignments for a different purpose, rewriting text from other points of view, and connecting text with other media. Sustained silent reading, when effectively implemented, has also been linked to building a positive literacy culture, but supporting reading practice, addressing the needs and interests of a variety of learners, and improving reading skills.

Research also supports the use of the writing process as an integral part of content-area literacy development. Effective writing instruction gives students frequent opportunities to write, accompanied with feedback, expectations to revise, and opportunities to edit. This approach improves written communication skills, thinking skills, and memory.

Speaking and Listening

Purposeful integration of speaking and listening into the content-area classroom improves reading comprehension and writing skills. Allowing for regular exchanges and use of spoken language supports the development and expansion of ideas. Frequent opportunities to collaboratively brainstorm, organize, write, read, share, revise, and present work can build multiple literacy skills. This results in richer individual work and the establishment of a learning community. Speaking and listening strategies can also reinforce the use of scaffolding, the development of motivation, and making connections. Such collaborative learning is particularly

important in supporting the literacy development of second language learners.

Emphasis on Thinking

The research strongly indicates positive correlation between adolescent literacy development and the deliberate and frequent use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Cognitive strategies act as a catalyst for students using higher-order thinking skills. These include reading, writing, speaking, and listening both to learn and to demonstrate learning.

Metacognitive strategies allow students to effectively monitor their own comprehension and skill in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Research shows that weaker readers can learn to use the metacognitive strategies that stronger readers use, improving content-area learning.

Cognitive strategies improve a student's ability to effectively use language to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Students are required to make judgments based on evidence from many sources (e.g., text, web page, TV show, advertisement, film); create analogies, compare and contrast similar and dissimilar items, events, and points of view; use creativity to develop new representations or extensions of concepts; use critical thinking to analyze pros and cons; present arguments using language that communicates well-reasoned opinion. These strategies must be taught, modeled, and practiced.

Metacognitive strategies allow students to think of themselves as learners. By monitoring one's comprehension and skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, one becomes a self-regulated learner.

Moreover, using a variety of goal-setting, problem-solving, and focusing strategies fosters academic success. Therefore, deliberately teaching such strategies related to each skill area benefits students, especially those who do not intuitively apply these strategies.

Metacognitive strategies include reciprocal teaching, two-column note-taking, visualization, the use of graphic organizers, and the use of rubrics.