I Read It, But I Don't Get It:
Fostering Reading Comprehension in the Content-Area Class

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TODAY'S AGENDA

- What do you notice about your students' reading behaviors?

- Increasing degrees of context

- The case for reading instruction in post-secondary settings

- Common elements of high-utility reading strategies

- Activities that build on those recommendations

- Getting started

Increasing Degrees of Context

- The World of K-12 Literacy: What Our Students Bring with Them

- Bridging the Gap: Developmental Reading

- College-Level Reading: From Skills to Strategies

- Discipline-Specific Literacy: Specialized Literacies

The World of K-12 Literacy:
What Our Students Show Up With

- "America's nine-year-olds are reading markedly better by all measures than they were fifteen years ago. . . . However, the idea that early literacy improvement would automatically lead to consequent later growth in literacy has not panned out. Early learning gains, instead of catapulting students toward continued literacy advancement, disappear by the time these students reach eighth grade" (Perle et al., 2005).

- "According to American College Testing (2006), the proportion of students on track for successful college work actually diminishes as students advance through U.S. schools from eighth through twelfth grade" (Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008).

- "What is clear is that instead of 'learn to read, then read to learn,' the natural progression of literacy abilities and needs in K-12 contexts should be more like 'learning to read and reading to learn go hand in hand' and that literacy instruction is an accepted part of the entire K-12 experience" (College Reading and Learning Association 2013).

Bridging the Gap: Developmental Reading

- "To some extent, remedial courses . . . help students achieve a level of reading and writing competency that they should ideally have reached upon graduating high-school. However, beyond this fairly basic remediation for the struggling students . . . there is little evidence that students are improving" (Van Camp and Van Camp, 2013).

- Roksa and Arum (2011) report that during the first two years of college, students show very little real gain in their critical thinking, analytical reasoning, or writing skills" (Van Camp and Van Camp, 2013)

- " . . . at the heart of critical reading is that the reader is able to identify what a text does, and how . . . who makes connections with and within the materials, therefore constructing new knowledge as they read (El-Hindi, 1997). Reading-to-write involves integrating the information with one's own ideas in order to produce novel written material, and it is this type of reading that we most associate with college level work" (Flower, Stein, Ackerman, Kantz, McCormick, and Peck, 1990).

College-Level and Discipline-Specific Reading

- "To prepare students for the variety of disciplines, texts, and tasks they will encounter, instruction necessitates less focus on specific skills and more emphasis on the underlying processes needed to become a flexible reader by learning and understanding how, when, where, and why to use a variety of task-appropriate strategies that promote comprehension" (Holschuh & Aultman, 2009; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Simpson & Nist, 2000).

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- "In literacy development, progressing higher in the pyramid means learning more sophisticated but less generalizable skills and routines . . . Most students need explicit teaching of sophisticated genres, specialized language conventions, disciplinary norms of precision and accuracy, and higher-level interpretive processes" (Shanahan and Shanahan, 2006)

Common Components of High-Utility Strategies

- 1. Activate prior knowledge (schema)
- 2. Generate questions and answers
- 3. Elaborate on text (make connections between text-self-other text-world)
- 4. Identify text structure
- 5. Summarize
- 6. Anchor new vocabulary in its semantic field
- 7. Monitor comprehension

What Now?

- Short-term:
  - Select a few strategies that make sense for your class and use them regularly throughout the semester
  - Assess efficacy by means of . . .
    - Pre/post strategy use checklist
    - Classroom engagement/participation
    - Completion/quality of homework
    - Performance on exams/written assignment
- Long-term:
  - Required academic reading class