Standards Based Literacy: 
How to Teach Reading When You’re NOT an English Teacher

“For these are all our children. We will all profit or pay for whatever they become.”  
James Baldwin

For struggling readers, comprehension is a mystery. “If students are to succeed in the content areas, teachers will need to de-mystify the reading and writing that goes on there.”  
Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas, p. 22

Critical Question for ALL Teachers:
➢ How will the ELA Standards change your teaching approaches?

What are the ELA Anchor Standards for Literacy?
• The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards have 4 strands and a total of 32 standards: 1. Reading (10), 2. Writing (10), 3. Speaking and Listening (6), 4. Language (6)
• In order to prepare students for the challenges of college and career texts, the standards require a rich reading of literature as well as extensive reading in science, history/social studies, and other disciplines.
  • Students must be able to read complex informational texts and cite specific examples from the text with independence and confidence because the vast majority of reading in workforce training programs will be sophisticated nonfiction/informational text.
  • The CCSS literacy standards are intended to complement the content area and not to replace it.
• The standards also require that students systematically develop knowledge of literature as well as knowledge in other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening in history/social studies and science.

What the Reading Research Tells Us:
  o The bulk of older struggling readers and writers (4-12) can read but cannot understand what they read.
  o Many excellent third grade readers will falter or fail in later-grade academic tasks if the teaching of content specific reading is neglected in the middle and secondary grades.
  o The two most critical elements needed to learn to read are vocabulary and prior knowledge/experience.
  o It is never too late to teach a student to read!

Reading Comes in Two Stages
Learning to Read: PreK-3
Reading to Learn: 4-12 and beyond

Reading is NOT a natural ability:
“That the brain learns to read at all attests to its remarkable ability to sift through seemingly confusing input and establish patterns and systems. For a few
children, this process comes naturally; most have to be taught.”
David Sousa, 2005

Remember:
- Every content area has its own vocabulary and style of being read. Every content area is a foreign language to students!
- As you teach your content, make sure your students understand the words (academic vocabulary) that you as a content specialist know are important to be successful in your content.

What is Content Area Reading (Reading to Learn)?
- Content area reading means helping students make connections between what students already know (prior knowledge) and the new information (academic vocabulary) being presented.
- Content teachers must teach their students how to use reading and writing as tools for thinking and learning in their specific subject.
- Content teachers do not become reading or writing specialists!
- Content teachers become teachers who teach their students how to read and write in their specific content.
- Content teachers teach their students to think like the teacher!

Never Forget: Whatever the students’ reading level or ability to comprehend text might be, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make the textbook material accessible and meaningful to students.

“Comprehension is taught, not caught. It is explicit and straightforward. Students should know and be able to explain what strategy they are using to comprehend the text they are reading. Teachers across the curriculum can help improve student comprehension by modeling best practices and filling students' toolboxes with comprehension strategies.”
Carianne Bernadowski

Comprehension Strategies
“Comprehension strategies are specific procedures that guide students to become aware of how well they are comprehending as they attempt to read and write.” Comprehension strategies are a set of steps that purposeful, active readers use to make sense of text when they read.
National Reading Panel Report, National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2000, pp. 4-5.

Why Do I Love Literacy Strategies?
1. Strategies create a plan of attack. Then you can solve any reading problems yourself. Students need to do the work!
2. Strategies help you learn HOW to understand. If you know HOW to understand, then you are more likely TO understand.
3. Strategies help you realize HOW you are thinking so that you can think more deeply and more consciously.
If You Want To Implement the ELA Standards in Your Classroom, Try These Strategies

1. Book/chapter/section/instruments/equipment/etc. Walk or Preview (Learning Tool Walk or Preview)

Purpose—create interest, assess or activate prior knowledge, encourage personal connection to the text, require active participation with the text, expose students to critical text features, develop purpose for reading, develop key concepts, vocabulary, and general idea of the text before reading.

Steps:

- Quickly walk through and preview the text, pointing out key information in the text.
- Use key vocabulary as you do the walk.
- Have students predict what the things you are pointing out will provide them as you go along. You may choose to record predictions, and return to predictions after reading. (Anticipation Guides work very well for predictions.)
- Go over the physical aspects of the text—what readers cope with in terms of length, size, and layout. Point out text features that make the information delivery unique for your content.
  - Include features like table of contents, glossary, pronunciation guides, indexes, sidebars, introductions, conclusions, and graphic features that communicate how the text is read.
  - In nonfiction texts, illustrations often include graphics that provide information that readers must integrate with the text if they are to comprehend the information.
  - In fiction, illustrations and graphics usually add meaning and enjoyment to the content.
- Before students read text, preview and examine the parts of the learning tool by systematically examining the structure or the way the text is organized and presented.
  - In fiction texts, the structure is usually narrative and arranged primarily in chronological sequence.
  - Nonfiction texts are organized categorically or topically and may have sections with headings. Several underlying structural patterns to provide information to readers are used, and the presence of these structures can increase the challenge for readers.
    - Description
    - Chronological sequence
    - Comparison and contrast
    - Cause and effect
    - Problem and solution

Student Sample: Reading Guide After a Book/Chapter/Section Walk

- What is the name of your text, chapter, and section?
- On what page does the glossary begin?
What is used in the text to help you practice problems, understand new words, create interest, etc. as you read?

Name some lessons/ideas/words from this text that will be a review for you.

What is a key word, idea, or concept in your text? How do you know?

Where do you find a key word, idea, or concept?

Using the Table of Contents, name one/three new things that you will be learning.

**Extensions:**

- Have students describe in writing how the use of various text features helped them construct meaning from the text.
- Have students show how they would modify the Text Walk to match different types of text like a blueprint, recipe, automotive manual, script, or a Web site text.
- Have students predict what the things you are pointing out will provide them as you go along. You may choose to record predictions.
- Return to predictions after reading.

**2. Teacher Think Alouds (Metacognition)**

**Purpose:** Help the students to learn to think like you!

**Steps:**

1. Think-aloud strategies are not a sequence but a **set of habits of mind** all effective readers use to make sense of a wide variety of texts in different media and of varying complexity.

2. The think-aloud helps readers better understand what they are reading by forcing them to think about what they read as they read it.

3. Use think-alouds to:
   - Demonstrate what students should do and how they should do it.
   - Reflect on what they read.
   - Help them comprehend their reading.

4. When you come to a difficult part of text, tell them, “This is what I would do if I were reading, listening, watching this information.” Show them how you would:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predict, estimate, hypothesize</th>
<th>Describe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare and contrast</td>
<td>Make connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and correct</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify—use fix-up strategies</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply prior knowledge or new knowledge</td>
<td>Troubleshoot and problem solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize it in their heads</td>
<td>Explain or categorize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. Fix-Up Strategies**—When students don’t understand the words, content, or ideas, they must be taught what “things” they can do to help themselves understand the information **before** they ask the teacher for help.
Steps:

- Discuss with students what they do when they are reading and they come to something they don’t understand.
- Give students the Fix-Up Strategies Chart and explain each type of fix-up strategy and give an example of when it would be used in your content.
- Read a text to the students and model Fix-Up Strategies using a Think Aloud.
- Have students read a text and practice using Fix-Up Strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fix-Up Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ask yourself what you already know about the text. <strong>Use your prior knowledge</strong> and make an informed guess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Re-read</strong> the sentence with the “clunk” and look for ideas or clues. <strong>Re-read</strong> the sentences <strong>before and after</strong> the clunk and look for clues of what it means. <strong>Visualize in your head</strong> what the text or problem is saying or asking for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Keep reading</strong> for now and skip the confusing word or concept. It may be explained later in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Study the text features</strong> like the sidebars, bold print, headings, captions, diagrams, charts, visuals, graphs, pictures, and glossary. Use the text features to help understand the content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Use prefixes and suffixes</strong> to figure out the meaning of the word or phrase. Break the word/problem into smaller parts or chunks and find the parts of that you already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If it doesn’t make sense reading the text silently, <strong>read it out loud</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Ask someone</strong> for help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REMEMBER:
**Use at least 3 of these strategies BEFORE you ask the teacher! Use “3” BEFORE you ask me!**

References:


Web sites that share effective and engaging vocabulary activities:

Common Core App—free app—green with black circles
Edutopia
ReadWriteThink
Readingeducator.com
http://www.achievethecore.org Lots of resources and lesson ideas
www.teachingchannel.org: short videos with real teachers modeling CCSS lessons
www.engageny.org
www.quizlet.com. There are all kinds of flashcards available and teachers can make their own plus play whole group or small group games for review
www.studystack.com Create flashcards for sorts
www.fisherandfrey.com
Merriam-Webster Online contains a dictionary and thesaurus as well as a number of links to sites such as Cool New Stuff, Word Game of the Day, Lighter Side of Language, and Words for the Wise.
Vocabahead.com Watch short vocabulary videos for ACT/SAT preparation
Words by creating word designs with text you provide at http://www.wordle.net/
www.quizlet.com. There are all kinds of flashcards available and teachers can make their own plus play whole group or small group games for review
http://www.dinah.com/ Dinah Zike’s foldables for all content areas

Your favorites that I don’t have on the list?