
4

Teaching Reading Comprehension and Content

How Is Teaching Reading Different for ELLs in Secondary Schools?

Reading in the content areas has typically meant “reading to learn,” as differentiated from beginning reading instruction, which has been referred to as “learning to read” (McKenna & Robinson, 1990). Content area literacy for ELLs refers to reading and writing to learn concepts from textbooks, novels, magazines, e-mail, electronic messaging, Internet materials, or Internet sites so they can keep up with their subject matter and pass the high-stakes tests. It also means learning to read these texts critically, forming opinions, and responding appropriately orally and in writing. It means keeping up with all subjects and daily course work. It also means being part of the culture of the Internet in order to access information, evaluate contents quickly, and synthesize information for various classes. English language learners, like all other students, need to understand the languages of disciplines like biology, algebra, government, and English literature—for each is a different language in itself. This is definitely not easy to accomplish! Neither for ELLs nor for their teachers! Nevertheless, this is what all teachers must strive for.

The problem with ESL only. Expository or informational texts have their own language and organizational format. They vary considerably across subject matter. Scientists, mathematicians, historians, linguists speak and write differently when explaining their domain. Each domain has its set of nomenclature and semantic preferences for nesting that terminology. For years the field of second-language teaching has espoused the concept of providing "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1981), where teachers modify their speech and use visuals and other techniques to make instruction comprehensible to ELLs. While it is important for ELLs to understand the teacher, most sheltered content teachers or ESL content teachers simplify their language to the point where students are learning very few words, especially when it comes to subject matter.

It is quite likely most ELLs were primarily exposed to narrative genre as commonly used in ESL or language arts. Their English as a second-language instruction might have consisted of only simple oral language patterns (e.g., "This is a . . ."; "I have a . . ." and simple phrase responses) or reading short, choppy sentences. The words and grammatical structures that show rhetorical or narrative connections between ideas are often eliminated (Fillmore & Snow, 2002). English language learners' basic terminology and syntactical and discourse structures for the subject matter you are teaching may be very limited or non-existent. If so, then these students have a lot of catching up to do. Without additional reading and language development support from their mainstream content teachers, student comprehension remains at a shallow level—a surface comprehension level.

Notwithstanding, one must always keep an oxymoron in mind—provide comprehensible input and rich vocabulary. It is most challenging but critically important for teachers to balance comprehensible input with rich vocabulary.

Problems with too much sheltering. Publishers of sheltered instruction or content-based ESL textbooks use readability formulas that keep ELLs reading below second- or third-grade levels even in secondary schools. Important topics and concepts are reduced to a couple of sentences, devoid of detail. We have observed sheltered content classrooms where out of desperation for lack of detail, students are asked to go to search in encyclopedias. The students have no recourse but to copy straight out of the pages without really understanding the basic concepts.

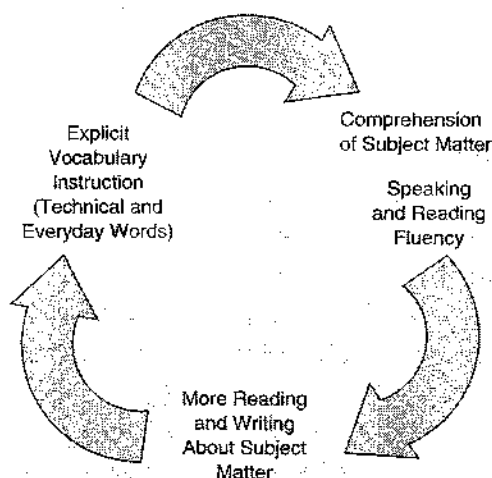
In contrast, instruction that provides an in-depth, long-term focus on a specific domain not only improves general vocabulary but also

improves reading comprehension. Instead of attempting to "cover" a lot of information, opportunities to probe profoundly into meaningful texts help *all* students, not just ELLs, experience deep comprehension and critical thinking.

Problems with too much phonics. Phonics programs in middle and high schools are fine as tools for ELLs that have low literacy skills in their first language. They also help more advanced ELLs that need to hear and distinguish the phonemes (sounds) and morphemes (smallest units of meaning) of English. However, phonics and decoding programs beyond 20 days have a downward spiral effect (Kamil, 2006). In other words, after 20 or so days of exposure to phonics only, there is no positive effect on students. Often, these programs focus only on sounds and not word knowledge. That means that students are parroting sounds devoid of meaning and sense to them. Along with phonics instruction, students need opportunities to practice those decoding skills with real texts, word study, and real discussions.

Problems with dense texts. School curricula, administrators, or teachers usually dictate or believe that the complete textbook be "covered." As teachers rush through the pages and content, ELLs and low-level readers are left behind. Because it is important for all students to engage with this type of text, a better option is to parse the text. To parse a text, teachers select the chapters or pages from a chapter all the basic information that addresses the district's standards. The fluff is left out. Kauai teachers defined parsing as "condensing and eliminating." After parsing texts for the week, they proceeded to select the vocabulary tiers, the reading comprehension skills that better suited that genre, and then the consolidation activities that would ensure students learned all the material selected. At first teachers were reluctant to cut out a lot, but as their students experienced more and more success, the teachers became comfortable with parsing.

A comprehensive approach. The more exposure ELLs have to explicit instruction of vocabulary, reading skills, and in-depth focus on a specific domain, the more improvement on reading fluency and motivation to learn that subject. It has to become "a vicious cycle" where vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing using the same words, and further reading and learning of more words are happening on a daily basis.

Figure 4.1 Reciprocal Effects

Lesson Planning for Integrating Vocabulary, Reading and Content

Teachers use the first 5 components of the lesson plan described in Chapter 2 to plan their lesson. First they select the standard or objective. This helps them to do backwards planning, where the outcome is determined first, then the lesson designed. To measure the outcome, student assessments are selected or developed next. Once the outcomes are determined, teachers preview the text to select, condense, eliminate unnecessary information, and segment the text for orchestrating daily activities.

After parsing and writing a summary, teachers can begin planning the reading comprehension part of the lesson by using a set of questions such as the following to work the text they have selected:

1. Semantic awareness.

Which Tier 1, 2, and 3 words will I teach that will help them understand the main aspects of the text selection?

Which techniques will I use to teach each one?

How can I make sure students interact with each word at least 5 times prior to the lesson? And use the words 7 or more times during the lesson?

2. Connecting students' prior knowledge with new knowledge.

Is the text appropriate, or do I parse it or find another?

What do the students know about this topic? How can I find out?

What type of motivation and props can I use to connect to what we are about to read and learn?

3. Metacognitive awareness.

Which reading strategies are most appropriate for comprehending this text?

How do I present them in my read-aloud?

Which is the best activity for the students to practice these skills?

How will I debrief what they have learned?

4. Active and engaged reading.

What are the best sections for partner reading?

What strategy should I use for partner reading?

How can I make sure they use the new vocabulary?

Is there a graphic or cognitive organizer they can use?

What follow-up cooperative learning strategy should I use to consolidate knowledge and develop more language skills?

5. Ample discussions to anchor domain knowledge.

What are my questions for *before reading*?

During reading, where do we stop and debrief?

What are my debriefing questions for the final discussion *after reading*?

6. Assessments.

How should I test their content knowledge? What is the best genre for writing up the content they have learned?

What evidence of vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking and other skills do I want them to exhibit?

What rubrics should I use?

How will I test vocabulary?

Other types of assessments fit here?

Preparing for Reading

The standard, objective, and purpose for reading and learning and how students will be graded are posted on the chalkboard. In other

words, objectives, rubrics, and evaluation criteria are posted and introduced before the lesson begins.

Lists of Tier 1, 2, and 3 words are also posted. Teachers in Kauai posted the following suggestions for previewing and walked them through each:

- Look through assigned text.
- Think about what you already know about the topic and what you will be reading.
- Look at titles and headings.
- Look at vocabulary words.
- Look at pictures and captions.
- Read summary, conclusions, questions at the end *FIRST!*
- Be prepared to make predictions and discuss background.

Teacher Read-Alouds in Content Classes

Once the anticipatory set and vocabulary are introduced, *the teacher reads two or so paragraphs to model reading comprehension strategies*. In secondary schools, teachers read aloud to model reading fluency and comprehension skills—*not to read for the students*. There is a strong belief that because students have trouble reading, it is better for the teacher to read to the students. We emphasize this because we have observed teachers read complete novels to their classes! Keeping students from reading only makes them fall further and further behind on their reading skills.

First, the teacher makes *one* of the statements below and then proceeds to model how the statement is done. For instance, a teacher would say:

- I'm going to visualize and think aloud about what I just read.
- I'm going to read chunks I can handle and then summarize.
- I'm going to change the title and subheadings into questions.
- I'm going to make predictions.
- What could that word mean? Let me reread.
- I'm going to stop and reread confusing parts of this sentence.
- I'm going to put a Post-it note after this sentence so I can ask for clarification.
- What kind of test question would the teacher ask from this paragraph?
- How does this relate to the paragraph above?

There are other basic reading (decoding) and reading comprehension skills that can be modeled and taught while doing a teacher read-aloud. Some of the ones ELLs and low-level readers need the most in secondary content classes are listed here along with ways teachers can teach them "on the run" without having to stop and conduct a grammar or phonics lesson.

Modeling Grammar, Spelling, Phonics, and Comprehension Skills During Teacher Read-Alouds

1. *Auditory Blending and Segmenting.* With a difficult word, blend sounds for 2, 3, or 4-phoneme words or break a word into its separate sounds.
2. *Sight Words.* Mention and read words that have irregular spelling or pronunciation.
3. *Vocabulary.* Say the word twice and follow it with a simple definition or a simple sentence.
4. *Cognate Awareness.* Recognize cognates and false cognates, and set up cognate recognition activities.
5. *Spelling.* Say the word, then spell the word aloud as you are reading.
6. *Writing Mechanics.* Mention or emphasize punctuation, sentence structures, grammar, idioms, and metaphors.
7. *Fluency.* Read a sentence without fluency (too slow, too fast, wrong pauses, wrong intonation), then read it again with smoothness, good expression, good rate.
8. *Comprehension Monitoring.* Model comprehension monitoring and "fix-it" strategies. Make a mistake in reading and then go back and fix it.
9. *Predictions.* After reading part of a paragraph, make a prediction.
10. *Questions.* Ask a question after you read a couple of lines.
11. *Answer Questions.* After you ask a question, model answering that question in complete sentences.

12. *Grammar*. Talk about particular sentence structures, tense, punctuation, and contrastive features of Spanish and English (or English and another language when possible).
13. *Word Analysis*. Mention prefixes, suffixes, identifying word parts, and break and assemble compound words.
14. *Summarization*. Read a couple of sentences, then summarize aloud.
15. *Graphic Organizers*. Read a paragraph, then quickly fill out a graphic organizer you have on the board or chart tablet.
16. *Text Related Writing*. Think aloud how you would tackle prewriting, writing, revising, editing, publishing, using vocabulary and patterns from the text you have been reading.

After modeling one or two strategies, the teacher instructs the students to use those same strategies as they conduct their partner reading.

Partner Reading

After the teacher models reading and thinking about reading, partners are assigned a reading portion, which includes rereading what the teacher read aloud. At the beginning of the year, alternating sentences helps students ease into partner reading. This also ensures that partners are paying attention to each other and helps them concentrate on stress and juncture, punctuation (where and how to pause), in other words to read with expression. This form of developing fluency also emphasizes comprehension. After reading a few alternating sentences, students stop and practice the strategy the teacher has assigned (e.g., summarizing). After a few weeks of alternating sentences, partners can move to alternating paragraphs, as long as they continue to be engaged in quality reading and quality interaction. There are several variations students like to use for partner reading. These are some that we have captured:

Partner Reading Option 1

- Partners read the entire page alternating sentences.
- The teacher leads a short discussion of the page to check comprehension.
- Students share a word or words they didn't understand.

Partner Reading Option 2

- Partners read the entire page, alternating sentences.
- Partner A retells what happened or summarizes facts from the first paragraph.
- Partner B retells what happened or summarizes facts in the second paragraph, and so forth until they finish the page.
- Students place Post-it notes on words that they cannot identify or understand.

Before starting partner reading, students need to know the behaviors expected during reading. The section in this chapter on Cooperative Learning suggests ways of setting up effective partnerships and teams.

Partner Reading With Newcomers

Benefits for Mainstream Students. Pairing an ELL or a newcomer ELL with a mainstream student is beneficial for both. It helps the ELL, particularly a newcomer, to have a buddy who can help understand what classroom protocols are like in this country. Mainstream students report they learn a lot more from helping others than they do on their own. This is because they are more cautious about how they read (their fluency), and pay closer attention to what they read, and are able to understand it better because they get to talk through what they just read. Hearing questions from someone who needs explanations for basic word meanings, cultural nuances, and concept formation helps the peer tutor as much as the ELL.

Benefits for Newcomers. Many students will come during the year and need to fit into academic learning as quickly as possible. Some newcomers can do that very well since they have high literacy levels in their own language. Others may need more time, even to figure out what schooling norms are required of them. When a newcomer needs this type of help, placing the student with an established ELL-mainstream partnership works well. When it is time for partner reading, the newcomer sits between the two and listens to each of them read. After a week or so of listening and observing reading protocols and classroom norms, the newcomer begins to feel more comfortable. The next step is to ask the newcomer to shadow read (read after each partner but in a soft voice), or read along with each partner softly. The third step is to ask the student to take turns reading on his own, but

still sits between both partners. This way, the student in the middle gets more turns at reading because students are still alternating sentences but the one in the middle gets to read twice as much. This *three-step peer scaffolding process* helps the student “pick up” English quickly and keep up with assignments. If an ESL teacher works with this student some time during the day, that teacher can accelerate vocabulary and reinforce concepts the student has read in the content classes. In the meantime, the mainstream teacher is applying all the steps described throughout this chapter so that there is redundancy of vocabulary usage through the lesson sequence.

Choral Reading in High School?

Students like to get creative with how they read. Choral reading is not just for poetry or theater anymore! A government class decided they would read in unison by teams, one paragraph at a time. After a couple of times, they decided to start practicing their parts before class so they could outperform, outread, the other teams. By practicing prosody in this fashion, government came to life. Some of the students who also had a physical science class together talked the teacher into letting them do the same in the science class. The science teacher took it a bit further and had whole-class rehearsals for reading and pronouncing words such as *elongated*, *ellipse*, *perpendicular* so the choral reading would come out smoother. Both teachers reported that choral reading helped all students develop more confidence in using appropriate terminology and reassured ELLs that help was necessary and available even for mainstream students. Choral reading also led students to explore new ways of presenting their unit products more creatively. Some decided to personify the solar system and presented with dialog and movement what they had studied. The government teams also wrote short plays depicting a controversial event that blended history with politics.

Consolidating Knowledge Through Cross-Cutting Strategies

After partner reading, other student-centered and/or teacher-guided activities can be used to consolidate knowledge. We call these activities cross-cutting strategies. Oral, writing, or further reading activities to anchor knowledge can be conducted through Cooperative Learning, journals, logs, and instructional conversations. We call these

cross-cutting strategies because they can cut across all content areas and cut across any part of a lesson. These help to build redundancy of concepts and vocabulary—and those pieces of knowledge that will be tested.

Debriefing as a Cross-Cutting Strategy

After about 15 minutes of partner reading, the teacher asks them to pause where they are and begin a discussion of what they “have found so far.” This open-ended question signals that students can discuss themes, important details, and confusing lines, question the author or the facts, and clarify concepts and key vocabulary. The teacher usually ends the discussion with another open question, such as “What did you learn?” Besides content, students express lessons learned about working together or things that did not work.

Teachers don't always debrief with the whole class. Sometimes they go from team to team and ask and probe. They conduct instructional conversations where students are welcomed to discuss, question, and think aloud about what they are working on. One history teacher likes to pull 5 chairs together in a corner of the room and calls each team of 4 to come and converse with him for 10 minutes each. These rich conversations are always exciting. Students come prepared because although these are informal conversations, they like to show off their knowledge and even try to trip up the teacher with complex questions. The teacher uses this strategy before tests to get students to talk through the key ideas, details, and inferences from the social studies unit they have been reading and learning. These talk-through conversations help students go beyond answering literal questions about history and to process information at high levels of thought and meet curriculum standards.

Cooperative Learning as a Cross-Cutting Strategy

After reading and discussing ideas with the teacher, the students can work in teams of four to consolidate their knowledge and thinking into a group product. Graphic organizers lend themselves to this type of consolidation. Information learned can also be consolidated into written synopses or summaries. Both products enable students to use the new vocabulary words again, anchoring meaning through utility. They use the words to map out concepts or to write the summaries. They also drill each other on the meaning, spelling, and multiple meanings of the words.

Teachers usually prepare the students to work in teams from the beginning of the year until students learn to work efficiently. Making sure each student has an academic task, not just “one leader” to do all the organizing, thinking, and even the work! They start by assigning simple fun activities so the focus is on learning how to work together. They also present, post, and discuss with students the following norms for working in teams:

- Everyone must contribute ideas
- Everyone must work on all tasks
- Everyone must show respect for peers
- Everyone must learn and master the material

Some teachers like to assign roles at the beginning of the year. Some examples that have explicit roles so that each student is responsible for an academic aspect of the task are:

- Content Connector—discusses connections between new and old information; between instructional objective and information being gathered.
- Architect—responsible for graphing or illustrating meaningful pieces of information.
- Vocabulary Collector—looks for key words and other interesting, unfamiliar, and perhaps relevant words, marks the spot, and shares with the team.
- Seeker—finds interesting, important, or puzzling pieces of information in the text to read aloud to the group.

After students have completed their team product and learned the new vocabulary and concepts, they write in their logs or *exit passes* how this information affects them or their environment or the world. Exit passes are 2" × 3" cards where students write their reflection and hand it to the teacher as they leave the classroom. They make connections to their lives and current events. They can also make connections to other chapters, literature, or discussions they have had in class.

Formulating Questions as a Cross-Cutting Strategy

When adolescents work in teams of four, it is important to give them challenging activities that keep them busy learning minute by minute. Figure 4.2 contains graphic organizers for each level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Each slide has key verbs, question stems, and activities for that particular level. For example, the verbs for the *Knowledge* category, which is basically for recalling or remembering

information, are words such as *describe, define, identify, label, recognize*. However, for a higher category such as *Analyzing*, the verbs to be used are words such as *differentiate, distinguish, select*. Questions for this category would be: What conclusions can you draw from . . . ? What is the function of . . . ? The type of products or activities for this would be: Design a . . . Make a flow chart for . . . Analyze . . .

Figure 4.2 Applying Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Process—4

APPLYING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF COGNITIVE PROCESS—4			
THINKING PROCESS	USEFUL VERBS	SAMPLE QUESTION STEMS	POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS
A N A L Y S I S	Analyze Distinguish Examine Compare Contrast Investigate Categorize Identify Explain Separate Advertise Subdivide Point out Select Survey Differentiate Classify	What is the function of...? What conclusions can you draw from...? What is the premise? How was this similar to...? What was the underlying theme of...? What do you see as other possible outcomes? Why did ...changes occur? Can you compare your... with that presented in...? What must have happened when...? How is ... similar to...? What are some of the problems of...? Can you distinguish between...? What was the turning point in the story? What was the problem with...? What were some of the motives behind...?	• Design a questionnaire to gather information. • Make a flow chart to show critical stages. • Write a commercial for a new/familiar product. • Review a book of math and compare to the one we use. • Construct a graph to illustrate selected information. • Construct a jigsaw puzzle. • Analyze a family tree showing relationships. • Write a biography about a person being studied. • Arrange an exhibit and record/list the steps you took.

These frames are given to the students to use throughout the semester. The question stems are useful for constructing questions during partner reading or for cooperative learning activities such as Numbered Heads Together.

In a *Numbered Heads Together* activity, each team writes 2 questions on a given section of the text. One question is from Bloom's knowledge, comprehension, or application category; the other from the analysis, synthesis, or evaluation category. They give these questions and possible answers to the teacher. The teacher uses these questions for a Numbered Heads Together to test the class. In a Numbered Heads Together, the students number off from 1 to 4 in each team; the teacher calls out a question and asks all the teams to put their heads

together to discuss the answer and make sure everyone knows the answer; after a couple of minutes, the teacher calls a number, and a student has to stand and respond for the whole team. This strategy is particularly helpful for ELLs because they know they have to be ready to answer as much as the other students and are willing to participate more. The accountability factor also works for the other students because they learn how to help the ELL as well as prepare themselves more accurately.

These questions are sometimes used with the *Tea Party* activity. In a Tea Party students stand either in two concentric circles and face each other, or in two long "conga-type" lines and face each other. The teacher gives them a minute to review, discuss, and memorize each answer. Then she arbitrarily calls on one student to respond. The students then move to the next partner, and another question is discussed. Usually 8 to 10 questions or topics are used for this activity.

When students formulate questions for such competitions, the questions tend to be at higher levels than textbook questions and they also motivate the students. Usually, activities such as these become better assessments of student knowledge than the traditional paper and pencil tests. These activities also save teachers time trying to figure out what questions to ask and how to assess students.

There are many other Cooperative Learning activities that are applicable at any stage of the lesson delivery. The next chapters integrate Cooperative Learning at different intervals and for different purposes.

Graphic Organizers as Cross-Cutting Strategies

Graphic organizers—also called semantic maps, webs, organizers, diagrams, graphs, charts, etc.—are visual representations of knowledge to help students comprehend content (Bromley, Irwin-Devitis, & Modlo, 1995; Echevarria & Graves, 2005). Graphic organizers involve both visual and verbal information; they promote active learning and exercise students' use of language as they listen, think, talk, read, and write. They can also be tools for group interaction between teachers and students and among students. Graphic organizers require the integration of language and thinking to highlight key vocabulary in a visual display of knowledge that facilitates discussion and sharing of ideas and information.

ExC-ELL teachers use graphic organizers to explain concepts for Tier 1, 2, and 3 words. Graphic organizers help ELLs understand grade-level text without changing the meaning or lowering the academic and cognitive level of the content. Graphic organizers help

modify difficult texts so content is illustrated in a meaningful way for the students. The four basic patterns used throughout the lesson are:

1. *Hierarchical*. The linear organizer includes a main concept and the levels of subconcepts under it.
2. *Conceptual*. The organizer consists of a central idea with supporting characteristics and/or examples. A Venn diagram is an example of conceptual organizer with two overlapping circles for representing information being compared.
3. *Sequential*. The organizer arranges events in chronological order with a specific beginning and end into chronology, or cause and effect, problem and solution, and process and product.
4. *Cyclical*. The organizer represents a series of events in a circular formation with no beginning or end, just a continuous sequence or successive series of events.

There are many books and Web sites for graphic organizers. By simply typing in "graphic organizers," the Web gave us many many pages of sites (e.g., www.graphic.org; www.smartdraw.com; www.graphic.org), Here is one example we shared with teachers.

Main concept: _____	
<u>Description</u>	<u>Attribute 1</u>
<u>Attribute 2</u>	<u>Attribute 3</u>

Cooperative Summarizing Activity

Description: Class summaries help students review and remember information. Students can *explain* what they have learned through a summary that focuses on the main concept and three key attributes of that concept. As a subsequent activity, the students can write a report about what they have learned in their team interaction.

Science Theme: _____

Writing as a Cross-Cutting Strategy

Writing intelligently about something is good proof of learning about that subject. Students can meet writing standards by doing their “reports” in a style that fits a writing standard or goal. If one of the goals is descriptive writing, the language arts teacher can meet with the other content teachers and share templates on how to structure the final report. When all content teachers use the same techniques, formats, or templates around the same time, it makes it easier for all students to quickly grasp those formats. Rubrics and ways of evaluating the reports and products should also be consistent across content domains if the final product is to be the same format.

For example, formats for writing position papers can be given, along with information from the Web on opposing views on a government policy, an environmental issue, a way to solve a mathematical problem, or play reviews. Students in teams, pairs or individually can pick sides of the issue and write a position paper defending their position with factual evidence. Students can follow up with debates.

A teacher asked student teams to make a comic book version of a novel they had been reading. The drawing of cartoons had to be accompanied with dialog and intermittent narrative. These are shared with the rest of the class through read-arounds.

Mini lessons are necessary so students can learn to master the writing elements. Nevertheless, mini lessons need to be relevant to ELLs’ needs. Some additional features to consider for ELLs:

- Writing lags 1 to 2 levels behind oral language development.
- Syntax, grammar, and spelling errors are the same as in oral language.

This implies that ELLs may need more opportunities for discussions and more models of good writing. Before asking students to write, a teacher can:

- Model brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and final publication-ready product.
- Demonstrate and explain what the final written product should look like.
- Explain and display rubrics or criteria for assessing that piece of writing.
- Address different stages of writing development and help students at each stage.

Content teachers can label and share samples of different writing genre, such as:

descriptive	narrative	persuasive
technical manual	history book style	math book style
science book style	chronology	scientific process
web sites	poetry	screen play
short story	mystery novel	marketing plan
reflection journals	learning logs	plain summaries
how to take notes		

Interdisciplinary Products as Cross-Cutting Strategies

The final products can also vary across content domains—some topics lend themselves to dramatizations; others to posters, fliers, newspaper articles; booklets, pamphlets, or technical reports with Web-based information; and a variety of contributions to the community. The biology teacher takes her class to the computer lab at the end of a unit for a week. Her students search the Web for related information in teams, then, pull it together to finalize a team product. One middle school ends a multidisciplinary unit with an Amazing Race where teams compete with a mixture of content, word knowledge, and physical challenges. Everyone enjoys those days, and all students feel accomplished.

Final Debriefing and Student Assessment

Instructional conversations also serve to assess student oracy and comprehension. With the final debriefing through these conversations, the focus turns to the whole chapter, reading segment, or literature piece. Judgments are made about the author's purpose, point of view, quality and clarity of the message, how important this information is, and how it connects to what is happening in the world today. They

also do a final sweep of vocabulary terms, and teachers indicate which are key for the final writing product.

Teachers often forget to debrief. They don't leave enough time before the bell rings. One teacher's solution was to set her timer to ring ten minutes before the bell. This way she trained herself and her students to spend that time consolidating knowledge for that period and to gauge what needed to be revisited the next day. After a while, they didn't need the timer. It became inherent, and students automatically stopped to wait for the final instructional conversations with their teacher.

For assessing the overall performance of the students, the ExCELL Observation Protocol can be used. The new format of the EOP uses a Logitech pen to record individual student observations of their oracy and literacy development. When the pen is anchored in its computer cradle a teacher can request graphs of different types to plot the student's progress. The paper versions of the EOP also enable teachers to keep track by storing observations in a student's portfolio. Please see Chapter 9 for oracy and literacy indicators.

"People often confuse *teaching* comprehension skills with *testing* comprehension" (Ivey & Fisher, 2005, p. 13). Content instruction has traditionally called for teachers asking literal questions to test domain knowledge. That is what is called comprehension. If a student did not answer the question, then it was assumed that there was no comprehension. However, that is the old version of comprehension. As content teachers encounter more and more ELLs and low-level readers in their classroom, it will not make sense to expect students to read on their own and comprehend. By the same token, it does not make sense to expect content teachers to become expert reading teachers as they juggle comprehension and domain knowledge.

Therefore, it is imperative that school administrations provide teachers with time to study how to integrate the two. Teachers will need yearlong ongoing support for trying the ideas set forth in this chapter. Teachers who were the most creative and most successful during the year of our first study were given time to get together in their learning communities. They were observed and coached by experts who had conducted or participated in the 10-day training. Their administrators were also trained to observe and support them. Successful students require successful teachers. Teachers who are supported continuously become continuous learners and transmit this to their students.

Table 4.1 Lesson Sequence for Integrating Reading and Oral Language Development With Subject Matter

	<i>Background Building</i> • Teacher and students discuss purpose, goal, objectives, I can statements, and background building • Teacher shares rubric or method of grading for this learning objective • Teacher and students discuss method of text organization • Teacher reads aloud to model comprehension strategies, thinking skills, and prosody • Teacher preteaches Tier 1, 2, and 3 vocabulary and engages students to practice each word
Preparing for Reading	
	<i>Partner Reading</i> • Students reread the passage the teacher has modeled by alternating sentences as they conduct partner reading • Students read aloud with partners to practice prosody (e.g., reading with expression, intonation, pronunciation, punctuation, pitch, juncture, flow)
Prosody	
	• Students use Post-it notes or highlighters or simply underline and box: - o words pretaught - o new words they don't understand - o confusing lines - o what is most important
Coding Details and Initial Peer Conversations	
	• Students make inferences about themes and concepts as soon as they begin reading in pairs. • They continue to check their inferences for accuracy and modifications
Comprehension of Themes and Concepts	
	<i>Cross-Cutting Strategies for Consolidating Knowledge</i> • The teacher conducts instructional conversations with the whole class or goes from table to table or calls a team to come sit in a comfortable place to discuss any of the following: - o themes - o most important details - o what students found (confusing lines, confusing concepts, questionable elements or facts, author's craft, unknown words, grammatical structures, text organization)
Teacher Debriefs and Class or Small Group Discussions	

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Students Practice Comprehension Skills Such as Summarizing	<i>Cooperative Learning for Comprehension Skills</i> • Students reread to the end of the assigned section to summarize/synthesize information through discussions • Students use graphic organizers or cognitive maps to summarize for retell and mastery of content • Students use as many of the key vocabulary words as possible
Connections	• Students reflect on how this information affects them and how they can use it • Students connect information with current events and how this affects their immediate environment or globally • Students connect information with other literature or texts previously read
Writing Genre	<i>Student Writing to Anchor Comprehension</i> • Students use new vocabulary and concepts through persuasive, informing, or entertaining writing • Students write synopses, essays, narratives, or creative writings (e.g., sonnets, poems, dramatizations, posters, pamphlets, booklets).
Final Debriefing and Assessment	<i>Teacher and Students Debrief</i> Final Debriefing • Final themes, processes, events, etc. • Author's purpose, facts, formulas, etc. • Judgments of the message's quality, authenticity, clarity, accuracy, relevance, importance to subject matter • Value of vocabulary and content Students' final products are judged on • content • their interpretations • new vocabulary • concepts that have been used Student development of oracy and literacy is documented through the ExC-ELL Observation Protocol and teacher, district, and state assessments.

Summary

- ✓ Without reading instruction from content area teachers, students get used to surface comprehension.
- ✓ When students read on their own and answer questions one can never really tell if they are understanding, learning content, or thinking at higher levels beyond literal responses.
- ✓ With explicit reading instruction from content area teachers students develop critical comprehension, learn vocabulary continually, associate readings with prior knowledge, add new knowledge, interpret facts more accurately, and apply critical thinking to texts.
- ✓ Student progress on oracy and literacy can be assessed using an observation protocol such as the EOP.