
Preface

Because of the increased demands for literacy in the workplace and in higher education, secondary students today need to be more highly literate than ever before. At the same time, teachers are saying that students find reading difficult and don't complete reading assignments in school. In addition, the level of difficulty in content textbooks and of technical writing is beyond that found in literature books, the traditional place where reading skills are developed. Jacobs (1999) stated that "texts used in subject areas often employ language, syntax, vocabulary, and concepts that are specific to a particular field of study. Merely assigning reading does not help students learn how to tangle with these specialized texts to construct meaning; teachers must help prepare students for and guide them through the texts so that they will learn from them most effectively" (p. 1). Thus, secondary content-area teachers must have instructional strategies to help students read within the context of their subject.

The idea for this book grew from our observations of secondary classrooms where students were not engaged by their reading. Because of our belief that reading is the core of any subject-matter learning, we decided to write a book that could help secondary teachers. We found many resources available that focused on content literacy and felt that a book that concentrated on only a few of the many content-literacy approaches would be more manageable for teachers. We wanted the book to be user-friendly and filled with examples from classrooms where teachers were using instructional strategies that not only helped students increase their ability to read complex texts, but also helped them learn more about the content being taught and engaged their interest.

In Chapter 1, we review the state of adolescent literacy today and the need for literacy in the twenty-first century. We outline some of

the research as well as look at a lifelong view of literacy growth—rather than one that stops with elementary school—and demonstrate what it is that proficient readers do.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the instructional process that is explained in more detail in the rest of the book. It includes two detailed lesson plans that show how an English teacher and a science teacher engaged students before, during, and after reading assignments.

Chapter 3 goes into detail about the before-reading practices that teachers can use to prepare students for reading. These before-reading activities highlight the importance of background knowledge as well as ways to set a purpose for reading. Vocabulary development before reading is also discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter 4, we move to ways to actively engage students in their reading. Different ways to guide students' thinking while reading are included. We also caution teachers about the use of oral reading in secondary classrooms.

In Chapter 5, we discuss activities that can be done after reading to solidify student learning and increase comprehension. The importance of writing is stressed, as is the use of graphic organizers for structuring learning.

Chapter 6 ties together the need for instructional strategies around reading in all secondary classrooms and the needs of today's students. It also brings assessment to the forefront of instructional decision making.

The Appendix in this book outlines the process we went through in developing the format of the instructional strategies outline, and teachers were able to use the strategies in ways that improved student achievement.

We hope this book will support secondary teachers as they work to improve learning in their content area as well as improve students' reading ability. We understand the challenges teachers face and want this book to assist with those challenges.