

Engaged Academic Literacy for All

Usually, in a regular history class, the teacher would say, “Read from page so-and-so to so-and-so, answer the red-square questions and the unit questions, and turn them in.” And it wasn’t like you had to *read* it. . . . If the red-square question was here, you knew the answer was somewhere around that area right there. It was something that you could like slide by without them knowing. I don’t know if they cared or not, but that’s the way everybody did it.

—Rosa, grade 9 student

Most teachers, if I talk to them, they’ll be like, “What, are you serious—this is college, you’re asking me how to *read*? I can’t help you. You should have learned that in eighth grade.”

—Kalif, community college student¹

AS A NATION and as educators, what do we expect of our middle school, high school, and college students? What messages do we send students about their academic abilities and promise? If we believe that all students should be able to think and read critically, to write and talk knowledgeably about historical, literary, scientific, or mathematical questions, we need to provide richer learning opportunities than the “red-square question” routine that Rosa describes. We need to better prepare and support students like Kalif.

This book presents an approach to improving students’ ability to read critically and to write about and discuss texts in a range of disciplines—an approach that builds their academic literacy. The framework for this approach, Reading Apprenticeship, starts from the premise that engaging students like Rosa and her peers affectively as well as intellectually is key to developing the dispositions and skills required for becoming confident, critical, and independent readers and thinkers.

Like Kalif, many students feel overwhelmed by the high level of literacy expected of them in college courses. Standards for high-level literacy, such as those embodied in the Common Core State Standards for K–12 students or in

the “gatekeeper” exams that determine college admission and placement, outpace many students’ preparation. Teachers feel similarly overwhelmed by the distance between these ambitious literacy goals and their students’ experience engaging with academic texts. When students are unaccustomed to carrying out rigorous literacy tasks, it is a daunting prospect for teachers to find new ways to engage them in the satisfaction of unlocking texts and the learning it makes possible.

Many educators express the belief that students who struggle with academic texts “just aren’t motivated.” Yet we see ample evidence that by helping students find their own reasons and entry points for reading challenging texts, we can support them in developing both their affective and their intellectual engagement with academic texts. When a teacher at a high-poverty high school with a majority of English learners tells us her students are “suddenly finding that the economics textbook is more interesting,” and they are eager to read and discuss the ideas in it, it seems clear that the students rather than the text have changed. By learning to work through challenging passages and to collaboratively make sense of them, these students have developed a different *affective* relationship with the text and with economics concepts they previously found “unengaging.”

Our work over the years with thousands of middle school, high school, college, and pre-service teachers has been the subject of multiple research studies demonstrating that teachers can successfully apprentice their students into becoming readers of academic texts. When teachers listen closely to students’ thinking, probe their thinking respectfully, and help students listen to and probe each other’s thinking about texts, classrooms can become lively centers of discussion about *how*, as well as what, students are reading. In such classrooms, students begin to see themselves differently and to feel more empowered as readers and thinkers. Time and again, this change in students’ sense of themselves as readers and learners—their academic and reader identity—results in striking changes in how they engage and comprehend a wide range of academic texts.

What we have learned from teachers and students is consonant with a deep reservoir of knowledge developed by scholars in the areas of cognitive science and sociocultural learning theory; psychological research on motivation, engagement, achievement, and identity; and educational research on pedagogy and disciplinary literacy in core subject areas.

The Reading Apprenticeship instructional framework presented in this book combines this scholarly research with practitioner experience. This framework, described in Chapter Two, is not a program or a curriculum that teachers or schools “adopt.” It is an organizing paradigm for subject area teaching, one

that enables students to approach challenging academic texts more strategically, confidently, and successfully.

The Context for Change

Reading, and its role in promoting achievement, is fundamentally an equity issue.

—William Loyd, district literacy coordinator,
addressing superintendents of the
Washtenaw, Michigan, intermediate school district

Secondary and post-secondary education in the United States reflects a society that does not equitably educate people living in poverty, members of racial and ethnic minorities, those whose first language is not English, and those whose learning differences call for special education services. Problems of inequitable opportunity and outcomes do not originate in schools and cannot be addressed through schooling alone. However, strong evidence suggests that schools can either reinforce these inequities or, like the schools in the Washtenaw district and others, push against them.² The following look at the state of literacy in secondary school, college, and beyond makes clear the extent of the problem.

Literacy in Middle and High School

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), two-thirds of U.S. high school students are unable to read and comprehend complex academic materials, think critically about texts, synthesize information from multiple sources, or communicate clearly what they have learned. Only a small minority of eighth and twelfth graders read at an advanced level. Many high-needs students have been demoralized by years of academic failure and do not see themselves as readers or as capable learners. Achievement gaps are stubbornly persistent along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. By some estimates, half of the incoming ninth graders in a typical high-poverty urban high school read two or three years below grade level.³

The traditional response to low literacy achievement has been to take a remedial approach to addressing skill deficits. At the middle and high school levels, low-achieving students are often required to take several remedial classes a day. Yet research has shown that isolated, skills-based instruction in reading may perpetuate low literacy achievement rather than accelerate literacy growth.⁴ At the same time, a renewed policy focus on “college and career readiness” driven by concerns about global competitiveness has highlighted the importance of increasing the number of students who can read critically and make sense of complex texts.

As awareness of literacy needs in secondary school and college has grown, an increasing number of research and policy documents are highlighting the importance of a more integrated and student-centered approach to building literacy—one that addresses both academic rigor and academic engagement. Recent literacy research has identified the instructional characteristics necessary to meet the unique needs of low-achieving adolescents: treat all students as capable learners, create a collaborative climate of inquiry, build on students' interests and curiosity, tap into students' knowledge and experience, and harness their preference for social interaction to serve academic goals.⁵

However, policies instituted in accordance with the No Child Left Behind act run counter to these research findings. Narrow compliance measures typical of No Child Left Behind continue to push schools to use remedial curricula, pacing guides, and test preparation to produce "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) on state standardized tests. Schools serving the least-well-prepared students are the most constrained by test-score pressures, but high-stakes tests push teachers everywhere to promote the rote learning practices—Rosa's "red-square questions"—that have long characterized teaching in U.S. secondary schools.⁶

Low academic literacy is by no means an issue only for underperforming students. Even among students who do relatively well in class and score reasonably well on standardized tests, teachers can point to those who have difficulty comprehending and interpreting class texts, who fail to complete reading assignments, and who seem unlikely to become independent, lifelong readers. "You can't rely on the students to read," explains one high school teacher. "They will engage in projects, but they don't seem to read or understand the source materials or texts."

The momentum behind the Common Core State Standards and the accompanying development of more sophisticated literacy assessments offer hope that richer literacy learning across subject areas may become a goal against which students, schools, and teachers measure themselves and are measured by others. These new standards and assessments can also provide direction for teachers' professional learning, if they are accompanied by sustained support for teachers to develop knowledge and skills for embedding advanced literacy practices into their subject area teaching. Otherwise, the inequalities these standards and assessments have the potential to address may merely be replicated.

Literacy in College and the Workplace

Without substantial improvement in advanced literacy proficiencies such as those identified by NAEP, students will be unable to handle the quantity and complexity of assigned reading in college.⁷ They are likely to struggle in the

workforce as well; even for entry-level jobs, the ability to read, write, and think critically is increasingly a minimum requirement. At issue are the competencies that allow or limit full participation in our increasingly complex and diverse society.

Students enroll in college with the expectation that this continued education will help prepare them for more satisfying futures. In the United States, 44 percent enroll in a community college, either as a gateway to further education or with the goal of earning an associate degree or technical license. However, between 70 and 90 percent of these entering students are placed in remedial, or developmental, English language arts or mathematics classes, or both.⁸ Success rates in these classes vary, but campuses that have tracked the progress of students who enroll in lower-level developmental courses find that only a small number of them (usually around 10 percent) ever make it to credit-bearing or transfer-level courses. Many, if not all, of these students are weak in the essential academic skills related to high-level literacy.⁹

In community college classes more generally, faculty report that students in credit-bearing classes ranging from geology to anesthesia technology also struggle with literacy. Many students seem unable to read and understand the course texts independently and rely instead on lecture notes. These same students are likely to become the future employees who have difficulty working either in teams or independently with complex instructions, open-ended problems, and multiple texts.

Community colleges are not alone in facing this challenge. Recent reports point to a dismaying literacy problem in four-year colleges as well: close to 50 percent of entering students are not prepared for the literacy tasks expected of them.¹⁰

The Literacy Ceiling

When students have difficulty reading and understanding subject area texts, they hit a “literacy ceiling” that limits what they can achieve both in the classroom and in their lives outside of school. Naturally, the literacy ceiling also limits what teachers can achieve in their classrooms. To the degree that students cannot independently access the knowledge and information embedded in their books and other curriculum materials, teachers try to find alternative ways to help them “get the content.”

Middle school, high school, and college teachers often express frustration with students’ limited academic literacy preparation, sometimes asking, “Why didn’t somebody do a better job earlier of preparing these students to read what they need to read to succeed at this grade level?” Others express a sense of inequity and bewilderment: “What am I supposed to do when they can barely

get through a page in the textbook on their own? I'm a subject area teacher, not a reading teacher!" Perhaps most disconcerting is the resignation of teachers who conclude, "It's too late for these students to catch up."

Teachers are not the only ones worried about the literacy ceiling. Students have an even more immediate and personal cause for concern. Many find reading mystifying. Faced daily with the difficulty of making sense of unfamiliar texts and literacy tasks, they have come to believe that they are "just not cut out" to be readers. With a mounting sense of exasperation, they "read" the words but cannot begin to make sense of sentences, paragraphs, and longer texts.

Students respond to their reading difficulties in a variety of ways, often avoiding a reading task entirely and waiting instead for a teacher to *tell* them what they need to know. Some students attempt invisibility, silently sliding lower in their seats in hopes they will not be called on. Others act out in class, creating distractions when they fear their errors or inadequacies might otherwise be exposed. Still others adopt a stance that clearly says, "I don't care about any of this school stuff at all." The most dedicated among them—or, perhaps, simply those with the most stamina—struggle through each new text in a painful, word-by-word attempt to string meaning together. None of these responses, of course, provides a way to break through the ceiling restricting them from higher-level learning.

"Solutions" That Don't Solve the Problem

I knew that just telling them to reread the essay or to summarize the main points wasn't enough.

—Walter Masuda, community college English 1A professor

When students are unprepared for the academic literacy demands in their courses, many teachers, like Walter Masuda, feel frustrated by their own unsatisfying "solutions" for helping them, or find themselves turning to a handful of defaults that serve only to postpone or compound students' problems. For the lowest-testing students, remediation interventions that reteach at the most basic level or packaged programs that drill students in discrete skills may be called upon. More generally, teachers may try to teach "around" the text altogether with lectures and PowerPoint presentations, or they may try to "protect" students from dry or difficult texts with alternatives that never challenge them or help them grow as readers and learners.

Instead, as Walter came to understand, effective academic literacy instruction for all levels of students must involve them in practicing higher-level thinking with complex texts precisely so that they can further develop those abilities:

Now, through the use of Reading Apprenticeship routines, I feel that the low- to average-performing students are beginning to acquire *the kind of thinking* so necessary for their academic success in my classes and beyond.

Remediation Restart

Supporting students' development as active, engaged, and independent learners is a key goal of education. Yet a common response for helping low-performing readers is a remediation approach to literacy—an approach that is more likely to take students into a remedial dead end that many never escape.

In middle school and high school, remediation may take students all the way back to decoding and the beginning of the learning-to-read process. A decision to support struggling readers by reteaching them to decode is based on a belief that students' difficulties with reading are rooted in a lack of successful phonics instruction.

The idea that early reading instruction has failed to equip middle and high school students with adequate decoding skills is pervasive. Yet most adolescents whom teachers might initially describe as “not able to even get the words off the page” are far less likely to have problems with decoding than they are to have difficulties with comprehension, unfamiliar vocabulary, limited background knowledge, and reading fluency or engagement.¹¹ Usually these students have been asked to do little reading in school and have very little stamina or persistence when they encounter difficulties with texts. Being sent “back to the beginning” of reading instruction can be worse than nonproductive for these students. It can reinforce their misguided conceptions that reading is just “saying the words.” Nor does going back to phonics help them understand and use the complex comprehension processes or the knowledge about texts and the world that good readers rely on. In addition, by simply reteaching decoding, educators ignore some of students' most powerful assets for reading improvement: the knowledge and cognitive resources they already use throughout the many nonschool aspects of their lives.

A very small percentage of students may actually need help with decoding skills. These students, however, require intensive, precisely targeted, individualized support specific to their carefully assessed needs, provided by highly skilled teachers, and lasting no longer than necessary. Moreover, such decoding instruction need not displace meaningful literacy engagement, as numerous literacy programs for English learners and adults attest.¹²

Remedial, or developmental, literacy classes at the community college level can tie students to a sequence of from four to six semesters before they are eligible to enroll in credit-bearing English and other general education courses. For the lowest-testing students, these remedial sequences may begin with a

course on sentence-level grammar, followed by a course on paragraphs, followed by a course on essays or longer works. The counterproductive effects of this compartmentalized, step-by-step structure have been well documented, with students dropping out in discouragement at various “exit points” on the path from one non-credit-bearing course to another. Research on the length of these sequences indicates that completion rates in community college English and math programs drop with each additional level of remedial coursework required of students.¹³

Searching for Skills-in-a-Box Solutions

When students are ill prepared for the literacy challenges of the classroom, it is natural to want a quick fix to bring them up to speed. We have been asked repeatedly about any intervention packages that have shown proven results. In fact, there are a few programs that do a reasonable job of supporting students who need to catch up. But these programs require skilled implementation to build students’ personal engagement, develop social supports for reading, and engage students in the extensive reading of extended text—probably not the quick fix that educators may be hoping for.

Instead, the quick-fix or “skills-in-a-box” programs commonly promoted as suitable for solving a range of reading difficulties feature discrete skills practice and decontextualized reading of short paragraphs or passages. Some of these programs focus on word-level exercises and vocabulary drills; others divide comprehension into a suite of skills such as find-the-main-idea, sequence sentences, draw conclusions—all with decontextualized snippets of text. Some other skills programs put students through batteries of test preparation exercises: read a paragraph and answer “comprehension” questions, read another paragraph and answer questions, and so on. These, too, fail to help students gain the kind of deeper comprehension skills and practice that are needed for high-level literacy demands.

Simply put, there is no quick fix for reading inexperience. Decades of research have shown that reading is a complex cognitive and social practice and that readers develop knowledge, experience, and skill over a lifetime of reading.¹⁴ In building reading aptitude, there is no skills-only approach that can substitute for reading itself. On the contrary, repeated studies have demonstrated that isolated instruction in grammar, decoding, or even reading comprehension skills may have little or no transfer effect when students are actually reading.¹⁵

If these were not reasons enough to avoid skills-in-a-box programs, there is also the issue of how decisions are made to place students in such programs. Inexperienced readers are often placed into skills programs based on scanty

assessment information and limited understanding of their real learning needs. When placed into courses that do not fit with what they actually need or can benefit from, not only are students frustrated by the experience, but often, because of scheduling conflicts, they are prevented from participating in other, more productive learning opportunities. Instead of catching up, these students find themselves stuck in courses that only produce further delays and discouragement.

Teaching Around the Text

Many middle school, high school, and college teachers see their primary responsibility as teaching the important ideas and knowledge base of their discipline—the “concepts and content” of mathematics, chemistry, literature, history, and so on. When their students seem either unwilling to tackle or unable to understand course texts on their own, many teachers, like the history teacher speaking here, make a strategic decision to provide students with alternative means of accessing the ideas and content of the curriculum—that is, to teach “around” reading:

I’m doing back flips in the classroom to get the content across without expecting them to read the textbook. I’ve stopped assigning reading. The text is almost supplementary.

To engage students in the important ideas of a text that many have not read or understood, teachers find ways to provide the entire class with some common understanding of what is in the text. They may do so by reading to students, lecturing with bullet points projected in the front of the room, or showing a video related to the content. Another teacher explains,

Because you can’t rely on students to read, I feel like I’m constantly summarizing the history textbook so kids don’t miss the main points. I wish I didn’t have to assume that role as much, but I find I do.

Such compensatory practices are so common that many students regard them as normal. One student’s description of how reading is handled in her science class could as easily apply to any number of other classrooms:

Usually, the teacher just writes stuff on the overhead. Then we copy it down and she gives us lots of labs to do. I don’t remember using the book. We probably only used it a couple of times to look for stuff.

The strategy of teaching content without having students read—or of reducing what students are asked to read to only a small amount of text—becomes a

self-defeating practice with its own domino effect. Because students are unprepared to carry out reading assignments independently, many teachers give up any thought of holding them accountable for reading. And because these students do not have to read in some of their subject area classes, they resist expectations for doing so in other classes. One result is that other teachers begin to give up their own expectations that students read academic texts independently. In this way, even with the best intentions, teachers inadvertently enable students to progress up the grades and even through college courses with very limited reading experiences and abilities. Students remain dependent on someone else to convey curriculum content.

Perpetuating students' dependence on teachers denies them opportunities—and successes—they can gain only through the extensive, independent reading of texts. Without being encouraged and supported to expand the limits of their reading, many students may never be prepared to independently read the gatekeeper texts that stand between them and their future educational, economic, civic, and cultural opportunities—texts such as the SAT exams, entry-level reading tests for jobs, college or job applications, textbooks and other reading material for postsecondary education or training, and even the directions to apply for a student loan or home mortgage.

Protecting Them from Boredom

Many students' literacy lives outside of school are decidedly digital. There is no denying the appeal of digital media for developing and validating social identity, for self-expression, and for locating rich information and entertainment resources. There are enormous opportunities for learning, interaction, research, and creativity in the digital worlds at students' fingertips. In comparison, printed or even electronic textbooks and other primarily text-based materials can seem hopelessly stodgy and old-fashioned. Nonetheless, especially for students who have yet to develop the dispositions required for concentrated literate attention, digital media can encourage coasting on the surface of text rather than slowing down to dig into it. The concentration required to sustain attention on a long or challenging text, or the persistence and confidence needed to read across multiple texts on a related topic and compare ideas in each of them, is very different from the kind of "browsing reading" that most Internet readers employ.¹⁶

As teachers struggle with authentic ways to build bridges between students' digital literacies and the literacies needed for this kind of focused academic endeavor, many also feel an obligation to "protect" students from dull or dreary print materials. Anyone who has read a range of secondary school and college textbooks knows that many are neither well written nor engaging.

Why, some well-meaning teachers argue, should students be subjected to these “inconsiderate” texts? Why make students plow through an encyclopedic history textbook? Why assign Shakespeare? Such objections to having students read assigned course texts arise from the valid argument that students need engaging texts to be more able and likely to actually read and understand them. We don’t disagree.

In fact, we strongly encourage teachers to supplement textbooks with varied and engaging texts, to build text sets that expand students’ opportunities to read about and understand important content, and to include digital sources in their search for such texts.¹⁷ But more engaging texts are not necessarily more accessible. Primary source documents used in a history class or scientific studies found on the Internet can be more challenging than textbook explanations.

If students are to keep their future options open, they must develop the confidence and the will to approach—as well as the ability to make sense of—a range of texts, including the many gatekeeper texts that will not be inherently fascinating or well composed. When taken to the extreme, an emphasis on finding perfectly engaging and considerate texts can turn into never asking students to read anything they cannot already comfortably read or to learn about anything that they are not already familiar with or interested in.

Instead, by building bridges between students’ out-of-school and in-school literacy knowledge and by expanding the range of texts students read, teachers can help them learn strategies for persisting with and understanding texts they may initially perceive as boring or inaccessible. We have a responsibility to help students learn to approach these texts as informed, critical thinkers. Armed with appropriate strategies and mental habits, students can then make their own decisions about which texts they will or will not work their way through, depending on their own goals.

In contrast to the delays and discouragement of ineffective “solutions” such as those just described, which do little to bring students into an active relationship with texts they encounter in school, we have seen more promising ways to proceed. The experiences of many teachers demonstrate that once students are helped to comprehend complex texts, of varied academic disciplines, they often find them curiously “more interesting,” as did the high school economics students described earlier. Students do like to learn; they do want to become competent and knowledgeable. As we once heard a courageous young woman tell a roomful of high school teachers,

We know we aren’t very well educated. We know there are things we should know by now that we don’t. But we’re not stupid. Most of us are really smart. You just need to show us, break it down for us, work with us, and expect us to do it.

The Case for Optimism

Reading Apprenticeship gave me the language and strategies to use with students that helped to “unlock” doors for them . . . I felt like a better teacher and that the time . . . put into the process was given back in outcomes.

—Middle school teacher, Washtenaw, Michigan, district survey

At the heart of our approach to reading instruction is a conviction that the most powerful resources for improving student reading exist within teachers and their students. Some policymakers and administrators hold the view that secondary and college teachers are not open to pedagogical change. However, we have repeatedly seen that engaging teachers at the heart of their professional interests—on the basis of their disciplinary expertise and classroom practice—often results in teachers like this middle school teacher, who feel more effective and who see improved student learning.

Teachers’ Untapped Resources

We see a strong case for optimism in the numbers of secondary and college teachers who are stepping up to address their students’ reading needs by learning how to put more of the responsibility for comprehension back into students’ hands. Teachers whose education has prepared them to teach history, science, math, English, technical, and other courses have a great deal of knowledge they can share with students about how to make sense of and use information from the various texts characteristic of their subject areas. This knowledge helped teachers to be successful in their own education, and they continue to draw on it as they read in their field and prepare lessons in their discipline. However, most teachers—and most fluent readers generally—have not spent much time thinking explicitly about the mental processes by which they make sense of texts in their fields. In fact, few middle, high school, or college teachers see their own abilities to read subject area texts as a powerful resource for helping their students approach these texts.

The Reading Apprenticeship approach to improving student literacy asks teachers to tap into that knowledge. More specifically, it relies on teachers working with other teachers to become conscious of their own disciplinary reading and thinking processes—the perhaps unrecognized knowledge and strategies that each uses to read effectively. When teachers become more aware of the complexity of how they themselves make sense of text, they gain new appreciation for the reading difficulties students may face. Teachers can then begin to apprentice their students to the reading craft by making their invisible comprehension processes visible to their students. As apprentices, students, in

turn, become empowered as readers, able to tap and expand their own knowledge. In the course of doing so, they begin to own and improve their reading processes.

Students' Untapped Resources

In the classroom, teachers often view students through the narrow lens of academic competency. Teachers frustrated by students' inability or unwillingness to read academic text often allow this "literacy problem" to define their view of students as learners. The experiences, affinities, and skills in reading, writing, and problem solving that students gain outside school are frequently invisible to teachers and unappreciated by students themselves, who might otherwise draw on them to support the work they are asked to do in school. Nimbleness in everyday language, skills in translating from a first language to English, creativity in navigating search engines, persistence in mastering video games, even a propensity for "reading" the moods and behaviors of others—all have applications in making sense of text.

In our Reading Apprenticeship work, we have come to see students as individuals who bring powerful resources that can be tapped in a learning environment that is safe, respectful, and collaborative. As teachers work with—rather than against—some of their students' common characteristics, teachers and their students can begin to build a reading inquiry partnership, or apprenticeship.

When the learning environment is carefully constructed to promote social collaboration and make explicit connections between literacy proficiencies and students' assets and aspirations, students' social and personal concerns can serve the academic goals their teachers hold for them. Students' keen interest in themselves and their classmates can be turned toward supporting the effort and risk-taking needed to develop new skills as readers. Adolescents, who are particularly focused developmentally on trying out and forming new identities, can be encouraged to try on new reader identities, to realize that who they will become and what they will do in their lives is to a great extent in their own hands. For older students, too, a need for social connection, self-expression, and competence can serve academic goals.

In a Reading Apprenticeship classroom, students are invited to become partners in a collaborative inquiry into reading and thinking processes. The aim is to help students become better readers by making the teacher's and other students' reading processes "visible," by helping students gain insight into their own reading processes, and by helping them develop the dispositions to put these insights and problem-solving strategies to work. As students gain practice in making their own reading processes visible, additional valuable

information becomes more available to their teachers—information about the social and cultural contexts, strategies, language practices, knowledge base, and understandings students are bringing to the task of making sense of texts. A reading apprenticeship is, at heart, a partnership of expertise, drawing on what a subject area teacher knows and practices as a disciplinary reader and on students' unique and often underestimated strengths as learners.

Signs of Success:

Changes in Students' Literacy, Learning, and Identities

Results from multiple studies, including three recent experimental research studies, show that in high school classrooms where teachers integrated core Reading Apprenticeship routines to invite students into text-based, problem-solving ways of working, students made statistically significant gains in reading comprehension and content knowledge.¹⁸ Importantly, in addition to these comprehension and knowledge outcomes, students in the Reading Apprenticeship classrooms showed increased motivation for and success in tackling challenging disciplinary texts. One of the experimental studies looked as well at measures of student behavior and found that students in the Reading Apprenticeship intervention classrooms were far less likely to receive referrals or suspensions from school compared to students in the control group, both in the year they took the course and in the following year.

Through these studies we have been able to demonstrate that changes for students are the results of changes in the classroom practices of their teachers. As teachers begin to hold students responsible for doing course readings, turn the work of comprehending text over to students, and ask them to be meta-cognitive about their reading processes and share their confusion and problem solving, the classroom quickly transforms into a setting where students can gain reading experience and skill.

Looking across the recent experimental studies and other studies conducted in previous years, we see strong evidence that students gain far more from Reading Apprenticeship than a set of reading comprehension strategies.¹⁹ They learn to direct their own learning, engage in the academic enterprise, expand their identities as readers and learners, and form new relationships to school.

In addition to studies of the impact at the high school and middle school level, a set of complementary research studies have documented changes in classroom practice and student outcomes when college faculty implement the Reading Apprenticeship framework and routines.²⁰ These studies present a promising picture of changes in community college classroom instruction leading to improvement in students' active engagement with texts, depth of

interpretive and analytical reading and writing, and, in most instances where measured, in their grades and course completion rates.



In contrast to typical secondary and college instruction for struggling readers, which reinforces low levels of achievement for students who are already behind by steering clear of rigorous course work based on the assumption that students are not capable of performing at appropriate levels, the Reading Apprenticeship framework and approaches are based on research showing that most students *are* capable of complex thinking and carrying out disciplinary inquiry but have not been given the skills or self-confidence to approach these tasks effectively.²¹

We argue that to reach higher levels of literacy for all of our students, we need to embrace a vision of intellectually and personally engaged academic literacy for the inexperienced but capable students we serve. To move toward making this vision a reality, we must strengthen students' view of themselves and their capacities as readers and learners—while helping them build their skills in high-level literacy. We must transform subject area classes into collaborative, inquiry-oriented learning environments that intellectually engage, challenge, and support students. Chapter Two describes the model we propose for achieving these goals: the Reading Apprenticeship framework.

Notes

1. Kalif is one of dozens of students interviewed in *Reading Between the Lives*, produced by The Making Visible Project at Chabot College. Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/details/ReadingBetweenTheLivesPart1.mp4>
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