

High School Literacy: Comprehension Through Active, Strategic Reading

High School Literacy: Comprehension Through Active, Strategic Reading is an interactive, online, and in-person professional development course designed for all high school teachers. The six online sessions focus on the latest research findings on active, strategic reading techniques and strategies for implementing active, strategic reading across the curriculum; as well as six important elements of adolescent literacy—Motivation, Contexts, Communication, Collaboration, Connections, and Assessment.

Goals of this course include getting students to read and think critically about fiction, nonfiction, and informational text through marking a text; to write purposefully about all types of texts through the use of a dialectical journal; to interpret and analyze texts through small-group and whole-class discussion of open-ended prompts; and to make text and real-life connections through participation in Socratic Seminars.

COURSE RESEARCH BASE

COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading literacy encompasses more than just basic or functional literacy—it includes knowing when to read, how to read, and how to reflect on what’s been read—in a variety of texts and for a variety of purposes. Therefore, NAEP assesses students in three contexts for reading—reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task (NAEP, 2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques to help students read analytically and critically in the three contexts—reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task—are modeled on video, simulated on Red TV, and supported by lesson plans and resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active reading is a process of constructing meaning that involves various levels of interaction between reader and text (Lipson and Wixson, 1986). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques that encourage multiple levels of interaction between students and the text they are reading are modeled on video and supported with lesson plans and resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Reading strategies are important only insofar as they assist readers to construct meaningful understanding of texts. With this level of understanding, readers can respond to, converse with, and even resist the meanings the author seems to put forth” (Wilhelm, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The technique of marking a text—which involves students agreeing, arguing, querying, and commenting on text as well as identifying unfamiliar vocabulary—is modeled on video, simulated on Red TV, and supported with resources. The technique of using a dialectical journal to identify meaningful passages and to create a dialogue with the text which encourages students to respond and question what they are reading, is modeled on video, simulated on Red TV, and supported with resources.

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Reading, <i>cont.d</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When students at all levels of reading proficiency turn their attention to a particular piece of text, it's important that they get the right scaffolding to think and discuss, for example summarizing, justifying answers, and making connections (Langer, 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies such as summarizing, justifying answers, and making connections are modeled on video; students are seen employing the techniques of marking a text, using a dialectical journal, holding small-group and whole-class discussions, and participating in a Socratic Seminar. These techniques are supported by resources. Various forms of scaffolding for struggling readers are provided in the Struggling Reader note at the end of every topic.
Writing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active reading and writing "both help students proceed from understanding goals to demonstrating understanding. As a result, if we have engaged our students well in [active reading], then we have also prepared them to draft well" (Jacobs, 2002). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques to encourage engaged and interactive reading, such as meaningful markings and journal responses, are modeled on video, simulated on Red TV, and supported by resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing-to-learn forms and extends thinking and thus deepens understanding" (Fulwiler, 1984; Knoblauch and Brannon, 1983). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers receive online instruction and view a classroom video modeling the use of a dialectical journal, which facilitates writing to learn; models of journals are provided as well.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading literature carefully, thinking about it, discussing it, and, finally, writing one's extended thoughts about it opens students' minds to the world of ideas in a text" (Whirry, 2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small-group and whole-class discussions extend the ideas in the journal and require students to support their statements with evidence from the text. These techniques are modeled on video, simulated on Red TV, and supported by resources. Examples of student dialogue can be heard on Red TV.
Listening and Speaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich classroom discussions should range from basic conversations to clarify what was stated in the material to drawing interpretations from the text to relating text to other texts, experiences, and reading goals (Duke and Pearson, 2002). "Constructing meaning during reading means going back and forth between reading relatively small segments of text and discussing the ideas encountered" (Beck, et al., 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discussion techniques modeled on video (and supported by resources) build upon one another; examples of student discussions are modeled on Red TV.

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Listening and Speaking, cont'd	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In successful group discussions, students engage in “thoughtful-dialogue” in which “they play the multiple roles of learners, teachers, and inquirers” (Langer, 2000). • “In addition to being an enjoyable forum for students to share their responses, collaborative discussion promotes comprehension and helps students to become expert readers” (Cummings, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers watch a video of a Socratic Seminar in action (students carry on a dialogue between their peers that requires them to query the text, explain their responses, and listen and understand other viewpoints); guidelines for both teachers and students are provided as resources in the course.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading is a socially interactive process (Vygotsky, 1978). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-group and whole-class discussions (including Socratic Seminars) are presented and modeled in the course on video and supported by resources; resources include behavior and etiquette guidelines for the social interaction that takes place during the Socratic Seminar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Learning to talk about [texts] in complex ways is a skill that must be modeled, explicated, supported, practiced, reviewed, and revised” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Dube, 2001). • “Talking with others about ideas and work is fundamental to learning. But not all talk sustains learning or creates intelligence. For classroom talk to promote learning, it must have certain characteristics that make it accountable. Accountable talk seriously responds to and further develops what others in the group have said. It puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion. Accountable talk uses evidence in ways appropriate to the discipline (for example, proofs in mathematics, data from investigations in science, textual details in literature, documentary sources in history)” (Resnick, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods to encourage effective and engaging small-group and whole-class discussions are modeled on video and presented on audio; models of accountable talk can be heard on Red TV. • Students are held accountable for their contributions to the Socratic Seminar; they are provided with guidelines to self-assess their performance, and they see a rubric teachers create to evaluate their participation

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Critical Thinking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By considering the implications (both intellectual and ethical) of ideas and comparing these ideas to their own, students “refine their critical thinking skills and deepen their collective understanding of the material they discuss” (Tredway, 1995). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques modeled in the course require students to target the most important ideas in a text and comment, question, and compare these to what they have read and to their experiences.
Comprehension	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “. . .comprehension instruction should be balanced. By this we mean that good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing, and discussion of text” (Duke and Pearson, 2002). • Reading for meaning “involves a dynamic, complex interaction among three elements: the reader, the text, and the context” (NAEP, 2003). • “Both reading comprehension and comprehension instruction are highly interactive and reciprocal. The meanings students create for the texts they read are complex negotiations involving an unseen author, a teacher, and an interpretive community of peers” (Pearson, et al., 1992). • “In transmission classrooms, texts (like teachers) are viewed as dispensers of knowledge, whereas in participatory classrooms, students use text as tools for learning and constructing new knowledge” (Alvermann, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video shows how to get students to discuss their writing with their peers as a means to extend and develop their ideas. • Tips for struggling readers are aimed specifically at helping below-basic readers make meaning from text. • Graphic organizers are included as organizational tools to help students understand the relationship between text ideas and themes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Vacca and Vacca (1999) contend that prior knowledge is ‘the single most important resource in learning with texts” (Barton, Heidema, and Jordon, 2002). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic organizers for helping students build prior knowledge are provided as resources. • By using a dialectical journal, students confront the factual and experiential knowledge base that helps facilitate their understanding of text.

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Comprehension, cont'd	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students today must read very different types of materials, including fiction, scientific and technical tests, charts and graphs, and historical documents. This higher standard of reading requires many skills, including comprehension, reflection, the ability to distinguish facts from argument, and the ability to weigh evidence and make conclusions” (Grosso de León, 2002). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included within the course are resources to help students read and respond to content-area textbooks. • Red TV provides examples of student interaction with content-area texts.
Motivation and Self-Esteem	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In an extensive review of how instruction influences students’ reading engagement and academic performance, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) concluded that various instructional practices, while important, do not directly impact student outcomes (e.g., time spent reading independently, achievement on standardized tests, performance assessments, and beliefs about reading). Instead, the level of student engagement (including its sustainability over time) is the mediating factor, or avenue, through which classroom instruction influences student outcomes” (Alvermann, 2001). • “Adolescents’ perceptions of how competent they are as readers and writers, generally speaking, will affect how motivated they are to learn in their subject area classes (e.g., the sciences, social studies, mathematics, and literature). Thus, if academic literacy instruction is to be effective, it must address issues of self-efficacy and engagement” (Alvermann, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques presented in this course, such as using a dialectical journal to respond to a text and participating in small-group and whole-class discussions, engage and motivate students by asking them to tap into their experiences and make connections to other texts and other viewpoints. • Struggling readers who are more comfortable speaking and listening than reading or writing are often particularly motivated by the ample discussion opportunities this course presents.

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Assessment and Test Preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The seeds of successful student self-assessment are often planted by teachers’ thoughtful questions and comments that help students focus their attention on details of critical importance” (Block and Pressley, 2002). • “Students who trust their own reasoning test better. And students whose schooling is connected to their experiences are more actively engaged in their own learning” (Tredway, 1995). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model questions that teachers can use with students and a self-assessment rubric for students are provided as resources. • Each session concludes with a “Test Prep Tie-In” that gives example NAEP questions that course strategies will prepare students to answer correctly.
Connecting Between the Content Areas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A student who writes about “science, social studies or industrial arts, acquires the basic vocabulary of the subject. That [student] learns to use the technical terms in context; learns how language is used in every discipline: in short, learns to think as a scientist or think like a historian” (Squire, 1983). • “Content literacy instructional practices help shape the comprehension strategies students need to think deeply about texts” (Vacca, 2002). • “Adolescents respond to the literacy demands of their subject area classrooms when they have appropriate background knowledge and strategies for reading a variety of texts” (Alvermann, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The techniques presented in the course are used within the content areas of social studies, science, and math and are directed toward all teachers; content-area models and resources that support the use of these techniques are included.

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