

BRIDGING THE GAP: A CRITICAL READING AND WRITING GUIDE

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving mother, the greatest teacher I have ever known.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS PROJECT

Bridging the Gap: A Critical Reading and Writing Guide

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This curriculum project is designed to assist secondary teachers in the explicit teaching of academic literacy. The development of this project was inspired by the need for a deliberate approach to the teaching of academic reading and writing. One of the methods of this project is to define the gap that exists between high school competencies and post-secondary expectations.

Although there has been much discussion about adolescent literacy, high school graduates continue to enter colleges and universities unprepared for post-secondary reading and writing tasks. The gap that exists between the skills and abilities of high school graduates and what colleges and universities expect from their incoming freshman, combined with the general need for literacy instruction in secondary education, signals a need for more projects that prepare secondary students for reading and writing tasks in academic environments. The majority of scholarly work contributing to academic literacy remains in the form of a discussion, yielding valuable conversations on methodology and pedagogy but producing few curricular resources that teachers can use in the classroom. It is this need for practical, academic literacy resources that creates a space for this project.

In order to meet the needs of teachers, this project provides student activities and exercises that guide students through the more sophisticated ways of reading, writing, and thinking about text.

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CHAPTER 1

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Five years ago I began my career as an English teacher at El Cajon Valley High School (ECVHS). As a new teacher, I didn't know what was expected of me and I certainly didn't know what to expect from my students. Assuming that most high school students were competent or approaching competency in reading, I fell right into teaching the high school literary library: Homer's the *Odyssey*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, to name a few. Reflecting back, my decision to teach these fictional texts must have been influenced by what I had read in high school and by what I had studied at San Diego State University while earning my Bachelor's Degree in English.

On occasion, I would incorporate various expository texts into my curriculum in order to provide context for what we were reading in class. Although setting the context is considered a sound practice in the teaching profession, I spent little time teaching students how to read these supplemental materials. Often, I stood in front of the class and joyously dissected sections of text in order to reveal to my students the literary elements that made a particular piece of literature memorable. I also taught them how to identify and analyze these elements on their own. Clearly, my actions here would not be viewed as reprehensible, but my literature based lectures and activities were not addressing my students' needs. It goes without saying that my students needed (and still need) exposure to great literature, but they also needed to develop their competency in academic literacy: an area that was unfamiliar to me. This was the work that needed to be done; so I set out to learn how to do it.

Although I have much to learn about the teaching profession, the past five years have taught me how I can better prepare my students for post-secondary education and the world of work. It is the purpose of this section, therefore, to illustrate the literacy concerns of a low performing, low socioeconomic inner city high school, to explain how my experience within such a school heightened my awareness of issues pertaining to literacy, and to briefly recount the events and professional experiences that led me to write a critical reading and writing curriculum guide.

As a way of setting the context, it would be worthwhile to explain the challenges and obstacles teachers and students face at my school. El Cajon Valley High School is the second lowest performing school in the Grossmont Unified High School District. Made up of a culturally diverse and low-socioeconomic population, ECVHS struggles to develop its own unique traditions and cultures due to students moving out of state, moving to other schools, or simply dropping out. And for every student we check out, a new student enrolls. The turnover is so server that by the time the class of 2008 graduates, only 70% of all graduates attended ECVHS for all four years. With this attrition rate, it is very difficult to maintain school traditions and establish a vertical curriculum in which each year's work builds on the previous one.

Adding to the staff's frustrations at ECVHS is the high number of students who read below grade level. Last year, our literacy coordinator released our school wide results from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The data revealed that nearly 85% of our total student body was reading below grade level. At the freshman level, more than 45% of freshman students read below the sixth grade and roughly 35% of all sophomores read below the sixth grade.

As a result of our students reading far below grade level, they consistently perform poorly in their content classes and on high-stakes exams. For the past five years, 25% of all students have been failing their history classes, 35% have been failing their English classes, and even more have been failing their science classes. Across the campus, more than 65% of the students receive a D or F in one or more classes per year. Our D/ F rate has become such a problem that we have had to discontinue enrichment and advancement classes during summer school in order to make room for the 1,800 students that return in the summer to retake classes they have failed. This number becomes even more alarming when compared to the 2,200 students who attend during the regular school year. Put in another way, we enroll nearly the same number of students in summer school as we do during the regular school year.

I attribute these high levels of failure to three factors: (1) students do not have the skills necessary to do the work they are being asked to do; (2) students have not experienced academic success of any kind and have adopted failure as something they can count on and expect; and (3) since students lack the skills and confidence needed to do well, they become apathetic and make little effort to succeed. I also maintain that the factors contributing to students' failure stem from one central issue: students' inability to read and write effectively. It is my belief, therefore, that if our school hopes to see gains in student achievement, we will need to focus more intently on school-wide literacy instruction. I am not trying to oversimplify the major literacy concerns that plague our campus, but I do believe that more can be done to help our students; and believing in them, expecting more from them, and explicitly teaching them how to read, write, and think in a variety of ways will lead to more students experiencing more success in more academic settings.

El Cajon Valley High School's designation as a low performing high school is based on its Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Even though there are many factors that contribute to a school's AYP,¹ high-stakes exams² greatly influence a school's overall score. And since our students do not perform well on such exams, our AYP score remains low—the second lowest in the district.

Looking at our test scores, one could conclude that there is much work to be done on our campus. For instance, for the past four years, only 64% of our sophomores have passed the English portion of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and even fewer scored proficient on the California State Test (CST). Unfortunately, our students do not do well on the Advanced Placement tests, either. According to the Grossmont District School Accountability Report Card for ECVHS, 287 seats were filled in AP classes³ during the 2005-2006 school year. Of those 287 seats, 145 AP tests were attempted and only 71 total tests were passed with a score of (3) or higher. This data shows that only half of the students taking AP classes are attempting the corresponding AP exams; it also shows that only 50% of students who attempted the exam successfully passed it. Granite Hills High School, a Grossmont school one mile down the road from El Cajon Valley High School, filled 276 AP seats last year, and of the 276 tests that were attempted, 217 passed with a score of (3) or higher. For Granite Hills High, 100% of their AP students attempted an AP test and 80% passed; whereas El Cajon High had a mere 50% of its AP students attempt an AP exam and

¹ Other factors include attendance, percent of students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, number of proficient scores on the CSTs and the CAHSEE.

² For California, high-stakes exams include the CAHSEE, the CST, and the NCLB Science test.

³ The data on AP courses is a bit ambiguous because it reports on the number of enrolled in AP courses, but students can enroll in multiple classes; therefore, the data may reflect that our school had 200 students enrolled in AP courses, but in reality, 100 students took two AP courses each. For this reason, I am translating the number of AP students to the number of AP seats filled.

less than 50% passed. These disparities have become a major concern for our AVID,⁴ GATE,⁵ and Administrative teams. In addition to the low turnout and even lower performance on the AP exams, our pass rate on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) remains around 64% for English Language Arts and 68% in Mathematics. Similarly, the majority of our students score “basic” or “below basic” on the California State Test (CST). I might also note that California requires that all students score proficient on the CST by the year 2014; currently we have less than thirty percent of our total student body scoring “proficient” on the CST. It is without question that the low test scores on both the CASHEE and CSTs are now our greatest area of concern for the entire school.

One obstacle to improving our CAHSEE and CST scores is the high number of non-native speakers of English. In the past five years, El Cajon Valley High School’s ELL⁶ population has steadily increased from 400 identified ELL students to presently 620 identified ELL—30% of our total student body. This growing number of ELL students is a problem when schools are held accountable for how well students score on California State exams. Since the exams are only offered in English, students who have been in this country for only two years or less struggle to comprehend what they are reading and inevitably fail. To date, our school has roughly 200 students who are ELL identified in jeopardy of not passing high school because they have not passed the California High School Exit Exam. Across California, there are potentially thousands of ELL students in the same predicament:

⁴ AVID—Advancement Via Individual Determination—is an elective program designed to help students in the middle succeed in a four-year college or university.

⁵ GATE—Gifted and Talented Education—is a state funded program designed to give unique education opportunities to high-achieving and low-achieving students who have been identified as “talented.”

⁶ ELL is a term given to students who are English Language Learners. This is different from students who speak English as a second language (ESL).

unable to pass the CASHEE with only one year of high school remaining. This issue goes beyond students not scoring well on high stakes exams. The severity of the situation becomes clear when we consider what will happen to the thousands of students who leave high school without a diploma. What options do these students have? What kind of future do they have to look forward to? How will they ever contribute to our society? It is urgent, therefore, that the staff at ECVHS, and schools across California, work together to address this issue. Luckily, students are given multiple chances to retake the Exit Exam during their junior and senior years, and California requires schools to offer support classes to those students who do not pass the Exam, but if schools do not make academic literacy a priority, they will continue producing low-performing students, leaving the English Language Learners with little hope of graduating high school.

As I have grown into the teaching profession, I have learned much about our students and their needs. I also have learned that the problem our school is facing cannot be traced back to one particular type of student. On the contrary, the problem is rooted in what students learn, how they learn it, and how they demonstrate that learning across the disciplines. According to the Educational Alliance at Brown University, low-performing students are most successful when “teachers have high expectations and do not deny access to challenging academic content; when teachers explicitly teach and model academic skills; when teachers employ a variety of strategies to help students understand challenging texts in a variety of genres with guided practice; when students have opportunities to interact with teachers and classmates; and when teachers have sustained, high-quality professional development” (qtd. in “A Cognitive Strategies Approach,” 273). This list of recommendations suggests that teachers play a significant role in what students learn.

Driven to know more about academic literacy and to learn about the teaching of reading and writing, I looked to enroll in a graduate program. In the fall of 2004, I re-entered San Diego State University as a graduate student in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. By the end of my first year, I realized that my decision to enter the Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) program was going to challenge my understanding of reading and writing and require me to think about texts in sophisticated ways. In addition to teaching me how to read and write more competently, the RWS program inspired me to reevaluate what I had been teaching in my classroom and why I was teaching it. Literature was still an integral part of my curriculum as a high school English teacher—after all I was still accountable for teaching the California State Standards and preparing my students for the CAHSEE and CST—but I was beginning to see the importance of teaching students how to competently read a variety of academic texts—a skill that would help students score higher on standardized tests and prepare them for future academic reading and writing assignments. Learning how to balance the teaching of content with the explicit teaching of reading and writing might be the most formidable obstacle teachers must overcome; however, as I developed my understanding of literacy instruction, I began to realize that teaching students how to read effectively will improve their ability to gain content knowledge. Since students are asked to read textbooks, write papers, and formulate questions pertaining to topics discussed in class, teachers should teach students how to read the textual material and write the papers. This will serve two purposes: the first, students will develop competence in the reading and writing in a particular discipline; and the second, students will comprehend more of the course content if they are taught how to approach the material. To see instruction in

this way, teachers must be willing to shift their paradigm of literacy instruction and be willing to evaluate and refine their pedagogical practices to fit such a model.

In the spring of 2006, I was encouraged to teach The Rhetoric of Written Argument (RWS 100) for the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies.⁷ As part of my graduate program, students in the teaching emphasis are encouraged to enroll in a Teaching Internship program, and since I desired to learn more about academic literacy, I applied to teach one class of RWS 100. As a Graduate Teaching Associate (GTA), I was required to attend a weekly colloquium, Issues in Teaching Composition, a professional learning community (PLC).⁸ The members of the PLC included fellow GTAs, RWS faculty, and the program director.⁹ During our meetings, we discussed best teaching practices, teaching strategies, learning outcomes, and we practiced doing the work we were expecting our students to do. Because we were led to discuss the texts we were teaching in class, and because we were given opportunities to draft sample papers and evaluate student work, our GTA meetings ended up being the single most enriching collaborative learning experience that I have ever had as a teacher. I found great value in the activities where we struggled through the reading assignments we had given our students, where we discussed potential challenges our students might face while reading, and where we learned from each other different ways to actively read texts. What made this experience even more meaningful were those times when we

⁷ RWS 100 is a reading and writing course that all incoming freshman must take in their first semester at San Diego State University. The course focuses on teaching students how to account for an author's argument, how to read with an analytical eye, how to succinctly and accurately account for arguments made in text, how to identify rhetorical moves authors make, and how to discuss relationships among texts. Students are assessed on these skills through formal writing assignments.

⁸ PLC or Professional Learning Communities are collaborative environments where professional get together to discuss group specific issues or concerns. As a PLC team lead on my campus, I am responsible for meeting with my team to align curriculum and facilitate discussions on common assignments and assessments.

⁹ When I was a GTA, Ellen Quandahl was the Director of the Lower Division Writing Program.

revisited reading strategies in order to improve the effectiveness of each strategy. Today, I routinely implement in my tenth grade PLC team the types of exercises we were asked to do in the GTA program. The progress is slow going but the teachers are beginning to see the value in working with the texts we teach and the writing activities we assign our students.

From this experience—teaching first year college freshman and working with other GTAs, faculty, and staff—I learned that I needed to make some dramatic changes to my approach to teaching. From my experience teaching at the University, I learned that incoming freshman would be expected to read rather lengthy academic articles that communicated complex ideas. Students would have to discuss these complex ideas in class and write papers that demonstrated their ability to comprehend and clearly communicate ideas presented in the text. I noticed that students who were more competent in reading and writing had an easier time working through the difficult material, for they had learned ways to approach challenging texts; but the students who were less prepared struggled through every reading assignment and relied heavily on what they had learned from what was discussed in class. What I can take back to the high school classroom is the knowledge that students planning on attending college must learn how to actively interact with texts and learn a variety of reading skills that will help them become independent, insightful readers of texts. I also learned that teachers are effective in the teaching of academic literacy when they engage students in genuine conversation about texts and teach them how to discuss texts in the papers they write. Furthermore, I learned that teachers need to select texts for pedagogical purposes, providing students with a variety of reading experiences that require them to apply various reading strategies to the texts they read.

Adjusting to what seemed like a constant flow of new information, I was continuously revising my lesson plans to align more closely to what I was learning about academic literacy. Wanting to both deepen my knowledge of adolescent literacy and make credible my evolving pedagogy, I began to research what scholars and organizations had to say about students and their ability to read, write, and think about challenging texts. (I have included a full discussion on my findings in the review of the literature). The more I read, the more I became interested in the discussion of literacy. My desire to effectively teach reading and writing, combined with my involvement in AVID, led me to investigate the gap that exists between what high school graduates are able to do and the level of work colleges and universities expect from their incoming freshman. I wanted to know what high school students should be learning and how I could better prepare them for post-secondary education.

My inquiries and passion for bridging the gap between high school and college led me (almost fortuitously) to write this project. Knowing that I was both involved with AVID and concerned about what high school teachers could do to help develop students into competent readers and writers, my thesis committee encouraged me to investigate the possibility of writing a curriculum that would be useful to AVID and to me.

Professor Johns—one of my thesis committee members—was currently working with AVID as a language and literacy consultant. She was also working with a variety of curriculum teams and had recently developed, and was in the process of refining, a curriculum for seniors called College Readiness: Senior Seminar. This curriculum is designed to increase the rigor in the senior AVID classroom by asking students to engage in academic reading and writing tasks similar to those found in freshman college courses.

Ann Johns explained that more could be done to support high school reading and that AVID was interested in developing a curriculum that would prepare students for the College Readiness piece. As professor Johns explained, in the past AVID had created some materials for non-fiction reading, but a curriculum was still needed that explicitly taught students how to become strategic readers of texts. Ultimately, the curriculum would prepare high school students for college level reading and writing assignments. Willing to work with me on this project, she asked if I would be interested in writing such a curriculum for AVID. After a bit of negotiation, my thesis committee agreed that I would write a curriculum project for AVID and use the project for my thesis.

After six months of consulting with Ann Johns, various AVID directors and curriculum writers for AVID, I produced a critical reading and writing curriculum guide. (The purpose of the guide and the scope of the project is outlined in Chapter 2). Although this phase of the project is complete,¹⁰ more needs to be done. Next year, during the 2007-2008 school year, I will continue testing the strategies in my classroom and elicit feedback from the one-hundred and fifty middle and high school teachers who will be using this curriculum in their classrooms.¹¹ This information will help guide my decisions on which strategies are effective and which strategies need to be revised. I will also focus on developing my project into a complete text, replete with variations on how to use strategies, student models, and developed instructions for teachers. Eventually, I would like to see my

¹⁰ This phase of the critical reading and writing curriculum is intended to be taught in AVID's Summer Institute. Since it is being taught, the instructor will contextualize the content, model the strategies, and walk teachers through the curriculum.

¹¹ I will be teaching this curriculum during the AVID Summer Institute. There are two Institutes in San Diego and one in Sacramento. Each class will have approximately fifty middle and high school teachers in attendance.

curriculum guide evolve into a book so that teachers who are interested in improving students reading and writing skills could use what I have created as a resource. For now, I will use my curriculum guide in my own classroom and encourage members of my staff at El Cajon High School to implement elements of the curriculum in their classrooms. My hope is that this reading and writing guide will begin to address the literacy issues on our campus and lead us into a serious conversation about what we can do to better prepare our students for their academic futures.

CHAPTER 2

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

When I began this project, I had two purposes in mind: first, I wanted to write a high school critical reading and writing curriculum guide for AVID elective teachers; and second, I wanted to couple the rhetorical training that I received from San Diego State University with my evolving knowledge of literacy instruction to create a curriculum that I could use to address the literacy needs of my students. Ultimately, I wanted my project to serve both teachers and students. For the teachers, I wanted to make available a variety of ways texts can be read, discussed, and used for classroom activities. And for the students, I desired to create a curriculum that consisted of both practical activities and reference guides that could be used to support their reading of challenging texts. And even though I was writing for two different audiences, the goal for the project was to remain the same: create a curriculum that helps high school students become strategic readers of text in order to better prepare them for the rigors of college and university level reading and writing assignments.

The final product resulted in a curriculum guide consisting of seventeen research based reading activities,¹² eighteen one-page reference guides that help direct students through various ways of reading, thinking, and writing about challenging texts, and thirty teacher reference sections that provide brief explanations and rationalizations for the strategies and activities included in the guide. The curriculum guide is designed as a teacher

¹² Some of the research behind these activities is discussed in the Review of the Literature section of this project. Other texts are listed in the Reference section.

resource, intended to be duplicated and used to guide students to new ways of approaching difficult texts. The reference guides, on the other hand, are intended to be a resource for both the students and the teachers. Some of the content on these reference pages is designed to help guide a reader's thinking while reading, while other reference pages provide writing templates that help direct students to think about the relationship among texts and the ideas presented in texts. By including student activities, one-page reference guides, and teacher reference sections in the curriculum, teachers will be able to model reading strategies and empower their students to use a variety of strategies as they independently read texts.

Since my project functions more like a guide rather than a textbook on reading, there are few places where I offer in-depth conversations about particular strategies, and even fewer places where I include sample responses that coincide with student activities. Although these features would serve this curriculum well, my focus for this particular project was to create a curriculum and to give teachers an opportunity to interact with the material and receive guidance from an instructor. In this environment, the staff developer would be responsible for contextualizing and modeling the different strategies and activities that make up this curriculum guide. Something else this curriculum guide does not include is hand-selected texts that could be used to teach the various reading strategies. At the AVID Summer Institute,¹³ teachers will receive a packet of pre-selected texts that will accompany the curriculum guide. These texts will give teachers an opportunity to work with the curriculum, applying different strategies while they read. Teachers who complete the Summer Institute will have learned how to use a variety of reading strategies, read for a

¹³ This curriculum guide will be taught in three Summer Institutes: two in San Diego and one in Sacramento.

variety of purposes, and discuss texts in a variety of ways. Ultimately, I hope that teaching this curriculum will motivate and inspire teachers to consider their students' academic literacy needs and react to those needs so that their students will have a better chance of succeeding in post-secondary education.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this section is to investigate what scholars and organizations in the field have said about adolescent literacy and to see what has been done to bridge the gap between what high school students learn and what colleges and universities expect their incoming students to know and do. It is also the purpose of this section to identify academic competencies and expectations in order to better understand what secondary teachers can do to help prepare students for post-secondary demands. In this section I wish to make clear how secondary and even post-secondary teachers can address the literacy needs of our students by offering a sampling of research and curriculum projects that work to define and address gaps in students' abilities to read, write, and think about challenging texts.

I will begin with a review of three comprehensive research studies that focus on adolescent academic literacy: the first, a study conducted by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate, outlines academic competencies and expectations for reading, writing, and thinking for incoming freshman entering California's colleges and universities; the second, a study sponsored by the California Writing Project, details how a group of teachers in the Santa Ana Unified School District implemented a cognitive strategies approach that improved the development of academic literacy for thousands of English Language Learners; and the third, a report by the Center on Instruction, identifies the need to address literacy earlier in a student's education and provides various recommendations to help prepare students for rigorous reading and writing assignments. Following these three studies, I will briefly discuss a few projects that aim to address the academic literacy needs

that are outlined in studies like the ones I have included here. I will conclude this section with an explanation as to how these studies in conjunction with what individual scholars and organizations have done to support academic literacy not only guided the development of my reading curriculum project but provided a space for me to add to the existing resources on academic literacy.

The need for academic literacy has spurred a rich conversation in and around high schools and has produced for me three central questions: (1) What does it mean to be a competent reader of texts? (2) What is the most effective way to teach students how to read, write, and think with sophistication; and (3) Who should be responsible for teaching academic literacy? These three guiding questions led me to research what individual scholars and organizations were saying about adolescents and their ability to read academic texts.

When I sat down to organize this section, I thought it would be appropriate to begin with a discussion of the recent studies on adolescent literacy. Even though there is a number of literacy studies published each year,¹⁴ I considered only those studies that had been published between 2000 and 2007. From this list of studies I reviewed only those projects that focused on academic literacy instruction in the high schools. Such studies are valuable to those of us involved in secondary education because they highlight deficiencies of year-one and year-two college students and offer recommendations about how high schools can better prepare students for rigorous course work.

¹⁴ In addition to the research that has been done on college readiness, there is a number of research projects that focus on language acquisition, English Language Learners, early elementary literacy, the role of vocabulary in one's literacy development, and the newest body of research, literacy development for high stakes exams.

Since I am interested in knowing what high school teachers can do to better prepare high school students for college level work, my first instinct was to investigate what colleges and universities were saying about their incoming freshmen. I looked to the University of California and the California State University's Academic Senates for answers, and in the process of this research, I discovered a report by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate. This Intersegmental group is unique in that it is made up of all three of California's higher-level academic institutions.¹⁵ Since I was interested in what both colleges and universities had to say on the subject of academic literacy, this report by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate became the central resource for my project. The following is a review of their report.

In 2002, the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate (ICAS) published a study entitled *Academic Literacy: A Statement of Competencies Expected of Students Entering California's Public Colleges and Universities*. This comprehensive document, designed to aid in the research and development of critical reading, writing, and thinking, seeks to identify "skills and attitudes" that competent, successful college students' exhibit. Since the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate recognizes that all incoming freshman must be competent in reading, writing, and thinking in order to be successful in any academic field, the ICAS wanted to include in this research project as many voices in as many disciplines as possible. The two consultants for this project—Dr. Robert Doly, a professor at the University of California, Irvine, and Dr. Jerry Rudmann, an instructor at Coastline Community College—coordinated a massive online survey through which faculty

¹⁵ This committee has representation from all three of California's higher education institutions: Community College, California State University, and University of California.

from California's community colleges, state colleges, and universities were invited to participate in this study.

The invitations were limited to faculty who had taught an entry-level course within four years of the study or who regularly taught first-year courses. Of the 402 faculty members who responded, 289 respondents were chosen for the study. The responses from the survey made clear that the majority of students who graduate from high school and move on to college are not prepared for the rigorous work that is expected of them in the colleges and universities.

In Part I, under the section entitled Habits of Mind, the ICAS suggests that critical reading, writing, listening and thinking “depend upon students' ability to postpone judgment and tolerate ambiguity...” and that getting in a habit of “rethinking, rereading and rewriting” will lead to high levels of academic success. Based on what colleges and universities value as “intellectual habits of mind,” the study concludes that incoming freshman are not generally equipped with the attitudes and habits necessary to do well in their first two years of college. According to the study, “Only 1/3 of entering students are sufficiently prepared for the two most frequently assigned writing tasks: analyzing information or arguments and synthesizing information from several sources” (17). Even though this statistic focuses on students' writing ability, the type of writing that is being assessed here begins with a reading assignment. And, since students are being asked to analyze authors' arguments and synthesize information from a variety of texts, it is reasonable to conclude that the problem is not the individual student's ability to write; on the contrary, the issue is more fundamental; it begins with his/her ability to competently read and discuss challenging texts. The study goes on to say that only 49% of students are able to give brief summaries of texts that they read,

and 83% of faculty involved in the study report that “students’ lack of analytical reading skills contributes to students’ lack of success in a [college] course” (17). These percentages are instructive. If we hope to prepare students for success in college, we must teach students how to perform the reading and writing tasks that they will be expected to do when they enter into college.

The ICAS document is broken into three major sections. Part I, "Academic Literacy: Reading, Writing, and Thinking Critically," focuses on what college faculty expect high school graduates to know and provides a list of student competencies; Part II, "Statement of Competencies," compares state competencies for high school students to the competencies outlined by the Academic Senate; and Part III, "Strategies for Implementation," offers suggestions as to how high schools, colleges, universities, and surrounding communities can work to improve academic literacy.

Throughout these three sections, the study offers a number of recommendations. In the first section, the committee members contend that “we must teach our students to be active makers of meaning and teach them the strategies all good readers employ: to think critically, to argue, to compare, to own an idea, and to remember” (12). They caution teachers not to reduce the competencies that have been outlined in this study “to a mere listing of skills” (12). Rather, they argue that “true academic competence depends upon a set of perceptions and behaviors acquired while preparing for more advanced academic work” (12). To better prepare students for college level tasks, they recommend that high schools assign writing tasks at the junior and senior levels that require students to analyze and synthesize information from a variety of texts.

In Part I, “Academic Literacy: Reading, Writing, and Thinking Critically,” a list of competencies is provided to help guide secondary teachers to the types of learning that needs to take place in order to prepare high school graduates for college level work. The study also makes clear that it is not solely the English teacher’s job to ensure that these competencies are met: “All of the elements of academic literacy discussed in this report...are expected of entering freshman across college disciplines. Therefore, these competencies need to be developed in each of the content areas in California high schools” (35). In **Table 1**, I have provided an abridged list of the reading and writing competencies that are in the study.

Table 1: CSU Reading and Writing Competencies^a

<p><i>Reading Competencies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make predictions based on the title • Predict the author's purpose using textual clues • Approach texts with a variety of reading strategies • Successfully read challenging texts without instruction or support • Clarify challenging material through rereading strategies • Identify appeals made to the readers' emotion and logic, and on the basis of the author's self-presentation • Differentiate between main and subordinate ideas in texts • Comprehend ideas presented in a variety of texts and be able to see connections among them • Summarize texts accurately • Make predictions while reading • Withhold judgment while reading a text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argue with a text; challenge what a text says • Apply prior knowledge to new ideas and information • Develop questions while reading and seek to find answers • Identify key claims and evidence as it relates to the argument • Use context clues to understand unfamiliar words <p><i>Writing Competencies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write papers that pertain to reading • Summarize ideas presented in non-fiction texts • Synthesize ideas from several sources • Analyze arguments • Critically analyze the ideas in texts
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^a A complete list of competencies can be found on pages 16 and 22-25 of the ICAS study.

This list of competencies is useful because it clearly outlines what colleges and universities value as good reading, writing and thinking skills. It is also instructive in that the list of reading competencies overwhelmingly outnumber the competencies listed for writing.

In Part III, “Strategies for Implementation,” the committee echoes what they had stated previously in Part I: “Students need greater exposure to and instruction in academic literacy than they receive in English classes alone” (32). This need for literacy instruction across the disciplines “calls for greater coordination of literacy education among subject matter areas within high schools” and the committee believe that “practical professional development” is the key to improving literacy instruction (42). In addition to professional development, the committee recommends that colleges and universities make a concerted effort to form partnerships with neighboring high schools. These partnerships, the committee contends, will improve communication between the two institutions, thus keeping the high school teachers informed of what colleges and universities expect. This vertical teaming approach will also provide for college faculty and staff an understanding of what their students’ previous high school reading and writing experiences have been (44).

Even though the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate published their report in 2002, their recommendations continue to inform teachers, schools, and districts about the need for a more deliberate approach to teaching adolescent literacy. In 2007, ACT Inc. released their 2005-2006 National Curriculum Survey Results that focused on the gap between post-secondary expectations and high school practice.¹⁶ In a press release by an ACT spokesperson, we are reminded of the “gap between what U.S. high schools are

¹⁶ According to their website, the ACT conducts a National Curriculum Survey every three to four years.

teaching in their core college preparatory courses and what colleges want incoming students to know in order for them to succeed in first-year courses” (“New Study Points to Gap,” par. 1). The National Survey¹⁷ reports that “colleges generally want all incoming students to attain in-depth understanding of a selected number of fundamental skills and knowledge in their high school courses, while high schools tend to provide less in-depth instruction of a broader range of skills and topics” (“New Study Points to Gap,” par. 2). The survey conducted by the ACT not only reiterates what the ICAS had reported in 2002, it extends the ICAS’s claim that high school academic standards are not aligned with post-secondary expectations, leaving incoming freshman ill-equipped to handle the rigors of post-secondary work.

Although the study by the ICAS has informed much of my work on Academic literacy, the section on how teachers could support academic competencies for ELL students did not satisfy my curiosity. I desired to learn more about non-native speakers of English and how I could support them in their development of academic literacy. I was interested in finding a study that focused primarily on supporting English Language Learners and their development of critical reading and writing skills.

The ELL population ought to be a major concern for any teacher who teaches in California. According to the ICAS, English Language Learners make up close to 40% of all K-12 students in California, and according to their report,¹⁸ this population is also not prepared for college-level academic demands (10). In my experience, many of the students

¹⁷ The purpose of these surveys is to compare the expectations of post-secondary institutions to that of high school college preparatory courses

¹⁸ *Academic Literacy: A Statement of Competencies Expected of Students Entering California's Public Colleges and Universities* (2002).

who are non-native speakers of English possess the determination and commitment that the ICAS suggests is the key to success in academic settings. However, despite their efforts, ELL students struggle through many reading and writing assignments; they have the heart and the motivation to make it to college, but many ELL or ESL¹⁹ students lack the English language development needed to succeed, especially if they have only been in America for a short period of time. This is perhaps where we see the clearest case of what has been called “misplaced confidence.” A number of ELL students move through high school with excellent grades and soaring GPAs. The students see their grades as a reflection of their abilities and their preparedness for college; however, their grades are not necessarily a good determiner of how well they can read, write, and think critically. Many ELL students wander onto college campuses unaware of the academic demands that await them. For this reason, individuals who are interested in helping students make the transition from high school to college must confront the reality that a fair number of students in our classrooms are ELL and that these students need to develop academic competencies if we hope to increase the number of under-represented students going to and succeeding in college. The question then becomes, How can we support the development of academic competencies for our English Language Learners? This is where studies like the Pathway Project can be most helpful.

In February 2007, the California Writing Project in conjunction with the Santa Ana Unified School District—a low socioeconomic district struggling to serve their 93% ESL population—published a study that focused on improving academic literacy for English Language Learners. In the opening pages of their report, *A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction for English Language Learners in Secondary School*, we

¹⁹ English as a Second Language

learn that the Pathway Project spanned an eight-year period and included the participation of fifty-five secondary teachers (grades 6-12). The teachers who participated in this study were extensively trained in how to use a wide range of cognitive strategies to ensure that their learning of the strategies moved beyond simple application and into a “deep knowledge” of how and when to use each strategy (269). The training that the teachers received was designed with one goal in mind: to help students develop into competent readers of academic text, preparing them for college-level reading and writing tasks. The study revealed that students who were exposed to cognitive strategies instruction “significantly out-gained peers on holistically scored assessments of academic writing” and out-performed the control-group on GPA and high-stakes exams (269). Their success, they found, was rooted in high expectations, rigorous reading and writing assessments, explicit teaching and modeling of strategies, and deep discussions of text (269).

Since the Pathway Project was so successful, it is worthwhile to better understand the cognitive strategies approach that was responsible for greatly improving the academic literacy of nearly 2,000 ESL students per year. In the section entitled “Conceptual Framework: A Cognitive Strategies Approach,” we learn that the cognitive strategies approach to teaching academic literacy is an intervention developed by the California Writing Project. This intervention was developed from extensive research on how experienced readers and writers interact with texts. From their research, they found that “experienced readers and writers purposefully select and orchestrate cognitive strategies that are appropriate for the literacy task at hand” (273). They report, “teachers need to provide systematic and explicit instruction in strategies used by mature readers and writers and help students develop declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of these cognitive

strategies, thereby building students' metacognitive control of specific strategies" (274). They contend that the responsibility rests with the teacher to "make visible" the thought process and decisions good readers and writers make and "to provide enough sustained, guided practice that students can internalize these strategies and perform complex tasks independently" (274). In other words, the cognitive strategies approach relies on teachers to teach students a variety of different strategies, how to use the strategies, when to use the strategies, and why one strategy may be more appropriate than another.

The ultimate goal of the cognitive strategies approach is to develop in students the ability to "select and implement appropriate strategies independently and to monitor and regulate their use" (274). As students learn how to use reading strategies without support, they will develop the flexibility needed to approach a variety of challenging texts. This is not a simple task, however. In *Teaching and Researching Reading*, William Grabe and Fredricka L. Stoller comment on the challenges behind developing students into strategic readers of text. In "Dilemmas for L2 reading research and instruction," Grabe and Stoller state that a considerable amount of time must be spent teaching students how to become strategic readers; time, they say, that most teachers do not have or are unwilling to invest (82). They also caution that "using strategies effectively does not typically involve conscious decisions on the part of the fluent reader. Strategic readers are able to verbalize consciously the strategies that they use when asked to reflect, but they usually do not think consciously of these strategic choices because they have used them effectively so often" (82). Teaching a strategy to students, having them practice and use the strategy, and learning when to use the strategy is an important step in developing strategic readers, but great investment of time must be spent on repetition. As Grabe and Stoller explain, mature readers do not consciously

select strategies as they read; instead, they fluidly move from one strategy to another, making “strategic choices” based on the reading situation. Grabe and Stoller contend, to truly develop into a strategic reader, students must move away from the deliberate selection of strategies and into a process that is more instinctive or automatic.

In **Table 2**, I have provided a condensed list of the cognitive reading strategies that are outlined in the Pathway Project study. I selected from their list those strategies that would assist students in meeting the competencies outlined in the study conducted by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate.²⁰

Table 2. Effective Reading and Writing Strategies for ESL Students

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- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Establishing a reading purpose | • Organizing information |
| • Searching existing schemata | • Backtracking |
| • Predicting what will happen next | • Asking questions |
| • Confirming or revising meaning | • Forming criticisms |
| • Visualizing texts | • Making connections |
| • Regulating the kind and duration of activities | • Identifying main ideas |
-

These reading strategies suggest that there is a high correlation between an individual’s ability to think, question, and summarize text while reading and his or her ability to competently read and understand ideas presented in text. Therefore, teachers should teach and rehearse with students how to ask questions of a text, make connections in and around a text, and how to infer meaning and make predictions from a text. The cognitive strategies approach makes clear that the teaching of strategies or skills is not enough to help students

²⁰ The cognitive strategies listed here are taken from a table entitled Cognitive Strategies: A Reader’s and Writer’s Tool Kit. The complete list of strategies is broken up into eight categories: Planning and Goal Setting, Tapping Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions and Making Predictions, Constructing the Gist, Monitoring, Revising Meaning, Reflecting and Relating, and finally, Evaluating (277).

develop into competent readers and writers. Instead, students need to learn how to think about each strategy and have ample opportunities to practice the strategy. Through repetition and exposure to a variety of challenging texts, students will eventually move away from deliberately selecting strategies to a less conscious effort. That is, students will eventually take ownership of the strategy, independently making decisions about how to approach and interact with difficult reading material. From the Pathway Project we can infer three effective teaching practices that will improve literacy instruction: (1) teachers must participate in continuous professional development; (2) teachers must purposefully select texts for pedagogical purposes; and (3) teachers must dedicate class time to the modeling and scaffolding of cognitive strategies.

Before I discuss the third and final study, let me review some key points from the two prior studies. The first study by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate reports that high school graduates are not prepared for the academic rigor that is expected of them in the colleges and universities. The study recommends that high school teachers need to spend more time explicitly teaching critical reading and writing strategies to their students. It also states that students must develop the “attitudes and habits” that mature readers possess and learn how to approach texts openly, suspending judgment until the text is fully understood. They suggest that junior and senior classes should assign writing assignments where students are asked to summarize and synthesize information from a variety of texts and spend more time teaching students how to analyze arguments that are presented in texts. We may infer from their recommendations, even though they offer recommendations for reading, writing, thinking, and speaking alike, that the ability to competently read academic

texts is the most essential skill that high school student should learn in order to increase their chances of success in an academic environment.

In the second study, by the California Writing Project, we learn that a cognitive strategies approach to teaching English Language Learners academic competencies proves to be quite successful. This study concludes that continuous, purposeful staff development, “deep knowledge” of reading strategies, and the explicit teaching of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of strategies are central to developing competent readers of academic texts.

The third and final research project—*Academic Literacy Instruction For Adolescents: A Guidance Document from the Center on Instruction*—contributes to the discussion on adolescent literacy by reporting on students who have fallen behind in grade-level reading standards. Primarily concerned with grades 3-12, this study adds to the conversation by reporting on the damaging effects falling behind in grade level reading has on a student’s overall academic performance. The study suggests ways teachers can prepare students for challenging reading assignments earlier in their education and recommends ways for teachers to keep students reading as grade level.

The Center on Instruction, one of five content centers serving as resources for the 16 regional U.S. Departments of Education Comprehensive Centers,²¹ published *Academic Literacy Instruction For Adolescents: A Guidance Document from the Center on Instruction* in order to assist states, districts, and schools in their efforts to improve literacy instruction. Divided into three parts—Improving Academic Literacy, Advice from the Experts, and

²¹ Information provided by the Center on Instruction website: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org>.

Examples of State Activities²²—this document offers ways to improve literacy, ways to support students reading below grade level, ways to support literacy development in English Language Learners, and ways the state and local governments can support schools in their pursuit to improve adolescent literacy.

In the opening pages of the study, the Center on Instruction outlines three goals for improving academic literacy: (1) increase all students' overall grade-level reading ability in order to prepare them for post-secondary and workplace reading demands; (2) ensure students continue to gain one grade level in reading competency with each year they move through elementary, middle, and high school so that they continue to grow with the increasing demands; and (3) support students who are reading below grade-level standards and help them improve their reading proficiency.²³ The document also suggests that literacy instruction should focus on six elements: (1) reading fluency; (2) vocabulary knowledge; (3) domain-specific and domain-general content knowledge; (4) higher-level reasoning and thinking skills; (5) cognitive strategies; and (6) motivation and engagement.²⁴ It is important to remember that the three goals for improving academic literacy and the six elements of literacy instruction that are listed here come from the examination of nearly a dozen or so research projects on academic literacy instruction. The value in this report, then, rests in the wide body of research that went into the creation of this document. The recommendations and suggestions here are not one person's idea of how secondary educators should approach

²² The complete title for each section is as follows: Part 1: Improving Academic Literacy Instruction for Students in Grades 4-12; Part 2: Advice from the Experts about Improving Academic Literacy Instruction; Part 3: Examples of State Activities in Support of Improving Adolescent Literacy Instruction.

²³ The document includes a summary of Florida's spring 2006 test results. The results show that 75% of all third grade students were able to meet grade-level reading standards. However, only 61% of seventh grade students were proficient, and a dismal 32% of all tenth grade students met grade-level reading standards (5).

²⁴ There are explanations and rationales for each of the six foci (6-13).

literacy; instead, this document provides a comprehensive look at what research has found to be most useful and productive in the teaching of adolescent literacy.

Even though the document is divided into three sections, I will limit my discussion here to the first section, “Improving Academic Literacy Instruction for Students in Grades 4-12.” Although Parts 2 and 3 prove to be valuable resources to those interested in academic literacy, I believe Part 1 applies more directly to the work that I am currently engaged in: writing a curriculum that will assist in students’ development of critical reading and writing competencies.

In Part 1, the Center on Instruction provides five recommendations that parallel and/or extend the recommendations made by both the ICAS and the California Writing Project. Under the first recommendation, the Center on Instruction advises teachers to facilitate genuine conversations about texts; specifically, how reading strategies help with the comprehension of the content. As part of the discussion, teachers should guide students through conversations about why a particular strategy would be useful, how to use the strategy, and when it would be appropriate to use the strategy.²⁵ In addition to explicit instruction of a variety of strategies,²⁶ teachers should provide frequent opportunities for students to practice using reading strategies throughout the school day (27). They recommend that strategies should be taught through a variety of teaching methods to include think-alouds, think-pair-shares, and small-group activities. When students are given a chance

²⁵ This recommendation echoes what the California Writing Project called declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge.

²⁶ According to the research by the Center on Instruction, they have learned that multiple strategies must be taught, but there isn’t an agreed upon number of strategies that students should learn.

to practice newly acquired strategies in a variety of reading situations, their knowledge of those strategies strengthens.

The second and third recommendations focus on conversations in the classroom. Beyond discussions of specific strategies, the report suggests that students benefit from rich, probative discussions of reading material and should be given multiple opportunities to discuss texts throughout the school day (38). And during these discussions, the report suggests, the teacher should encourage students to use vocabulary appropriate for the conversation. That is, students should use thematic and content based vocabulary when discussing a text as a way to maintain high standards, which will result in higher levels of student performance (46).

The fourth recommendation is to increase students' motivation and engagement with reading. The report states that students who have choice in what they read generally exhibit higher levels of reading endurance and concentration, thus leading to higher levels of comprehension (53-54). Another way to motivate and engage students is through high-interest texts (54). Bringing in non-fiction literature that connects to what students know or to what they identify with will increase engagement, allowing the teacher to slow down and teach students different ways to approach the reading of the text. When students are interested in the material, they will be more willing to reread, discuss, and write about the text. When explicitly teaching reading strategies, it is best to select texts that students will want to work with and learn from. Another way to motivate students, the report explains, is to discuss the importance of learning goals and articulate what students will learn each day (54). This strategy outlines for the students what they are expected to learn from the lesson and provides for them a sense of purpose behind what they are reading or studying. If

students know what they will be accountable for learning during a particular lesson, their level of concern heightens and their level of engagement increases.

The fifth and last recommendation focuses on teaching students critical concepts and content-based routines and habits. The Center on Instruction discovered that “when teachers actively guide students in using routines during class, students learn more of the content they are studying” (63). A routine could be defined by the way in which an intellectual in a particular field does his or her work. For example, a scientist relies on the scientific method to begin the process of discovery or to prove a hypothesis, whereas a historian might review primary documents to learn more about a particular event in history. Even more applicable are the simple routines that happen in the classroom. When an English teacher does not know the meaning of a word, he or she could model the process one takes to learn the meaning. The teacher might go to the text to infer the meaning from the contextual clues, study the root or prefix of the word, and maybe even consult a dictionary. A science teacher, confronted with the same problem, may walk students through the examination of the visual information in the text, turn to the index to see where else this word or term has been used in the text, or show students how to use the glossary to look up the meaning of the word. These routines model for students how competent learners think, reason, and act when confronted with an academic challenge. It is expected that students who are guided through “content enhanced routines” during class “will assume more responsibility for using these routines independently in a manner similar to the way that responsibility for executing comprehension strategies is gradually transferred from teachers to students” (63). Students will become more knowledgeable of the content as they master more content-based routines and habits; and there is compelling evidence that suggests students who improve their knowledge in a

specific subject area will experience high levels of comprehension with texts in that same subject (63).

Desiring to make sense of what I have read and understood, and wanting to glean from these studies what I thought was most useful to the teaching of academic literacy, I decided to craft four statements that encapsulate all that I have learned from these three studies: (1) Teachers must consistently participate in professional development that emphasizes high expectations, daily learning objectives, motivation strategies, and deep understanding of reading strategies; (2) Teachers must explicitly teach a variety of reading strategies, provide numerous opportunities to practice strategies on a variety of texts, and guide students through cognitive and metacognitive exercises, training students to be strategic readers—independently evaluating and selecting reading strategies that are appropriate for the reading task; (3) Students must be guided through meaningful discussions of texts and engage in writing assignments that support comprehension and the development of new knowledge; and (4) Reading and writing strategies must be taught across the disciplines and throughout the school day in order for students to develop the “attitudes and habits” of competent readers and writers. These four statements are helpful because they provide a manageable framework. This framework helped guide the development of my project and has become the focus of my approach to literacy instruction in my classroom.

A broader concern is that school sites that are interested in improving literacy on their campuses need to educate the staff on the most effective ways to teach academic literacy. Few teachers have the resources to learn how to teach literacy, and although some schools turn to their English departments for answers, the large majority of English teachers (I am included in this generalization) lack the knowledge and expertise needed to move a staff

toward a successful literacy program. Most often, a teacher who is interested in addressing the literacy needs on his or her campus will engage in sporadic, self-directed research in order to find out what he or she can do to help students prepare for college. Although these warriors for literacy make a difference in their own classrooms, and undoubtedly influence a few staff members in their own departments, schools must gain staff support and seek to develop partnerships with local colleges and universities if they hope to make any progress in adolescent literacy.

Michael Carter, a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) professional, deals more explicitly with the challenges one experiences when trying to implement an ideology across the disciplines. In his article “Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines,” Carter discusses his desires to get faculty and staff to see the purpose and value of writing in their own discipline: to see how writing can be used as a means of producing knowledge and assessing that knowledge. Even though Carter’s text deals specifically with writing instruction, what he discovers and how he goes about effecting change within and around the disciplines offers some insight into effective school wide literacy implementation.

Carter argues that faculty at the colleges and universities “continue to conceive of writing as generalizable to all disciplines and therefore distinct from disciplinary knowledge, to be learned as a general skill outside the disciplines” (385). I see a connection between Carter’s concern with writing being perceived as a skill unrelated to any particular subject to that of literacy instruction and how teachers perceive reading as a skill to be acquired outside of the science, history, and math classrooms. And when Carter reports that faculty resist incorporating writing instruction into their classrooms because it “will result in an unacceptable sacrifice of course content” (386), I am reminded of the faculty at my school

(and others in and around the district) and their reluctance to purposeful teaching of content-based literacy. Most teachers who resist teaching reading or writing in their classrooms over emphasize content knowledge and are unaware that teaching content-based skills and routines will improve students comprehension and retention of course content.

Michael Carter argues that there is a “disjunction between the way [WID teachers] conceive the relationship between writing and knowing in the disciplines and the way so many faculty across our colleges and universities conceive that relationship” (387). Carter desires to move away from viewing disciplines as simple “repositories and delivery systems for relatively static content knowledge” (389). The challenge for the WID professionals resides in “bridging the gap between writing in and writing outside the disciplines...” (387). In an attempt to bridge the “conceptual gap,” Carter calls for disciplines to focus on teaching “active ways of knowing.” He believes there is a connection between what one does, what one knows, and what one writes. “Doing,” therefore, becomes “the middle term that links writing and knowing in the disciplines” (389). Since Carter views writing as a tool for making and assessing knowledge specific to the discipline (385, 388), he suggests that the disciplines focus on what they want their students to be able to do. He suspects that the answer to this question will lead to the need for writing to learn and writing to demonstrate knowing within the discipline (408). Through this process of identifying learning outcomes and assessments, faculty will discover the role writing plays in their discipline and begin to take responsibility for teaching writing as it applies to the content and learning objectives.

Similar to Carter’s observation that faculty see writing as “generalizable,” high school teachers view reading as a skill learned outside of the discipline. The belief that teaching writing will result in a sacrifice of valuable content is also similar to high school teachers’

fears that their classrooms will become reading rooms, abandoning content for the sake of reading instruction. But if a school were to adopt Carter's approach—each discipline deciding on their own learning outcomes, identifying how students meet those outcomes and how those outcomes can be assessed—teachers may well find that their curriculum relies heavily on the reading of textual material. A focus on how important reading is to understanding the content could lead departments to a more fruitful discussion of what types of texts are essential to acquiring content knowledge, how to read such texts, and how to assess students' comprehension of each text. Once the outcomes are established, and the individual learning objectives defined, teachers would realize how significant reading is to understanding their content and gladly shift their way of thinking about texts in order to support their students' learning. For RID professionals, much like WID professionals,²⁷ learning how to competently read content-based text is the key to making, understanding, and retaining content-based knowledge.

A related and more concrete resource is William Grabe and Fredricka L. Stoller's *Teaching and Researching Reading*. In their opening pages, Grabe and Stoller provide a rationale for their text: "As we enter a new century, productive and educated citizens will require even stronger literacy abilities (including both reading and writing) in increasingly larger numbers of societal settings" (1). Their work is useful to those desiring to add to the conversation on literacy instruction because they seek to understand what reading fluency for L1 students looks like in order to offer some insight into teaching L2 students how to read more effectively (91). In addition to their work on L1 and L2 reading, Grabe and Stoller

²⁷ For Carter and the Writing in the Discipline professionals, writing becomes essential to the knowledge acquired in each discipline. I think this approach could also work for reading. I am arguing that competent reading leads to "knowing" in the discipline.

explore key research projects conducted in the 1990's in order to show what experts in the field have discovered about effective literacy instruction.²⁸ I value Grabe and Stoller's work because it not only supports the idea of research-based literacy instruction, it encourage teachers to do "small-scale research projects" in their own classrooms; they suggest that teachers should test recommended approaches to literacy and tweak strategies in order to produce activities that are useful to students. Even though *Teaching and Researching Reading* proves to be a rich resource for ELL and ESL teachers, their text provides many insights into L1 academic literacy and offers a comprehensive list of common strategies used by skilled readers.²⁹

When I think about the substantial scholarship on academic and adolescent literacy and the various discourse communities that contribute to the actual conversation, I am most intrigued by the discussion of rhetorical reading. Partly due to my rhetorical training and partly due to my own pedagogical beliefs, I find the discussion of rhetorical reading and writing fascinating. When I say rhetorical reading and writing, I am referring to a way in which a reader or writer thinks about, questions, responds to, and interacts with text. When we read rhetorically, we look at relationships between a text and its intended audience, its relationship to the surrounding scholarship, or its relationship to the time in which the text was written. Reading rhetorically also considers the way in which a reader patiently watches and listens to what a text has to offer. That is, the reader asks questions of the text, listens to

²⁸ Some projects include Keith Stanovich's study on the impact exposure to print has on reading abilities, Michael Pressley's study on strategic readers, John Guthrie's study on motivation and its impact on reading comprehension, and Isabel Beck's study on text structure and its affect on students' comprehension of a text.

²⁹ Some of the reading strategies outlined in their book include specifying a purpose for reading, planning for the reading, previewing the text, making predictions, questioning the text, summarizing information, making inferences, analyzing the text structure, rereading difficult sections of the text, assessing comprehension of the text, critiquing what an author has said, and reflecting on what has been learned from the text (83).

the discussion in and around the text, and patiently, almost methodically, works through the material, seeking clarity and adjusting his or her own biases when necessary. And finally, rhetorical reading considers the author's actions, paying close attention to organizational structures in order to better understand how an author constructs meaning in a text.

One institution aware of the need for rhetorical reading is the California State University (CSU). Desiring to work with neighboring high schools, the CSU has created a senior curriculum for students interested in going on to a four-year university. Officially known as the CSU 12th Grade Expository Reading and Writing workshop,³⁰ this program invites high school teachers to learn about the literacy needs observed in colleges and universities. As part of the workshop, teachers are given a complete semester long curriculum that takes students through a series of reading and writing assignments similar to those they will experience during their first year of college. In addition to the curriculum, teachers are given a brief textbook called *Reading Rhetorically*. It is this brief textbook that has inspired several rhetorical reading activities in my curriculum guide.

In the introductory pages to *Reading Rhetorically*, John C. Bean, Virginia A. Chappell and Alice M. Gillman state that "secondary students need explicit instruction in analytical reading, not because they [the students] have problems with reading, but because

³⁰ This is a pilot program designed to prepare students for reading and writing demands of their first year in college. The members of this task force argue, "Students who for many legitimate reasons have not yet learned to read academic texts proficiently by the time they reach high school deserve our help in developing their reading capacity." This course is the product of a collaborative effort consisting of college professors, secondary teachers, and various administrative staff members. Their project has four goals: 1) prepare students for the English Placement Test (EPT); 2) prepare students for college and university level work; 3) prepare students for California's English Language Arts State Standards; and 4) prepare students with functional literacy skills. They argue that students need to develop reading fluency and competency in the types of texts that they will most likely be exposed to in college and the professional world. Description of the course available online at <<http://www.calstate.edu/eap/englishcourse/>>.

college writing assignments demand sophisticated ways of reading.” Reading Rhetorically “approaches reading as an advanced intellectual process that forms the basis for successful academic writing across the disciplines.” Overall, this text is designed to instruct students on how to “read with an analytical eye and to write about what they have read with rhetorical insight.” The goal for Bean, Virginia, and Gillman is to “teach students how to see texts as positioned in a conversation with other texts, how to recognize the bias or perspective of a given text, and how to analyze texts for both content and rhetorical method (xiv).” While reading the materials, I became more and more interested in crafting a reading and writing curriculum guide that would align with what other rhetoricians were doing to help high school students prepare for college. And the more I read, the more I realized that teaching students how to read texts rhetorically would effectively address the UC and CSU expectations for incoming freshmen. When students are taught how to read rhetorically, they move past the simple comprehension of content and into a deeper discussion of why texts are written and how they are constructed. These higher-level discussions of texts will shape students into more competent, more mature readers and better prepare them for college-level reading and writing assignments. In **Table 3**, I have provided a list of rhetorical questions that readers could ask while reading.³¹ Such questions will get students in a habit of thinking critically and analytically about the texts they read and model for them the kinds of questions students should ask while reading.

³¹ This list of rhetorical questions is published in *Reading Rhetorically* (16).

Table 3. Questions Rhetorical Readers Ask While Reading

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- What questions does the text address? (Why are these significant questions? What community cares about them?)
 - Who is the intended audience? (Am I part of the audience or an outsider?)
 - How does the author support his or her thesis with reasons and evidence? (Do I find the argument convincing? What views and counterarguments are omitted from the text?)
 - How does the author hook the intended reader's interest and keep the reader reading?
 - How does the author make himself or herself seem credible to the intended audience? (Are the author's sources reliable?)
 - Are the writer's basic values, beliefs, and assumptions similar to or different from my own?
 - How do I respond to this text?
 - How do this author's evident purposes for writing fit with my purposes for reading? (How will I be able to use what I have learned from the text?)
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Similar to *Reading Rhetorically*, *They Say/ I Say* is a brief resource designed to support students in their development of academic literacy. Although both texts are written for both college and senior high school students, *They Say/ I Say* primarily focuses on developing rhetorical writers, whereas *Reading Rhetorically* addresses writing but primarily deals with rhetorical reading strategies.

In the text *They Say/ I Say*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein hope to “demystify academic writing by isolating its basic moves, explaining them clearly, and representing them in the form of templates” (ix). They want to encourage students to “enter a conversation about ideas” and help students understand that “intellectual writing is almost always composed in response to others’ texts” (ix). Graff and Birkenstein contend that using templates to help shape what students write will also transfer over into how they read. That is, students who are urged to think and write rhetorically will begin to see similar ways of thinking and writing in the texts they read. In addition, as students learn to use common rhetorical moves, they will better understand why such moves are being made.

Graff and Birkenstein are aware that some might take issue with the fact that they are encouraging students to use templates to help them construct more academic, highly analytical sentences, so in their opening chapter they take a moment to explain their position. They reason that templates provide ways of formatting not what a student says, but rather how he or she says it (10-11). Critics who question the usefulness of templates are concerned that such formulaic writing tools stifle analytical thinking and original thought. However, Graff and Birkenstein maintain that templates provide ways for students to say more and to “make moves in their writing that they might not otherwise make or even know they should make” (11). And, they contend, templates will help student write more original and creative sentences (10). Speaking from experience, I know that students welcome template sentences, and as Graff and Birkenstein assert, these templates do not create mundane, unoriginal sentences; on the contrary, templates offer students new ways to think about texts and therefore assist in their discovery of new knowledge. Graff and Birkenstein’s work inspired me to create my own templates for my curriculum guide and I have seen how using templates in the classroom help guide students to think and write about text in more sophisticated ways.

In Summary, my project began with one simple question: What can teachers do to better prepare students for college-level reading and writing assignments? After a bit of research, my one question became three: (1) What does it mean to be a competent reader of texts? (2) What is the most effective way to teach students how to read, write, and think with sophistication; and (3) Who should be responsible for teaching academic literacy? The previous section is a record of my journey: a document of the relevant scholarship that has informed the bulk of my project. All of the scholarship that I have included here has

contributed to my understanding of literacy instruction and guided the development of my curriculum project. As a teacher who is fairly new to literacy instruction, I am pleased to build on these resources that work to support the literacy needs of secondary students.

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