Challenges to Integrating Reading into Content Areas

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Adolescent Literacy

- Adolescents must read/write with proficiency
- Generic reading strategies – shift to disciplinary strategies
- Must be able to apply literacy strategies across curriculum
- Disproportionate number of 4th & 8th grade students reading below grade level (National Center for Education Statistic, 2011)
Adolescent Literacy

• Elementary level – middle school level
• CCSS – acceleration of literacy skills has begun
• Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate – multiple sources
• Think, perform, evaluate information like mathematicians, historians, and scientists
Adolescent Literacy

- Teaching reading alongside content
- Solid foundation in reading - to address adolescent literacy needs
- Literacy instruction in content areas is effective & will increase student achievement
The old adage “every teacher is a teacher of reading” after all...

Should every teacher be a teacher of reading? Why or Why not?
Literacy Crisis

- 70% middle and high school students
- 26% eighth grade – “essential for daily living” (Faggella-Luby & Dreshler, 2008)
- 68% secondary- scoring below proficient -NAEP
- Lack of adolescent literacy is far reaching…
  - 1/3 first year college students- remedial classes (Weldon, 2010)
- 1.2 million dropouts every year – 3000 per day
Challenges - #1

Content Area Literacy

Interaction and engagement with print and non-print materials used to generate and express meaning in specific academic disciplines. (Jewett, 2013)

How do you assist students with reading to learn frequently challenging content area information?
Challenges - #2

Disciplinary Literacy
Math, Social Studies, Science

Advanced literacy instruction embedded within content-area classes such as math, science, and social studies. (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008)
The CCSS calls for teachers in all content areas to address literacy standards across the curriculum, a shared initiative, resulting in a major shift in thinking for teachers at the middle and secondary levels. (Carney & Indrisano, 2013; Wendt, 2013)

Most teachers see themselves as content specialists.

Do you see yourself as a content specialist only? Are you knowledgeable about how to integrate reading into your discipline?
Challenge #4 – Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Pajares (1992) suggests a good indicator of the decisions individuals make throughout their lifetime can be strongly influenced by that individual’s beliefs.

What beliefs do you hold regarding teaching reading in your content area?
Challenges – Long Held Beliefs

Some long held beliefs:

• Traditionally, it has been an accepted belief that at the primary level it is everyone’s job to teach reading, but at the secondary level, it has mostly been the responsibility of the reading teacher.

• Many content area teachers believe they have a responsibility for content literacy but feel they have not been trained properly to meet students’ needs.

• Most teachers hold the belief that they are not capable of nor have the knowledge to teach literacy, as they have not had the proper training.

• Beliefs that some teachers hold regarding content literacy such as-I do not believe I should be teaching reading in Math—may be seen as barriers and challenges to the integration of reading strategies into content areas.

• Many believe literacy instruction is not relevant to their discipline and therefore, “the responsibility for teaching reading and writing often seems to belong to no one in particular” (Cantrell et al).

• Literacy instruction does not align to content; the traditional cultures and pedagogy at the secondary school level.
Challenge #5 – Resistance to Change

Change is a complex experience for many, creating barriers for many individuals.

Change involves uncertainty. Uncertainty can make it difficult to anticipate how change will affect people. Fear as a result of uncertainty can produce a feeling of being threatened, even if those threats are imagined or perceived, the threat is, nonetheless, very real.

What are some of the reasons you may be resistant to change?
Challenges

Some barriers to change...

• No support or guidance,
• No voice,
• School culture; isolation, schedules,
• Leadership behaviors;
• Job security; tenure,
• Too many jobs to do in one day.
Challenge #6 – Professional Development

*Districts that provide teachers with effective Professional Development can increase teacher knowledge and enhance pedagogy in an effort to guarantee not only what they are teaching is highly-qualified, but also competent in how they are teaching.*

What do you consider to be effective PD?
Challenges

• Most PD is a one-day workshop out of district.
• ELL’s
• Lack of resources.
• Teachers who teach in rural areas
• Lack of support from administration.
• What is considered to be effective professional development?
Challenge #6 – Literacy Coaching

The lack of training on how to integrate literacy skills into their subject area presents a challenge for many teachers (Binkley, Keiser, & Strahan, 2011).

Literacy coaching has the potential to be a critical link between the requirements of the CCSS and increased student achievement, as it has a positive effect on teacher change and consideration as a promising form of PD.
Challenges...

- Many literacy coaches work with teachers in various departments.
- Structural layout of most middle and high schools promotes teacher isolation with little opportunity for collaboration between teachers, a critical component of successful coaching.
- Working with a literacy coach also requires an openness to collaborate, as well as a willingness to implement instructional changes, difficult for some teachers to do.
• Many coaches believe they can have a positive effect on classroom instruction but building trusting relationships with teachers, can be challenging.
• Adding a coach to teaching schedules can add to teachers’ stress, not eliminate it.
• How literacy coaching aligns itself to a middle school philosophy?
Some concluding thoughts to reflect upon…

• Approximately 50% of fourth and eighth grade students nationally do not meet reading proficiency standards.

• Many content area teachers perceive themselves as content experts and their role in the classroom is to teach the content not reading. *Who will teach students how to read proficiently?*

• Many teachers may hold the belief that they are ill-prepared to implement literacy skills in their specific discipline because they have never been adequately prepared to do so and have not been provided with the support and guidance they need.

*Never forget everyone is grateful for the outstanding job you’re doing!*
Addressing this crisis is a challenge.
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References


