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Communication Across the Silos and Borders: The Culture of Reading in a Community College

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As part of a study (Armstrong, Stahl, & Kantner, 2015a, 2015b, 2016) of curricular alignment between developmental reading (DR) and introductory-level general education (GE) at one community college, we asked faculty participants about the DR coursework at their own institution. Throughout data analysis, we became interested in how non-DR faculty understood reading at the college level, and especially what a major role lack of communication seemed to play in these understandings. We identified five major themes in the faculty responses: reading comprehension, vocabulary instruction, emphasis on writing, study skills instruction, and disciplinary literacy instruction. In this article, we detail each theme through exemplar responses coded in this category, a discussion, and recommendations for professionals within the DR (and surrounding) fields striving to build bridges to others on campus. Our intention is to initiate a conversation related to the issue of communication between DR and other higher education professionals, as we see value in DR faculty having this insight regarding how others on campus view their work.

KEYWORDS *community college, developmental reading, literacy*

Recent education reform efforts, driven in part by the early conversations surrounding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the more recent reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), have sparked renewed attention on clarifying what is considered college and career ready. This has led

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to a flurry of definitions of what constitutes "college ready" (e.g., Conforti, 2013; Conley, 2012; Mishkind, 2014). Much attention within these conversations has focused on developmental education coursework, as increasing numbers of first-year college students—particularly in community colleges—are being placed into one or more developmental courses prior to beginning their college-level courses (Boatman & Long, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Quint, Jaggars, Byndloss, & Magazinnik, 2013).

Unfortunately, with minimal or no input from the practitioners and scholars in the field, more and more states are implementing policy pertaining to developmental education that is abandoning, minimizing, relocating, or accelerating this instruction (e.g., NEA, 2014), including our area of focus: developmental reading instruction (Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). Given that it will be at least a decade before students who have had full benefit of the CCSS curriculum in their K-12 experiences will enter either the workforce or higher education (Holschuh, 2014), draconian reductions in literacy instruction at the college level are premature at best.

Of course, this does not suggest that there is not work to be done with postsecondary developmental reading (and the authors of this article maintain that there is much reform needed in the way reading instruction is offered at the college level). Even so, one must understand that the literacy transition—a transition to the academic literacy practices and expectations of higher education—is indeed one of the most significant and challenging transitions to be faced by beginning college students today. In order to facilitate these literacy transitions effectively, postsecondary (and secondary) professionals must first understand what constitutes college ready for text. Such an understanding requires dialogue with content-area faculty—an activity that rarely occurs.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF POSTSECONDARY DEVELOPMENTAL READING

It is unfortunate that reading instruction is not an explicit focus of college curriculum-development and implementation across the disciplines, and, as a result, is a marginalized area of postsecondary education in general. Just as scholars such as Alexander (2005) and T. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) have noted, literacy is widely assumed to be a finite skillset fully developed in the pre-college education levels (see also Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). However, as these same scholars have demonstrated, literacy development is, in fact, a lifelong endeavor. And, we would argue that, at least as it pertains to academic literacies, the most varied and sophisticated expectations are present at the college level. Indeed, there is minimal argument within postsecondary circles that reading is fundamental to the mastery of disciplinary and career knowledge and competency, as well as foundational in promoting positive academic and career-oriented dispositions.

The reform of developmental education programs, including minimizing any shred of dedicated reading instruction that some students will ever encounter in college, is becoming more and more common (see Goudas & Boylan, 2012, for instance). And, in general, for policymakers and legislators, higher education

professionals, and even students, any argument of a lifelong literacy perspective (Alexander, 2005) seems to be, unfortunately, unpersuasive. Thus, we argue that communication becomes absolutely critical in articulating the very real need for continued, context-specific, and evidence-driven literacy instruction at the college level. Just *how* to initiate and conduct such conversations on a local level deserves some consideration, though, as Emerson has famously noted: "If I know your sect, I anticipate your argument." In this situation, "reading" the motivations, rationales, and justifications held by those outside of the field is of utmost importance as we, as literacy professionals, frame our arguments and begin to have meaningful dialogue that advocates for students as they navigate the college literacy transition. This article attempts to initiate such a conversation by exploring how postsecondary developmental reading is perceived by faculty in other content field areas of the community college.

BACKGROUND ON THE STUDY

As part of a study (Armstrong, Stahl, & Kantner, 2015a, 2015b, 2016)—an audit of curricular alignment between developmental reading (DR) and introductory-level general education (GE) at one community college—we asked faculty participants about the DR coursework at their own institution.

The study was undertaken at Southside Community College (SCC), a large college situated outside a major Midwestern metropolitan area that serves more than 35,000 students. The research team consisted of two external university researchers who were enlisted to assist SCC in determining the implicit definition of college text-ready at that institution. The study was driven by the following overarching questions:

(1) What are the text-expectations, including text types, tasks, and goals?
   - In developmental reading (DR) courses?
   - In general education (GE) courses?
(2) How do these text-expectations align?
(3) What constitutes college-level text-readiness at Southside Community College (SCC)?

Although the purpose of this article is not to provide a detailed report of procedures or a full discussion of all the study findings, an overview of the data collection and analysis approaches used is needed to provide an overall sense of the procedures (for a full description of the methodology see Armstrong et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

This study took place over the course of two years, and entailed a systematic protocol consisting of three foci. First, we focused on GE courses and aimed toward understanding the implicit or explicit local definition of college text-readiness by surveying, interviewing, and holding focus groups with faculty members across the college who teach introductory-level GE courses. In addition, we gathered course materials from representative courses (e.g., course texts, syllabi, lecture notes, instructor PowerPoints), and observed targeted class sessions

to gather data on in-class text usage, textbook-reading strategy instruction, and discipline-specific literacy instruction.

Simultaneously, we employed the same data-gathering protocol with a second focus on the DR courses at SCC. Here, too, we gathered data from faculty members teaching various levels and types of precollege-level reading and literacy courses, course and program-level curricular materials, and classroom observations.

The third focus was on the voices of students. Through an online survey, interviews, and focus groups, we gathered data on student perceptions of institutional literacy expectations, college text-readiness needs, current developmental reading preparation, and specific gaps in their own literacy transitions.

While analyzing data, we noted a trend that was beyond the scope of our research questions. In short, we became interested in how different GE faculty understood reading instruction at the college level, how these understandings were aligned or misaligned with our own understandings as experts in the field, and how these understandings are significant and potentially problematic given current reform and redesign efforts. We began to recognize these issues arising in the data, especially from the online faculty surveys.

For the survey portion of the project, a Survey Monkey link was emailed to all full-time faculty members at SCC (approximately 211, at the time). A total of 130 full-time instructors representing at least 16 different departments and numerous disciplines and program areas (primarily general education ones) responded to the survey, indicating about a 62% response rate. Of the 130 respondents, 122 responded to a question about the number of years teaching at the college level. Their answers ranged widely, from 1 to 42 years. In terms of 10-year increments, the majority (44%, or 54/122) indicated 11–20 years of college teaching experience. The next largest number of respondents (34%, or 41/122) indicated 1–10 years of college teaching. Only 21/122 (or 17%) indicated having taught from 21 to 30 years at the college level. Finally, 6/122 (5%) responded that they have taught at the college level for 31 or more years.

Our intention with this article is to initiate a conversation related to this one issue of communication between DR and other higher education professionals, as we see value in DR faculty having this insight regarding how others on campus view their work. Thus, extensive coverage of the study itself, including what might be called the ‘culture’ of reading at the community college level, is provided elsewhere (Armstrong et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

Overview of the Data Context

Faculty members from across 16 different departments were asked the following question in an open-ended online survey: “How can the faculty who teach Developmental Reading better prepare students for your classes?” Their responses ranged from an indication of inability to answer the question, to very general responses about their desire for students to enter their classes college text-ready, to much more specific responses that identified particular needs for instructional improvement of the DR courses. Other responses indicated that reading was not a major concern or specified other problem areas, including general student-

success issues (i.e., time-management, good attendance, coming to class with the necessary supplies, etc.). Because these items were identified as being outside the primary instructional scope of the DR coursework at the institution, they were not included in the analysis. For the remaining data, qualitative methods, including open and axial coding procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 2007), allowed us to identify five major themes: reading comprehension, vocabulary instruction, emphasis on writing, study skills instruction, and disciplinary literacy instruction.

THEMES

Employing each of these five themes as headings, we will provide a brief summary of the responses coded in each category, including several exemplar responses. The summary of responses for each theme will be followed by a discussion, and then by recommendations for professionals within the DR (and surrounding) fields striving to build bridges to various academic communities on campus. This presentation style provides a fuller discussion on each of these themes. Because our goal in this article is to provide general insights and initiate a conversation, and not to report on the particulars of a study, we will naturally draw from our own experiences and our field's literature base in these discussions, as well as draw insights from other data gathered in that study.

Reading Comprehension

Summary of Responses

Numerous responses called for "reading for understanding" and "[students] understanding what they read." Some of these responses further called for very specific comprehension activities to be included in the DR courses, including reading actively, summarizing, synthesizing, applying what is read, thinking critically, and retrieving main ideas. A representative sample of faculty responses includes the following:

- "Students need to better understand how to read actively."
- "The faculty can teach them how to read for understanding, not just skimming the information."
- "Students need to receive a further emphasis on the importance of reading so that they fully comprehend the material that is presented. Merely skimming pages without absorbing the content does not constitute college reading."
- "From what I can tell from my observations around the department and from listening to students, the DR faculty could better prepare students by HAVING THEM READ!"
- "Giving students the tools they need to read well and comprehend what they read."

The emphasis on reading for understanding emerged as a clear pattern that led us to code responses as related to reading comprehension.

Discussion

Across the responses we coded as "reading comprehension," we identified a range in terms of what college faculty members expect of students with regard to reading comprehension. And, there was an equally wide range of students' actual literacy readiness levels reported. These are, in a sense, two parallel tracks that don't intersect, which leads to a form of instructional dissonance in the manner by which faculty respond to the literacy needs of students.

One question that comes to mind immediately when considering this call for increased emphasis on reading comprehension in DR courses is what do these faculty mean by "reading for understanding or comprehension"? What we recognized throughout the responses in this category is a disconnect between what faculty say their students are ready for versus what faculty expect. Specifically, we noted an underlying assumption that students are coming in "college-text-ready-lite," whereas faculty are expecting "college-text-ready-supercharged." Could this be, in part, based on faculty memories of their own college experience that have been aggrandized across the years of their growth in their respective disciplines?

These content faculty offered no evidence that they had any particular definition of reading comprehension in mind; however, their expectations of students' reading comprehension levels seemed reflective of more complex, sophisticated understandings of reading comprehension. Indeed, one expert definition of "reading comprehension" that came to mind immediately is one that can be found in the RAND report, where reading comprehension is defined as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow, 2002, p. 11).

By contrast, and at the opposite end of a potential continuum of understandings of "reading comprehension," is a more narrow definition of comprehension that focuses on discrete basic skills like the definition at the heart of the simple view of reading, which emphasizes "an outcome of development in two basic areas: decoding skills and listening comprehension" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 55). According to the simple view, as just one example of such a definition, "growth in reading comprehension is explained primarily by increases in the automaticity of decoding accompanied by increases in general cognitive and language abilities" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 55).

Such a complex and process-driven conceptualization of reading comprehension as the Snow (2002) definition, in our experience, has not likely been explicitly driving the practice of most DR programming over the years. Rather, programs may have been implicitly adopting the narrower, less complex, and more skills-based conception of reading comprehension as indicated by the simple view that plays out in practice in a skill-drill approach. Given that a majority of DR faculty receive their training in reading within K-12 certification or reading specialist programs, (or served in secondary school remedial reading programs) (Stahl, Brozo, & Gordon, 1984; see Paulson & Barry, 2012a, 2012b, for more information on the licenses and certifications held by DR instructors) it makes sense that they may be adopting a perspective based more on a hierarchically ordered skills pedagogy that draws from a clinical model that tends to privilege workbook-driven curricula. These findings are consistent with Martha Maxwell's

past commentary that "Many [developmental] teachers seem to believe that their goal is to focus on basic [reading] skills" (Maxwell, 1997, p. 11). Unfortunately, mastering these types of basic skills alone often does not prepare students for college-level literacy expectations (Richardson, Fisk, & Okun, 1983).

Because explicit definitions of reading were not gathered in the research, it cannot be determined whether contradictory or opposing definitions are truly at play; however, given the information provided, responses seemed to suggest that the content-area faculty had in mind one view of reading comprehension that may not have been aligned with the driving definition, at least from their perspective, of the DR courses. What was immediately interesting to us is that an underlying definition of reading comprehension that we find to be more in line with our own as literacy scholars was being presented (however, implicitly and certainly not using literacy terms) by the content-area faculty. What these faculty seemed to be suggesting about the instructional focus of DR (which could provide an indication of the also-implicit DR faculty definition) was quite far-removed from our own understandings, though.

In short, what begins to emerge is a continuum of implicit definitions or conceptualizations of reading comprehension that may warrant further dissection. And such an exploration is important because, as Jackson (2009) has noted, "How reading and writing practices are viewed impact how they are taught. If they are seen as a set of discrete skills and subskills, then a diagnostic approach is taken, where certain skills are targeted" (p. 167). And, of course, the standardized testing model of assessment driven by state policy and local practice has further encouraged this. The reality is that, although the DR faculty may have philosophically accepted the construct of college and career readiness, what they enact in the classroom may be more closely related to a traditional, skills-based approach with limited forays into blind training in the presentation of prototypic reading and learning strategies. For instance, what we learned elsewhere in the study is that even when DR faculty assigned a book-length reading assignment, which tended to be a traditional narrative source, as often found in high school English departments, the associated comprehension checks still tended to be discrete-skill activities.

Recommendations

Our analysis, and subsequent discussion, of the category of responses coded as "reading comprehension" has implications for DR on multiple levels, and here we are able to present an overriding recommendation based on the extant literature on reading comprehension and college reading.

If Maxwell's (1997) concerns about the over-emphasis on decontextualized "basic skills" instruction are representative of the field's standard approach to teaching reading at the college level (and all indications are that it is), then it prompts us to think twice about the GE faculty's calls for a greater emphasis on reading comprehension. And, such calls to move beyond basic skills instruction based on a simplistic understanding of reading comprehension have certainly come from within the field (Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004; Stahl, Simpson, & Hayes, 1992). In addition, others have offered anti-skill/drill sentiments, such as

Lesley's (2001) comment that "If 'remedial' students are to survive in the world of the academy, they cannot do so through lower level drill practice. They must learn to read analytically, beginning with their own circumstances of tracking, social stratification, and marginalization" (p. 189).

What we in the field know—and have known for some time—is that strictly discrete-skills approaches to DR instruction are counterproductive, if not detrimental. Furthermore, considering the calls for additional emphasis on reading for understanding by faculty of next-level courses, one specific recommendation is for DR programs and faculty to develop curriculum that is driven by an explicit, research-based definition of reading comprehension, and that is locally informed with input on actual reading expectations in GE courses. Only when programs, curricula, and learning outcomes are built upon such key definitions can we ensure that we are having meaningful conversations with those outside of our areas. And, only with a clear understanding of reading demands and expectations at the local level (i.e., through the use of curriculum audits or reality checks) can we, in DR, be certain that we are appropriately preparing students for next-level literacy demands (Armstrong et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Simpson, 1993, 1996). Thus, we echo Simpson's (1996) argument that DR instructors must know what types of tasks students will be faced with in their other courses (p. 102). In order to become informed, Simpson (1996) suggests "reality checks." Some specific strategies Simpson provided include the following: observe a content area course, interview professors of content area courses, gather syllabi from these courses, gather information from faculty via surveys (Simpson's Academic Literacy Questionnaire), ask students to interview their professors, and interview former students. In short, DR instructors and curriculum designers need to make informed decisions about what to teach (and how) based on what students are being asked to do in their next-level courses. Indeed, it was that very premise that was at the very center of this entire study.

Vocabulary Instruction

Summary of Responses

Regardless of faculty members' academic disciplines, there was evidence that all had strong beliefs on the importance of students possessing a college-level vocabulary. As well, faculty had strong viewpoints regarding the manner in which DR classes approached vocabulary instruction, as is represented in these few sample responses:

- "If they could do more worksheets related to the reading where the student needs to remember vocabulary—that would be helpful."
- "Teach students to learn words by looking at the root of the words to find its meaning."
- "Less emphasis on strategies and vocabulary without enough context and quantity of reading."
- "Stop asking them to memorize things like vocabulary."

- "The reading program here consists of memorizing vocabulary, which is not learning how to read better."
- "Learning the health care related words is a challenge, and those who have a small vocabulary to begin with really struggle. Teach students to learn words by looking at the root of the words to find its meaning."

This interest in the importance of college-ready vocabulary led us to create a coding category called vocabulary instruction.

Discussion

The college student of the 21st century encounters a vocabulary requirement in any postsecondary institution that will tax the strength of the individual's word hoard developed across the precollege years whether the words were part of the person's funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) or academic learnings from the PK–12 experience. It has been proposed that the new college student, whether an honor student, a regularly matriculated student, or a special admissions candidate, will encounter a vocabulary requirement that crosses three classifications: (a) the language of the academy, (b) the language of the educated, and (c) the languages of the disciplines (Sartain, 1981; Sartain et al., 1982; Stahl et al., 1992).

First, the language of the academy going back to the earliest days of American higher education is comprised of the terminology that permits a college to operate on a daily basis (e.g., *provost, bursar, ombudsperson*) (B. H. Hall, 1856). In all likelihood this language will be new to the freshman and particularly foreign to the first-generation or at-risk student (see Johnson, 1971; see also Brookfield, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996). Next, the language of the educated is the vocabulary used by the faculty as they communicate with one another and with the students (e.g., *monolithic, disingenuous, obfuscate*). Such words are often the glue of college text or lectures. College professors expect that students will have mastered the language of the educated by the time the students reach the hallowed halls of ivy; however, even in an era of college readiness such an expectation for all students is more likely to be a pipedream. Finally, the languages of the disciplines are those technical terms, symbolic materials, among others, that permit members of an academic community to communicate effectively and precisely via the specialized language styles in the discipline so as to discuss key principles, theories, generalizations, and complex concepts (Sartain, 1981; Sartain et al., 1982; Stahl et al., 1992). For students to be successful in the academic community, they must understand that simple memorization of words from any of the three classifications at the definitional level will leave them wanting as the key to mastery and entry into the academic community is to develop full conceptual understanding (see also Francis & Simpson, 2009; Willingham & Price, 2009). And, this seems to be the underlying message across all of the responses in this theme category: move beyond simple memorization of words.

Recommendations

In considering the instructional program that will lead students to effectively master terms from each of the classifications previously described, we continue to be influenced by the seminal work of Steven Stahl (1985, 1998) and actualized for college reading instruction by Nist-Olejnik and Simpson (1993). Stahl's theoretical proposal is that students should receive vocabulary instruction that focuses on both the additive dimension and the generative dimension. Additive instruction in this approach promotes word study through the power of the meaningful context of naturally accruing text rather than the age-old approach of instructor-selected vocabulary lists, traditional supplemental skills-oriented workbooks, college reading workbooks, and Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW)-oriented workbooks. In this more naturalistic additive approach, students encounter unknown vocabulary terms from college publications (language of the academy), lengthy essays and book chapters (language of the educated), and content field chapters, texts, or journal articles (languages of the disciplines). Thus, our first recommendation is that DR courses adopt a theoretically sound approach to vocabulary instruction that is aligned with the extant research specific to college learners.

Students are expected to select unknown or partially mastered vocabulary terms for self-mastery through time-honored approaches such as the self-collection strategy (Haggard, 1986) or Johnson O'Connor's frontier system (Pauk, 1974; Sand, 1994) for advanced general vocabulary or the concept cards approach (Simpson, Nist, & Kirby, 1987) for technical terms. Using such devices that promote deep learning of words transitions the instructor to easily adopt a generative approach in which students do not focus directly on individual word mastery but rather they learn how to independently unlock and master the meaning(s) of words in any situation they might find themselves in, whether that be in the academy, the workplace, or at one's child's homework table. Generative strategies would include informed use of various dictionaries (traditional, technical or specialty, online), employing structural analysis (prefixes, roots, suffixes) to unlock multiple words, and deciphering and then using context clues among others. Thus, our second recommendation related to vocabulary instruction is that an approach that values both additive and generative instructional approaches be implemented (Francis & Simpson, 2009; Stahl et al., 1992).

Regardless of the course or program structure that provides vocabulary instruction, the key is to lead students to develop an understanding and valuing that learning vocabulary is a lifelong endeavor and part and parcel to the process of learning. More so in this era of learning communities and IRW classes, the nature of vocabulary instruction should seamlessly bridge the ill-conceived borders of receptive language (reading, listening, viewing) and expressive language (writing, speaking) so as to build upon the full power of cognitive processing. Furthermore, students developing competency with the generative approach will more likely integrate these competencies into a strategic approach to mastering content in college classes (Simpson et al., 2004).

Emphasis on Writing

Summary of Responses

Because this curriculum audit investigated reading, writing was not an explicit focus; however, it is worthy of note that multiple calls for more and better writing instruction were requested for the DR courses. Specific calls to "Collaborate more actively with the Writing faculty" and "ask them to WRITE" (all-caps included in the response) were among some of these requests. The exemplar comments also included the following:

- "Assignments should not be done in abbreviations. Texting on a phone is one thing, but do not do it on my tests or assignments."
- "Help students find their voice as writers so that they can recognize the voice of the authors they read."
- "More challenging texts and WRITING!"
- "When assessing, do not give them multiple choice or T/F assessments. Instead, ask them to WRITE."

We found it interesting that even with the explicit study focus on reading so many faculty chose to make comments on writing. However, it is an area in need of additional dialogue within the larger fields of developmental education and learning assistance, particularly with the current reemergence of integrated reading and writing (IRW) as a pedagogical structure and approach; thus, we include it here.

Discussion

One reason we found these writing-focused comments so interesting is that it suggested to us that faculty in the GE areas may be unaware of the disciplinary silos that traditionally and still exist between reading and writing instruction at the college level (Jackson, 2009). Or, perhaps they find the disciplinary divides unimportant as it pertains to their students' academic literacy (that is, both reading and writing) competency. The integration of reading and writing is, of course, not a new concept (see for instance Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Jackson, 2009; Pugh & Pawan, 1991; Valeri-Gold & Deming, 2000), despite its current position as a "rediscovered practice" (Paulson, 2013; Saxon, Martirosyan, & Vick, 2016); yet, the associated fields, by and large, continue to treat the two as separate and disconnected.

Recommendations

Our analysis of the category of responses coded as "writing" leads us to a larger conversation currently being undertaken in the field. In short, reading and writing, when viewed as interrelated communication processes (Rosenblatt, 2013), have great potential to be taught together. Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986) present a curriculum and pedagogy for such an integration at the postsecondary level, and this has been replicated many times since (see, for instance, Goen &

Gillotte-Tropp, 2003; Goen-Salter, 2008). Unfortunately, however, until recently integrated reading and writing (IRW) models have not been prevalent in developmental education programming, particularly at the community college level. Of course, some developmental reading instruction recognized the need and followed instructional models such as those proposed by Stahl, Simpson, and Hayes (1992) that note the importance of writing about reading assignments: "In a sense, writing about reading assignments turns the reading process inside out, exposing readers to the inescapable constructivist activity of creating meaning in and from words" (p. 8). However, the majority of programs maintain separate space in colleges, equally so when housed within centralized developmental education departments; these are disciplinary, political silos, not geographical ones. Thus, our recommendation is for institutions to initiate a conversation across these areas to explore possibilities and establish common ground and goals for helping students transition to academic literacy practices of higher education.

Currently, the IRW model is reemerging in the field, though there are those who seem to think it is a new approach. Although it is primarily being touted as an acceleration model (see, for instance, Edgecombe, Jaggars, Xu, & Barragan, 2014; Hern, 2011, 2012), there are other benefits in terms of working toward a more collaborative model that bridges the disciplinary divide between literacy and English. Also, providing more meaningful instruction on language processes specific to academic contexts—that is, addressing the cognitive aspects of both reading and writing, and, perhaps even extending that to speech—could certainly address the general education faculty concerns for better preparing students for the literacy demands across the disciplines related both to reading *and* writing.

Study Skills Instruction

Summary of Responses

Just as respondents provided recommendations on comprehension and vocabulary instruction, they also offered suggestions on study skills/strategies instruction. These included calls for additional instruction on specific strategy instruction, such as note taking, listening, and study skills, as the following responses illustrate:

- "How to listen, how to take notes, how to find main ideas, how to overcome the fear to ask questions."
- "Teach them to use publisher learning objectives and textbook websites. Have them work on integrating the book and lecture notes. How to read a textbook for test questions, not as a story."
- "Link the course to study skills preparation."
- "By blending reading comprehension, vocabulary, and study skills together in meaningful lessons…."
- "Students need effective study skills. Reading your notes or the textbook is not an effective or the only way to prepare for an exam. Students also need to know what active listening is and that should include taking notes."

- "Please explain that most colleges do not supply 'Study guides' or give the students a listing of the questions before the exam. They are expected to study all topics presented during lecture and lab and be able to interpret/apply all of them."

It should be noted that our interest in this investigation was in DR, and at the institution that was the site for the investigation, DR is separated from the college success programming. However, academic courses offered in both areas include study skills training in their course descriptions and syllabi objectives, so we did include this topic in our data analysis.

The DR model we observed at the focal site tended to employ either a decontextualized blind training model (Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981) or a content-field simulation model (e.g., Armstrong & Reynolds, 2011; Stahl, King, & Henk, 1991). However, it is of interest that one of the respondents from a content field suggested that study strategy instruction should be in a contextualized setting such that learning strategy courses were linked with disciplinary courses. Although contextualized programming has existed for nearly a century now and fused/adjunct/paired classes have been well-known approaches in promoting transfer of learning strategies for over four decades (Hodges & Agee, 2009; Stahl & Armstrong, 2016) such an approach was not in practice at this college.

If there was a recommended focus for training it was in the area of notetaking. Instructors felt that many students either would not or did not read the assigned texts. Interestingly, a number of students reported that there was little reason to procure a textbook that was not needed to learn the primary content of the course because the instructors regularly provided content workarounds (see NCEE, 2013) for presenting the information necessary for mastery. Given these two findings, we can understand why the competency with notetaking was being emphasized. It was clear from the class observations, the survey data, and the focus group responses that the class lecture had become a workaround. Instructors wanted students to be prepared to take notes, actively listen to lectures, take notes in a critical manner, ask questions for clarification in class, and process notes as part of studying. In only one case did an instructor suggest that students should be able to integrate notes from assigned texts with class lecture notes.

Discussion

It was clear that the faculty members who participated in the research expected that the students who were enrolled in their classes should be independent, self-regulated learners able to study and master the course content. However, none of them responded in any manner that would suggest they felt any responsibility to teach students how to be effective learners of disciplinary knowledge.

The content area instructors at this college tended to reflect the same set of traditional values and reflective practices that have been found across eras, locales, and academic levels when it comes to incorporating content field literacy practices in their courses and in training students to approach course content and assignments with strategic and tactical processes (L. A. Hall, 2005; O'Brien, Stewart, &

Moje, 1995). Thus, it is not a surprise that developmental educators and college student success course instructors are tasked with the role for at least the time being until all students arrive from the feeder schools with the expected knowledge, competencies, and attitudes.

Recommendations

The instructors did not suggest that students be able to approach text and/or learning demands in a strategic manner. Rather they suggested that developmental educators teach and students master time-honored prototypic, generic study methods that might or might not require learners to first engage the task in a strategic manner. Indeed, since it is well known that teachers' instructional approaches are greatly influenced by their own historical experiences along the educational path, the recommended techniques may very well have been the ones they used successfully or less so during their secondary school or undergraduate days. We would hypothesize that the vast majority of the instructors never encountered the theories, research, or practices associated with strategic approaches to learning in their academic training (undergraduate or graduate) or in their professional development activities (Cross, 1990; Shulman, 1987). Hence, the nature of the responses are not altogether unexpected.

At least in the most explicit sense the instructors did not articulate or demonstrate an understanding or an advocating of strategic learning with its direct link to cognitive, metacognitive, and self-regulatory processes. This begs the question of whether we can/should expect postsecondary content field specialists to design course curriculum and instructional approaches that promote these processes via the inclusion of appropriate content delivery mechanisms and assignments that require students to undertake strategic actions such as selecting, summarizing, organizing, elaborating, monitoring, self-testing, reflecting, or evaluating so as to achieve and operationalize deeper levels of processing as opposed to surface-level processing that is often the end product of a student's own best approach or a time-honored, generic technique.

Given this perspective, there is a greater need for college reading and learning strategy specialists, as well as instructors in student success courses that incorporate study strategy training, to be fully cognizant of the learning demands in content courses and the processes necessary to lead students to be strategic learners. Care must be taken that instruction not be of a blind training approach where students simply hear/read instructor/author recommendations followed by short duration practice with the prototypic generic study technique of the week as opposed to research-based training via direct instruction (i.e., modeling, practicing, evaluating, and reinforcing) of the same intensity and time in practice as observed in the impactful training studies that have been reported in peer-reviewed journals (Simpson & Nist, 2000). Without the latter approach, the training is unlikely to promote transfer nor lead to the students' incorporation of sophisticated and strategic approaches to learning contexts.

Hence, the fundamental outcome of training with the strategic process and students' evolvement as strategic learners is the transfer of such knowledge, competencies, and attitudes to a range of learning environments in college and

then to the learning requirements for a productive career and life. The mastery, the internal incorporation, and then the transfer of a sophisticated capability with the strategic process comes with the student independently crossing a threshold that separates an initial stage of comfort with cognitive and metacognitive processes with a particular learning task to a stage where new strategic actions and requisite tactical substeps are the natural approaches to it.

Content specialists are just that; rarely do they have strong backgrounds in pedagogy. However, most are willing to integrate instructional protocols that promote content mastery. For instance, faculty would likely be willing to have their syllabi extended so as to build in literacy and content supports. Furthermore, we see the opportunity for DR instructors to design and integrate content area reading instructional methods and techniques such as anticipation guides, structured overviews, KWL sequences, etc. into a course's delivery model. We also see opportunities for a learning specialist and a content faculty member to undertake activities that promote the embedding of disciplinary literacy components in a course, whether it is offered face-to-face or online. These activities might eventually take the form of co-designing direct instructional methods and assignments. Furthermore, such support could take the form of developing YouTube videos that address learning strategies targeted at specific courses and even specific units of study within a targeted course. In a sense this becomes a localized version of the Kahn Academy.

Disciplinary Literacy Instruction

Summary of Responses

Although neither the term "content area reading" nor the term "disciplinary literacy" were ever explicitly stated in the responses (for clarification on these two terms, please see T. Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), we recognized aspects of these underlying constructs, which emerged across multiple responses:

- "How different reading is required in mathematics (as opposed to literature, history, etc.)."
- "Use actual examples which are in the field of the student's interest."
- "What developmental reading students read currently (*Newsweek, USA Today*, a novel) in no way prepares them for the kinds of reading they'll need to do in English 101."
- "Please have them read more scholarly texts. Reading the newspaper does not make for a scholarly reader."
- "Provide a bit more 'technical reading' challenges."
- "But are they [developmental reading instructors] asking them…if they're doing reading comprehension, is it just like reading comprehension with a story—like an English story? Or are they also doing reading comprehensions from—and I don't mean really high-level science or anything—but something that's discussing a science situation, or even a mathematical situation or whatever. Because these kids are going to go out from these developmental courses and they're not just going into English; they're going into all these gen ed kinds of areas."

Indeed, although the content field faculty did not mention either philosophical stance (content area reading or disciplinary literacy), they did advocate for content area reading instruction in an overt manner and seemed to key in on the disciplinary approaches and associated praxis in what might be referred to as an emerging manner but certainly not in an explicit manner.

Discussion

Here, it is important to note that the institution under study is found in a state that has fully embraced the Common Core State Standards with its advocacy of the disciplinary literacy construct at the K–12 levels, and the State's community college board is seeking to develop policies and practices to align with the public schools (see Holschuh, 2014, for more on this topic). What, then, can we say about disciplinary literacy and its potential role in the community college particularly as students emerge from the CCSS pipeline at this time and in the years ahead of us?

First, although disciplinary literacy has developed great capital in the K–12 arena, it has yet to catch fire in the content fields of postsecondary education or in developmental reading circles. Nevertheless, the basic foundations of disciplinary literacy, although not necessarily with the current label, have evolved in the postsecondary literacy milieu across much of the past 100 years (e.g., Cole, 1940; Hynd, Holschuh, & Hubbard, 2004; Sartain, 1981; Triggs, 1943).

Secondly, while instructors in a particular discipline may approach the generation of new knowledge as well as the study and the evaluation of the respective field's extant literature base with a set of specific if not unique field-oriented strategies and practices (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2011), this is likely to be practiced in an unconscious, second-nature manner developed over the years having been handed down from one's "master teacher" to the "neophyte/apprentice." Focus group research (e.g., C. Shanahan, Shanahan, & Misischia, 2011) has drawn out deep-level, strategic disciplinary practices from university professors so as to make them visible to all. It is suggested by our work at community colleges that faculty desire students to master rather generic, time-honored, often surface-level reading and study skills (e.g., summarizing, note taking, previewing) in the same manner their predecessors have advocated across the decades. Certainly they have not explicitly recommended disciplinary literacy practices to students enrolled in general education courses. It is worth considering that deep-level, disciplinary literacy practices are not regularly introduced until a student is enrolled in a selected major if not master's degree or while serving in an apprenticed role in a professor's lab or field site where the neophyte undergoes the same time-honored method of "elbow learning" for becoming fully acculturated into the respective field.

Given their positions in the overall college curriculum, traditional DR courses, learning-to-learn courses, student success courses, integrated reading and writing courses, and even freshman composition courses, generally tend to focus on rather generic approaches to academic literacy. Even in contextualized approaches as they have been evolving for ten decades now, the primary strategy

training has been of a generic decontextualized nature where a one-size-fits-all model has ruled the day (Stahl & Armstrong, 2016). This situation has unfortunately lead to a continued practice where market research has had as much or more of an impact on the directions both curriculum and instruction have gone, as has peer-reviewed research (Stahl, Simpson, & Brozo, 1988). Hence, even if the desire of the instructor is to lead students to develop and implement strategic learning practices and then approach the learning act with appropriate and context-driven tactics, students are generally presented with prototypic methods that do not require them to fully analyze the conditional task presented to them through a metacognitive process. Students are simply urged to select one of the prototypic strategies of the day as presented via a blind training protocol from a textbook.

Recommendations

The postsecondary academic environment is composed of numerous entities that operate as independent "siloed" fields/units. Disciplines and fields have, across decades, if not centuries, developed ways of knowing and growing that are often unique and powerful within the academic context (Wineburg, 1991). To learn and then to employ these disciplinary thoughtways are the basic requirements in the age old rite of passage ritual for entry into the respective scholarly realm (Bartholomae, 1985). Given this history, we must believe that college professors would be far more receptive to integrating discipline-specific strategies into their classes than the generic, prototypic, and packaged strategies than have been offered to them across the years by college reading specialists. Here, then, is the promise and the onus of disciplinary literacy.

First, our observation, based on the faculty responses from this study, is that content area instructors do not explicate an understanding of their discipline-bound literate behaviors. In our own practice we have seen, at best, a half-hearted acceptance of traditional content-area methods. In our more recent work with faculties, we have noted that when the constructs of disciplinary literacy are presented, faculty seem to have the aha moment (Hynd-Shanahan, 2013). At that point it is as if the floodgate has been opened. They are no longer being asked to teach reading or learning strategies (generally viewed as remedial activities); rather, they are being asked to introduce the students to their respective thoughtways and greater Zeitgeist…something that they live themselves "24/7/365."

What, then, is the future for college reading and learning strategy instruction? Rather than stand-alone courses taught by literacy generalists, the reform movement in developmental education and the disciplinary literacy movement might join forces to more greatly promote the delivery of discipline-specific paired courses. It is now time to develop such paired courses built upon the tenets of disciplinary literacy. Thus, the model we would propose is that college reading and study strategy programs or learning centers develop one-credit courses such as Disciplinary Literacy in the Sciences, Disciplinary Literacy in the Social Sciences, or even integrated reading and writing course models embedded in a specific discipline area or as a learning community

model that might also include a speech class. Furthermore, consideration must be given as to whether the instructor should possess an academic background in the content field. Of course, a true partnership between the disciplinary and literacy specialists must be the goal and as such nourished and supported by both academic/administrative units.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Throughout this study, faculty commented on a lack of understanding about curriculum and content in areas other than their own. Although, given the siloed nature of higher education, this may not be surprising to some, steps need to be taken on a local level for greater communication across areas. Initiatives lending themselves to this purpose need not be limited to forced meetings across faculty groups, but instead could work toward true border-blurring, particularly between DR and GE, by allowing for authentic collaboration opportunities.

Develop Contextualized Reading Courses

Throughout this study, students and faculty alike called for text selection and literacy instruction that focused on more field-specific texts that would better prepare students for the types of literacy practices they would encounter in their general or career technical education coursework. Given the past and current successes identified in the larger field (e.g., Jenkins, Zeidenberg, & Kienzl, 2009; Perin, 2011; Simpson & Rush, 2003) developmental reading faculty should work collaboratively with content faculty in developing contextualized reading courses (see Holschuh, 2014, for more information on the integration of disciplinary text/content in developmental literacy courses). Along these lines, individual institutions may consider installing a postsecondary reading and writing specialist on the staff of the faculty development office so as to bring academic/disciplinary literacy-oriented reforms across curriculum and instruction. These individuals, in a sense, may serve as contextualization specialists. Such has been done with the Writing Across the Curriculum movement, which begs the question why has higher education privileged one component of the language arts while marginalizing reading, speaking, and listening?

Provide Training for Future Faculty

Institutions should take the lead on preparing the next generation of general education and career technical education instructors, whether as graduate students or new adjunct instructors, to integrate academic/disciplinary oriented instructional components into their respective curricular specializations. Many universities, for example, already house Preparing Future Faculty (or similar) initiatives that would be a logical home for such training. This approach has the potential added benefit of informing the future of higher education reform.

Install an Advisory Council to Guide Communication

Emphases as in Recommendations 1 and 2, on new communication and collaboration channels, will not come easily or without push-back. To ease this process, it may be useful to implement an academic literacy advisory council involving members from various constituency groups who can meet and develop programming to promote communication, partnerships, and curricular and instructional reforms that break down or at least develop pathways between existing silos. Specific goals for the council would be tied first to student success and achievement from a school-wide perspective and only later to the goals of an independent department.

Provide Incentives for Excellence in Communication and Collaboration

Institutions might also nudge such work by offering institutional grant initiatives for collaborative efforts in developing academic/disciplinary curricula and support services that team faculty and learning assistance specialists from across campus. Many institutions offer similar incentives in the form of Multicultural Transformation Institutes or Curriculum Improvement grants, which might serve as models for such a project.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We recommend that programs undertake a careful curriculum alignment audit with attention to the local institutional parameters and culture, as this is a critical first step toward understanding the culture of reading at the local level. However, a broader view needs to also be taken. Although the major focus thus far, as it was in the study itself, was on the institutional, local level, it must be acknowledged that there are global implications of this dearth of communication as well. Here, we focus our attention on the big picture in terms of the broader field of developmental education and its place in higher education.

Expand the Scope of Future Alignment Studies

For this study, we aimed for depth of coverage; however, there is need for breadth of investigation as well. For instance, rather than limiting the scope to the alignment of developmental reading and introductory-level courses, extending the investigation into the second year and beyond would provide much greater insights as to academic literacy needs. Additionally, such studies need to look beyond reading—at writing, math and numeracy, and even critical thinking and oral communication. As well, the participants involved in the alignment should be chosen with a broader lens, and the group should include college success instructors, learning assistance personnel, freshman orientation staff, and even advisors and counselors. In short, even in future research, if the aim is toward a broader understanding of the issues students face in higher education, the silos and the borders need to be pushed.

It is worth highlighting one of the major findings in the study (reported in Armstrong et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2016); namely, curricular alignment between developmental reading and the general education courses at this institution does not exist (see also similar findings in NCEE, 2013; Richardson et al., 1983). What is striking about this finding is what led us to our exploration detailed in this article: the problems raised by faculty tended to focus more on issues of *communication and collaboration* than on our stated focus on *curriculum alignment*. At best this is further damage of the silo effect in higher education; at worst it is evidence of continued marginalization. Either way, the issues raised related to communication must be addressed.

The themes presented in this article, and their associated recommendations, evolved from a situation where there was a general lack of understanding across the institution about the current developmental reading programming, including its purposes, goals, and scope. These themes provide indication that a lack of communication can prevent the type of cross-disciplinary collaboration discussed above. Beyond these themes, we can also learn a great deal about community college literacy practices from the topics that did not emerge in this study. For instance, it is particularly interesting that postsecondary faculty, whether developmental reading specialists or content experts, did not raise issues related to new literacies or digital literacies in terms of their curriculum or instruction. This suggests that there is potentially another misalignment that exists between growing practice in the secondary schools that promote literate behaviors associated with multimodal text navigation and community college courses, which continue to emphasize traditional modes of instruction.

Although a single institutional case study, even as in-depth as was this investigation, should not be the basis of broad-based generalizations, we believe that the recommendations provided in this article should be carefully considered by developmental reading professionals and researchers across the country as each participates in the reform agenda and navigates the murky waters of marginalization.

In closing, for reform efforts to be successful, it is imperative that the recommendations from research and policy centers and foundations be carefully reviewed from the perspective of over a century of theory, research, and practice in the field of postsecondary reading and learning.

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