Apprenticing Adolescent Readers to Academic Literacy

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Throughout the United States, concern is growing among educators about the numbers of students in secondary schools who do not read well. In response, committed and well-meaning educators are increasingly advocating remedial reading courses for struggling adolescent readers. In this article, Cynthia Greenleaf, Ruth Schoenbach, Christine Cziko, and Faye Mueller offer an alternative vision to remedial reading instruction. The authors describe an instructional framework — Reading Apprenticeship — that is based on a socially and cognitively complex conception of literacy, and examine an Academic Literacy course based on this framework. They demonstrate that academically underperforming students participating in the Academic Literacy course gained on average what is normally two years of reading growth within one academic year on a standardized test of reading comprehension. They argue for investing resources and effort into demystifying academic reading for their students through ongoing, collaborative inquiry into reading and texts, while providing students with protected time for reading and access to a variety of attractive texts linked to their curriculum. This approach can move students beyond the “literacy ceiling” to increased understanding, motivation, opportunity, and agency as readers and learners. These findings challenge the current policy push for remedial reading programs for poor readers, and invite further research into what factors create successful reading instruction programs for secondary school students.
Into the Heart of Reading

In a back room off the school library in an urban high school, a boisterous group of ten ninth-grade students talks about their Academic Literacy course. These young people — multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural — come to this high school from the poorest neighborhoods in San Francisco. Like many of the young people we meet in city schools, they are bright, optimistic, and articulate. They are willing to say what they think. It is early December, and these students are frank about their experiences in the course, telling the adult interviewer what they do and do not like. The interviewer asks the students what, if anything, has changed for them as readers since the beginning of the year.

A chorus of voices erupts, each one vying for conversational space. LaKeisha, an African American student, shares her new vision of reading, which reflects the metacognitive inquiry into reading that she has been engaged in since September: “There should be a little voice in your head like the storyteller is saying it. And if it’s not, then you just lookin’ at the words.” Other students agree, echoing one of the mantras of the course: “You read with your mind, not with your mouth.”

Soon after, the students reveal with some degree of puzzlement that they had stopped reading in middle school. They describe, in painful detail, how they have faked “reading” during their silent-reading periods, even at the beginning of their Academic Literacy course this school year. They show the interviewer how long to wait before turning a page to fool the teacher into thinking you are reading. Anyone who has listened to young people brag about such exploits cannot help but be impressed by their strategic intelligence and worried about the colossal waste of energy expended.

Yet, as these students begin to reveal, the Academic Literacy course has generated a profound shift in their relationship to reading. They are reading more than they used to, several students claim. Others say they have learned what they like to read and that this has opened up new worlds of reading for them. Some, like LaKeisha, think they are making better sense of the reading they do by using strategies they have learned while reading together in class. Only Michael leans back in his chair, arms crossed in a parody of disaffection. “Man, she’s tryin’ to be sneaky!” he complains, referring to his teacher, a codesigner of the course. The interviewer turns to this young African American man for elaboration. “Sneaky?” she asks. “Yeah. She wants you to pick a book that you are interested in so you could read it more,” he charges. “That’s like, what hooks you onto reading. She wants you to find a book that you like, but you don’t want to read! She makes you find a book that you like so you have to read it. Because you like it!”

While other students tease Michael, amused at the weak complaint he has just made, Jason, a Filipino American student, turns the topic to something that has changed for him as a reader through the course. In an exchange with the interviewer, Jason shares how the strategic reading of difficult texts
in Academic Literacy has affected his independent reading of his history textbook:

Jason: I understand the book more. I get more stuff out of it than I do [sic] so far because it didn’t make sense to me.
Interviewer: Do you think it was because you were reading something too hard for you, or what?
Jason: No. It was kind of in the middle of easy and hard.
Interviewer: Why does it make sense to you now?
Jason: Because I have learned more stuff, like harder things, like in the RT groups. So, like when you are reading and it doesn’t make sense, like try to restate it in your own words. Make questions so you can understand better. Now I read differently. I read in between the lines. I basically get into the story, get into the heart of it. Like reading deeper into what it is saying.

These voices and those of the many other young people we have worked with in urban schools echo in our ears as we confront the growing concern among educators about how to define and address the problems faced by middle and high school students who struggle to read texts assigned in their courses. Increasingly, we see concerned and well-meaning educators advocate remedial reading courses focused on basic skills for struggling adolescent readers who are, more often than not, the kinds of linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse adolescents we know. These students are often underprepared for the academic tasks they face in high school and, as a result, are underrepresented in institutions of higher education. Too often they have gone through many years of schooling without being encouraged to pay attention to the “storytellers” inside their heads, as LaKeisha described her internal reading voice. These are students we would like to get “hooked onto reading,” as Michael says, but we know that for the vast majority of adolescents who can decode but not comprehend a variety of texts, a return to basic-skills instruction will only further distance them from that goal. Rather, we believe the young people in our urban schools have lacked sufficient help in learning to make sense of texts, to find their way into the heart of reading, which is often hidden from view. We write this article to argue for a powerful alternative to remedial reading instruction for the majority of young people who struggle with the literacy demands of the secondary curriculum.

In this article, we give a brief overview of our program of work in urban public schools that focuses on addressing the literacy learning needs of young people who face increasingly challenging reading tasks as they advance through school. We outline the reasons we believe that remedial, basic-skills instruction is problematic and unnecessarily limiting for the majority of secondary students, and set forth a model that draws on the assets and expertise of both adolescents and subject-area teachers. We describe an instructional framework — Reading Apprenticeship — that foregrounds the
role of social mediation in learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and is based on a socially and cognitively complex conception of literacy.

To support our argument for the power of this instructional framework as an alternative to basic skills remediation, we describe an Academic Literacy course for ninth-grade students as a specific example of Reading Apprenticeship and discuss the results of our study of students’ reading development in the course. As part of this discussion, we carry out a detailed analysis of one student’s reading of an academic text, demonstrating her appropriation of more powerful conceptions of reading, as well as specific mental tools, from her experiences in Academic Literacy. We conclude by stepping back from this detailed picture of student reading development to consider some of the broader implications of this work. The work described in these pages demonstrates a more powerful vision of the complexity of academic reading, the strategic resources and capabilities of young people, and the expertise of teachers than is prevalent in much of the current educational policy and legislation on the problem of low literacy achievement in the United States. We ask readers to consider the implications of this vision for secondary curriculum and instruction, as well as for the professional development of middle and high school subject-area teachers.

Defining the Problem of Adolescent Literacy

For the past several years, a vitriolic ideological battle about how best to teach reading to our nation’s children has been waged in the headlines of the national press, among school board members and in school districts across the country, in the halls of Congress, and around the dinner tables of concerned families. While much has been written about code-based versus meaning-based instruction for beginning reading, there is broad and substantial agreement among literacy researchers that young readers need instruction that skillfully integrates phonics and word-level instruction into meaningful reading activities (see Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Taylor, Anderson, Au, & Raphael, 1999). Nevertheless, a spate of federal and state legislative mandates have focused on systematic phonics instruction and allocated professional development dollars to this approach, with the aim of assuring that American children learn to read independently by grade three (see also Manzo, 1998).

While strengthening early literacy instruction is no doubt a worthy investment, many politicians, educators, and members of the public seem to believe that this investment will pay automatic dividends in accelerated literacy learning, enabling children to make the leap from learning to read to reading to learn and, ultimately, to reading to solve complex and specific problems with ease. When students arrive in middle or high school unable to access the complex texts they encounter there, the assumption is often that early literacy instruction failed. Assumed to be the products of a poor educa-
tional system, these students are increasingly pulled off the academic track and placed in remedial courses where they encounter isolated skills instruction focused on phonics, word attack, vocabulary, and spelling, as well as controlled readers, worksheets, and computer-based skill-building programs (see, for example, studies of secondary reading programs by Barry, 1997). Many of these programs were initially developed to give very structured support for discrete language skills to students with specific language-based learning disabilities and are now being adopted for use with a broader range of students. These programs may serve the populations for whom they were designed quite well. However, our concern is with the over-application of such approaches to the diverse populations of students with whom we are working.

Recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test results indicate that while the vast majority of American youth reach basic literacy levels, as measured by this test, few are gaining the literacy knowledge, skills, and dispositions that would enable them to successfully engage in higher level, problem-solving literacy of the kind required in an information generating and information transforming economy (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999; Mullis et al., 1994). According to the most recent report, The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States (Donahue et al., 1999), while 74 percent of the nation’s eighth graders and 77 percent of twelfth graders perform at or above the basic level of reading achievement, only 33 percent of eighth graders and 40 percent of twelfth graders perform at or above the proficient level, and a mere three percent and six percent, respectively, perform at the advanced level. These reports suggest that attaining particular, higher level uses of literacy is and has been the greater problem facing American students (see, for example, Gee, 1999). In response to a “pervasive neglect of adolescent reading” (International Reading Association, 1999a, p. 1), a resolution on adolescent literacy by the International Reading Association addresses the rights of adolescent readers, calling for homes, communities, and a nation that will not only support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy but also provide the resources necessary for them to succeed (International Reading Association, 1999b; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999). The resolution cites the escalating literacy needs of adolescent readers in an increasingly complex communication age and describes a crisis in adolescent literacy of disturbing magnitude.

Alarm bells have sounded frequently in our country, announcing literacy crises and the grand failure of U.S. schools, the scope of which seemed poised to threaten our very ways of life (see also Gee, 1999; Hourigan, 1994; McQuillan, 1998). Yet, as scholars of literacy argue, definitions of what we mean by literacy, what counts as a demonstration of having attained it, and what groups of students we aim to cultivate as literate have undergone tremendous changes over our brief history, making comparisons between earlier “golden ages” of literacy learning and current levels of accomplishment
difficult, if not impossible (e.g., Graff, 1979, 1987; Hull & Rose, 1989; Myers, 1998; Ohmann, 1987). While we do not adopt the alarmist and historically naive view that we are currently undergoing the latest in a series of “literacy crises,” we remain dissatisfied with counter evidence demonstrating that more of our young people are being educated to higher levels of achievement than at any previous time in our history (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In our view, the recent NAEP results, coupled with the persistent achievement gap between mainstream populations and those who are socioeconomically, ethnically, culturally, or linguistically outside of that mainstream (Gee, 1999; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Snow et al., 1998), provide ample evidence that we are not now, nor have we ever been, doing a good enough job. Because reading habits and literacy achievement make important contributions to individuals’ socioeconomic mobility, access to higher education, and civic participation (Guthrie & Greany, 1991; Guthrie, Schafer, & Hutchinson, 1991), educators bear a special responsibility to help all students achieve high levels of literacy.

However, once students move beyond elementary school and take separate courses with different instructors focused on particular subject areas, it is no one’s job to “teach” reading. As children move up the grade levels, subject-area teachers increasingly view their role as getting across the content of their discipline, be it science, math, literature, or history/social studies, expecting that students will come equipped with the reading skills they need to learn from course materials. Often, teachers are frustrated to see how much difficulty their students encounter with these materials. The conception of reading that is therefore reflected in the organization of schooling and curriculum in the United States is that reading is a kind of technical and basic skill that one acquires once and for all early in the school career. Indeed, a “simple view of reading” (Gough, 1983; Gough & Hillinger, 1980; Gough & Tunmer, 1986) is pervasive in current policy and legislative mandates on early reading instruction.

Many secondary teachers operate with this simple view of reading, assuming that reading comprehension proceeds quite automatically from skill in decoding, and that there is something straightforward and uncomplicated about the process. When students come to middle and high school unable to access the texts they encounter, the assumption teachers often make is that early literacy instruction failed, that these students have weak decoding and word-level skills, and that specialized help is needed from someone who “knows how to teach reading” in a way that helps build basic skills. Students who score poorly on standardized reading tests are identified for such skill-based programs and pulled out of the regular academic curriculum for remediation. When reading is seen as a basic skill and thereby as a prerequisite to reading history or science or literature, it is not seen as in the purview of subject-area teachers. Yet, reading researchers have long recognized both the need to teach comprehension and reading to learn across the curricu-
lum and its pervasive neglect in secondary classrooms (e.g., Pearson, 1996). These researchers lament that secondary subject-area teachers are resistant to teaching reading as part of their content, or, more generously, that these teachers face organizational and curriculum constraints that are powerful deterrents to taking up this work (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Konopak, Wilson, & Readence, 1994; Moje & Wade, 1997).

In addition, a great deal of research has documented persistent inequities in the limited and limiting types of learning opportunities afforded to students who are ethnically or socioeconomically outside of the mainstream. These students receive a higher proportion of isolated basic-skills instruction than their mainstream peers, who are more frequently engaged in higher order thinking processes (e.g., Allington, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Levin, 1997). The abundant documentation of these differential learning opportunities for poor and minority students suggests that isolated skills-based instruction may perpetuate low literacy achievement rather than accelerate literacy growth (e.g., Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Hiebert, 1991; Hull & Rose, 1989; Knapp & Turnbull, 1991).

Because of this history of differential instructional opportunity for poor and minority students, in a recent report, Taylor and colleagues (1999) warn against the potential misuse of research findings and test scores to narrow the curriculum for students from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, Moje, Young, Readance, and Moore (2000) caution against drawing conclusions for adolescent literacy based on research focused on early literacy. To us, these warnings seem timely: due to increased public scrutiny and real concern about the perceived crisis in literacy achievement, many secondary schools and districts are turning to discrete skills-focused commercial programs for reading instruction. In these programs, phonics and word-level instruction figure prominently, despite little evidence that explicit phonics instruction serves students beyond the first and second grades (National Reading Panel, 2000). Even for beginning readers, an extended daily diet of discrete phonics skills has never been recommended by reading researchers (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998; Stahl, 1998). Yet the diverse young people in our urban schools, historically underserved by the educational experiences they have had, seem destined once more to fill the lower ranks of the educational system in programs designed as remedial, skills-focused interventions for struggling readers.

In the urban subject-area classrooms of the San Francisco Bay Area where we have long worked as teachers, teacher educators, and classroom-based researchers, the vast majority of the students we meet are inexperienced, but not beginning readers. They understand the alphabetic principle (that letters can represent sounds) and they can decode the words on the page. However, they often cannot tell us what words on the page add up to, what sense they make. In these urban schools, many students come from socioeconomically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds and do not often share the
language or world experiences reflected in course curricula and texts (Banks, 1995). Perhaps it is no accident, then, that by the time young people reach middle school, their interest in both recreational and academic reading has waned (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

The majority of these inexperienced adolescent readers do not need further instruction in phonics or decoding skills. What many of them do need, however, is the opportunity and instructional support to read many and varied kinds of materials in order to build their experience, fluency, and range as readers (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Stahl, 1998). Many also need guidance and the opportunity to read books of their own choosing in order to develop as independent, lifelong readers. They may also profit from being engaged as pattern-finders in word and sentence study at various levels (rimes, roots and affixes, sentence construction), an approach to word-level skills that can engage their strategic thinking ability and increase their agency as learners (Templeton, Beer, Invernizzi, & Johnston, 1996). However, what virtually all middle and high school students need — those who struggle academically as well as those who have been more successful — is help acquiring and extending the complex comprehension processes that underlie skilled reading in the subject areas.

The Strategic Literacy Initiative in Urban Secondary Schools

In 1995, Cynthia Greenleaf and Ruth Schoenbach, building on their respective backgrounds and prior joint work in literacy research and teaching, curriculum design, and professional development, established a professional development organization and a multifaceted program of work to address what we and our teacher colleagues had begun to call the “literacy ceiling” limiting the academic performance and opportunities of secondary students. Our first effort was to understand the sources of students’ reading difficulties by conducting case studies of the reading histories and reading performances of thirty ninth-grade students. As part of these case studies, we videotaped interviews with students as they read a variety of self-chosen and assigned texts as we inquired into their understandings of these texts, their reading processes, and their reflections on reading tasks. We read research on reading theory and practice and began to surface and articulate our own reading processes as we read a variety of difficult texts as a way to tap into our own tacit reading knowledge.

The understandings and insights gained from our collaborative work with teachers and these case studies of adolescent readers have resulted in a number of ongoing projects. We have designed inquiry materials and approaches for the professional development of secondary subject-area teachers. Using these inquiry approaches, we carry out a broad program of professional development with several ongoing teacher networks. We have developed an instructional framework designed to take advantage of the particular social
and cognitive assets and interests of adolescents in order to help students move beyond their limiting conceptions of and approaches to reading. We have also designed, implemented, and assessed a ninth-grade course in Academic Literacy that embodies this framework in specific curriculum units and activities. Below we present the conception of literacy that underlies this program of work.

Literacy Apprenticeships: Learning Specialized “Ways with Words”

We understand reading and writing to be much more than a collection of basic skills. Rather, reading and writing are essentially social and communicative practices (see also Bruffee, 1984). Each act of reading or writing involves socially developed and culturally embedded ways of using text to serve particular social or cultural purposes (Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000; Gee, 1999; Hourigan, 1994; Lee, 1995; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). All texts are shaped by specific conventions and structures of language, and proficient reading of all texts therefore demands the use of these conventions to navigate layers of meaning (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; New London Group, 1996; Scott, 1993). Additionally, the resources and processes used by proficient readers are influenced by the specific contexts and situations in which reading occurs and the social functions that it serves (e.g., Courts, 1997; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981).

The implications of this view for the literacy learning of diverse populations of students are profound. Increasingly, students in U.S. schools come from a variety of economic, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, bringing significantly different experiences and expectations about how to initiate and sustain conversations, how to interact with teachers and peers, how to identify and solve different types of problems, and how to go about particular reading and writing tasks (e.g., Greenleaf, Hull, & Reilly, 1994; Lee, 1995; Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000). In addition, literacy practices become increasingly specialized throughout the school career, reflecting the broader literate, scientific, or historical conversations that characterize the academic disciplines (e.g., Applebee, 1996; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Grossman, 1990; Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Harste, 1994; Langer, 1995; Langer, Confer, & Sawyer, 1993; Lemke, 1990; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 1991; Wineburg & Wilson, 1990). Academic literacy at higher grade levels therefore requires particular interpretive and communicative competencies, or specialized “ways with words” (Heath, 1983) for skilled participation as a reader or writer (Bartholomae, 1985; Gee, 1996; Hull, 1989; Rose, 1985).

For these reasons, learning to read at early grade levels will not automatically translate into higher level academic literacy. Instead, literacy researchers have argued that for all students to learn to perform high-level, academically linked literacy tasks, teachers will need to make explicit the tacit
reasoning processes, strategies, and discourse rules that shape successful readers’ and writers’ work (e.g., Delpit, 1988, 1995; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Freedman, Flower, Hull, & Hayes, 1995; Gee, 1996, 1999; Hillocks, 1995; Pressley, 1998). Our own work with students from richly different backgrounds has underscored the necessity of not only telling students what to do and providing engaging and authentic opportunities for them to do it, but also painstakingly and explicitly showing them how, building bridges from their cultural knowledge and language experiences to the language and literacy practices valued and measured in school and society.

Helping students master academic literacy practices, however, does not mean a return to isolated skills-based instruction. Rather, ample studies over the past few decades have demonstrated that integrating the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies, text structures, and word-level strategies into compelling sense-making activities with texts increases student reading achievement (Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997; Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley, 1990; Dowhower, 1999; Duffy et al., 1994; Fitzgerald, 1995; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996; Hillocks, 1995; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Pearson, 1996; Pressley et al., 1992; Pressley, 1998; Roehler & Duffy, 1991; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). These researchers argue that for the reading and reasoning processes of the academic disciplines to become part of the repertoires of a broader population of students, teachers need to engage all students in complex academic literacy tasks while at the same time providing the explicit teaching and support necessary for students to perform these tasks successfully (see Pearson, 1996, for a review of this research).

Drawing from both sociocultural studies of learning and cognitive studies of expert and novice performance on a variety of complex mental tasks, some researchers have adopted the metaphor of “cognitive apprenticeship” to describe a type of teaching designed to assist students in acquiring more expert, or proficient, cognitive processes for particular valued tasks, such as reading comprehension, composing, and mathematical problem-solving (e.g., Bayer, 1990; Brown, Collins, & Newman, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lee, 1995; Rogoff, 1990). In an apprenticeship, an expert practitioner or mentor draws on his or her expertise to model, direct, support, and shape the apprentice’s growing repertoire of practice. Apprenticeship also generally involves learning while doing. It is hard to imagine learning to paint without actually working with canvas and brush, or learning to jump hurdles without getting out on the track.

When the desired proficiency is a cognitive practice such as composing or comprehending a text, the invisible mental processes involved in the task must be made visible and available to apprentices as they actually engage in meaningful literacy activities (Freedman et al., 1995; Pearson, 1996). To help students develop as readers and writers, then, teachers must begin to create
“literacy apprenticeships,” engaging students in meaningful and complex literacy practices while *demystifying* these literacy practices (Brown et al., 1989; Lee, 1995; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999).

This conception of literacy apprenticeship also suggests that the best teachers of specific discipline-based literacy practices are those who themselves have mastered these practices. These include the subject-area teachers and academicians who have acquired scientific, historical, mathematical, or literary discourses during their own educational careers. We argue, therefore, that for all students to attain high-level literacy, apprenticeships that demystify the literacy practices and discourses of the academic disciplines must be embedded in subject-area instruction across the curriculum, rather than becoming the sole purview of the English department. For subject-area teachers to embrace this work, they must reconceptualize subject-area teaching as an apprenticeship into discipline-based practices of thinking, talking, reading, and writing (see Applebee, 1996). To assist teachers in constructing this new conception of teaching and, specifically, of reading in the content areas, we have developed an instructional framework, Reading Apprenticeship, derived from the socially and cognitively complex view of literacy and drawing on the core metaphor of cognitive apprenticeship described above.

Reading Apprenticeship: An Instructional Framework

In a Reading Apprenticeship, the teacher serves as a “master” reader of subject-area texts to his or her student apprentices, paralleling the role of more proficient “expert” in descriptions of socially mediated cognitive apprenticeships (e.g., Bayer, 1990; Brown et al., 1989; Lee, 1995). This instruction takes place in the process of teaching subject-area content, rather than as an instructional add-on or additional curriculum. Briefly summarized, Reading Apprenticeship involves teachers and their students as partners in a collaborative inquiry into reading and reading processes as they engage with subject-area texts (see Schoenbach et al., 1999, ch. 2, for a more complete description of the model). This instructional framework explicitly draws on students’ strengths and abilities to provide crucial resources for the inquiry partnership.

The aim of Reading Apprenticeship is to help students become better readers of a variety of texts by making the teacher’s discipline-based reading processes and knowledge visible to students; by making the students’ reading processes and the social contexts, strategies, knowledge, and understandings they bring to the task of making sense of subject-matter texts visible to the teacher and to one another; by helping students gain insight into their own reading processes; and by helping them acquire a repertoire of problem-solving strategies with the varied texts of the academic discipline. In other words, *how* we read and *why* we read in the ways we do become part of the curriculum, accompanying *what* we read in subject-matter classes.
As depicted in Figure 1, Reading Apprenticeship involves teachers in orchestrating and integrating four interacting dimensions of classroom life in order to draw on adolescents’ particular strengths and help them develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions they need to become more powerful readers:

**Social Dimension**
- Creating safety
- Investigating relationships between literacy and power
- Sharing book talk
- Sharing reading processes, problems, and solutions
- Noticing and appropriating others’ ways of reading

**Cognitive Dimension**
- Getting the big picture
- Breaking it down
- Setting reading purposes and adjusting reading processes
- Monitoring comprehension
- Using problem-solving strategies to assist and restore comprehension

**Personal Dimension**
- Developing reader identity
- Developing metacognition
- Developing reader fluency and stamina
- Developing reader confidence and range
- Assessing performance and setting goals

**Knowledge-Building Dimension**
- Mobilizing and building knowledge structures (schemata)
- Developing content or topic knowledge
- Developing knowledge of word construction and vocabulary
- Developing knowledge and use of text and language structures
- Developing discipline- and discourse-specific knowledge

**Figure 1** Dimensions of Classroom Life Supporting Reading Apprenticeship

As depicted in Figure 1, Reading Apprenticeship involves teachers in orchestrating and integrating four interacting dimensions of classroom life in order to draw on adolescents’ particular strengths and help them develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions they need to become more powerful readers:

**Social**: This dimension of community-building in the classroom includes developing a safe environment for students to share their confusion and difficulties with texts and recognizing the diverse perspectives and resources brought by each member (see, e.g., Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000). Together, teacher and students build interest in books and reading, a community of readers, and a culture of reading (e.g., Allen, 1995; Atwell, 1998; Burke, 2000; Wilhelm, 1997).
Work in this dimension draws on adolescents’ interests in larger social, political, economic, and cultural issues through explorations of the relationships between literacy and different types of power in society.

**Personal:** This dimension includes developing and extending students’ identities and self-awareness as readers; their purposes for reading; and their own goals for reading improvement, including increasing reading fluency and comfort with a variety of texts (e.g., Beers & Samuels, 1998; Stahl, 1998). It also includes developing students’ sense of agency in a variety of ways: students are given frequent choices about the books they will read, invited to connect personal experiences to texts, asked to bring in examples of out-of-school texts that matter to them, supported in setting and working toward fluency and other reading goals, given assistance to develop and express preferences for reading materials, and asked to assess how well their reading strategies are serving their own needs as readers. Work in this dimension draws on students’ strategic skills used in out-of-school settings, as well as their interest in exploring new aspects of their own identities (see Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993).

**Cognitive:** The cognitive dimension, frequently the entire focus of reading-comprehension instruction, is only one aspect of life in a Reading Apprenticeship classroom. Work in this dimension includes developing readers’ mental processes, including their repertoire of specific comprehension and problem-solving strategies such as rereading, questioning, paraphrasing or summarizing, and the like (e.g., Beers & Samuels, 1998; Brown, Palincsar, & Armbruster, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1995; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Kucan & Beck, 1997). Importantly, the work of unveiling cognitive strategies that can support reading comprehension is carried out through classroom inquiry (see Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992).

**Knowledge-Building:** This dimension includes identifying and expanding the kinds of knowledge readers bring to a text and then further develop through personal and social interaction with that text, including knowledge about word construction, vocabulary, text structure, genre, and language (e.g., Beck et al., 1997; Berkowitz, 1986; Taylor, 1992; Templeton et al., 1996); knowledge about the topics and content embedded in the text (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Bransford, 1994); and knowledge about the disciplinary conversation or social discourse in which the text is situated (e.g., Gee, 1992; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998).

Demystifying Subject-Area Reading through Metacognitive Conversation

These four interacting areas of classroom life are woven into subject-area teaching through a metacognitive conversation, a conversation about the thinking processes teachers and students are engaged in as they read (see
Flavell, 1976, and Garner, 1994, for a description of metacognition). Teachers and students work collaboratively to make sense of texts, while simultaneously engaging in a conversation about what constitutes reading in specific academic disciplines and how they are going about it. New knowledge, strategies, and dispositions to reading develop in an ongoing conversation in which teacher and students think about and discuss their personal relationships to reading, larger issues of literacy and power, the social environment and resources of the classroom, their cognitive activity, the structure and language of particular types of texts, and the kinds of knowledge required to make sense of reading materials. This metacognitive conversation is carried on both internally, as teacher and students reflect on their own mental processes, and externally, as they share their reading processes, strategies, knowledge resources, motivations, and interactions with and affective responses to texts.

The metacognitive conversation occurs through many means — class discussions between teachers and students, small-group conversations, written private reflections and logs, letters to the teacher or even to characters in books. Such conversations and reflections, if they become routine, offer students ongoing opportunities to consider what they are doing as they read — how they are trying to make sense of texts and how well their strategies and approaches are working for them (Borkowski et al., 1990; Kucan & Beck, 1997). These conversations about reading and reading processes demystify the invisible ways we read and make sense of texts. Through the metacognitive conversation, readers’ knowledge, strategies, and ways of reading particular kinds of texts become an explicit part of the secondary curriculum.

Reading Apprenticeship is at heart a partnership of expertise, drawing both on what subject-area teachers know and do as discipline-based readers and on adolescents’ unique and often underestimated strengths as learners. We have come to see secondary students as young adults with powerful resources that can be tapped in a learning environment that is safe, respectful, and collaborative. Adolescents are frequently strategic and resourceful problem-solvers in their lives outside of the classroom. They are also at a point in their lives when their social identity matters most to them. Precisely at this time in their lives, they can be encouraged to try on new reader identities, to explore and expand their visions of who they are and can become (Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993; Gee, 1996). Despite their veneer of cynicism, the majority of young people we have worked with desire to be part of something larger than themselves and to make the world a better place; this can motivate them to master the “power codes” of our society (Delpit, 1995). Adolescents thus carry with them into the classroom a wealth of proficiencies and dispositions that can be drawn upon to support their reading development. Teachers can work with, rather than against, some of these developmental characteristics by inviting students’ self-awareness, strategic problem-solving,
idealism, knowledge, and experience, and even their confusion, to serve instructional ends.

Designing and Implementing an Academic Literacy Course

Our work with subject-area teachers has demonstrated that these teachers are key resources in supporting adolescents to develop high-level subject-area literacies and that this work can be powerfully and successfully integrated into ongoing subject-area instruction (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 1999; Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2000). In the process of carrying out this professional development work, we were offered the opportunity to develop a course that would provide students with an intensive experience of Reading Apprenticeship. Working collaboratively as teacher/implementers and researcher/support providers, we designed this course for all ninth-grade students in a local urban high school, naming it "Academic Literacy".

Thurgood Marshall Academic High School, a school serving some of the poorest neighborhoods of San Francisco, was established by court decree to provide a college preparatory education for the Latino, African American, and immigrant students who had been historically deprived of such educational opportunities. The school opened in 1994 with many recent high school reforms in place, including block scheduling, family groupings of students with academic core faculty, and project-based, interdisciplinary teaching and learning. However, by the fall of 1995, Marshall’s faculty was expressing increasing concern that students coming into academically rigorous classes were unprepared to read the texts necessary to be successful in these courses. In response to this need, the Academic Literacy course began in the fall of 1996 as a mandatory course for all incoming ninth-graders.

According to school reports, in 1996–1997 the demographic composition of the ninth grade at Thurgood Marshall was roughly 30 percent African American, 25 percent Latino, 24 percent Chinese American, 7 percent Filipino American, 8 percent other non-White students, and 3 percent White students. Approximately 7 percent of the ninth-grade students were classified as special education students eligible for support services, and 14 percent were identified as English-language learners. This entire freshman class was enrolled in twelve sections of Academic Literacy, which met for two 90-minute block periods and one 50-minute period per week. Christine Cziko, the lead teacher of the course, recruited three other teachers to teach Academic Literacy, among them a first-year English teacher and two history teachers.

For Academic Literacy, we designed three units to focus on the role and use of reading in one’s personal, public, and academic worlds: Reading Self and Society, Reading Media, and Reading History. The course had three goals: to increase students’ engagement, fluency, and competency in reading (see Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Guthrie & Alvermann, 1991; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997; Stahl, 1998). The course aimed to increase adolescent students’ sense
of agency and control of their own reading practices (Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993). Throughout the three units, students in the course were invited into an inquiry through a set of essential questions the course was designed to explore: What is reading? and What do successful readers do when they read? Students were to gain a greater metacognitive awareness of their reading and to come to understand their own reading practices and habits by asking themselves questions such as, What kind of reader am I? and What strategies do I use as I read? The course was also designed to increase student motivation for reading by revealing, within the students’ frame of reference, the power of literacy to shape lives. The students explored such questions as, What role does reading serve in people’s personal and public lives? which lead students to a clearer understanding of the role reading will play in their future educational and career goals and help them set goals they can work toward to help themselves develop as readers. Finally, the course had a metadiscourse focus, exploring how texts are designed and conventionally structured through such questions as, What kinds of vocabulary can I expect from different texts? What kinds of sentences are found in different kinds of texts? and What do I need to know to be able to understand these different kinds of texts? Students encountered and revisited these questions through a series of units and activities designed to engage them in ideas, strategies, and practices to demystify discipline-based reading and apprentice them as academic readers.

Within the three units, specific subject-area content provided what we hoped would be compelling learning opportunities as well as sites for integration of reading strategies and practices. In *Reading Self and Society*, students focused on inquiry into the personal and public worlds of reading through guided reflection into their own and others’ reading histories and experiences. While conducting personal inquiries into their own reading, they read narratives from authors such as Malcolm X, Claude Brown, Frederick Douglass, Maxine Hong Kingston, Richard Rodriguez, Emily Dickinson, and others, taking the perspectives of these authors in addressing the question, Why read? They interviewed family and community members about the role reading played in their lives as adults. Simultaneously, they started sustained silent reading (SSR) of self-chosen books, reading in class for twenty minutes of each block period for the school year.

The second unit, *Reading Media*, introduced students to commercials as visual texts similar to the kinds of printed texts they had studied previously. Students explored ideas such as: these and all texts are devised and constructed in particular times and places, and with specific purposes and agendas; all texts selectively include (address) and exclude particular readers or audiences; audiences (readers) negotiate meaning using the design and messages of the text as well as their own knowledge, experience, and responses to these design properties and content; and, texts are fallible sources of information. Students analyzed television commercials and formed adver-
tising production teams to create their own commercials, working with visual
metaphors, visual icons and symbolism, and techniques of persuasion; iden-
tifying and constructing key messages; casting; sketching storyboards; com-
posing and interpreting production notes, and targeting specific audiences.
During this unit, they also watched a documentary film about how and for
what purposes media are created and they read a challenging theoretical es-
say from a college course on media about the role of the media in our under-
standing of experiences in which we cannot participate directly. In order to
make sense of both of these expository pieces, one visual and the other text
based, they began to use their growing understanding of their own reading
processes and the reading strategies that they had learned in the previous
units.

The third unit, Reading History, was designed to help students put their
personal experiences in a historical context by understanding the historical
roots of modern issues of totalitarianism and intergroup hatred and aggres-
sion. In addition, it was designed to help students reconceptualize the disci-
pline of history as an interpretive and contentious enterprise rather than a
burdensome exercise in memorization. Students were assisted in developing
a set of strategies to enable them to learn from a set of subject-area textbooks
and from primary source documents. They built background knowledge
through extensive reading across a variety of topic-relevant texts, including
modern films about historical events. They read analyses of the social, histor-
ical, and psychological precursors and explanations for intergroup hostility
and violence. They viewed historical documentaries about the Armenian
genocide, as well as segments of The Wave and Swing Kids — the former a film
depicting the unintended and horrific outcome of an experiment in in-
group and out-group identity formation among teenagers, and the latter a
film set in Nazi Germany as a group of jazz-loving teenagers comes of age, is
forced to make choices, and begins to take on or resist roles in Germany’s in-
creasingly totalitarian and genocidal society. As a culminating unit, students
assumed the role of historian in an investigative project centered on the Ho-
locaust. Working in groups and with primary- and secondary-source docu-
ments related to a specific event such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or the
evolution of anti-Semitic laws in Germany, students interpreted and analyzed
and finally presented their historical analyses of the event they had investi-
gated.

To help students gain more powerful conceptions of literacy, as well as an
expanded repertoire of problem-solving strategies they could draw on when
facing academic texts, explicit strategy and text instruction was integrated
into these units of study as students worked with texts and engaged in an on-
going inquiry into the essential questions. Key instructional strategies in-
cluded Reciprocal Teaching (RT) and explicit, integrated instruction in self-
monitoring, cognitive strategies, and text analysis that would facilitate read-
ing a variety of materials. Teacher “think-alouds” modeling reading and
problem-solving with texts, as well as student writing and discussion about their own reading processes and confusion, were daily features of the learning environment. Because adolescents are often keenly aware of their confusion but also reluctant to expose it, teachers worked to create a safe environment where “it’s cool to be confused” (Cziko, 1998). It quickly became clear that being able to identify comprehension problems and to stimulate collaborative problem-solving and inquiry using a variety of strategic approaches, rather than having the right answers about texts, was valued in this class.

Academic Literacy teachers engaged students in practicing the component strategies of RT—questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting—as they read a variety of texts and conducted inquiries into reading. Students were also given specific instruction, as well as modeling and thinking aloud opportunities, as they examined the features of different text genres. They learned and practiced techniques for note-taking; paraphrasing; using graphic organizers and mapping to identify text structure and support processing of information in texts; identifying root words, prefixes, and suffixes; and developing semantic networks to increase their command of vocabulary learning strategies. As the need arose with difficult expository texts, students also learned to “chunk” or break down complex sentences, and even words, into understandable bites. The overarching goal of putting students in control of their own engagement in and assessment of these strategies for themselves as readers ran through these instructional routines.

To give students opportunities to develop both fluency and knowledge about themselves as readers, as well as increased motivation for reading, students read books of their choice for sustained silent reading (SSR), drawing from extensive classroom libraries and from community and school book collections. They kept a “metacognitive log” during SSR, in which they wrote about their reading processes using a variety of sentence starters such as, “I was confused by . . .”, “I got stuck when . . .”, “I lost track of time because . . .”, and the like. In addition, students wrote reflective letters to their teachers monthly, describing what they were learning about themselves as readers through SSR. To create a social context for self-chosen reading, students shared their metacognitive log entries with one another, made book recommendations through posters and book talks, and discussed ways of picking good books to read. Through the shared inquiry into reading, students were encouraged to reappraise their current conceptions of literacy, set and accomplish personal goals for reading development, and draw on the social resources of the classroom community in developing new and more powerful reading repertoires.

A Study of the Impact of Academic Literacy on Student Reading

To evaluate the impact of the course on student learning, we collected a variety of data, including both standardized test scores and qualitative data, to
gauge student thinking and learning. Standardized measures included pre- and post-tests of reading proficiency using the Degrees of Reading Power test. Qualitative measures included pre- and post-course reading surveys adapted from Atwell (1998, Appendix E; see Figure 2); students’ written reflections, self-assessments, and course evaluations; focus group interviews; classroom observations; and samples of course work for thirty students selected randomly from the class rosters of two of the Academic Literacy teachers. In addition, we carried out intensive case studies of eight of these thirty students, videotaping interviews with them three times during the year as they carried out their reading assignments for the course.

The eight case-study students were volunteers recruited by their teachers as typical ninth graders who represented the cultural and gender diversity of students in their classes. These students understood that they were not only helping to evaluate the impact of the course on student learning but also assisting in a larger inquiry into adolescent reading, with the goal of helping secondary teachers meet the needs of students like themselves. During each of the three units of the course, we interviewed the case-study students as they read from self-chosen or assigned texts, responded to interview questions, and discussed their reading processes. These interviews were audio- and videotaped. Students read on from where they had left off in class or at home with these texts, reading a copy of the text that had been segmented into four sections. The students read the segmented text in four ways during

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**FIGURE 2  Reading Survey, Adapted from Atwell (1998, Appendix E)**

1. If you had to guess, how many books would you say you owned?
2. How many books would you say are in your house?
3. How many books would you say you’ve read in the last twelve months?
4. How did you learn to read?
5. Why do people read?
6. What does someone have to do in order to be a good reader?
7. Do you consider yourself a good reader? Why or why not?
8. What kinds of books do you like to read?
9. How do you decide which books you’ll read?
10. Have you ever reread a book? If so, can you name it/them here?
11. Do you ever read novels at home for pleasure? If so, how often do you read at home for pleasure?
12. Who are your favorite authors?
13. Do you like to have your teacher read to you? If so, is there anything special you’d like to hear?
14. In general, how do you feel about reading?
the interview: reading aloud, reading silently, being read to, and thinking aloud while reading. After each section of text, the interviewer probed not only into what sense the students were making of the texts, but also how they were doing so.

These reading interviews were designed to provide valuable information as we implemented the course. Interviews with Academic Literacy students could show us the degree to which students were appropriating the reading practices available to them in the instructional setting (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). The interviews were conducted as a kind of dynamic assessment of students’ problem-solving during reading in which it would become apparent what the student was able and unable to understand independently, as well as what type and degree of support the adult in the interview situation provided to assist the case-study student with the reading task. The interviews could thus point to aspects of academic reading tasks and texts, as well as class resources, that helped or hindered students as they engaged in reading, helping us to improve the course even as we taught it.

In addition to these data, we have continued to follow the progress of the original cohort of Academic Literacy students as they have moved up through the grades. During 1997–1998, their tenth-grade year, we interviewed twenty students who had been in Academic Literacy about the impact of the course on their learning and preparation for other courses, about its utility in their lives, and about their lives as readers. We also collected reading surveys and administered the DRP test to the tenth-grade students at the end of the year. These students continued to inform us about the impact of the course through surveys, standardized tests, and interviews as they moved through the school toward their graduation in June 2000.

A Case Study
Rosa was a Latina student in one of Christine Cziko’s Academic Literacy classes. Her first language was Spanish, but she was a fluent English speaker by the time she entered Thurgood Marshall in the ninth grade. Rosa’s parents often attended school functions, asking that meetings be translated into Spanish for themselves and other Spanish-speaking parents. Rosa’s father was actively involved in community work in the Mission District, the largely Latino neighborhood in which they lived. Rosa was typical of the students in the class, in that she was inexperienced as an academic reader and unprepared for the demands of a college preparatory high school program. Reflecting recently on why she had chosen Rosa for case study, as typical of students in her classes, Christine Cziko recalled:

Rosa was interesting to me because she was articulate, sociable, active in the life of the school, but academically a B- or C student. She was also aware of social injustice in the world, perhaps because of her father’s community activism, so she had a broad picture of the world outside of the classroom. When it came to
work with text, though, her ability to negotiate the world in her everyday life was not apparent. She didn’t bring the strategic thinking and competence and engagement that I knew she had in other aspects of her life — her social and community lives in the school and her neighborhood — to academic tasks. She was never hostile; it wasn’t as though she was making a political statement like “I won’t learn from you.” She was cooperative, friendly to teachers, and responded positively to her teachers and to what she thought she was being asked to do. But it was as though she brought only a shadow of herself to the academic aspect of her school life. The real Rosa was much more vibrant, confident, articulate.

In this regard, Rosa was typical of many students at Thurgood Marshall, including the ninth graders Cziko described teaching:

You see this with so many kids. In the hall, in the cafeteria, in their communities, in all these places there are these active, engaged, bright, funny kids. They come into the classroom and they turn into a ghost of themselves, like a shroud just drops over them. Their academic identities are these fragile, ghostly things, not robust in the way their whole person identities are because of so many things — repeated failures, being told what they can and cannot do, being mystified by what is asked of them in school. Then there are the kids who don’t become ghosts — they’re demons. They’re acting out, they’re bringing their most angry selves into the classroom. The source of these seemingly opposite classroom identities may be very much the same.

Rosa’s Reading of History

The reading interview excerpted below was done in March of 1997, after Rosa had been in the Academic Literacy class for six months. The interview we will analyze was the second in a series of reading interviews with Rosa and seven other case-study students, and focused on her reading of a chapter on totalitarianism from a tenth-grade modern world history textbook. The interview questions were designed to assess Rosa’s ability to use the predicting, summarizing, questioning, and clarifying strategies that are components of Reciprocal Teaching (RT); to probe her thinking and reasoning about the text; and to stimulate reflection on her reading experience, on other reading experiences with history texts, and on her development as a reader in Academic Literacy. (See Appendix A for the interview protocol.)

In our analysis of the reading interview, we focus on key literacy practices that Rosa participated in as part of her Academic Literacy class: strategic control of the reading process; metacognition, or knowledge of self as a reader; and metadiscourse, or knowledge of texts and textual practices. In the following transcribed segments of the interview, the interviewer prompts Rosa to carry out particular reading processes and reflect on her reading. In our analysis, we are interested not only in whether Rosa carries out these practices when asked to do so by the interviewer but also whether Rosa carries out these practices without the interviewer’s prompt when her reading suggests
the need to do so. Through this analysis of the reading interview, we consider whether Rosa has appropriated for her own use as a reader the key literacy practices she participated in during the Academic Literacy course. We are also able to trace the impact of these literacy practices on Rosa’s development as a reader of, and participant in, the academic discourse of history.

Metadiscourse: Knowledge about Texts and Reading Practices

The interviewer begins by inviting Rosa to share what she thinks about the history textbook and the kinds of reading she is doing with it in Academic Literacy. Rosa tells the interviewer that her experience reading this particular textbook seems different from her usual textbook experience. When asked to explain, she voices a common student opinion about studying history in school:\[11\]

8  Rosa: A textbook just really, much more, just throws the facts at you, and you’re just
9  like, here are all these facts. And it’s kinda boring. You read all these facts about
10  dead people and what happened and sometimes you wonder, like, “Why am I
11  studying this thing?” You know? Why? But in these books it seems more realistic. I
12  don’t know why.
13  Interviewer: Why is that? What’s the difference?
14  Rosa: I don’t know . . . It’s like, for the um — we’re like talking about hate groups right
15  now. And we watched the movie, The Wave. And it like, it tied in with the book and
16  it kind of made us realize that it can happen again. If you don’t know what happened
17  back then, y’know, it can repeat itself. So this book is more, I don’t know, realistic to
18  me. I understand it more.

The interviewer steps in to clarify what Rosa thinks is different: the text, the reading practices that accompany the text in her Academic Literacy class, or her own interest in the topic:

20  Int.: Well, let me just ask you about that. Is it that the book is different or is it that your
21  talking in class around the book is different? Like, the topic — is it the topic that’s
22  more realistic? Is it the connection you can make to your own life? Or is it
23  something about the way the book is written?

Rosa considers:

24  Rosa: It’s sort of like the way the book is written. It’s not really, I mean, I don’t know.
25  Here they give you examples and you know, you’re thinking, “okay…” And the
26  way we talk in class is different. And it’s just like the talking in class and the way
27  the book is written and the way you read it, and all of that ties in and it gives you
28  like this whole different atmosphere. And it’s not really all that boring to read
29  anymore.
Rosa goes on to offer a fairly serious and specific indictment of a common type of textbook and attendant classroom reading practice:

Um, usually in like a regular history class, like the one I had last year? Which was just pretty much all writing? Okay, “read from page so-n-so to so-n-so, answer the red square questions and the unit questions and turn them in.” And he corrects them and says, “You did this wrong, you did this right. Okay, here you go.” And that was pretty much the basic way every single day was gone. So, from day one to the end of the year, that’s pretty much all we did. Answer the red square questions. And pretty much it’s been like that since I got to middle school. In fifth grade it was a little more different because we actually discussed the books. But before that it was like, we didn’t have books, like pretty much for history. You know before fifth grade, it was pretty much kids don’t really understand so they don’t have those books. And in fifth grade was when we started with books. And it was pretty much, answer the red square questions, explain a little, red square questions, explain a little. And the questions just pretty much had to do with what you were reading. And it wasn’t like it was spread all over the place, like you had to read it. It was just like, if the red square question was here, you knew it was somewhere around that area right there. And you could just look for the answer and copy it down and you got full credit for it. So you didn’t have to read. It was something that you could like slide by without them knowing. I don’t know if they cared or not, but that’s the way everybody did it. You see the red square question and you sort of calculate where it’s around, you find the answer, and you write it down and that’s it.

Comparing this familiar textbook reading practice to reading in the Academic Literacy unit, Rosa explains:

Rosa: Now it’s like, you have to talk about it. You have to explain what you read. You have to make a tree about it, okay? And figure out those details. You have to get more into the book than you realize. So, this book is kind of different. Also the way we’re talking in class.

In these exchanges, Rosa demonstrates how she is thinking about history and reading history in a new way. She is considering how historical events connect to her life and her responsibilities as a person who knows that “it can happen again.” The “whole different atmosphere” of her historical reading practice in Academic Literacy has helped her to understand and value types of reading and thinking that were unavailable to her when all she was asked to do was to “answer the red square questions” in her history reading. Rosa’s interview also demonstrates one of the more powerful results of Reading Apprenticeship: the development of students’ abilities to critically evaluate and appraise texts and textual practices themselves.
Strategic Control of the Reading Process

The interviewer then refers to the text itself, asking Rosa how she would go about reading it if her teacher assigned it for class. Demonstrating that she has appropriated routines from her Academic Literacy classroom into her own repertoire of reading behaviors, Rosa answers:

Rosa: I guess I’d have to start by the title. And then, um, just try to relate the first paragraph, second paragraph. And just sort of, kind of, read through it and see what it’s about. Because it usually explains it in the first paragraph and it just goes on from there. So if I understand like the first paragraph, then I would see what like the subheadings are about, like what it has to deal with. Then I would start reading, and, um, just keep on going, I guess. Just keep reading and if I have any questions just try to answer them within the reading. Pretty much do what we do with RT.

In this brief description of how Rosa would approach her reading, she displays an awareness and analysis of text structure and organization (the functions of headings, subheadings, and first paragraphs), the importance of identifying central ideas (“what it has to deal with”), and the need to link parts of the text to one another and construct a coherent meaning (“to relate the first paragraph, second paragraph”). Rosa also demonstrates here her awareness of her own active role in reading, describing this activity as “seeing what it’s about,” “trying to relate” parts of the text, moving on if she “understands” the first paragraph, and, if she has any questions, “just trying to answer them within the reading.”

The interview continues with a review of the section of the chapter on totalitarianism that Rosa has already read and analyzed with her class. Rosa tells the interviewer what she remembers about this section and describes the importance of this topic, relating the analysis of the historical roots of intolerance contained in the chapter to her own experience of interracial hatred and hate crimes in her community. After this discussion the interviewer turns to the next section of the text that Rosa has not yet read, inviting her to share how she would use RT strategies in her reading. The section of the text is excerpted below:

Propaganda and indoctrination orchestrated feelings.

Perhaps the most important tools of the new totalitarian states were propaganda and indoctrination. By repeatedly playing on the peoples’ hopes and fears, propaganda could whip people into a fever pitch of hatred for an external enemy — or for a group of people at home who were “different” or did not conform. People who supported the leader were portrayed as self-sacrificing heroes. The enemy or domestic opponents of the regime were pictured as devils or beasts who were corrupt and depraved. Once fully in power, totalitarian states quickly turned to indoctrination, or the systematic use of propaganda to form habits and attitudes. It is no coincidence that totalitarian states such as
Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Communist China took over complete control of children’s education. Young people were often enrolled in special camps or movements such as the Hitler Youth. Children were even turned against their own parents, told to spy on them, and given rewards for turning them in to the authorities. (Krieger & Neill, 1994, p. 89)*

In this sequence, Rosa is asked to predict and does so, displaying her understanding that prediction means what “we’re gonna find out about” in the text (lines 149 and 150). Specifically, she predicts that she will learn more about how the media and propaganda affect hate crimes. (Note, too, that Rosa has made the connection between media and propaganda independently, using media as a synonym for propaganda. Media is not specifically mentioned in this section of the text.) This brief interchange is evidence that Rosa can and does use the predicting strategy when prompted by the interviewer. But before she can attempt to make a prediction, she first interrupts herself, without being prompted, and carries out the strategy of clarifying (lines 144–147), one of the key comprehension practices taught in Academic Literacy. In this interruption, she demonstrates important self- and text-knowledge. She knows that usually when she doesn’t understand a part of the heading, she will benefit from reading the text to clarify the word meaning. She also knows that she can count on the text explaining the term “later on.” She demonstrates her knowledge that words often are defined in the text and, furthermore, that key vocabulary is often typed in boldface in textbooks. Using these cues, Rosa locates some text that helps her define the word indoctrination. This unprompted clarification sequence is evidence that Rosa has appropriated strategies for clarifying as she reads and is able to recognize when they may assist her reading.

Rosa then reads the paragraph of text aloud, stopping at the end of a sentence containing the word regime to ask the interviewer what it means, again

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clarifying using available resources (including the interviewer) without prompting. When she finishes reading, she is prompted for a summary. However, before she provides a summary, she initiates a long clarification sequence in which she reads the text closely, with the assistance of the interviewer, to work out the word meaning and to monitor the reliability of the meaning she has made so far. We analyze this sequence below:

175  Int.: Okay, great. So why don’t you tell me in your own words what that was about, what
176  you just read?
177  Rosa: Um, I guess it was about... I’m not sure because I did not understand that word
178  totalitarian?
179  Int.: Uh-huh, good. So if you were doing RT you would say...
180  Rosa: I didn’t understand the word. And then I guess I would describe the word and
181  since I didn’t understand it someone would have to like describe it and if we
182  didn’t know we would ask Ms. Cziko and Ms. Cziko would tell us the definition.
183  Or if it was home, I would pretty much use the dictionary.
184  Int.: Okay, so what have you talked about in class so far about totalitarianism?
185  About totalitarian states?
186  Rosa: I don’t think we have talked about that because we used um totalitarianism for
187  our test and it wasn’t in the reading until this next paragraph. So, I don’t
188  remember if we were defining the word. I don’t remember that. But I guess we
189  did. But I don’t remember the definition of it.
190  Int.: Do you have anything in mind? Kind of a guess or a hunch about what it
191  might mean?
192  Rosa: I don’t know why, when I think of that word I think of tolerance.
193  Int.: You do?
194  Rosa: I think of tolerance. I don’t know why, but that’s what I think of. And um I
195  know genocide is trying to kill a group of people for a reason, whatever it might
196  be. So I know genocide is bad so totalitarianism has to be good, I guess in a way.
197  Int.: You think it’s the opposite of genocide?
198  Rosa: I guess it has to be because it says “turned hate into genocide.” Oh, actually no,
199  it has to be bad. No, it has to be bad. Um, I don’t know what it means. I’m kind of
200  stuck.

In this sequence, Rosa postpones giving a summary for the paragraph she has read, instead focusing on what, for her, is a key stumbling block to her comprehension, the term totalitarianism. At the suggestion of the interviewer, she first struggles to recall what has been said about this concept in class, but since she can’t remember this information, she turns to the word itself and her own word knowledge as a source of information, again at the suggestion of the interviewer (lines 184–185). Attempting to find a similar, known word, Rosa associates totalitarianism with the word tolerance, an association that misdirects her search for the meaning of totalitarianism (line 192). Yet she does not stop with this association. She continues to draw a mental web of related ideas and concepts, looking back in the text and bring-
ing in the word *genocide* from the title of this section of the chapter she is reading, which is “Totalitarianism turned hate into genocide.” She attempts to contrast genocide with totalitarianism (lines 194–196). At this point, her understanding of the word *totalitarianism* is still colored in the positive hues of tolerance: “I know genocide is bad so totalitarianism has to be good.” Yet, she does not express confidence (“I guess in a way”). Instead, she turns back to the text to test her growing definition: “I guess it has to be because it says ‘turned hate into genocide.’”

Even as she reads this title aloud, Rosa realizes her error, that something turning hate into a worse crime, genocide, must be bad (lines 198–199). Though she has so far failed to clarify the meaning of totalitarianism, Rosa demonstrates, in this sequence, her ability to wrestle with the text and use context, semantic associations, text structures, and syntactical constructions to shape the meaning she constructs with the text. Throughout this sequence, the interviewer follows Rosa’s lead, asking questions to clarify the state of Rosa’s ongoing problem-solving (lines 193 and 197). Following this exchange, the interviewer summarizes Rosa’s search for meaning and encourages her to continue it (lines 201 and 202, below):

201 *Int.:* Okay, so you’re thinking about this word and you’re using some hints that you have here. What could you do next to try and clarify this?
202 *Rosa:* Well, I guess try to read where that word is and try to define it by that.
203 *Int.:* Um-hmm. So why don’t you try that and see what happens?
204 *Rosa:* Um, it says that “tools of the new totalitarian states were propaganda and indoctrination.” So, so they were propaganda and indoctrination? I’m not sure if that’s right.
205 *Int.:* Those are some tools that um, totalitarian states use.
206 *Rosa:* Okay, um . . . Then, could that mean, taken over by a certain person or something?
207 *Int.:* Um, you mean like dictatorships where somebody takes over?
208 *Rosa:* Yeah, like that.

In line 203, Rosa describes a strategy she could use to help her define totalitarianism. When the interviewer encourages Rosa to “try that and see what happens” (line 204), Rosa finds a sentence where propaganda and indoctrination, the concepts that she has just wrestled with, are connected with totalitarianism. Trying to establish the nature of the connection, she asks the interviewer for help (lines 205–207). Responding to this request in a limited way to give Rosa an opportunity to solve as much of the comprehension problem she is experiencing on her own, the interviewer focuses Rosa on the word *tools* in the text — “Those are some tools that um, totalitarian states use” (line 208) — and Rosa connects these tools to her previous reading to hypothesize, “Then, could that mean taken over by a certain person or something?” (lines 209–210), a conjecture that draws her closer to the meaning of totalitarianism. The interviewer’s clarifying question, “You mean like dicta-
torships . . . ?” (line 211) gives Rosa yet another semantic clue and confidence, as she recognizes the connection (line 212), that she is on the right track.

At this point, the interviewer, still responding to Rosa’s request for help, affirms the direction of Rosa’s search and asks Rosa to describe what she is doing to investigate the word totalitarianism in more detail (lines 213–214 below). Rosa’s description (lines 217–220) makes clear that she is scanning back in the paragraph she has read for instances of this word and reading the sentences in which it is contained to see if these new contexts shed light on the concept. Although she starts by rereading a prior section, she also makes it clear that if she did not get enough help there, she would go on to scan ahead in the text. She summarizes her strategy, saying, “I’m trying to find the definition of it through what I read” (lines 218–219):

213 Int.: There are some real similarities with that concept, with that idea. Where are you looking as you’re looking? I’m just curious.

214 Rosa: I’m trying to look for the word.

215 Int.: In this paragraph that you just read?

216 Rosa: I just try to look for that word as much as I can. And when I find it I try to read around it. If I don’t find it after it, I find it before it. I’m trying to find the definition of it through what I read. I’m not sure if it defines it later on.

219 Int.: I sure don’t think so.

The interviewer then tests whether Rosa has enough of a sense of the word to continue her reading of the passage (lines 221–224, below), whether she can live with her tentative understanding as she reads on. But Rosa is not finished clarifying: “It’s pretty much not enough” (line 225). We see Rosa’s persistence here as evidence that she is able to assess not only her own understanding, but how important the meaning of this word will be to the meaning of the text (lines 225–226). Finally, in lines 226–231, she “puts the heading to chapter two [Totalitarianism turned hate into genocide.] and what I just read” together to formulate an idea about totalitarianism: “There has to be some kind of person dictating what you think, and then . . . making you believe that what you’re feeling is because of somebody else.” While not a conventional definition, the key ideas of dictatorship and manipulation or control of thought help her feel like she “can understand it a little more” (line 233).

221 Int.: So you’ve gotten a few ideas. That there’s propaganda and indoctrination. That, you have this hunch that it has something to do with um, with somebody taking over like a dictator. What might you do next? Or is that enough? Do you feel like you have enough of an idea to go on?

224 Rosa: It’s pretty much not enough. I mean, I’m really not defining it so I really can’t understand it until I kind of get that defined. And putting the heading to I guess you’d say chapter two and what I just read, I mean there has to be some kind of
person sort of dictating what you think, and then using your hate against, and
turning it into like something else, like making you believe that what you’re feeling
is because of somebody else. I guess it would have something to do with that. I’m
not totally sure about that, though.

_int.: Um-hmm. So, do you feel settled then with that enough to go on?
_rosa: It makes me feel like I can understand it a little more . . .
_int.: Okay, so when I asked you before what was this paragraph about, you said you were
stuck because you didn’t understand totalitarianism. What if I asked you now? What do
you think this paragraph is about? What would you say you just read in your own words?

When prompted again (lines 234–236), Rosa returns to the task of summarizing this paragraph (lines 238–244, below). In this summary, Rosa indicates her understanding that totalitarianism is something that became possible once it was possible to use technologies of communication to that end: “Somebody . . . can easily now confuse people and make them believe things.” She is also working with the concept of “tool” that was introduced in the passage and underscored by the interviewer: “. . . turn their hatred into something else, use it as a tool . . . against people . . . used the children against their parents . . . they used something to get something else.”

_rosa: I guess in my own words what I would say was somebody or, what this thing
believe things and turn their hatred into something else, use it as a tool, I guess,
against people? _int.: Um-hmm_ And some examples of that being Nazi Germany,
the Soviet Union, and Communist China. Which are, like, places that used the
children against their parents. So, I mean, they used something to get something
else. I’m not sure I explained it very well. But that’s what I got.
_int.: Okay, great. So let’s um, those are the main points. Like if you were summarizing
that’s what you would say.

The work of clarifying the term _totalitarianism_ has brought relationships among agents (dictators), tools of oppression (propaganda), and ends that serve the totalitarian regime (using children against their parents, turning hatred into something else) into greater focus for Rosa. Rosa is able to summarize her reading only after asserting her need to clarify the passage, and carrying out this clarification using a wide array of textual and cognitive resources, including signals within the text, grammatical and semantic relationships among words and sentences, and her own repertoire of problem-solving strategies. In this interview, Rosa demonstrates not only the struggle to construct meaning that she is now capable of carrying out with difficult academic text, but also the various tools and resources she is able to employ to serve that struggle. Moreover, she knows what she needs as a reader to move on in the work of reading and is able to assert the priority of these needs, even before a video camera and a waiting interviewer who is prompting her for a prediction or a summary before she is ready to give one. In an inspiring
way, Rosa remains in control of her reading throughout the interview, helping to shape this reading event — a videotaped reading performance — as an enterprise of making sense rather than one of merely running through a protocol or answering the questions that are put to her.

**Metacognition: Monitoring Comprehension and Drawing on Knowledge about Self as Reader**

The next segment of the textbook chapter on totalitarianism includes a narrative excerpt from the *Gulag Archipelago*. The text shifts from exposition to this reflective narrative written in a literary style, and the connection between the narrative and the exposition is implied rather than stated explicitly. After reading this segment of the *Gulag* silently, Rosa stumbles a bit when asked to summarize it and finally says, “I’m not sure, I’m kind of confused right now.” She talks about being sleepy, complains that the text seems beyond her ninth-grade level, and says, “It’s just kind of all a big blur right now.” As she did earlier in her reading, Rosa then marshals a set of tools for constructing meaning with this text, including skimming back over the text looking for key words, rereading, and connecting the text to what she already knows and has been learning in her Reading History unit. She refers repeatedly to “the excerpt,” “the book part,” and “his reflection,” displaying both her ability to recognize text markers that delineate borrowings from other text sources, as well as her adoption of a language for talking about text. Later in the interview, after Rosa has successfully comprehended this segment of the text, the interviewer recalls Rosa’s “confusion”:

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...
In this exchange, we see that the practices of metacognition — especially being aware of reading processes, setting goals for purposeful engagement with reading, and deliberately controlling attention — are well within Rosa’s grasp. She is aware of her mental “blur” and takes deliberate steps to avoid “losing it.” She knows that she can generally retain meaning for a certain length of text, and recognizes that it is “too soon to lose it” after such a short passage.

In this reading interview with Rosa, we are able to see clear reflections of the instructional practices that the Academic Literacy course constructed to support her reading development. What she has accomplished in the socially mediated setting of the classroom is now visible in her interaction with the interviewer, in her reflective talk about herself as a reader, in her comprehension monitoring, in her deliberate control of attention, and in her unprompted use of repair strategies when her comprehension fails. In essence, the Reading Apprenticeship practices of the class have created a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) in which Rosa is able to appropriate powerful knowledge, strategies, and dispositions to guide her reading. We can also see how Rosa assesses these practices, how she is able to externalize and characterize ways of reading and their usefulness to her. In Academic Literacy, Rosa, her classmates, and their teacher have been sharing what and how they read, “thinking aloud” in a metacognitive conversation. From this practice, Rosa has gained not only strategies for intentionally constructing meaning with print and monitoring her own comprehension, but also a vocabulary for talking about her reading performance.

We believe the metacognitive, metadiscursive, and strategic reading practices of the Academic Literacy course will assist Rosa and other adolescent readers in not only grappling with academic texts to construct meaning, but also in participating in the ways of thinking that characterize the academic disciplines. We see evidence of this in Rosa’s shifting understanding of what it means to read history, moving from answering red square questions to struggling to clarify meanings and connect them to one’s own life experiences. During the interview, Rosa also shows how she has apprenticed herself to particular ways of thinking historically. When asked what question she would ask an RT group based on her reading of this text, she voices a question that has animated much historical scholarship, as well as moral inquiry, in the past half century. We hear the Reverend Niemoller’s now famous litany in Rosa’s question for her RT group:\textsuperscript{14}

532 \textit{Rosa:} Why didn’t people fight back? Why didn’t they do anything? Why did they just sit there and say, “Okay, well I’m glad it’s not me who’s in trouble, it’s them”?

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Rosa’s reading of this history text calls to mind the skillful problem-solving, negotiation of meaning, and connection to others that is captured in Rexford Brown’s eloquent phrase, “a literacy of thoughtfulness” (Brown, 1991). Imagine, for a moment, that Rosa had been in a reading course focused on building basic reading skills. While such a course may have strengthened her word analysis and vocabulary skills, we doubt that Rosa would have developed the kind of intellectual and ethical engagement and personal agency she demonstrates here. When we imagine such a limited outcome, we are struck with a keen sense of loss and unfulfilled potential, not only for Rosa, but for the many young people with whom we work.

Interviews with Rosa and the other case-study students mirrored the metacognitive conversation these students had participated in as members of the Academic Literacy course. Like metacognitive conversations in the classroom, these interviews traced students’ reading processes and meaning-making and asked students to reflect on and articulate how they were approaching reading tasks. The interviews demonstrated that ninth-grade students can self-consciously appraise their own strengths and weaknesses as readers, set goals and work to accomplish them, and develop metacognitive monitoring and strategic control of reading processes. The interviews also affirmed that when students participate as apprentices in an inquiry into academic reading practices, they can and do appropriate the comprehension activities and dispositions toward texts available to them in the context of instruction. Further, through these interviews we were able to witness students’ emerging academic identities as students engaged, as Rosa did here, in literacies of thoughtfulness.

Other Assessments of Student Reading Development

Standardized Reading Comprehension Tests
While reading interviews gave us impressive evidence of students’ appropriation of the reading practices of the course, we had many other indicators of the positive impact of the course on student reading development. As we have reported elsewhere (Greenleaf & Schoenbach, 2000; Greenleaf et al., 1999; Schoenbach et al., 1999), the ninth-grade Academic Literacy students improved their performance on standardized tests of reading comprehension. Table 1 shows that Academic Literacy students improved their performance significantly on the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) test, gaining an average of four points in raw score and moving from the 47th to nearly the 49th percentile in national ranking in the seven months of instructional time between October and May of their ninth-grade year. When special education students were omitted from the Academic Literacy sample, as they were from the national norming population, the mean scores of the Academic Literacy students increased further, moving these students above the 50th percentile ranking.
The DRP test is both norm and criterion referenced. In comparison with the national norm, the ninth graders in Academic Literacy classes started the year reading on average at a late seventh-grade level, moving to a late ninth-grade level (catching up to the national norm for ninth graders) by May. In terms of familiar texts, by the test-makers’ estimates, students were able independently to read and comprehend texts similar in difficulty to *Charlotte’s Web*, *Old Yeller*, or children’s magazines at the start of the year. By May, the test-makers estimate they were able to independently read and comprehend texts similar in difficulty to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and teen reading materials. The increase of nearly four units on the Degree of Reading Power criterion-referenced scale from fall to spring is significantly greater than the norm, based on samples of large, national populations of same-grade students, in which “growth from Fall to Spring is smaller — about 1–2 DRP units” (Touchstone Applied Science Associates, 1995, p. 48). Students’ increased average reading levels in May, as estimated by the DRP, suggested that they should be able to handle all but the most difficult high school textbooks with instructional support, and that with instructional support, these students should be able to tackle difficult literature like *The Prince* or *The Scarlet Letter*.

These results gain in significance when one considers that the norming sample against which the performance of Academic Literacy students was compared was developed to approximate a national population. In this norming population, only 13.5 percent were eligible for free or reduced school lunch programs, compared to 33.2 percent of the Thurgood Marshall students. In addition, the demographics of the norming sample were 12 percent African American, 4.6 percent Spanish surname, 1.4 percent Asian, and 63 percent White students, a sample that is clearly not representative of the

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**TABLE 1  Mean DRP Scores and Mean Score Gains (delta) from Fall (F) to Spring (S) for Academic Literacy Students (n = 216)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Scores</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Mean delta</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Scores</td>
<td>S = 47.4352</td>
<td>13.4270</td>
<td>3.9213</td>
<td>7.558</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 43.5139</td>
<td>14.1678</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td>S = 49.0741</td>
<td>23.9263</td>
<td>1.9352</td>
<td>2.107</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 47.1389</td>
<td>23.5698</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE Scores</td>
<td>S = 49.7731</td>
<td>15.0503</td>
<td>1.2130</td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 48.5602</td>
<td>16.0773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  ** p < .01,
diverse population of students at Thurgood Marshall. Yet the kinds of socioeconomically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students served by the Academic Literacy course are those for whom a persistent achievement gap has been regularly documented (see Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Means, Chelemer, & Knapp, 1991; Williams, 1996).

Even though the course was taught by teachers with different levels of experience and from different disciplinary backgrounds, students in all of the teachers’ classes made significant progress. A multivariate test of the interaction of teacher placement with change in mean DRP scores showed no statistical difference between students assigned to the different teachers in performance on these tests (F = .594, df = 3, NS). Moreover, the course was successful for all groups of students, regardless of ethnic or language background. The performance of different ethnic groups of students did not differ significantly from one another on the DRP tests, nor did their mean gain in score differ significantly from fall to spring (F = .654, df = 6, NS). The two lowest scoring groups in the fall, Latino and other non-White students, many of them Southeast Asian second-language learners, made the largest gains from fall to spring, suggesting that the course may have been especially valuable to these students.

Thus, as measured by a well-known standardized test, the Academic Literacy course had a significant impact on the reading performance of this highly diverse population of students, who developed what is normally two years of reading proficiency in only seven months of instructional time while engaging in rigorous, academic work. Follow-up studies show that Academic Literacy students retained their reading improvement, as measured by the DRP, continuing to grow as readers at an accelerated rate into and through their tenth-grade year.15

Student Responses to Reading Surveys

Additional evidence for the positive impact of Academic Literacy came from student surveys and reflective letters. We summarize their responses here, giving samples of typical student reflections and survey responses as illustrations.

After reading his pre- and post-surveys, one student wrote in a reflective letter to his teacher, “Before I didn’t consider myself a good reader but now I do. I think that my attitude about reading has changed a lot ’cause since we started reading I got used to it. Now I feel more confident as a reader.” Making a similar testimony to this changed relationship to reading, a ninth-grade girl wrote, “I’ve learned this month that I’ve really started reading very good [sic]. I’ve done it so much that it’s become a custom. I took both of my books everywhere I went. I even took them to Great America with me and read in the lines to get on rides.” These students recognized for themselves what became clear to us in comparing the October and June survey re-
responses of the Academic Literacy students: that students’ reading ease, reading habits, and reading preferences changed profoundly as they began to read for SSR and share books with one another through official classroom projects as well as through social talk.

For example, the number of books students reported reading almost doubled from the fall to the spring, according to their pre- and post-course surveys (from 5.58 in fall to 10.99 in spring). At the same time, students gained knowledge about particular kinds of books available to them, identified favorite authors, and learned ways to select books they might find engaging. In the classroom community of readers, particular books changed hands from reader to reader, gaining popularity through reputation. By June, 80 percent of the students wrote that they actually read parts of books to inform their choices. A testimony to the sustained focus on reading and sharing books, the percentage of students who were unable to list a favorite author dropped from 42 percent in October to 20 percent by June. Importantly, author R. L. Stine and several writers of color, notably Terry McMillan, were high on the list of favorites for this diverse audience, suggesting not only that classroom libraries should reflect the cultural diversity of the students, but also that books that are attractive to teenagers while still being easy enough for independent reading (R. L. Stine is often considered to be more suitable for younger readers) should be included for the benefit of less fluent readers.

Students’ survey responses revealed important “reasons to read” (Guthrie et al., 1996) that Academic Literacy students gained from their inquiries into reading: “I love to read because reading can take you to a time you did not know,” “I love it because you get to go through what that character’s going through,” “That way you can think more and expand your mind,” “I like to read, it keeps me busy,” “It feels good when you finish reading a book and have memories of a life or experience that you did not have to live through,” “I love to read. It helps me to understand life.” In addition to these testimonies to student immersion in reading, students reconsidered the role reading will play in their futures: “I’m cool with it because the more you read, the more you become a better reader. And as time passes by, you’ll probably have a successful career, and if you take the SAT proficiency test, CTBS [California Test of Basic Skills], etc., you’ll do great.”

By June, a full 94 percent of the Academic Literacy students said they liked or loved reading or thought reading was “okay” when asked to summarize their general feelings about this activity. Only six percent said they did not enjoy reading at the end of the school year. At the same time, there was little change in the proportion of students actually reading novels for pleasure at home. We view these responses as evidence that continuing efforts are needed to make these potential habits more robust, and to help reading compete with other attractive options for student attention, such as sports, socializing, and TV and movie viewing. Moreover, we suspect that for busy teenagers, teachers must make room for self-chosen reading in the curricu-
lum if reading is to get done at all, and if it is to become a sustained practice for young people. Further underscoring this point, many tenth-grade students told us in follow-up interviews that even though they’d like to be reading recreationally, once they began their courses in the fall they lost any discretionary time for pleasure reading.

While Academic Literacy students described their changing motivations and attitudes toward reading, they also recognized their changing reading processes in their self-reflections and survey responses. One student explained, “What I can really do that I didn’t do before is think about what the book is saying and try to reflect and give some thought to what is going on in the book instead of closing it and not thinking anything when I read it.” In the beginning of the year, most students responded that to be a good reader, a person must know a lot of words, pronounce them correctly, and read fast and fluently aloud. By year’s end, they increasingly saw that good readers also are mentally active, making sense of what they read and using strategies to monitor and control their reading.

As these examples suggest, overall the Academic Literacy students recognized that they were now reading more, reengaging as readers after a hiatus of several years, or engaging in reading for the first time in this year. Increasingly, they saw reading as sense-making rather than oral performance. They were more keenly aware of their own preferences, and had come to see reading as an activity they could control by using strategies and choosing books they are drawn to, rather than as a set of skills one either does or does not possess. Student responses revealed reasons to read as well as internal and external catalytic factors pushing students to pick up books. They came to value reading in new ways, and they acquired a greater sense of their own agency, responsibility, and control of how they read over the course of the school year, as well as a much more elaborate set of ideas, strategies, and resources for tackling texts of various kinds. Students’ engagement in self-chosen reading, embedded as it was in a collaborative, metacognitive conversation about reading, readers, authors, and texts, made key contributions to the students’ growth in Academic Literacy.

Broader Considerations: Toward Defining and Addressing the Needs of Adolescent Readers

In these pages, we have shared some of the ways a diverse group of urban ninth graders developed as readers in an Academic Literacy course designed to build their reading proficiency while engaging them in academically challenging coursework. Through its impact on student reading, the course demonstrates the power and promise of a framework for adolescent reading instruction — Reading Apprenticeship. Through inquiry, social mediation, and ongoing practice, Reading Apprenticeship engages students in building more complex conceptions of high-level literacy practices, increased fluency
and range as readers, and broader repertoires of problem-solving strategies and approaches.

There are clear instructional implications based on the changes in student reading that we document here. Most clearly, the kinds of reading practices we ask students to engage in, as part of subject-area learning, matter because they make a difference in the resulting reading proficiencies that students develop. In Rosa’s descriptions of her early experiences of reading in history classes, we see that the reading tasks assigned to her conveyed not only distinct conceptions of reading, but also specific conceptions of history itself. Rosa’s “red square question” version of reading in history impoverished not only her interest in and engagement with history texts, but also her very idea of the practice of history as a discipline. History, in this view, was an exercise in retaining and reporting facts. In contrast, Rosa’s reading of the totalitarianism text engaged her in a strategic and purposeful inquiry, an inquiry in which she not only had the right, but felt the responsibility, to ask why historical events occurred and why human beings acted as they did in these events. Throughout her inquiry-focused reading of this text, she was engaged in making sense of history as well as the text, carrying out a new reading practice through which she demonstrated her growing understanding of history as an interpretive discipline (e.g., Wineburg, 1991). Rosa’s reading of this history text demonstrates that what we ask students to read, how we ask them to read, and to what ends, shapes not only their conceptions of reading, but also their conceptions of the disciplines.

The tools we give students to assist them in engaging successfully in these reading practices also matter. In Rosa’s reading of the history textbook, her growing strategic control of the reading process is evident. Questioning, paraphrasing, and clarifying her understanding of the text, Rosa displayed key strategic moves she had been explicitly taught to make in the context of purposeful, often self-chosen, and authentic reading experiences in her Academic Literacy class. Further, in Rosa’s reflections on her own reading needs, in her redirection of the reading interview, and in her descriptions of previous history reading experiences, she exhibited self-assurance and self-knowledge as a reader that grew out of her engagement in an ongoing, collaborative classroom inquiry into reading and texts.

Students’ reading skills and capabilities thus matter for what students can accomplish when faced with the complex demands of academic reading. As we hope our descriptions of Reading Apprenticeship and the Academic Literacy course have made evident, we are deeply committed to helping adolescents become skillful readers. However, our conception of reading, our definition of reading skills, and our appraisal of what students need to be successful academic readers differ profoundly from the more prevalent basic-skills conceptions often found in remedial reading courses. How the problem of low literacy achievement among our nation’s secondary students is defined matters a great deal because it prescribes, and often circum-
scribes, the ways we begin to address the problem. Skillful comprehension of various texts requires mastery of a complex set of interpretive mental activities associated with academic disciplines (e.g., Harste, 1994; Lee, 1995). These are communicative competencies that can, and must, be taught. Yet, Rosa’s appraisal that “you didn’t have to read” in the “red square question” version of history reading seems to illustrate the paucity of attention paid to discipline-based reading in U.S. middle and high schools.

In our view, all students need to be taught how to participate in specific reading practices and given the tools they will need to do so if they are to enter into and succeed in multiple and varied social worlds, including the worlds of the academic disciplines. The default, for children from poor, urban, minority neighborhoods, too often is a kind of basic-skills approach, resulting in a literacy ceiling that limits their academic and other opportunities. We are convinced by scholars like Lisa Delpit, (1986, 1988, 1995) and by our own experiences in nurturing and creating Reading Apprenticeships in secondary classrooms, that “if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (Delpit, 1988, p. 238). Yet all around us we see that without first offering middle and high school students a program of subject-area instruction that provides them with ongoing, skillful, teacher mediation of academic reading, educators and policymakers are prescribing skill-based remedial programs for under-achieving adolescent students. We believe this approach mislocates the problem as a failure to learn, rather than a failure to teach reading as the complex mental activity it is.

In our program of professional development with middle and high school subject-area teachers to integrate Reading Apprenticeship into ongoing subject-area instruction, we see teachers embrace new and complex conceptions of reading as well as ways to develop their students’ skill as academic readers. When these teachers have opportunities to explore their own reading processes, to discover and articulate the resources and strategic mental habits they bring to reading, to share their reading processes with colleagues, and to discover patterns and contrasts among the disciplines, they build richer, more complex conceptions of reading. When they have opportunities to explore the reading performances of students like Rosa, they gain insight into what makes reading particular kinds of texts challenging for students, as well as the resources and strategies students bring to academic reading tasks. They begin to see more clearly the promise of these often underprepared students (Hull, Rose, Greenleaf, & Reilly, 1991), locating the problem of student reading in the complexity of reading itself and beginning to see texts as sites for common inquiry in their classrooms (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Morehouse, Katz, & Mueller, 1999).

Armed with new conceptions of reading, new awareness of their own expertise as discipline-based readers, and new perceptions of students as strate-
gic and resourceful, subject-area teachers begin to embrace, rather than re-
sist, the teaching of reading in their subject areas. They challenge instead
the constraints of curriculum coverage and the impositions of standards and
exams that value student “absorption of knowledge” over student “construc-
tion of meaning” (Newmann, King, & Rigdon, 1997). They struggle to make
time for reading in the curriculum-pressed subject-area classroom, where
they can apprentice their students into reading in their disciplines.

Our collaborative work with subject-area teachers of diverse urban middle
and high school students, as well as our evidence that students can and do
develop as readers in a rigorous, meaningful curriculum, prompt us to ques-
tion the necessity of basic skills approaches for the majority of secondary stu-
dents who struggle with the literacy demands of the secondary curriculum.
We are mindful of the history of remediation in U.S. education and its costs
to the very students now purported to require remedial programs (e.g.,
Brown, 1991; Hull & Rose, 1989; Knapp, 1995a) and aware that such instruc-
tion has been a well-documented feature of the impoverished curriculum of-
tered to the linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse students
with whom we work (e.g., Oakes, 1985; Sizer, 1992). For the past few decades,
educators concerned about inequities in educational opportunities for poor
and minority students have championed important reforms aimed at
detracking the curriculum to include all students in richer, more academi-
cally rigorous learning (e.g., Brown, 1991; Knapp, 1995b; Oakes, 1985). We
hope our work to apprentice adolescent readers to academic literacy, and
thereby help students through the literacy ceiling that limits their participa-
tion in such rigorous academic work, can help to fulfill the promise of this
democratic vision.

If we as a nation care deeply about the achievement of students like Rosa,
LaKeisa, Michael, and Jason, as well as the many middle and high school stu-
dents like them, we must be alert to the learning opportunities they will miss
as a consequence of their placement in skills-focused reading courses. These
students have barely begun to benefit from a prolonged battle to reform and
detrack our nation’s schools in order to guarantee all students access to a rig-
orous academic curriculum (e.g., Brown, 1991; Hull & Rose, 1989). As we
have demonstrated in these pages, investing resources and effort into demys-
tifying academic reading through ongoing, collaborative inquiry into reading
and texts can move students through and beyond the “literacy ceiling” to
increased understanding, motivation, opportunity, and agency as readers
and learners.

A wholesale return to remedial programs for academically underperform-
ing students heralds the retracking of the secondary curriculum and pro-
vides unwarranted support for the enduring perception that only some stu-
dents are academically capable. The costs of such proscribed instructional
approaches outweigh any possible benefits when there are demonstrated al-
ternatives. We can make significant progress in narrowing the reading achievement gap for diverse urban students, not only through courses like Academic Literacy, but also in the context of regular subject-area classes. To achieve this outcome, we must build on the strengths of our young people by inviting them to be active participants in their own learning, by demystifying the hidden processes of reading for understanding, by putting their confusion and difficulties to classroom use, and by helping them make connections between their strategic thinking and behavior outside of school and their academic performance and reading achievement inside school. Doing so will require that we invest, not in skills-based remedial programs, but in the professional development of secondary teachers, helping them to draw on their own subject-area reading expertise to nurture and sustain Reading Apprenticeships in their classrooms.

Notes

1. Throughout this manuscript, students are given pseudonyms to protect their identities.
2. Jason refers here to Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1989), one of the instructional routines embedded in his Academic Literacy course. In Reciprocal Teaching, individual students take turns being the instructional leader — the one who either attempts or calls for questions, summaries, clarifications, and predictions about a text — hence the name, Reciprocal Teaching. Its purpose is to give students frequent and supported opportunities to practice these key comprehension processes while reading, in order to internalize these powerful strategies for making sense of texts.
3. In California middle and high schools, for instance, frequently adopted programs include Language! published by Sopris West and Corrective Reading by Science Research Associates.
4. The Strategic Literacy Initiative was formerly known as the Humanities Education, Research and Language Development (HERALD) Project in the San Francisco Unified School District, one of the Collaboratives in Humanities and Arts Teaching funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The HERALD Project began work in 1988 to increase the oral and written language proficiencies of the highly diverse student populations in San Francisco public high schools through a program of professional development for teachers across the high school curriculum. As we worked with high school teachers to design and implement language-rich, interdisciplinary curriculum projects to engage students in reading, writing, and constructing knowledge in various ways, teachers repeatedly expressed their concerns about student reading proficiency. In response to these concerns, we organized the Strategic Literacy Initiative, now housed at WestEd, one of the national regional laboratories. Beginning in 1995 as a teacher-researcher collaborative at the high school level involving teachers of English and history for both English-speaking students and English-language learners, the Strategic Literacy Initiative now provides inquiry-focused professional development programs for several networks of middle and high school teachers across the core curriculum of English/language arts, math, science, and history (see www.wested.org/stratlit for more information about this initiative). This article thus reflects our learning from a long history of collaborative work with teachers in urban public secondary schools.
5. We struck on the metaphor of the “literacy ceiling” not only because it calls to mind the various “job ceiling” and “glass ceiling” metaphors in common usage, but also because student competence in reading a variety of types of texts and engaging in a variety of ac-
Activities with texts places a ceiling on what students can learn and do, as well as on what their teachers can hope to accomplish in the classroom.

6. Case studies were conducted collaboratively, with classroom teachers selecting a student or students for each case study and collecting data, including notes based on their review of students’ cumulative records, observations of student participation in class activities, and student work samples throughout the school year. The Strategic Literacy Initiative research staff, primarily Greenleaf but also Schoenbach and Mueller, conducted audiotaped literacy history interviews and a series of videotaped reading interviews with case-study students. The teachers and researchers then worked together to identify some common patterns from this large body of case data and to create professional development materials for other teachers from the case studies.

7. See Schoenbach et al. (1999, ch. 3–6) for a more detailed description of the Academic Literacy course.

8. As part of our study of the impact of the Academic Literacy course on student reading development, we wanted to measure changes in student reading comprehension processes. Given the intense focus on curriculum and instruction demanded when teachers are first implementing a new curriculum, we also wanted the assessment to demand little from the teachers in the way of time and interpretation, while yielding information useful in instructional decisionmaking. Because we were not planning to conduct a controlled study and wanted to be able to speak to a broad constituency including administrators and policymakers, we sought a norm-referenced test that would measure ninth-grade student performance and progress against that of a larger population of age- and grade-matched students. The Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) test by Touchstone Applied Science Associates came closest to meeting these various criteria. The DRP test measures students’ ability to “process and understand increasingly more difficult prose material” (Touchstone Applied Science Associates, 1995, p. 11), focusing on student comprehension of the surface meaning of texts in order to measure “the process of reading rather than products of reading such as main idea and author purpose” (p. 1). The test consists of nonfiction paragraphs on a variety of topics. Within these paragraphs, words have been deleted and the student is asked to select the correct word for each deletion in text from a set of multiple-choice options (a modified form of cloze passage). The items assess students’ ability to use the information in the text to figure out the meaning of the text and thereby select the correct word from the multiple-choice options given. The items require that students read and understand the entire passage in order to answer correctly. Omitted words are all common words, even if the passage is difficult; thus, failure to respond correctly should indicate failure to comprehend the passage rather than failure to understand the response options. The test is constructed to eliminate the likelihood that guessing or other nonreading activities can be used to generate correct responses.

9. These surveys are most appropriately viewed as elicitation devices, presenting students with a variety of questions, all of which required a written response by the students. Thus, they are open-ended questions, asking students to clothe their thoughts about reading in their own words. A few questions ask for quantitative responses, but the majority focus on student preferences, experiences, and beliefs about reading that may assist a teacher with instructional planning and individual recommendations.

10. Vygotsky (1978) argued that it is possible to distinguish between a child’s actual or completed developmental level as demonstrated by the child’s independent problem-solving on tasks, and his level of potential development when problem-solving with adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Vygotsky called the distance in performance between what a child is capable of doing independently and with guidance the “zone of proximal development” (p. 86). He argued that this zone was a concept of great utility in developmental research, permitting researchers to “delineate the child’s imme-
future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing” (p. 87). We designed the role of the interviewer in our dynamic reading assessments to provide limited support to students, giving them comprehension questions, prompting them to carry out particular comprehension strategies, and asking them to reflect on their reading processes. The interviewer was to give support on word meanings and pronunciations only as requested by the students themselves. The prompting of the interviewer thus would support the ongoing reading comprehension processes engaged in by the students, but in a limited way.

11. The numbers throughout this interview refer to line numbers in the interview transcript. They are included here for ease of reference in guiding the reader to specific parts of the interview.

12. Throughout the interview, expressions like “um-hmm” and “great” function as conversational turn-taking mechanisms (see Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978), giving Rosa social feedback that she is receiving the sustained attention of the interviewer (Goffman, 1964, as cited in Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978). Space does not permit an analysis demonstrating the function of these expressions in the interview. While these expressions may appear to be evaluative and therefore to steer Rosa’s responses to the interviewer in a pre-ordained direction, they are not intended, nor are they taken by Rosa, as evaluations of her performance. Rather, they work to establish the interviewer’s right to speak next. Readers familiar with conversational analysis will be familiar with these functions of speech.

13. Again, the interviewer’s response here does not evaluate Rosa’s reading. It certainly was not meant as a celebration of the fact that Rosa does not understand the word totalitarianism. Again, it is best understood as functioning to keep the interview going. At the same time, the interviewer’s role is not neutral. She is guiding the interview to probe into Rosa’s ability to carry out particular meaning-making strategies, giving as little help as she can while maintaining Rosa’s forward movement through the text. This calibrated support is precisely what is meant by dynamic assessment. If Rosa was not able to carry out much of the meaning-making on her own, the interviewer would have to be doing much more explanation of the textual references, vocabulary, and concepts than she is doing throughout this interview. As it is, the interviewer provides a kind of procedural facilitation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982), following Rosa’s lead as she carries out prompted and unprompted reading strategies.

14. Reverend Niemoller, who spent seven years in concentration camps after protesting the Nazi mistreatment of Jews, wrote the following: “First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me” (quoted in McGhee & Munzenmaier, 2000, p. 4).

15. In the spring of their tenth-grade year, Academic Literacy students from the 1996–1997 pilot year were asked to take another DRP test to measure whether they had retained the gains from the prior year. The tenth graders were enrolled in regular academic and elective courses and were not given any special course in reading. Unfortunately, the state of California had mandated a new battery of tests, the SAT-9, and the district mandated several other standardized tests. The teachers and students alike were naturally loathe to participate in yet another test, and for this reason we were able to test a smaller population of students than we would have liked. However, for the 114 students whom we were able to retest, the results suggest that the students were given a jump start in ninth grade that continued to accelerate their reading growth into and through their tenth-grade year. The mean independent reading scores for these students increased to fifty-eight DRP units in the spring of 1998, an increase of another two years’ scaled growth in read-
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ing, according to the test-makers. In addition, NCE scores from spring 1997 to spring 1998 showed significant gains ($t = -3.143, df = 113, p < .05$). These students continued to rise in percentile ranking to the 53rd percentile by the spring of 1998.

References


Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Reading Exposition

Issues of the Modern Age

Chapter 5: Totalitarianism in the Modern World, p. 88

Section 2. Totalitarianism turned hate into genocide.

Ms. Cziko said you read this section individually and wrote questions, summaries, clarifications, and predictions for each paragraph. Is that right? Did you get a chance to do that?

What do you remember about this part? [allow time to look back over it if needed] If you had to say what the main ideas of this passage were, what would you say?

There are some descriptions in here of violent action against different groups of people. What do you think about when you read these descriptions? Do you have any personal experiences, family stories, or other connections to this kind of anti-group violence?

Were there any words or parts that were confusing for you?

Do you know what the Inquisition was? Do you have any idea what that refers to?

What do you think a totalitarian state is?

Okay, let’s go on to the next section.

Propaganda and indoctrination orchestrated feelings.

Take a look at the heading and tell me what you predict you will read about in this section.

Do you have any idea what propaganda is? Indoctrination? What do you think the phrase, “Propaganda and indoctrination orchestrated feelings” might mean?

Okay, please read this section aloud.

1. Retelling: In your own words, tell me what you just read.
2. Clarifying: Was there anything that didn’t make sense to you in what you just read? Any words that you weren’t sure of?
3. Summarizing: What do you think were the major points the author wanted to get across in this section? Why do you think these are the major points?
4. Making connections: Can you think of any examples of propaganda? How about indoctrination? What do you think is the difference between these two things?
5. Text awareness: This section talks about the effects of propaganda and indoctrination. Who is it that carries out the propaganda? Who indoctrinates the people? Who is it that gets indoctrinated? Who are the victims of propaganda?

6. Recalling facts, drawing inferences: According to this section, which totalitarian states took over complete control of children’s education? Is that important? Why?

_Fear and isolation paralyzed resistance._

Take a look at the heading and tell me what you predict you will read about in this section.

Do you know what that phrase might mean? “Fear and isolation paralyzed resistance?” How can fear and isolation paralyze? Who is it that is afraid? Isolated? What is resistance? Who is it that resists?

Okay, read this section silently.

1. Retelling: Okay, what was that section about?
2. Clarifying: Were there any words or phrases or ideas that didn’t make sense to you or that you weren’t sure of?
3. Background knowledge: What is the Stalinist terror? The Gulag Archipelago? Do you have any idea? Have you ever heard of Alexander Solzhenitsyn? Who would you guess he was?
4. Summarizing: What do you think were the major points the author wanted to get across in this section? How did you pick these out as the major points?
5. Recalling facts: According to Solzhenitsyn, what could have stopped the Stalinist security operatives from arresting citizens?
6. Interpreting language: What does this phrase mean: “The cursed machine would have ground to a halt!”?
7. Interpreting language: How about the phrase, “The dictators used terror to demoralize the people and made an example of any individual who protested”?
8. Interpreting language: What does it mean, “As each group in turn bore the brunt of persecution, other groups comforted themselves”?
9. Text awareness: Why does that paragraph look different from the rest of the text? Why did the author put this in the book? What do you think is its purpose in this section? What makes you think that?
10. Strategies: When I asked you to read this section silently, what was the first thing you did? How did you go about reading? What did you think about? Did you look for particular ideas? Did you skip around? Did you read some parts first and then read the whole thing? Did you ask yourself questions? Test your understanding in any way? Put things into your own words? Form any mental pictures? Try to remember anything in particular?