



Chapter One — How to Start?

from *Leading for Literacy: A Reading Apprenticeship Approach*

Ruth Schoenbach, Cynthia Greenleaf, and Lynn Murphy

ISBN 978-1-118-43726-1

- 🔗 [Jump to document](#)
- 🔗 [Purchase the full publication](#)
- 🔗 [Browse the WestEd bookstore](#)
- 🔗 [Visit WestEd.org](#)

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., & Murphy, L. (2017). How to Start? In *Leading for literacy: a Reading Apprenticeship approach* (pp. 1-22). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from: <http://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/leading-for-literacy-ch1.pdf>

About WestEd

WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency that works with education and other communities throughout the United States and abroad to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has more than a dozen offices nationwide, from Massachusetts, Vermont, and Georgia to Illinois, Arizona, and California, with headquarters in San Francisco.

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document is protected by copyright law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This PDF is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission is required from Jossey-Bass to reproduce or reuse in any other form for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see Wiley Permissions. [<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-403426.html>]

Areas of Work

- College & Career
- Early Childhood Development & Learning
- English Language Learners
- Health, Safety, & Well-Being
- Literacy
- Schools, Districts, & State Education Systems
- Science, Technology, Engineering, &
- Mathematics
- Special Education
- Standards, Assessment, & Accountability
- Teachers & Leaders

How to Start?

We want reading to be woven into the fabric of what is happening on our campus, to put reading into every conversation about student success, whether it is equity, first-year experience, basic skills, even accreditation—and to connect those conversations and initiatives.

—Chris Padgett, American River College history instructor

DISCIPLINARY READING—the reading that middle school, high school, and college teachers assign day after day in class after class—is foundational to students’ success. For anyone in doubt, new academic standards and workforce expectations make the demand for academic literacy emphatically clear. What is less clear is how to support students to achieve that literacy-based, future-oriented success.

For many if not most administrators, teachers, students, and parents, these new expectations may require a paradigm shift in understanding how learning happens best. This shift includes new ways of thinking about the relationship of literacy to subject area content, students’ and teachers’ roles in learning, and, most important, students’ potential for critical thinking and disciplinary reasoning. Change of this depth cannot spread beyond a few classrooms and is not sustainable without system-level support.

The Reading Apprenticeship Framework,¹ developed to promote students’ engaged academic literacy, has a solid history of catalyzing this kind of transformative change—for individuals and within institutions.

Taking Up Transformational Change

Reading Apprenticeship makes a difference in the way people teach and the way kids learn, but it’s not something you can say, “We’re doing this tomorrow,” and have it be done tomorrow. It takes time and energy, and some patience and commitment from all parties involved.

—Randy Gawel, Berkley High School principal

To implement and scale up meaningful change in classrooms, teachers must deeply understand and own the goals and principles of such change. Many interventions focus on structural or cultural change in school climate or governance as the way to improve student outcomes. Other interventions focus on improving students' engagement and achievement by changing what happens in the classroom. Reading Apprenticeship is in this second category, with a focus on transforming classroom interactions between teachers and students, between students and their peers, and between students and texts of all types.

As an intervention with an explicit focus on changing classroom practice, Reading Apprenticeship takes a strengths-based approach to how both teachers and students learn. Reading Apprenticeship first shows teachers how to make visible the "invisible" knowledge they already have of how to read with rich comprehension in their own content areas. This process then enables teachers to help students become aware of their own thinking processes, giving them confidence and skills to solve comprehension problems and to read more deeply.

To take the risks involved in trying out new ways of teaching, teachers need significant support from their schools and districts. Such support includes new *structures*, such as dedicated literacy teams and communities of practice, and more *time* to engage in high-quality professional learning, professional collaboration, and problem solving with colleagues. These challenging professional activities also require *political cover* on the part of site and district administrators to protect teams and their time from challenges that may arise in the community or at higher levels in the system.

Successful education reform includes the awareness that each school, district, and college campus is particular and resists cookie-cutter replication of even the most rigorously proven interventions. A context-sensitive approach to Reading Apprenticeship implementation calls for a balance of flexibility and fidelity. Teachers and systems require the flexibility to make Reading Apprenticeship their own. At the same time, for interventions to be effective, integrity to the core principles is crucial. We have seen and heard about too many "toxic mutations" of Reading Apprenticeship not to urge educators to keep the key elements of Reading Apprenticeship—the Framework, an inquiry stance, and a strengths-based approach—front and center. Without these core principles, implementation cannot achieve the powerful change that is required to improve learning for a large number of students.

In this chapter, we offer examples to suggest how educators in secondary schools and on college campuses can start to extend Reading Apprenticeship into the broader system in which they work. Familiar questions surface:

- How can teachers, convinced from their own experience of the effectiveness of Reading Apprenticeship, create opportunities for *genuine* buy-in from other teachers and administrators?
- Are there ways administrators can initiate classroom change without the well-known pitfalls of top-down implementation?
- How can leadership teams turn external mandates into positive steps to meet their own goals for change?
- How can schools incorporate Reading Apprenticeship without adding to reform overload?

As we take up these questions, it is with the understanding that the avenues for introducing Reading Apprenticeship are different at the secondary and college levels. Each institutional structure creates different opportunities for instructional leadership and supports professional learning in parallel but different ways.

Leading Change at the Middle and High School Level

Reading Apprenticeship can't be seen as an extra program, it can't be seen as a one-off. It has to be embedded into professional development and revisited.

—Janet Rummel, Chief Academic Officer for Goodwill Education Initiatives, Excel Centers²

Reading Apprenticeship sometimes spreads from one or two teachers at a middle or high school who have discovered Reading Apprenticeship on their own and are sharing it informally with colleagues. More commonly administrators concerned about students' academic literacy hear about Reading Apprenticeship through professional connections and make the decision to bring it to their faculty, often as an experiment for a few teachers to try but sometimes with top-down expectations for wider implementation.

Whether the initial energy to address student literacy comes from teachers or administrators, for that energy to grow, others in the system need to see evidence that local classrooms are changing and students are benefiting. So, for example, teachers who have felt frustrated with their ability to support

their students' disciplinary literacy but then experience success using Reading Apprenticeship approaches need opportunities to share with colleagues what they and their students are learning.

If schools already have professional learning structures in place, such as professional learning communities or department teams, these can be a base for bringing attention to disciplinary literacy and strengthening what it means to collaborate for the benefit of students. And if Reading Apprenticeship arrives at a school or district as more of an expectation than an invitation, increased support for teacher learning and shared administrative and faculty responsibility can create safe space for taking on the challenge of transforming educational practice.

Building Excitement from Teacher to Teacher

Secondary school administrators who have shepherded Reading Apprenticeship implementation cite teacher-to-teacher excitement as the bottom line for success. They find that the enthusiasm of teachers whose students are benefiting from Reading Apprenticeship is highly contagious.

When Randy Gawel was a relatively new principal at Berkley High School, he received an announcement that a team from his school could participate at no cost in a literacy professional development study.³ He asked two teachers for their opinions of the offer. The teachers were impressed, so he forwarded the announcement to the entire staff. Those two teachers and three others replied that they were interested in spending a week of their summer vacation learning about Reading Apprenticeship and getting ready to try it out in their classes.

Randy remembers the energy those five teachers brought to the beginning-of-the-year staff meeting when he asked faculty members to describe what they were looking forward to: "Every one of those Reading Apprenticeship teachers independently said—and these were great teachers—I'm looking forward to implementing Reading Apprenticeship in my classroom, and it's going to change the way I teach, and it's going to change it for the better."

Over the following school year the five teachers worked as a team to implement Reading Apprenticeship in their own classes. They deliberately avoided trying to train staff. Instead, with the support of their principal, they shared with their colleagues what they were experiencing and what they were excited about.

At Chelsea High School, it was also the principal, Julie Deppner, now Chelsea district assistant superintendent, who learned about Reading Apprenticeship through her administrative network. But again, it was well-regarded teachers who primed the pump for what Julie calls "a huge cultural shift at the school." (See Close-Up 1.1, *Priming the Pump at Chelsea High School.*)

CLOSE-UP 1.1

Priming the Pump at Chelsea High School

At Chelsea High School in Chelsea, Michigan, it took only two teachers to prime the pump for what principal Julie Deppner calls “a huge culture shift.”

I certainly had to pick the right people to start off in the Reading Apprenticeship model, teachers who were excited about it and well respected by their peers—and then trust them. They took ownership of Reading Apprenticeship, and we embraced it after hearing them talk about what they were doing in their classrooms.

The two teachers who became the Reading Apprenticeship pioneers supported one another in the ups and downs of trying a new teaching approach. Their principal encouraged them to share what was happening in their classes with the staff. When Reading Apprenticeship professional development was made available to more staff, a combi-

nation of concrete results and peer pressure turned the tide. Julie describes the teacher-to-teacher nature of scaling up Reading Apprenticeship at the school:

We had two teachers from the math department that went to the training because they just wanted to be better teachers. They said, “If this can have an impact on what I’m doing in my classroom, I want to go.” They came back excited, and they sold it to others in the department.

Teachers saw it was great for kids. If you hadn’t gone to the training, you felt like you were missing out. You wouldn’t know what they were talking about in the teacher’s lounge. Reading Apprenticeship has changed the way our teachers teach and the way they think about learning.

As Sam Varrano, principal of Souderton High School, points out, when pioneer teachers have the opportunity to share their Reading Apprenticeship experiences with the rest of the staff, a persuasive appraisal will include the challenges as well as the benefits of learning new practices:

We looked for teachers we knew would embrace it, our very best lunatic-type people, and who would promote it when they were being successful and honestly share their setbacks so we could get better.

By offering these pioneer teachers’ experiences to other staff, and making it clear the administration held them in high regard, Sam was able to convince a strategically important second group of teachers—whose peers would recognize them as typically more reluctant to try new things—to give Reading Apprenticeship a chance. “Once you get those people on board and they’re talking highly of it,” he says, “there’s no stopping that momentum.”

Building on Existing School Culture and Structures

Increasingly, secondary schools support teacher learning with structures such as professional learning communities and literacy teams. Reading Apprenticeship’s

inquiry model of professional development can be an organic way to animate this kind of faculty collaboration.

The Reading Apprenticeship teacher leaders at Berkley High School are quick to credit the school's history of collaboration as an important factor in their evolution as a team—and in their colleagues' openness to the Reading Apprenticeship literacy teams they have nurtured. Teacher leader Angie Church tracks the school's move toward collaboration from her vantage point of sixteen years on the staff:

Over the course of those years we moved from a school of all teachers who taught in isolation to a building in which teachers talked to each other about what they were doing in their classrooms. We had content professional teams throughout our building. It seems super simple, but that's huge. Because we were immersed in it, we might not have noticed how big that was.

Buchanan High School is another school where professional learning communities (PLCs) long predated Reading Apprenticeship. At the same time, however, Buchanan's principal, Ricci Ulrich, worried that the PLCs had lost some of their edge as learning communities. The Reading Apprenticeship model of teacher inquiry, she says, has brought new life and meaning to the school's PLCs:

We've always had a very collaborative staff. Since its inception Buchanan has had teacher time to work together built into the school day. But over a number of years, it was a lot of informational meetings and department meetings, but not working in teams or establishing a set of common goals or really going after an instructional model with something that tells us the kids are having success.

Now when teachers are meeting as PLCs, it's a much different conversation. I believe Reading Apprenticeship helped us establish goals and become diagnostic. The focus is on what the kids are doing, very specifically tied to literacy. That's a big culture shift for us. This is very authentic, very different, and ties back to the adults having a higher level conversation about what we can do instructionally so students have more success.

Top-Down Change as a Positive Path?

Although many stories of successful Reading Apprenticeship implementation initially involve small numbers of teachers or faculty, there are also cases at the secondary level in which administrators have successfully introduced Reading

Apprenticeship and still managed to avoid faculty skepticism or resistance that sometimes typifies mandated professional learning initiatives.

David Pffaf, principal of Eastern Hancock Middle School and High School in rural Charlottesville, Indiana, heard about a high school grant-funded Reading Apprenticeship professional development opportunity from an acquaintance at the Indiana Department of Education and decided to investigate. Convinced that the Reading Apprenticeship program addressed the needs of his school's students, he worked to persuade his staff, laying out students' reading competence as the school's overriding academic responsibility:

There's just nothing our kids are going to do when they leave here where reading is not going to be an essential, foundational skill. So what is there that we can do that would be more valuable to our kids than to give them this tool, this ability to read something that is not easy to read? I can't think of a job we have that's more important.

Eastern Hancock is a small high school, with only thirty-two teachers. None of them escaped David's vision for advancing the school's literacy culture, and he included himself as a learner along with his teachers:

If the principal doesn't believe this is really, really important, then don't bother. The principal has to be fully in. The principal can't send some teachers off and then be done with it.

In another small school district, the superintendent and the principal of the combined junior–senior high school took steps to initiate a focus on literacy after interviews with local employers and nearby colleges and universities led them to understand that improved academic literacy was the most important service they could bring to their community. They found Reading Apprenticeship as a place to start. To signal district commitment, principal Harley Ramsey participated with faculty members in Reading Apprenticeship professional development and further prepared to lead the effort by taking a Reading Apprenticeship course designed specifically for principals. (See Close-Up 1.2, *Leading from Community Needs*.)

When principals, district leaders, or a team of teacher leaders and others can communicate a strong vision and provide teachers with time and support to learn about and try out Reading Apprenticeship for themselves, a top-down approach can lead to positive results. The only way this can work, however, is if supports are in place to help teachers grow into new practices that involve deep changes in their professional identity, their ways of relating to students, and sometimes in their conception of their discipline.

CLOSE-UP 1.2

Leading from Community Needs

At Pennsylvania's small Otto-Eldred School District, administrators were concerned that the teaching and learning there had stagnated. In a community with intergenerational poverty and high unemployment, they wanted to be sure their graduates would be prepared to meet the demands of local employers and higher education. Superintendent Matt Splain and high school principal Harley Ramsey met with leaders from regional industries and colleges to find out what they wanted from incoming employees and students. What they found out, Harley says, led the district to a tight focus on literacy. "We asked a few very basic questions: What are you looking for—what types of education, what types of skills? We took all that information and synthesized it. The areas of need boiled down to content area literacy."

Working backward from this community input, the district administrators asked themselves what they needed to provide from an experiential and curriculum standpoint to make sure that students

would be truly college and career ready. "That's when we started looking at adjusting our curriculum, adjusting our pathways," says Harley. "That's when I first started looking at Reading Apprenticeship."

Harley echoes a point that other school leaders have made when using Reading Apprenticeship for deep school-wide change.

You can't approach it as, "We are going to be doing Reading Apprenticeship." It has to be literacy, and then the model that you're using is the Reading Apprenticeship model. Initiatives come and go, but literacy has to stand.

Once teachers understand, "Okay, this is our objective, this is our duty, this is where we're going from a literacy perspective," then they'll see, "Oh, Reading Apprenticeship fits that perfectly. Why wouldn't we use it?"

One of the advantages of a top-down approach to such innovations is the opportunity to build systems of support that include in-depth professional learning, curriculum, coaching and feedback, and explicit articulation with teacher evaluation.

Two examples of Reading Apprenticeship implementations that have been designed for large-scale rollout and comprehensive support are described in Chapter Seven. These models, from Canada's Manitoba Province (see "Building Capacity System-wide: A Canadian Case Study") and the 18,000-teacher Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (see "Building Momentum for a District-wide Rollout"), generously invest institutional resources in the service of deep, iterative teacher learning.

Opportunities for Scale-Up at the Community College Level

Our campus is a place now where more faculty who aren't in the reading department are willing to concede that their students need help.

—Amanda Corcoran, American River College English instructor

Compared with their colleagues in secondary schools, college faculty members enjoy considerable instructional autonomy, and they have many more opportunities for initiating instructional change within and beyond their classroom walls. Interest in Reading Apprenticeship on a college campus typically begins with one or two entrepreneurial instructors willing to engage others and then leverage initial interest across departments or into campus-wide programs.

Originally, Reading Apprenticeship found its way onto college campuses as a way to address the literacy needs of underprepared students. Its use has spread from remedial applications into a wide range of subject area departments. Many instructors are starting to see that their own disciplinary ways of reading can be a powerful resource for apprenticing students. Additionally, colleges' attention to student engagement and a focus in recent years on growth mindsets and productive persistence has helped faculty see how the Reading Apprenticeship Framework's attention to the social and personal dimensions of classroom life and metacognitive conversation connect to goals they and their colleagues have for their students.

Reading Apprenticeship is also becoming more common in campus-wide programs like new-faculty seminars and student first-year experience courses that depend on a design partnership between faculty and college administrators.

Statewide networks for the scale-up of Reading Apprenticeship on college campuses are also emerging. As described in Chapter Seven, this work is supported by a vibrant California network (see "Communities of Practice: An Educator-Led, State-Supported Network") and another that is building momentum in Washington. (See "Building a Statewide Network from a Spark.")

Inviting Colleagues to Take a Look

Many college faculty are keenly aware of how little they have been prepared to apply learning theory and effective instructional practices to the disciplinary expertise they have developed. Concerns about students' needs for literacy support are particularly vexing.

Biology instructor Shane Ramey's experience is representative of what college faculty are increasingly recognizing as a new responsibility to their students. Shane teaches honors molecular and cellular biology at College of the Canyons. He was uneasy about whether his advanced students were understanding the course content:

I asked my students to raise their hands if they had read either—or both—of the two chapters we were scheduled to cover during the day's lecture. I was disappointed, but not surprised, that not a single student raised a hand.

At American River College, a campus-wide survey asked instructors to take a look at their students as readers. The survey is designed to create a portrait of students' expectations, preparation, and the background they bring to courses where faculty assign academic reading. Instructor Chris Padgett, co-director of the campus Reading Apprenticeship Project, says the reading survey, developed with the college reading and research divisions, is useful because it offers a fairly quick, efficient portrait of the state of reading on campus. "With any luck," Chris says, "it will have an effect on the ways folks think about reading here and its place in the overall goal of student success."

Inviting faculty members to take a look at their students' reading needs is a first step. What happens next often has a persistent individual involved. That was certainly the case at Northern Essex Community College where Trish Schade first brought attention to Reading Apprenticeship and nurtured an increasingly supportive campus-wide response. (See Close-Up 1.3, *Starting with a Group of One*.)

CLOSE-UP 1.3

Starting with a Group of One

About a decade ago, Trish Schade was one of the very first college instructors to take a look at how Reading Apprenticeship might provide disciplinary support for student literacy. She was a member of a small inquiry group of California instructors trying out Reading Apprenticeship in their college classes. When she later moved across the country—from California's Merced Community College to Northern Essex Community College in Massachusetts—she was eager to share Reading Apprenticeship with her new colleagues, but no one had heard of it. Trish needed ways to get their attention.

One way she built interest in Reading Apprenticeship was through paired courses she taught with other faculty. In her classes, students were learning Reading Apprenticeship routines. Before long, Trish says, her faculty partners were noticing and asking her about her teaching: "What are you doing to get the students so engaged?"

Trish also decided to start a Reading Apprenticeship inquiry group. She wasn't sure who would show up, so she invited professional tutors, lab coordinators, and librarians as well as faculty across

disciplines. The group that assembled monthly was small but persistent. They tried out Reading Apprenticeship strategies, presented to others, and slowly grew in numbers and confidence.

Now, the Reading Apprenticeship inquiry group has developed into the college-supported Transitions to Academic Success Initiative, and Reading Apprenticeship approaches have become integral to the first-year seminar at Northern Essex. The college administration, pleased with the team's contribution to student literacy, asked the group to bring their focus on academic literacy to the most rigorous classes on campus—gateway courses in the academic disciplines. For example, Emily Gonzalez, who now co-chairs the Transitions team with Trish, has been instrumental in spreading interest in Reading Apprenticeship to members of her science department.

Starting with a group of one, Trish and then Emily and others who saw the promise of Reading Apprenticeship built a grassroots movement to make academic literacy a campus-wide mission.

Making Use of Campus Structures for Professional Learning

When campus interest in Reading Apprenticeship develops, instructors who take the initiative to introduce Reading Apprenticeship to others may first have gotten up a little steam simply by inviting faculty members to visit a class where they are trying out Reading Apprenticeship approaches.

More formally, enthusiastic teachers can use college structures for professional learning, as Trish Schade did with a campus FIG⁴ at Northern Essex Community College.

Paid “flexible” (flex) learning days are another professional learning structure available for interesting others in Reading Apprenticeship. For example, at American River College, instructor Amanda Corcoran, who is now a co-leader of the Reading Apprenticeship Project at the college, first found out about Reading Apprenticeship in a three-hour flex presentation:

I understood that my students needed additional literacy support and I couldn't quite figure out what it was. So I went to a Reading Apprenticeship flex presentation and what they said about how students needed to be apprenticed—even though I'm not a reading teacher—it made perfect sense to me.

Amanda is now a veteran of the three-hour flex structure, introducing Reading Apprenticeship as a regular offering on campus professional learning days.

Communities of practice are another structure community college faculty and staff have embraced for building Reading Apprenticeship expertise and advocacy. These can be self-supporting on a campus or organized across campuses. (See Chapter Seven for more about communities of practice.)

On some campuses, it is administrators rather than faculty members who set the course for increased attention to disciplinary literacy, providing material and political support. When this happens, the pace of scale-up can really accelerate. At Renton Technical College, for example, fully 80 percent of the faculty has participated in college-underwritten Reading Apprenticeship professional development. A forward-thinking college president and a small team of faculty and staff made it happen. (See Close-Up 1.4, *Galvanizing a Campus Around Reading*.)

Integrating Support for Reading Apprenticeship Across Campus Programs

In community college, beyond Reading Apprenticeship's central role in subject area teaching, it can also play an important part in strengthening student services. Programs designed to provide special support for student success, such

CLOSE-UP 1.4

Galvanizing a Campus Around Reading

Renton Technical College is attractive to many students who prefer not to read. Students typically think of themselves as hands-on learners. They enroll to train for jobs like veterinary assistant, phlebotomy technician, or welder—jobs, they perhaps assume, where reading is not a feature.

Back in 2008, however, when Renton got focused on reading, college president Steve Hanson and other campus leaders were concerned that students' reading inexperience was keeping too many of them from completing their coursework or attaining career gateway certificates and degrees.

As a first step in the campus plan to home in on reading, the college underwrote the participation of three instructors and a librarian in an intensive week of leadership training in Reading Apprenticeship. The four came back excited, with a vision of what they could change in their own classrooms and how they could support colleagues.

After a successful year piloting what they had learned, they were convinced that their experiences would translate into faculty interest in a shared literacy agenda. Instructor Michele Lesmeister, for example, had collected data that her Adult Basic Education students were completing their requirements in two-thirds to one-half the time of students nationally. Students' persistence in her classes soared from 51 to 89 percent.

The college paid for four more faculty members to attend Reading Apprenticeship training, and Michele and her colleagues sent out newsletters,

sponsored faculty meetings, and modeled in classrooms. "Let us know," they encouraged colleagues, "how you want us to help." Librarian Debbie Crumb collected a robust library of Reading Apprenticeship books and articles, tip sheets, and videos.

After three years, with the demand for Reading Apprenticeship professional development increasing, Michele collaborated with staff at the Strategic Literacy Initiative at WestEd to develop Reading Apprenticeship 101, a six-week, thirty-hour online course specifically for community college instructors.⁵

Michele taught the first, pilot section to a sold-out contingent of Renton faculty who learned about and tried out Reading Apprenticeship routines and then exchanged reflections with their colleagues. At the end of six weeks, she reported:

I have been here twenty years and I have never seen this campus pulled together on one topic like Reading Apprenticeship has done. People right now are changing curriculum like you can't believe.

With *reading* as the catalyst, dynamic teacher leaders, an engaged administration, and an open-minded faculty are moving their campus toward an increasingly ambitious culture of learning. Eighty percent of faculty has Reading Apprenticeship training, and this two-year college has just launched its first four-year bachelor's degree program, in applied science.

as tutoring, summer bridge, and first-year experience courses, have found that the Reading Apprenticeship Framework is a natural fit. When colleges can integrate a coherent strengths-based approach to student learning—across subject areas and support services—students' academic experience makes sense.

Pasadena City College is one campus where academics and support services share a Reading Apprenticeship foundation. For a description of how Pasadena students benefit, see Chapter Seven, "Infiltrating a Campus, One Program After Another."

Using External Pressures to Move Toward Local Goals

We're being pushed politically to do something about student success, so why not use that process to push for an instructional program that genuinely works.

—Chris Padgett, American River College history instructor

External pressures for change frequently result in quick-fix, surface-level approaches. In some situations, however, leadership teams of faculty and administrators are able to use external pressures to create opportunities, and sometimes to secure funding, for deeper improvements that align with their goals. Finding ways to match these pressures with the goals of a school, a district, or a campus takes skill and vision.

From Data Discussions to Deeper Reading

In many secondary schools, high-stakes test scores drive schools' search for improvement opportunities. Similarly, community colleges are increasingly pressured by state requirements—as well as their own goals—to improve student persistence and completion rates. Looking at student data is a concrete way to begin a discussion about needed improvement.

Beyond Reading Scores

At Titusville High School, administrators were unhappy with students' low reading scores on the Pennsylvania Keystone Exams. Their first thought was to ask the English department to step up. It didn't take much discussion with staff, however, to recognize that students needed subject-specific reading skills to access content in all their courses. Principal Scott Davie has seen an initial focus on test scores evolve into an appreciation for how literacy transforms subject area learning:

Standardized tests don't always drive the bus, but they are an obvious fit for discussion. Students were not doing well on the state reading exam. The need to become better teachers of reading motivated us to jump on board with Reading Apprenticeship, but we continue to be on board because as students' reading skills improve, you can take things further with the content. You can go deeper, you can get that evidence drawn out, and you can have more enjoyable class discussions as a result of your kids' ability to do that.

Beyond Defensiveness

A different discussion about data was taking place at Manistee High School. Principal Julia Raddatz says that when more and more students began

struggling to meet grade-level expectations, the staff acknowledged that, although they were teaching the same way they always had, their students weren't learning. "Instead of defending our teaching, we said, 'Let's really look at what our kids need, and, as a teacher, what do I do?'"

For Julia and her teachers, the key was recognizing the role of disciplinary literacy in student thinking:

Before Reading Apprenticeship, I don't think our science teachers would have thought of themselves as literacy specialists. And that's what changed everything. Our teachers, especially content level teachers, now understand how literacy instruction enhances content instruction. You really can't have a great biology classroom until your kids learn how to read biology and have the independence of their own thinking in biology.

Focusing on Student Engagement

Savvy educators dealing with external pressures to improve test scores know that if test scores are the problem, student engagement is going to be key to any solution with staying power. The Reading Apprenticeship Framework's focus on the social and personal dimensions, and emphasis on metacognitive conversation, means that issues of engagement, motivation, and developing academic dispositions are always an important driver in successful implementation.

As next described, in two schools where SSR Plus⁶ caught fire (the Reading Apprenticeship program that puts a metacognitive spin on sustained silent reading), test scores rose along with students' reading pleasure. In a college English class for first-generation students, students being apprenticed into the expectations of college reading learned that engaging metacognitively with text can be a kick.

The Kids Are in the Library Like You Can't Believe

For almost a decade, about half of students at Reading High School, in Reading, Pennsylvania, had failed to graduate, in no small part because of poor reading skills. Students' passing rate on the state's Keystone literature exam, for example, ranged between 30 and 40 percent. When a new principal, Eric Turman, arrived, test scores and graduation rates were at the top of his agenda.

He moved students to teachers whom he thought would best be able to help them. The passing rate on the literature test moved from 37 percent to 54 percent. The following year, he further refined teaching assignments. Four of his English teachers had recently begun Reading Apprenticeship professional development. Those teachers took on the six hundred eleventh graders least likely to pass the literature test.

Nine months later, Reading High School beat the state average, with 61 percent of students passing the exam. Eric credits his teachers, Reading Apprenticeship, and the Reading Apprenticeship SSR Plus program (see Close-Up 1.5, *SSR Plus: We're Going to Read for Two Minutes*), with turning nonreaders into readers:

We went from 37 percent to 61 percent in two years with those teachers. My librarian emailed me, "You're not going to believe this. The number of books the eleventh graders are checking out is off the charts. These kids are in the library and checking out books at a rate I've never seen."

Eric's vision for his school is one of a Reading Apprenticeship *building*—a place where attention to literacy is embedded in the school culture. "Having

CLOSE-UP 1.5

SSR Plus: We're Going to Read for Two Minutes

If Reading Apprenticeship's model for sustained silent *choice* reading takes time every day out of subject area instruction, how can that improve students' subject area performance?

Nicole Dysart and Sindy Goodhart are co-teachers of those eleventh graders at Reading High School who are most in need of help to pass the Pennsylvania-required literature test. "At our Reading Apprenticeship training," Nicole says, "we saw how we could turn this community of nonreaders into readers, without them even realizing it."

Their students use the same curriculum and read the same literature as the other eleventh graders. The difference is the amount of reading their students do *in class*. "We read pretty much the entire time," Sindy says. "We start with SSR. I've seen SSR before, where it's just, 'Read for twenty minutes.' We didn't do that."

As Nicole explains, "We started small. I would say to the class, 'We're going to read for two minutes.' Initially, they would say, 'That's so long!' We'd read, and I'd call time. They'd be, 'It's done?' They were astounded that was two minutes. As we progressed, they wanted more. 'Well, can't we read for five? Can't we read for ten?' It actually increased our students' vocabulary and reading stamina exponentially.

"And since we teach literature skills such as theme or characterization," Nicole continues, "with

the metacognitive logs, we could say, 'Today when you're reading your SSR book, you're going to focus on characterization. Tell me how this character changed and why.' Then we would shift into the piece of literature we had for the curriculum that day, and I'd say, 'Just like in your metacognitive log, we're going to focus on characterization.' It was an easy transition from one thing they were really invested and interested in to something that—not so much. But they know about characterization, because they just did it in their metacognitive logs. That helped a lot to build their confidence in their reading and in their skills."

When it came time for Nicole and Sindy's students to take the literature exam, students themselves recognized how much Reading Apprenticeship helped them. As Sindy recalls, "They kept asking before the test, 'Can we write on the [test] books, can we Talk to the Text?' I said, 'Absolutely. Please do. Circle things that are confusing to you, go back to them. Identify words that you're unsure of, then use the context.' I said, 'Mark those books up!' When they came back from the test, they were so excited, 'Oh my god, I used Talking to the Text, and I did this, and I did that.' It was such a moment for me, 'Okay, I think we're on the right track here.'"

seen the success we had with Reading Apprenticeship in literature classes, bringing it into science and history is a no-brainer,” he says. “Hopefully, in the next three to five years we’ll be a Reading Apprenticeship building. We could really be talking about something special.”

Turning a Stigma into Success

In Michigan, when a high school has been rated in the state’s bottom 5 percent, based on a number of metrics, it is listed as a Priority school, and sanctions apply. At Edsel Ford High School in Dearborn, when the Priority rating hit, principal Scott Casebolt had been at the helm for only a year.

The Priority rating mandated an extra hour of instruction, Monday through Thursday, for the vast majority of Edsel Ford students. On Fridays, teachers stayed late for an hour of professional development.

Out of a school population of 1,400, about 1,100 students were assigned to a Language Arts Plus, Math Plus, or Science Plus intervention class that kept them in school that extra hour four days a week. “Plus” was the key in each course, and it refers to SSR Plus—the Reading Apprenticeship approach to SSR that invites students to read for pleasure within a metacognitive framework. Scott has special enthusiasm for the role of the intervention classes:

We knew the kids needed to read, and we knew that they needed to have that metacognitive piece. They are all reading for 20 minutes a day, even in Math Plus. We’re linking that to a huge part of our success.

Kids had lost interest in reading going back to second, third, and fourth grade because they lost access to high-interest materials. They lost the enjoyment piece, and we brought it back with the SSR. It’s carried over to the academic piece.

With a combination of grant funds and funds related to the Priority rating, close to 75 percent of the faculty were able to participate in Reading Apprenticeship professional development, including extra time for teachers to meet and collaborate—time that Scott and the teachers see as crucial. Now when Scott does classroom walk-throughs, he sees the payoff for this kind of focus. “I think we’ve truly established a culture for learning,” he says. “The classroom environment you see is supportive. You see the Reading Apprenticeship routines, you see the metacognitive piece, the tie-in with the Common Core. You can ask the kids what they’re doing and they know. There’s just a tremendous transformation in the classrooms.”

Scott and the Edsel Ford staff and students were successful in exiting Priority status in a single year. In the state’s Top to Bottom ranking, they jumped from the 1st percentile to the 29th percentile. Students proficient in reading improved

from 49 percent to 59 percent. The school's improvement plan and funding are still in place for another year at least, which means continued intervention classes. Scott anticipates that students' experience of success and growth will continue as well:

They're starting to have success in their classes, they're performing better on tests, and they see the improvement. Apparently, that success is helping motivate them.

Apprenticing College Students to Ask, "Why Does This Matter?"

Lauren Servais, who teaches English at Santa Rosa Junior College and coordinates the campus Puente program,⁷ was initially drawn to Reading Apprenticeship because it reminded her of the many important ways she herself had been apprenticed as a first-generation student. Now when she meets with faculty members in a faculty interest group or facilitates Reading Apprenticeship workshops for colleagues, she makes a point to connect her experience learning how to be a college student with the Reading Apprenticeship Framework:

There are so many things about being in college—how do I really apprentice them into college? What I'm trying to do is have students engage text and wonder about the things we're reading. I want them fired up: "What does this mean for me? What does this mean in the time when it was written? Is it still relevant? How does it connect to my life and the experiences of my classmates?" I want them to see that reading can be this very active, engaged thing, "What are we doing here? Why does this matter?"

Turning Reform Overload into Reform Coherence

Connect the dots: Reading Apprenticeship, Danielson, Common Core. I try to help staff to understand that these are all pieces that fit. Everything we're doing is based on literacy in the content areas.

—Harley Ramsey, Otto-Eldred Junior-Senior High School principal

When schools and colleges are bombarded with improvement initiatives, large and small, how can leaders help teachers make sense of them? How can they amplify the power of Reading Apprenticeship in concert with other institutional priorities? The ability of leaders to promote coherent visions and help colleagues see how Reading Apprenticeship connects to other reforms, potential resources, and existing structures is a key element of success.

Some schools and colleges see the opportunity to introduce Reading Apprenticeship under the umbrella of school improvement plans or when it can complement other high-priority local reforms, such as college and career

readiness standards, teacher evaluation frameworks, or a college effort to “accelerate” students through remedial courses.

Reframing Competing Demands

When state, national, and local reform priorities seem to collide and overwhelm staff, the Reading Apprenticeship Framework can be used as an opportunity to clarify areas of overlap and reframe competing demands as complementary.

In Pennsylvania, for example, teachers deal with Pennsylvania Core standards for curriculum, they have the Danielson Framework for Teaching for teacher evaluation, and they must track evidence of growth on Student Learning Opportunities (SLOs). Otto-Eldred High School principal Harley Ramsey makes a point of working with teachers to show them how these initiatives fit together and strengthen the school’s overriding focus on literacy in the content areas.

I’ve been very purposeful and specific with teachers. If you look at the Reading Apprenticeship and the Pennsylvania version of the Common Core, they are strongly convergent in content literacy. If you take a look at Danielson, it’s all about creating persistent, independent learners. The focus is on the student, a student-centered classroom, which is really what Reading Apprenticeship is. If an SLO’s not literacy-based, well, why? Literacy should be threaded through everything we’re doing.

Now we’re starting to understand the connections. “Oh, it’s not a big deal because it’s already part of what we’re doing. This is just how we represent it, or how we assess it, or how we’re evaluated on it.” It just makes sense.

In post-observation conferences, I will ask, “Okay, you did x, y, z literacy activity in class today. Where does it fall [in the Danielson framework]?” Then we start a side conversation, “Okay, what if you did this, where does that fall?” So they’re always drawing the conclusion themselves, “Yeah, if I do this I’m pushing ‘distinguished’ in most of these categories.”

For schools that use Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching along with Reading Apprenticeship, a crosswalk tool helps teachers find the commonalities between these two powerful systems. Many teachers have been introduced to the simple tool in Chapter Six, Team Tool 6.17, Mapping Reading Apprenticeship onto the Danielson Framework, for constructing their own understanding of the complementary nature of Reading Apprenticeship and the Danielson framework.

The Common Core State Standards and other new college and career readiness standards are a major new focus for secondary schools in many states.

At California's Anaheim Union High School District, administrators saw the value of Reading Apprenticeship for supporting teachers' implementation of the Common Core standards and the special value of Reading Apprenticeship's metacognitive routines for the district's plurality of English learners.

District superintendent Mike Matsuda had been head of district professional development when he learned that the district's high schools were eligible to participate in grant-funded Reading Apprenticeship professional development. He jumped on it. "I was in the position to really bring this forward," he says. "I framed it as a support for the training for Common Core, especially for history and science. That's how we got started."

District leaders also recognized the opportunity as one that would benefit the district's large population of English learners. Jackie Counts, Anaheim's English curriculum specialist, says, "What Reading Apprenticeship was offering—metacognitive strategies that students are taught very purposefully and that become part of their repertoire—are strategies that they can pull out when they need to. All students need that but English learners need it in a very structured, mindful way."

Seven high schools signed on and volunteer teachers began the professional development. Mike, who was monitoring teachers' evaluation of the program at the time, was impressed with the quality of the professional development itself and the "value-added" collaboration that was structured for teachers in the monthly professional learning community meetings. "Teachers felt the training was quite transformational," he reports. "That's a pretty powerful statement in terms of teachers taking ownership. A big piece is turning around attitudes about whether kids can access more complex texts."

Rethinking School Improvement Plans

Secondary schools all have school improvement plans (SIPs). When administrators and teachers share a desired focus on creating a culture of literacy in their school, the SIP is a logical place to make that commitment concrete and keep track of how they are doing. Close-Up 1.6, *Accounting for Reading Apprenticeship in a School Improvement Plan*, describes how the staff at one Michigan school made this work.

Accelerating Remediation on College Campuses

Many college campuses have found that the Reading Apprenticeship Framework helps faculties coalesce around a unifying approach for achieving their equity goals. This might begin with changing instruction to accelerate underprepared

CLOSE-UP 1.6

Accounting for Reading Apprenticeship in a School Improvement Plan

When the Dearborn, Michigan, school district chose Reading Apprenticeship as the district's secondary school literacy initiative, Youssef Mosallam had been principal of the 2,400-student Fordson High School for one year. A believer in the power of the school improvement plan to shape school change, Youssef, and his staff, had already decided to build the school improvement plan around three initiatives—the SIOP sheltered instruction model (English learners make up 56 percent of the school population), Habits of Mind, and 6+1 Writing Traits—and stick to them. Now, given the new district priority, Fordson would have to add Reading Apprenticeship to their SIP. Youssef was concerned:

The fear of every staff is, "This is a new fad. We'll do it for a couple of years and it will go away." As a new principal in a building so large, that had so much of a need, the last thing we wanted was to push forward on something and then pull it away later.

Meanwhile, Fordson's full-time literacy coordinator, Amy Keith-Wardlow, had participated in Reading Apprenticeship professional development along with a small group of volunteer faculty members. Youssef attended parts of the professional development as well. Given the district's emphasis on a Reading Apprenticeship approach, and Fordson's existing commitments to other initiatives,

they were encouraged that Reading Apprenticeship would be a good fit.

Amy signed on for more intensive training to lead Reading Apprenticeship professional development at her school. She could see the relationships between the pre-existing SIP priorities and Reading Apprenticeship, and it was going to be her responsibility to manage Fordson's professional development so that teachers did too.

Although the school improvement plan drives Fordson teacher evaluations, it does not do so in a vacuum. As Youssef explains, the professional development *process* is key:

We aren't only going in and working with teachers and saying, "These are the areas we want you to improve on." We have those conversations, but every teacher has multiple layers of support. On a regular basis we have teachers visiting other teachers' classrooms, usually Reading Apprenticeship model classrooms, to observe. The teachers use an observation protocol, and then have a conversation with peers who were also in the observation. Amy is involved in that conversation, and that allows for, "Okay, I'm going to try that tomorrow." Then you see the emails going back and forth: "Amy, I'm going to do this tomorrow 4th hour. Can you come and observe?" There's the constant reinforcement.

students' path through non-credit-bearing remedial reading courses, but also include changes to instruction in credit-bearing courses that better support all students to meet rigorous academic demands.

Recent research on the promise of accelerating community college students' movement through remedial math and reading and writing sequences, and through non-credit-bearing ELL courses has prompted a growing development of alternative, accelerated courses. These courses have the potential to move students more quickly into credit-bearing courses.

When a campus decides to take on acceleration for its pre-college-level or basic skills courses, curriculum has to change, and so does instruction. Katie Hern, a leader of the acceleration movement nationally and co-founder and director of the California Acceleration Project (CAP), has long been aware of the synergy between the work of acceleration to redesign remediation and the affordances of Reading Apprenticeship to support literacy instruction in an accelerated environment:

Once a college steps forward to do the kind of curricular redesign that is no longer pushing students through three semesters of non-credit-bearing remedial courses, it calls upon you to teach differently. You can't spend a whole semester doing grammar workbook exercises. You've got to get students in there with challenging texts and you have to be able to support them to be successful with those texts. That's where faculty are reporting that Reading Apprenticeship is a really great complement to the structural and pedagogical work they're doing with CAP. Reading Apprenticeship enhances their confidence and their toolkit around supporting students to be successful with challenging reading.



Bringing Reading Apprenticeship into any educational institution is a significant commitment. The Reading Apprenticeship Framework is designed to guide deep transformations of teaching and learning. Without sustained focus, such transformations become glimpsed opportunities that simply slip away.

The diverse community of Reading Apprenticeship schools and colleges suggests many ways to envision a culture of literacy and begin a process of implementation with staying power. Whether advocating as a single teacher or responding to an administrator eager to have everyone on board, there are a range of ways to make the case for using Reading Apprenticeship to meet local goals for students' engaged academic literacy.

In Chapter Two, we learn how administrators and teacher leaders have shared leadership roles in developing a culture of literacy with a Reading Apprenticeship foundation.

Notes

1. This approach to teaching is described briefly in the preface of this book and is the subject of an earlier book, *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*, by Ruth Schoenbach, Cynthia Greenleaf, and Lynn Murphy, and published by Jossey-Bass in 2012. Also see Appendix A, a graphic representation of the Reading Apprenticeship Framework.

2. Excel Centers make up a network of fourteen charter schools in Indiana, Texas, and Tennessee—sponsored by Goodwill Industries—with a mission of bringing basic secondary education to adult learners, many of whom have been out of school and out of a job for years. Intensive professional development supports the teachers who support these students.
3. Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE) was a five-year, federally funded study of Reading Apprenticeship implementation and scale-up.
4. The acronym FIG refers to faculty interest (or inquiry) group and is sometimes expanded to include staff as well as in SFIG.
5. This online course is now widely available to college faculty members. See more about it on the Reading Apprenticeship website: <http://readingapprenticeship.org/professional-development/college/faculty-101-course>
6. SSR Plus combines students' sustained silent reading of self-selected books with metacognitive logs and conversation. Students read for enjoyment and write and talk about their reading responses and processes (not about plot summaries). Chapter Six in *Reading for Understanding* describes the Reading Apprenticeship SSR Plus program in detail.
7. Puente community college programs are designed to improve the college completion rates of underrepresented students, typically those who are the first generation in their families to attend college.