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Many teacher education programs offer a course on content area reading which is required for certification by some states (Farrell and Cirrincione, 1984). However, as discussed by authors (e.g., Memory, 1983; Ratekin, Simpson, and Alvermann, Dishner, 1985; Stewart and O'Brien, 1989), pre-service teachers generally do not see a need for content reading instruction. This attitude results from a range of factors, from student perception of limited opportunities for incorporating reading instruction into restricted time blocks at the secondary level (Stewart and O'Brien, 1989) to questions about the philosophy of and rationale behind such a course (Memory, 1983).

As a college content reading instructor, I have met with much resistance related to the latter objection. The idea that all teachers should assume responsibility for ensuring that students can apply literacy skills to better understand content and appreciate reading is difficult for some to grasp. After years of grappling with the design and structure of my content area reading course, I have arrived at an overall approach based on three principles which I believe has successfully aided students in understanding the rationale, and more

importantly, motivated them to apply learned strategies in context.

Content reading and whole language

Kennedy contends, "Teachers need not only to understand ... content deeply, but also to know something about how that content is taught and learned" (1991, p. 17). Preservice teachers' active involvement and immersion in the learning process promotes the development of reflective educators prepared to offer effective instruction.

Since many elements of content reading instruction are based on principles of whole language (Gilles, 1988), both the daily environment and student assignments for the course were developed within this framework. According to Cambourne and Turbill (1988), students in this type of environment are engaged in activities that promote "the literacy learning [they] are grappling with at that particular time. These structures support them while they 'cope' with the learning unrest taking place in their heads as new learning occurs" (p. 8). Furthermore, in this setting, students directly experience the literacy environment that they may be asked to implement as future teachers.

Three basic principles of whole learning (Brozo and Simpson, 1995) provide the framework for course instruction.

Principle 1: Literacy processes are used on a daily basis. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are necessary to the type of environment espoused. Thus, lecture became a limited mode of instruction, as students tended to take on a passive role in response. When lecture was combined with demonstration of reading strategies and then students were given the opportunity to discuss and critique the use of these strategies, the students became more actively engaged in

course content. This interaction and give and take of ideas encouraged and supported the learning process. A related activity was student participation in a debate concerning the role of the content area teacher in providing instruction for students with disabilities in their classrooms. Many concerns and different perspectives surfaced during this exercise.

Outside readings were used to supplement information in the text. In small groups, students chose to read and share a piece of literature (fiction or nonfiction) that they could use in their future classrooms to teach particular concepts. They reviewed current articles on literacy and also young adult literature selections.

As students learned about the reading/writing connection and how writing can clarify and extend course content at the secondary level, they participated themselves in various writing activities on a regular basis. They wrote informal reactions to class activities/discussions and more formal essays concerning the application of strategies to their particular area.

Much emphasis was put on the use of portfolios as an alternative assessment technique appropriate in any content area classroom. To familiarize the students with development of portfolios, they created their own literacy portfolio as one course requirement. The purpose of the portfolio was to document understanding of themselves in terms of general literacy development and to reflect on their own growth and goals for enhancement of literacy in their future students. Participation in portfolio assessment in teacher education to document learning provides the opportunity for decision-making and empowerment (Rousculp and Maring, 1990; Wagner, Brock, and Agnew, 1994). In addition, this assignment supported one aim of the teacher education program at

the college: to develop reflective practitioners capable of acting to ensure student learning.

   Principle 2: Students are given much opportunity to use and practice what is learned. Simulations gave students the opportunity to practice selecting, adapting, and implementing reading strategies. This was done for example, when students were asked to create graphic organizers (Barron, 1969). After being introduced to various types of graphic organizers (visual diagrams illustrating relationships among concepts) in class, they identified key vocabulary in a unit of instruction they were writing and selected an organizer that would best depict the relationships among these concepts and words. They then taught the concepts in their organizer to two peers, one with the same content area major and one with a different major, and solicited their input about understanding of the relationships of the concepts based on the choice of organizer. Suggestions for improvement of the organizer followed, and students redesigned them according to these suggestions. Before- and after-versions of the organizers were quite different, and many students remarked that peers had seen problems in the original version that they had not seen. These results support the work of Florio-Ruane and Lensmire (1990) regarding the benefits of preservice teachers trying out teaching strategies and reflecting about them with others.

   On a larger scale, connecting theory and practice was done through two microteaching assignments. The first, which was videotaped, was one lesson from a two-week thematic unit developed by individual students and taught to a small group of eight or nine peers. Students then reflected on their own videotape, noting strengths and weaknesses and their use of content reading strategies. These reflections were included in the portfolio. The second microteaching was one lesson from an interdisciplinary unit developed by five

students representing different content areas. The challenge that this type of instruction presents at the secondary level was recognized in light of the highly departmentalized nature of most high schools. However, it is vital that students have experience in planning with peers for this type of instruction, as these types of units, according to Pappas, Kiefer, and Levstik (1990), "link together content from many areas of the curriculum, depict the connections that exist across disciplines, and provide children a sense of ownership over their own learning" (cited in Erwin, Hines, and Curtis, 1992).

Principle 3: Learning is a social process. The social nature of the whole language environment integral to this reading course has been partially described above. Regular interaction, dialogue, and feedback among students and instructor promoted and clarified new understandings.

In addition, literature circles (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988) were used periodically for students with the same content area major to discuss their responses to a book selected by them which could be used to supplement instruction in their future classes. The group analyzed the book for multicultural representations, stereotypes, and vocabulary and comprehension teaching strategies necessary for high school students' understanding. Small groups reported their findings to the whole class after participating in the literature circles for approximately six weeks.

Particular forms of cooperative learning groups were used for purposes suited to the respective strategy. For example, the Jigsaw Method (Aaronson, Blaney, Sikes, Stephan, and Snapp, 1975) was used during the study of the comprehension process. In jigsaw teaching, individual members of a group become expert on one aspect of the material to be learned and then teach the information to the other

members.   In this case, group members learned about prediction, inferencing, and metacognition as aspects of comprehension and then explained these processes and instructional strategies that develop them to other members of the group.

Conclusion

Teacher education in content reading has been fraught with challenges posed by a general resistance among preservice teachers to the implementation of these strategies in various curriculum areas.   Successful incorporation of this instruction into future classrooms is contingent upon effective education of preservice teachers in the rationale and pedagogy of content reading.   When reading/writing strategies are presented to college students in an environment that models that which is being described and promoted for secondary learners, students are more likely to grasp the rationale behind the course and motivated to implement the strategies. These strategies are valuable as preservice teachers prepare to deal with a wide range of students in their future classrooms.

The three principles of whole learning which provide the framework for my content area reading course are not unique.   However, they have successfully engaged preservice teachers in using literacy processes, practicing and refining what is learned, and interacting in a social context to gain insight into the role of content reading strategies in the classroom.   Most importantly, preservice teachers are reflecting on their responsibility for ensuring that future students can apply literacy skills to better understand content and appreciate reading in all areas.

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