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The Greatest Literacy Challenges Facing Contemporary High School Teachers: Implications for Secondary Teacher Preparation

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Secondary teachers face significant challenges in their efforts to increase the literacy levels of adolescents. Encouraging teachers to speak out about these challenges and to recommend initiatives that may improve literacy practices for adolescents is vital for future reform efforts. This study examines the questions: "What are the greatest literacy challenges facing high school content area teachers?" and "What will help to diminish these challenges?" The data collection questionnaire was distributed to teachers in eight high schools throughout the greater Chicago area. A discussion of the findings suggests compelling directions for secondary teachers and teacher educators.

WHILE SEVERAL REFORMS in higher education teacher preparation have made a difference in more teachers being highly prepared and qualified (Smylie, Bay, & Tozer, 1999), preparing teachers to meet the literacy demands of secondary students still remains inadequate. Improving literacy learning in our nation's high schools needs serious elevation as an educational priority at all levels. The 2002 NAEP (National Association for Educational Progress) Report indicates that 36 percent of students in grade 12 performed at a proficient level, indicating that only a little over one-third of our nation's high school seniors can understand challenging material (Feller, 2003). This was a decline in performance from 1998 when the NAEP reported the percentage of seniors who performed at the proficient level as 40 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Additionally the 1998 report states that no more than 6 percent of the adolescents performed at the advanced level which demonstrates students' ability to analyze and extend the meaning of the materials they read. The NAEP data further show more than one-third of the students did not demonstrate competence at a basic level of literacy.

The International Reading Association has taken a substantial leadership role in elevating attention to middle school and secondary literacy issues by establishing the Commission on Adolescent Literacy in 1997 (Rycik & Irvin, 2001). The work of this Commission resulted in the published document, *Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement* (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999), which recommends principles for teachers to consider when supporting the literacy growth of secondary students. Still much more comprehensive work needs to be done as challenges still persist and "teachers, administrators, and staff developers have asked for more examples of practices that might renew and revitalize their efforts for middle and high school students" (Rycik & Irvin, 2001, p. 4).

Teaching has greatly increased in range and complexity over the last decade. Teachers now find themselves in highly pressured environments (Pincas, 2002). Faced with the reality of overcrowded classrooms, high stakes testing, and standards-based environments, using instructional practices that move students to higher levels of thinking through more "authentic" forms of learning are lost. Additional factors

that compound the situation are high student mobility, absenteeism, minimal student engagement, misbehavior, missing homework, cultural and linguistic diversity, special needs, and increasing numbers of students from poverty and single parent households (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, & Waff, 1998). Regardless of the number or degree of challenges, teachers still remain accountable for fostering literacy growth among all students.

Efforts to improve literacy learning for secondary students must take seriously the realities and challenges persistent in today's high schools. Reform theorists who suggest "improvement can be made through a series of workshops, enhanced technology, sanctions and the like," (Smylie, Bay, & Tozer, 1999, p. 59) are naïve at best. A new paradigm requires comprehensive and systemic change. It also requires a serious re-orientation towards broad organizational, political, and economic presuppositions on which definition and acquisition of change must be based. Moreover, it involves a commitment to putting teachers at the forefront of the reform process. Valencia and Wixson (2000) argue that it is time for the voices of teachers to be heard. Without empowered professional voices, we lose the potential for constructing serious reform.

Emerging Directions

If students are to achieve high literacy standards, evidence strongly suggests that what teachers know and can do is one of the more important factors influencing student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 228). Research also makes it clear that "if teachers are to negotiate the demands of new standards and new students, they must have access to a deeper base of knowledge and expertise than most teacher preparation programs now provide" (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 229).

While several studies have looked at reform in teacher preparation programs, Schwartz (1996) concluded that reform changes in teacher preparation have resulted in "little more than adjusting on the margins" (p. 3). Particularly troubling, in secondary teacher preparation, is the limited attention given to the challenges existing in schools in which future teachers must help students to achieve literacy, and the problems

of schooling in a broader social context. Moreover, in many states, secondary teacher preparation programs include a requirement of a content area reading course, whereas in other states there is no equivalent requirement. This has remained literally unchanged for years, even as secondary students continue to struggle with reading and writing throughout the high school curriculum.

The wide-spread standards movement has made some impact in requiring newly certified teachers to demonstrate competency on specific literacy knowledge and performance indicators. However, the depth of what is needed to teach content area literacy in secondary schools requires more than one course, and/or a few standards.

Connecting Two Distinct Communities

Education can no longer be seen as an exclusive function, and the traditional structures cannot remain isolated from social change. Faculties in colleges and universities and the practicing teachers in secondary schools have no choice but to adjust to new paradigms. While it is now more common to find partnerships and institutional collaborations between university faculty and secondary teachers, many of these need redefinition. In many partnerships, "practicing teachers have related there has not been a high level of reciprocity, as the universities are too dominant" (Campbell, 2002, p. 22).

Each entity must put into the equation improvement strategies that are meaningful to their respective organizations; that is, they need to identify areas where they truly need help from one another. Then institutionally and programmatically, they need to find ways to work together to make those intended improvements a reality (Howey & Zimpher, 1999, p. 299).

High school teachers and teacher educators alike are looking to move beyond yet another "good idea" to realize reconceptualization and transformation for secondary literacy education. This means engaging high school teachers in the process of secondary teacher preparation, determining what factors pose the greatest challenges to literacy development and using this knowledge as a cornerstone for improving

literacy practices in schools. Failure to confront these challenges effectively will undoubtedly compromise the ability of teachers to serve as effective agents of change.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the problems secondary teachers face that impede literacy learning in the classrooms and to yield information that may inform the preparation of future secondary teachers. Two broad questions emerged to guide this study:

- What are the greatest literacy challenges facing high school content area teachers?
- What will help to diminish these challenges for current and/or future high school teachers?

The Study

Participating Schools and Teachers

The schools that participated in this study included eight high schools, seven public and one private. The researchers purposely selected the schools to ensure ethnic diversity as well as urban and suburban representation. Six of the high schools represented grades 10-12 and two included grades 9-12. The school principals granted permission to graduate students enrolled in a Masters Degree Program in Reading to place the *High School Literacy Survey* in the school mailboxes of the teachers. A total of 450 questionnaires, including a cover letter and a stamped return envelope, were distributed to 9-12 teachers. Two hundred and two questionnaires were returned, realizing a return rate of 45 percent. There were no follow-up attempts to obtain a higher return rate.

Most respondents (71 percent) had advanced degrees beyond the B.A. or B.S.: among these were 68 percent with a M.A. and 3 percent with a Ph.D. Teachers from 18 different subject area fields responded to the survey. English (18 percent), mathematics (16 percent), and science (15 percent) teachers comprised the majority of participants. The remaining teachers represented the following subjects; art (3 percent),

business (4 percent), technology (4 percent), driver's education (1 percent), foreign language (6 percent), history (7 percent), library (1 percent), music (1 percent), physical education (3 percent), reading (1 percent), radio/television (1 percent), social studies (8 percent), special education (3 percent), theology (3 percent), and vocational education (4 percent). Teachers with more than 10 years of experience accounted for 63 percent of the sample, while 37 percent had 10 years or less.

Teachers working in suburban areas surrounding the greater Chicago area comprised the majority (67 percent) of the sample population, with the remaining 33 percent coming from urban schools. Forty-four percent described their schools as predominately diverse (> 50 percent), 32 percent considerably diverse (30-50 percent minority), 17 percent somewhat diverse (10-30 percent minority) and 7 percent primarily white (less than 10 percent minority).

The Questionnaire

We collected the data from a survey instrument, *High School Literacy Survey*, designed and constructed by us. The questionnaire requested two types of information:

- objective, relating to educational degrees, content field of study, years of teaching experience, diversity of school population
- subjective, relating to opinions and values in teaching and learning

The subjective portion of the survey was comprised of two broad questions. The first question asked teachers to identify 5 of the 20 factors that posed the greatest challenges in helping their students to attain literacy in their subject field. Respondents wrote the numeral 1 next to the statement representing their greatest challenge, the numeral 2 next to the statement representing their next greatest challenge, and so forth through the numeral 5. (See Appendix)

The twenty statements, defined as challenges, were derived from the literature on content area reading. An extensive review of the literature

resulted in identifying twenty challenges, however, these may not represent all possible factors and they may not represent factors that teachers would have included if they were to construct the questionnaire. A space was provided for teachers entitled "other" for their convenience in identifying additional factors that pose as challenges. Since no specific theory was identified to serve as a foundation for the selection of factors, they represent an eclectic representation. Additionally, the factors were not defined on the questionnaire, indicating that a singular definition cannot be assumed and that the factors may represent multiple meanings in the field. The second question invited the teachers to respond openly to the question, "What do you believe will help to diminish these challenges for current and/or future high school teachers?"

Findings

Percentages were used to report the data on the high school teachers' perceptions about the factors that challenge them most in helping their students to achieve literacy in their subject area.

Table 1.
Percentage Responses of Factors that Represent the Greatest Literacy Challenges

Factors	Percent					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Assessment of student learning	2	1	1	2	2	8
Classroom environment	1	2	-	1	2	6
Class size	4	4	6	8	5	27
Cultural and language diversity among students	-	1	-	1	-	2
Curriculum	-	1	2	1	3	7

Factors	Percent					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Helping students to construct meaning from text	3	6	6	7	7	29
Helping students interpret graphics in text	1	1	-	3	2	7
Helping students to learn and use critical thinking skills	16	8	12	11	12	59
Helping students to locate and organize information	1	5	5	4	3	18
Helping students to understand concepts and vocabulary	8	3	6	11	12	40
Homework issues	5	8	10	6	7	36
Integrating technology for teaching and learning	1	5	2	1	3	12
Selecting materials for teaching and learning	-	-	1	-	4	5
Organizing and managing the classroom for learning	1	2	-	2	3	8
State/district/school standards for students	1	1	1	1	2	6
Struggling readers	9	9	8	8	8	42
Student motivation/interest/attitudes	33	17	17	8	7	82
Students with special needs	1	5	5	5	3	19

Factors	Percent					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Students who lack study skills	11	13	13	13	7	57
Writing skills of students	2	8	5	7	8	30

(A ranking scale, with 1 meaning "greatest challenge," 2 "next greatest challenge," and so forth)

The top five challenges as reported in Table 1 were:

- student motivation, interests, and attitudes (33 percent)
- helping students to learn and use critical thinking skills (16 percent)
- students who lack study skills (11 percent)
- struggling readers (9 percent)
- helping students to understand concepts and vocabulary (8 percent).

The least perceived challenges were cultural and language diversity among students (2 percent) and selecting materials for teaching and learning (5 percent).

Examining the data of the largest responding groups of content area teachers, English, mathematics, and science, yielded similar findings. All three of these groups identified the same top two challenges as did the total group. The English, mathematics, and science teachers' third, fourth and fifth rankings were:

- English
 - (3) homework issues
 - (4) students who lack study skills
 - (5) writing skills of students
- Mathematics
 - (3) students who lack study skills

- (4) homework issues
- (5) helping students to locate and organize information
- Science:
 - (3) students who lack study skills
 - (4) helping students to understand concepts and vocabulary
 - (5) helping students to construct meaning from text

The teachers were also asked to respond to the following open-ended question, "What do you believe will help to diminish these challenges for current and/or future high school teachers?" Seventy-seven percent of the teachers wrote responses to this question. The responses were grouped by similar topics from which themes emerged. Table 2 reports the percentages of the most frequently occurring responses to the open-ended question.

Table 2.

Themes and Percentages of Responses for Confronting the Greatest Challenges

Most Frequent Responses by Theme	Percent
Better basic skills instruction in elementary schools	64
More parent responsibility and support	58
Mandatory inclusion of critical thinking questions on all assessments	39
Study skills classes for incoming students	33
Improve teacher preparation/more methods for secondary teachers	28
Greater respect and support from society	20
Practical/useful staff development	11

Most Frequent Responses by Theme	Percent
Teacher task forces making policy decisions instead of politicians and administrators	9
Complete restructuring of the current traditional education model	7
A center at each high school for struggling readers	1

The most common responses cited by the majority of teachers to confront the greatest challenges (Table 2) were better basic skills instruction in elementary schools (64 percent) and more parent responsibility and support (58 percent). Sample responses given by less than 50 percent of the teachers were mandatory inclusion of critical thinking questions on all assessments (39 percent), study skills classes for incoming students (33 percent), and improvement of teacher preparation with more methods for secondary teachers (28 percent).

Discussion

The results of this study provide insight for the continuing efforts to improve the literacy levels of secondary students. They are, however, neither exclusive nor exhaustive. They are offered with no claim for the universality or total generalizability, but they are offered as a common ground for thinking.

Student Motivation and Attitudes

High school teachers identified student motivation to read, write, and do other literacy-related activities as their greatest challenge. The teachers' written comments on questionnaires indicated that much of the class-assigned reading is often boring and not relevant to the student's own interests and experiences. They also stated that the students who will not read are as much at a disadvantage as those who cannot. Student

motivation was ranked the greatest challenge of all for the participating teachers.

The dilemma of identifying and implementing strategies to motivate adolescents is not new to literacy practice. The data from this study confirm what the research (Alexander & Filler, 1976; Au & Asam, 1996; Benware & Deci, 1984; Collins-Block, 1992; Guthrie & Alao, 1997; Schraw, Brunning, & Svoboda, 1995) has documented over time: that student motivation, interests, and attitudes are indeed authentic challenges. Teaching adolescents to become active, motivated, and self-regulated learners is a continuing issue in secondary schools. It is during the adolescent years when reading motivation and attitudes appear to worsen, especially for poor readers (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Serious attempts to advance literacy skills require interventions that address motivation and attitudes as much as interventions that assure cognitive changes in the learners (Verhoevan & Snow, 2001). This generally does not happen. Motivational constructs are usually not given significant vigilance in relation to student cognition and thinking, and at best, are given only passing and superficial attention.

A further problem is that standard reading texts and uniform curricula make life somewhat easier for teachers and administrators, but they make it very difficult for students to get involved with the material at the level that is right for them, and therefore to find intrinsic rewards in learning. In the classroom, the teacher is the key element in motivating students to learn. The responsibility is great and the ramifications even greater, yet many responding high school teachers stated they were not adequately prepared in their teacher preparation programs with the knowledge, skills, and instructional strategies to ignite the spirit of their students. These teachers indicated they want more ideas, support, and freedom within the school curriculum to take the lead, and more ways to experience first-hand, in-field, motivational issues in their teacher preparation programs.

Critical Thinking Skills

Teaching critical thinking skills was the second greatest challenge for teachers. Large numbers of teachers indicated they feel under-

prepared in pedagogical methods to help students conceptualize problems and solutions. Assisting adolescents to become proficient with these skills is a prodigious challenge for secondary teachers. The capacity for abstraction, for discovering patterns and meanings, generalizing, evaluating, and theorizing is the very essence of critical thinking and exploration.

For most students in the United States and throughout the world, formal education entails just the opposite kind of learning. Rather than construct meaning for themselves, meanings are imposed upon them. Frequently, students often accumulate a large number of facts along the way, yet these facts are not central to their education; they will live their adult lives in a world in which most facts learned years before (even including some historical ones) will have changed or have been reinterpreted. Whatever data they need will be available to them at the touch of a computer key.

If students are to learn critical thinking skills, teachers must teach them and engage their students in genuine problem solving discussion. Generally these skills are best, and likely only taught and assessed, through extended discourse. This is difficult to do in crowded classes where it is near to impossible to carry out extended discussions. The commitment to teaching these skills in all content areas means gaining support from the public. It also means that teachers must gain the knowledge and skills to do so through teacher preparation programs and inservice education, taking into account the real-life situations and parameters in today's classrooms.

Study Skills

Students who lack study skills ranked as the third greatest challenge to teachers. The importance of study skills has been documented over time in the professional literature (Flood & Lapp, 1995). What is known is that many people of all ages have difficulty reading and learning, largely because they are not using appropriate techniques or good learning habits. Often, the adolescents who are dropping out of schools are doing so because they believe they cannot learn. For the majority of these students, they lack suitable reading and study techniques, which

impede their growth in learning and contribute to their negative beliefs about themselves and school.

Although most secondary teachers have a thorough understanding of their subject, many responding teachers in this study indicated they lack the knowledge of instructional/study strategies by which to help students internalize the concepts. Research shows that with an organized system of study, students can increase their comprehension of subject matter up to 50 percent (Annis, 1983). As nations seek to assist adolescents in gaining higher levels of literacy, the knowledge and skills that teachers need to teach their students effective study habits and strategies may likely become central to the curriculum in secondary teacher preparation programs and in the curriculum of secondary schools.

Struggling Readers

Struggling readers ranked as the fourth greatest challenge to the high school teachers. Teachers responded that these students can be found "hiding out" in content classrooms. They frequently are passive and disengaged. Many have found coping strategies to help them get by, but they do not significantly improve their literacy skills or their knowledge in the content areas.

Although comprehension of text material is difficult and sometimes impossible for struggling readers, there are research-based strategies that have proven to be successful when used with struggling readers. One such strategy is instructional scaffolding, an effective strategy that gives students a better chance to be successful than if left on their own (Vacca, 2002). Pedagogy, which includes instructional techniques for diverse learners, is glossed over in many teacher preparation programs for secondary teachers. However, it is as important in the preparation of high school teachers as is cognitive knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2000). If high school teachers are to make substantial contributions to all adolescents, it will require more knowledge of relevant instructional methodologies.

Darling-Hammond (2000) found that teacher subject-matter knowledge was related to student achievement only up to a certain point.

Marzano (2003) asserts that the importance of the relationship between pedagogical knowledge and student achievement has been consistently reported in the research literature. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Ferguson and Womack (1993), they found that the number of courses teachers took in instructional techniques accounted for four times the variance in teacher performance and student achievement than did subject-matter knowledge.

Teachers stated that more information about how to assist the struggling readers in their classrooms is sorely needed in preservice teacher education programs. Additionally they need to know that the strategies and support to assist these learners are realistic for today's classrooms.

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

Helping students to understand concepts and vocabulary ranked as the fifth greatest challenge. Every subject area has its own vocabulary and modes of argument, and its language is the common denominator for learning subject matter knowledge. Vacca and Vacca (2002) agree: they state, "Vocabulary must be taught *well enough* to remove potential barriers to students' understanding of texts as well as to promote a long-term acquisition of the language of a content area" (p. 160-161). Teachers want more knowledge about ways to teach vocabulary and concepts to adolescents, strategies that will provide adolescents with a deeper and richer entry into the content area of study, and strategies that will work in the classrooms of today.

Intriguing Findings

It is a noteworthy finding that the cultural and language diversity among students in the classrooms was not identified among the greatest challenges. The majority of teachers in this study were from diverse schools, and yet only two percent ranked this to be a challenge. Equally notable was the fact that state, district, and school standards, writing skills, and integrating technology were not identified among the greatest challenges.

Of all the findings, the most revealing was that provided by the driver's education teachers: whereas every other content-area group of teachers, albeit art, music, business, foreign language, etc., ranked student motivation as the greatest challenge, they did not. This is not surprising as it supports the findings of this study as well as long standing research in the field, as cited in Marzano, 2003. The hypothesis being that when motivated, students strive to learn. It is likely safe to say that >99 percent of all high school students want to learn to drive.

Teachers Views for Confronting the Challenges

The high school teachers stated that improving literacy for secondary students must begin long before the high school years. They believe it requires better basic skills instruction in elementary schools, more parental responsibility and support for adolescents, and greater respect and support for education professionals from society. The secondary teachers further reported that mandatory inclusion of critical thinking questions on all assessments at local, state, and national levels may lead to improvements in the literacy levels of students.

The majority also reported that study skills must become a required part of the curriculum beginning in elementary schools. Teacher education programs need to emphasize study skills knowledge and strategies that are content specific and will assist future teachers with ways to help their students achieve literacy in their subject areas. Staff development needs serious attention and reform. Emphasis needs to be on real issues identified by the teachers, and the staff development needs to be content specific. Some teachers elaborated that schools can do little to improve high school literacy because the things that need to be changed are outside the scope of the educator's responsibility.

A smaller percentage of teachers stated that teacher task forces, instead of politicians and administrators, should make policy decisions at all levels. Several called for a complete restructuring of the current education model and structuring of schools to contain a "center for struggling readers." Others stated that teachers should have a full year-round professional contract: envisioning that students would attend school for 10 months and teachers would work the remaining two

months revising curriculum, collaborating with colleagues, and participating in relevant and rigorous staff development. These teachers held similar views with Brandt (2001), as they see their schools attempting to implement elements of the newer ideologies of literacy into traditional structures and curriculum which results in institutional confusion, vulnerability, and a mismatch of schooling and society in contemporary times.

Conclusions and Implications

Improving literacy levels for secondary students is too complex for simplistic explanations, yet one thing seems clear: faculties in schools of education need to attend to the voices of secondary teachers. When we fail to do so, we do this at the peril of the students they teach. The voices of the teacher participants in this study identify the greatest challenge to literacy development to be student motivation, and the teachers feel unprepared to deal with this serious challenge. Marzano (2003) states:

The link between student motivation and achievement is straightforward. If students are motivated to learn the content, then they will achieve in that subject. If students are not motivated to learn the content, then achievement will likely be limited. The validity of this relationship is supported by a fair amount of research (Bloom, 1976; Geisler-Brenstein & Schmeck, 1996; Schiefele & Krapp, 1996; Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler, 1992; Tobias, 1994; Willingham, Pollack, & Lewis, 2002) as reported in Marzano (p.144).

The other greatest challenges, critical thinking skills, study skills, pedagogy for struggling readers, and vocabulary and concept development, need critical attention as well. To successfully confront these challenges, the most critical and urgent need, as stated by the teachers, is to revise secondary teacher preparation.

Implications for Secondary Teacher Preparation

Faculty in secondary teacher preparation programs have a pivotal role to play in the literacy growth of adolescents, as well as the

preparation of secondary teachers. The results of this study point to the following implications for secondary teacher educators.

- Engage in partnerships between secondary teacher preparation faculty and practicing secondary teachers. Partnerships in which the voices of practicing teachers are central to reform in secondary teacher preparation, and the voices of college and university teacher educators are central to high school literacy reform.
- Revise the secondary teacher preparation curriculum to include more opportunities for prospective teachers to experience and understand the real-life literacy challenges identified in this study.
- Create a secondary teacher preparation curriculum that gives significant attention to motivational practices, such as incorporating the new media, which has become integrally bound up with adolescents' affiliations, identities, and pleasures (Nixon, 2003).
- Reform the secondary teacher preparation curriculum that divides subject matter courses and methods' courses. "Content and processes of learning to teach must be brought together, since how teachers learn, shapes what they learn and is often part of what they need to know" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 2001, p.78). The debates that center on the disciplinary boundaries that keep scholars apart and leave students to make their own interdisciplinary connections must invite new initiatives.
- Align and teach pedagogical practices, critical thinking skills, study skills, and vocabulary within subject matter content.
- Finally, teacher educators need to provide students with more sustained and guided experiences; those which help prospective teachers learn to teach those things that matter most to students in ways that are meaningful to them, and are grounded in actual classroom practice.

These views provide common ground for discussion and future exploration regarding improving literacy skills and understanding for secondary students. Moreover, they involve a commitment to secondary literacy reform in a context of uncertain challenges and outcomes. What would it mean to build comprehensive, integrated partnerships across institutional lines and across disciplines? What powerful vision might we see if we could finally get hold of the big picture (Schoem, 2002) of secondary education? If secondary teacher education programs were redesigned along the lines of the characteristics identified in this study, teaching and learning experiences would look much different and would represent a newly defined literacy for secondary students and their future teachers.

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Appendix

High School Literacy Survey

This study is being conducted by Mary Campbell, a faculty member in the School of Education at Saint Xavier University. The purpose of this study is two-fold. The study seeks to, 1) determine the greatest literacy challenges facing high school content area teachers today, and 2) determine the ideas high school teachers have to improve content area literacy practices in classrooms. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary; there are no penalties if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, the information you provide will remain completely anonymous.

Demographic Information (Please check the appropriate response)

1. Your highest academic degree (check one)
☐ BA/BS ☐ Masters ☐ Doctorate

2. Your primary teaching responsibility is in which of the following content areas?
☐ Art
☐ Business
☐ Computers
☐ English
☐ Foreign Language
☐ History
☐ Mathematics
☐ Music
☐ Physical Education
☐ Science
☐ Social Studies
☐ Vocational Education
☐ Other _____

3. Your high school classroom teaching experience:
☐ first year teacher

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- ☐ 1-5 years
 - ☐ 6-10 years
 - ☐ 11-20 years
 - ☐ more than 20 years
4. Ethnic Origin
- ☐ White (Non-Hispanic)
 - ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ African American
 - ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Other
5. Which best describes your school? (check two)
- ☐ Urban
 - ☐ Suburban
 - ☐ Public
 - ☐ Private
6. Which best describes your school? (check one)
- ☐ Predominately diverse(50percent + minority)
 - ☐ Considerably diverse(30-50percent minority)
 - ☐ Somewhat diverse(10-30percentminority)
 - ☐ Primarily white (Euro-American less than 10percent minority)
7. Gender
- ☐ Female
 - ☐ Male

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please identify what you believe to be the 5 greatest challenges in helping your students to attain content literacy in your subject area. On the lines provided, write the numeral 1 meaning your greatest challenge, the numeral 2 meaning the next greatest challenge, the numeral 3 for the next and so forth p to 5.

_____ Assessment of student learning

- _____ Classroom environment (physical setting and classroom conducive to learning)
- _____ Class size
- _____ Cultural and language diversity among students
- _____ Curriculum
- _____ Helping students to construct meaning from text
- _____ Helping students interpret graphics in text material
- _____ Helping students to learn and use critical thinking skills
- _____ Helping students to locate and organize information
- _____ Helping student to understand concepts and vocabulary
- _____ Homework issues
- _____ Integrating technology for teaching and learning
- _____ Selecting materials for instruction and student learning
- _____ Organizing and managing the classroom for learning (discussion, activities, etc.)
- _____ State/district/school standards for students
- _____ Struggling readers
- _____ Student motivation/interest/attitudes
- _____ Students with special needs
- _____ Students who lack study skills
- _____ Writing skills of students
- _____ Other _____

2. What do you believe will help to diminish these challenges for current and/or future high school teachers? Please write your ideas below.

Thank you for your participation in this study