April 2019

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Content-area teachers, embrace the literacy struggle! Many teachers are facing the reality of true implementation of the Common Core State Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, 2010), and many contemplate how they will embed the content-specific literacy skills described in the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), which are reflected in Michigan's soon-to-be-adopted Social Studies State Standards (Michigan Department of Education, 2018) into their existing instruction. With the implementation of literacy instruction across all content areas, many skilled teachers are finding themselves overwhelmed and lacking pedagogical understanding. The need to educate all content-area teachers in the practices of literacy has never been more pressing and necessary, as content-area literacy is the foundation of disciplinary literacy.

Chauvin and Theodore state, "To graduate high school fully prepared for college and the workforce, students need more than basic literacy skills. They need to master the distinct approaches to literacy that are used in academic disciplines such as science, mathematics, and history—as well as Career Technical Education courses" (2015, p. 1). If literacy does not become a significant pillar of students' content-area instruction, their abilities to read and write as historians or scientists may be stifled. However, the shift in standards means that many 21st century educators are thinking about how to integrate these literacy skills into the classroom for the first time.

Because this shift in standards is relatively new, some seasoned teachers may have missed the opportunity within their teacher preparation programs to gain a foundational understanding of literacy that supports instruction outside of the English Language Arts classroom. As the standards have changed, many in-service teachers have not been supported to adapt their instruction. As stated in the U.S. Department of Education's Statistics in Brief, "the most prevalent topic of teacher professional development in 2011 was the content of the subject(s) taught (85 percent), followed by the use of computers for instruction (67 percent) and reading instruction (57 percent)" (Rotermund, DeRoche, & Ottem, 2017, p. 5). With limited professional development time and a primary focus on content (as opposed to skills), time to learn about the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts and the literacy standards that will be in the new social studies standards is hard to come by for many teachers. The standards can be challenging to implement and difficult to decipher for teachers outside of English or Language Arts subjects.

However, learning to implement effective literacy instruction in all content areas is crucial. As stated in *Reciprocal Teaching at Work*, "in recent years, an alarming 64 percent of 4th graders and 66 percent of 8th graders read below the proficient reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress" (Oczkus, 2018, p. 1). As proficiency levels in literacy falter,

educators need professional development opportunities to help support content literacy instruction and help to reduce the widening gap that literacy creates every day in the classroom.

These levels of literacy proficiency should concern all who are committed to educating all students to high levels. According to Vacca, "Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives" (as cited in Alber, 2014, Literacy is an Every-Century Skill section, para. 2). This is a powerful and valid argument supporting the assertion that all content-area teachers need to possess a diverse set of literacy instructional skills that will support students as they develop, use, and master their own set of literacy skills. In response to this, content-area teachers are often left to wonder, what strategies or practices are both best practices and easy to implement?

Reciprocal Teaching to the Rescue!

It has been my experience that one might find push back or refusal from students to engage and use literacy as a gateway to learning in the content areas. While this may be attributed to many things, one reason is that reading levels have been the focus in schools over the past decades, which constrain what students are "allowed" to read, and many content-area texts lie outside of their prescribed reading levels. However, many educators challenge the notion that students should only read at their prescribed level (e.g., Porter-Magee, 2014). In content-area classrooms, students often have opportunities to interact with text above their prescribed level of achievement, and it is the role of teachers to help them successfully gain meaning from these texts.

Reciprocal Teaching is a collaborative, scaffolded approach to improving reading comprehension in which each member of a group of four students is assigned an active role in the reading process, as either a predictor, a questioner, a clarifier, or the summarizer (Oczkus, 2018, p. 22). Each role within the strategy requires metacognition and supports students in their quest to construct the meaning from the text. "The application of the metacognitive strategy during reading and comprehension lessons is also believed to help students to think methodically in all three levels of reading processes, namely before reading, during reading, and after reading" (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhall, & Joshi, 2007). Engagement and thinking about the text is imperative, as it allows and supports students to flex their cognitive muscles to ensure they are able to carry out their assigned role as they progress from the beginning to the end of the text. This process both supports creating meaning from particular texts and provides them with structured ways to think about other texts. In addition, engaging in each of the roles supports unique standards (for roles, descriptions, and the standards they support, see Table 1).

The Research

As educators of the 21st century struggle to immerse students in literacy, Reciprocal Teaching can be a conduit to content and disciplinary learning. The efficacy of Reciprocal Teaching has proven its worth within content-area instruction and content-area curriculum, and has "led to sizable gains on criterion tests of comprehension, reliable maintenance over time, generalization to classroom comprehension tests, transfer to novel tasks that tapped the trained skills of summarizing, questioning, and clarifying, and improvement in standardized comprehension scores" (Palinscar & Brown, 1984, p. 117). As students use their skills of comprehension, prediction, clarification, and summarizing in new contexts, the educator and students are likely to see evidence of improved reading comprehension and content learning. Oczkus views Reciprocal Teaching as "a bridge to engagement in literacy, while meeting the needs of all learners, regardless of ability levels" (2018, p. 4). Diverse ability levels populate our classrooms, and educators are held accountable for ensuring all students have access to the curriculum. Reciprocal Teaching supports this by expanding access to texts that may be above a student's reading level. For example, the predictor may scaffold students to use imagery and text features to make predictions that are valuable to the group and make the text more accessible. In addition,

Table 1

Reciprocal Teaching Roles and Common Core State Standard Correlations

Role	Description	Standard Correlation[1]
Predictor	Uses explicit and implicit evidence from the text and prior knowledge to make predictions before, after, and during the reading, while locating textual evidence to prove predictions true.	RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
Clarifier	Identifies unknown words and phrases for the group, to support comprehension and clarify meaning within the text.	RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
Questioner	Uses clues from the text to ask implicit and explicit questions and seek answers to questions that supports the group's ability to construct meaning of the text.	RI.6.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
Summarizer	Uses knowledge learned from the other roles within the strategy to identify the overarching themes and big ideas of the text.	RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

[1] Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, 2010).

the summarizer and clarifier can help the group focus on big ideas and key vocabulary, supporting them to attend to the most important information and understand the textual descriptions. Finally, the questioner can make the text more accessible by posing questions that the group can answer together to build stronger understanding. As students become more comfortable and confident with the strategy, they can and should switch roles to ensure they have supported practice in each role that will help them to later engage in them independently.

Reciprocal Teaching can also produce up to two years of growth in comprehension per year, which indicates that this teaching method is extremely effective in improving student achievement (Hattie, 2008, as cited in Oczkus, 2018, p. 2). Hattie's (2008) research "ranks Reciprocal Teaching as one of the 10 most effective

teaching techniques out of 138 practices" (Oczkus, 2018, p. 2). Even more convincing, Brown and Campione (1992) claim that reciprocal teaching can improve students' performances on high-stakes achievement tests, as "research on reciprocal teaching has shown that there are improved comprehension results and transfer of skills to other curriculum areas" (McAllum, 2014, p. 26). According to a study by Palincsar and Brown (1986), "the creators of reciprocal teaching, found that when the strategies were used with a group of students for just 15-20 days, assessment of students' reading comprehension increased from 30 percent to 70-80 percent" (Oczkus, 2018, p. 16). Palincsar and Klenk (1992) also found that "students not only improved their comprehension skills almost immediately, but also maintained their improved comprehension skills when tested a year later" (as cited in Oczkus, 2018, p. 16).

In addition, for students that may struggle with comprehension or lack the foundational literacy skills, Reciprocal Teaching can provide an opportunity to build these necessary skills. Carter (1997) found that, "Reciprocal Teaching techniques are especially effective when incorporated into intervention programs for struggling readers and when used with low-performing students in urban settings" (Oczkus, 2018, p. 6). In addition, as concluded by Sollars and Pumfrey, "English Language Learners also benefit and grow as a result of Reciprocal Teaching, as studies have found positive growth in reading comprehension for English Language Learners who often experience problems with comprehension due to vocabulary load and a mismatch in background experiences" (Oczkus, 2018, p. 6). Reciprocal Teaching has the potential to meet the instructional needs of a variety of students in a variety of contexts.

Steps to Implementation in All Content Area Classrooms

Learning how to use Reciprocal Teaching in the classroom is a gradual process in which teachers learn with their students. Breaking the strategy into parts and teaching each skill or role and then later teaching students to use them more flexibly is one way to embed

this instructional tool into your weekly practice. Consider the following tips as you plan for implementation:

1. Teach students how to summarize fiction and nonfiction text before beginning the Reciprocal Teaching process.
2. Model the strategy in its entirety using a video or with four teachers who understand it well so that students can envision what they are trying to do.
3. Pre-teach each role separately using less complex picture books or a well-known story, which will allow students to focus on the process, not understanding of difficult content.
4. Use strategy cards that define the roles and give possible sentence starters they might use while fulfilling the role to guide the students as they work through the process and requirement of each role.
5. Provide each group with a large poster on which all group members can post the work produced as they played their roles. This allows groups to organize the learning embedded in each role in a visible way, this can also serve as a formative assessment check.
6. As much as possible, group students in mixed-ability groups, including high achieving readers, average readers, and struggling readers. When first starting out, you may want to have more confident readers take on the role of summarizer, which is quite demanding, while less confident readers may be more comfortable beginning as the predictor. However, eventually, all students should enact all roles.
7. Assign one student to also act as a "teacher" student to monitor their small group to stay on task and ensure each member gets to enact their role.
8. As students learn their roles, they should, in time, switch roles within their group.

Content Crossover

Reciprocal Teaching teaches students how to determine important ideas from a text while discussing vocabulary, developing ideas and questions, and summarizing information (Oczkus, 2018, p. 3). All content teachers can rest assured that this strategy can be effectively used with textbooks, nonfiction text, articles, and book

clubs (Oczkus, 2018, p. 3). In addition, when a bird's eye perspective is applied to English language arts and social studies standards, one will discover that the strategy addresses parallel skills in each. Therefore, the strategy of Reciprocal Teaching, when implemented in a social studies classroom, can also address English language arts standards. To understand this binding relationship, consider the following scenario: A sixth-grade social studies teacher has decided to read articles that support and oppose gun control to help students understand the idea of varying perspectives, which targets the Language arts standard "CCSS.ELA-LIT-ERACY.RI.6.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text" (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, 2010), as well as the proposed Michigan Social Studies State Standard "6 – G4.4.2 Evaluate examples of cooperation and conflict within the region under study" (Michigan Department of Education, 2018). The teacher supports the students to use Reciprocal Teaching as they read the article, putting students in groups of four and assigning each student a role. Some groups read an article that is in favor of gun control, and other groups read an article that takes a position against gun control. Each group previews their text before and during reading, as the questioner generates questions. The clarifier uses technology and context clues to identify unknown words and phrases before, during, and after the reading, as the members of each group can choose to independently silent read or share the task of reading aloud the text to the group. If the text proves difficult, the summarizer reads it out loud to the group to support any comprehension or decoding difficulties. After reading, the questioner poses questions in response to the full text.

After the reading is completed, each group participates in a discussion, in which they discuss and evaluate their predictions, questions, meanings of unknown words and phrases, and the main idea of the text. This discussion supports efforts to write a summary of the text. The summarizer writes the summary with the group's support and guidance. Upon completion of this task, each group meets with a group with an opposing position text, and the two groups discuss the differences

in predictions, questions, unknown words and phrases, and summaries. After students have been exposed to each position, through the Reciprocal Teaching process, they identify which perspective they support by using evidence from the relevant article.

Conclusion

Reciprocal Teaching is an efficient and effective way for content-teachers to embed literacy into their instructional methods and weekly routines. When using this strategy, all learners have a purpose, are included in a group, and can feel success as the strategy supports students with diverse levels of ability through collaborative practice. Further, reciprocal teaching also assists with student engagement, something that all teachers strive for.

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