

Chapter 1

Preparing All Teachers as Teachers of Reading

Challenges and Visions

Teacher educators preparing middle and high school teachers face a number of challenges. A shortage of qualified teachers, especially in urban areas, has called into question what ought to be the essential content of the teacher preparation program, how to assess quality teaching (and thus prepare prospective teachers to provide it), and how to prepare teachers to function effectively in diverse and demanding classrooms. For faculty charged with teaching content area reading, the debate about the role, method, and place of literacy instruction across the curriculum has been amplified as tests of reading achievement have become highly significant in assessing student learning and determining school success. The debate raises questions central to our work in preparing secondary content area teachers. What should teachers of adolescents learn about the nature and teaching of academic literacy? Is reading a prerequisite to advanced content learning?

The story of a fictional new teacher may serve to bring some of these challenges into focus:

Mark, an economics major in college, joined a volunteer teacher program after graduation and taught middle school mathematics for a year in a high-poverty urban school. He has stayed on in the school, earning an alternative credential through a series of district-sponsored afterschool training courses, many tied to implementation of published mathematics curricula. He has also had training in classroom management and preparing students for the

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state's mathematics achievement tests. Mark is considered a good teacher by administrators, colleagues, and parents.

Mark is interested in what works in his classroom—for classroom management and for students' learning of mathematical knowledge and processes. He relies heavily on published programs to teach sequenced mathematical skills. His teaching style is whole class instruction, with monitored individual student practice and more practice for students who haven't shown mastery in a particular skill. He keeps a steady pace for this whole group instruction but does work with individual students during problem practice time and also invites students to get extra help from him after school. Mark does not have students work in pairs or small groups in his math class.

Mark is concerned about the poor reading skills of many of his students but doesn't know how to help, and will say that he doesn't think it's his responsibility to teach reading in a mathematics class. He wishes that students had learned to read well enough in the elementary grades to handle the reading demands of his class. He hasn't thought much about the role of reading in mathematics, other than in solving word problems, even though he studied mathematics extensively in college. He knows that state and national mathematics standards call for higher levels of problem-solving ability but finds word problems in mathematics too frustrating, especially for students who struggle with reading. Without productive ways of addressing his students' reading needs, Mark has begun to limit his use of word problems, concentrating more on mathematical operations. He worries that this low-level mathematics curriculum will curtail his students' future opportunities in math and likely rule out a college prep high school experience for many of them. He has begun to feel bored with the content of his teaching and is concerned about the students he's not reaching. However, he doesn't know how to do a better job.

Challenges for Teacher Education

Teacher Supply

Perceived teacher shortages in certain content areas and geographic locations have led to emergency credentials, most often for teachers like Mark in urban schools that serve large proportions of poor and minority students. This stopgap response to the critical need for teachers has, in recent years, lent support for an alternative route to certification, such as the one Mark took. Schools of education are being asked why prospective teachers should be required to complete a full credential program in a college or university when a less expensive and quicker route is available, one that emphasizes learning the practical aspects of teaching. Equip teachers with content knowledge and classroom management skills and get them in front of a classroom—that seems to be the idea.

Teacher Quality

Just what counts as teacher quality and how teacher quality affects student achievement and thus school performance are hotly debated issues with huge implications for teacher education programs. Adding heat, if not light, to the debate, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) requires “highly qualified” teachers in all schools by 2005–06. The definition is left to the states, though, so we may expect an array of indicators of quality, ranging, for example, from (1) amount of coursework in the content area and grades earned in those courses to (2) amount of coursework in educational theory and practice and curriculum design and grades earned in those courses, (3) scores on credential exams, and (4) professional experience deemed relevant to teaching. Mark, our fictional math teacher, would probably do well on the first and third, and may be moving toward the fourth. However, he will probably have little chance to qualify for the second.

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There are many who believe that knowledge of a subject is sufficient to teach it well. Alternative routes to certification place a high priority on subject area knowledge, and thus attract either professionals who make a midcareer switch to teaching or recent college graduates, like Mark, who sign on to teaching as a first career. Their entry into teaching is usually accomplished with a minimum of education coursework in areas such as learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum planning, research, and assessment.

A persistent theme among critics of traditional teacher education is that prospective teachers are burdened with coursework developing their pedagogical knowledge rather than focusing on their subject area disciplines. A recent report from the Education Commission of the States (Allen, 2003) that looks at teacher quality examined available research in order to address links between components of teacher preparation and teacher effectiveness in the classroom, as well as links between teacher preparation and retention in the profession. The ECS report concluded that although the research provides *moderate* support for the importance of solid subject matter knowledge to a teacher's effectiveness, it offers only *limited* support for the value of preparation in pedagogy to a teacher's effectiveness. Regarding the subject matter knowledge–pedagogical knowledge debate, the report says this:

On one side are those who believe that solid pedagogical preparation is critical to teachers' ability to handle an increasingly diverse student population and adapt their instruction to the learning style and worldview of each student. On the other side are those who hold that teaching is much more a matter of communicating various concepts and matters of content, and that the ability to manage a classroom, evaluate students, and develop curricula are the essential teaching skills. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) tends toward the latter view, and the *Secretary's Annual Report on Teacher Quality* (Paige, 2002) contends that a strong grasp of subject

matter knowledge and strong verbal ability are the most important factors contributing to successful teaching. [Allen, 2003, p. 29]

We believe that this report, and other statements like it, create a dangerous false dichotomy. The omission of the role of teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning is striking here, especially given the wealth of empirical evidence and professional standards that link teacher preparation to quality teaching. In fact, the negative impact of inadequate pedagogical knowledge on instruction has been well documented (Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987). Reviews of research continually show that fully prepared and certified teachers are generally better rated and more successful with students than those without this preparation. And given the steadily rising bar for student proficiency, the fact that teachers who have greater knowledge of teaching and learning are more effective with students, especially at tasks requiring higher-order thinking and problem solving, is strong support for thorough preparation in teaching as well as in subject matter knowledge. (For a review of this literature, see Darling-Hammond, 1999.)

For certified teachers, National Board Certification is widely accepted as the standard of excellence—for example, satisfying the NCLB's requirements for "highly qualified teacher." Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) measures a teacher's practice against rigorous standards in specific subject areas and with specific grade levels, all linked to five core propositions (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, n.d.):

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

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- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

Teacher educators see the teacher preparation program as the first in a continual series of professional development experiences characterized by intellectual rigor and inquiry as a stance toward learning in the profession (Ball and Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000). The National Board Certification process and standards offer the next step in professional development.

In contrast, the preparation that our fictional math teacher Mark received focused on subject matter knowledge and classroom management. Without the opportunity to learn about learning theory, develop habits of inquiry and reflection in action, and function as a member of a learning community, he is at a disadvantage in becoming a competent teacher and even pursuing professional development to improve. And a recent study of preservice mathematics teachers points to a more critical reason for strengthening subject matter knowledge with solid pedagogical knowledge. Researchers found that preservice teachers with high levels of mathematics knowledge were actually more likely than less mathematically knowledgeable peers to have “an expert blind spot” (EBS); (Nathan and Petrosino, 2003). That is, they were prone to assume that ninth-grade Algebra 1 students’ symbolic reasoning precedes and is a necessary prerequisite to verbal reasoning and story problem-solving ability. In fact, this research showed that students move to symbolic mathematics understandings through verbal representations and procedures. The experts in mathematics actually were misled by their subject matter knowledge to predict student problem-solving difficulty inaccurately. Steeped in the discipline, they assumed that the structure of the discipline of mathematics is actually the way students learn it. Not so, say the researchers, who concluded that “the existence of EBS underscores the need to balance subject matter knowledge with well-developed

pedagogical content knowledge and an understanding of how students' subject matter-specific knowledge develops" (Nathan and Petrosino, 2003, p. 923).

The ECS report calls for more research addressing the question of how best to prepare effective teachers, an inquiry already undertaken by a task force of the American Educational Research Association. In fact, there is a growing body of empirical evidence about the role of quality teacher preparation in successful teaching as measured by a number of outcomes, including student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2000). However, reports like the ECS study and the Abell report, "Teacher Certification Reconsidered: Stumbling for Quality" (Walsh, 2001), focus on what we *don't* know definitively about the impact of a teacher preparation program on a teacher's effectiveness as measured mainly by student achievement test results. We have compelling evidence of the impact of high-quality teacher preparation on teachers' effectiveness, especially the importance of knowledge of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2001). The complex connections between teacher learning and effectiveness in instruction cannot be reduced to student performance on standardized tests.

Content of Teacher Education

A growing theme in current criticisms of teacher education is that schools of education lack the knowledge base and professional validity to determine a curriculum of study and practicum experiences that prepare teachers adequately. In the case of literacy education, this belief is driven by an assumption that successful teaching can be measured by student test scores. Of course, student learning is the goal of teaching. However, the reduction of the complexity of teaching and learning to a "what works" formula of teaching as cause and test score as effect is false and damaging. One consequence of such simplistic thinking is that schools of education are feeling pressure to abandon course content that draws on

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constructivist, sociolinguistic, meaning-based models of reading in favor of a phonics-based model of reading with an emphasis on direct instruction, especially as represented in the 2000 report of the National Reading Panel (NRP).

In some institutions, scholarly traditions of inquiry-based learning and exploration of diverse perspectives on research as well as on literacy may be replaced with training in “what works,” according to the recommendations of the NRP. A number of critiques of that report, notably by literacy researchers and teacher educators, suggest the conflict this reeducation of teacher educators will likely produce (Allington, 2002; Camilli, Vargas, and Yurecko, 2003; Yatvin, Weaver, and Garan, 2003).

The debate about preparing teachers of reading is often polarized by the false dichotomies that occur in the larger debate about teacher education: knowledge about pedagogy versus knowledge about subject matter, and preparation via coursework versus preparation through experience. Most alternative certification programs seem to capitalize on these false dichotomies, sending new teachers into classrooms with minimal preparation in how to teach and banking on their ability to learn educational practice on the job through practice, and sometimes, observation of experienced teachers. But observation of an experienced teacher without sustained mentoring and feedback for the new teacher’s self-reflection and action is hardly sufficient professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2000). More important, without some guidance via frameworks of teaching and learning, how can an inexperienced teacher know what to look for in such classroom observations?

Those who argue in favor of alternative certification often disdain professional knowledge about learning theory, pedagogy, and curriculum design. In their view, teacher education is not a professional program of study but rather a credential program. As such, proponents argue that prospective teachers should have access to less expensive, less time-consuming routes to certification. Our fictional teacher, Mark, took this route, but he is struggling, and so are his students.

Underprepared Teachers

Not surprisingly, proponents of scripted programs for beginning and developmental reading instruction point to the need among alternatively certified or emergency credentialed teachers for a clear-cut, sequential curriculum to teach and assessments that are “objective” to measure students’ reading achievement. For many teacher educators, this marks a stunning shift in priorities: away from teacher knowledge—for example, about reading in specific disciplines, about monitoring learning, and about pedagogy—and toward reliance on published program content and standardized tests. In such a system, the knowledge resides in the instructional program (and those who designed it) and not in the classroom teacher, who is asked merely to implement it. But can programs do the job? Can teachers who don’t know much about reading and learning effectively teach children to read by relying on “teacher-proof” programs? Can teachers at the middle and high school levels who lack insight into discipline-based reading help students become effective, engaged readers? The idea that the knowledge resides in the instructional program, not in the teacher, is foreign to our best understandings of effective instruction, understandings reflected in voluminous research on teacher effectiveness.

Research by Moustafa and Land (2002) indicates that scripted programs do not improve the effectiveness of underprepared teachers and suggests that rather than shoring up uncredentialed teachers with teacher-proof curricula we would do well to prepare them adequately in the first place. The researchers, both from California State University, Los Angeles, studied the impact of scripted programs on student reading achievement. They found the percent of children scoring at or above the fiftieth percentile on California’s state achievement test to be as follows:

- Lower in the schools with lower levels of credentialed teachers than in schools with higher levels of credentialed teachers

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- Lower in schools with scripted programs than in schools with unscripted programs
- Lowest in schools with low levels of credentialed teachers *and* with scripted programs

Scripted programs not only fail to deliver results for students but may actually discourage inexperienced teachers from developing the professional knowledge they need to address their students' various instructional needs in reading, thus exacerbating the problem (Moustafa and Land, 2002).

Clearly, in schools staffed with committed but underprepared teachers, the teachers as well as the students are suffering. Studies consistently show that the neediest schools have disproportionately high numbers of teachers working on conditional or emergency credentials (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 1996). Also typical of trends throughout the country, these underprepared teachers leave the profession at higher rates than traditionally prepared teachers. Teach for America (TFA), one of the best-known alternative programs, has a two-year attrition rate nearly three times the national average for new teachers. In Baltimore, nearly two-thirds of the TFA corps members who began teaching in 1992 left within two years (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In contrast, retention rates in the profession for teachers prepared through fifth-year professional programs and four-year education programs are between 84 percent and 53 percent. A 30 percent retention rate for teachers trained through "alternative routes" represents lost opportunities and squandered resources both for individuals and for the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

High teacher turnover exacerbates the existing problems of urban schools and brings into sharp relief the importance of building a national consensus on quality teacher preparation and effective support for new teachers. Also, given the strong evidence that teacher effectiveness increases significantly after the first few years

(Kain and Singleton, 1996), it is critical that beginning teachers be well equipped. The education system's investment in novices who leave after a year is lost (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Literacy Education as a Flashpoint

The NCLB legislation has made reading and literacy a flashpoint for debates about teacher preparation. The national goal of the NCLB legislation for average yearly progress (AYP) measured by standardized tests in reading and mathematics has led to a focus on how best to teach reading so that scores on these tests will consistently improve for all students. In the immediate aftermath of the report of the National Reading Panel (2000), much of that focus was on elementary reading instruction, but teacher educators preparing secondary teachers have begun to feel the pressure to equip them with strategies or programs to boost the test scores of struggling adolescent readers.

In the crowded academic program for preservice secondary teachers, reading in the content areas has variously been embedded in the methods course for content area teaching or accorded its own course in the program. A separate course in reading for prospective middle and high school teachers is relatively new in some states; Washington State initiated the requirement in 2000, for example. The authors of this text teach in institutions that require secondary teaching candidates to take a one-term course in content area reading instruction. In addition, their students explore the relationship between literacy and learning in coursework, practice, and teaching placements.

Creating a Bigger Vision of Literacy in Content Area Learning

We want our preservice teachers to understand reading as larger and more complex than a basic skill acquired in elementary school and now used generically to learn from texts across the curriculum.

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They must understand reading as a developmental process in which the knowledge and strategies needed to comprehend more sophisticated subject area texts develop, with appropriate support, in the process of extensive engagement with such texts. Still, we have encountered resistance in some preservice teachers to seeing themselves as teachers of reading in their discipline. We are also well aware of similar views of reading as a basic, technical skill by content area university faculty and by experienced teachers with whom our students are placed for internships or student teaching.

A number of recent studies and reports coalesce around the importance of teachers having a strong and growing knowledge base in reading. The RAND Reading Study Group (RRSG) spoke of the need to ensure that teachers “have a deep knowledge about the reading process and reading comprehension” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 49). The International Reading Association and the National Middle School Association issued a joint statement on reading (2002) in which they called for better teacher preparation in reading and ongoing professional development to enhance teachers’ effectiveness in content area literacy instruction. To accomplish this goal, the RRSG says we need to determine the knowledge base teachers need to teach comprehension effectively, the “relative power” of the different ways of accomplishing this, and an understanding of how closely “teacher preparation experiences relate to teacher practices and student performances” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 51).

The Alliance for Excellent Education, a national policy, advocacy, and research organization that focuses on improving academic success for the nation’s most at-risk middle and high school students, has published a report that echoes these calls for an emphasis on reading. *Adolescents and Literacy: Reading for the 21st Century* (Kamil, 2003) describes a developmental view of reading—specifically, reading to learn from content texts (Alexander and Jetton, 2000). The ability to learn from text changes during the course of one’s education, a reality that manifests itself in a variety of ways for students. Cummins (2001) describes the docu-

mented decline in reading performance for English learners as “the fourth-grade slump” to mark the point at which simple vocabulary development and decoding skills are no longer sufficient for students to meet literacy development expectations. The instructional implications are clear: teachers must be knowledgeable about all of their students’ content area literacy strengths and needs, about the demands of particular texts, and about the support necessary for particular students to learn from them. They must also know how to select accessible texts for content area learning while at the same time helping students to develop strategies and knowledge that will allow them to engage productively with more challenging texts. Students are not opening a toolbox, presumably fully equipped by the end of third grade, and using it to read their tenth-grade science text; instead, they are learning how to read this text in the process of learning high school science content, equipping their toolbox to meet the demands of content area reading in high school and beyond. This is why teachers’ knowledge about literacy and learning in their disciplines is so important, with a strong foundation in the preservice program and opportunities to deepen that knowledge through ongoing professional development.

We want to help our preservice teachers see that, as expert readers in their subject areas, they are uniquely equipped to help the adolescents in their classrooms learn discipline-specific ways of reading and thinking. It is critical that they gain the insights and tools they need to help their students access and employ the complex ways of reading that each discipline requires. This is a larger vision of the middle and high school teacher’s role in subject area literacy, one that our teacher Mark was not offered in his preparation that focused on “what works” to raise test scores.

We strive to help preservice teachers shift their thinking about reading to the larger vision described here, one that moves subject area reading to the center of classroom practice. But often the classroom placements for student practica or teaching make our task more difficult because of the reinforcement of the model of reading as a technical skill separate from the content. We can’t assume that

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cooperating teachers themselves are knowledgeable about effective literacy-support practices—for example, building schema needed to understand specific texts or developing students' questioning and summarizing skills to guide their reading. And given pressures to cover the content, cooperating teachers may steer preservice teachers away from interactive strategies that help students focus on the reading process as well as on comprehension (Irvin, Buehl, and Klemm, 2003). In fact, Irvin and her colleagues note that preservice teachers are likely to find secondary content classrooms much as they were described by Alvermann and Moore in 1991, with the following features: reliance on a single text for content learning, learning facts as the main goal, little preteaching of concepts or vocabulary, an emphasis on classroom management and teacher control, and accountability via testing and emphasis on content coverage acting as limitations on reading strategy instruction.

Against this backdrop, we have been challenged to help our preservice teachers see reading as an essential mode of acquiring content area knowledge. We are committed to help these teachers deepen their understanding of reading in their discipline and develop expertise by modeling discipline-specific ways of reading that can be taken up and used effectively by their students.

Meeting the Needs of Readers Who Struggle

The prevalent idea of reading as a technical skill to be mastered in the primary grades and then consistently applied to learning in the content areas does not merely limit secondary teachers' knowledge and effectiveness in content areas. It can also lead to policy and curricular decisions that actually harm students. In this view, adolescents who struggle with literacy tasks in subject area classes need remedial intervention—for example, instruction in basic skills such as phonics or word recognition. The growing adoption of direct instruction, basic-skill reading programs in middle and high schools with substantial populations of identified “struggling readers,” illus-

trates this increasingly dominant view of reading as a technical, generalizable skill.

This trend works against our best efforts to equip subject area teachers to embed literacy instruction in their curriculum, with appropriate scaffolding to meet the needs of individual students and make particular texts accessible. In schools that consign struggling secondary readers to basic skill instruction, content area teachers get the message that someone else will “fix” these students. In fact, students who struggle with reading may not even be in the regular content area classroom; instead, they may be spending two or even three periods a day in skill-based reading instruction that is unrelated to the curriculum. In such an impoverished learning environment, student disengagement even to the point of dropping out of school is predictable. Tragic and unnecessary, but predictable.

Meeting the Literacy Needs of English Learners

A shift away from categorical status of English learners (ELs) in schools has led to a similar one-size-fits-all mindset about meeting their literacy needs. More and more often we are seeing students who have literacy knowledge and experience in their home language, but who lack grade-appropriate skill reading English, being referred for basic reading instruction. They are identified as struggling readers rather than as readers developing literacy in English.

English learners are wrongly seen as struggling readers largely because of the persistence of deficit views of linguistic and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, knowledge and ways of demonstrating knowledge in American schools continue to be exclusively in English (Valdés, 1998). A parallel situation exists regarding the content of most remedial literacy programs. Although textbook publishers have made some progress in diversifying the cultural, ethnic, and racial content of the material used in most classrooms, the situation is quite different with remedial texts. As we discuss in Chapter Eight, the simplistic nature of such materials leaves no

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room for the complexities and subtleties associated with the rich and diverse cultures represented in most American classrooms. Thus, it is no surprise that English learners struggle to become literate using texts that are devoid of their own reality and experiences. It is surprising that they engage in the struggle at all.

Both native speakers of English and English learners who exhibit difficulties with academic literacy may need more experience reading texts that are engaging and more support to grapple with texts in the subject areas. Schools may confuse such inexperience with inability or a lack of basic skills. They do so to the detriment of students' reading growth, and in the case of ELs, to the detriment of their growth in oral and written English use.

Preparing New Teachers for Content Area Literacy Instruction

Our fictional middle school math teacher Mark, whose story introduced this chapter, holds the unexamined assumption that reading is a technical skill, one that his students should bring with them to his classroom, along with their school supplies. Had his teacher preparation included opportunities to investigate his own literacy history—specifically, how he became an expert reader in mathematics—he might have reexamined this belief. If he had had opportunities to ask questions about and investigate his students' reading, he might have gained an understanding of their resources and challenges as readers. If he had had opportunities to think about how mathematics is a sign system that can be “read,” he might have learned ways to apprentice students into mathematically unique and important ways of reading. Ultimately, he might have understood reading in mathematics as part of teaching mathematics, and he might also have eagerly sought ways to teach reading to help his students succeed in math.

Learning how to teach involves more than learning what works to raise test scores. As the following chapters illustrate, prospective teachers also need to learn about themselves and their students as

learners. In our content area reading courses, we help preservice teachers focus on their own literacy histories, particularly in academics. Focusing on learning and seeing themselves as learners also means understanding that they won't know everything they need to know upon graduation and certification. They will continue to learn through their practice, through ongoing professional development, and especially through inquiry and reflection on their instructional interactions with students. For them, and for their students, learning will not be a linear process; there will be growth spurts and lags. Elmore (2003, pp. 9–10) reminds us that learning doesn't happen in a straightforward way: "We learn in part by tearing down old preconceptions, trying out new ideas and practices, and working hard to incorporate these new ideas and practices into our operating model of the world. It takes a while for these ideas and practices to 'take,' but when they do, they often result in learning at the individual and collective level."

As teacher educators, we are committed to providing a supportive yet challenging curriculum that helps prospective teachers reexamine assumptions about literacy and learning in the disciplines. Teaching for deep understanding and ongoing inquiry is a challenge in the current "what works" education landscape. In the following chapters we explain and illustrate our choice of Reading Apprenticeship as a framework to promote in-depth content literacy learning, starting with our students—prospective teachers—and bridging to their adolescent students. In our programs, we strive to help teachers like Mark deepen their understanding of their own discipline, and particularly the ways in which literacy operates in it. Subsequent chapters describe some of the learning experiences we have designed to accomplish this.

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