The Read-Write Cycle Project: Toward Affecting Teacher Change in Content Area Literacy in the Upper Elementary Grades

THE READ-WRITE CYCLE
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READING THEORY

READING PRACTICE

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Our vision of content area literacy
(Calfee, Miller, Thomas & White-Smith, 2005)

- **Teachers and students need a wider and more powerful understanding of language and literacy as fundamental tools for thinking and learning.**

- **Language and literacy are embedded in the construction of content area knowledge.**

- **Acquiring this level of literacy requires the engagement of teachers and students in parallel developmental activities.**

The Read-Write Cycle Project

Conducted by UC Riverside and Chapman University in conjunction with the Orange Unified School District

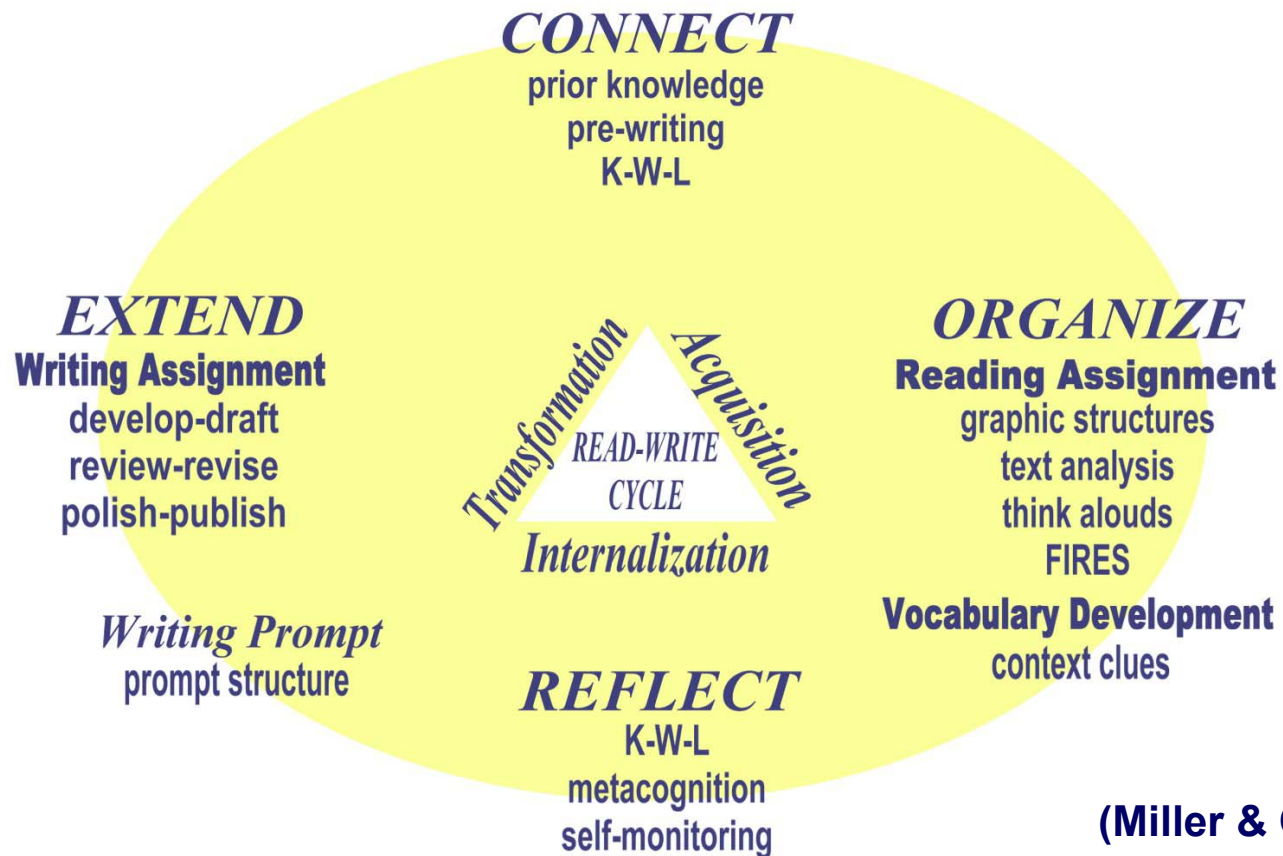**Funded by U.S Department of Education**

RWC Project Goals

- **To simultaneously improve students' <u>reading comprehension</u>, <u>expository writing skills</u>, and <u>content area knowledge</u>.**

- **To enhance students' ability to search out and select <u>information from text sources</u>,**

- **To analyze the information using <u>rhetorical structures</u>, and,**

- **To <u>transform and synthesize</u> the information into high quality expository writing.**

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Assumptions

- The integration of reading and writing instruction is key to improving students' reading comprehension and writing skills.

- All students, but particularly students who struggle with writing, benefit from explicit instructions in cognitive and socio-cognitive strategies to reading, writing, and problem solving.

- Writing coherently and insightfully requires competence in the subject matter to be written about.

The Read-Write Cycle

CONNECT
prior knowledge
pre-writing
K-W-L

EXTEND
Writing Assignment
develop-draft
review-revise
polish-publish

Writing Prompt
prompt structure

Transformation *Acquisition*
READ-WRITE CYCLE
Internalization

ORGANIZE
Reading Assignment
graphic structures
text analysis
think alouds
FIRES
Vocabulary Development
context clues

REFLECT
K-W-L
metacognition
self-monitoring

(Miller & Calfee, 2004)

The Read-Write Cycle incorporates the following:

- Connection to prior knowledge
- Organization of ideas both before and after reading
- Graphic organizers matched to reading/writing task
- Vocabulary building strategies to accompany reading
- Specific prompt structure
- Making writing a structured process
- Metacognitive reflection throughout model

RWC Project Instructional Components: Main Ideas

- Teacher-developed units of instruction that integrate content with literacy.

- Teachers use the Read-Write Cycle to plan cyclical – not linear – instruction.

- Extensive, ongoing professional development.

- Conforms to CA State Standards.

- Uses a variety of instructional materials beyond the adopted textbook.

Promoting Teachers as Decision Makers Who Are

Comfortable,

Confident, and

Informed in Pedagogy,

   Content (literacy or subject area), and

   Reflection on self & external feedback,

      themselves as teachers,

      the whole class, and

      individual students.

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The RWC schools:

- 10 schools within one urban-suburban district
- 4 of the schools received Title 1 funds in 2004-2005
  - (3 school-wide; 1 targeted assistance program)
- 7 3rd grade classrooms; 8 4th grade classrooms; 6 5th grade classrooms; 5 6th grade classrooms; 1 grades 4-5-6 combo classroom
- 3 schools did not meet federal AYP in 2005; 2 schools were enrolled in federal Program Improvement (Year 2 and Year 3)
- API's range from 628 to 878 [CA mean = 709]
- English Language Arts CST scores range from 309 to 379 [CA mean = 336]

The RWC students and their teachers:

STUDENTS:

- 42% Hispanic, 40% Anglo, 10% Asian, 2% African-American district-wide

- 34% low SES; 22% LEP; an additional 20% Fluent EP (former LEP students not yet exited from ELD program)

- Third, fourth, fifth & sixth graders

TEACHERS:

- Range from 2 to 25+ years of experience

- 50% have Master's degrees

- 25 female; 2 male

- Exhibit varying levels of receptiveness to integrated content area reading instruction

RWC Project Activities

Year 1 – 2005/2006:

- 10 days of teacher professional development in content area literacy
- Teachers developed a min. of 3 long-range units within their content standards to implement next year
- Development of pilot text-based writing assessments
- Gathering of baseline data for participating schools

Years 2 & 3 – 2006/2007 & 2007/2008:

- Teachers implement their units and receive continuing professional development
- Frequent videotaped and coded classroom observations
- Pre/post standardized testing of reading comprehension & writing capacity w/control groups
- Multiple mid-year assessments of text-based writing composition

Research Questions

- How are teachers understanding the goals of the project?

- To what degree are teachers engaged in the project?

- What do teachers see as emerging challenges to implementation?

- What do teachers see as benefits of the project?

- Where are the teachers in terms of pedagogical skills?

Methods

- Qualitative case study
  - Context –embedded research design that provides a more holistic description of and explanation for our phenomenon

- Analysis
  - Within and across case comparative analysis allowed practice-informing themes to emerge from the data (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994)

- Case selection
  - Extreme or deviant case sampling was the specific approach used in purposefully selecting these particular sites. Six teachers, two from each category, were selected from the relevant population of 32 teachers participating in the Project's first year.

Criteria for Extreme Case Selection

Teacher Category	Description
I	Teacher Skilled and Engaged
II	Teacher Engaged but Lacks Skill
III	Teacher Resistant

Data Sources

- Video of classroom practice
- Observations of teacher participation at PD trainings
- Planning artifacts
- One-on-one interviews using semi-structured interview protocols

Teacher I

- It'll make more sense to them because they can make connections. Children will learn better when everything isn't fragmented into parts.

- Intelligent planning will be key.

- We're doing it because we want to learn more and want to be part of a learning experience, rather than it's just being given to you. (in reference to children and teachers)

Teacher II

- I had so much new learning going on being a new teacher in a new grade level that I wasn't always able to do that [teach thematically). But being in this program, it made me more aware.

- One of the things that I'll say concerns me right now is I've had a process of how I plan for seven years and now we're looking at how do we plan differently. There are so many interrupters in a teacher's day that it's going to be hard to sort of stay on a schedule to finish things that we want to get done or to get as much into a unit as we possibly can.

- I think if our kids are engaged and excited, then maybe as a teacher too, you are as well. Then you're sort of feeding off the process.

Teacher III

- It's important to remain open-minded because emphases do change. The longer I'm at this, the more I realize the less I know. I consider it another arrow, another quiver in my arrow basket.

- You're trying to teach teachers to teach in the same way so that you can get this thing developed and see if kids learn better by teaching thematically and through writing.

- I know you guys told us [the project goals] at the beginning but I wasn't listening.

Summary

- We were able to develop a coherent and useful understanding of each teacher.

- It hit home nevertheless how different each teacher was, in spite of our initial move to create the three broad categories.

- The complexities we've uncovered will help us in planning different kinds of support for the project teachers.

- The complexities will also provide valuable, more nuanced insights into the body of research on professional development.

For more information

Visit the Read-Write Cycle Project Website at

www.readwritecycle.org

Complete contact information for all presenters appears on the website. Additionally, our project office is located at

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