Support Reading with the Four Dimensions of RA

The dimensions of the Reading Apprenticeship® (RA) Framework include the personal, social, cognitive, and the knowledge-building dimensions. These four dimensions are necessary to support reading development at all levels in your classroom. Let’s review the four dimensions:

**Dimensions of Reading Apprenticeship®**

**Personal: Who are you as a reader?** The personal dimension deals with helping the students develop their reader identities and become self-aware of their purposes and goals of reading. This also has to do the ability to take on a wide variety of disciplinary texts with confidence, in a fluent manner, and with the ability to handle the rigor and demands of the text.

**Social: How will the group support your reading skill development?** The social dimension builds the community of readers by recognizing the reading resources and contributions that each class member brings to the text. The social setting must offer a supportive, safe classroom where students can discuss their misunderstandings and challenges with the readings.

**Cognitive: What techniques will make the task of approaching text easier?** The cognitive dimension works to give the readers the tools to develop their mental strategies, monitor comprehension, apply problem solving strategies, and adjust reading processes for various texts.

**Knowledge-Building: How can we build schema together and learn the reading skills of our technical professional fields?** The knowledge-building dimension is the key to identifying and increasing the kinds of knowledge that readers use to approach text and persevere when reading is a challenge. As the field expert, you bring the students into your world and build their knowledge or skill set of disciplinary structures and texts.
We all have our ways of helping students read their texts. But what happens when they do not ask or they simply do not read their course material. We need to look beyond the immediate habit of jumping to the conclusion that these very students who have enrolled in class are not interested in reading or do not want to read. Indeed, there are some people for whom reading is not a pleasure. Academia expects that students will read their texts and read them well enough to master the material to pass the tests and ultimately the course, and maybe even a national exam or credential.

This is the point where I have to add the caveat: the four dimensions without metacognitive conversations are limited. In fact, many faculty already do some cognitive and knowledge-building activities to help their students. These are activities like locating the main idea, previewing the text and then the chapters, circling the concluding ideas. These are a start, but they are simply not enough to build sustainable change in readers.

Metacognitive conversations will change how the readers identify themselves as readers, how they approach text, and how they engage and use text as evidence to make sense of their reading. A metacognitive conversation is an ongoing discussion in which the students and a faculty member think about and discuss their personal relationships with text in a community of readers and where their cognitive activities and their shared knowledge skill sets help the reader make sense of the text.

When a student states: “I read this passage and thought I understood the meaning. But, in table discussions, I found my interpretation varied from the rest of my classmates. I need to clarify the meaning of the key terms to better make sense of the entire passage. I guess I let my own bias and personal definitions of the terms tell me what the author said. That sent me off track. I need to ask, “What does the author mean?”

Here is an example of one reading log to promote metacognitive conversation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Double Column Entry Log</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I saw (notes and quotes from the text)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information about metacognition or using reading logs, go to the RA/RATs LibGuide at [http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats](http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats), click on the RA Routines & Topics tab and select the desired topic.

**Resources for Learning More about RA**

- The RTC Library’s RA/RATs LibGuide will remain available indefinitely at [http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats](http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats).
- The RATs website [http://www.rtc-rats.org](http://www.rtc-rats.org) and its online files will available at least until 09/01/2013.
- Info about WestEd’s online RA course is available at [http://www.wested.org/cs/ra/view/serv/158](http://www.wested.org/cs/ra/view/serv/158).
- Feel free to email Michele Lesmeister (mlesmeister@rtc.edu) with questions about RA.