Reading Apprenticeship (RA) Routines for Busy Faculty

As the papers pile up and more committee projects have deadlines looming, faculty often find themselves trying to figure out how to streamline their course preparation while at the same time ensuring that students are "mastering" skills in their courses. Your students' ability to read is central to the mastery of discipline-based texts.

You might be surprised to find that Reading Apprenticeship (RA), much like the UDL methods, fit our classrooms well. With RA, learning becomes the shared responsibility of the collaborative classroom and the faculty member begins with modeling the metacognitive conversations that spotlight his or her reading processes.

These serve as models for student learning and sharing; these discussions harness the individual and group strengths to create a rich learning environment around text that often seems tedious or too taxing to students to approach on their own.

The Reader's Strategy List, Textual Analysis, 25-Word Summary, Think-Alouds, Evidence Logs, and Gallery Walk all incorporate scaffolds and discussions that hone students' abilities to discuss how they read, how they know, and how they think about specific reading materials.

In this way, the faculty can "see" the learning of discipline-specific reading materials by the students' framing of their knowledge through discussing "what they know" and "how they know" from their readings.

The regular use of RA routines and the inclusion of a repertoire of metacognitive techniques fosters the mentoring of the thinking processes of making meaning from texts. These strong, research-based, pedagogical tools help bridge student learning to a higher level of student attainment and knowledge building.

As the discipline expert, your modeling will show the students:
- how we make meaning from text
- what are the steps and skills needed to make meaning
- what scaffolds are needed to bridge learner and text
- why reading matters in your field.

The RATs have some ideas for you that will assist in making learning a shared responsibility for both you, the faculty member as the content expert, and the students as apprentices. Templates are ready for your use; furthermore, guidance and advice is also available at our monthly training sessions.

Learn more about RA routines for busy faculty. Come to Michele Lesmeister's workshop on Tuesday, November 17 from 2:45-3:45 PM located in Michele Lesmeister's classroom J-302.

RTC interim President, Steve Hanson, shows off his RATs t-shirt.
Ask a RAT

This RATs stuff sounds great, but my students don't read a lot in our program and the little reading that we do is not that difficult. Why do I need to use RA routines with my class?

First, you may want to cast a fresh eye on your program. Why isn't there much reading? You might find that your program evolved this way due to students' reluctance to read assignments or failure to comprehend assigned readings. Or an instructor's discomfort with certain types of readings may have influenced the text choices. Consider what types of text a student will encounter as a worker and lifelong learner, and then make sure that your curriculum reflects that same variety.

Now that you've determined you are pleased with the types of texts your student encounters, I'd encourage you to cast a fresh eye on the word "text". Guess what? It's not just textbooks! Of course it could be a typical written document - textbooks, articles, manuals, online information, etc. But keep going - texts could also be items such as product labels, visual diagrams, advertisements, videos, radio programs, and more. The routines of RA and the rationale behind using them are really about thinking. They can be applied to any "text" to help students explore how they make meaning from it.

Finally, don't assume that any reading is easy. Something might be easy for you, but difficult to students. And many students are adept at finding ways to compensate for difficulties, so the problem may not be apparent to the instructor. For example, a student might not understand a procedural diagram, but can complete the task by watching the demo. That student still should know how to read a diagram! Opening up metacognitive conversations through RA routines gives you insight as an instructor and allows students to explore and build their skill set.

Library Item of the Month

The RTC Library has materials to support and help improve student reading and comprehension skills. For more info, contact the Library at 235-2331 or via email at librarian@RTC.edu.


RATs Calendar

Tues. Nov. 17, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302: RATs Workshop on RA Routines for Busy Faculty with Michele Lesmeister.


Join the RATs!

RATs (Reading Apprenticeship Teachers and supporters) is the RTC support group for those who want to use WestEd's Reading Apprenticeship® (RA) to help engage students in metacognitive conversation about their reading habits. Become a RAT and learn how to help improve your students' reading skills and comprehension.

The RAT Pack is the training and planning leadership team to help get you started. Contact one of them today for more info about RA or RATs:

- Debbie Crumb
- Jenna Pollock
- Michele Lesmeister, Team Leader

For more info about RA at RTC, scurry over to our RATs website and blog!

http://rtc-rats.org/

Website of the Month

How to Write a Summary
http://www.enotes.com/topics/how-write-summary