
4A

Action

Credentialing and Certificated Assignments Committee

Request for Consideration of Eminence Credential

Executive Summary: The Governing Board of Health Science High and Middle College, a Charter School in San Diego County, recommends to the Commission, the issuance of a credential based on Eminence to Dr. Douglas Fisher in the subject of English.

Recommended Action: None

Presenter: Patty Wohl, Director, Certification, Assignment and Waivers Division

Strategic Plan Goal(s): 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators

◆ Grant credentials, certificates and permits as set out in regulation and statute

April 2008

Request for Consideration of Eminence Credential

Introduction

The Governing Board of Health Sciences High and Middle College, a Charter School in San Diego County, by resolution, adopted on June 04, 2007, in accordance with Education Code Section 44262 recommends to the Commission the issuance of a credential based on Eminence to Dr. Douglas Fisher in the subject of English.

Background

Education Code Section 44262 allows the Commission to issue an Eminence Credential to any person who has achieved eminence in a field of endeavor commonly taught or a service practiced in the public schools of California. California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 80043(a) defines an eminent individual as one who is recognized as such beyond the boundaries of his or her community, has demonstrably advanced his or her field, and has been acknowledged by his or her peers as beyond the norm for others in the specific endeavor.

The Commission has determined that an individual who has achieved eminence in the three areas that define eminence in a field would meet the following requirements:

- **The individual is recognized as eminent beyond the boundaries of his or her community:** To meet this requirement the individual must be renowned outside his geographical community with more merit given to interstate and international recognition.
- **Demonstrably advanced his or her field:** To meet this requirement an individual must provide documentation of advanced degrees; distinguished employment in the field/endeavor; contributions to the field including evidence of authorship or research indicating a high level of expertise.
- **Acknowledged by his or her peers as “beyond the norm” in the specific endeavor:** To meet this requirement the employing agency and the candidate must submit all of the following:
 1. Letters from former employers, professional colleagues and other experts in the field, relating to the individual’s recognized expertise or position of prominence in their field
 2. Documents evidencing extraordinary ability worthy of distinction
 3. Evidence of major, national or international awards recognizing uncommon achievement in and advancement of a particular field or endeavor
 4. Evidence of significant contribution to the field
 5. Authorship of a new or unusually successful method of educating children or the public in the field or endeavor
 6. Extraordinary success in their field

The following tables outline a sampling of the documentation submitted by the Health Sciences High and Middle College Charter School Governing Board and Dr. Fisher to support the request for a Single Subject Teaching Credential in English based on Eminence.

Education
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Language Acquisition and Structure, 1990 San Diego State University, San Diego, California
Master's Degree in Public Health/Health Education, 1992 San Diego State University, San Diego, California
Ph. D. in Multicultural Education, 1995 San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University Joint Doctoral Program

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
Language Fluency			
English (Also fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish)	X	X	X
Professional Experience			
1989 through 1995 – Teacher, Health Science Grossmont Community College, San Diego		X	
1993 through 1997 - Lecturer and Supervisor of teacher interns , SDSU, Department of Teacher Education, Special Education and Communicative Disorders		X	
1993 through 1999 - Project Coordinator, Interwork Institute, SDSU Foundation Coordinated research and activities for state and federal funded grants to include: California Dept. of Education, <i>Statewide Systems Change</i> US Department of Education, <i>Consortium on Inclusive School Practices</i> US Department of Education, <i>Real Moves</i> US Department of Education, <i>The Intern Model</i> California Department of Education, <i>Positive Behavior Supports Study</i>	X	X	
1996 to 1997 - Policy Fellow National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), Washington, D.C.	X	X	X
1997 – Adjunct Doctoral Faculty University of San Diego		X	
1997 – 1998 - Block Leader & Lecturer, San Diego State University Teacher Education Dept.		X	

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
1999 – 2005 - Director of Professional Development, City Heights Educational Collaborative, San Diego Teacher development, pre-service graduate and in-service education		X	
1998 – 2001 – Assistant Professor of Language and Literacy Education, School of Education, San Diego State University (SDSU)		X	
2000 to present – Doctoral Faculty Member SDSU, USD and Claremont Graduate University		X	
2001 and 2003 – Student Teacher Supervisor/ Professional Development Coordinator, Hoover High School in San Diego		X	
2001 through 2004 – Associate Professor of Language and Literacy Education with Tenure, SDSU, Teacher Education Program		X	
2004 to present – Professor of Language and Literacy Education , SDSU, Teacher Education Program		X	
2006 to present - Co-Director, Center for Advancement of Reading, CSU, Long Beach		X	X
Honors and Awards			
1998 – <i>Golden Bell</i> California School Boards Association	X	X	X
2000 – <i>Distinguished Service to Education</i> Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society	X	X	X
2000 – <i>Outstanding Faculty Award</i> School Of Teacher Education, SDSU			X
2001 – Elected Member, National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy	X		X
2003 - <i>Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education</i> , American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)	X		X
2004 – <i>Celebrate Literacy Award</i> International Reading Association	X		X
2004 – <i>The Paul and Kate Farmer English Journal Writing Award For Excellence In Writing</i> National Council of Teachers of English	X		X

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
Letters of Recommendation			
Barbara Buswell, Executive Director Peak Parent Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado	X		X
Donna Ogle, Ed. D., Prof., Reading and Language National–Louis University, Skokie, Illinois	X		X
Cathy Collins Block Ph.D., Prof. of Education, Chancellor’s Distinguished Professor for Creative Teaching and Scholarship, Texas Christian University and Past, Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (2002 – 2005)	X		X
Kathleen Hinchman, Ph.D., Professor and Chair School of Education Reading and Language Arts Center, Syracuse University , New York	X		X
Nancy L. Shanklin, Ed. D., Director, Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, a joint project of IRA and NCTE, University of Colorado at Denver	X		X
Kathy Ganske, Ph. D. Professor of Reading, Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey	X		X
Gay Ivey, Ph. D. Associate Professor of Reading Education James Madison University, Harrisburg, Virginia	X		X
Nancy Brynelson, Co-Director Center for Advancement of Reading California State Univ. Office of the Chancellor			X
Sharon Roth, Division Director of Professional Development, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois	X		X
Cathy M. Roller, Director of Research and Policy International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware	X		X
Publications			
Dr. Fisher has authored, co-authored and contributed to many books and publications. He submitted evidence of over 40 books, 51 Chapters and 99 journal articles. A representative sampling of his work is included in this agenda item.	X	X	X
Dr. Fisher is Senior Author of the <i>Glencoe Literature Program</i> (grades 6-12). Dr. Fisher designs, develops and field tests the English class curriculum.	X	X	X

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
Dr. Fisher is the Senior Author of the <i>Jamestown Reading Intervention Program</i> for Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.	X	X	X
Co-author of <i>Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents</i> , ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia	X	X	X
Co –author of <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> , Pearson, Merrill, Prentice Hall, Columbus, Ohio	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy</i> , Pearson, Merrill/Prentice Hall, Columbus, Ohio	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>Scaffolded Writing Instruction</i> , Scholastic, New York	X	X	X
Co-Author – <i>Implementing a schoolwide literacy framework</i> , The Reading Teacher	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>What’s the gist? Summary writing for struggling adolescent writers</i> , Voices From the Middle, 11(2) , 43-49	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>A stitch in time: Increasing literacy achievement in an urban elementary school</i> Indiana Reading Journal, 35(2), 51-59	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>More than Instruction: The moves of an expert English Teacher</i> , Illinois English Bulletin 94(2), 13-24	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>Seven literacy strategies that work</i> , Educational Leadership, 60(3), 70-73	X	X	X
Co-author, <i>Using graphic novels, anime, teen magazines and the Internet in an urban high school English class</i> , English Journal, 93, 19-25	X	X	X
Co-author – <i>What’s it take to talk, read and write like a scientist?</i> , Content Area Reading Journal	X	X	X
Memberships			
2006 – 2008 Board Member, Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse (IRA & NCTE)	X	X	
2005 – 2007 Chairperson, Adolescent Literacy Committee, International Reading Association	X	X	X
2006 – 2007 Chairperson, School of Teacher Education Personnel Committee	X	X	X
2003 - 2005 Member, Adolescent Literacy Committee, International Reading Association	X	X	
2005 - 2006 Member, Imperial Valley Campus Literacy Search Committee		X	

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
2003 – 2006 Area Chair, Teacher Education, National Reading Conference	X	X	X
2002 – 2004 Member, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, San Diego State University		X	
2001 – 2003 Member, Field Council, National Reading Conference	X	X	
2001 – 2003 Member, Outstanding Children’s Book Award Committee, International Reading Association	X	X	
1999 – 2000 Member, Outstanding Dissertation Award Committee, International Reading Association	X	X	
1999 – 2000 Board Member, San Diego Council on Literacy		X	
National Conference of Teachers of English	X	X	
National Conference in Research in Language and Literacy	X	X	
Presentations			
2007 <i>Literacy instruction for all students</i> , Colorado Inclusion Conference, Denver	X	X	X
2006 <i>Effects of interactive teacher read alouds/shared readings of expository texts on the comprehension of struggling intermediate, middle, and high school students</i> , National Reading Conference, Los Angeles	X	X	X
2006 <i>Graphic novels in the classrooms</i> , National Council of Teachers of English Conference, Nashville, Tennessee	X	X	X
2006 <i>Teaching Reading to all students</i> , Keynote Speaker at the Keystone State Reading Conference, Pennsylvania	X	X	X
2006 <i>Content literacy strategies that work</i> , Charlottesville Professional Development Institute North Carolina and Loudoun County Professional Development Institute, Virginia	X	X	X
2006 <i>Hit the ground running: Teaching English Idioms</i> , Colorado Reading Conference, Denver, and Conference for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students, Oak Brook, Illinois.	X	X	X
2005 <i>Vocabulary instruction and assessment</i> , National Reading Conference, Miami, Florida	X	X	X

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Douglas Fisher	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advanced Field	Acknowledged as Beyond the Norm
2005 <i>Schoolwide approaches to Literacy instruction</i> , Keynote Speaker, International Reading Association, San Antonio, Texas	X	X	X
2004 <i>10 writing instructional strategies every teacher needs to know</i> , California Reading Association Research Institute, San Jose, CA	X	X	X
2004 <i>Improving writing schoolwide</i> National Conference of Teachers of English, Indianapolis, Indiana	X	X	X
2004 <i>Content area reading and writing</i> , Workshop for the Macedonia Ministry of Education, funded by US AID, Skopje, Macedonia	X	X	X
2003 <i>Phonics from a teachers perspective</i> , Tenth International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference, London, England	X	X	X

The following pages contain a representative sampling of the many documents provided by Dr. Fisher and the Health Sciences High and Middle College Charter School Board as evidence of his involvement and contributions in the field of English.



State Of California
 California Commission On Teacher Credentialing
 Box 944270
 1900 Capitol Avenue
 Sacramento, CA 94244-2700

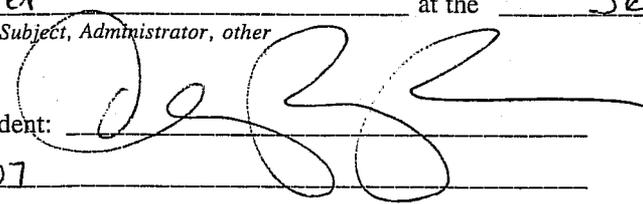
Telephone:
 (916) 445-7254 or (888) 921-2682
 E-mail: credentials@ctc.ca.gov
 Web site: www.ctc.ca.gov

RECOMMENDATION FOR A PERSON OF EMINENCE

The Governing Board of the Heath Sciences High + Middle College
 school district, by resolution adopted on June 4, 2007, in accordance
 with California Education Code, Section 44262, recommends the issuance of a credential based on Eminence to
Dr. Douglas Fisher

in the subject of English
 Eminence was determined on the basis of Dr. Fisher's reputation, expertise, and influence in the field of adolescent literacy / English education. After a careful review of his vital publications, committee memberships, education, experience, and knowledge-base, HSHMC would benefit from the addition of his expertise to the teaching core.

The above named applicant will be employed in this school district to serve as a
Teacher at the Secondary level.
Teacher/Subject, Administrator, other Elementary or Secondary

District Superintendent: 
 Date: 6/22/07

See page 2 for additional required information.

(continued)

The individual is recognized as eminent beyond the boundaries of his or her community, has demonstrably advanced his or her field, and has been acknowledged by his or her peers beyond the norm for others in the specific endeavor.

1. The following affirmations of eminence are attached (see tables with corresponding letter highlighted in bold):

A) Letters of recommendations from the following individuals, each of whom has reached stature in his or her field attest to Dr. Douglas Fisher's eminence:

Dr. Donna Ogle, Professor from Illinois

Dr. Gay Ivey, Professor from Virginia

Dr. Cathy Collins Block, Professor from Texas

Dr. Kathy Ganske, Professor from Ohio

Dr. Nancy Shanklin, Professor from Colorado

Dr. Kathy Hinchman, Professor from New York

Sharon Roth, Director National Council of Teachers of English

Dr. Cathy Roller, Director of Research, International Reading Association

Nancy Brynelson, Director, Center for the Advancement of Reading, California

B) A copy of the Kate and Paul Farmer Award of Excellent to Dr. Douglas Fisher for outstanding writing from the National Council of Teachers of English (only 1 award is given each year). This award recognizes exceptional writing about an English classroom.

C) A copy of the Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education. This award, from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities recognizes excellent in teacher preparation. The innovative program, co-directed by Dr. Fisher, received the award in 2003.

2. The following documentation of achievement (advanced degrees, distinguished employment, publications, other) are attached:

D) A copy of Dr. Douglas Fisher's unofficial transcripts from Claremont Graduate University which document his doctoral degree (official copies are also included for credentials staff).

E) A copy of Dr. Douglas Fisher's 59-page vita which documents his record of publications, including 99 journal articles, 51 book chapters, and 40 books. This is an exceptional record of scholarship over a 12-year period. Dr. Fisher is highly prolific and productive. In addition, his vita documents a number of competitively awarded research and demonstration grants, national and international conference presentations, and numerous teaching assignments. Sample publications related to English education are included in the appendix. As noted in on Dr. Fisher's 59-page vita, he obtained tenure in 3 years (rather than the customary 7) and was advanced from Associate Professor to Full Professor in 3 years (rather than the customary review after 5 years). It should be noted

that many Associate Professors never obtain the rank of Full Professor and Dr. Fisher accomplished this in just 6 years.

F) Senior authorship on the Glencoe Literature program (grades 6 – 12). As a senior author, Dr. Fisher designed, developed, and field -tested the English class curriculum. Each reading selection is analyzed with literary devices, reading comprehension tools, and writing connections. Each unit focuses on content standards. Very few people in the world are selected as senior authors for literature programs; at Glencoe there are only 2 of them. This, in and of itself, is indicative of Dr. Fisher's content knowledge and reputation in the English field.

G) Senior authorship on the Jamestown reading intervention program, Jamestown Reading Navigator. As with the authorship of the 6-12 English Literature program, Dr. Fisher was selected as one of the four authors for reading intervention programs produced by Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. As such, Dr. Fisher has designed, developed, and implemented standards-based reading intervention for students in English language arts.

3. Please provide an explanation of the individual's effectiveness as a teacher:

H) A letter of recommendation from Doug Williams, Principal of Hoover High School, where Dr. Fisher taught for 2 terms. In his letter, Mr. Williams notes Dr. Fisher's skill in teaching.

I) A letter of recommendation from Abdurashid Ali, a former student of Dr. Doug Fisher, who credits Doug with ensuring that Abudurashid had the skills necessary to attend college.

J) A letter from Barbara Buswell, Executive Director of PEAK Parent Center in Colorado. A former English teacher, Ms. Buswell now directs a federal parent training and informational center.

4. Attached are the following miscellaneous items the district feels support eminence:

N/A – We believe that we have established Dr. Fisher's eminence through the materials we have provided. He is extremely knowledgeable, very well respected, and an excellent teacher. He is remarkable and our school will benefit in significant ways with the addition of Dr. Fisher to the teaching staff.

5. Attached is a letter from the applicant describing his or her accomplishments that support a claim of eminence.

K) Attached is the letter from Dr. Douglas Fisher as well as a number of his publications.



Health Sciences High & Middle College

8888 Balboa Ave. #150, San Diego, CA 92123

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 22, 2007

TO: California Commission on Faculty Credentialing

FROM: Dr. Ian Pumpian, CEO & President
Health Sciences High and Middle College

RE: Eminence Credential for Dr. Doug Fisher

On behalf of the governing board of HSHMC and its student body, I am formerly verifying our recommendation for Dr. Douglas Fisher as a Person of Eminence. I am also verifying his employment at our Charter School. We intend to employ him on a 50% contract as an English teacher. For the purposes of your records, our Charter School Number is 876.

HSHMC was founded on a commitment to creating a high school in which highly effective instructional practices are used, demonstrated, and evaluated. Our strategic plan was to actively employ, engage, and involve recognized experts in curriculum and instruction in our schools design and operation. Dr. Fisher is one such expert. I assume a careful review of Dr. Fisher's vita is a part of your review process. I assure you those of us who have had the chance to work with him believe he is a teacher and a scholar of the highest caliber. I have observed him teaching in a wide variety of K-16 settings. He is prepared, engaged and engaging.

The ability to actually have one of the nation's most sought after researchers and technical assistance providers on staff at our school is a most unique opportunity for our teachers and students. Dr. Fisher has a unique background having knowledge of both health and English education. Our faculty, through their interactions with him, will engage in professional developed unparalleled in other districts. In addition, we have first hand knowledge that Dr. Fisher is an excellent teacher. He has expertise in adolescent development and learning. He is a full professor with SDSU College of Education with appointments in both the Literacy and Language Development programs. He has first hand knowledge, experience, and a significant record of publications related to aligning State content standards to English I, II, III, and IV courses and in designing school-wide literacy plans. In my opinion, Dr. Fisher meets and exceeds every requirement for an eminence credential in English. Under his tutelage we expect to operate a program of the highest caliber.

I appreciate your careful consideration of Dr. Fisher's request and I appeal for your support in furthering his appointment and contribution to our school.

Current Office: 4275 El Cajon Blvd., Suite 101, San Diego, CA 92105
Phone: 619-985-7482 Fax: 619-594-2742 email: snorth@hshmc.org www.hshmc.org

June 19, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to request that I be considered for an Eminence Credential in the single subject area of English. I am thrilled to be considering the possibility of teaching at Health Sciences High and Middle College, a public charter school. I believe that my education, experience, and current assignments provide a unique perspective from which public school students can learn. This unique school will allow me to use my background in health and health education and combine it with my expertise in English. The remainder of this letter outlines my development as a teacher-scholar and provides a rationale for my request for eminence.

As a teacher, my interests focus on curriculum and instruction, language and literacy, educational policy, and the needs of our diverse student population. I am particularly interested in professional development, student achievement, and community involvement. In terms of public school teaching, I have taught and/or co-taught every year since I joined the SDSU faculty. At the university level, I have coordinated four of the credential program blocks at San Diego State University. I have taught the content area reading course, the teaching English language learners course (CLAD), and a number of graduate level course in language arts and literacy education. In addition, I designed and coordinated an interdisciplinary MA program in El Centro that focused on Education in the 21st Century. I also designed and coordinated a graduate program in City Heights focused on urban education and student achievement. In addition, I regularly teach in the graduate programs on the main campus and have been involved in developing curriculum for the joint doctoral program between SDSU and USD. I have taught doctoral courses for USD and for the USD/SDSU joint doctoral program. Further, I have served on and chaired a number of dissertation committees. In recognition of my teaching, both of public school students and university students, I have received the following awards:

- Golden Bell, California School Boards Association, 1998
- Distinguished Service to Education, Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society, 2000
- Outstanding Faculty Award, School of Teacher Education, 2000
- Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, 2003
- Celebrate Literacy Award, International Reading Association, 2004

As a scholar, my research skills include a balance of both qualitative and quantitative methods. My involvement in conceptualizing and coordinating over 18 million dollars of project funding has

provided me with a source of information for publication. To date, I have authored or co-authored 99 articles in refereed journals, 51 book chapters, and 40 books. My vita provides a comprehensive list of these publications. In addition to the journal articles and book chapters, I have conducted workshops, paper presentations, and symposiums in 36 states (as well as England, Spain, Canada, and Saipan), including a ticketed special session at ASCD and a pre-conference workshop at the Pacific Rim Diversity Conference. I also serve on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and the *Journal of Literacy Research*. For my scholarship, I received the Farmer Award for Excellence in Writing from the National Council of Teachers of English. I have enclosed the following publications to document my expertise and eminence:

- Fisher, D. (2004). Setting the 'opportunity to read' standard: Resuscitating the SSR program in an urban high school. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48, 138-150.
- Fisher, D. (2005). The literacy educator's role in suicide prevention. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48, 364-373.
- Fisher, D. (2005). The missing link: Standards, assessment, and instruction. *Voices From the Middle*, 13(2), 8-11.
- Fisher, D. (2006). When students disclose the violence in their lives, how should their teachers respond? *English Journal*, 95(6), 65-70.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). *Scaffolding writing instruction: A gradual release model*. New York: Scholastic.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Content area reading strategies at work* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Fisher, D., & Ivey, G. (2006). Evaluating the interventions for struggling adolescent readers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50, 180-189.
- Fisher, D., & Ivey, G. (2007). Farewell to A Farewell to Arms: Deemphasizing the whole-class novel. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88, 494-497.
- Fisher, D., Brozo, W. G., Frey, N., & Ivey, G. (2007). *50 content area strategies for adolescent literacy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Williams, D. (2002). Seven literacy strategies that work. *Educational Leadership*, 60(3), 70-73.
- Fisher, D., Lapp, D., Flood, J., & Moore, K. (2006). Linking literacy teaching with assessment: A continuing professional development initiative for secondary schools. *Literacy: An International Journal*, 40, 115-122.
- Fisher, D., Rothenberg, C., & Frey, N. (in press). *Language learners in the English classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2004). Using Graphic novels, anime, teen magazines, and the Internet in an urban high school English class. *English Journal*, 93, 19-25.
- Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Hernandez, T. (2003). What's the gist? Summary writing for struggling adolescent writers. *Voices From the Middle*, 11(2), 43-49.
- Ivey, G., & Fisher, D. (2005). Learning from what doesn't work. *Educational Leadership*, 63(2), 8-17.
- Ivey, G., & Fisher, D. (2006). *Creating literacy-rich schools for adolescents*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Ivey, G., & Fisher, D. (2006). When thinking skills trump reading skills. *Educational Leadership*, 64(2), 16-21.
- Rothenberg, C., & Fisher, D. (2007). *Teaching English language learners: A differentiated approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

During the past year, I assumed the position of Co-Director for the Center for the Advancement of Reading. I was selected from the pool of all California State University literacy faculty as the third ever faculty co-director, following MaryEllen Vogt and Dana Grisham. This, in and of itself, is a significant testament to my stature in the field and my knowledge of literacy. The Center for the Advancement of Reading focuses on professional development for university faculty as well as college readiness. Through our work on the Early Assessment Program, we provide professional development to California teachers in the areas of expository reading and writing and reading for academic preparation.

In terms of leadership, I served on the International Reading Association literature award committee for two years and have chair the Adolescent Literacy Committee for the International Reading Association for two years. In addition, I was selected by the National Council of Teachers of English to serve on the English Language Learner task force as one of three members charged with designing a professional development system for teachers across the country. This fall, Pathways For Success will become available for English teachers around the world.

As is evident in my vita and in the letters of recommendation I have submitted from scholars around the country, I have reached a level of expertise in my chosen profession. I am known as one of the country's top experts in adolescent literacy. However, I am fully aware that I would not be where I am had I not had the amazing teaching experiences that formed my professional life. There is nothing more important to me professionally than getting back into classrooms and continuing to teach. Obtaining this credential, an eminence credential from the state of California, will allow me to work as an English teacher at a very innovative school. In doing so, I will be able to share what I learn with others through my continued scholarship.

I look forward to hearing from the commission members and to assuming a new role in California public education. I urge you to review my application favorably; I am a great teacher who wants to influence the profession.

Sincerely,

Douglas Fisher, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

Douglas Fisher

(<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher>)



Douglas Fisher is Professor of Language and Literacy Education in the Department of Teacher Education at San Diego State University, the Co-Director for the Center for the Advancement of Reading at the California State University Chancellor's office, and the past Director of Professional Development for the City Heights Educational Collaborative. He has published numerous articles on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design, as well as books such as *Creating Literacy-rich Schools for Adolescents* (with Gay Ivey), *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work* (with Nancy Frey) and *Teaching English Language Learners: A Differentiated Approach* (with Carol Rothenberg). A former early intervention specialist, language development specialist, he has also taught high school English, writing, and literacy development to public school students. Some of his presentation topics include content literacy, ELL, and struggling readers.

Douglas Fisher's Selected Presentations (<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/presentations>)

Conference Presentations

(<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/presentations/125059.htm>)

Douglas is a regular presenter at NCTE, IRA, and ASCD conferences. In addition, he is asked to present at schools and districts across the nation.

Consulting Projects

(<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/presentations/125068.htm>)

Douglas has consulted extensively at schools in San Diego, Ohio, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania on content literacy, struggling readers, the use of alternative texts, and more across most grade levels.

Doug's NCTE Web Seminar Presentation

([http://www.ncte.org/library/files/Profdev/onsite/Consulting Network/FisherWBR021908.ppt](http://www.ncte.org/library/files/Profdev/onsite/Consulting%20Network/FisherWBR021908.ppt))

Click here to view the PPT from Doug's Web seminar presentation "All Teachers Are Not Teachers of Reading, but . . ." on February 19, 2008. If you would like to view the on-demand version, go [HERE](#) to purchase this free product in the NCTE store.

Published Works by Douglas Fisher (<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/publications>)

Language Learners in the English Classroom

(<http://www.ncte.org/store/books/127810.htm>)



This book is designed as a tool to guide English teachers in designing powerful lessons that accelerate the achievement of students who are learning English. It also helps English teachers play a role in helping ELLs achieve academic success across disciplines. Nancy co-authored this book with Doug Fisher.

Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents

(<http://www.ncte.org/store/books/language/125756.htm>)



In this book written by Douglas and Gay Ivey, they argue that, primarily, students need lots of rich, literacy-based learning experiences across the school day, and sometimes those experiences require specific instruction in reading, but all have the ultimate goal of learning and thinking.

Classroom Notes Plus Article on use of Graphic Organizers

(<http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/cnp/highlights/127802.htm>)

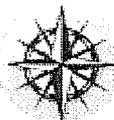
In this excerpt from "Foldables: Improving Learning with 3-D Interactive Graphic Organizers," by Douglas Fisher, Dinah Zike, and Nancy Frey, they describe how to use graphic organizers—specifically, a type called "the Foldable"—for meaningful learning in the English language arts. The authors give general tips for creating and using Foldables, describe the benefits, present

sample activities, and give how-to instructions and student examples for six types of Foldables.

Related Resources (<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/resources>)

ELL Professional Development

(<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/online/adlit/126760.htm>)



NCTE's Pathways for Teaching and Learning with English Language Learners is a self-paced multimodal learning experience that invites you to actively interact in a professional community of practice as you engage with the program's resources and tools. Kick-off Pathways with an onsite visit from Doug, one of the program developers.

Education and Professional Experiences

(<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/fisher/resources/125054.htm>)

Douglas has degrees from San Diego State University and the Drucker Management Program at Claremont Graduate School. His areas of expertise include: literacy language development, language arts and literacy, school restructuring and reform, curriculum and instruction for social justice, cultural and linguistic diversity, and inclusive education.



Honors and Awards



secondary awards

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The Paul and Kate Farmer *English Journal* Writing Award

Established in 1979; awarded to authors of the best articles in *English Journal*. In 1993, the NCTE Executive Committee changed the name of the *English Journal* Writing Awards to the Paul and Kate Farmer Writing Awards. In 1999, the NCTE Executive Committee changed the name to the The Paul and Kate Farmer Award for Outstanding Articles by High School and Junior High/Middle School Teachers. Paul Farmer was President of NCTE in 1951, and he and his wife, Kate, established this award. In 2006, a request by the Secondary Section Steering Committee to change the name to the Paul and Kate Farmer *English Journal* Writing Award was approved by the NCTE Executive Committee. The award is presented at the November NCTE Annual Convention.

2006

Lori Cohen and Leyna Peery, "Unveiling Students' Perceptions about women in Islam: January 2006

Jeff Anderson, "Zooming In and Zooming Out: Putting Grammar in Context into Context" May 2006

2006 Honorable Mentions:

Melissa McClain, "Rediscovering the Artist, Reinvigorating the Self, Reinventing the Teacher" November 2005

Deb Teitelbaum, "Why is the Sky Blue? using Children's Questions to Motivate Research" March 2006

2005

Ann Frkovich and Annie Thoms, "The Monologue Project for Creating Vital Drama in Secondary Schools" November 2004

Stacy Miller, "Shattering Images of Violence in Young Adult Literature: Strategies for the Classroom" May 2005

2005 Honorable Mention:

Christie Jones, "Talking about The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon" May 2005

Jessica Whitney, "Five Easy Pieces: Steps toward Integrating AAVE into the Classroom."

2004

Lisa Garrigues, Ridgewood, NJ, "Porch Talk: Reading Their Eyes Were Watching God",
September 2003

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, Hoover High School, San Diego, CA, "Using Graphic Novels,
Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School", January 2004

2004 Honorable Mention:

Sharon Bishop, Henderson, NE, "The Power of Place" July 2004

Kimberly Price, Roswell, GA, "Teaching as Learning in a Yup'ik Eskimo Village", November
2003

2003

Joseph M. Flanagan and Thomas M. McCann, Community High School, West Chicago, IL, "A
Tempest Project: Shakespeare and Critical Conflicts", September 2002

Jennifer D. Morrison, La Plata, MD, "Using Student-Film to Create a Culturally Relevant
Community," September 2002

2003 Honorable Mention

Christie "CJ" Bott, Solon, OH, "Zines-The Ultimate Creative Writing Project, November 2002

Benjamin B. Dziedzic, Philadelphia, PA, "When Multigenre Meets Multimedia: Reading Films to
Understand Books," November 2002

2002

Lorraine Cella, Westwood Junior-Senior High School, Washington Township, New Jersey,
"Reading the Complex World: Students Approach the Scarlet Letter from Multiple Perspectives",
July 2002

Don Pederson, Florin High School, Sacramento, "Question and Answer: Reading Nonfiction to
Develop the Persuasive Essay", March 2002

2001

Lynda Hamblin, "Voices in the Junior High School Classroom: Lost and Found", September 2000

Tamara L.C. Van Wyhe, "A Passion for Poetry: Breaking Rules and Boundaries with Online
Relationships", November 2000

2000

Joseph M. Shosh, Freedom High School, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, "Much Ado about
Negotiation," July 2000

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

PAUL AND KATE FARMER
ENGLISH JOURNAL AWARD

presented to

Douglas Fisher

“Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet
in an Urban High School”
January 2004 Issue

This award acknowledges excellence in writing by a classroom teacher
whose article was published in *English Journal*.

COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING

1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, California 95814-4213
(916) 322-6253
Fax (916) 445-0800



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 15, 2003

Dr. Nancy Farnan
Director, School of Teacher Education
San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1153

Dear Dr. Farnan:

Congratulations! I was delighted to hear the great news about your City Heights K-12 Credential Program receiving the very prestigious Christa McAuliffe Award from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Your highly successful commitment to improving the academic achievements of students in urban classrooms through the preparation of teacher candidates, deserves noteworthy praise from all of us in the education community.

Please know I wish you continued success in your effort to truly make a difference in the lives of the students you serve.

Proud of you!

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Swofford", written over a large, stylized scribble.

Dr. Sam W. Swofford

Cc: Members of the Commission
Dr. Stephen Weber, President,
Dr. Skip Meno, Dean

SDSU'S SCHOOL OF TEACHER EDUCATION WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

University Honored for City Heights K-12 Credential Program

SAN DIEGO, Thursday, September 11, 2003 — San Diego State University's School of Teacher Education has won the prestigious Christa McAuliffe Award given by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). SDSU, recognized for its City Heights K-12 Credential Program, is one of five universities nationwide being honored by AASCU for leadership and innovation in teacher education.

The City Heights K-12 Credential Program, directed by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, connects SDSU student teachers for one year with students at Hoover High School, Monroe Clark Middle School, and at Rosa Parks Elementary School. The credential candidates in the program learn state-of-the-art applications of educational technology, how to develop and implement curricula for diverse learners in urban classrooms, how to ensure literacy development across different subject areas, and more. In turn, the students and schools of City Heights benefit from the presence of a highly motivated group of student teachers committed to providing the best tools to help them attain academic success.

"Because of the range of experiences they get, these credential candidates truly are the best novice teachers we can place in schools," said Nancy Farnan, SDSU professor and director of the School of Teacher Education. "They are working with linguistically and culturally diverse students across various grade levels, teaching all children to be successful and to try to achieve. They're not limited to just knowing what happens at the high school level. They can look at education through a broad lens, which I think is a special part of the program."

Since the program began in 1999, nearly 300 student teachers have received their credential. Many already have become exemplary instructional teachers and recognized leaders on their school sites, Farnan said, including one who was recently named Teacher of the Year at a Denver public school.

Christianna Antonello graduated from the City Heights K-12 Credential Program in spring 2003 after teaching biology to ninth- through 12th-graders at Hoover High School.

"Working in the City Heights area opened my eyes to what kids can accomplish," said Antonello, who earned a Single Subjects credential from SDSU. "I learned a lot from them and their experiences. Every student contributed differently which, in turn, helped me to become a better teacher."

Antonello, a native New Yorker, now teaches eighth-grade science at Bell Junior High School in Paradise Hills.

The Christa McAuliffe award is named after the teacher who died in the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986. The award was first presented in the late 1980s, and its focus was changed by the AASCU Board of Directors in 2001 to emphasize honoring programs that could document the success of their graduates and their impact on the pupils they teach.

“Winning the Christa McAuliffe Award is especially important to SDSU and the College of Education because it gives national recognition to what we value – preparing high quality teachers, community involvement, and ensuring K-12 students’ increasing achievement,” Farnan said.

The other universities AASCU recognized are Bowling Green State University, Central Michigan University, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the University of Toledo. AASCU will present the awards at its 2003 annual meeting scheduled for Nov. 23-25 in Carlsbad, Calif.

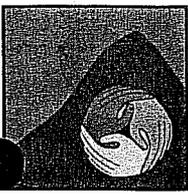
“Through this award, these nationally selected programs offer innovative leadership in the continuing redesign and improvement in teacher education,” said George L. Mehaffy, AASCU’s vice president of Academic Leadership and Change.

AASCU represents more than 430 public colleges, universities and systems of higher education throughout the United States and its territories.

San Diego State University is the oldest and largest higher education institution in the San Diego region. Since its founding in 1897, SDSU has grown to offer bachelor's degrees in 79 areas, master's degrees in 67 areas and doctorates in 14. SDSU's more than 34,000 students participate in academic curricula distinguished by direct contact with faculty and an increasing international emphasis that prepares them for a global future. For more information log on to www.sdsu.edu.

###

Letters of Recommendation



PEAK
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CENTER

Helping Families Helping Children

611 N. Weber, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
719.531.9400
Fax: 719.531.9452
www.PEAKparent.org

June 25, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Dr. Douglas Fisher for 15 years and am pleased to write this letter of recommendation. As an English teacher, I have very high standards for myself and those around me. As the Executive Director of a Parent Training and Information Center, I have even higher standards for people I ask to work with our Center on family literacy and engagement. Dr. Douglas Fisher not only meets my standards, he helps me raise them even higher.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to directly observe Doug's interactions with students. He is a remarkable teacher who engages learners very effectively. He challenges his students to develop both strong knowledge and skill foundations. He holds high expectations for his students and uses a variety of diverse strategies to ensure that they reach those expectations. His instructional repertoire is exceptional. He, in reality, is a master teacher.

In sum, I strongly support Dr. Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. He is a powerful, effective teacher who cares deeply about teaching and learning. Our country needs more teachers like him. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Barbara Buswell,
Executive Director



San Diego Unified School District

EUGENE BRUCKER EDUCATION CENTER
4100 Normal Street, San Diego, CA 92103-2682

(619) 283-6281
Fax: (619) 380-5837

Doug Williams
Principal
Hoover High School

June 19, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing an exceptionally strong letter of support for the teaching capabilities of Dr. Doug Fisher. I have known Dr. Fisher since 1998 and am impressed with his content knowledge and instructional repertoires. I'm also very impressed with Doug's ability to guide and mentor classroom teachers in the development of literacy strategies. He is a teacher's teacher.

Doug Fisher taught high school English at Hoover High School during the 2001 and 2003 school years. He met students on a daily basis, planned lessons, and engaged with his colleagues. I had the opportunity to observe him teach on a number of occasions and can attest to his abilities and skills as a teacher. He engages students in productive group work, models his own thinking, and regularly checks for understanding. The students in his classes learn a great deal and have done quite well on the California Standards Test.

In addition, Doug Fisher has provided countless hours of professional development to the teachers and administrators at my school, Hoover High. His sessions are engaging, informative, and responsive to the needs of our school. We have made significant progress in improving student achievement as a direct result of our on-going relationship with Dr. Fisher.

In sum, I strongly support Dr. Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. He is a strong teacher who cares deeply about teaching and learning. We need more teachers like him. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Doug Williams, Principal

National-Louis University

National College of Education
The Reading Center
5202 Old Orchard Road, Skokie 60007

June 21, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing in strong support for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. I have known Dr. Fisher for many years and am pleased to make this recommendation.

Dr. Doug Fisher has a national reputation as a scholar in adolescent literacy. He is widely recognized for his contributions to the professional literature. His expertise is unquestioned and he has influenced the field in a number of ways. For example, the book he co-authored with Gay Ivey, *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents*, is in its third printing. This book is being used widely as middle and high schools attempt to re-structure their instructional programs in the area of literacy.

I have personally recommended that Dr. Doug Fisher serve as an external consultant and expert for the Chicago Public Schools. I have done so because I have had the opportunity to observe him teach. Not only is Dr. Fisher smart, he can share that knowledge with others in ways that facilitate their understanding.

In sum, I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Douglas Fisher. I think that he should be commended for wanting to return to the public school system and to teach high school English. I believe that university professors should do this on a regular basis as it ensures that they remain current in the realities of teaching and learning. I hope you will approve Dr. Fisher's request so that he can touch the lives of his students and share what he learns with the world.

Sincerely,



Donna Ogle, Ed.D.
Professor of Reading and Language

June 21, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing in exceptionally strong support for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential from the State of California. I have known Dr. Fisher for many years and am pleased to make this recommendation. He is a leading scholar in our field and an exemplary teacher who has significantly influenced the profession.

Dr. Doug Fisher has a national reputation as a scholar in adolescent literacy. He is also widely cited for his highly-effective programs that increase teachers' abilities to meet the needs of today's, Generation Y adolescent learners. He is widely recognized for his outstanding research, theoretical and practical contributions to the professional literature. His expertise is unquestioned. He has influenced the field in a number of ways. For example, he recently wrote a chapter in the Second Edition of Comprehension Instruction: Research-based Best Practices (Guilford, New York, 2008 publication date). This book, for which I am a co-editor, is among the most frequently cited reviews of research in comprehension in the literacy community. When I wanted to include a chapter to advance our knowledge in the field of adolescent comprehension instruction, Dr. Fisher was my first choice as its author. His chapter focuses directly on a model of teaching comprehension at the secondary level that has been highly successful. It is my recommendation that all USA and English-speaking nations' school adopt his research-based practices. Dr. Fisher's research, theory, and classroom applications, presented so vividly and effectively in this chapter, clearly outline his thinking and successful experiences relative in high-quality, standards-based instruction in English at the high school level.

I've also had the opportunity to observe him in action as a teacher. He is simply superb and exemplary, as I stated above. He engages students and leads his colleagues with his command of English content and his understanding of the developmental learning needs of his students. He is also exceptionally honest and thoughtful. He transforms complex ideas into exciting, manageable learning units for all students. He continues to vary his instructional strategies until he is certain that each pupil understands the complex issues embedded in a high quality, standards-based, high school English curricula. He is among the most gifted, hard working, and skilled educators that I have ever known in my 36 years in this profession.

Page 2

Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Douglas Fisher
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

In sum, I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Douglas Fisher. I think that he should be honored for wanting to return to the public school system and to teach high school English. I hope you will grant Dr. Fisher's request so that he can engage the minds and change the lives of countless adolescents through English education. If I can provide any additional information on Dr. Fisher's behalf, please do not hesitate to contact me. I know that he will be the very best candidate you will have for Eminence Credentialing.

Sincerely,



Cathy Collins Block, Ph.D.
Chancellor's Distinguished Professor for Creative Teaching and Scholarship
Past, Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (2002-2005)
Professor of Education
College of Education
Texas Christian University
P. O. Box 297900
Fort Worth, TX 76129
817-257-6789
c.block@tcu.edu
FAX 817-423-0410



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS CENTER
READING / LITERACY EDUCATION / ENGLISH EDUCATION / COLLEGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

June 20, 2007

Douglas Fisher

Dear Doug:

This letter is to attest, with enthusiasm, that you are an expert secondary literacy scholar with a national reputation -- most suitable for a certificate in single-subject English.

Indeed, as chair of a department that recommends its graduates for an English teaching certificate, I see you as someone who has a highly significant amount of insight about developing secondary students' literacy and literary understandings, including those related to composition -- insights that far exceed those typical to the newly certified English teacher.

I also know that publishers, journal editors, school districts, and universities all over the country seek you as a consultant because of your expertise at developing young people's enthusiasm and expertise in English language arts.

I am pleased to be able to offer you this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Hinchman

Kathleen Hinchman, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair

School of Education
Division of Language, Literacy, and Culture

Campus Box 106
P.O. Box 173364
Denver, Colorado 80217-3364
Phone: (303) 556-4366
Fax: (303) 556-4479

June 23, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

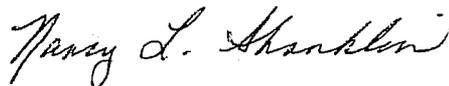
Dear Members of the Commission,

Dr. Douglas Fisher asked that I write in support of his application for an eminence credential. I am very pleased to do so. Dr. Fisher is a recognized expert in the area of English education and regularly shares his thinking through publications and presentations. He is most deserving of this credential.

I have known Dr. Fisher's reputation for many years. This is why I asked him to serve on the National Board of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse. He is one of the country's top adolescent literacy experts and I knew that he could contribute in significant ways to the work we are doing.

Dr. Douglas Fisher clearly meets the criteria established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. He is an expert in this area. He is incredibly well-known across the country for his work and his influence is felt in literally thousands of classrooms. If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Nancy L. Shanklin, Ed.D., Director
Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, *a joint project of IRA & NCTE*
University of Colorado at Denver & HSC
Campus Box 106, P.O. Box 173364
Denver, CO 80217-3364
Nancy.Shanklin@cudenver.edu



June 20, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am pleased to be writing this letter of recommendation for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. I have first-hand knowledge of Dr. Fisher's expertise, reputation, and teaching skill and am pleased to provide this feedback to the commission.

I met Dr. Fisher several years ago through a joint committee appointment at a national conference. His knowledge of adolescent literacy and his thinking abilities impressed me. Since that time, we have collaborated on a number of projects. His expertise in English language arts is evident in all of his work. His publications are thoughtful and engaging, as are his classroom interactions with learners; Dr. Fisher is an excellent communicator.

He is extremely productive. He is a regular contributor to professional journals and books. His work has been well-received across the country and is highly regarded and regularly referenced in the world of secondary literacy. Not only is his expertise sought after, but Dr. Fisher has influenced the field in a number of ways. For example, his work on moving English past the whole class novel is important and timely, especially in this era of standards. Dr. Fisher doesn't just raise concerns about this topic. Instead, he offers solutions that he himself has tried.

In sum, I highly recommend Dr. Douglas Fisher for this credential and look forward to his classroom teaching experience. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me at 856-256-4500 or at 856-354-1825.

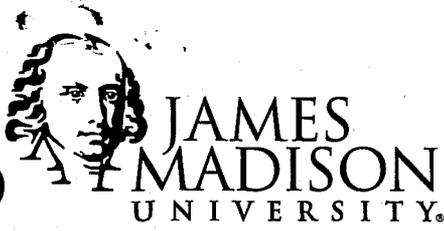
Sincerely,

Kathy Ganske, Ph.D.
Professor of Reading

Department of Reading
College of Education
Education Hall C&CA 4A-33
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

856-256-4770
856-256-5624 fax

April 2008



California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capital Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

June 20, 2007

To the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing:

I am so pleased to write a letter in support of Douglas Fisher's efforts to renew his teaching credentials for the state of California. I have known Dr. Fisher well for the past five years, and I believe I am in an excellent position to comment on his qualifications.

First and foremost, Douglas Fisher remains an exceptional teacher of children and adolescents. Although I am a researcher and teacher educator residing in Virginia, I have had the unique opportunity to observe Dr. Fisher working with students in classrooms in California. He is not only an exemplary instructor, but he also has an extraordinary rapport with students and a keen sensitivity to their needs, particularly those students whose needs are greatest. I have become personally acquainted with several of the high school students with whom Dr. Fisher has worked, and I can say quite confidently that his involvement has helped change the course of their lives in the most positive ways.

To say that Dr. Fisher's knowledge of research and best practice is up-to-date would be insufficient. It would be more accurate to say that he has been largely responsible for creating some of the cutting-edge principles of literacy instruction that other teachers across the United States and beyond are encountering in their own professional development. I work with a variety of school districts, state departments of education, and government-based educational agencies, and I am critically involved in the most influential professional organizations in literacy education in the country. In those communities, Douglas Fisher is incredibly well known, and he has an earned reputation for understanding teaching and teachers. In fact, I would rank him in the top three of all adolescent literacy teacher educators in the United States.

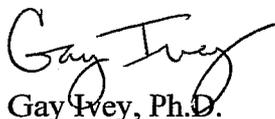
One of Dr. Fisher's many books, *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Content Area Strategies at Work*, now in its second edition, is my first choice for the preservice teachers in my courses. In fact, if I could create an opportunity for my students to meet, observe, and interview one expert teacher, I would choose Douglas Fisher. His many articles published in such prestigious and influential journals such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Educational Leadership*, and *Journal of Adolescent Literacy*,

Department of
EARLY, ELEMENTARY
AND READING EDUCATION
MSC 6909
Memorial Hall
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
540.568.6255 Phone
540.568.2008 Fax

comprise some of the most compelling professional literature in adolescent literacy today. Dr. Fisher is sought after heavily as a keynote speaker for a variety of professional development activities, and having had multiple opportunities to observe him in these roles, I can attest to his effectiveness and his qualifications to be a teacher of teachers. At the root of his knowledge and passion is, without a doubt, his work with children and adolescents.

I give my highest recommendation to Dr. Douglas Fisher. He is perhaps the best teacher I know. He represents the educational efforts in the state of California in the best of possible ways.

Sincerely,



Gay Ivey, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Reading Education

James Madison University

(540)-568-3698

iveymg@jmu.edu

Center for the Advancement of Reading
6000 J Street, Modoc Hall 2003
Sacramento, CA 95819-6018
916-278-4581

www.calstate.edu/car

June 28, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Ave.
P. O. Box 944270
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission:

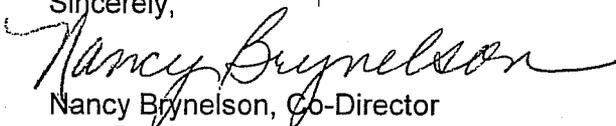
I am writing in strong support for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. I have known Dr. Fisher's reputation for many years and have worked with him very closely for the past year.

Dr. Fisher is a scholar of adolescent literacy with a national reputation. He has had a significant influence on the profession, not only in California but also across the country. His expertise in the area of English-language arts is evident in his writing and his speaking. He is regularly asked to present to teachers. He has an amazing way of engaging learners and making sure they "get it."

As such, he was selected as the faculty Co-Director for the Center for the Advancement of Reading. This center, which I also co-direct, is focused on improving the preparation of teachers to teach reading and reducing remediation rates in the California State University through a systematic process of professional development. We provide a number of experiences for teachers and university professors each year. Dr. Fisher was selected as the co-director from the pool of all California State University literacy faculty members for this appointment, a significant recognition of his eminence in and of itself. I have had the opportunity to personally examine Dr. Fisher's expertise and I can assure the Commission that he is top-notch.

In sum, Dr. Fisher is exceptional and is most deserving of the Eminence Credential. I trust you realize how rare it is for a full professor to want to return to classroom teaching. I find this another sign of Dr. Douglas Fisher's eminence and one that will serve California's public school children well.

Sincerely,


Nancy Brynelson, Co-Director

CSU Campuses
Bakersfield
Channel Islands
Chico
Dominguez Hills
East Bay

Fresno
Fullerton
Humboldt
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Maritime Academy

Monterey Bay
Northridge
Pomona
Sacramento
San Bernardino
San Diego

San Francisco
San José
San Luis Obispo
San Marcos
Sonoma
Stanislaus

June 20, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission,

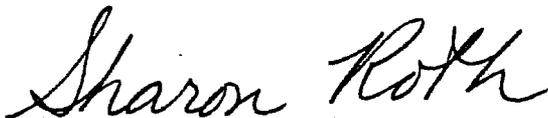
I am writing in support for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. I have known Dr. Fisher's reputation for many years and have worked with him very closely for the past year. He is considered to be a well known expert in the field of English Language Arts and NCTE is honored to have him as a member of the NCTE consulting network. As part of this network, Doug regularly presents for us and receives the highest accolades from participants.

Dr. Fisher has a strong expertise in English education. He has published a number of times in our flagship journals, *English Journal* and *Voices from the Middle*. I had the chance to watch him present to teachers in Florida about the work he has done at Hoover High School. He is a skilled presenter who develops ideas with the audience. After his presentation, I invited him to become increasingly involved with the National Council of Teachers of English. He has since published a book with us, *Language Learners in the English Classroom*, which focuses on the instructional needs of English language learners in the areas of grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Dr. Douglas Fisher was also selected as a subject matter expert and author for our new professional development program, Pathways for Success with English Language Learners. As such, he is using his content knowledge to develop this program. He has demonstrated a deep knowledge of the content, an understanding of the needs of students, and amazing skill in instruction.

The National Council of Teachers of English is the premiere membership organization for English teachers and we are proud to count Doug Fisher as one of our own. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Sharon Roth,
Division Director of Professional Development
National Council of Teachers of English

INTERNATIONAL

Reading Association

800 BARNSDALE ROAD, PO BOX 8139, NEWARK, DE 19714-8139, USA

Asociación Internacional de Lectura • Association Internationale pour la Lecture
02-731-1600 • Fax 302-731-1057 • www.reading.org

PRESIDENT

Linda B. Gambrell
Clemson University
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June 23, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
State of California
Box 944270
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing in support for Dr. Douglas Fisher's application for an Eminence Credential. I have known Dr. Fisher's reputation for many years and have worked with him over the years. He is well-known across the country and is the chairperson of the International Reading Association Adolescent Literacy Committee. He was selected as chairperson two years in a row by the IRA president.

Doug has a strong expertise in adolescent literacy development. He has published a number of times in our flagship journal, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy. He has distinguished himself, both in his publications and in his presentations on behalf of the International Reading Association. For example, this year he was one of the featured speakers as our convention. This is quite an honor and is reserved for top individuals in the country. In addition, the publications staff asked Dr. Fisher to present his work in a special research publication session. Again, this is a significant acknowledgement of Dr. Fisher's reputation, skills, and expertise.

The International Reading Association is the premiere membership organization for reading/literacy educators and we are proud to count Doug Fisher as one of our own. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Cathy M. Roller

Cathy M. Roller,
Director of Research and Policy

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- background research that support Fisher and Frey's model



Douglas Fisher, Ph.D.,

is a professor of Language and Literacy Education at San Diego State University and co-director of the Center for the Advancement of Reading at California State University. The recipient of several awards in education and literacy, including the International Reading Association's Celebrate Literacy Award, Fisher has served as an early intervention specialist and language development specialist as well as a high school English, writing, and literacy-development teacher. He also teaches courses in SDSU's teacher-credentialing program as well as graduate-level courses on English language development and literacy. Among his publications are *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents* (with Gay Ivey; ASCD, 2006), *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work* (with Nancy Frey; Prentice Hall, 2003) and *Teaching English Language Learners: A Differentiated Approach* (with Carol Rothenberg; Prentice Hall, 2006).



Nancy Frey, Ph.D.,

is an associate professor of Literacy at San Diego State University. Before joining the university faculty, Nancy taught students at the elementary and middle school level in Broward County, Florida, and later worked on a statewide project for supporting students with diverse learning needs in general education curriculum. Frey currently teaches courses in SDSU's teacher-credentialing program on elementary and secondary literacy in content-area instruction and supporting students with diverse learning needs. She is a recipient of the Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education and has co-authored several books on literacy, including *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work* (with Douglas Fisher; Prentice Hall, 2003).

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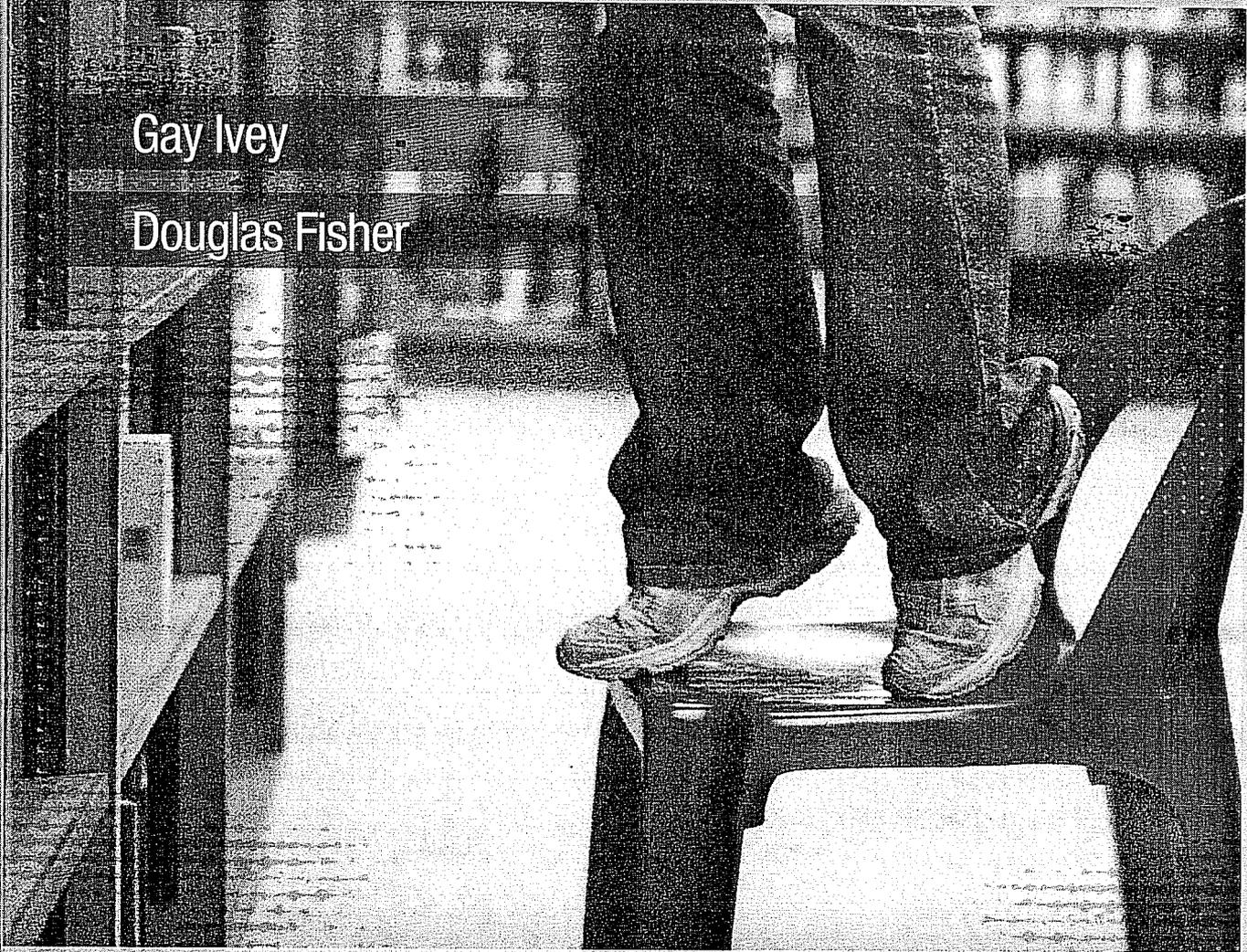
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Creating
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About the Authors



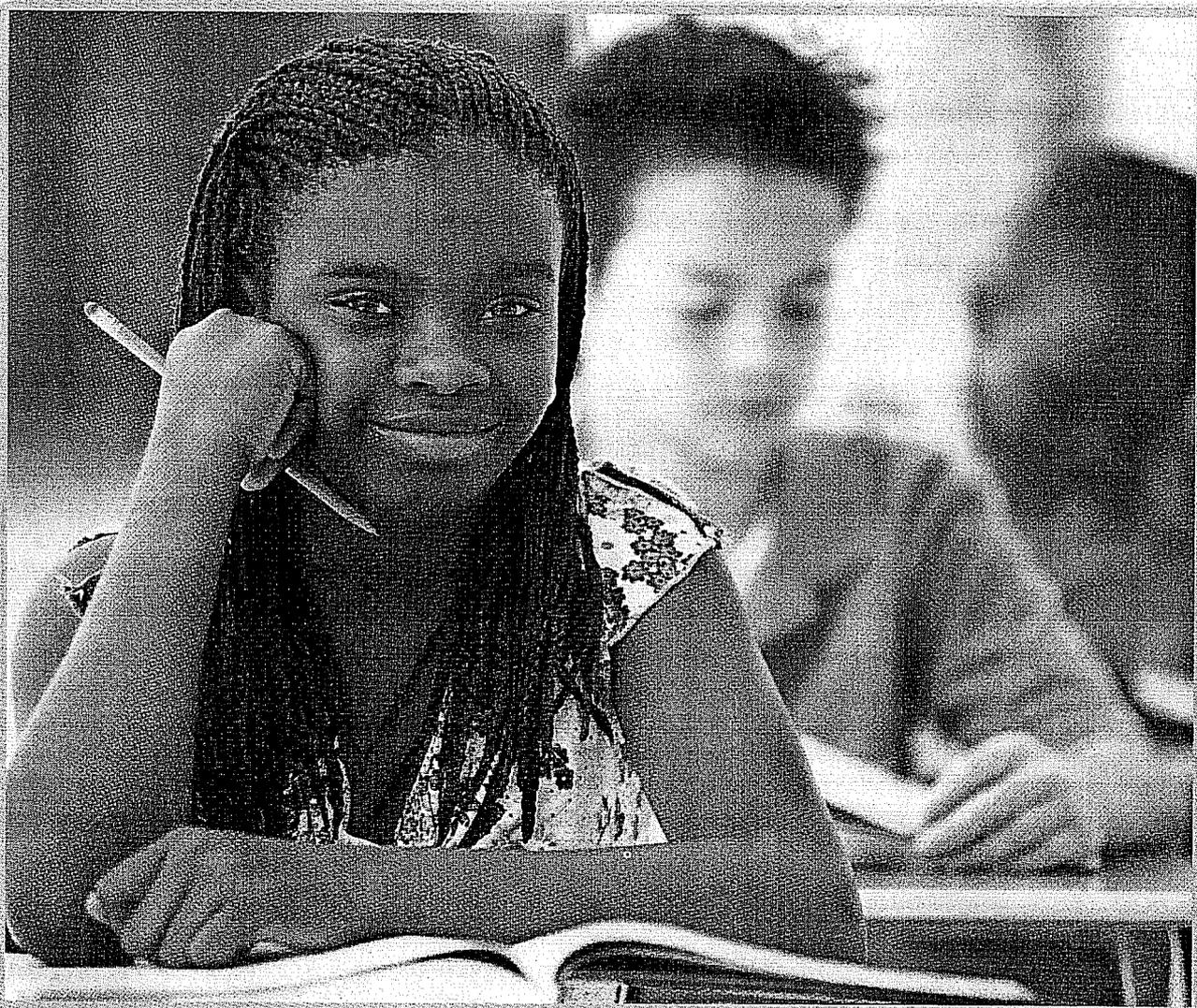
Gay Ivey is an associate professor of reading education at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She is a former middle school reading/language arts teacher. Ivey's research and teaching expertise include examining ways to make regular classroom instruction more responsive to individual development and motivation, particularly for older students still learning to read and write. She can be reached at iveymg@jmu.edu.



Douglas Fisher is a professor of literacy and language education in the Department of Teacher Education at San Diego State University and the Director of Professional Development for the City Heights Educational Collaborative. He is the recipient of an International Reading Association Celebrate Literacy Award as well as a Christa McAuliffe award for excellence in teacher education. Fisher has published numerous articles on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design as well as books, including *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work* and *Responsive Curriculum Design in Secondary Schools: Meeting the Diverse Needs of Students*. He has taught a variety of courses in SDSU's teacher-credentialing program as well as graduate-level courses on English language development and literacy. Fisher has also taught classes in English, writing, and literacy development to secondary school students. He can be reached at dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu.

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50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy



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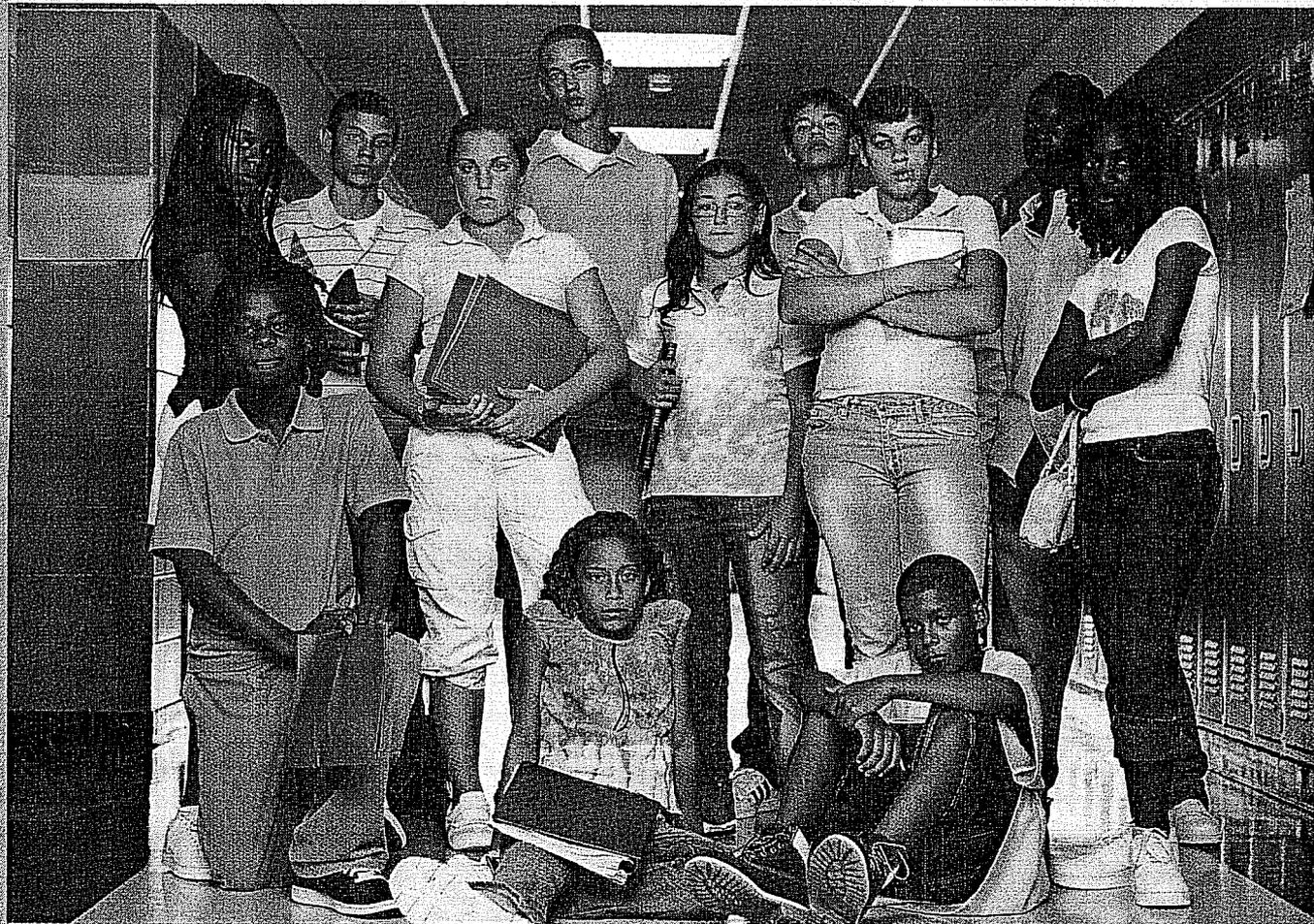
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Improving Adolescent Literacy

Content Area Strategies at Work



DOUGLAS FISHER
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Improving Adolescent Literacy

Content Area Strategies at Work

Too many students in middle and secondary classrooms struggle to comprehend texts in their content area classes. This straightforward, affordable text provides classroom-proven strategies to improve middle and secondary students' comprehension in content areas. Each chapter opens with a glimpse into a classroom. These scenarios are followed by a research-based rationale for each strategy, an in-depth look at implementing the strategy, and examples of each strategy across the curriculum. A new focus in each chapter on English learners, and new features examining struggling readers, give you insight to support these learners. Also, new Media Notes clarify opportunities to use different technologies to enhance teaching. Together, these elements provide you with the tools to support your middle and secondary students' comprehension and success.

This is a highly practical and useable book for a range of teachers and teacher candidates. You get the feeling that the authors spend much time in high school classrooms and have a good feel of what's currently happening and what works.

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Margot Kinberg, National University

The information is theoretically quite sound. It provides the students with a wealth of strategies to facilitate comprehension.

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DOUGLAS FISHER, PH.D., is Professor of Teacher Education at San Diego State University and the Director of Professional Development for the City Heights Educational Collaborative. He is the recipient of an International Reading Association Celebrate Literacy Award as well as the Christa McAuliffe award for excellence in teacher education. He has published numerous articles on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design and has authored numerous books, including *50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy*.



NANCY FREY, PH.D., is Associate Professor of Language and Literacy Education in the School of Teacher Education at San Diego State University and the Coordinator of Professional Development Schools for the City Heights Educational Collaborative. A former classroom teacher, Dr. Frey is now the President of the Greater San Diego Reading Association. She is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Reading for Information in Elementary School: Content Literacy Strategies to Build Comprehension*.



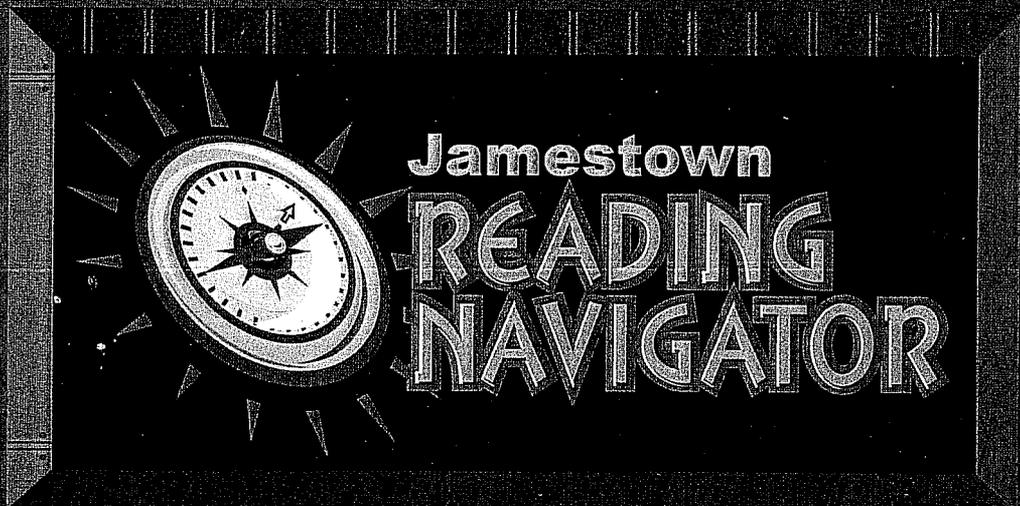
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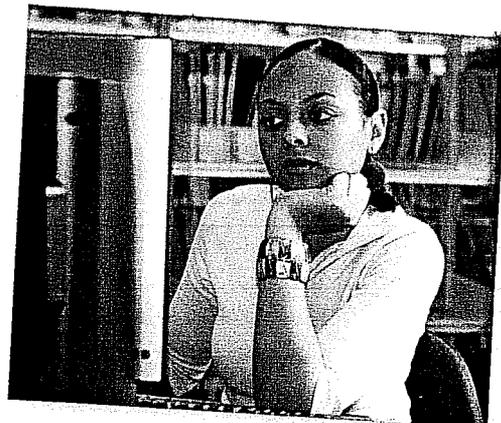


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What is *Jamestown Reading Navigator*?

Jamestown Reading Navigator is a reading intervention program designed specifically for students in grades 6–12 who are reading two or more reading levels below their grade in school. *Jamestown Reading Navigator* is based on the latest research in adolescent literacy and draws from more than 30 years of experience in reaching adolescent readers with the popular *Jamestown Education* print series. It is designed to accelerate growth in reading-comprehension skills and fluency to help struggling students raise their reading capabilities.

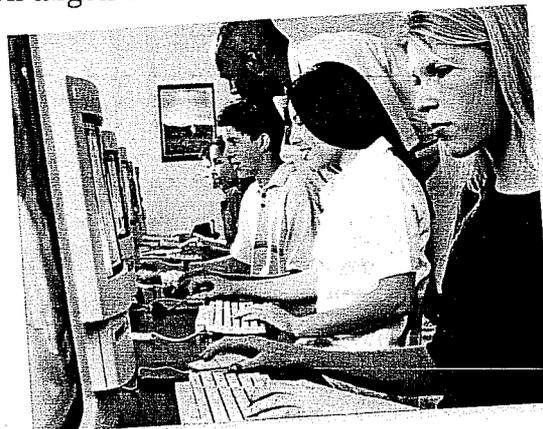


Features of the program include

- highly motivating online and print-based content written exclusively for middle school and high school readers
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- recursive instruction—key reading skills are taught twice in each trek and Look Back lessons review reading skills and/or vocabulary for students who need additional support
- a strong focus on nonfiction and content-area reading strategies needed for success in all subject areas
- ELL support, including content-area vocabulary and academic English
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- Professional Development tools to help effectively implement a reading intervention program in your classroom or school
- teacher support materials, including lesson plans and reteaching skills support

***Jamestown Reading Navigator*—a reading intervention tool**

Jamestown Reading Navigator is designed first and foremost as a reading intervention program. Research has shown that successful reading intervention targets **three critical elements**. First, successful intervention is **focused** on what struggling students need most—research-based skill and vocabulary instruction. Second, reading intervention is **intensive**—students work in the program daily to achieve grade-level reading skills. Third, the intervention takes place **in addition** to the student's regular English/Language Arts instruction and in coordination with that instruction. It is not a substitute for that instruction. Used as designed, *Jamestown Reading Navigator* will help struggling students expeditiously close the reading achievement gap.



Edward B. Fry, Ph.D.

Edward B. Fry is Professor Emeritus of Education at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he was director of the Reading Center for 26 years. Dr. Fry is known internationally for his Readability Graph, which is used by teachers, publishers, and others to judge the difficulty of books and other materials. He is the author of *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists*. Dr. Fry also



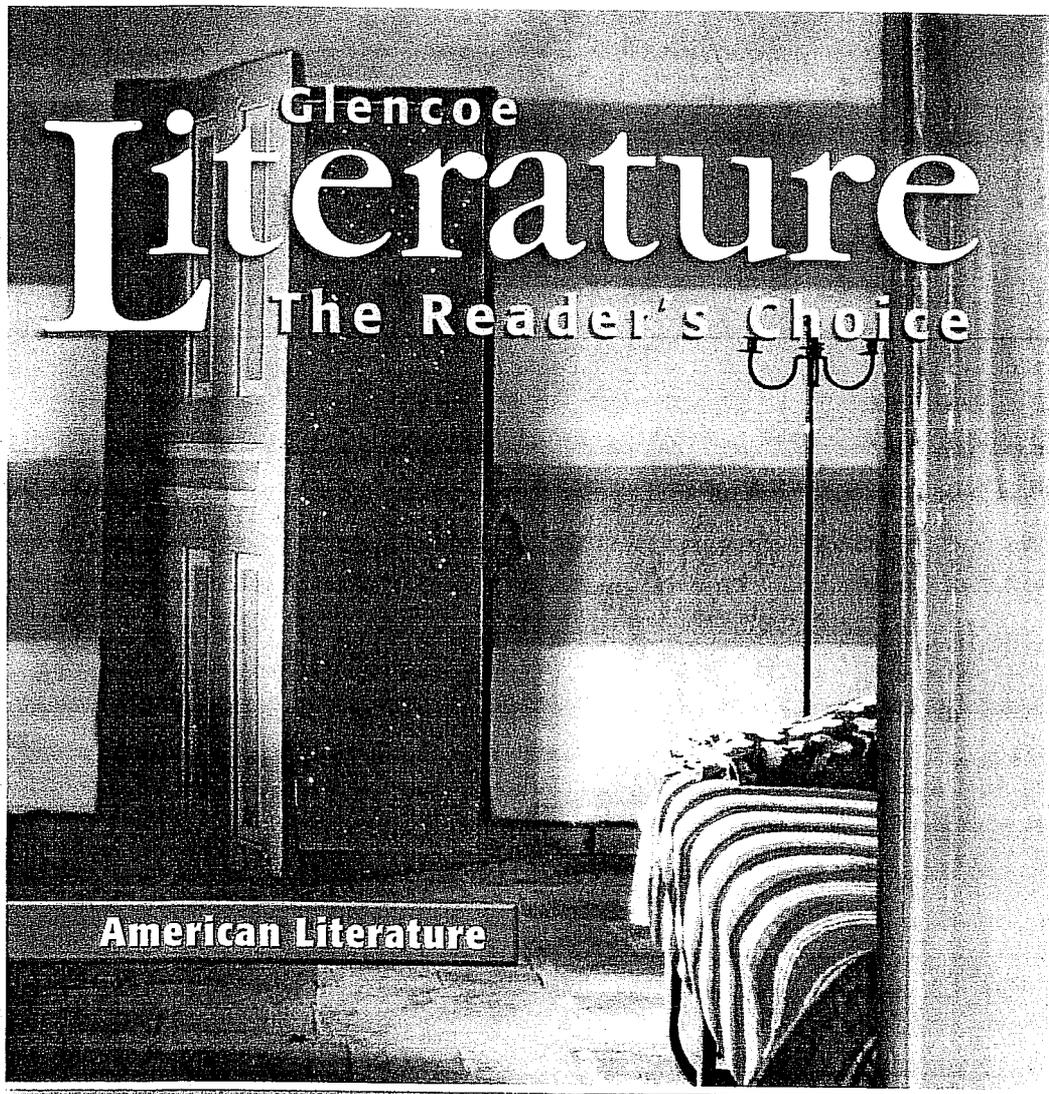
- has written more than 25 textbooks for schools and colleges;
- has published numerous journal articles, reading textbooks, and curriculum materials;
- was president of the National Reading Conference and has been a member of the International Reading Association since its inception;
- was elected to the Reading Hall of Fame in 1993; and
- received two Fulbright Lectureships to Africa.

Douglas Fisher, Ph.D.

Douglas Fisher is Professor of Language and Literacy Education at San Diego State University and the Director of Professional Development for the City Heights Educational Collaborative in San Diego. He has been the recipient of an International Reading Association Celebrate Literacy Award as well as a Christa McAuliffe Award for excellence in teacher education. In addition, Dr. Fisher

- has published numerous articles and books on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design;
- has taught a variety of courses in San Diego State University's teacher-credential program and English language development and literacy;
- has a strong background in adolescent literacy and instructional strategies for diverse student needs; and
- is a frequent presenter at local, state, and national conferences, with particular emphasis on urban issues and the needs of a diverse student population.





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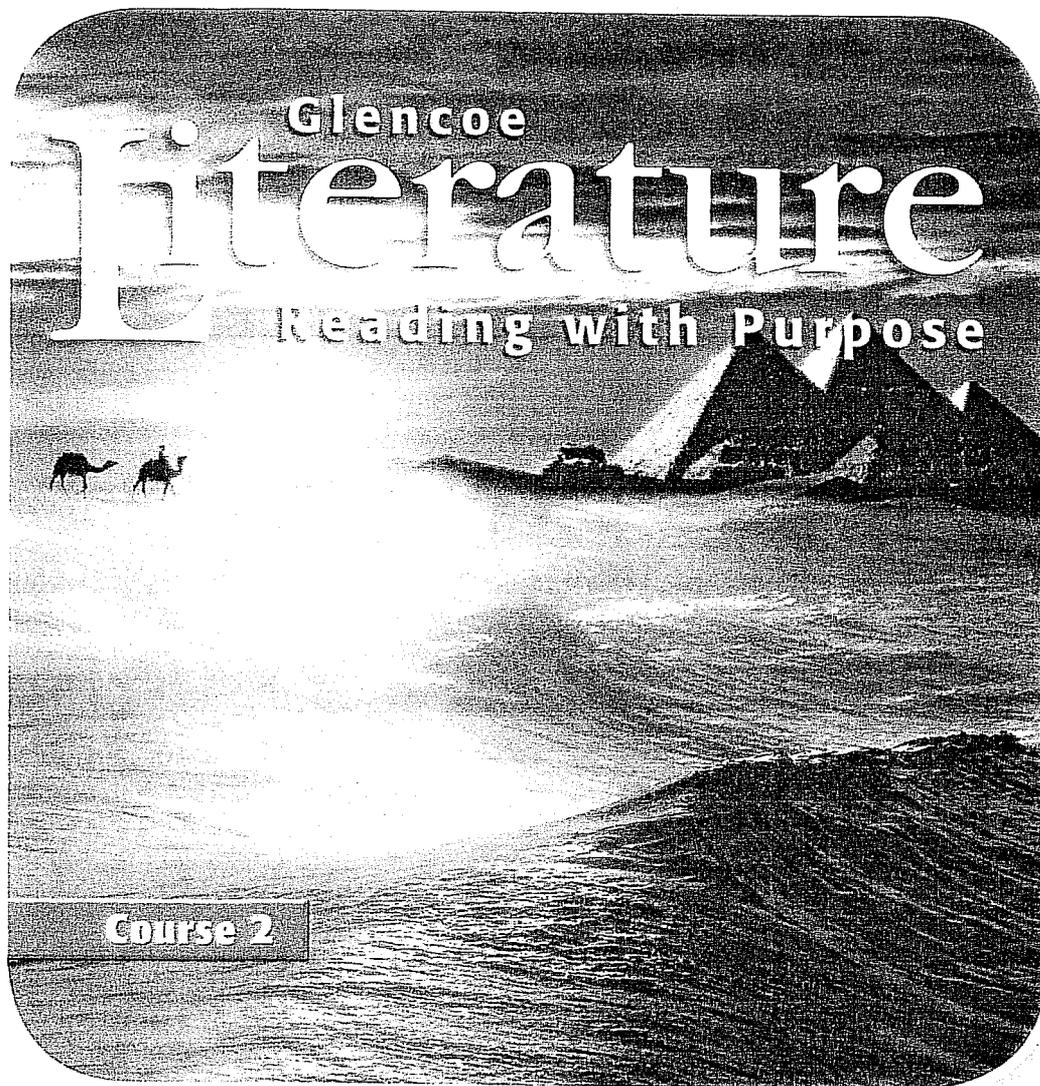


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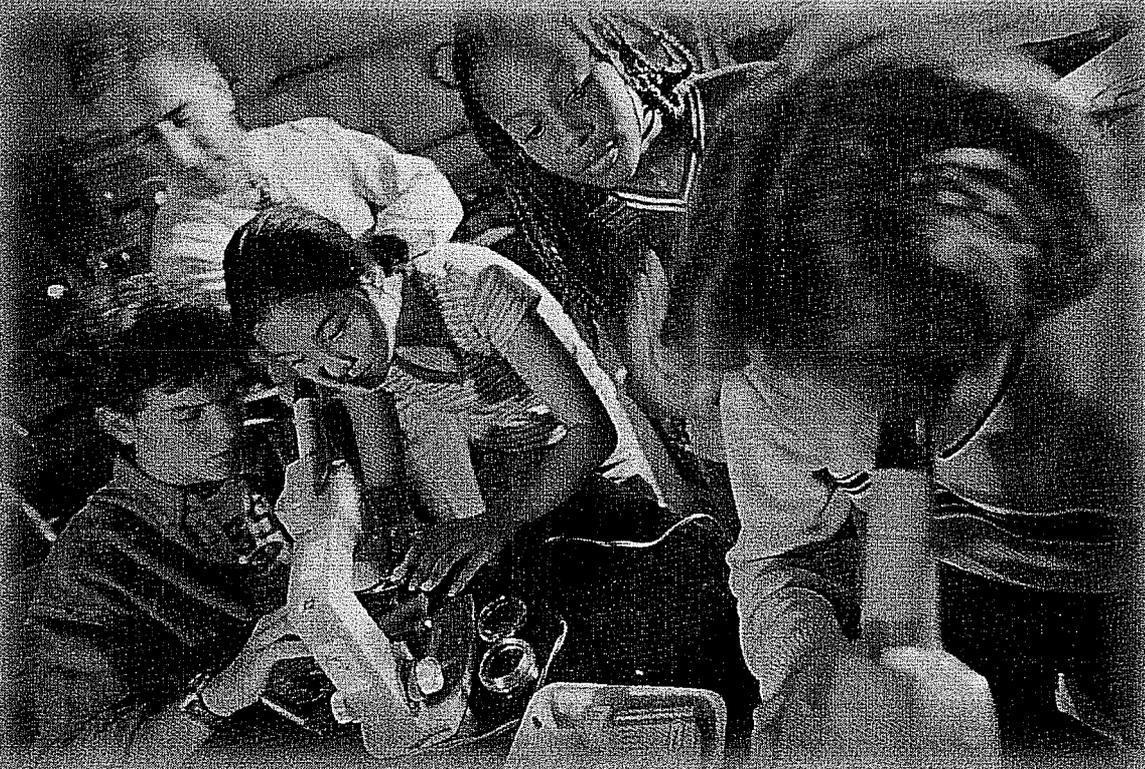
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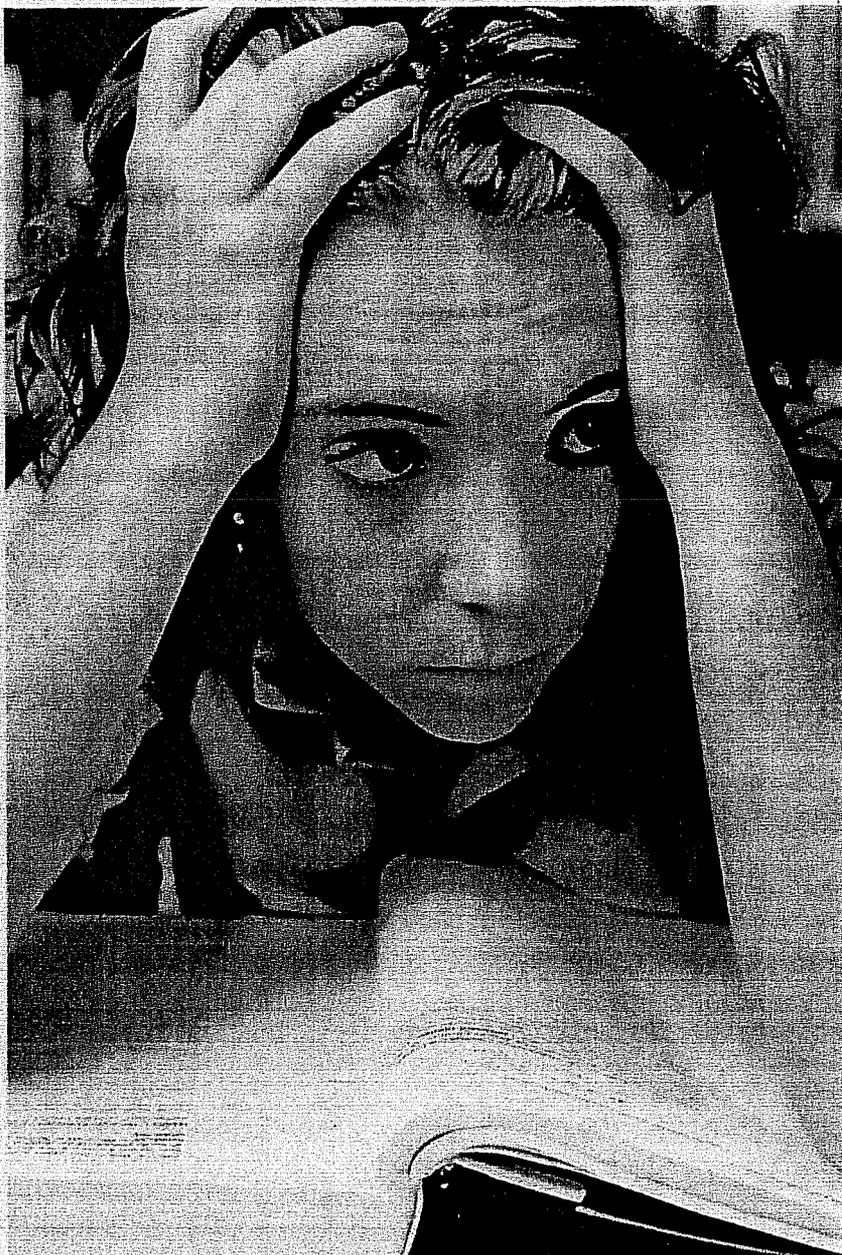
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CAROL ROTHENBERG
DOUGLAS FISHER

When Thinking Trump



Adolescents and “back-to-basics” reading programs rarely mix. Four strategies stimulate thinking while teens learn to read.

**Gay Ivey and
Douglas Fisher**

How should secondary school teachers respond when they face students reading three, five, or even seven years below grade level?

We suspect that many instructional leaders feel the urgency, as one district literacy director recently shared with us, to “bring kids up to speed.” Most likely, this means improving test scores.

Schools often respond to pressures to improve reading skills by adopting back-to-basics programs that focus mainly on discrete skills with little attention to critical reading and writing. The assumptions driving teachers to use this kind of back-to-basics intervention seem to be that (1) the basics must be learned before higher-level reading and writing work can begin, and (2) students did not “get” the basics in the early grades. But our observations indicate that the most popular programs define “the basics” quite differently, from sounding out

Majority Rules

A Schoolwide Literacy Success

BY DOUGLAS FISHER AND NANCY FREY

The students and teachers at Hoover High School in San Diego, CA, have made significant progress in their quest to meet accountability standards and ensure that all students learn to read, write, and think at increasingly complex levels. In 1999, Hoover High was the lowest performing high school in the city of San Diego and one of lowest performing schools in the state. Between 1999 and 2005, the students at Hoover made significant progress in meeting standards in all subject areas. In fact, Hoover had the greatest change in achievement for all high schools in the district: an impressive 136-point gain on California's Academic Performance Index, a measure of achievement and improvement that is based on multiple academic measures. Schools across California have targeted growth averages of about 8 points per year. Improving the achievement of Hoover's 2,100 students, all of whom qualify for free lunch and 72% of whom are English language learners, wasn't easy. The progress Hoover made over the years suggests some ways in which all secondary schools can improve.



Seven Literacy Strategies That Work

A schoolwide commitment to reading and writing strategies in all content areas has had a positive impact on student achievement at Herbert Hoover High School.

Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Douglas Williams

By all accounts, Herbert Hoover High School in San Diego, California, was a school in trouble. Achievement scores were the lowest in the county and among the lowest in the state. Teacher morale was low; turnover was high. Crime, poverty, and basic skills were the most frequent topics of conversation on campus. At one point, a consultant suggested that we should not expect more from our 2,200 students: 46 percent of them are English language learners, 100 percent qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, and 96 percent are members of minority groups.

We did expect more, however. Every teacher at our school had been working hard to meet students' needs. We had a health clinic, counselors, and a great library—but our students were not achieving. Then, in 1999, we formed a staff development committee of teachers, administrators, and San Diego State University colleagues. Together, we identified seven instructional strategies that would permeate the school at every level. We wanted the strategies to be transparent to the students, and we



wanted literacy strategies in content-area instruction to become commonplace—across English, science, social studies, art, physical education, music, and shop. After the school's governance committee approved these strategies, we expected every teacher in our school to use them.

Equally important to the commitment from teachers was our commitment to them. This school had seen many reform efforts come and go, and staff members were exhausted from shifting priorities. We needed an unswerving focus. Over the next three years, we worked on a professional development plan that centered on our adopted strategies, and the results seem to support our efforts.

Our Gates-MacGinitie scores, for example, which we use to measure

reading achievement, have increased from an average 5.9 grade-level equivalent to an average 8.2 grade-level equivalent. Although these scores remind us that student achievement at Hoover still has room for growth, we are encouraged that the average student now reads more than two grade levels higher than three years ago. In addition, we met our state accountability targets for the first time in a decade. California uses its official accountability score, the Academic Performance Index, to encourage improved school performance by setting an accountability target for each school based on its assessment results. In 1999–2000, with a baseline score of 444 and a target of 462, Hoover achieved a score of 469. On another measure of reading scores, the Stanford 9, Hoover's 9th graders exceeded district

Linking literacy teaching with assessment: a continuing professional development initiative for secondary schools

Douglas Fisher, Diane Lapp, James Flood and Kelly Moore

Abstract

As part of a professional development initiative helping secondary school teachers use assessment data to guide their instruction, teachers in this study changed their knowledge, skills and dispositions. Over time, they were able to identify assessments, administer these assessments, interpret the results and plan instruction. As a result, the students who were tutored by these teachers increased their achievement compared with a control group.

Key words: literacy assessment, literacy instruction, teacher professional development

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe an initiative designed to teach secondary school teachers (middle and high school) to use an assessment-to-instruction approach with their struggling adolescent readers and writers. The goal of this initiative was to expand teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions towards an assessment-to-instruction approach to teaching that they could utilise to improve their students' literacy performance.

As early as 1964, Ruth Strang, noted research authority in assessment-to-instruction techniques and content area reading instruction, argued that secondary school teachers needed to understand the importance of basing their instruction on information from standardised and interactive student-based performance assessments. She believed this inclusion model of assessment, which she described as involving dialogue between the teacher and student, would better identify barriers to reading success and would also enable students to be a part of the solution to their own reading challenges. In her desire to teach her graduate students the importance of using an assessment-to-instruction approach in their work with struggling adolescent readers, she argued that the teacher should

"begin working with the reading problem as the client sees it and assist him through texts and interviews in clarifying it. [The teacher] would teach the student

methods of learning, which he can apply to each reading task. Both of them (the teacher and student) would try to change conditions that are inhibiting progress" (Strang, 1964, p. 288).

This notion of using effective assessment-to-instruction methods is based on the theory that teachers need to get to know their students' literacy strengths and needs in order to plan effective instruction (Fisher et al., 2005; Moore, 2004).

To do so we believe teacher educators must help teachers understand how to design instruction based on the results of their students' assessments. We must ensure that teachers understand that literacy develops along a continuum and that "there is no point on the continuum that denotes too much literacy or, for that matter, not enough. There are no good or bad places to be, only places informed by children's previous knowledge and construction of literacy concepts" (Farnan et al., 1994, p. 136). We also know that literacy is not limited to academic or school literacy; many adolescent students who are the foci of our study like to read and write about a wide variety of topics (Alvermann and Hagood, 2000; Cruickshank, 2004; Hopper, 2005; Luke and Elkins, 2002). In order to teach struggling adolescent readers, we need to know what they like to read as well as their reading abilities and needs.

The need to link assessment and instruction

A number of researchers argue that teachers need to select, analyse and implement assessment-to-instruction practices in the classroom (Afflerbach, 1998; Clay, 2001; Farstrup, 2003; Fehring, 2003; Neill, 2000; Stiggins, 2001; Tierney, 1998). Campbell (2001) surveyed teachers to determine which assessments they perceived to be the most effective at providing insights that guide instruction. She concluded:

"Teachers perceived all reading assessments as having some degree of merit. This is important because it offers the possibility of making better use of assessment information to guide instruction and assist the development of individuals" (p. 7).

The Missing Link: Standards, Assessment, *and* Instruction

Rhetoric aside, the students in our schools can do better. While there is evidence that students today perform as well as, or better than, their historical peers (e.g., McQuillan, 1998), it seems reasonable to suggest even higher levels of achievement can be expected. In response to these increased expectations, accountability systems have focused attention on content standards and assessment systems.

Educators across the country are talking about the state standards and the ways in which they are assessed. It's hard to imagine a teacher, student, administrator, or parent who hasn't been touched by "adequate yearly progress." Interestingly, educators are also realizing that the definition of proficient and the percentage of students that must be proficient vary widely across the country. But I digress. As a profession, we need systems to ensure that standards are linked with the assessments and the instruction students receive. Simply teaching to the test will not result in radically improved achievement. Similarly, buying a new "program," regardless of how good it may be, will not get the results our students deserve.

Those in our profession know that the reading achievement of youth is profoundly influenced by quality instruction. In fact, several researchers (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002) suggest that the professional development of teachers is critically linked to student achievement and literacy levels of students. I believe that this professional development must be

focused on specific factors related to improved academic achievement. First, we must hold high expectations for ourselves and our students, and communicate those expectations to the community. There is ample evidence that raising expectations—and teaching to those expectations—will result in improved achievement. Second, we must ensure that adolescents see themselves and others in what they read. Known as the "mirror and window" function of literature, our reading selections should reflect the students in our classes as well as provide them an opportunity to meet people and visit places that they otherwise would not be able to access. Third, we know that it takes a whole school focus on literacy to radically improve achievement. English teachers play a critical and pivotal role in literacy achievement, and the content teachers who integrate literacy instructional strategies hold the key to making literacy a life-long endeavor in every field (Ivey & Fisher, in press). Finally, we must link our instruction to assessments based on content standards. By closely examining student work, alone and with our colleagues, we can better allocate our instructional interventions. This process—examining student work collaboratively—is the focus of this article.

It is important to see the linking of standards, assessments, and instruction as a process of professional development that leads to improved teaching and learning. It is based on evidence that groups of teachers reviewing student work together results in improved achievement (Langer, Colton, & Goff, 2003). Let's consider the ways in which the process of linking standards, assessment, and instruction is used in a middle school. Figure 1 (p. 10) contains an overview of this process.

Collaborative Analysis and Instructional Planning

Welcome to John Adams Middle School (JAMS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This school educates over 870 students in grades 6–8, 76% of whom qualify for free lunch. Of these, 82% are Latino, 10% are Anglo, 4% are Native American, 3% are African-American, and 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander. The achievement gap at this school, compared with middle schools that educate mostly white students, is notable. In addition to achievement gaps, there are differences in the number of students who drop out (3% compared with the district average of 1%) and attendance (92% compared with the district average of 95%).

While it would have been easy to focus on the increasing rates of poverty at JAMS or diminishing parent support or lack of appropriate preparation from the elementary school, the teachers at JAMS wanted to improve student achievement and close the gap. To that end, they agreed to implement a process for examining content standards, planning instruction, and re-teaching.

The first common assessment event was scheduled for seven weeks into the school year. Each grade level, 6–8, developed its own assessment that included questions from English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and bilingual education. In addition, every student in the school responded to a common writing prompt.

Over a two-year period, the teachers at John Adams wrote and administered eight common assessments across content areas and met to discuss the results of each. Each common assessment also included a writing prompt. Let's watch and listen as groups of teachers at two different grade levels analyze the fourth of the common assessments.

Teacher Talk

A group of sixth-grade teachers are discussing a question that asks, "Which statement summarizes the passage?" The assessment required that students read a short passage to answer several questions—not unlike the state assessment that stu-

dents will take in the spring. While the majority of students selected the correct answer, a large number selected instead a fact that was identified in the story. During the teachers' discussion, the conversation focused on the difference between fact, opinion, and summary, all of which were taught during the previous six weeks. One of the teachers suggested, "Maybe we should change the pacing guide and not teach fact and opinion with summaries. Maybe that's just too confusing for them." Another teacher asked for data on which students missed the question—"What do we know about them?"

The peer coach reviewed the aggregate data and the student group data and reported that over 2/3 of the students that missed the question were in beginning or early intermediate levels of English fluency. Another teacher asked, "Why are they missing that question then? Are the instructions confusing? Maybe they don't know the word 'summarizes.'" The teachers talked about this at length and concluded that they needed to provide this group of students with additional opportunities for answering these kinds of questions. They quickly discussed a variety of ways that English learners could be taught the differences between fact, opinion, and summary before moving on to the writing samples.

After scoring the writing samples based on the prompt "Write a letter to the principal that outlines your feelings about the school uniform policy," the sixth-grade teachers noted the consistent lack of paragraphs in their students' writing. They expressed significant concern about this and discussed ways to focus on paragraphs and idea units. As one of the sixth-grade teachers noted, "They'll never write like their counterparts across town if they write one long paragraph. We have to teach them how to divide up their ideas and share them more effectively if they are going to achieve on par with other students."

Meanwhile, on the same day, a group of eighth-grade teachers is discussing the common

Simply teaching to the test will not result in radically improved achievement.

Step 1: Develop Pacing Guides. Pacing guides, developed by the teachers who teach the classes, provide an overall structure for the course. Pacing guides allow teachers to review their content standards and decide how much time should be devoted to each standard. Typically, pacing guides include the standards to be taught, instructional materials aligned to those standards, instructional strategies useful in teaching the standards, and a timeline.

Step 2: Develop Common Assessments. Like pacing guides, common or benchmark assessments should be developed by the teachers who teach the specific courses. Teachers can use materials provided by publishers and other sources to create their assessment items, of course, but the power of designing these common assessments lies in the opportunity for groups of teachers to review their content standards and determine the various ways in which their students can demonstrate their knowledge. While these common assessments provide for integrated test format practice by providing students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in modes that they are expected to use in state accountability systems (e.g., multiple choice and on-demand writing), they can also include more authentic tasks and modes that allow teachers to get at students' comprehension and thinking skills. The common assessment is given to every student who takes the class, not just specific sections of the course (e.g., all sixth-grade English classes or seventh-grade science classes).

Step 3: Teach and Assess. With the pacing guide and the common assessment in place, teachers are ready to teach. Consistent with the backwards planning model proposed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005), these steps ensure that teachers know what they expect from students before they begin teaching. In addition, the conversations that teachers have with other teachers regarding student work often become structured discussions about teaching and learning. This process may increase the likelihood that teachers share effective instructional approaches with one another and reduce the use of less-effective instructional interventions.

Step 4: Collaboratively Score the Assessments. As the unit of study comes to a close and students complete the common or benchmark assessment, teachers are ready for the discussion of student performance. But first, someone must compile the data. Typically, this is a peer coach, Title 1 coordinator, or vice principal. The assessment results are first compiled in aggregate with the data from all of the students combined. Data charts are then created for specific groups of students, such as English learners, students with disabilities, African-Americans, or boys. An item analysis for the assessment should also be created. The item analysis provides teachers with the percentage of students who chose each answer so that they can discuss students' misunderstandings of the question or content. Following the discussion of the aggregate data and the analysis of subgroups, teachers are provided with the data from their own classes.

Step 5: Revise and Re-teach. Based on the result of the collaborative assessment and discussion, groups of teachers may decide that the assessment or pacing guide needs revision. Alternatively, they may decide that there are specific standards—content—that their students do not know and that they must re-teach. The follow-up conversation centers on increasing mastery of the content and effective ways for doing so.

Figure 1: A Process for Linking Standards, Assessment, and Instruction

assessment they gave. They are most concerned that just under half of their students could not identify the elements of a short story. One of the teachers said, "I never really taught the elements. I thought that the pacing guide was about teaching short stories. I read a lot of short stories with my classes, but I never really talked with them about the elements. Are the elements in the standards?"

While the faces of some of the teachers in the room clearly indicated their frustration, they talked with their colleague about the standards and expectations for students. As one of them very nicely

said, "We can't close the gap between what they know and what they are expected to know if we don't teach them." The conversation then turned to how to teach and re-teach this content with teachers helping one another think about instructional approaches and materials that they could use.

As they completed their conversation on the multiple-choice items, they began to score the writing prompt. In this case, students were asked to "describe your ideal crib" (house, condo, apartment, or other living environment). They chose to experiment with slang in the prompt to deter-

mine if it would make students more interested. The papers were scored using a four-point rubric. The peer coach reported that the number of students scoring a 1 had decreased by 50%, so the teachers started a conversation about why that might be. Their ideas centered around the professional development they had received in writing instruction and systematic, purposeful approaches to teaching writing. They also noted the difference in students' reactions when "their language is used in class and on assignments." This, in turn, generated a conversation about scaffolding students' language use to conventional registers.

As this conversation ended, the peer coach randomly selected a student paper from the pile of papers assessed at 2, passed it around, and asked her colleagues what type of instruction this student needed to move to the next level. The conversation ranged from expanding the students' vocabulary to providing the student with writing models from which he/she could draw. They agreed that this particular student, who used a number of fragments and run-on sentences, needed individualized instruction in sentence construction from a language arts teacher.

Conclusions

The statistics on adolescent literacy achievement are clear—this is a national problem. The problem is especially pronounced in terms of the achievement gaps between students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, the

data represent the stories of our past. We cannot afford to allow the patterns of the past to dictate the future. It's time to invest in our students' future and ensure that all students are equipped to become contributing citizens of our global village. By linking standards, assessments, and instruction, we can identify areas of need for specific students and address those needs. We can also use this process as an authentic opportunity for professional development. Collaboratively examining student learning and performance allows teachers to engage with their content standards, design and critique assessments, and plan instruction.

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Setting the “opportunity to read” standard: Resuscitating the SSR program in an urban high school

Douglas Fisher

One urban high school made significant efforts to provide students with the opportunity to read.

Schools across the United States have redoubled their efforts to improve student achievement and meet the goals established by the No Child Left Behind Act, namely the provision that students and schools make adequate yearly progress. At the secondary school level, teachers and administrators have focused on ensuring that students can read and that they understand what they read. Unfortunately, less attention has been focused on providing students time to read and ensuring that they do read. Given the increased pressure for student performance, teachers and administrators question the use of every instructional minute and wonder if providing students with time to read is a wise investment. The purpose of this article is to examine the journey an urban high school took as the teachers and administrators struggled with the question of time—specifically time devoted to free voluntary reading. Starting with a single comment made by a student, which led to committee work and significant policy changes, the chronology of resuscitating free voluntary reading is explored.

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The beginnings of change— A student comment

Sometimes a student asks a question or makes a comment that triggers significant policy change.

This is one such case. Miana (all student names are pseudonyms) stopped her English teacher from the previous year in the hall one afternoon. She had recently had her schedule changed and was in a different fourth-period class. This meant that her 20-minute Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) period was also with a different teacher. She told her English teacher that her new fourth-period teacher started class instead of letting them read. She continued, “My mom doesn’t let me just read at home. I can do my math homework or write my essays, but she yells at me if I’m *just* reading. She wants me to watch my brothers and sisters or clean the house. The only time that I ever got to read was during 4-R [the SSR period]. Now that’s taken away from me.” Miana made several important observations that day. For one, she noticed that not all teachers were implementing SSR. She also noted the importance of reading time—time that is especially valuable for students in urban schools who may not have a place or the resources to read texts of their choice outside of school. Little did she know that her strategic

Evaluating the interventions for struggling adolescent readers

Douglas Fisher, Gay Ivey

The authors assess current reading interventions for struggling readers and offer five guidelines for choosing an effective program.

Literacy educators across the grade levels are often asked for their opinions on the quality of particular reading programs. However, for researchers and teacher educators who study adolescent literacy, these questions are now coming more frequently and more urgently. The recent flood of information on later reading difficulties has received much attention in the United States and has created a sense of crisis in adolescent literacy that begs for immediate solutions. For instance, the United States Department of Education reports that more than 8 million students in grades 4–12 are struggling readers (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003). National Assessment of Educational Progress data from 2002 indicate that 33% of the 8th-grade students and 36% of the 12th-grade students who were tested performed at or above a “proficient” level. These data mean that nearly 70% of the 8th graders tested could not describe the purpose of a practical passage and support their views with examples and details. We are also reminded that poor readers are at significant risk for dropping out of high school (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). Over 3,000 students drop out of high school every school day (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).

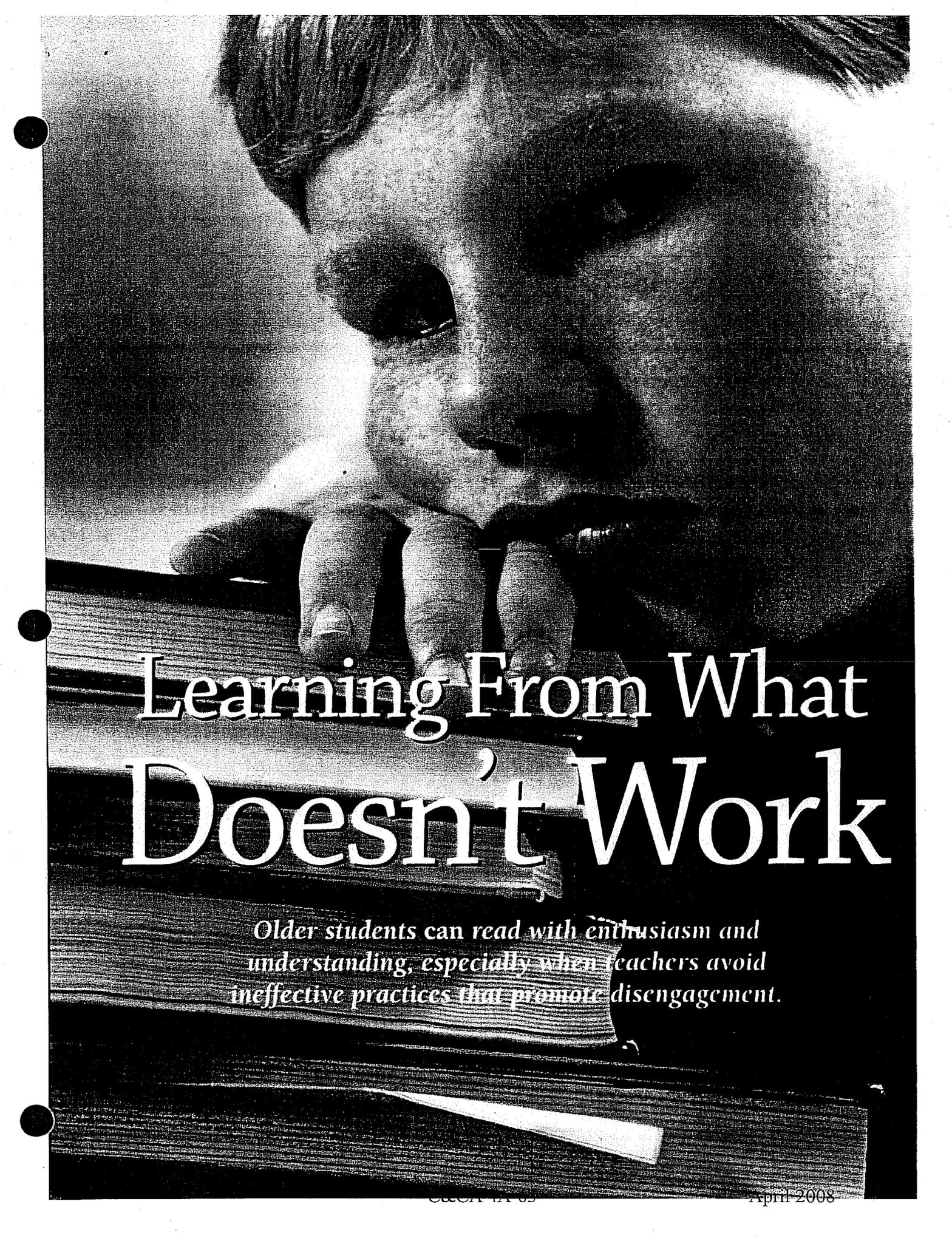
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The federal government has responded to this issue by focusing funds on a “Striving Readers” initiative. According to the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/education,

The President’s Striving Readers initiative provides a focus on improving the reading skills of high school students who read below grade level. This Presidential initiative, first funded in 2005, builds on the No Child Left Behind elementary school reading initiatives. The President’s [fiscal year] 2006 budget will provide \$200 million, an increase of \$175 million, eight times the 2005 level to improve the reading skills of these high school students. (press release dated January 12, 2005)

Along with this federal focus, states are responding with funds for reading intervention programs for middle and high school students. For example, in California, funds are available for schools to adopt intervention programs. The purpose of the current middle school reading intervention, for example, is “to provide a comprehensive, intensive, accelerated reading/language arts program designed for students in grades four through eight whose reading achievement is significantly below grade level,” as described on the Department of Education’s website (www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/im/documents/ri.rtf).

Although we agree that far too many students do not read well and that reading and writing interventions are necessary to move students to proficient and advanced levels, we worry that middle and high schools eager to see changes in



Learning From What Doesn't Work

Older students can read with enthusiasm and understanding, especially when teachers avoid ineffective practices that promote disengagement.

Educators are flooding the professional learning community with requests for strategies that work to improve reading comprehension in the upper-elementary and secondary grades. In these achievement-driven times, we want to know what works best to raise test scores, improve comprehension, and motivate students to read. The answers are not simple for most students, particularly for older students still learning about literacy. The needs of adolescent readers are complex and varied (Ivey, 1999), even within specific cultural groups (Alvermann, 2001) and linguistic groups (Rubinstein-Avila, 2003–2004). To make blanket assertions about what works for *all* students would be misguided and shortsighted.

Getting to the bottom of older readers' comprehension and motivation difficulties requires careful, ongoing assessment of instructional practices and students' literacy needs. We believe, like Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), that real engagement in reading is not the product of strategies alone but a fusion of self-efficacy, interest, and strategic knowledge.

What we can report with more certainty are common practices that create barriers to engaged reading and comprehension development. We invite you to consider five ineffective strategies for developing reading comprehension in older students. Before asking "What works?", it might help to ask "What *doesn't* work?"

Ineffective Strategy 1: Don't let students read.

A new high school principal "put an end to reading" and gave back to teachers time formerly used for Sustained Silent Reading. He warned teachers that students should be "focused on the instruction at hand" rather than "sitting around reading" during class time. In a discussion about these policy changes, the principal explained, "Students have to be taught. We need more time focused on direct instruction."

During the next two years, book circulation rates at the high school library plummeted, and the school's overall achievement on the content standards tests declined. Teachers understood why taking away students' time to "just read" might have resulted in a decline in reading scores, but they were shocked that scores sagged in history and science as well.

Compare this with the approach of principal Doug Williams, a former math teacher. He announced to the faculty of Hoover High School, "If we are going to teach our students to read, we need to provide them with *opportunities* to read." He allocated 20 minutes each day for Sustained Silent Reading and provided his staff with the resources and professional development necessary to ensure that students had time to read books of their choice (Fisher, 2004).

The result? Hoover has met state accountability targets, and students' average reading level as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test has risen from 4.3 to 7.2. Although the independent reading initiative cannot take full credit for this, Hoover teachers credit the Sustained

Silent Reading time with a significant portion of the increased achievement.

In addition to such schoolwide approaches as a formal Sustained Silent Reading period (Pilgreen, 2000), providing students with time for independent reading during content-area classes increases their motivation, background knowledge, and vocabulary. In

example, 7th grader Manuel struggled to read materials above the 2nd grade level, but he became more skilled and motivated to read when his teacher found easy books for him to read and Web sites for him to peruse on platypuses and leopards, two animals that had piqued his interest in science class.

between this book and your own life?" Anthony confesses, "I barely read it. I just searched for the answers. Man, it's not like I need to know this."

Alternatively, Mr. Jackson, a history teacher, was discussing the Reformation with his students. Each student had selected a book from a wide range of texts on the topic and appeared interested in the subject at hand. When asked how he engaged his students, Mr. Jackson replied,

You build on what they know *and* on what they care about. You also give them books to choose from so they can extend what they know.

Students need instruction, but mostly they need opportunities to negotiate real texts for real purposes.

fact, students report that having time to read actually affords them the opportunity to think and comprehend (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Consequently, we cannot imagine initiatives designed to improve comprehension that do not prioritize time with text. Although some have suggested that providing students with practice does not improve their reading (Shanahan, 2004), we cannot think of a single case in which a poor reader became a better reader without having substantial opportunities to read. How many years of piano, tennis, or driving practice do we need to excel at those skills?

We often hear the argument that we should focus on the basic skills, even in high school, before using valuable instructional time to let students read. We know of programs for struggling readers that emphasize word-level reading skills for several years to the exclusion of real reading. This kind of instruction certainly helps students read words more accurately, but it doesn't necessarily equate to improved reading comprehension, nor does it increase student motivation to read. Students need instruction, but mostly they need opportunities to negotiate real texts for real purposes. For

Ineffective Strategy 2: Make students read what they don't know about and don't care about.

Insisting that every student needs to read enduring works of literature, Ms. Prewitt distributes a copy of *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958) to each of her students, along with a packet that requires the students to summarize each chapter, identify the characters, and respond to specific prompts.

With no background knowledge and little interest in the book, students read one chapter each night for homework. They complete the assigned section of the packet before discussing the chapter in class. The book takes several weeks to complete; students rush to catch up on the packet work on the final day. One student uses *CliffsNotes* to hurriedly complete his packet; another student copies from a peer. When asked about the book, Anthony admits, "I don't know what it was about, really. All we had to do was this" (he shows the packet). When asked, "Did you make any connections

Observing this classroom at work revealed a number of practices ensuring that students comprehended the content. First, Mr. Jackson used a wide range of texts and media to inundate students with intriguing information about the topic, drawing also from contemporary issues that would help students see connections between history and events currently happening in their world and in their personal lives. As students worked on generating questions for a game simulation, they reviewed their individual readings from the textbook and several trade books as well as their notes from class lectures, discussions, and a video that they had watched.

One page of Daveen's notes focused on the role of the Pope. Daveen's conversation with us confirmed his interest in and comprehension of the subject. After Daveen explained to us the role of the Catholic Church during the Reformation and the process of selecting a Pope, we asked whether he realized that the Pope had just died. "Yeah," he said. "I watched it on TV. I'm not Catholic, but it was cool to see history being repeated." When asked whether he planned to watch the Pope's funeral on television the next day, Daveen grinned and said, "Oh yeah, I'll

Farewell to A Farewell to Arms:

DEEMPHASIZING THE WHOLE-CLASS NOVEL

The common practice in English language arts classes of assigning all students to read the same book at the same time is a tradition, the authors believe, that would be more honored in the breach than the observance.

BY DOUGLAS FISHER AND GAY IVEY

ASK ANY group of adults ranging in age from their early twenties to late fifties what they remember about middle or high school reading, and you will no doubt hear an unenthusiastic and often bitter chorus of such titles as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, and other classic novels long considered standard and acceptable fare in English classrooms. The younger set may chime in with *Parrot in the Oven*, *Looking for Alaska*, or some other young-adult novels that have become contemporary classics.

Not many adults have great memories of assigned reading from English class, yet the one-size-fits-all class novel persists as the centerpiece of instruction in many middle and high school classrooms. As teacher educators and former English and reading teachers, we also know that getting students to read these selections continues to be difficult, even in the best of circumstances. A high school memory sums up this situation for us. Gay recalls a nighttime bus ride back from a National Honor Society field trip to an amusement park near the end of her junior year. Nearly a third of the students clustered at the back of the bus with the CliffsNotes for *The Scarlet Letter*, not because they needed to read it by the following morning but because they had to read it *and* write a critical analysis of it by the following morning! Even for these high-achieving high-schoolers, the goal was just to get the assignment finished.

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For struggling students, the choice is apt to be noncompliance. Often, the teacher notices that the students have not read the text and so reads it to them. We know that teacher read-alouds are a powerful tool for building vocabulary and background knowledge, but we worry that they are being used to supplant assigned readings. Read-alouds should extend students' thinking, not replace it.

We know that classics — and even award-winning contemporary classics — do not make the list of what adolescents prefer to read.

As an alternative, in the hope that students can be coerced into reading a novel that they have been assigned, teachers often resort to testing their knowledge about it. Some teachers give oral summaries of the contents so that students who have not completed their assigned readings can "keep up." Others show the film version so that students have a sense of the content. Regardless of which alternative is selected, students are not reading more or reading better as a result of the whole-class novel. Instead, students are reading less and are less motivated, less engaged, and less likely to read in the future. Meanwhile, teachers continue their endless — and often fruitless — search for better ways to persuade students to read their assigned novel.¹

Given this frustration and resistance, what is it about a "class set" of novels that captivates teachers so much that its use dominates English language arts instruction? We often hear that curriculum standards dictate the decision and require, for example, that all sixth-graders read *The Giver* or that all ninth-graders read *Romeo and Juliet*. (Of course, the latter is a play, not a novel, but it is typically assigned and taught in the same way.) But even a cursory review of content standards from several state departments of education reveals that specific texts and authors are not actually named. Rather, students are expected to learn how to read, write, and speak about a variety of texts, and the standards typically emphasize literary devices, reading comprehension skills, and writing strategies.

We also hear quite frequently that class novels are selected because they are "good for students." But we know that classics — and even award-winning contemporary classics — do not make the list of what adolescents prefer to read.² In addition, we know that students still struggling to read do not get better at reading from tackling difficult books.³ It would be hard to locate one book that addresses the needs of all students in any given classroom. Life experiences that enable a reader to make sense of a book

vary too greatly, and every class has students who read above or below their grade level.

The bottom line is that, when teachers require all students to read the same book at the same time, English classes are neither standard-centered nor student-centered. As a result, these classes can respond neither to the academic agenda (i.e., the sanctioned curriculum as defined by stan-

dards) nor to the student agenda (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening that satisfy students' own reasons to know, experience, and relate). Radical as it may seem to some readers, to us it's only common sense to reconsider the use of the whole-class novel.

WIDE, FOCUSED READING AS AN ALTERNATIVE

Class novels may actually limit or restrict the variety, depth, and quantity of students' reading. We would argue that we can expand students' reading by significantly increasing the number and variety of texts in English classrooms and by offering a greater number of creative opportunities to read in school. We have identified a number of factors necessary to balance students' preferences for reading with the demands of a standards-driven curriculum.⁴ As an alternative to using the whole-class novel, we offer teachers five guidelines for practice.

1. *Identify universal themes rather than individual books as a way of guiding instruction.* In our professional development work with teachers in middle and high schools, we are consistently asked how to get students motivated to read. We suspect that the real question, the question behind the question, is "How do we get students to read *The Iliad*?" (Choose any other institutionalized assignment if Homer didn't make your school's list this year.)

Research offers excellent advice on getting students to read: choose texts that matter to students,⁵ create contexts in which students find intrinsic reasons to read rather than reasons related to external rewards or consequences,⁶ and provide time to read in school.⁷ But motivation is also multi-dimensional and may be heavily influenced by such factors as the student's own "perceived competence."⁸ The class-novel experience rarely meets these criteria. Instead, you have students with a text they do not like, which they

are directed to read for purposes other than their own, with little time in school to do so. To top it off, the books are typically so difficult that students feel overmatched by the challenges they present. And that feeling is not unreasonable, since these are the same kinds of texts that intimidate even competent adult readers.

When students read widely from books they have selected, they are more prepared to discuss the books with their peers and to write complex analyses of the themes and ideas. What's more, they are motivated to read more.

Instead of defining instruction in English language arts by the books ("I teach *The Odyssey*." "I teach *Old Yeller*."), teachers should focus instruction on big ideas or universal themes, such as "The Hero's Journey," "Matters of Life and Death," or "Are the Greeks and Romans still with us today?" These ideas and concepts are surely within the grasp of most students, but it is difficult to find out what students know and can do within the context of one very hard book. Big ideas pique students' interest and allow every student in the class to engage with the topic using his or her own background, interests, and skills.

2. *Select texts that span a wide range of difficulty levels.* If our goal is to encourage students to read more and better, then we have to ensure that they are reading books they can read. Simply requiring students to read "grade-level" texts will not improve their skills. However, inviting students to read widely in response to a big idea, question, or theme requires that they have access to a significant number of books at a variety of levels of difficulty that provide diverse perspectives on the topic.

By the way, we don't want readers to think we're opposed to the specific books we've named in this article. In fact, they and myriad other "classics" are excellent examples of literature. *Charlotte's Web* might be a highly suitable addition to a collection of cutting-edge young adult and children's books that explore the theme of friendships with responsibility. Similarly, *To Kill a Mockingbird* might be an appropriate option in a study of discrimination, racism, and prejudice, but it need not be given higher status than more student-friendly, high-interest books on the topic, such as Chris Crowe's *Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* or Toni Morrison's *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*.

Our experience suggests that, when students read widely from books they have selected, they are more prepared

to discuss the books with their peers and to write complex analyses of the themes and ideas. What's more, they are motivated to read more.

3. *Select texts that address contemporary issues and that are engaging.* Students want to read about things that matter to them. They want to think, form opinions, challenge

and be challenged, and learn. Students want to read widely in multiple genres and media — graphic novels, manga, Internet sites, informational texts, and so on. All of these text sources can be used as students consider the big idea or theme that the class is exploring together. Themes we select should allow students to engage with contemporary issues — issues that they and we are struggling with — while reading both current and classic works. We agree with literary scholars who suggest that literature provides the reader with a mirror to examine oneself, a window to consider alternative experiences and beliefs, and a door to walk through forever changed. We just haven't found the book that does this for every member of every class at the same time.

4. *Orchestrate instruction that builds students' competence.* Another drawback of the whole-class novel is the type of instruction it engenders. Teachers using a single book with a group of students often revert to lecturing and assigning independent reading. From the perspective of the students, the teacher knows everything (from the "correct" symbolism to the appropriate predictions), and students have permission to remain passive.

Turning this situation around so that the teacher provides modeling, coaching, scaffolding, and guiding requires that the teacher use time differently. For example, the expert teachers we love to watch start with a read-aloud or shared reading. This time is not used to read something that the students should have already read but is an opportunity for the teacher to share his or her thinking about a text with the class. Then students move into groups — some are reading, others are discussing books, others are writing or getting peer feedback on their writing — while the teacher meets with specific students to provide guided instruction.

This organizational system allows teachers to move from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task . . . to a situation in which the students assume all of the

responsibility."⁹ In other words, the teacher guides students through texts and models comprehension along the way. As students develop their understanding of the theme or response to the big idea or question, they are developing skills, building competence and confidence, and learning with and through texts. And as the students' skills develop, teachers gradually cede to them the responsibility for learning.

5. *Teach literary devices and reading comprehension strategies using texts that are readable and meaningful.* As we have noted, the content standards in English language arts do not name or test students' knowledge of specific texts or authors. Instead, students are expected to learn how to draw inferences from a text as a way of making sense of it. But students are not likely to have vast experience with inferring or with appreciating and understanding how an author uses particular literary devices to enrich a text or to contribute to a theme. Their lack of experience is compounded when most instructional time is consumed by efforts to get them to "get the story" of a few specific texts that they may not find interesting or that may be too difficult for them. Far too often, we try to teach to content standards by requiring that students read books with difficult vocabulary and concepts. The problem is that comprehension tools and literary devices don't jump out at the reader in difficult texts; students simply don't get good at reading comprehension, understanding literary devices, literary response, or writing by reading hard books. Students don't learn how to write a persuasive text or how an omniscient point of view works from reading one difficult short story.

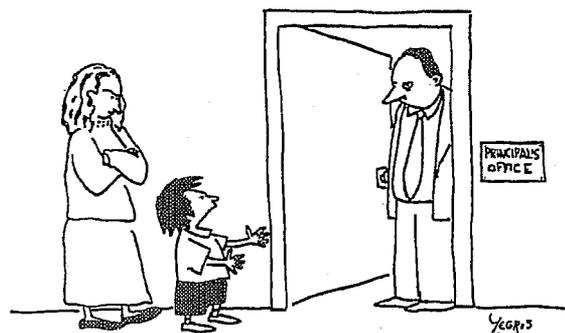
Students do develop an understanding of and appreciation for persuasive arguments by reading a number of texts, across genres and topics that they are accessible to them. And students do develop the ability to make inferences through repeated practice, first with very obvious examples modeled by the teacher and then with increasingly complex examples to which they apply what they have learned independently.

While we don't know of students who got better at reading or learned to understand the classics through a focus on whole-class reading, we do know a significant number of students who got better at reading and who started reading more widely and frequently because their teachers used a range of texts, organized the course around a theme or big idea, and then provided instruction as outlined in their state's content standards. We are on the same page as children's author Walter Dean Myers, who writes, "It is only when readers have the ability to fully absorb the material being read that the process becomes pleasurable and a lifelong reader is created."¹⁰ The whole-class novel

assigned as independent reading won't help students "fully absorb the material." Helping that to happen takes a skilled teacher who guides his or her students through multiple texts, genres, and standards.

A common statement made by some English language arts teachers is that students need to know Shakespeare or Walt Whitman before they graduate. Should this "knowledge" be acquired at the expense of students' knowing how to read and write independently and purposefully for a wide range of reasons? Traditional instruction in English language arts actually *limits* the reading and writing students can produce. Let's work instead on expanding students' understanding, interests, and thinking.

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"Yes, I did write, 'Do not deface school property' on my desk. But she asked me to use 'oxymoron' in context!"