

Strategies for Improving Literacy at the College Level

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“I look forward to disgusting my presentation with you.”

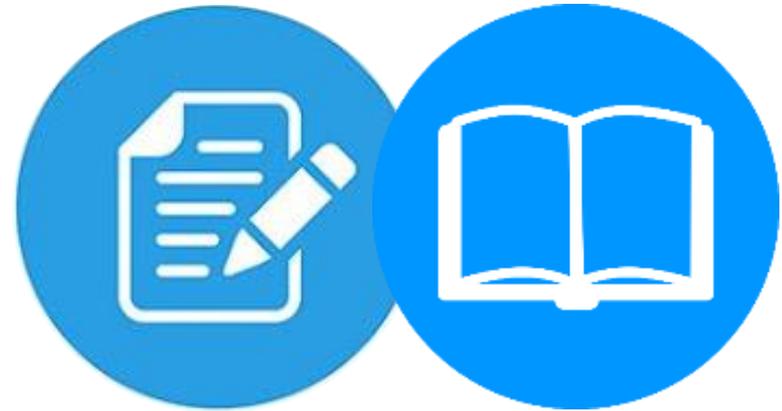
“I also learned how to properly right reports and memos.”

“I can do yoga & study at the same time, thereby getting 2 birds stoned at once.”



Agenda

- Define Literacy
- A Brief Literature Review
- Scaffolding
- **Literacy Strategies:**
 1. Weekly Writing Assignments
 2. The 3-2-1 Reading Response
 3. Scaffolding the Essay Writing Process
 4. One-on-one support
- Wrap-up



Defining Literacy



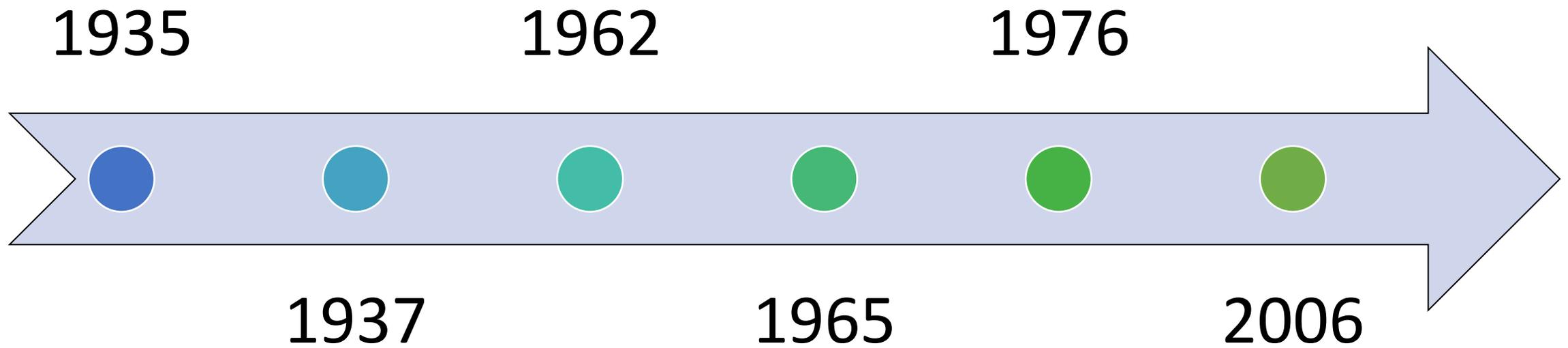
Reading & Understanding



Writing Clearly

A Brief Literature Review

A Brief Literature Review – The Timeline



A Brief Literature Review

- Good readers are often good writers (Clark, 1935)
- Subsequent research confirms the two activities are related (Stotsky, 1983; Parr & McNaughton, 2014)
- There is little research on the exact nature of the relationship (Stotsky, 1983)



Stotsky (1983): *Research on Reading/Writing Relationships: A Synthesis and Suggested Directions*

- Writing about a text improves reading
- Better writers plan and re-read more when they compose
- Better readers tend to produce complex writing than poorer readers
- Additional reading was **as useful or more useful** than grammar study or additional writing study in improving writing skills in college students (Clark, 1935; Bagley, 1937; Heys, 1962; Christiansen, 1965 & Elley, Barham, Lamb & Wyllie, 1976)

Processes shared when reading & writing



Readers

Plan reading around a purpose; use background knowledge

Make their own meaning, using cues in the text

Develop their own ideas when they re-read



Writers

Have a purpose and think about what they know or need to know to accomplish it

Make their own meaning to convey their ideas

Develop their own ideas as they write and re-write

(Parr & McNaughton, 2014)

What we know in 2005

- Reading and writing are linked; and they are mutually supportive in improving literacy

However...

- There are no frameworks that help translate the relationship into practice (Close, Hull, & Langer, 2005)

Until...



Biancarosa & Snow (2006): *Reading Next: A vision for actions and research. A Carnegie Report*

- Strategies for the classroom that are based in research appear fairly recently
- A compilation of key strategies that are supported in research and/or professional opinion



Biancarosa & Snow (2006):

Some elements of an effective literacy program

- 1. Direct, explicit instruction** on reading comprehension, including summarizing, keeping track of one's own understanding, with scaffolded content.
- 2. Integration** – embedding content into COMM courses and COMM skills into content courses.



Biancarosa & Snow (2006):

Some elements of an effective literacy program

3. **Peer Learning** – small group discussing a text
4. **One-on-one** reading and writing instruction as needed
5. Text with **varying levels of difficulties** and topics



Graham & Hebert (2010): *Writing to Read: Evidence For How Writing Can Improve Reading*

A meta-analytic review presents 3 major instructional ways in which writing has been shown to improve reading:

1. Having students **write about the texts**, e.g. response, summaries, note-taking, etc.
2. Teaching students the **writing skills**, e.g. sentence and paragraph construction
3. Increasing **how much students write**



Scaffolding & 4 Literacy Strategies

Scaffolding

“**Scaffolding** is breaking up the learning into chunks and then providing a tool, or structure, with each chunk”
(Alber, 2014, para. 2)

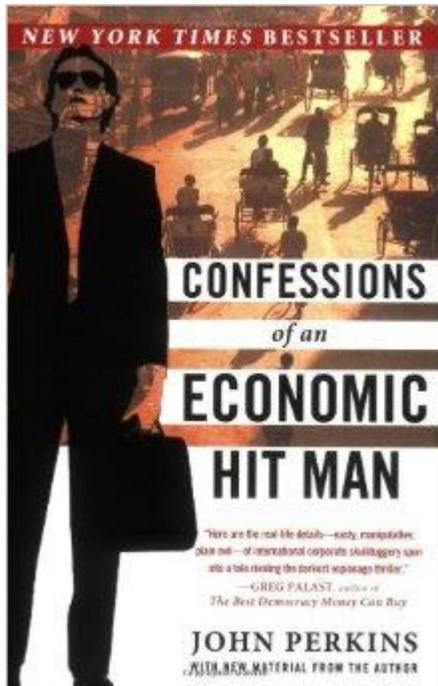


Scaffolding the Writing Process: Weekly Writing Responses



Course	Students	Assignment
<p data-bbox="117 522 749 729">COMM 78 – Communications for Business</p> 	<p data-bbox="792 522 1462 736">International Business, Human Resources & Hospitality & Tourism</p>	<p data-bbox="1582 544 2423 608">Weekly Reading Responses</p> <p data-bbox="1531 694 2474 979">Book: <i>Confessions of an Economic Hit Man</i>, By: John Perkins + Guiding Questions for each chapter</p> <p data-bbox="1544 1072 2461 1208">14 Responses (random 2 x 5%) + 1 practice</p>

Scaffolding the Writing Process: Weekly Writing Response



- Students read 2-3 chapters of a book weekly
- Guiding Questions for each assigned chapter
- Students were given 20-25 minutes in class to respond to an additional question based on the assigned chapters
- **Note** – the very first writing response was practice and immediate feedback was provided



Scaffolding the Writing Process: Weekly Writing Response



Composition (Ideas, Content, Organization)

Beginning—0	Emerging—.5	Developing—1	Proficient—1.5	Mastering—2	Exemplary—2.5
___ Little or no relevant content ___ No structure evident ___ No logic, coherence	___ Content meets few expectations ___ Very little structure apparent ___ Very little logic, coherence	___ Content meets some expectations ___ Poorly structured ___ Some logic, coherence	___ Content meets many expectations ___ Reasonably structured ___ Adequate logic, coherence	___ Content meets most expectations ___ Adequately structured ___ Good logic, coherence	___ Content meets all expectations ___ Effectively structured ___ Excellent logic, coherence

Style & Language (Grammar, Punctuation, Mechanics)

Beginning—0	Emerging—.5	Developing—1	Proficient—1.5	Mastering—2	Exemplary—2.5
___ Inappropriate style/voice/word choice ___ Serious errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics inhibit readability	___ Awkward style/voice/word choice ___ Frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics impact readability	___ Ineffective style/voice/word choice ___ Numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics	___ Effective style/voice/word choice ___ Occasional errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics	___ Strong style/voice/word choice ___ Minor errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics	___ Powerful style/voice/word choice ___ No errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics

Feedback - Reading Response Question

Q: What is an Economic Hit Man (EHM)?

General Feedback:

- **Topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence** – missing elements
- **Use your own words!** – copying wording from text (be original!)
- **General/vague statements** – no evidence to support your statements. Remember to ask the following questions: who, what, where, when and why, how etc.
- **Repetitive statements** – say the same thing using different words (filler)
- **Lacks coherence** – ideas are not in a logical order.
- **Added new information** that had nothing to do with EHM.
- **Spelling, punctuation and grammar** – edit/revise your work!

Scaffolding the Writing Process: Weekly Writing Response



Advantages:

- Guiding questions to help make sense of the content
- Students are required to write about what they read, which improves literacy
- Repetition of the assignment
- Not time consuming to mark (random 2 out of 14)

Disadvantages:

- Book not relevant to all programs
- Writing apprehension
- Time pressure



Scaffolding the Writing Process: Weekly Writing Response



Supported by the research?

- Students who read more write better (Stotsky, 1983)
- Increasing how much students write (Graham & Hebert, 2010)
- Answer questions about a text in writing (Graham & Hebert, 2010)



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Courses	Students	Assignment
<p>COMM 79 – Communications for the Helping Professionals</p> <p>COMM 32 – Technical Communications</p>	<p>Paramedics, Nursing, Rec & Leisure, Pharmacy Tech, Massage Therapy, Child & Youth Workers, Engineering</p>	<p>The 3-2-1 Reading Response</p> <p>5% x 4 + 1 practice</p>



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



- Students are assigned readings (preferably program related)
- Readings become progressively complex over the semester; the final two readings are from academic journals with proper documentation
- Students are given one week to read the article
- Students complete the activity in a one hour computer lab session on the discussion board of their LMS



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



PART 1: The 3-2-1 Reading Response

3: What are the **three** main ideas in this article?

2: What are **two** things you had trouble understanding?

1: What is **one** question you would ask the author?

PART 2: Responding to a Peer's Post

- Responding to another student's post in 150-300 words on the discussion board of their LMS



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Results at Fleming College:

- Even as the articles became more difficult to read, the average marks from the first to the last assignments rose anywhere from **5-12%** (~ 275 students; 10 sections)



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Name: _____				
Part A (3 marks)	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks
3-2-1 Post	<input type="checkbox"/> Post not completed in time allotted	<input type="checkbox"/> One or more parts are incomplete <i>or</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Significant lack of clarity makes post difficult to understand	<input type="checkbox"/> All three parts are complete <input type="checkbox"/> One or more of the parts does not fully meet the requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> All three parts of post are thoughtfully completed and clearly expressed
Part B (2 marks)	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	
Response to Classmate's 3-2-1 Post	<input type="checkbox"/> Response not completed in time allotted	<input type="checkbox"/> Response is general or superficial <i>or</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Response is not written in complete sentences <i>or</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Significant lack of clarity makes response difficult to understand	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful response to <i>at least</i> one classmate's post in 150-300 words written in complete sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Response goes beyond "I agree" and or/ summary of reading <input type="checkbox"/> Response explains/analyzes/clarifies/connects or extends ideas	
TOTAL GRADE:				/5

Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Advantages:

- Students are required to write about what they read, which improves literacy
- Repetition of the assignment
- Shows students proper documentation (academic articles)
- Not time consuming to mark

Disadvantages:

- Finding articles related to their program for the college level
- It uses a lot of lab time: 5 hours over 14 weeks



Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Supported by the research?

- Writing about reading improves comprehension (Graham & Hebert, 2010)
- Increasing how much students write (Graham & Hebert, 2010)
- Direct, explicit instruction on reading comprehension, including summarizing, note taking etc. (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)

Scaffolding the Reading Process: The 3-2-1 Reading Response



Supported by the research Cont?

- Integration – embedding content into COMM courses and COMM skills into content courses (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)
- Students who read more write better (Stotsky, 1983)

Scaffolding the Writing Process: The Research Essay



Courses	Students	Assignment
COMM 3715/2316 – Academic Writing For Success	Pathway into University (UOIT or Trent) and General Arts & Science	Research Essay (25%) & Peer Review (5%)



Scaffolding the Writing Process: The Research Essay



Step 1: Topic & Thesis Statement + Essay Analysis (weekly basis)

Step 2: Library Workshop, APA Documentation & [Write it Again](#) (learning module)

Step 3: Essay Outline

Step 4: Writing Sample (Introduction + body paragraphs) & Peer Review

Step 5: Peer Review

Step 6: Final Submission



Scaffolding the Writing Process: The Research Essay

IMPORTANT TASKS & DUE DATES

IMPORTANT TASKS & DUE DATES		
STEP 1: Topic & Thesis Statement	2%	Friday, March 20, 2015 (dropbox by 11:59 pm)
STEP 2: Library Workshop (in-class), 2-3 Credible Sources & APA Citation (dropbox)	3%	Wednesday, March 25, 2015 (in-class & dropbox)
STEP 3: Essay Outline	2%	Friday, March 27 th , 2015 (dropbox by 11:59 pm)
STEP 4: Introduction & One body paragraph OR Two body paragraphs (with APA citations) + peer review.	3%	Wednesday, April 1 st , 2015 (in-class)
STEP 5: Peer Review	5%	Wednesday, April 8 th , 2015 (in-class)
STEP 6: Final Research Essay	15%	Friday, April 10 th , 2015 (dropbox by 11:59 pm)



10%



Scaffolding the Writing Process: The Research Essay

Advantages:

- Every step requires lots of feedback by instructor and peers
- Generates lots of discussion about the writing process
- The task of writing an essay doesn't seem overwhelming

Disadvantages:

- Providing lots of feedback at each step can be time consuming especially if it is a large class
- Lots of small chunks – some students lost track of due dates



Scaffolding the Writing Process: The Research Essay



Supported by the research?

- Students who read more write better (Stotsky, 1983)
- Increasing how much students write (Graham & Hebert, 2010)
- Teach students writing skills and processes (Graham & Hebert, 2010)
- Planning and re-reading during the composing process (Atwell, 1981)
- Peer Learning (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)

One-on-One Feedback

- Intensive individual teaching with a piece of student's writing
- Indicate what the student has done well, and show them the weaknesses and errors
- Show the student how to improve, but don't write the assignment for them
- It emphasizes that writing takes time and care
- Can be done successfully online



One-on-One Feedback

Advantages:

- Instructor models revising and editing line by line (good writing can't be “whipped” off)
- Provides the student with an opportunity to see how their writing could be interpreted (or misinterpreted) by a reader – “That’s not what I meant to say....”
- Students see that writing is hard work; that even the teacher struggles to find the best wording

Disadvantages:

- Time consuming
- Requires students to be focused and motivated



One-on-One Feedback

Supported by the research?

- Intensive writing (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)
- Writing takes time and care (Davis, 2001)



Summary

- Strategies for improving reading and writing that are supported by research
- **Four strategies that we have used:**

1. The Weekly Writing Responses
2. The 3-2-1 Reading Response
3. Scaffolding the Research Essay
4. One-on-One Feedback



References

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- Tollefson, S. K. (1988). *Encouraging Student Writing*. Berkeley; Office of Educational Development, U. of California.

Discussion

- Have you used scaffolding in your classroom?
- Have you used any of the four strategies in your own class? What were the results? Do you have any other strategies to share?

Literacy Strategies:

1. The Weekly Writing Responses
2. The 3-2-1 Reading Response
3. Scaffolding the Research Essay
4. One-on-One Feedback

