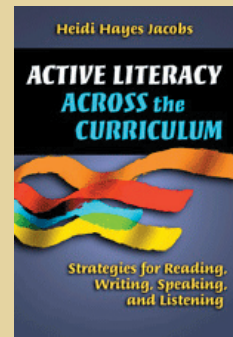


THE MAIN IDEA

current education book summaries



FILE: Literacy

Active Literacy Across the Curriculum: Strategies for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

By Heidi Hayes Jacobs (Eye On Education, 2006)

S.O.S. (A summary of the summary)

The main ideas of the book are:

- Every teacher needs to consider him/herself a literacy teacher.
- This means that all teachers – at every grade level and in every discipline – must learn literacy strategies to integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing into the subjects they teach.
- Curriculum mapping is an effective tool to ensure that literacy instruction is schoolwide and consistent in approach.

There are a number of reasons students fail to attain the literacy skills they need for success in school and life. First, formal literacy strategies are not commonly taught after fourth grade unless a student is considered “at-risk.” When literacy strategies *are* taught they are rarely taught in a consistent manner across grades and disciplines. Furthermore, most teachers believe it is the responsibility of the English/Language Arts teachers to teach literacy even though every student needs literacy skills to succeed in every class and on every test. Finally, even when teachers *do* focus on literacy, they often teach reading and writing and neglect speaking and listening: two vital aspects of literacy.

Heidi Hayes Jacobs, who is well-known for her work with curriculum mapping, responds to this literacy crisis in her book *Active Literacy Across the Curriculum*. While there are many books that introduce the teaching of literacy strategies, this book emphasizes the importance of *aligning* and *reinforcing* the literacy strategies throughout the school. It also provides a useful tool – curriculum mapping – to ensure consistent schoolwide implementation of these strategies.

Each chapter covers one literacy strategy that can be implemented in every class (vocabulary instruction, active notetaking, editing and revising skills, and teaching speaking and listening). The book culminates with an overview of the curriculum mapping process – a data-driven process to record, analyze, and revise what is being taught in each classroom.

The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

- ✓ **How to teach vocabulary in a more effective way (Chapter 2, p.2)**
Teachers often limit their vocabulary instruction to a single ineffective approach: students look up words and write down definitions.
- ✓ **How to use notetaking to improve comprehension (Chapter 3, p.3)**
Rather than copying from the board, notetaking can actually be used to boost comprehension.
- ✓ **How to make editing and revising consistent in all classes (Chapter 4, pp.4-5)**
Imagine the power of students learning how to edit and revise their writing based on the same standards in every class.
- ✓ **How to use discussions to truly promote student thought (Chapter 5, pp.5-6)**
Rather than play, “Guess what I’m thinking,” learn different discussion techniques that lead to higher levels of thought.
- ✓ **How to incorporate speaking into literacy instruction (Chapter 6, pp.7)**
Speaking remains the heart of literacy, every class relies on it, yet few teachers formally teach and assess speech.
- ✓ **How curriculum mapping can provide a formal method to integrate the six strategies into your school (Chapter 7, p.8)**
This data-driven approach will provide the structure needed to sustain the development of literacy learning.
- ✓ **Concrete suggestions for designing professional development sessions using the ideas in the book (Professional Development page)**

Professional Development Suggestions – from THE MAIN IDEA

Creating a Schoolwide Writing Policy and Rubric

The goal of the PD ideas below is to create a schoolwide editing and revising policy and rubric to be used for *any* writing assignment.

1. To show the *need* for this, bring in a piece of student writing (it could be an explanation of a math problem), and have teachers grade it individually, not just for subject-area accuracy, but also for how clearly the student organizes and communicates his/her ideas. Lead a discussion about the varying grades the teachers assign to this piece of writing and the types of criteria teachers used to judge it. This will show how teacher grading of writing within one school/grade/discipline can vary so wildly.
2. Hand out copies of the Sample K-12 Revision and Editing Policy and High School/Middle School Writing Rubric on pp. 4-5 of the summary (or the full versions from the book on pp.64-6, 71-6) to provide an example of consistent schoolwide writing expectations.
3. To actually create your own Revision and Editing Policy and a rubric to go along with this, you might want to create a committee (with representatives from different subjects and grade levels) since this will take a lot of work. To create these documents, either: 1) Bring in state/national writing rubrics that are used in your school and have teachers bring in the writing rubrics they're currently using. Use these documents to create your own policy and rubric. Or, 2) Bring in samples of student writing (from all grades and all disciplines) and divide these papers into four categories (from 'excellent' to 'poor') for each grade level. Then pull out the skills used for this writing (and this becomes the Revision and Editing Policy) and the criteria used to judge this writing (and this becomes your pool of criteria for your schoolwide writing rubric). This document can be submitted to the entire staff for suggested revisions.
4. Once the committee has come up with these two documents, for a useful follow-up PD session ask teachers to bring in an assignment they plan to use that involves writing. Teachers can give each other feedback in pairs about how well the assignment reflects the school's revision and editing policy. Then, after the students have completed the assignment, at another PD session teachers could collaboratively grade some of the student responses, using the schoolwide rubric to strive for consistency in writing expectations.

Modeling and Practicing Active Notetaking

While many English/language arts teachers have experience with the notetaking techniques in this book, other subject-area teachers may not. To introduce these techniques, first model them, then let those teachers experience these techniques by actually *doing* them. This would be a good opportunity to tap a teacher experienced with these literacy strategies to conduct this PD session.

First, *model* the 'Commenting and Questioning' technique. Choose a one-page reading (perhaps p.1 or p.3 of this summary), copy it onto a transparency, and with an overhead projector, demonstrate how you might "interact" with the text by asking questions and making connections aloud while you use a marker to write these notes in the margins. Or, pass out copies of the reading and use the overhead projector to show how, after drawing a line down the middle of the page, you write key ideas you've extracted from the text on the left and then reactions to those ideas on the right. After modeling these techniques, distribute a new short text and ask teachers to *practice using* these techniques. Consider using a reading from math (a textbook page) or science (a piece of research) since these are subjects where teachers may have less experience with active notetaking. You can also model and have teachers practice the other three notetaking techniques on p.3 of the summary (for example, bring sentence strips for teachers to organize into a sequential outline or bring notecards for teachers to extract categories from a sample text).

Planning for Vocabulary Instruction

To help students continue to learn high-frequency words, it is helpful for teachers to choose which words should be emphasized in which grades. To make sure teachers understand what "high-frequency" words are, distribute the list of 69 high-frequency words on p. 26 of the before the meeting. This list includes the following: *contrast, determine, discern, discuss, elaborate, establish, examine, extract, generate, identify, interpret, justify, organize, prove, reason, refer, reflect, select, and support*. It might be useful to have teachers ask students to translate these words into their own language as a diagnostic tool to see how precisely students understand these words and to make the case for teaching them.

Then, each teacher should come to a PD session with a variety of sources where students find high-frequency words in their particular class: assessments, textbooks, teacher-created tests, and standardized tests. Spend time going through these materials and have teachers identify approximately 50 high-frequency words. This could be done before the PD session to save a lot of time. Then, either by grade level, or grouping grades together (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12), have teachers look at their lists together and choose the high-frequency words each grade or group will focus on for the year. It also may be helpful to have teachers of the same grade level brainstorm and then agree on a common approach to these words: word walls, a list in each student's binder, translation practice, assessment techniques, and other approaches.

Curriculum Mapping

If you want your teachers to use curriculum mapping to support schoolwide literacy efforts, show them some sample maps (below, on p. 128, and in Jacobs's other work) and have them note where literacy skills are built in. Then have teachers bring in their own unit plans and provide them with a blank template so they can integrate literacy instruction based on: the literacy priorities of your school or literacy gaps they have determined from looking at student work and test results.

Sample of a Calculus Curriculum Map

CONTENT	SKILLS	ASSESSMENTS
<p><i>Essential Questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the equation of a line represented? 2. Why is the graph of a line different from the line of a radical function? 3. Why is the graph of a line different from the line of a rational function? <p><i>Content:</i> Linear functions (applications & graphs) Terms: slope, function, rational, depreciation, intercept, radical</p>	<p>Rewrites linear equations in point-slope form, slope-intercept form, and standard form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines slope using slope formula • Determines equation of a line given two points • Applies depreciation formulas • Graphs functions on the T1-83+ calculator • Determines the roots of functions • Employs terms in written work and discussion • Translates directions on all tests and assignments • Revises all writing to include precise procedural language • Edits all written work for complete sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student demonstrations on overhead calculator • Triad class discussions in small groups reporting out to whole class on linear functions • Multiple choice quiz on slope and linear functions • Short answer test on functions and graphs • Correct use of terms in work • Accurate paraphrasing of directions • Circled revisions • Edited written work