

COLLEGE PREP READING & WRITING

With the variety of challenges and issues facing struggling high schools today, instruction directly related to college preparation and application often cannot be addressed at all, or at the earliest, it is addressed in the senior year, when most colleges are already accepting applications. Some cynics might say that many of the students will not go on to college anyway, but at Talent Development High Schools (TDHS) we know differently. Many of the students are interested in post-secondary education and are capable of applying and being accepted if only they knew what is expected of them and how to get involved in the process. Even students who may be reading below grade level can make it to college with the appropriate awareness, instructional support, and encouragement.

The Problem. . .

When students begin 11th grade reading below grade level, teachers often observe the following challenges:

- Students have difficulty reading extended materials written on grade level.
- Students may have anxiety about state-based graduation exams in reading and writing.
- Students have the ability to meet more rigorous standards but lack the confidence to try for fear of failure.
- Students' writing reflects "high-school requirements" as opposed to college or career-related writing.
- Students may have little to no knowledge of either the types of skills needed to be successful in the college/work world or how/when to apply for such post-high school opportunities.

In challenged high schools where upon entry many of the students are reading well below grade level, college preparation becomes a secondary consideration. Additionally, many students may have been told well before high school, sadly either by family or school personnel, that they may be able neither to afford college nor be accepted. Such a negative message often closes the door to this option completely. Students whose interest was revived in the 10th grade TDHS course, *Reading & Writing in Your Career*, often need help with the college application process so that they do not feel overwhelmed by the details or miss important deadlines.

The Solution. . .

College Prep Reading & Writing (CPRW) continues TDHS's Literacy Initiative in 11th grade by providing additional assistance to students who are still reading two years below grade level and those who have not acquired the necessary skills for college and post-high school careers. Like *Strategic Reading* and *Reading and Writing in Your Career*, this intensive acceleration course engages students in age-appropriate materials and topics while building their confidence and skill levels. The course also gives students the assistance and awareness they need to be prepared for state-based graduation tests as well as post-secondary options.

Frequently, reading-intervention programs are tailored solely to elementary or middle school-aged students. These programs are beneficial, but what about the high school students who need an opportunity to build and strengthen their reading skills as well as gain exposure to the options available after high school? Who is helping not only this student but also the teacher who is being challenged to meet needs not commonly associated with secondary-level students or to assist in the type of college-planning often found in private career counselors or the advice of parents? *The Literacy Initiative* by Talent Development High Schools (TDHS) brings accelerated reading strategies to students who might otherwise be forced to try to "get by" with limited reading skills. At TDHS we believe that all students can improve their reading skills, no matter how far along they are in the education system.

Balanced-Literacy is the Key. . .

College Prep Reading & Writing (CPRW) is an 11th grade course designed for students who may have made gains in their reading ability in previous TDHS courses but are still reading at least two years below grade level or have not been exposed to the skills and strategies necessary for college. CPRW uses a balanced-literacy approach where students move through four timed components each day.

College Prep Reading & Writing Four Components

- Reading Colloquy
- Focus Lesson
- Literature Exploration
- Project-Based Applications

CPRW is not merely a follow up to previous TDHS courses. CPRW, again, considers the unique developmental stage of the students and addresses the development of students' reading and writing skills. CPRW immerses students in units of study that examine both the application process and the types of projects, thinking, and applications that are required in most post-secondary settings. During these various activities students practice a variety of skills that help them to improve their reading: predicting, visualizing, listening to good reading, reading independently short higher-level selections, analyzing style as a way of conveying meaning, recognizing unidentified vocabulary through context, learning and practicing specific writing and speaking techniques and formats in literature-based or research assignments, answering critical-thinking questions about what they have read by citing textual evidence, completing a common college application, and applying what they have read and done to other readings, knowledge, or real-world situations. These strategies help students improve both their reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition, improve their ability to handle upper-level writing assignments, and increase their overall confidence and ability to be successful both on state-based English graduation exams and completion of college applications.

Flexible Units & Materials. . .

One of things that makes CPRW so unique and successful is the wide variety of subjects that the units of study cover. The flexibility of the resources allow teachers to customize units for their particular classes without having to double their own workload. During the first week of school, teachers give a diagnostic test to determine the reading levels of their students.

Based on the results, teachers organize students into heterogeneous teams for cooperative learning when appropriate and work with students to set meaningful, learning-based goals. As the semester progresses and students strengthen both their confidence and ability levels, they begin to work more extensively with a variety of writing assignments. Thus, students are making gains and getting closer to reading on grade level as well as improving their writing. At the end of the semester, students take a post test so that teachers can better determine their progress and the areas in which students still require practice and assistance.

CPRW has two direct immediate outcomes beyond those of RWYC:

- Students work intensively on literature-based writing assignments, critical thinking discussions, and using an entry-level college text in order to be prepared for the types of skills covered on most state-based graduation exams in English;
- Students have an opportunity to complete a college application and participate in activities like a persuasive speech, debate, research paper, and portfolio defense in order to experience the types of things that will be asked of them in college or a post-secondary career.

College Prep Reading & Writing Class Model

Reading Colloquy

20 minutes

Students independently read a brief current events article for no more than 10 minutes. Then they are permitted to work with a partner for five minutes to discuss questions or problems that each had and to help one another. The last five minutes are for a structured analytical discussion during which students respond to the article giving their opinions and reactions while using the article as evidence for their response. This activity engages students in reading about the world outside of themselves (much like college), asks them to make educated, opinionated responses about what they have read, and holds them accountable for participating. Evaluation rubrics and scoring tools are provided for the teacher.

Focus Lesson

20 minutes

During the second 20 minutes of class, teachers directly instruct students in a skill or concept that they will immediately apply to that day's (or upcoming days') Literature Exploration or Project-Based Application. The purpose of the Focus Lesson time is for teachers to not only explain but also model the selected skill or concept. Additionally, students have an opportunity to practice during this time in an authentic or meaningful way. By limiting the time for direct instruction, teachers are more likely to keep challenged readers' attention while giving them the modeling and practice time they need to actually incorporate a skill into their own knowledge base. Focus Lesson time has a heavy emphasis on the elements of literature, aspects of research, and analytical thinking and writing.

Literature Exploration

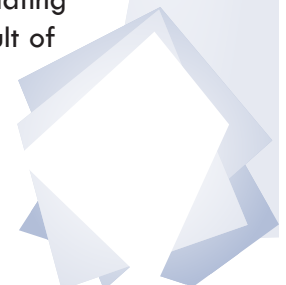
30 minutes

During this 30 minute block, students work intensively with **75 Thematic Readings: An Anthology** or one of three novels: John Fowles **The Collector**, Ernest Hemmingway's **The Old Man and the Sea**, or George Orwell's **Animal Farm**. Students are not only working with higher-level texts, but they are also asked to formulate the types of written responses with textual support common to state-based exams and college courses. In addition, they are also asked to participate in discussions common to both college and a post-secondary career. All of the literature deals with complex and diverse themes that encourage students to begin to think about the world outside themselves and how they fit into the larger global community.

Project-Based Applications

20 minutes

Part of what makes CPRW unique is the variety of student projects. Some of the suggested projects provide authentic learning applications for students: delivering a two-minute persuasive speech, participating in a formal debate, completing the common college application, writing a research paper with emphasis on the early stages of gathering resources, and reading an upper-level novel and finding current-events articles that demonstrate the relevancy of the themes of the novel to today's world. In addition, teachers are given the option of having students develop a performance portfolio which they can use as a culminating project; here students would argue for the gains they have made in particular skill areas as a result of their course work.



TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOLS OFFERS THREE LEVELS LITERACY SUPPORT

In addition to the 11th grade course, *College Prep Reading & Writing*, consider how the 10th grade course, *Reading & Writing in Your Career*, and the 9th grade course, *Strategic Reading*, might help students in your school to graduate reading on grade level.

READING & WRITING IN YOUR CAREER: This 10th grade first-semester acceleration course continues the gains students made during 9th grade and boosts their abilities further in preparation for the 10th grade required English course second semester. The course focuses on themes of career exploration and setting life goals.

STRATEGIC READING: An intensive acceleration program designed for incoming 9th grade high school students who may be reading two or more years below grade level. The course works to help develop the basic skills and strategies necessary for challenged readers to negotiate upper-level texts while building their reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOLS OFFERS A WIDE
ARRAY OF COURSES:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Strategic Reading (9th Grade)
Reading & Writing in Your Career (10th Grade)
College Prep Reading & Writing (11th Grade)
Literacy Lab

MATHEMATICS

Transition to Advanced Mathematics (9th Grade)
Geometry Foundations (10th Grade)
Algebra II Foundations (11th Grade)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Freshman Seminar (9th Grade)

If you would like a course prospectus or more information on any of our courses, please contact us, and we'll be happy to forward you additional information. You're also invited to visit our website at www.csos.jhu.edu for complete information on Talent Development programs and curriculum.



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