

# CONTENT READING INSTRUCTION *Second Edition*

*A Communication  
Approach*



MARK W. CONLEY

# Content Reading Instruction

---

## A Communication Approach Second Edition

Mark W. Conley  
Michigan State University

**McGraw-Hill, Inc.**

New York	St. Louis	San Francisco	Auckland	Bogotá	Caracas
Lisbon	London	Madrid	Mexico City	Milan	Montreal
New Delhi	San Juan	Singapore	Sydney	Tokyo	Toronto

This book was developed by Lane Akers, Inc.

### **Content Reading Instruction**

A Communication Approach

Copyright © 1995, 1992 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 9 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-012496-5

This book was set in Caledonia by Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Inc.

The editor was Lane Akers;

the production supervisor was Friederich W. Schulte.

Project supervision was done by Hockett Editorial Service.

R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

*Cover Photo:* Jeff Dunn/Picture Cube

*Photo Credits:* Section I opener, Ulrike Welsch; Chapter 1 opener, Joel Gordon; Section II opener, Mark Antman/The Image Works; Chapter 2 opener, Laima Druskis/Photo Researchers; Chapter 3 opener, David Pratt/Positive Images; Chapter 4 opener, Elizabeth Crews/The Image Works; Chapter 5 opener, Joel Gordon; Section III opener, Susan Lapides/Design Conceptions; Chapter 6 opener, Sven Martson/Comstock; Chapter 7 opener, Rick Friedman/The Picture Cube; Chapter 8 opener, Joel Gordon; Chapter 9 opener, Elizabeth Crews; Section IV opener, Spencer Grant/The Picture Cube; Chapter 10 opener, Dan Chidester/The Image Works; Chapter 11 opener, Joel Gordon; Section V opener, Alan Carey/The Image Works; Chapter 12 opener, Tony Velez/The Image Works; Chapter 13 opener, Joel Gordon.

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Conley, Mark William.

Content reading instruction: a communication approach / Mark W.

Conley. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN 0-07-012496-5

1. Content area reading. I. Title.

LB1050.455.C65 1995

428.4'071'2—dc20

94-24171

---

# About the Author

**Mark W. Conley** is associate professor of teacher education at Michigan State University. He was an English and reading teacher at the middle school and high school levels prior to earning a Ph.D. in secondary reading from Syracuse University. Dr. Conley taught courses in content area reading and secondary reading at the University of Alaska-Anchorage and Eastern Michigan University before going to Michigan State, where he teaches content area reading to beginning and practicing teachers. He continues to teach in public schools, most recently at Holt Junior High, where he participated as a coteacher in the development of multidisciplinary teams. He coedited and cowrote *Research Within Reach: Secondary School Reading*, published by the International Reading Association. He was named Researcher of the Year in 1990 by the Michigan Reading Association, and in 1991 he received the Elva Knight research award from the International Reading Association.

---

# Preface

*Content Reading Instruction: A Communication Approach* is designed for courses in teacher education variously labeled Content Area Reading or Secondary Reading. Its purpose is to help you teach your students to read and communicate more effectively in whatever subject area you happen to be teaching. To accomplish this goal, I have produced a text with the following characteristics.

## CONTENT COVERAGE

Because students from so-called nonprint subjects such as art, music, physical education, and industrial arts face many of the same problems of comprehension, motivation, and limited knowledge as students from the print-dominated subjects, this text covers all the content areas. By showing how reading strategies can be integrated with other language modes (listening, speaking, writing, and observing), it is possible to improve comprehension in any subject area. This attention to both print and nonprint subjects is what most distinguishes this text and has led me to title it a *communication* approach.

## INSTRUCTIONAL EMPHASIS

The word “instruction” appears in the title to highlight the emphasis on what teachers think and do to help students become more literate. Each of the instruction-oriented chapters (5–11), which are the heart of the book, has a common format: setting goals, planning for instruction, and teaching a lesson. They not only describe specific teaching strategies, but also develop students’ sense of how, when, and where to adapt these strategies to various contexts and subject areas.

## PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

An abundance of subject-specific examples, including sample dialogues, have been scattered throughout the book. In addition, cases illustrating instructional decision-making are provided toward the end of each of the teaching chapters (6–11 and 13). All of these examples, dialogues, and cases have been gathered or created in collaboration with real content area teachers. Finally, chapter-opening objectives, rationales, and concept maps are provided so that readers can quickly sense both the direction and justification for studying the information presented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since publication of the first edition, I have been fortunate to teach with a number of dedicated public school teachers, including Pam Nagy and Patti Wagner at Holmes Middle School in Flint and the *Dream Team*: Sherry Henderson, Bob Jarema, Lorna Lieske, and Tamara Redburn of Holt Junior High. The results of my collaboration with them appear in examples throughout the second edition, but most particularly in Chapter 13 on Unit Planning.

Thanks again to Lane Akers, a wise editor who really knows how to nurture writers and good writing. Thanks to all of my students, both university and public school, who teach me so much and often touch my heart. Thanks again to Sigrid and the kids, Brendon, Kelly, and Erin.

*Mark W. Conley*



Ulrike Welsch



---

# Contents

<i>Preface</i> .....	xv	The Organization of Texts .....	23
<b>SECTION I</b>		Problems in Teaching from Texts .....	30
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1	Assessing Texts .....	31
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>		Readability Formulas .....	32
<b>CONTENT READING AND</b>		A Textbook Checklist .....	36
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> .....	3	CLOZE Procedure .....	39
Rationale .....	3	Trial-by-Teaching .....	41
The Goals of Content Reading .....	5	Summary .....	42
Understanding Essential Content .....	5	Special Projects .....	42
Learning How to Read-to-Learn .....	6	Suggested Reading .....	43
Developing Motivation for Lifelong		References .....	44
Reading .....	8	<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
A Communication Approach .....	8	<b>UNDERSTANDING AND</b>	
Communicating with Self and Others .....	9	<b>ASSESSING THE READING</b>	
Integrating the Language Arts .....	11	<b>PROCESS</b> .....	49
What Is a Communication Approach to		Rationale .....	49
Content Reading Instruction? .....	13	The Reading Process: An Interactive	
Summary .....	14	View .....	50
Special Projects .....	14	The Reader .....	51
Suggested Reading .....	15	The Reader and the Text .....	55
References .....	16	The Reader and the Context .....	58
<b>SECTION II</b>		Individual Differences .....	59
<b>ASSESSING TEXTBOOKS, THE</b>		Good versus Poor Readers .....	60
<b>READING PROCESS, AND</b>		Development and Reading .....	60
<b>STUDENT MOTIVATION</b> .....	19	Special Populations .....	62
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>		Assessing the Reading Process .....	66
<b>USING AND ASSESSING</b>		Standardized Tests .....	67
<b>TEXTBOOKS</b> .....	21	The Content Area Reading Inventory .....	68
Rationale .....	21	Oral Language Observations .....	73
How Texts Work in Schools .....	22	Student Interviews .....	75
The Purposes of Texts .....	23	Writing Samples .....	76
		Summary .....	77
		Special Projects .....	77
		Suggested Reading .....	78



References .....	79	Identifying a Classroom Steering Group .....	117
Test References .....	81	Organizing for Instruction .....	120
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>		Identifying Objectives .....	120
<b>ASSESSING STUDENTS'</b>		Selecting Resources .....	124
<b>MOTIVATION</b> .....	83	Making Planning and Teaching Decisions .....	125
Rationale .....	83	Summary .....	127
Reading Attitudes and Interests .....	84	Special Projects .....	127
Subject-Matter Motivation .....	86	Suggested Reading .....	128
Self-Concept .....	86	References .....	129
Value .....	87		
Metacognitive Motivation .....	87	<b>SECTION III</b>	
Individual Differences .....	88	<b>READING-TO-LEARN: PLANNING AND TEACHING LESSONS</b> .....	133
Highly versus Poorly Motivated Readers .....	89		
Development and Motivation .....	89	<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
Special Populations .....	91	<b>VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION</b> .....	135
Assessing Motivation .....	93	Rationale .....	135
Reading Attitude Scale .....	93	Setting Goals .....	137
Interest Inventories .....	93	Content Goals .....	137
Subject-Matter Motivation Scale .....	98	Process Goals .....	140
Self-Concept Observations .....	98	Motivation Goals .....	141
Enhancing Student Motivation .....	99	Planning for Instruction .....	143
Summary .....	102	Use of Prior Knowledge: Structured Overviews and Semantic Maps .....	143
Special Projects .....	102	Context Analysis .....	147
Suggested Reading .....	103	Classification .....	150
References .....	104	Structural Analysis .....	151
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>		Use of Outside Resources .....	154
<b>INSTRUCTION</b> .....	107	Teaching a Lesson .....	157
Rationale .....	107	Goals and Assumptions .....	157
What Is Good Instruction? .....	108	Building Background and Motivation ...	158
An Instructional Framework .....	109	Developing Content and Process .....	159
Building Background and Motivation ...	109	Encouraging Independence .....	161
Developing Content and Process .....	113	Summary .....	162
Encouraging Independence .....	115	Special Projects .....	162
Accommodating Individual Differences ...	116	Suggested Reading .....	163
Developing a Class Profile .....	117	References .....	164

<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	
<b>COMPREHENSION</b>	
<b>INSTRUCTION</b> .....	167
Rationale .....	167
Setting Goals .....	170
Content Goals .....	170
Process Goals .....	171
Motivation Goals .....	173
Planning for Instruction .....	173
Pre-Reading .....	174
Guided Reading .....	178
Text Patterns .....	187
K-W-L .....	193
Teaching a Lesson .....	195
Goals and Assumptions .....	195
Building Background and Motivation ...	197
Developing Content and Process .....	199
Encouraging Independence .....	201
Summary .....	202
Special Projects .....	203
Suggested Reading .....	204
References .....	205
 <b>CHAPTER 8</b>	
<b>REASONING AND PROBLEM-</b>	
<b>SOLVING</b> .....	207
Rationale .....	207
Setting Goals .....	209
Content Goals .....	209
Process Goals .....	210
Motivation Goals .....	215
Planning for Instruction .....	216
Reasoning Guides .....	216
Reciprocal Teaching .....	223
Problem-Solving Lessons .....	227
Simulations .....	230
Teaching a Lesson .....	234
Goals and Assumptions .....	235
Building Background and Motivation ...	236
Developing Content and Process .....	238
Encouraging Independence .....	239
Summary .....	240
Special Projects .....	241
Suggested Reading .....	242
References .....	243
 <b>CHAPTER 9</b>	
<b>STUDYING</b> .....	245
Rationale .....	245
Setting Goals .....	248
Content Goals .....	248
Process Goals .....	249
Motivation Goals .....	250
Planning for Instruction .....	251
Note-Taking .....	251
Summarizing .....	253
Underlining .....	255
SQ3R .....	256
Locational Skills .....	258
Reading Rate .....	259
Time Management .....	260
Teaching a Lesson .....	263
Goals and Assumptions .....	263
Building Background and Motivation ...	263
Developing Content and Process .....	264
Encouraging Independence .....	265
Summary .....	266
Special Projects .....	266
Suggested Reading .....	267
References .....	268
 <b>SECTION IV</b>	
<b>READING-TO-COMMUNICATE:</b>	
<b>INTEGRATING WRITING AND</b>	
<b>DISCUSSION</b> .....	271
 <b>CHAPTER 10</b>	
<b>WRITING</b> .....	273

Rationale .....	273
Setting Goals .....	275
Content Goals .....	276
Process Goals .....	277
Motivation Goals .....	279
Planning for Instruction .....	280
Pre-Writing .....	281
Drafting .....	285
Revision .....	288
Editing .....	291
Publication .....	293
Evaluating Writing .....	294
Teaching a Lesson .....	296
Goals and Assumptions .....	296
Building Background and Motivation ...	297
Developing Content and Process .....	298
Encouraging Independence .....	298
Summary .....	299
Special Projects .....	299
Suggested Reading .....	300
References .....	301

## CHAPTER 11

### DISCUSSION .....

305

Rationale .....	305
Setting Goals .....	308
Content Goals .....	308
Process Goals .....	309
Motivation Goals .....	310
Planning for Instruction .....	311
Analyzing the Classroom Climate .....	312
Building Cooperation .....	312
Planning Whole-Class Discussion .....	316
Planning Small-Group Discussion .....	323
Special Considerations .....	332
Teaching a Lesson .....	333
Goals and Assumptions .....	333
Building Background and Motivation ...	333

Developing Content and Process .....	334
Encouraging Independence .....	335
Summary .....	336
Special Projects .....	336
Suggested Reading .....	337
References .....	338

## SECTION V

### EVALUATION AND SYNTHESIS .....

341

## CHAPTER 12

### ONGOING ASSESSMENT .....

343

Rationale .....	343
Planning for Assessment .....	345
Assessing Content Learning .....	345
Assessing Process Learning .....	346
Assessing Motivation to Learn .....	347
Words of Caution .....	349

Making Assessment Decisions: The Case of Portfolio Assessments .....	350
The Content of Portfolios .....	351
Using Portfolios for Assessment .....	352

Summary .....	354
Special Projects .....	354
Suggested Reading .....	355
References .....	355

## CHAPTER 13

### UNIT PLANNING .....

359

Rationale .....	359
Designing a Unit .....	361
Goals and Assumptions .....	361
Assessing the Content .....	362
Assessing Students .....	364
Making Instructional Decisions .....	365

Evaluating Students' Learning .....	372
Reflection .....	374
Designing a Multidisciplinary Unit .....	376
Goals and Assumptions .....	376
Assessing the Content .....	377
Assessing Students .....	378
Making Instructional Decisions .....	379
Evaluating Students' Learning .....	382
Reflection .....	383
Summary .....	385
Special Projects .....	385
Suggested Reading .....	386
References .....	386

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES OF</b>	
<b>BOOKS OF INTEREST IN</b>	
<b>VARIOUS CONTENT AREAS .....</b>	<b>387</b>

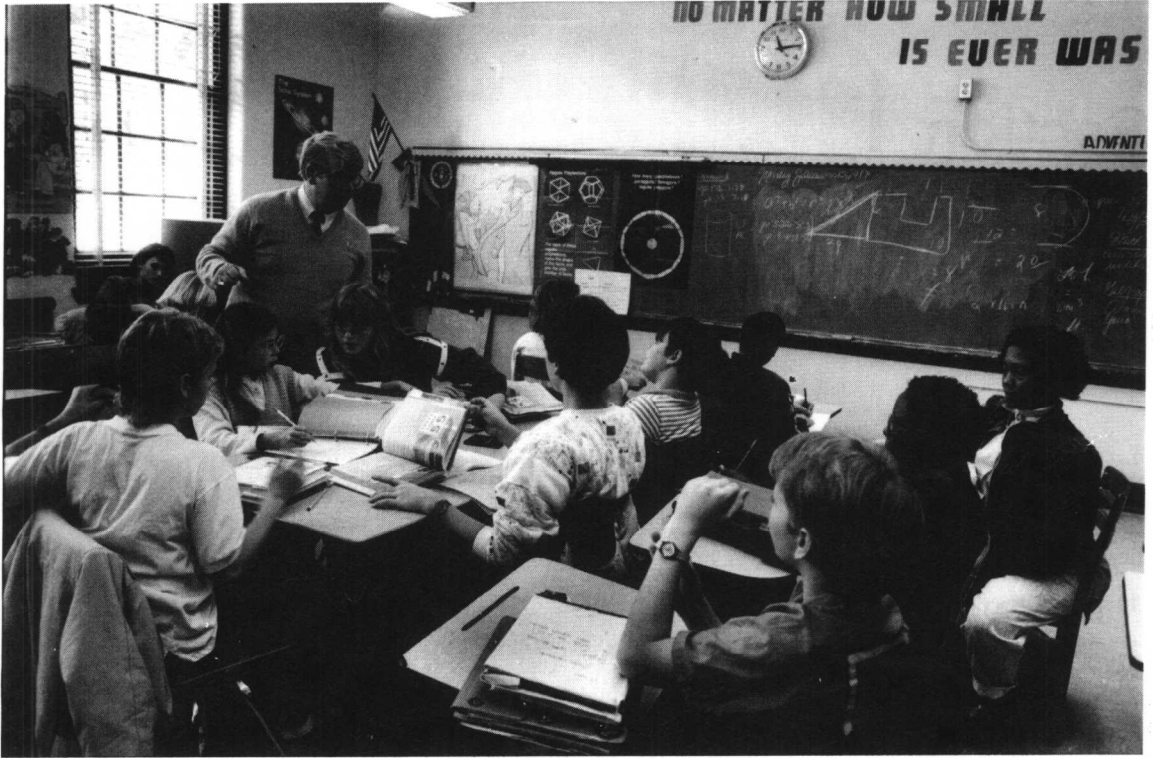
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	
<b>MAGAZINES OF INTEREST</b>	
<b>TO READERS IN VARIOUS</b>	
<b>CONTENT AREAS .....</b>	<b>389</b>
<i>Indexes .....</i>	<i>391</i>

# Section I

## Introduction

Section I contains a single chapter introducing you to the goals for a communication approach to content reading instruction. At the end of this section, you should be able to understand the purposes and themes that appear throughout the book and be able to answer questions such as:

1. What is content reading?
2. What is a communication approach to content reading?
3. What kinds of instruction make up a communication approach to content reading?



Joel Gordon

“No longer will it be sufficient to teach some facts of geography, a little algebra, or the mechanics of language. The school subjects will become means for learnings that transcend them.”

*From J. Goodlad (1984). A place called school (p. 244). New York: McGraw-Hill.*

---

# Content Reading and Communication

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the goals for instruction for helping students learn effectively from their reading.
2. Explain what it means to take a communication approach to content reading instruction.

## RATIONALE

For many years, news about students and reading has not been good. Students leave school without knowing how to perform simple reading tasks: many cannot scan a phone book to find emergency numbers or read an employment application. Equally disturbing are recent declines among all students in the ability to understand whole passages of text (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988; National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 1986). Solutions to the crisis in literacy are no longer restricted to teaching basic reading skills and using remedial readers. All students require instruction in reading. Without the ability to use reading to engage in a variety of ways of thinking, our students will be incapable of communicating and surviving in our print-based society.

Too often, responsibility for solving these problems is placed solely on elementary and remedial reading programs. *Elementary reading programs* (programs designed to teach beginning readers) are sometimes expected to teach students everything they should ever need to know about reading by the time they enter the middle school level. This expectation is unrealistic because the reading and communication needs of students change dramatically as they progress through school and eventually into the outside world. The reading curriculum for most elementary students focuses mostly on *learning-to-read strategies* (such as pronouncing words or comprehending paragraphs and stories). Learning-to-read strategies offer students a broad foundation for learning, but not the specific kinds of strategies that are necessary for reading in subjects like mathematics, science, English, social studies, vocational education, or music. For example, some students experience increasing difficulty with reading in the upper grades as the reading demands become more complex and specialized.

Students who are unsuccessful with reading are often placed in *remedial reading programs* (programs designed to help problem readers improve). Remedial instruction

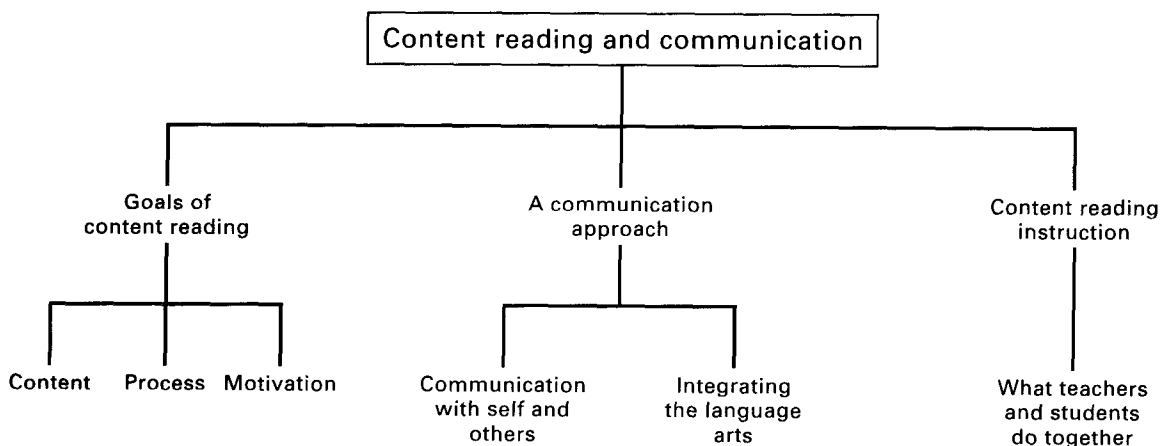


---

## CHAPTER ORGANIZER

An organizer is a visual way of thinking about a set of concepts and ideas. It is a device—a study technique—designed to help people remember. A chapter organizer is provided for each of the chapters in this book. Each chapter organizer represents one of many ways of organizing important concepts.

You can use the organizer as it is presented or you can create your own. If you decide to use the organizer, either write notes directly on the organizer or make a copy of it. As you read, watch for terms on the organizer. Jot down a few words or phrases that will help you understand, explain, and remember. To create your own organizer, make a list of important words and phrases (headings and italicized words are important). Then organize the words and phrases in ways that make sense. When studying, review not only the meanings but also the relationships among the words and phrases.



---

typically focuses on the learning-to-read strategies students have not yet acquired (Allington & Johnston, 1989). To expect remedial programs to give students all they need to know about reading is also unrealistic. While some students in remedial reading programs could profit from revisiting what they did not learn, they still must learn to adapt to new and more challenging subject-matter concepts.

*Content reading* is a field in education devoted to helping students acquire specific strategies for reading in various subject areas, termed *reading-to-learn strategies*. Reading-to-learn strategies (involved in such activities as mathematical problem-solving or using a manual to set up a machine) provide ways for thinking and communicating in different subjects (Singer & Donlan, 1980). These strategies help students continuously increase their knowledge, update their skills, and improve communication with the world around them.

Teachers at all levels—elementary, middle, and high school—have a stake in focusing on content reading. Reading plays a significant, supportive role in developing deep, subject-matter understanding. For example, students concentrating on a debate in an English class need assistance in figuring out what information is important from a variety of written sources. Students exploring ecosystems in science require help in separating their misconceptions from scientific theory as they read, observe, and reflect. Students in a choral music class often need help in integrating musical scores and symbols with the finer points of musical performance. In each of these situations, opportunities abound for showing students how to use reading to gain information or to communicate with others about what they know.

It is not necessarily automatic or easy to integrate subject-matter teaching with opportunities for teaching students about reading-to-learn. Inevitably, teachers are faced with difficult decisions about textbooks, students, and instruction. This book has been written to assist teachers with many of these decisions and to support teachers across the curriculum as they help students engage in more effective content reading and communication.

## THE GOALS OF CONTENT READING

Content reading has three important goals for students: (1) understanding essential content, (2) learning how to read-to-learn, and (3) developing motivation for lifelong reading. Each goal is described below.

### *Understanding Essential Content*

Content reading gets part of its name from the first priority of subject-matter teachers: to teach content. Simply defined, *content* is that which teachers want students to understand. Every subject (or *content area*) has its own content or defining sets of facts, concepts, and principles. For example, as students go through the school day, they gain familiarity with the past (social studies, history), learn how to use complex symbols to solve problems (mathematics), and discover new ways to express themselves (writing, music, and art). Content is neither static nor solid. The content of a subject grows and/or changes continuously through the discourse or conversations of larger communities in and outside of school.

The ongoing challenge to schools is to ensure that students are well-prepared to actively join a continuously changing world. To do this, teachers need to help students understand not only the traditional content of a subject but also ways in which the content evolves. This is a kind of “deep” content understanding that prepares students to take part in the real-world conversations that contribute to serious thinking in various subjects.

Students are not always afforded classroom experiences that result in a sufficient depth of content knowledge. In an eighth-grade science class, I once observed two students as they were busily completing a laboratory exercise that consisted of pouring acids on different types of metals. Questions in a lab book focused on observations