Improving Reading in CTE

Students in Career and Technical Education must use literacy skills effectively to be college and career ready. Hi, my name is Dr. Rick Peterson, and I’m Project Director for the Career and Technical Special Populations Training and Resource Education Center at Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Welcome to this webcast on promoting disciplinary reading strategies within CTE curriculum.

Students tend to resist reading in CTE classrooms that are traditionally more hands-on in nature. It is therefore hypothesized that purposeful implementation of reading strategies allows students to be more interactive and gain a deeper understanding of the highly technical language in CTE textbooks. A research project begun in 2010 sought to validate this hypothesis by developing and measuring interventions that targeted document and prose literacy. Document literacy measures how well one finds and uses information in forms, schedules, charts, graphs, and other tables of information. Prose literacy measures how well one understands and uses information found in newspapers, magazines, novels, brochures, manuals, or flyers.

Using an experimental design, the researchers studied two models of purposefully implemented reading strategies versus a control group. The first model, titled “ALS/Ash,” focused on inquiry learning and oral reading (Ash, 2004). The second model, “Motivating, Acquisition and Extension” or MAX, focused on cooperative learning and skills acquisition (Forget, 2004). At the conclusion of initial data analysis, students participating in both models scored statistically higher on vocabulary and reading comprehension than the control group.

Using a qualitative interview method, researchers collected further data from teachers and students in the experimental groups. Teachers noted that the strategies got students further engaged and more interactive. Teachers also observed an increase in grades, higher level thinking skills, and better recall as the class progressed. Teachers who viewed the strategies as promoting competition thought it was a positive aspect of the implementation. The strategies that incorporated social learning were viewed favorably by both the teachers and students. Students also stated that they found the reading strategies motivating. Pre-reading strategies helped the students follow the text better and build their knowledge, thereby learning more information. Strategies that focused on organization allowed students to take better notes and promoted study skills. Finally, students noted an improved relationship with their teachers and felt better understood by their teachers, who now seemed to be focusing their education on their career goals.

Despite the additional preparation work involved (2-4 hours per week), teachers participating in the study felt that they were “teaching” less and that learning became more student-centered. Students were more engaged when using the strategies, and teachers found that they spent less time reviewing the material when they used the strategies. Students enjoyed the strategies because they preferred a more interactive learning environment and working together. Because of this preferred learning environment, teachers found there was little resistance to implementing the strategies. To find out more about this study, the models and the reading strategies implemented, please visit our website at http://ctsp.tamu.edu/resources.php.