

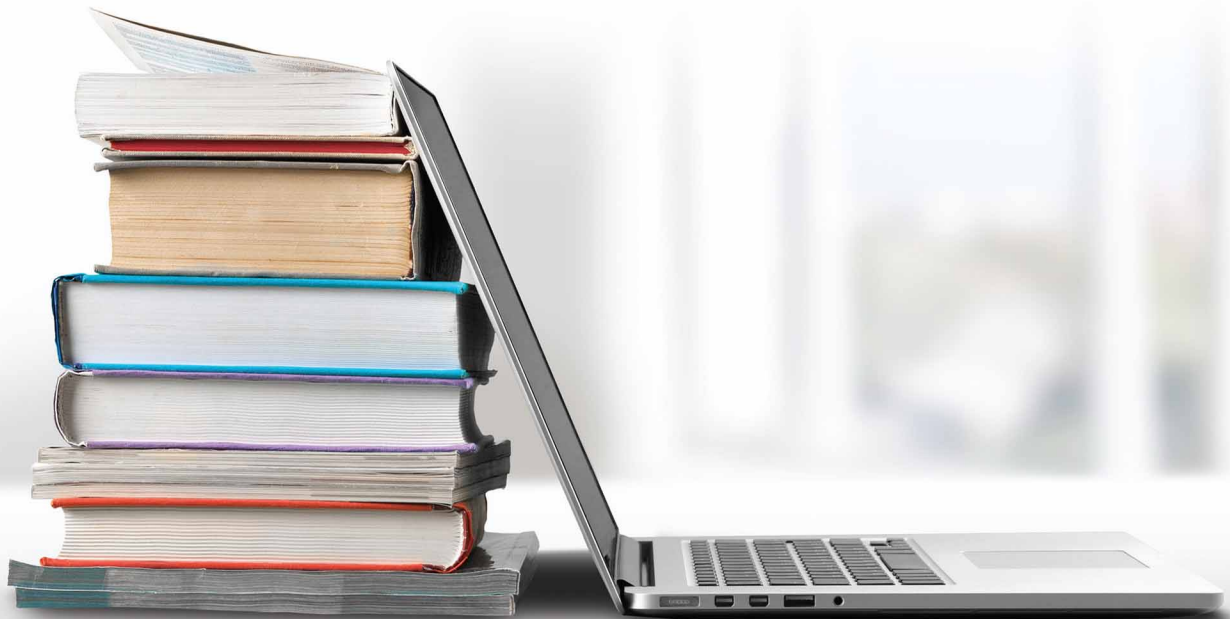
Cynthia Greenleaf, Ruth Schoenbach, Linda Friedrich,  
Lynn Murphy, AND Nika Hogan

THIRD EDITION

# READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

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HOW READING APPRENTICESHIP  
IMPROVES DISCIPLINARY LEARNING  
IN SECONDARY AND COLLEGE CLASSROOMS





# Reading for Understanding

*To Christine Cziko, who made enduring contributions to this book, to the design of the Reading Apprenticeship Academic Literacy course, and to our work with teachers. Christine's classroom experience, insight, brilliance, and humor continue to light the way for others to follow.*

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How Reading Apprenticeship Improves  
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and College Classrooms

Cynthia Greenleaf  
Ruth Schoenbach  
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### **Praise for *Reading for Understanding***

*“Reading for Understanding* and the Reading Apprenticeship framework are a revelation for secondary educators. Through this framework, educators are engaged in the work of learning alongside their students and truly helping their students connect with their own metacognitive processes in a way that will benefit them far beyond their K-12 education. In this latest edition, the authors dive deeper into the concept of disciplinary literacy and inquiry which helps to build the power and agency of educators, in turn building the power and agency of students.”

—**Lauren Spenceley**, M.Ed., Secondary English Language Arts Specialist,  
Arizona Department of Education

“I highly recommend this book for new and veteran teachers alike. Teacher credential programs stress the importance of teaching reading skills in all content areas but do not offer any specific ways. *Reading for Understanding* is chock full of a myriad of easy to implement, step by step ideas to teach reading skills to all levels of readers for all content areas.”

—**June Smith**, Middle School Science teacher,  
New Haven Unified School District

*“Reading for Understanding* (and the Reading Apprenticeship framework) effectively complements disciplinary inquiry that centers the social aspects of learning and students’ thinking, deepening students’ reading and disciplinary learning.”

—**Chauncey Monte-Sano**, Professor, University of Michigan School of Education

“An absolute must-read for educators that desire all their students to become independent readers in their disciplines. This research-based book maps out simple but powerful teaching approaches to ensure every learner engages in the reading process and evolves to independence.”

—**Alana Madgwick**, Director of Educatalysts: Education for Change, New Zealand

“Timely, practical, and relevant! This edition is replete with classroom routines from all content area classrooms and levels. A pragmatic guide, this edition dives deeper to assist teachers, professors, and administrators as they uncover their habits as expert readers and learners so they can apprentice students to become more independent thinkers and learners. In this post COVID teaching and learning environment, the Reading Apprenticeship Framework is even more necessary as it meets the personal, social, and emotional needs of all learners.”

—**Amy Keith-Wardlow**, Fordson High School, Assistant Principal,  
former K-12 Curriculum Coordinator

“Bridging the gaps between new insights into disciplinary literacy, implementations of socioemotional learning into school curriculums, and the infusion of technology into texts and literacy, the third edition of *Reading for Understanding* brings new relevance and light to the Reading Apprenticeship framework, unlocking an even greater power for students and teachers.”

—**Ms. Kimberly Fargier**, M.Ed., 6-12th grade Literacy Specialist

“Building on two successful previous editions, years of an engaged practitioner community, and contemporary research on literacy, the third edition of *Reading for Understanding* is a must-read for teachers across the disciplines and those who prepare them. It retains the features we love about the previous editions—the framework, the concrete ideas for teaching, the windows into other teachers’ classrooms—and updates them with an even stronger emphasis on equity and attention to the online classroom.”

—**Nelson Graff**, Professor and Director of Communication Across the Disciplines,  
California State University Monterey Bay



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# Foreword

**READERS SEEKING** a balanced appraisal of this book—one that offers kudos for what’s worthy and a wish list that details what falls short of the mark—can skip this Foreword. I’m an unapologetic advocate for Reading Apprenticeship and have been for almost 30 years. Thus, I will do nothing but heap lavish praise on this remarkable accomplishment and the people (some of whom are the authors) who brought it to life. Let me tell you what’s in store as you turn the pages that will open the door to a remarkable journey.

So, what’s to like about this book? A lot!

**First, it was written by a cast of thousands!** There are five authors, and Cyndy, Ruth, Linda, Lynn, and Nika have done a masterful job of weaving together the diverse experiences—and stories—of all the players in the Reading Apprenticeship network: *scores* of professional developers, *hundreds* of district and local school leaders, *thousands* of teachers in history, science, literature, and math classrooms, and most important, the *tens, even hundreds, of thousands* of students whose academic lives have been enriched and enhanced by being a part of Reading Apprenticeship.

The authors freely and joyously admit that they rely on all the other players. They orchestrate the words and stories of the participants to tell the full tale of Reading Apprenticeship. It all starts with the big ideas from reading theory and research—that’s the cornerstone of the book. As the book unfolds, we learn, up close and personal, how those big ideas emerge in daily lives in Reading Apprenticeship: professional development workshops, classroom routines for engaging students in close reading and text inquiry, and the range of responses students offer. It’s hard to find a stretch of more than a couple of pages in which you don’t encounter the voices of this multilayered cast of authors. It’s commonplace in today’s literacy world to talk about multimodal texts, but this is one of the few I would call a truly multivocal text.

**Second, the book champions synergies among key components of reading development.** Reading Apprenticeship is all about helping teachers help students

gain control over the important dimensions of classroom life. The four key dimensions in Reading Apprenticeship are social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge-building. Those dimensions are enacted in a context of deep and wide reading of challenging texts, and they are linked together by what the authors call a metacognitive conversation—a phenomenon in which students talk to themselves and one another about the thinking they do as they read, write, think, and talk. It's that metacognitive conversation that allows students to gain mastery over the process of making meaning as they navigate texts.

What makes the Reading Apprenticeship perspective synergistic is that the authors view these dimensions (and the metacognitive conversation that holds them together) not as independent, isolated activities, but as inter-related and interactive, constantly shaping one another. Thus, in the personal dimension description, we find students collaborating (social) on a task in which they are thinking about (the metacognitive) how they can use what they know to learn what's new (knowledge-building). In every chapter in the book, no matter the focal dimension, the other dimensions find a voice. My metaphor for fathoming reading development is the diamond: we can examine each facet separately, and when we move from one to another, we might notice different sheens or markings. The diamond hasn't changed, only our view of it. So it is with Reading Apprenticeship: each dimension relies on and supports the others. In the end, it's these synergies that enable students to imagine themselves as agentive readers who can link together ideas and actions to bring text under the umbrella of their personal worlds.

**Third, research, in all its faces, permeates the book.** Research in Reading Apprenticeship is regarded as a set of ethical practices that a community undertakes to improve the lives of everyone. Teachers are consulted at every turn as they participate in shaping the practices and the questions that drive the search for improvement. Students, too, have voice in shaping the instructional ecologies of their classrooms. How and where does research surface in the book and the Reading Apprenticeship framework?

- The framework is well grounded in theory and research about the nature of reading and learning. The work derives from a strong sociocultural theoretical base and the cognitive, social, and critical research that defines best practice for acquiring knowledge and inquiry skills in the disciplines.
- The Reading Apprenticeship community is committed to *evaluating the efficacy of its approach* using all the tools available to educational researchers. It deftly employs mixed methods involving:
  - Early *design-based* forays with classroom teacher partners to ensure relevant practices and materials.

- Close *ethnographic analysis* to determine what is really going on in classrooms as practices are carried out.
  - *Discourse analysis* to examine how students take up and make sense of practices.
  - *Psychometric study* of relevant assessments to ensure reliability, validity, and relevance.
  - *Quantitative analyses* of outcomes and how those outcomes vary by characteristics of individual learners (who is doing the learning) and contexts (what, where, and when are they learning).
- The Reading Apprenticeship framework encourages *inquiry as an enduring value* at every level of participation in the network. District and school leaders, professional development providers, teachers, and students are all involved in asking and answering tough questions about the “work” they do within the learning community. Even the reading of a text is regarded as a research-based inquiry—one in which the claims that are made about what a text means are viewed as baseless without accompanying evidence and warrants for how the evidence links to the claims.

**Fourth, the authors take a long and realistic, but nonetheless ambitious, view of reading development.** Teachers who embrace Reading Apprenticeship refuse to do the reading for the students. Instead, they invite them to be a part of the inquiry process, help them understand that reading can be confusing for all of us, including expert adult readers, and most importantly, help them discover, through metacognitive conversations (with themselves and their friends), that they can cope with challenging, even confusing texts. They can even exploit their own confusions (“confusion can be our friend”) to guide inquiries that allow them to construct meanings for the texts of schooling and everyday life. Reading Apprenticeship practices unfold in different disciplines and in classrooms serving widely varying learners to support disciplinary and rigorous inquiry-driven literacy for all students—with an ambitious and relentless focus on equity.

**Coda.** An important piece of evidence documenting the authors’ long view is that this is the *third* edition of *Reading for Understanding*. They know what we all must learn—that you don’t always get everything right on the first try. They also know that even if you did get it right the first time, contexts change enough over time that even an enduring practice may not fit well into a new and different setting.

At the outset, I admitted that I am something of a Reading Apprenticeship groupie. It’s true! Moreover, I was also asked to write a Foreword for both the

first and second editions. I was equally impressed with the first two volumes, finding much to like about the Reading Apprenticeship of the 1990s and the 2000s. Looking at what I said about Reading Apprenticeship across the three editions, I marvel at both what has endured and what has changed. Most enduring is the framework itself, with the dimensions of the social, the personal, the cognitive, and the knowledge-building still intact. Also enduring is the synergy among the components. The most salient change, from one edition to another, has been the contextual surround in which Reading Apprenticeship gets enacted. Reading development now takes place in an increasingly digital and demanding information world. The research base for reading and learning changed in each decade, and the policy contexts changed even more. And in the past decade, the authors have learned so much about how Reading Apprenticeship works at the post-secondary level. These shifts have required the authors of the various editions to frame Reading Apprenticeship differently across the decades. And that's been refreshing to see over 30 years. This new edition embraces the most recent research and addresses the varied online and in-person contexts in which students engage in reading and learning. One thing that seems particularly fresh about this latest edition is the inclusion of an ever-increasing and diverse chorus of voices we hear as the authors take us on the journey of the teachers and students who breathe life into Reading Apprenticeship every day. This feature is not new, but seems more evident, more transparent, in the new edition.

A final enduring feature: in the Foreword to the first edition, the last reason I offered for reading the book, all the good information aside, was that it was "a good read." I am pleased to say that it still is! Learn and enjoy!

P David Pearson  
Berkeley, CA

# Preface

When you read, there should be a little voice in your head like a storyteller is saying it. And if there's not, then you're just looking at the words.

—LaKeisha, 9th-grade student

**LAKEISHA'S** classmates, gathered in a back room of the school library, compete to add their assessments of this new approach to reading that LaKeisha is describing. They are students of the first teachers ever to use Reading Apprenticeship, and they boisterously agree that they are reading in new ways.

Jason describes how his reading of the history textbook has changed:

I understand the book more now. Because I read differently. Like when you're reading, if it doesn't make sense, you can try to restate it in your own words, or you can make questions so you can understand it better. Now I read in between the lines. I basically get into the heart of it—like reading deeper into what it is saying.

Students also agree that they are reading more. Michael couches his comments as a mock complaint about his Reading Apprenticeship teacher:

Man, she's tryin' to be sneaky! She wants you to pick a book that you are interested in so you will read it more. She makes you find a book that you *like* so that you *have* to read it. Because you like it.

We began this work with students' voices at the center, inviting them to tell us about their reading. When they began to realize that reading should make sense, that they were *entitled* to understand what they read, and that there were many things they could do—individually and in the company of others—to deepen their comprehension and begin to build and use knowledge, they made rapid—and in many ways life-changing—progress.

In the first edition of this book, we described piloting the Reading Apprenticeship framework as it was embodied in the new Academic Literacy course required of LaKeisha, Jason, Michael, and their fellow 9th-grade students at San Francisco's Thurgood Marshall Academic High School. By the end

of the 1996–1997 year, reading scores for those 200 students had jumped more than two grade levels on a nationally normed reading test. Student gains were consistent across ethnic groups and across the classrooms of the four teachers who taught the course. During the next school year, students held on to what they had learned: their reading achievement continued to grow at an accelerated rate, as measured by a standardized reading test.

Over the 25-plus years since it was piloted with LaKeisha and her peers, Reading Apprenticeship has benefited the students of over 150,000 U.S. middle school, high school, and college educators who have read *Reading for Understanding*, participated in Reading Apprenticeship professional development, used Reading Apprenticeship approaches in their courses, and brought Reading Apprenticeship approaches to their colleagues. During this same period, educators in Canada, Europe, New Zealand, Asia, and Africa have pored over and translated Reading Apprenticeship methods and messages into their settings and languages.

Reading Apprenticeship has also been the focus of much research (see Chapter One) and the recipient of multiple large-scale dissemination grants supported by the U.S. Department of Education and many educationally oriented philanthropic foundations. Several randomized controlled studies have found statistically significant benefits for students in Reading Apprenticeship classrooms. These gains have included improved attendance, course completion, and attitudes and confidence about reading, as well as higher achievement on reading comprehension and subject-matter standardized tests—all compared to students in control groups. These studies have demonstrated that skillful implementation of Reading Apprenticeship produces benefits for students in changed approaches to complex reading, in reading engagement, and in academic identity and achievement.

The impact of Reading Apprenticeship in college settings is also promising. Multiple studies have documented classroom instruction that markedly increases students' confidence and engagement in learning. In classrooms where achievement and persistence data have been collected, increased student grades, rates of course completion, and retention in school are typical.

Since the first edition of this book, we have published several related volumes and, in response to requests from the field, several new curricula. In 2012, we updated the first edition, tapping a great well of inspiration from middle and high school and college teachers who had adapted their teaching to implement, and inform, the framework. That second edition offered guidance from middle school, high school and college classrooms, showing Reading Apprenticeship implementation across the academic subject areas and disciplines. It illustrated



how, in the hands of educators at all levels and in different settings, Reading Apprenticeship approaches can serve learners who bring richly diverse cultural and linguistic assets and varied instructional needs to the classroom.

As a framework that offers teachers a coherent yet adaptable approach to literacy learning, Reading Apprenticeship has been an important force in the fields of adolescent and disciplinary literacy in middle and high schools and in college. Students' voices and a vision of engaged academic literacy for all have been touchstones for our work all along the way.

---

## Why We Wrote a Third Edition

Reading Apprenticeship is as timely and important today as it ever has been. In this third edition of *Reading for Understanding*, the core principles that drive Reading Apprenticeship remain solidly in place. Indeed, in some important ways the field has only recently caught up with the vision that has animated Reading Apprenticeship from the start, as evident in the field's new focus on the socioemotional foundations of learning engagement, new research on disciplinary literacies, and a greater recognition of the social and cultural influences shaping learning. A new generation of research on reading comprehension has generated a richer knowledge base that only underscores the importance of the approaches to literacy learning at the heart of Reading Apprenticeship.

Studies conducted across the grade levels and academic disciplines, with funding from the Institute of Education Science's Reading for Understanding Initiative, have highlighted the positive role that social collaboration, language development, and metacognition play in literacy learning and achievement. As participants in this research initiative, Reading Apprenticeship researchers and teachers helped demonstrate how reading with a focus on disciplinary inquiry supports the growth of both disciplinary knowledge and literacy skills and dispositions. Studies have continued to uncover important distinctions in the kinds of reasoning and argumentation, texts and representations of ideas, and inquiry purposes that drive work in and across the disciplines, distinctions that have important implications for literacy teaching and learning, as the framework has long recognized. A new generation of interdisciplinary scholarship has also sharpened understandings of the social and cultural foundations of learning and development and the integral role these contexts play for all learners. Socioemotional dispositions are now understood to be malleable, with new research showing how educators can increase students' engagement and self-efficacy—and thereby their academic achievement. From its inception, Reading Apprenticeship has embraced these sociocultural and socioemotional

foundations of learning and engagement. It has been designated a SElect program by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).<sup>1</sup> Reading Apprenticeship has received a Strong rating from Evidence for ESSA.<sup>2</sup>

Even as scholarship has affirmed the vital elements in the Reading Apprenticeship framework, the world in which students and educators interact has changed profoundly over the past two decades. The population of students in U.S. schools has become increasingly diverse. New academic standards call for readers to engage with complex text, to participate in inquiry practices that characterize specific disciplines, and to undertake tasks that demand close, attentive reading and depth of understanding. Perhaps most dramatically, given the growing influence of information—and disinformation—in today's world, the prevalence of digital devices has shifted the very nature of reading, as well as the forms of texts that readers must be equipped to read critically and deeply.

At the same time, Reading Apprenticeship has attracted a more diverse following, which has enriched the framework in many ways. College educators in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields have contributed new disciplinary tools and approaches to Reading Apprenticeship instruction. Middle and high school teachers participating in discipline-specific inquiry networks have long innovated with Reading Apprenticeship routines and approaches, most recently through a design network of science and engineering teachers who are developing open-source, text-rich investigations to offer to the field. Reading Apprenticeship teacher leaders of color, as well as those who are multilingual and/or multiliterate, have both enhanced our work and shifted our lenses and our language. And teachers—working in in-person, hybrid, and online settings, and using many digital tools—have shown how engaged, socially collaborative, and critical literacy teaching and learning can thrive in all of these settings.

Incorporating these new voices and new visions, this third edition represents Reading Apprenticeship instruction in broadly varied middle school, high school, and college classrooms across the academic disciplines. It shows how core Reading Apprenticeship routines come to life with digital tools and in online learning settings. Most importantly, it includes the many arresting voices of teachers and students who are making the Reading Apprenticeship framework their own in a broad range of rural, urban, and suburban classrooms across the country.

In addition to the resources included between the covers of the book, we have also included a range of online resources. These include: additional online

Boxes and Classroom Close-ups providing practical classroom tools and additional illustrations of what Reading Apprenticeship looks like in the classroom; an extended description of Sustained Silent Reading Plus, drawn from the second edition; and assessment resources that illustrate how to measure student learning.

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## Notes

1. “The designation indicates that a program promotes students’ social and emotional competence in a SElect category, provides opportunities for practice, and offers multi-year programming; and delivers high quality training and other implementation supports. Student outcomes that fall into the SElect category are improved positive social behavior, reduced problem behavior, reduced emotional distress, improved student-reported identity/agency, improved school connectedness,\* and improved school climate.\*  
\*\*If the evaluation involved adolescents (i.e., students enrolled in middle or high school), then outcomes must be student-reported to qualify for SElect designation.” Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (nd). Connect Your Criteria: Understand the SEL Program Designations, <https://pg.casel.org/connect-your-criteria/#sel>.
2. Evidence for ESSA (n.d.), Reading Apprenticeship, <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/programs/reading/reading-apprenticeship>. The Evidence for ESSA website was developed and is maintained by researchers at Johns Hopkins University. The website defines strong evidence as “at least one well-designed and well-implemented *experimental* (i.e., randomized) study” that has shown “a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes.”



# Acknowledgments

Reading Apprenticeship is, in many ways, a crowd-sourced labor of love. Open-hearted students, a talented Reading Apprenticeship staff, and insightful and dedicated teachers have contributed in their unique ways to the scope and spirit of this book.

We have changed the names of the students who populate these pages, but their words are true. We thank them pseudonymously, with admiration and best wishes.

WestEd staff members in the years since the first edition was published have contributed their collective knowledge, patience, and sense of humor to keep Reading Apprenticeship honest and fresh. The considerable professional expertise and energetic contributions of current and past colleagues—Jana Bouc, Jane Braunger, Will Brown, Irisa Charney-Sirott, Gayle Cribb, Pamela Fong, Emma Fujii, Gina Hale, Heather Howlett, Rita Jensen, Marean Jordan, Margot Kenaston, Jenell Krishnan, Diane Lee, Cindy Litman, William Loyd, Kate Meisert, Faye Mueller, Stephanie Patterson, Samantha Peters, Tamara Taylor Reeder, Catarina Rico, Sharon Saez, Mary Stump, Diane Waff, and Lorelle Wein—are represented in all the pages that follow.

Teachers, and especially those quoted in this book (and named in the following list), have not only taught us, but also have inspired us. They allowed us into their classrooms for observations and documentary videotaping, made time for research interviews, and reported back to us about ways their instruction was changing. We thank, too, the administrators whose comments and reflections add an important perspective to the book and our thinking.

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(Individuals' listed titles and schools are as they requested to be listed, with some from the time these educators were doing the Reading Apprenticeship work for which they are cited in this book.)

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# Engaged Academic Literacy for All

Usually, in a regular history class, the teacher would say, “Read from page so-and-so to so-and-so, answer the red-square questions and the unit questions, and turn them in.” And it wasn’t like you had to *read* it. . . . If the red-square question was here, you knew the answer was somewhere around that area right there. It was something that you could like slide by without them knowing. I don’t know if they cared or not, but that’s the way everybody did it.

—Rosa, 9th-grade student

Most teachers, if I talk to them, they’ll be like, “What, are you serious—this is college, you’re asking me how to *read*? I can’t help you. You should have learned that in 8th grade.”

—Kalif, community college student<sup>1</sup>

**WE LIVE** in a world of accelerated change and challenge, a world in which even what counts as fact is subject to heated public disagreements. As educators, how can we prepare students to navigate an environment saturated with many different types of information, requiring complex decision-making? If we believe that all students should be able to think and read critically, to write and talk knowledgeably about civic, historical, literary, scientific, or mathematical questions, we need to provide richer learning opportunities than the “red-square question” routine that Rosa describes. We need to be better prepared to engage and support students like Kalif.

This book presents an approach to improving students’ ability to read critically and to write about and discuss texts in a range of disciplines—an approach that builds their academic literacy. The framework for this approach, Reading Apprenticeship, starts from the premise that engaging students like Rosa and Kalif requires building from their experiences and attitudes toward themselves as learners. Supporting students, both affectively and intellectually,

is key to developing the dispositions and skills required for becoming confident and critical readers. As students gain a greater sense of efficacy as readers, they are increasingly able to develop the habits of mind and skills to become independent thinkers and learners.

Decades of research on how to support literacy development, including the Reading for Understanding initiative, establish that high-level literacy skills are built in classrooms that emphasize “collaboration, deep comprehension, critique, and the generative use of comprehension” as part of inquiry-based and text-based learning activities.<sup>2</sup> Yet studies also show that this kind of classroom learning environment is anything but the norm: many students, from middle school through college, are never expected or supported to independently read and problem solve with academic texts.<sup>3</sup> This creates a cycle in which students are unaccustomed to carrying out rigorous literacy tasks, and their teachers, losing faith in students’ willingness or ability to read independently, provide access to content in other ways, effectively doing students’ intellectual work for them, “protecting” them from the complexity of texts and tasks.

Many educators at all levels express worries that students are not motivated to expend the effort required to make sense of academic texts; a concurrent worry is that, as educators, they are unprepared to support students’ reading comprehension and literacy development. Yet we see ample evidence that, by helping students find their own reasons and entry points for tackling challenging reading, we can support them in developing both their affective and their intellectual engagement with academic texts. By learning to work through and, with the support of others, make sense of tough passages, students can develop a new relationship with texts and concepts they previously found “unengaging.”

For their part, when educators are supported to recognize and build on the strengths that they and their students bring to literacy tasks, they find that they *do* have engaged readers and problem solvers in the room. Critically, they also find that, as both educators and readers themselves, they *do* have the relevant experience and expertise to design and facilitate text-based learning activities that go much deeper than “covering the content.”

Our work over the years with tens of thousands of middle school, high school, college, and preservice teachers has been the subject of multiple research studies demonstrating that teachers can successfully apprentice their students into becoming independent and effective readers of academic texts. When teachers listen closely and respectfully probe students’ thinking, and when they also help students listen to and engage each other’s thinking about texts, classrooms can become lively centers of discussion about *how*, as well as what,