



Real Reading, Real Writing: Content-Area Strategies

Donna Topping, Roberta McManus

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Real Reading, Real Writing is a story for and by real teachers. In it, two seasoned veterans recount their 23-year collaboration to find ways to get students to improve their learning in their content area subjects. It all began when Donna Topping, an elementary-trained reading specialist who knew a lot about literacy but little about content areas, met Roberta McManus, a secondary-trained science teacher who knew a lot about science but very little about how to get students to read and write about it. Over the years, they have developed a host of practical activities and strategies to infuse the processes of learning into the content to be learned. Their book brings these activities to life-real activities immediately doable in classrooms at any level.

Donna and Roberta begin by telling of their mission to find what will work for them, rejecting and tiring of bandwagon movements and quick-fix promises, and finding the power of collaboration. In their subsequent chapters, they discuss practices and strategies for helping students read and become actively involved with books, lectures, and videos. Then they flesh out activities to help students write more effectively in the content areas. Every teaching strategy is one that they have used successfully with real students. And they have tracked improved grades and secured students' feedback about which strategies helped them the most. Their collaboration continues, although their circumstances have changed. Donna is now a university professor who teaches her teachers-to-be the classroom-proven strategies from Roberta's work in the public schools. Roberta, in turn, takes Donna's understanding of theory and research and refines her teaching.

In the hands of the authors, literacy and content become seamless. Practical ideas grow naturally from a theoretical base. Down-to-earth, conversational, and sometimes funny, their presentation enlightens while it entertains. Take their ideas, tweak and adapt them to your content area, and enjoy the same journey in teaching real reading and real writing.

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