



Discoveries in Reading Apprenticeship

In June 2007, as a part of our Academic Wellness Educators information gathering efforts Jeff Fitzwater and Meryl Soto attended part one of a two part conference offered by WestEd organization on Reading Apprenticeship. The training that they offer is mentioned in the 2003 Academic Senate *Survey of Best Practices in Basic Skills*, and the Rp Group 2007 report on *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*. Cited for producing positive gains for students in their reading, the fact finding subcommittee also noted, that colleges we visited that had been a part of the Carnegie Grant had all participated in this program and were reporting favorable outcomes.

The 2007 summer conference was the first exclusive offering from WestEd to Community Colleges. WestEd has been around for 20 years, and though it's primary targeted audience has been the K-12 school system, some community college teachers attended the training as many as eight years ago. Campuses like Delta, Chabot, Pasadena, and San Francisco City College have made significant headway incorporating Reading Apprenticeship practices into their developmental and skills courses, content area courses, and learning support centers.

A brief description of Reading Apprenticeship taken directly from RA materials defines it as “an approach to reading instruction that helps young people develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions they need to become more powerful readers. IT is at heart a partnership of expertise, drawing on what teachers know and do as discipline-based readers, and on adolescents’ unique and often underestimated strengths as learners.”



So far, on Columbia College’s campus, Jeff and Meryl have conducted an ISW workshop for vocational education instructors that received positive feedback, and Meryl Soto provided a brief adjunct faculty orientation in RA at the beginning of Spring 2008 semester, and is offering a seven week course to faculty on Reading Apprenticeship strategies.

Meryl Soto attended part two of the conference recently, from January 31st, 2008 to February 5, 2008, where more strategies were presented, and community college instructors had a chance to meet with K-12 teachers and to share what had happened over the semester since they began using an RA approach in their classes. Surprisingly, it seemed that all of the teachers who attended the winter session had positive things to say. In conversations, formal and informal, positive and encouraging results were relayed: students were responding more positively to reading tasks, reporting better understanding, succeeding on tests, and continuing on to do personal reading when none had been done in the past.

