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# Integrating Reading and Writing: A Response to the Basic Writing “Crisis”

*ABSTRACT: This article describes a FIPSE-funded integrated reading/writing program developed at San Francisco State University in response to the latest basic writing “crisis.” After noting the theoretical and practical necessity for integrating reading and writing, the authors provide a detailed account of the program and report on its first year of implementation. They conclude by offering some valuable lessons learned from this experience.*

## THE BASIC WRITING “CRISIS”

As Ira Shor wryly observes, basic writing is in a perpetual state of crisis (91). Of late, the crisis has gained momentum from widely publicized attempts in various states to eliminate or strictly limit remediation. These efforts are expected to have a profound impact on racial diversity, educational opportunity, enrollment, and retention at a number of postsecondary institutions. In their January 1998 report on college remediation, the Institute for Higher Education Policy warned that with over 80% of today’s sustainable jobs requiring education beyond high school and 65% requiring skills in advanced writing and critical thinking, the social and economic consequences of not providing remedial instruction are “high” (viii), and abandoning remedial efforts in higher education would be “unwise public policy” (ix).

At the 23-campus California State University (CSU), with its enrollment of 440,000 students, nearly half of all first-time freshmen place into basic writing. On our San Francisco State University (SFSU) campus, more than 80% of these basic writers speak native languages or dialects other than standard English, half are immigrants, 89% are stu-

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dents of color, slightly over half are the first in their families to go to college, and a third grew up in families where the primary breadwinner had less than the equivalent of a high school education (Goen 251-57). Despite obvious threats to equity and diversity, the CSU Board of Trustees mandated a plan in 1997 to reduce the number of incoming students in remedial courses to no more than 10% by 2007. This plan immediately limited remedial instruction to one year and instituted the hefty penalty of “disenrollment” from the university for any student failing to complete the remedial requirement during his or her first year.<sup>1</sup>

Contributing to the basic writing crisis is an historical and persistent trend in literacy education to treat reading and writing as distinct and separate processes, with reading being considered the more elementary of the two (McCormick 6; Nelson and Calfee 1). Those of us who teach reading and writing know, and have known for a long time, that the acquisition of academic literacy is a slow, protracted process. Unfortunately, those of us working in higher education in the United States also know that postsecondary institutions have historically operated as though learning to read should be accomplished by the third grade and learning to write by the twelfth. Accordingly, any postsecondary instruction in reading and writing is de-facto remedial and, as such, vulnerable to political and educational forces aimed at its removal.

## A RESPONSE TO THE “CRISIS”

Fortunately, basic writing’s perpetual state of crisis is attended by an equally perpetual search for new and better ways to meet the needs of basic writing students. At SFSU, our search led to the design of an innovative program in which instruction in reading and writing is fully integrated, and students’ movement from the margins of the university to its academic center can be appreciably hastened.

For a number of years preceding the implementation of the 1997 remedial policy, we had tried to persuade our institution of the critical importance of linking instruction in reading with instruction in writing. Convinced by empirical findings indicating that the processes of reading and writing are closely linked (see, e.g., Ackerman; Salvatori; Spivey and King; Nelson and Calfee), we had become increasingly frustrated with our system of separate reading and writing courses. Meanwhile, accumulated data from more than twenty years of CSU English Placement Test administrations provide mounting evidence that students’ performance on the *reading* portion of the test disproportionately accounts for their placement in basic *writing* classes, suggesting that students’ difficulty constructing meaning *from* texts may be a significant source of their difficulty constructing meaning *in* texts.

Initially, our efforts outside the English department to advocate for the interconnectedness of reading and writing were strongly resisted, at least until the advent of the one-year remediation policy. About the time the policy went into effect, it was not unusual for as many as 30% of the SFSU students who placed into basic writing to still be taking basic writing courses well into their second year of enrollment (Goen 167). The Board of Trustees mandate was greeted with a new willingness at all levels of the SFSU administration to consider changes to its remedial programs. Meanwhile, the opportunity afforded by the Board of Trustees mandate inspired us to convene a small team of faculty to put our thinking to the test. We reasoned that if the link between instruction in reading and writing is as crucial as we hypothesized, then it follows that basic writing students would reap demonstrably greater benefits from an approach that integrates the two. And if this hypothesis proved true, we wondered whether our students could achieve these benefits effectively (and swiftly) enough to enable them to move into the academic mainstream well within the confines of the one-year remediation rule.

Between 1999 and 2000, we refined our thinking about these questions, experimented inside classrooms, and ultimately designed a fully integrated reading/writing program. In the fall of 2001, we received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to implement our program and assess its outcomes. That same fall, we received administrative approval to offer ten sections of the integrated reading/writing course. In the discussion that follows, we describe the new reading/writing program, placing it within the context of SFSU's "remedial" English requirement, and report on its first year of implementation.

### **SFSU's "Remedial" English Requirement**

The essential components of SFSU's "remedial" English requirement have been in place for more than two decades. Students who score in the lowest quartile on the English Placement Test (a placement instrument contracted through the Educational Testing Service and used throughout the CSU system) must complete a full year of developmental-level course work in reading and writing. In their first semester, they take a 3-unit basic writing course (English 48) concurrently with a 1-unit reading course (English 118). In their second semester, they take another 3-unit basic writing course (English 51) concurrently with a 1-unit reading course (English 121). Students who score above the lowest quartile, but below the cutoff score for freshman-level composition, take a single semester of English 51 concurrently with English 121 while those who score above the cutoff go directly into English 114, SFSU's 3-unit first-year composition course. Whether stu-

dents place into one or two semesters of developmental-level course work, they must successfully complete the remediation requirement in their first year at SFSU or risk disenrollment from the university. Students most at-risk for disenrollment, and/or dropping out of college altogether, are typically those who score in the lowest quartile on the English Placement Test.

Because the curriculum and pedagogy of the basic writing and reading courses have traditionally been separate, students have not been encouraged to make the connections between themselves as readers and writers. Teachers, too, have been unprepared to see the connections. With few exceptions, SFSU's reading and writing instructors have received graduate education in teaching either college composition *or* reading.<sup>2</sup> Despite recent efforts to encourage our new graduate students to pursue both courses of study, the vast majority of basic writing teachers have little or no knowledge of the curriculum of the reading course, its theoretical underpinnings, and its potential connection to the writing curriculum. And although the reading teachers are more likely to have had some experience in and preparation for teaching writing, few curricular opportunities have been available to exploit fully the connections between reading and writing within the confines of a one-unit reading course.

### **The Integrated Reading/Writing Program**

Rather than requiring students who score in the lowest quartile on the English Placement Test to complete two basic writing classes, two reading classes, and yet another first-year composition class (for a total of up to five different teachers and five different groups of classmates), our integrated reading/writing program places these "at-risk" students into a single year-long course in which instruction in reading and writing are explicitly interconnected. In the first semester of the integrated course, students complete developmental-level course work equivalent to our basic writing courses (English 48 and 51) integrated with our reading courses (English 118 and 121); in the second semester, students accomplish an integrated version of work equivalent to first-year written composition (English 114). Students who successfully complete the new year-long course have thereby met not only the CSU remediation requirement, but also SFSU's first-year written composition requirement, in effect completing in one year what would ordinarily take three semesters to accomplish (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

Table 1

Comparison of SFSU's Integrated Reading/Writing Program and Conventional Program

	<b>Semester One (4 units)</b>	<b>Semester Two (3 units)</b>
<b>Integrated R/W Program</b> (8 units total, 1 teacher, 1 group of classmates)	Integrated coursework equivalent to basic writing and reading: English 48, English 118, English 51, English 121	Integrated coursework equivalent to first-year written composition: English 114
	<b>Remediation Requirement Complete</b>	
<b>SFSU's Conventional Program</b> (8 units total, 4 teachers, 4 groups of classmates)	Basic writing and reading: English 48 + English 118	Basic writing and reading: English 51 + English 121
		<b>Remediation Requirement Complete</b>

We began developing our integrated curriculum with a small group of teachers whose graduate training and professional experience include both reading and writing. During our deliberations and planning, we realized that in order for our course to be truly integrated, it could not be a course in which reading always precedes writing. Taking such an approach reduces writing to something that is done after the reading is complete as a way to check comprehension rather than a way to work through, analyze, and arrive at an understanding of a text. Neither could it be a course that reduces reading to a supporting role, providing information and lending authority to bolster the writing. Vivian Zamel criticizes courses that purport to connect reading and writing in such unidirectional terms (468): writing courses with assignments based upon readings (reading-to-write) or reading courses with writing assignments tacked on at the end (writing-to-read).

As a counterpoint, we imagined an integrated course in which the similarities and connections between reading and writing would be made explicit, a course where students would see how the structures, practices, and language of each process can enhance understanding of the other. The aim of the course we envisioned would be to engage students in an exploratory study of texts (including their own) produced by members of various social, cultural, and academic com-

munities, to achieve a range of authentic authorial purposes, and to facilitate student analysis of their own writings and those of their classmates. This aim was grounded in the following six principles distilled from over thirty years of research on basic writing and reading.

**Principle 1: Integration.** In summarizing research on the connections between reading and writing, Sandra Stotsky found some consistent correlations, namely that “better writers tend to be better readers” that “better writers tend to read more than poorer writers,” and that “better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers” (16). Robert Tierney and Margie Leys agree that “selective reading experiences definitely contribute to writing performance” (25) while Mariolina Salvatori contends that introspective reading, or reading as “an analogue for thinking about one’s own and other’s thinking, about how one’s thinking is ignited by the thoughts of others,” has a stimulative and generative effect on students’ writing (446). Anthony Petrosky notes that writing can also contribute to the development of reading, that “the only way to demonstrate comprehension is through extended discourse where readers become writers who articulate their understandings of and connections to the text in their responses” (24). Vivian Zamel detects some “profound ways” in which writing teaches reading, for “the process of writing shares much in common with the process of learning. . . . [W]riting allows one to discover and consider one’s stance, one’s interpretation, one’s immediate reactions to a text. . . . [I]t makes these responses to text overt, concrete, and tangible” (470). Meanwhile, Kathleen McCormick found that when students are taught reading and writing as separate subjects, these beneficial effects are lost. Students commonly write essays that basically summarize a reading with some personal observations thrown in; the two activities they typically find most difficult are “integrating one’s own ideas and knowledge into the written conversation with one’s sources” and “interpreting source texts for a purpose of one’s own” (99).

While we began designing our integrated reading/writing course with the primary goal to create an integrated curriculum, we soon gave equal attention to developing an integrated instructional approach. In this regard, we take our cue from James Flood and Diane Lapp, who urge us to devote as much thought and study to understanding integrated instruction as we have to understanding the conceptual links between reading and writing (21-22). We are also aware that while some of the basic research findings on the reading-writing connection have informed instructional practices (most notably in justifying the use of readings in the composition classroom), instruction in reading and writing is far from integrated, in part because of the nature of the English discipline. Literacy educators are still identified as either reading teachers or writing teachers. Nelson and Calfee notice that university

English departments are still populated by literature (reading) and composition (writing) faculty who have experienced “different kinds of graduate education, who cite different authors, who use different terminology, and who publish in different journals, and turf wars still rage. Attempts to create a more integrated discipline are often resisted” (35-36). McCormick complicates the picture, noting a further division between teaching reading on the one hand, and literature on the other: “reading as an academic subject is traditionally separate from literature instruction. . . . [M]any teachers of English and almost all in the colleges and universities do not regard themselves as involved in teaching reading” (6).

**Principle 2: Time.** Learning and improvement in reading and writing develop gradually and are directly related to the notion of writing and reading as situated within communities of discourse. Most successful basic writing programs cite time as a factor crucial to their program’s success, time for learning to develop and for communities to form. Shaughnessy’s program at the City University of New York was three semesters; Bartholomae and Petrosky’s at the University of Pittsburgh is an intensive six-unit, six-hour course. UC Berkeley’s recently reconceptualized alternative to its Subject A requirement<sup>4</sup> is an intensive six-unit course that meets five hours a week; Arizona State University’s Stretch Program for at-risk students “stretches” the freshman writing course over two semesters; and Soliday and Gleason’s alternative to remedial writing at City College of New York is a one-year course. In designing their “Enrichment” program, Soliday and Gleason note that “forming communities is vitally important” for underprepared students, especially on urban, commuter campuses (66). Like our SFSU students enrolled in basic writing, many of the students enrolled in the CUNY program work part or full time, come from families with low incomes, and/or have family responsibilities, caring for younger siblings or their own children. They concluded: “It is all too easy for such students to be pulled away from the college campus by adult concerns. This project’s two-semester writing course creates a space for students to become grounded in college life during the crucial first year” (66). Moreover, as Emig and other researchers have noted, writing can be enhanced by working in, and with, a group of other writers in an enabling community environment.

**Principle 3: Development.** Literacy is predominantly learned rather than taught and at a pace that can be very slow, especially if the reading and writing represent significant learning. According to Emig, attempting to teach certain reading/writing structures explicitly and expecting students to learn them is “magical thinking” (135). A year-long structure allows development to proceed, however slowly, by introducing students to certain thinking/reading/writing strategies that they can then apply in increasingly more complex contexts. This struc-

ture simultaneously allows teachers to move the class at a pace more conducive to learning, as opposed to teaching.

In SFSU's conventional approach, teachers and students meet three hours a week for writing and two hours for reading over the course of a sixteen-week semester. As anyone who regularly teaches either the basic writing or reading course knows, it can easily be the fifth week of the semester before even the most alert teacher is able to identify some of the complex reading or writing difficulties that vex individual students. By the time the teacher can start working regularly with the student in individual conferences or get the student plugged into the various adjunct learning assistance resources on campus—and for the student to start showing signs of response—the semester is nearing its end. Then, when the student joins two new basic writing and reading classes the following semester, the process has to begin anew.

Because students and teachers in our integrated reading/writing program stay together for the full year, teachers have plenty of time to put our learning assistance resources in place. As early in the first semester as possible, they identify students who need small group and/or individual tutoring or other learning assistance and help direct these students to appropriate resources to enhance their learning over the entire rest of the year.

**Principle 4: Academic Membership.** For decades, institutional rules and regulations have marginalized and stigmatized remedial programs and their students. By putting into place a one-year course that satisfies two requirements at once (the CSU remediation requirement and SFSU's first-year written composition requirement), we have dismantled the remedial sequence that frequently holds students back for several semesters and, under the one-year time limit, subjects them to disenrollment from the university. With few exceptions, students who do not pass the one-year integrated reading/writing course are not required to repeat it; rather, they are required to take and pass English 114, the first-year written composition course (see endnote 3).

The integrated reading/writing program promises to move students as quickly and humanely as possible into the university mainstream, and keep them there, breaking what, for many students, has been a dismal cycle of failure at the remedial level. The program has removed another punitive remnant of remediation: the lack of baccalaureate credit (which carries with it the stigma of not being perceived as "real" college work). SFSU's basic writing courses, English 48 and 51, carry workload credit but do not count towards graduation. The integrated course carries partial credit towards graduation, but more importantly, it satisfies the freshman composition requirement for graduation.

The credit-bearing aspect of the program provides an added ben-



efit: should the trend continue in higher education in the direction of complete elimination of remedial programs, we can potentially “protect” the integrated reading/writing course on the basis that it carries non-remedial credit and satisfies a university requirement for graduation.

**Principle 5: Sophistication.** A fundamental tenet from recent scholarship on basic writing is that the nature of the reading and writing activities in a basic-level course should be virtually indistinguishable from that in a college-level or advanced course. With a full year at their disposal, teachers of the integrated reading/writing course can offer support and scaffold assignments in ways that are simply not feasible in a 16-week semester. They can also help students become adept at sophisticated literate activities required for success at the university, such as reading book length works, engaging in original research, and participating in collaborative and/or co-authored projects.

**Principle 6: Purposeful Communication.** In college-level basic writing classrooms, attention is too often paid to modeling correct grammatical and essayist forms instead of providing opportunities for students to interact with language actively for authentic communicative purposes. We know that meaning is what drives linguistic competence; yet in many basic writing classrooms, the focus is on language itself, on teaching its parts abstracted from meaningful contexts, in a prearranged order of skills development (Kutz, Groden, and Zamel 18-19). To assure that our program provides students with opportunities for active interaction with texts in meaningful contexts, we designed the curriculum to meet the following objectives:

**Objective 1: To understand the ways that readers read and writers write in and beyond the university, across a range of tasks.** To accomplish this goal we require students to read a wide range of materials (expository, fiction, poetry, and hypertext) written from different points of view. This objective is crucial in helping our students become members of the academy. Our students are enrolled full time and take courses in other disciplines such as math, business, psychology, physical and social sciences. The majority also work full or part time outside of school. Our integrated course provides instruction that will help students set purposes and goals for their reading and writing in school and beyond, as well as learn to apply and internalize a variety of effective strategies for reading rapidly enough to comprehend text and generate ideas for writing.

**Objective 2: To develop a metacognitive understanding of the processes of reading and writing.** Metacognition is typically revealed in a student’s conscious strategies for selecting and recalling main ideas, summarizing another’s text, or producing conscious, elaborate “think aloud” protocols during composing tasks. Helping students attain awareness and knowledge of their own mental processes such that they

can monitor, regulate, and direct themselves to a desired end are key components in our curriculum. We achieve this goal by providing many opportunities for students to experience a variety of idea-generating tools (clustering, freewriting, previewing, prereading and coding [PPC], and questioning).

One useful example of a composing strategy that we use extensively throughout our curriculum is K-W-L+, a four-step procedure intended to help teachers become more responsive to helping students access appropriate knowledge when reading texts. While K-W-L+ is traditionally considered to be a reading strategy only, it is an excellent idea-generating tool in which students brainstorm and generate categories for ideas (K), develop interests and curiosities by asking questions (W), write on what has been learned and use the new learning as a set of reading notes (L), to see which questions still need to be answered, discuss any additional questions, and determine what further ideas need to be researched (+). More importantly, K-W-L+ is a strategy that students can use to comprehend a text, then use to shape and organize ideas for a written product, and finally use in peer response groups to give or receive feedback on their thinking and understanding of a topic as well as on the content and organization of their written responses. More specifically, through instruction and experience in using composing strategies like K-W-L+, students come to read as writers and write as readers, knowing that there is only one process—composing meaning—whether it comes from their transactions with existing texts or their production of new ones.

**Objective 3: To understand the rhetorical properties of reading and writing, including purpose, audience, and stance.** Our curriculum is designed to engage students in many reading and writing tasks. Writing tasks include freewriting, planning, developing rough drafts, making revisions, practicing sentence combining, and, of course, producing essays. Reading tasks include practice in methods of increasing reading rate and improving comprehension, developing recall and interpretation skills, employing efficient study techniques, and experiencing the reading-writing relationship across all disciplines. Overall, students learn to organize their essays to support their points of view in ways that are appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose; write cohesive paragraphs; and write sentences that are both well-focused and employ a range of sentence combining options. They learn to write informal reading journals and double-entry journals that encourage dialectical thinking, use a variety of graphic organizers, participate in small group discussions, and learn question-asking techniques. Ultimately our curriculum is designed to help students understand that we “draft” a first reading and revise or elaborate on it in subsequent readings, just as we do in writing. We want our students to learn that readers construct the meaning of texts they read by degrees in the same

way writers gradually construct meaning in the texts they write.

**Objective 4: To understand and engage in reading and writing as a way to make sense of the world, to experience literacy as problem solving, reasoning, and reflecting.** Our curriculum accomplishes this objective in two ways: First, the topics students read and write about prepare them to join current conversations on important social issues and help them critically engage with a variety of texts: popular print and visual media (newspapers, magazines, films, television); statistics in both tabular and prose forms; fiction; and exposition. Students can then enter into the conversations of our world by writing essays that are based on their thinking about the issues they are reading about—essays that use writing and reading to learn and that help students understand the kinds of writing frequently used in public discourse such as taking a position, reporting, evaluating, speculating, and interpreting. Secondly, we know that students must have some stake in what they are reading and writing about, that for literacy to be a genuine act of meaning-making, students must have an investment of some kind in order to take the intellectual risks that meaning-making requires. Therefore, each unit of our course has incorporated community building activities that not only satisfy inexperienced readers' and writers' needs for structure and content, but that also offer them the freedom to develop their style, repertoire, and voice, to locate themselves in these texts. Community-building exercises also help students learn relationship-building, class-building, and team-building skills and provide a vehicle through which they become stakeholders in creating a caring environment as the foundation for growth and learning. Over the course of the year that students spend together in this program, they learn essential collaborative skills through carefully designed and scaffolded interactive learning experiences. The course is designed so that the community-building strategies are "top-loaded" in the first semester, providing a variety of tools for students to draw upon, and allowing enough time for students to internalize them with repeated practice throughout the year.

**Objective 5: To develop enjoyment, satisfaction, and confidence in reading and writing.** To help achieve this objective, student self-assessment is an important component of the new course. For reasons similar to those cited by Soliday and Gleason (referring to Astin's research on the undergraduate experience), we include self-assessment because it has been shown to be a valid measure of student performance when compared to actual pre-test/post-test measures (72) and because we believe it to be a valuable tool in helping students articulate for themselves what they have learned and to derive satisfaction from that learning. At the end of each semester, teachers ask students to write a self-reflection essay to assess their "Reading and Writing Process." In these essays, students evaluate what they learned, what

changed in their reading and writing, and what they still need to work on. They conclude by setting some reasonable learning goals for the future. Teachers also periodically ask students to write self-reflections on their process of completing a given essay assignment and on how they integrated reading and writing strategies to complete the task.

In our years of teaching novice readers and writers, we have also discovered that our students do not do much, if any, reading for pleasure. Therefore we have built fictional reading requirements into our curriculum, supplemented by a variety of activities to stimulate collaborative learning, discussion, and personal and analytical writing.

## **PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

In fall 2001, we enrolled 169 students in the new integrated reading/writing program.<sup>5</sup> Enrollment in the new course followed already established procedures for placement and course registration. Students who scored in the lowest quartile on the placement test received their results by mail along with a letter describing the integrated reading/writing program and giving specific instructions about how to register for the course. Information about eligibility and registration in the program was also made available through other campus venues, including the summer freshman orientation sessions. The majority of students enrolled in the new course at freshman orientation; others enrolled in the course during the regular registration period. When students registered, they were informed in writing of the experimental nature of the course and the specific data collection, analysis, and dissemination procedures involved. We also asked all the students who scored in the lowest quartile enrolled in our conventional program (English 48 and 118 in fall and English 51 and 121 in spring) to serve as a comparable control group. Both groups signed consent forms indicating their agreement to participate in the evaluation study.

### **Procedures**

We measured the extent to which the course is realizing its objectives using a variety of data sources: end-of-year grade comparisons; comparative gains on standardized reading tests; comparisons of holistically scored portfolios of student writing; self-assessments of students completing the integrated program; and second-year written composition pass rates of students who arrived via the three-semester conventional sequence compared to those who arrived from the one-year integrated program.

**End-of-Year Grade Comparisons.** Throughout the fall and spring semesters, we collected enrollment census figures (fourth-week class lists) and final grade sheets from all ten sections of the integrated read-

ing/writing course and from the control sections. We compared end-of-year retention in the new program to retention in the conventional sequence of remedial classes. We also compared CSU remedial policy compliance of students in the new program to those in the conventional course sequence. Finally, we determined each group's readiness for the next level composition course: either first-year written composition (English 114) for students completing the conventional sequence or second-year written composition (English 214) for students completing the integrated course.

**Reading Outcomes.** We measured students' gains in reading proficiency at two junctures: Using the Descriptive Test of Language Skills<sup>6</sup> (DTLS), we assessed their proficiency as they completed the developmental portion of the curriculum, and we assessed their proficiency as they completed the first-year written composition-level curriculum using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.<sup>7</sup>

We administered a pre-DTLS to students in both the integrated and control classes during the first week of the fall 2001 semester. Since students in the integrated course complete the developmental-level curriculum by the end of the fall semester, they took a post-DTLS in December. Students in the control group took a post-DTLS at the end of spring 2002 while they were enrolled in English 121. The DTLS measures both reading comprehension and critical reasoning. It calculates reading comprehension as a total score on three submeasures: 1) identifying word or phrase meaning through context, 2) understanding literal and interpretive meaning, and 3) understanding writer's assumptions, opinions, and tone. Similarly, it calculates critical reasoning as the sum of scores on three submeasures: 1) interpreting information, 2) using information appropriately, and 3) evaluating information.

We administered a pre-Gates-MacGinitie test to students in the integrated program at the beginning of spring 2002, when they were just beginning to do work equivalent to first-year written composition (English 114). They took a post-Gates-MacGinitie at the end of spring. Since students in the control group did not enroll in English 114 until fall 2002 (their third semester), they took a pre-test in the beginning of the fall 2002 semester and a post-test at the end. The Gates-MacGinitie measures both reading comprehension and vocabulary and assigns students a total score as a sum of the two measures.

**Writing Portfolios.** We collected six sample essays from students in both groups, which we assembled into two separate portfolios. The first portfolio represents students' work early, near the middle, and as they completed the developmental-level portion of the curriculum. We collected the first portfolio during the fall 2002 semester from students in the integrated program, and over the fall 2001 and spring 2002 semesters for students in the control group. The second portfolio represents students' work from the first-year written composition-level of

the curriculum. We collected the second portfolio during the spring 2002 semester for students in the integrated course and during the fall 2002 semester while control group students were enrolled in English 114, the regular first-year composition course.

Using a four-point rubric, experienced external readers scored the portfolios across five categories: 1) the integration of reading and writing; 2) formulating and supporting a thesis; 3) organization; 4) sentence structure; and 5) grammar and mechanics. The readers were then asked to use the same four-point rubric to assign the portfolio an overall evaluation.<sup>8</sup> We began the reading with a norming session using anchor portfolios to arrive at consensus for scoring across the categories.

**Student Self-Assessments.** At the end of each semester, teachers asked students in the integrated course to write a self-reflection essay to assess their "Reading and Writing Process." In addition to the portfolio assessments by outside readers, we also collected these written self-assessments of students' learning experiences in the integrated course. Since these self-reflection essays were specifically intended to assess what students thought of the new integrated program, we did not ask students in the control sections to write self-reflection essays.

**Second-Year Composition Pass Rates.** After students left the integrated reading/writing program, we followed their progress in second-year written composition, English 214. As they completed English 214, we accessed their final grades in SFSU's student database and then compared their pass rates to aggregate pass rates in English 214.

## Outcomes

Across all categories of data, students in the integrated reading/writing program outperformed their counterparts in SFSU's conventional sequence of basic reading and writing courses.

**End-of-Year Grade Comparisons.** As Table 2 shows, of the 169 students enrolled in the integrated reading/writing course, 136 were retained to the end of the first year, for a retention rate of 81%. The 33 students who left the program did so early in the first semester, either because they withdrew entirely from the university or because of a scheduling conflict that caused them to withdraw from the course. Of the 136 students who remained, 97% successfully completed the CSU remediation requirement, compared to 84% of students in the control group. More importantly, 71% of those students who passed the integrated course did so with a grade of B- or better and have also met SFSU's first-year written composition requirement and are now ready for the next level course, second-year written composition. Thirty-eight students (28%) completed the integrated course with a C grade and have yet to complete the first-year written composition requirement; by comparison, all of the 84% who passed the conventional sequence of basic writing and reading courses have yet to complete the first-year written composition requirement.

Table 2

Comparison of Final Grades (by percent), Spring 2002

Grades	Integrated Group (N=136) <sup>a</sup>	Control Group (n=204) <sup>b</sup>	Percent Difference
A	14% (n=19)	15% (n=31)	-1%
B	55% (n=75)	48% (n=99)	+7%
C	28% (n=38)	21% (n=43)	-7%
Total Pass	97% (n=132)	84% (n=173)	
NC	3% (n=4)	15% (n=31)	-12%

<sup>a</sup>We started the integrated program with 169 students. Thirty-three students withdrew from the course and/or the university within the first few weeks of semester one. The remaining 136 students were retained for the full year, for a first-year retention rate of 81%.

<sup>b</sup>The conventional sequence began in Fall 2001 with 246 students. Forty students withdrew from the course and/or the university during the first weeks of the first semester. Another two students withdrew during the second semester, for a retention rate of 83%.

**Reading Outcomes.** As indicated in Table 3, students in the integrated program scored higher than the control group on all of the individual subscales of the DTLs. The total differences in scores on reading comprehension and critical reasoning are very significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) in favor of students in the integrated program. The only insignificant difference between the two groups was on the reading comprehension submeasure, "understanding writer's assumptions, opinions, and tone."

Table 3

Post-Test Results of Descriptive Test of Language Skills, Spring 2002

		Reading Comprehension				Critical Reasoning			
Submeasures		1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	total	1 <sup>d</sup>	2 <sup>e</sup>	2 <sup>f</sup>	total
<b>Integrated</b>	Mean	8.3	11.8	8.69	28.7	6.1	7.2	6.8	20.1
	SD <sup>g</sup>	2.02	2.72	2.51	5.59	1.17	1.94	1.82	3.71
<b>Control</b>	Mean	7.6	11	8.5	27	5.6	6.7	6.3	18.6
	SD	2.08	3.14	2.44	6.27	1.39	1.93	2.01	4.24
Difference		0.7	0.8	0.19	1.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.5
Significance		0.002	0.009	ns	0.007	0.0003	0.014	0.012	0.0005

<sup>a</sup>Reading Comprehension submeasure 1 is "identifying word or phrase meaning through context."

<sup>b</sup>Reading Comprehension submeasure 2 is "understanding literal and interpretive meaning."

<sup>c</sup>Reading Comprehension submeasure 3 is "understanding writer's assumptions, opinions and tone."

<sup>d</sup>Critical Reasoning submeasure 1 is "interpreting information."

<sup>e</sup>Critical Reasoning submeasure 2 is "using information appropriately."

<sup>f</sup>Critical Reasoning submeasure 3 is "evaluating information."

<sup>g</sup>SD means the standard deviation

Students in the integrated program also scored significantly higher ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) than the control group on the Gates-MacGinitie total score for vocabulary and reading comprehension (see Table 4).

Table 4

Results of Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Fall 2002

		Vocabulary	Comprehension	Total
<b>Integrated</b>	Mean	27.1	33.1	60.2
	SD <sup>a</sup>	6.3	5.9	10.6
<b>Control</b>	Mean	23.8	30.3	54.1
	SD	5.3	5.0	8.5
Difference		3.3	2.8	6.1
Significance		0.05	0.06	0.03

<sup>a</sup>SD means the standard deviation.

**Writing Portfolios.** As Table 5 displays, the first portfolios of students in the integrated course received higher scores than the control portfolios on all five individual categories and in the overall evaluation of the portfolio. In two of these categories, sentences and grammar/mechanics, the differences were statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The difference in the overall evaluation of the portfolios was very significant ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) in favor of those written by students in the integrated reading/writing program.

Table 5

Results of Developmental-Level Portfolio Evaluation, Spring 2002

		R/W Integration	Formulate Thesis	Organization	Sentences	Grammar and Mechanics	Overall Evaluation
<b>Integrated</b>	Mean	2.71	2.69	2.65	2.67	2.47	2.71
	SD <sup>a</sup>	0.75	0.75	0.66	0.78	0.74	0.72
<b>Control</b>	Mean	2.68	2.58	2.59	2.50	2.30	2.51
	SD	0.75	0.73	0.79	0.70	0.71	0.70
Difference		0.03	0.11	0.06	0.17	0.17	0.20
Significance		ns <sup>b</sup>	ns	ns	0.05	0.05	0.01

<sup>a</sup>SD means the standard deviation.

<sup>b</sup>ns means "not significant."



In spring 2002, the second semester of the integrated reading/writing program, we collected a second set of portfolios from students in the integrated course and compared them to portfolios from students in the control group collected in fall 2002, while they were enrolled in English 114. The results of these comparisons are displayed in Table 6. As with the first portfolio, the second portfolio from students in the integrated course received higher scores than those of the control group on all five categories and in the overall score. The score on “Reading/Writing Integration” and the overall score were significantly higher ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) in favor of portfolios written by students in the integrated course.

Table 6

Results of First-Year Written Composition-Level Portfolio Evaluation, Fall 2002

	R/W integration		Formulate thesis		Organization		Sentences		Grammar and mechanics		Overall Evaluation	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Integrated</b>	3.05	0.55	2.82	0.54	2.8	0.55	2.69	0.59	2.48	0.68	2.83	0.602
<b>Control</b>	2.8	0.53	2.65	0.61	2.76	0.54	2.57	0.57	2.50	0.65	2.59	0.596
Difference	0.03		0.11		0.06		0.17		0.17		0.20	
Significance	0.025		ns		ns		ns		0.05		0.044	

**Student Self-Assessments.** Students enrolled in the integrated course corroborate that the course is meeting its stated objectives to make explicit the links between reading and writing and for students to gain satisfaction and confidence in their ability to make meaning. For example, a number of students wrote comments indicating they now had an “internalized reader” guiding their writing process:

I don’t just think of myself when I write my essay. I think about who else is going to read my paper, so I take that into consideration and try to do my best to make the essay understandable. (Adrian)

During the [Integrated] English course, I have drastically improved on my essay in many aspects. First of all . . . my essay’s organization was not well-tuned, but in fact it mislead and confused my reader. Now my essay is well-oiled and guides the reader smoothly through the essay, with a general introduction that warns and prepares the reader of what’s to come,

body paragraphs that expound deeply upon the certain topic, and a conclusion that sums up what the reader read. (Sydney)

Other students made comments suggesting that the integrated course has taught them to “see” their own writing as they “see” the writing that they read:

As a writer, it is important to me to join “things” together because it shows the level the writer is at. For example, the sentences in a children’s book are very short while the sentences in a novel, college level writing, are quite long in comparison. (Jason)

You learn that peer review is a process that helps you see things through the eyes of the reader. If the reader doesn’t understand what you are talking about, then the paper needs some improvement. (Myeisha)

And still others commented on how the course had affected their self-perceptions as readers, writers, and learners:

It has been a long process for me to get to this point as a reader and writer. When entering this course, I really did not know anything that I have learned so far. I am glad that I did not know anything because I was able to actually LEARN in this class which is something I have not done for so long. Not only did I learn, but I learned it in different ways that seem exciting to me. (Melissa)

Every lesson taught in this course is developed to enhance your talents as a reader and writer; therefore, take advantage of every lesson. Indeed, there will be lessons that you may not appreciate at the very moment taught but believe me, these lessons will play major roles when reading and writing during this class and in future academic and non-academic experiences. I remember having little enthusiasm when first introduced to pre-reading tactics, skills like PPP, KWL+, and note-taking, but I later found these skills to be extremely necessary when reading – duh! (Denise)

My confidence in expressing thoughts through writing was built by friends in class who have been of great support and my own improvement which made me dare for more. . . . While training to improve my reading skills, I’ve gained not only speed and accuracy with comprehension but also confidence in my learning abilities. (Tiffany)

**Second-Year Composition Pass Rates.** As part of the assessment of the integrated reading/writing program, we were interested in how students progress when they leave the program and complete the next level course, second-year written composition. As Table 7 points out, students who arrived in English 214 via the integrated reading/writing program successfully completed the course at a higher rate (97%) than those who arrived in English 214 by conventional routes (90%).

Table 7

Second-Year Composition (English 214) Comparative Pass Rates, Fall 2002

	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>Total Pass</b>	<b>Total Not Passing</b>
<b>Integrated</b>	76 <sup>b</sup>	74 (97%)	2 (3%)
<b>Control<sup>a</sup></b>	967	869 (90%)	98 (10%)

<sup>a</sup> The control group for this assessment was an aggregate of grades from all sections of English 214, minus the grades of the 76 students from the integrated course.

<sup>b</sup>94 students were eligible to enroll in English 214 in Fall 2002 (see Table 2). Of these 94 students, 76 enrolled in Fall 2002; two students enrolled in summer 2002, six students enrolled in Spring 2003 and ten students were no longer enrolled at the university. An unfortunate and unanticipated outcome of the one-year remediation rule: the vast majority of students who place in basic writing and reading also must also complete SFSU's math remediation requirement. We know that at least four of the ten students who were no longer at SFSU in Fall 2002 were disenrolled from the university because of failure to complete the math remediation requirement within their first year.

## Conclusions from the First-Year Assessment

The data from the first year of the program offer compelling evidence that students in the integrated course can meet the cognitive challenges of learning to write as readers and read as writers, and that they can perform these tasks at a level of competence that places them fully into the mainstream of intellectual life at the university. At least as important from the standpoint of the one-year remediation rule, most can also meet these challenges well within their first year of enrollment.

The student self-assessments support the reading and portfolio findings that the integrated course is having a positive influence on students' literacy development and on their confidence and satisfaction as learners. Evidence in the portfolios and in students' self-assess-

ments suggests that they are able to develop an authoritative and confident stance in their writing, that they have an "internalized reader" guiding their writing process, and that they are able to "see" their own writing the way they "see" the writing of the texts they read.

While these first-year findings paint a promising portrait of literacy development, the extent to which the integrated program can prove to be a viable response to SFSU's basic writing "crisis" will be more fully determined by corroborating data from the second and third years. We have already analyzed DTLS data from the second year, which replicates the findings from the first year. As we move forward, we reflect on a number of lessons we've learned from this first year. Given the likely effects of teacher preparation on students' achievement, we are convinced that instructors need to have extensive preparation in teaching both reading and writing. In the second year, we carefully selected three new teachers to join the initial seven, all of whom have a strong background in reading as well as composition. Meanwhile, in order to better prepare our staff of writing teachers who lack the requisite background in reading, we have conducted a number of in-service workshops on integrating reading and writing. A significant component of this ongoing teacher education has been videotaping class sessions from the first year of the program. These edited videotapes of exemplary integrated reading/writing lessons serve as a valuable resource for writing teachers who are unfamiliar with the reading curriculum and how to use reading to support writing development and for reading teachers interested in using writing to help students work through their understanding of texts. We have also made changes to our graduate program to ensure that new teachers are well prepared to teach reading and writing in a more fully integrated instructional approach. SFSU now offers a year-long graduate seminar, "Projects in Teaching Integrated Reading/Writing," a required course for students pursuing SFSU's Graduate Certificate in Teaching Postsecondary Reading and/or the Graduate Certificate in Teaching College Composition.

Without doubt, implementing the program presented here has required much collective will and effort. However, as Glynda Hull concluded in her unpublished report on Berkeley's effort to transform Subject A, "It is definitely possible to take an existing remedial program and to transform it into something different and better, for students and for instructors" (40). Recent efforts to address the basic writing crisis at such far-flung places as UC Berkeley and the City College of New York have much to teach us. Most notable among the lessons is that for the program presented here to succeed, the necessary changes must occur from the ground up, and from the top down. Far too often, concerns about curriculum, pedagogy, and composition theory are left out of administrative policy discussions about remediation. But just as

often, we in basic writing and reading classrooms are content to ask questions only about curriculum and pedagogy and to ignore the complex ways that remediation interacts with vested institutional, economic, and political interests. For this new approach to succeed, we must be willing to consider curricular alternatives in the context of institutional change. In short, the program presented here requires change at the level of the classroom, the program, the university, and the CSU system. While executive mandates to curtail remediation may provide the impetus for change, the basic writing profession is in a position to do much more than simply respond to these directives. Rather, we can, and must, take an active role in transforming remediation in ways that are more thoroughly grounded in theories of learning and literacy and articulated assumptions about the complex institutional practice called "basic writing." By doing so, we will get closer to the root of what it takes to successfully educate the underprepared students who will inevitably continue to find their way to the university, and we will do so in a manner that proactively defends their right to higher education.

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### **Notes**

1. Students who are "disenrolled" have a block placed on their registration. They can have their registration at SFSU reinstated if they show evidence that they have completed comparable course work at a community college within one semester of being disenrolled. After one semester, they must reapply for admission to the university. Seventeen percent of first-time freshmen admitted to SFSU in fall 2000 were disenrolled from the university in fall 2001 for failure to comply with the one-year remediation requirement. No accurate figures are currently available for how many of these students made their way back to the university.

2. SFSU offers an MA in Composition and a "Graduate Certificate in Teaching College Composition" as well as a "Graduate Certificate in Teaching Postsecondary Reading."

3. Based on our pre-2001 experimentation, the course instructors recommended a change to our grading system for the integrated course. In order to meet SFSU's first-year written composition requirement, students must pass the integrated course with a B- or better. Students who get a C or lower need to enroll in English 114, SFSU's first-year written composition course. In rare cases, some students who don't pass the course will not be allowed to enroll in English 114 and will have failed to meet the CSU remediation requirement.

4. Subject A is the University of California's equivalent to the CSU English Placement Test. All students who enter the University of California as freshmen must demonstrate their command of the English language by taking the Subject A examination (with some exemptions allowed). Those who do not pass the Subject A exam can meet the requirement by taking a specially designated composition course.

5. Enrollment in all SFSU developmental reading and writing classes is limited to 18 students, and so we had room to accommodate 180 students in the program. In fall 2001, target enrollments were down campus-wide. All writing classes with a size limit of 18 averaged 16 students per class.

6. The DTLS (Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service [MAPS Division], 1995) is a well established set of four tests designed to be used in a variety of situations ranging from large-scale screening and placement of entering students to identification of an individual's learning needs. The reading comprehension test consists of 45 questions, administered in 45 minutes; the critical reasoning test consists of 30 questions, administered in 45 minutes. We use Forms M-K-3KDT and M-K-3LDT (pre- and post-test, respectively). Because this test has been used by all faculty teaching developmental reading classes on the SFSU campus for more than twenty years, and because the reading skills it assesses are equivalent to those measured on the CSU English Placement Test [EPT], we have found it to provide the necessary detailed information with which to counsel students on their reading strengths and needs that are not provided for by the EPT. Also, over the years, we have found a high correlation between students' scores on the DTLS with placements based on EPT scores. Lastly, the DTLS normative sample includes a student population from 11 two-year colleges and 24 four-year colleges, regionally drawn across the U.S. The sample includes an ethnically diverse group of students who have been enrolled in regular and remedial/developmental courses, and a proportionate number of ESL students—a population very like the student population attending SFSU.

7. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for adult readers (Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Fourth Edition, Level AR [Adult Reading], Forms S & T, Itasco, IL: Riverside Publishing, 2000) is wide-ranging in difficulty, reflecting the great variation in reading competence in an adult population. We selected it for use in the integrated reading/writing program because it is appropriate for older readers entering college programs; its format is simple, clear, and familiar, and the content of Level AR is mature, reflecting the interests of older students. The Vocabulary Test (20 minutes) contains 45 questions, measuring word knowledge. The Comprehension Test (35 minutes) contains a total of 48 questions that probe students' understanding of passages. Some questions require the student to construct an understanding based on information that is explicitly stated in the passage; others require the student to construct an understanding based on information that is implicit in the passage. The Gates-MacGinitie Test provides important information to help teachers discover students' ineffective reading strategies and to answer representative questions such as: 1) As a group, how well do the students read? 2) Are the students, as a group, progressing in reading at about the rate one would expect? Are they catching up? 3) Has a new set of materials or procedures made any difference in how well the students read? 4) Which students may need special attention?

8. We used a modified portfolio checklist developed by Soliday and Gleason. A copy of this checklist is available from the authors.

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