The Problem of Academic Discourse: Assessing the Role of Academic Literacies in Reading Across the K-16 Continuum

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Abstract: Using a mixed methodology study, this article explores the influence of academic language comprehension on reading, writing, and academic performance at a regional comprehensive institution. We completed a comprehensive survey of 150 students in ENGL 101 and 201, asking questions about academic reading strategies and important disciplinary concepts in the majors of individual survey participants. Additionally, we conducted a phenomenological study of instructor perceptions of student reading ability in order to gain a more complete picture of the role of reading in student performance. Finally, we triangulated this information by coding and analyzing multiple writing samples from assignments specifically designed to capture student facility with academic language. In order to explore possible curricular changes, we compared our findings with theories of academic literacies and the requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our research suggests that the ongoing implementation of the CCSS provides an opportunity to reconsider and revise how universities approach academic literacies and reading across the curriculum at the university level.

National efforts to better prepare students to enter college such as the newly developed K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and initiatives to promote student success at the college level undertaken by entities like the American Association of Colleges and Universities have begun to recognize the role of academic discourse in student success across the disciplines. Overwhelmingly, academic discourse research focuses on effective writing in academic contexts. Foundational discussions of academic discourse by scholars like David Bartholomae (1985) and Patricia Bizzell (1982) frame writing as a means for entering the academic discourse community. More recent work refigures this discussion as an issue of "academic literacies" (Wardle and Downs, 2011; Russell et. al., 2009), a shift that recognizes that success with academic language in any discipline involves both writing and reading.

Building upon the notion of academic literacies, this article examines ways that instructor and student confidence in student reading ability, reading practices, and facility with academic language influences to the processes of reading and comprehension across the college curriculum, in an effort to contribute to research on the relationship between academic discourse, academic reading practices, and student success. The timeliness of this research is emphasized by the ongoing implementation of the CCSS, which focuses in part on informational texts and disciplinary language.

By shaping the picture of "college readiness," these standards offer a framework for a discussion of the ways that academic language comprehension and discourse community characteristics influence writing and reading ability at the university level. As our research suggests, student and instructor perceptions of student reading ability vary dramatically; further comparison of these perceptions with formative assessments of student writing samples and summative assessments of student academic performance adds another dimension to our understanding of what students can actually do.

An analysis of these results highlights the discrepancies between actual skills taught in K-12 schools and perceptions of those skills; by comparing expectations for academic language and literacies with the curriculum being delivered at the K-12 level (per the CCSS), these findings underscore the need for comprehensive reading across the curriculum efforts at the university level. Moreover, the CCSS offers a starting place and possible framework for developing a curriculum that will better prepare students to engage with academic texts. This article provides a model of critical reading instruction based on "academic literacies." The results of our study suggest that because of the degree to which beginning college students struggle when reading academic discourse, this approach to reading instruction should be expanded across the disciplines, extending the cross-disciplinary approach of the CCSS to the university environment.

Literature Review

While the reading habits and preferences of college students are topics of recent research, "reading" in this context generally refers to whether or not students like to read, what students prefer to read, how much literature students read, and how hyperreading influences student behavior (Hayles, 2007). Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem (2005) offer a theoretical assessment of reading practices in the composition classroom, paying specific attention to the necessity of "articulating the kinds of reading that are enacted in classrooms and the roles that readers are expected to perform within them" (p. 44). Certainly, educators across the disciplines must be engaged in the process of helping students metacognitively understand the reading tasks and situations encountered at the university and beyond. While recent studies have explored the general reading abilities and habits of college level students, we know very little as a field about how the ability or inability to read and comprehend academic language across the disciplines specifically affects student success.

Literature on reading and academic performance often focuses on student performance on standardized reading assessments. A 2008 study by Daniel Acheson, Justine Wells, and Maryellen MacDonald, for example, found an association between levels of print exposure, reading ability (identified by the authors as "sentence processing ability"), and strong verbal ACT performance. The authors suggest that students perform with more consistent effort and scorers rate in a more heavily normed fashion on standardized tests than on other types of assessments (e.g., classroom assessments, research-based assessments). One implication of this study is that standardized assessments of reading do not always correspond with other measures of reading ability. Matthew T. McCrudden and Gregory Schraw (2009) demonstrated similar findings in a study that measured reading time, text, recall, and sentence recognition. "Relevance instructions," or specific instructions about how to read a text (e.g., strategies to focus reading), do not compensate for lower reading ability or improve performance on timed assessments, they found.

Studies like these add credence to the 2006 ACT study, which suggests that almost half of all test takers fail to score at a level of verbal ability that correlates with success in college. In contrast to the two studies described above, the ACT study considers more than sentence-level comprehension abilities; it focuses on and measures the traditional features of complex texts (relationships, richness,

structure, style, vocabulary and purpose). As Alice Horning (2007) notes, these results correspond with the observations made by various scholars of composition regarding the inability of students to work with the rhetorical features of texts.

When they arrive at the university, students are often "non-compliant" with faculty expectations and reading assignments for their courses. Research by John Sappington, Kimberly Kinsey, and Kirk Munsayac (2002) suggests that students are often dishonest when reporting their own reading non-compliance. Other studies interrogate the reasons students are increasingly resistant to reading. Lei et al. (2010) compiled a comprehensive review of literature concerning instructor perceptions about why students do not read and why faculty are resistant to teaching reading. According to this study, major reasons why students do not complete assigned college readings include "a lack of reading comprehension skills, lack of self-confidence, disinterest in the course material, and an underestimation of reading importance" (Reasons Students Do Not Read Often section, para. 4). Faculty do not assign readings for the following reasons: "possibility of offending students and its impact on student evaluations of instructors, the developmental (remedial) level of students, the motivational level of students and instructors, as well as the expectations and beliefs of instructors" (Reasons Instructors Do Not Strongly Reinforce Student Reading section, para. 10). Student ability, interest, and metacognition of the importance of reading skills are crucial factors in a successful reading curriculum.

Students' inability to read well can have consequences beyond their ability to read and understand academic texts. Indeed, multiple studies exist that discuss the importance of reading skills to overall college success. John Sappington et al. (2002), for instance, found that class discussions suffer from students' neglect of the reading material. This study and others (Clump et. al., 1988) demonstrate a close correlation between students' understanding of in-class work (e.g., lectures, group work) and their understanding of reading material. In a similar fashion, studies by Chickering (2004), Elder and Paul (2003), and Bass and Lincoln (2008) have documented the significant relationship between close reading and critical thinking skills.

Although reading across the curriculum programs (and studies of their effectiveness) are not plentiful, some work has been published about their development and implementation. Horning's (2007) influential argument for the necessity of teaching reading at the college level outlines four strategies for implementing a reading across the curriculum program: understanding reading, overt teaching of critical reading skills, providing opportunities for practice, and learning to read in specific disciplines. Her proposal connects reading practices to concerns about digital texts as well as concerns about plagiarism. Similarly, Kim and Anderson (2011) described their reading across the curriculum program at Fayetteville State University and detailed the resulting changes faculty made to their teaching strategies "including multi-genre response, dialogical journaling, contextual concept explanation, 'quickwrites,' [and] reading summary." Pre-test and post-test data suggested improvement in student abilities, and anecdotal faculty response corroborated these findings. Several studies also address a lack of focus on student reading practices across the disciplines at the university level (Burchfield and Sappington, 2000; Connor-Greene, 2005; Fernald, 2001; Lei et al., 2010).

This collection of literature on student preparedness for college-level reading and the attempts of universities to meet student reading needs suggests, as Horning notes, that focused efforts to improve student ability are needed. Reading ability influences student success in the classroom and beyond; however, underprepared students regularly enroll in college courses where faculty expect them to possess skills they have not yet developed. Few reading across the curriculum efforts exist to develop these skills. The research that has been conducted on reading largely highlights the failure of K-12 and university systems to help students enhance their reading abilities. For these reasons, a

K-16 collaboration is crucial to understanding how to best help students succeed in K-12, college, and non-academic settings. Although educators understand how important reading is, they cannot craft programs to help students when a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between K-12 and college curriculum is absent. The emergence of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the K-12 educational system and "academic literacies" (ACLITS) in the higher education system provides an opportunity to make these connections in order to improve student reading ability across the K-16 continuum.

ACLITS and the CCSS: Opportunities for K-16 Collaboration

The field of composition and rhetoric regularly engages with concepts of literacy. As noted by Doug Downs (2011), the field of writing and rhetoric once focused theoretically and pedagogically on the concept "discourse communities" but is now shifting towards to the study of "academic literacies" (ACLITS) as way to better initiate first-year students into the college environment. Emerging from New Literacy Studies, ACLITS denotes a specific approach to the teaching and study of student writing in higher education that focuses on "institutional practices, power relations and identities" (Russell, et. al., 2009, p. 400). The shift towards ACLITS coincides with an increased awareness of the wide range of literacies that must be addressed in a first-year writing course, if such a course is to promote "student success." Information literacy, technological literacy, critical literacy, and "traditional literacy" (the ability to write and read) all must be addressed in the first-year composition course.

While situated within the discourse of composition and rhetoric, the ACLITS model also provides a framework for theorizing and teaching literacies across the disciplines. The emergence of first-year experience and first-year seminar programs has underscored the fact that explicit instruction on study skills, life skills, and even health and wellness can effectively impact student success. These abilities, skills and topics can be understood as essential to understanding and effectively navigating the university environment; as such, they can all be understood as important academic literacies, crucial to the success of each student who enters college. The concept of academic literacies is not discipline-specific; ACLITS provides a set of skills or literacies that support academic learning across all subjects and offers a framework for connecting academic discourse/learning to life beyond the university.

Russell et al. (2009) note that "ACLITS has focused on research and theory thus far, describing practices and understanding them theoretically. It is just entering into large-scale pedagogy and reform efforts" (p. 396). Interestingly, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), currently undergoing implementation in K-12 environments across 45 states, the District of Columbia, and 4 territories, offers a starting point for curricular and pedagogical reform. As we will discuss, the CCSS emphasize the importance of integrating the teaching of reading and writing skills across the K-12 curriculum; these standards outline the skills taught in K-12 and offer opportunities for the implementation of an ACLITS-based reading across the curriculum effort. CCSS efforts demonstrate that K-12 educators and administrators are working to address concerns with reading across the disciplines; universities must be prepared to build on the changing skill sets of students, and ACLITS offers a framework for the reading across the curriculum efforts that will be necessary to meet the needs of future students.

The CCSS developed out of a state-led effort to identify and promote best practices in K-12 education while standardizing education across states and communities to ensure that more students will be prepared for higher education and workforce participation. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the

initiative, and educators vetted the standards during development. They meet the following criteria. They are:

- aligned with expectations for college and career success;
- clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn;
- consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live;
- focused on both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills; build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations;
- realistic, for effective use in the classroom; informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society;
- evidence and research-based (CCSS, 2010).

In language arts, the CCSS focus on three key ideas related to reading. First, the standards focus on progressive development and acquisition of reading comprehension skills throughout the course of a student's educational experience and across all subject areas. The standards also "mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare" (CCSS, 2010). Finally, the standards ask educators to focus on both literary and "informational texts"; previous standards were often heavily reliant on literary texts. It is also important to note that the standards require both reading and composing in digital environments. While the language arts standards have met some criticism for their "Great Books" emphasis, the inclusion of informational texts has the potential to serve as a building block for the aforementioned ACLITS proposal.

These informational texts, as defined in the CCSS, are cross- and inter-disciplinary; they rely upon discipline-specific knowledge and language. In other words, the reading of literary texts requires only a knowledge of literary discourse, while the reading of, for example, a newspaper article on American economic woes requires some knowledge of terms and ideas from a variety of disciplines. As students move from K-12 to the college environment, an ACLITS model reinforces and further develops student facility with cross-disciplinary discourse by adding curriculum on academic language, discourse, reading, and writing. A college curriculum—for both reading and writing—should be cross-disciplinary and acknowledge that reading, like writing, is not an autonomous act, separate from cultural and material contexts. Although critics might argue that the CCSS endorse a study skills and/or socialization model, we contend that the CCSS will prepare students to better participate in the type of inquiry demanded by ACLITS.

The CCSS English Language Standards emphasize the importance of academic language and have shifted the focus in the K-12 English classroom from the reading of literary texts to informational texts that students are more likely to encounter in the university. Absent from the standards for reading (and writing), however, is any explicit mention of the relationship between language use and power. Also missing are mentions of the skills and knowledge necessary to understand the ways that academic research is conducted, constructed, and communicated. These are the tasks that our students come to the university to learn, and they are also the tasks with which students have little prior experience. ACLITS, then, expands upon the skills students obtain in K-12 because it adds new skills in the interpretation and construction of academic language while emphasizing the relationship between academic reading and cultural forces beyond the classroom; however, as our research demonstrates, instruction in ACLITS must be an explicit effort that is carried across the curriculum.

Within this context, our study seeks to examine the ways that the CCSS might offer insight into both the focus on reading in our current first-year writing curriculum and throughout the overall curriculum at our university. The implementation of the CCSS will change the set of abilities and confidences our students bring to the university classroom; we must proactively adjust our curriculum. The current push to implement CCSS provides us with both a lens and an opportunity to rethink reading practices in higher education. Research on practices at our institution underscores the importance of responding to the changing practices in K-12 education.

Context and Methodology

Our study was conducted at a mid-sized (approximately 12,000 students) regional comprehensive university. The university is the most racially and economically diverse university in the state. Many of its students come from lower to lower-middle class backgrounds, as just under 40% of students come from families that make under $50,000 a year. In the 2008-2009 academic year, 72% of students received financial aid. This university also has the highest percentage of first-generation college students in the region; in 2008, 50% of entering first-year students would be the first in their family to earn a college degree. The school draws a majority of its population from the immediate area, which includes a nearby urban center and the surrounding rural, agricultural-based communities.

The school has the lowest admission standards of any four-year university in the state and charges less for tuition than any of the local community colleges. The average entering SAT score in 2008-2009 was 977. (For comparison, in the same academic year, the average SAT score of students in the 25th percentile enrolled at the state's flagship university was 1100.) As such, it is safe to conclude that this four-year university has the highest percentage of under-prepared students in the state. It can also be said safely that this institution has a higher percentage of under-prepared students than the average four-year research university, although it is comparable to other regional comprehensive universities.

Much of the responsibility for acculturating first-year students to the university is delegated to the English Composition Program. While the institution's mission is to provide college access for underrepresented and first-generation student populations, a first-year experience program that seeks to ease the transition of such students into the academic community has yet to be established. Further, the university lacks a Writing Across the Curriculum program that could help students maintain the academic skills gained in a first-year experience program. The English Composition Program therefore seeks to provide courses that not only teach writing, but also effectively introduce and sustain student engagement in academic discourse practices such as reading and research. The first course in the English Composition sequence (ENGL 101) focuses on enabling students to read, read critically, and discuss academic (including peer-reviewed) texts. The second course in the sequence, Advanced English Composition (ENGL 201), requires students to engage with an academic conversation (ideally within each student's field of study) and produce original research in relation to that conversation. This curriculum was created and implemented in 2010.

The curricular unit most pertinent to this study, critical reading, is currently found in the university's freshman composition program. However, the approach to reading instruction in this unit could certainly be transferred and implemented across the disciplines. This critical reading curriculum is used as an example in this article because it is the only example of an approach to explicit instruction in reading skills currently occurring at the institution studied. The unit is focused on teaching students to read and respond in an exam setting to a range of academic and popular texts focused on the themes of literacy, language, education, and power. The content of the unit originated in the

University of Oklahoma Composition Program. The original unit was primarily intended to teach the writing abilities needed to successfully complete a college level essay exam; this unit has now been revised with a central focus on reading skills. This current curriculum establishes an ACLITS approach to the teaching of reading and application of academic discourse at the college level, with the majority of lesson plan activities focused on strategies for reading, analyzing and retaining complex academic material.

The first lesson requires students, via classroom annotation and discussion of an assigned academic article, to find key words and define them. The second lesson focuses on the discussion of key claims and concepts in another article. The next two lessons provide students the opportunity to synthesize and apply these keywords, claims, and concepts through the creation of indexes and study guides. The students are asked to read a variety of academic articles that explore literacy as a contested term, dependent upon the goals of those in power who seek to define it (e.g., C.H. Knoblauch's "Literacy and the Politics of Education" and Robert Yagelski's "Abby's Lament," from his book, Literacy Matters). The students also read about the contested cultures and processes of the institution of higher education itself, as well as role that language and literacy can play in creating individual identity (e.g., an excerpt of Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands).

An effort is made to connect these readings with student experiences. Some of the students at our institution can identify with Abby, the disaffected high school student who doesn't think that she or literacy itself matters much at all in a world where many young people feel powerless. Our institution has a significant population of Chicano migrant workers who may be able to identify with Anzaldúa's struggle to find herself in an American culture that defines literacy narrowly in terms of functionality and performance. All of the reading that students do in this unit, while it is mostly academic, is connected in one way or another, to the position and experience of the college student him/herself.

The majority of our inquiry focuses on the efficacy of ACLITS instruction in this English 101 course. However, we continue this approach in ENGL 201, where students use the skills from ENGL 101 to write an academic study in the discipline of their choosing. Their project for the course is broken down into three smaller assignments: a literature review, a unique analysis of artifacts, and an argument/conclusion. Prior to choosing a topic and beginning research, the course includes a unit specifically on academic research and reading, designed to refresh student understanding and facility with the protocols of academic research learned in ENGL 101.

We initially undertook the research in this study as an attempt to look at the attitudes and experiences of students in our composition classes; however, we quickly realized that our study resulted in implications for curricular reading practices beyond the writing classroom. Moreover, our institution is a participant in the Affinity Network, a group of colleges given the task of investigating and easing the transition from K-12 to college in light of the CCSS, and our research revealed an opportunity to harness the "reading across the curriculum" efforts emerging in the K-12 environment for benefit in the college classroom.

Using a mixed methodology study, we explored the influence of academic language comprehension on reading, writing, and academic performance at our regional comprehensive institution. After undergoing review by our Institutional Review Board, we completed a comprehensive survey of 150 students in ENGL 101 and 201, asking questions about academic reading strategies and important disciplinary concepts in the majors of individual survey participants. Additionally, we conducted a phenomenological study of instructor perceptions of student reading ability in order to gain a more complete picture of the role of reading in student performance. Finally, we triangulated this information by coding and analyzing multiple writing samples from assignments specifically designed to capture student facility with academic language. We analyzed student writing to

supplement survey data about student strategies and instructor perceptions with information about student performance on writing tasks that required the reading and application of academic language. Specifically, we examined these writing samples in order to investigate how well students comprehended, summarized, and analyzed readings that involved academic discourse, how well students were able to use (in their own writing) the academic terminology from these readings, and how this performance compared to student and instructor perceptions of student ability. In order to make suggestions for possible curricular changes, we compared our findings with theories of academic literacies and the requirements of the CCSS.

Results

Our study includes three components: a student survey, an instructor survey, and an analysis of student writing samples. The results appear below for each component, and appendices appear for the two surveys (Appendix A: Student Survey and Appendix B: Instructor Survey). We analyze the results in the Discussion section.

Results: Student Survey

The student survey questions fall into three categories: student perceptions of ability, student perceptions of education/exposure, and student accounts of reading experiences. Of 150 ENGL 101 and 201 students surveyed, 45% (67) were freshmen, 34.2% (51) were sophomores, 14.8% (22) were juniors, and 6.7% (10) were seniors at the time of the study. ENGL 101 students comprised 44.3% (66) of the participants, while ENGL 201 students comprised 55.7% (83). Students who had taken both courses were asked 31 questions regarding both courses; students only taking one course took an abbreviated survey, including 27 questions.

Eight questions on the survey specifically involved student perceptions of reading ability. On four of the eight questions (Q6, Q7, Q10, Q11), more than 70% of students report above average confidence in their abilities to succeed at college-level reading tasks (Table 1).

Table 1. Student Perceptions of Reading Ability

Question	Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident
Q6. Rate your confidence in your ability to read college level materials.	30 (20.5%)	72 (49.3%)	31 (21.2%)	15 (10.3%)	4 (2.7%)
Q7. Rate your confidence in your ability to read high school level materials.	94 (64.8%)	41 (28.3%)	9 (6.2%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)
Q10. Rate your confidence in your ability to write college level materials.	22 (15.0%)	59 (40.1%)	47 (32.0%)	18 (12.2%)	4 (2.7%)

| Q11. Rate your confidence in your ability to write high school level materials. | 81 (55.1%) | 53 (36.1%) | 12 (8.2%) | 5 (3.4%) | 0 (0.0%) |

Two of the questions (Q8 and Q12) concerned ability in comparison with peer ability. When asked to rate their writing skills in relation to their peers' skills, 50% (73) of students rated themselves higher than their peers, while an additional 41.1% (60) rated themselves as similar to their peers (Table 2).

Table 2. Student Assessment of Reading Ability in Comparison to Peers

Question	Very Strong	Strong	Similar	Fair	Poor
Q8. When it comes to college level reading, how strong are your reading skills in relation to your peers?	20 (13.8%)	54 (37.2%)	61 (42.1%)	12 (8.3%)	3 (2.1%)
Q12. When it comes to college level writing, how strong are your writing skills in relation to your peers?	14 (9.6%)	59 (40.4%)	60 (41.1%)	17 (11.6%)	2 (1.4%)
Q10. Rate your confidence in your ability to write college level materials.	22 (15.0%)	59 (40.1%)	47 (32.0%)	18 (12.2%)	4 (2.7%)
Q11. Rate your confidence in your ability to write high school level materials.	81 (55.1%)	53 (36.1%)	12 (8.25%)	5 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)

The results of a similar question asking students to rate their reading abilities in comparison with the abilities of their peers were comparable, with 51% (74) rating themselves above their peers and an additional 42.1% (61) rating themselves as similar. An additional question (Q5) asked students to rate how often vocabulary or academic language inhibited their ability to read assigned work in college courses. Of students responding, 33.3% (49) chose "Sometimes," while 42.8% (63) chose "Rarely" or "Never."

The survey included eight questions on student exposure to reading and writing instruction. Of ENGL 201 completers surveyed, 88.3% (65) report being more than sufficiently prepared to read college-level materials after their ENGL 201 course (Q20). Moreover, 79.4% (64) suggest that ENGL 201 produced some change in their reading strategies (Q26). Of participants who completed ENGL 101, 60.6% (88) report more than sufficient preparation by their ENGL 101 courses for reading college-level materials (Q19). ENGL 101 students also report change in their reading strategies as a result of the course, with 61.2% (87) reporting "Some Change" or "Significant Change" (Q25). The survey also included a question (Q27) about the attempt of instructors to incorporate the extra-curricular interests of students into college course readings, which 83% (122) of respondents suggest they "Usually" or "Always" do.

An additional question inquired about student exposure to academic, peer-reviewed research. During the quarter of the survey, 4.7% (7) students reported that 16+ peer-reviewed articles were assigned in all of their courses combined (Q28). An additional 28.4% (42) students reported that 10-15 articles were assigned, 48.6% (72) reported that 4-9 articles were assigned, and 8.1% (12) reported that less than 3 were assigned. Several students (14.9% or 22 students) were unsure.

The remaining questions concerned student experiences with reading and writing (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Usefulness of Academic Reading

Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Q13. How often do you finish the reading for your college courses?	48 (32.7%)	69 (46.9%)	29 (19.7%)	5 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Q29. How often do you use the reading skills from high school in classes for your major?	6 (7.2%)	19 (22.9%)	26 (31.3%)	23 (27.7%)	13 (15.7%)
Q30. How often do you use the reading skills from ENGL 201 in classes for your major?	11 (13.0%)	33 (39.8%)	32 (38.6%)	7 (8.4%)	4 (4.8%)
Q31. How often do you enjoy reading materials for your college courses?	3 (2.0%)	36 (24.5%)	72 (49.0%)	35 (23.8%)	5 (3.4%)

Table 4. Completion of Academic Reading Assignments

Question	All	Most	Some	Little	None
Q14. How much of the reading for your ENGL 101 class did you finish each week?	58 (40.3%)	56 (38.9%)	26 (18.1%)	6 (4.2%)	3 (2.1%)
Q15. How much of the reading for courses in your major do you finish each week?	55 (37.7%)	60 (41.1%)	25 (17.1%)	3 (2.1%)	8 (5.5%)
Q16. How much of the reading for courses outside of your major do you finish each week?	40 (27.4%)	84 (57.5%)	20 (13.7%)	5 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Q22. How much of the reading for your ENGL 201 class did you finish each week?	3 (3.6%)	19 (22.9%)	29 (34.9%)	22 (26.5%)	13 (15.7%)

High school reading skills appear somewhat useful in college-level readings, with 61.4% (51) reporting that they "Always," "Usually," or "Sometimes" employ them when reading for their major (Q29). In ENGL 101, additional general education courses, major courses, and for all courses, more

than 75% of students reported finishing their course readings "All" or "Most" of the time (Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16). However, in ENGL 201, only 36.5% (22) of students report completing most or all of their assigned readings (Q22). Yet, 91.7% (76) report that they use the reading strategies from ENGL 201 in their majors (Q30). Less than 30% of students (39) report that they "Always" or "Usually" enjoy the readings for their courses (Q31).

The survey also included several open-ended questions. One of the questions (Q24) asked students to define academic, peer-reviewed research. Of 142 students who responded to the question, 36 (25%) answered the question correctly. Correct answers included responses that identified academic research as research conducted by scholars and reviewed by other scholars for publication. Examples appear below:

> Academic (or peer-reviewed) research is research material, such as studies and papers, that follows certain standards set by academic journals and are tested and reviewed by said journals in order to qualify for publishing.

> Academic, peer-reviewed research is research done on a specific subject within one or more fields of study. When the research is done it is supposed to abide by the rules of research laid out by those fields in advance. Before publishing, it is reviewed by others within the field of study to make sure that the research has been done accordingly and is as empirical or unbiased as possible. After publishing, it is a reflection on the views and information available for others within the academic community to use in their research.

> I understand academic, peer-reviewed research to be scholarly essays or writings by someone who is recognized as having knowledge in the field of the topic of the paper, that has been reviewed by other scholars in said field.

> A process of review in a specific academic field where professionals in that field review the [sic] and replicate the work of others to give it validity and credibility and to maintain academic standards within that field.

Incorrect responses often identified academic, peer-reviewed literature as papers that underwent a process of in-class peer review.

> Peer-review is a self-regulation by a profession or other students in your class. This also helps you know what you needs [sic] to be improved with your writing skills. [sic]

> A paper that has been reviewed by your peers in class.

> Scholarly research that has also been reviewed by your scholars of your age group.

Incorrect responses also often emphasized the "truth" or "correctness" of academic, peer-reviewed literature:

> Because it is acedemic [sic] and peer reviewed, nothing untrue can get through and the source can therefore be trusted.

> Academic, peer-reviewed research is research that is researched and found to be true. It is revised to make sure of accuracy and published academically meaning it is a trusted and proven source.

It id [sic] not biased, it is just the facts.

Academic, peer-reviewed research is when a study is done about a certain function in any academia and upon completion of the research, it is then looked over to determine if the data is correct and that there are very little mistakes or none at all

The survey included two questions (Q17, Q18) about challenges faced by students as readers and writers of college-level texts. Of 146 students responding, 11% (16) identified length of texts as a challenge to college-level reading, and 9% (13) suggested that retention of information was a challenge. Interest in reading material was a challenge cited by 16% (23) of students. The two most common challenges cited were comprehension, mentioned by 60% (87) of students, and vocabulary, mentioned by 58% (85) of students. Representative responses include:

One challenge I face is trying to understand the text to the best of my ability, especially when there are words in a text that I don't know the meaning of. Another challenge I faced was to read the text fluidly. Sometimes, when many facts are listed in one sentence, it is often difficult to understand which fact goes with which study and reading the text often becomes choppy and unintelligible. A third challenge I faced was to imagine what it is I am reading, which is similar to using your imagination when reading a novel or something interesting.

I feel like the structure and words the college level texts use is so far off from my ability to write like that. I read them and think "Am I supposed to write like this" If so, I wouldnt [sic] have a clue how to.

Boring, Lengthy, and Vocabulary

My vocabulary isn't as strong as it should be. Im [sic] generally a slow reader which gets me in truble [sic] if I am assigned to read a large amount. I don't [sic] always comprehend everything so i [sic] am sometimes having to re-read.

As writers of college-level texts, 14% (21) students identified grammar as an issue, 11% (16) suggested that thesis development was a challenge, 12% (17) mentioned procrastination/time commitments, and 14% (21) mentioned topic development. Another 11% (16) identified structure as a challenge, and 10% (14) listed research. The largest category involved writing to please the teacher or satisfy the prompt, identified by 28% (41) of students responding. Vocabulary was listed by 20% (29) as an issue. Representative responses are included below:

As a college writer, a challenge for me was to use transitions in my writing so that each paragraph flowed easily from the next. Another problem I have had is avoiding common, boring words in my writing. The third challenge is to sit down and do a lot of reasearch for the required paper and do more than what is expected, so that my paper would turn out well.

College-level is very different from high school writings with a major emphasis on thesis, transitions and topic sentences where as in high school the focus was more on the mechanics of our writing

1. The vocabulary is also a big challenges for my writing. The essay which I can take home is more simple, because I can look up the new words using dictionary. The essay exam

will be a problem with me. 2. Don't have enough material. I always use internet to search articles and web pages which are helpful. However, if I need to refer to a book, I must spend a lot time to read it to find useful information

Motivation to do the assignment. Not being biased about a particular viewpoint. Conforming to the views of the opinionated teachers.

Results: Instructor Survey

In a separate survey, we asked instructors of the courses in which the above ENGL 101 and 201 survey participants are/were enrolled to rank student ability to successfully complete the reading and writing tasks central to the first-year writing courses at our institution. These questions fell into two categories: questions about confidence and questions about the efficacy of our classes. While 100% (12) of instructors surveyed indicated that ENGL 201 prepares students to read college-level materials "Very Well" (33%), "Well" (33%), or "Sufficiently" (33%) (Q5), 58% (6) of instructors were less than "Sufficiently Confident" in their students' ability to read college-level materials (Q7). As Table 5 indicates, 58% (7) of instructors speculated that their students were less than "Sufficiently Confident" in their own abilities to read college-level materials (Q6).

Table 5. Instructor Confidence in Student Reading Ability

Question	Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident
Q6. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to read college-level materials.	0 (0.0%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (25.0%)	7 (58.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Q7. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to read college-level materials.	0 (0.0%)	4 (33.3%)	2 (16.7%)	6 (50%)	0 (0.0%)
Q12. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to write college-level materials.	0 (0.0%)	3 (25.0%)	6 (50.0%)	3 (25%)	0 (0.0%)
Q13. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to write college-level materials.	2 (16.7%)	5 (41.7%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (41.7%)	1 (8.3%)

When rating their confidence in their students' abilities to write college-level materials, 50% (6) of instructors were less than "Sufficiently Confident" in their students' abilities (Q13); 75% (9) of instructors speculated that their students felt more than "Sufficiently Confident" in their own abilities to write college-level materials (Q12).

All of the instructors surveyed suggested that academic vocabulary inhibits student reading ability (Q14), with 58% (7) of instructors reporting that vocabulary is "Always" or "Usually" an issue. When asked how well ENGL 101 students analyze or synthesize academic reading material in their own

writing, 55% (6) of instructors reported that they analyze and synthesize poorly (Q15). When asked the same question about ENGL 201 students, 100% of instructors report that they perform at least "Sufficiently" (Q16). One could infer that this suggests improvement between the courses; however, we do not make that inference, due to the small instructor sample-size.

Results: Assessment Analysis

In order to triangulate our understanding of student reading abilities, we also undertook an independent analysis of randomly selected student writing samples from the aforementioned Essay Exam unit in the ENGL 101 courses involved in this study. Without looking at the grades given by instructors for the samples, we reviewed them for six criteria related to the scope of this project. A chart with average scores appears below. We ranked the essays on a scale of Unsatisfactory (1) to Exemplary (5). The average in each of the categories was below a 3, and the average for all categories was 2.25. The results appear in Table 6.

Table 6. Essay Exam Evaluation Rubric

Fig. 1: Essay Exam Evaluation Rubric	# of 1's	# of 2's	# of 3's	# of 4's	# of 5's	Total
1. Usage of academic/disciplinary terms and keywords is effective. Demonstrates understanding of key academic concepts related to topic under study.	0	5	6	1	0	2.67
2. Summary of academic readings is effective, demonstrates comprehension of academic text(s) under consideration.	1	2	9	0	0	2.67
3. Analysis of academic readings is effective, demonstrates ability to examine, make inferences and/or make supported claims about academic text(s) under consideration.	1	8	2	1	0	2.25
4. Synthesis of academic readings is effective, demonstrates ability to recognize connections, patterns and differences amongst the academic texts under consideration.	3	5	2	2	0	2.25
5. Evaluation of academic readings is effective, demonstrates ability to take an evaluative position on academic text(s) under consideration.	1	8	3	0	0	2.17
6. Demonstrates ability to connect personal experience to academic text(s) under consideration.	8	2	2	0	0	1.5
Overall average	14	30	24	4	0	2.25

When assessing the students' usage of academic/disciplinary terms and keywords, "literacy" was the most commonly referenced disciplinary term. Students did a sufficient job in most cases defining it according to the ideas represented in the readings. Representative quotes include:

> Literacy is thought of as a tool to help one get ahead while in actuality the people trying to get ahead are being suppressed by the education they are receiving, diminishing opportunity.

> Because of the classes being so different they all have different definitions of what literacy is. For the one percent and the upper class literacy is just a tool that they all have on their tool belt that in a way sets them above everyone else …. The middle class would see literacy as something to strive for that opens up your mind to creative thinking …. Literacy to the lower class would be something that they only need for their job and once they acquired the right level or literacy they don't need anymore.

> Knoblauch describes four types of literacy such as cultural, critical, liberal, and functional.

When summarizing articles, students chose to use quotes longer than 3 lines in a paragraph-long summary 50% of the time. Excessive long quotations were a feature of almost all of the exams we analyzed. For example, one student used two quotes in quick succession:

> C. H. Knoblauch said in their essay, "The ultimate value of language lies in its utilitarian capacity to pass information back and forth for economic or other material gain" (3). They also included later on in the essay, "literacy also includes an awareness of cultural heritage" (4).

This quote is typical of the summary within exams, as it was not followed by any analysis of the quotes. It is interesting to look at the complexity of the words in the quotation: "utilitarian capacity" and "cultural heritage," for example, are difficult concepts, and one must wonder if the quotes have been chosen for their complexity and ability to portray the student as having more facility with language than s/he actually possesses. Other characteristics of student summary, represented by the quote below, tended to "make informal" the arguments of the articles.

> There are 3 theories that are in Menand's live and learn. Theory 1, go to school get good grades no questions asked & you'll get somewhere. Theory 2, go to college to find out what you are looking to do & become an informed cultural person. Theory 3, Already know what is your designed job & go vocational with no need for college.

The academic language used, in other words, often involves quotations during the summary process; when it doesn't, student language seems very informal and simplified.

Few of the exams we reviewed contained synthesis; typically, each devoted a paragraph to summarizing (and sometimes analyzing) each of the articles they sought to use in support of their answer to the questions. When attempts at synthesis do appear, they often lack substance:

> Overall, Knoblauch, Yagelski, and Menand have some similarities and diffrences in between them.

As previously mentioned, students often mention several authors in the same answer; however, they structure their responses according to article/source, rather than theme or pattern.

Evidence for the last two points of the rubric often appeared in tandem. All of the work surveyed offers evaluations of the articles only through the lens of personal experience. However, these evaluations were often platitudinal or surface-level. Representative examples include:

> College students face problems just like everyone around us.
>
> Being part of this Information Age is rather difficult but like Yagelski, if looked at in a positive way, we are able to accomplish anything.
>
> Of Menand's theories, I liked Theory 2 the best because as a student in a college like anyone else "we want to actually learn" We want the higher education to be available to all the Americans, but we also want people to deserve the grades we receive.

Students evaluated on the basis of what resonated with them, rather than on a disciplinary or academic basis.

A program-wide analysis of grades for the essay exam assignment suggests that students fall short of instructor expectations. The majority of instructors who participated in our study reported that their students averaged below a "B" grade on the Essay Exam. In other words, when students were tested on their understanding of academic readings, after extensive preparation on the texts themselves as well as on essay exam writing skills, a significant portion of students performed at a "C" level. We can report that anecdotal evidence, based on discussions with these instructors, suggests that this performance was below the expectations of the instructors. This performance also likely falls short of student expectations, considering that well over the majority of students express confidence in their ability to read academic texts. The grades for the unit are based on the criteria provided by individual instructor and may or may not correspond with the above criteria used for the purposes of this study. Regardless, while the majority of students pass the unit, few excel.

Discussion

The goal of this project was to survey student facility and confidence related to academic reading and writing, operating from the premise that academic language requires specialized skills and information beyond those taught in K-12 education. In order to focus our analysis, we hypothesized that we would find evidence to support the contentions that, even after a two-course sequence focusing on academic discourse, students: 1. have difficulty defining and understanding the purposes of academic writing, 2. exhibit weaknesses in comprehending academic language when reading, and 3. demonstrate an inability to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate academic arguments via supported claims. Discussion of the survey and assessment results follows, including an analysis of the ways those results support or disprove our contentions.

Much of the research on reading at the college level has focused on the reading habits of college students and/or strategies for helping students improve as readers at the college level. We began with the idea that work still needed to be done on the weaknesses of new college students as readers, so as to better address those weaknesses with appropriate pedagogical supports. We operated from the premise that academic discourse itself, since it is unique to the college level, plays a significant role in the success of college-level readers, and that college-level reading needed to be examined in relation to this particular discourse (or set of discourses).

In brief, the results of our survey suggest that, upon entering college, students have significant trouble reading academic discourse, despite having high confidence in their abilities. They are confused about what academic discourse is, and they don't understand academic vocabulary. They also don't understand the purposes, conventions, and expectations of academic writing. As the essay exam analysis suggests, ENGL 101 and 201 students have difficulty when they are asked to read and then apply academic reading material in written assignments. They can summarize academic

discourse but can't analyze, synthesize, or evaluate effectively. Some evidence suggests that this ability improves by the time students complete ENGL 201; however, students still exhibit a need for more instruction of these skills. As previously noted, they simultaneously express confidence in their ability to demonstrate these skills while they identify these skills as challenges.

Survey results and the analysis of student writing indicate that students do not have a clear idea of what "academic discourse" is. They are confused about the purpose and expectations of academic discourse, as evidenced by the students who identified peer-reviewed scholarship incorrectly. It isn't necessarily surprising that students are confused about this term. This confusion indicates a need to strengthen student understanding of the processes and purposes of writing, reviewing, and publishing academic discourse. If composition is to be taught in an academic literacies model of the kind suggested by Lea and Street (1998), in which we expect students to understand the processes of power within the institutions in which they are involved, instruction on the processes of academic publishing must be provided explicitly so that students can better grasp the process by which participants in the academic discourse community earn credibility and power. The disciplinary and informal use of the term "peer review" in composition classrooms appears to confuse students when we bring up the term in the context of scholarship.

Most importantly, we should consider the ways that teaching students about academic discourse is an issue for the disciplines; the best place for students to obtain academic literacies and their attendant reading skills is in their majors after building a foundation in more general courses like ENGL 101 and 201. Further study on students throughout their college careers is needed to fully support this contention, although our research clearly suggests that ENGL 101 and 201 are usually only able to teach foundational concepts.

Survey data and the analysis of student writing suggest that academic vocabulary also presents a challenge to our students. Students identified vocabulary as one of the biggest challenges in their effort to successfully read academic material. Moreover, students appear to need help dealing strategically with the new and—to them—strange words they frequently encounter in college level reading assignments. It is essential that students be taught to identify key terms that hold particular disciplinary value in texts that are filled with unfamiliar, difficult words. We cannot expect students to identify and understand disciplinary-specific academic terminology without instruction on doing so, just as we don't expect students to write effectively in academic genres without explicit instruction, guided practice, and handbooks.

The analysis of student writing suggests that while beginning college students, when taught to do so, can adequately summarize academic discourse, they do not adequately analyze, synthesize, or evaluate it. In a unit devoted to academic reading strategies, first-year students were able to write essay exam responses that, in most cases, contained an adequate summary of the academic reading that had been completed. Students, however, could not adequately apply the content of the articles in their writing, even with extended class discussion of the articles in question, as well as explicit instruction on writing strategies meant to help students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate academic material in an essay exam environment. Analysis of the articles under consideration was often shallow or platitudinal; it was also frequently confused, inaccurate, or based on a misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the texts in question. This finding is consistent with recent work from Sandra Jamieson, Rebecca Moore Howard and Tricia Serviss's Citation Project (2010). For example, in the Citation Project's pilot study, Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue (2010) note that in 78% of the student research papers studied, students "attributed information to a source that either did not contain that information or said something different from what the student was attributing to it" (p. 182). While the students who completed our essay exam assignment were able to summarize assigned readings, unlike the students who wrote the research papers analyzed for the Citation

Project pilot study, both sets of students demonstrated weak comprehension of academic texts, as they all failed to accurately write about scholarly readings. Synthesis of the texts under consideration for the essay exam was limited; when an exam question focused on a single text or concept, students did not draw on the other texts they had studied to support their contentions about the single text under discussion. Students also generally failed to adequately evaluate the texts under consideration. The best exam examples included thesis statements that contained an evaluative statement, followed by organized paragraphs that supported it with evidence from the texts in question. Most students did not include this kind of evaluative central claim; further, students rarely evaluated the texts under consideration unless an exam question specifically required it. Most evaluative statements were assertions of personal agreement or disagreement without further comment or analysis.

Student grades, results from the instructor survey, and instructor feedback on the Essay Exam Unit align with the above assessment of student work. The majority of instructors who responded indicated that students did not effectively analyze, synthesize, or evaluate academic discourse in this English 101 unit. Further, a majority of ENGL 101 instructors reported that student grades in our program for this unit were below a "B" average, indicating that the unit presented a significant challenge to most students entering the university.

We found a significant gap between the students' perceptions of their own ability and instructor perceptions of student ability. As noted above, 50% of instructors surveyed were sufficiently confident in their students' ability to read academic discourse. This contrasts the students' own perceptions of their ability, as well over a majority of students reported being sufficiently confident in their own ability to read academic discourse.

We cannot reasonably expect that students will enter college with a facility or even experience with academic discourse. Based on our student survey, we know that students are regularly assigned academic reading in their college courses across the disciplines. The standard high school English curriculum has traditionally been focused on reading and writing literary texts. Students have not been introduced to academic discourse, peer-reviewed research or scholarly writing, nor have they read or written about such discourse. And in the future, while the CCSS may have prepared them to read critically across the disciplines, they still will not leave high school having read or written academic texts. It follows that reading college level texts will continue be a challenge for many students.

Efforts to better align K12 and college curriculum currently figure prominently in discussions surrounding college readiness and student success at the college level; we suggest that college-ready reading and college-level reading are two separate things and that the ability to read academic discourse is a college-level skill. The ability to read academic discourse needs to be taught at the college level, even for those students deemed "college-ready," beginning in first-year composition and continuing in courses across the disciplines.

In sum, an ACLITS approach offered only in a two-course writing program failed to provide students at our institution with sufficient reading skills for success in the remainder of their college courses and beyond. When left to composition courses alone, ACLITS did not succeed at our university. The CCSS provide a model for integrating reading across the curriculum at the college-level, and ACLITS offers both substance and structure for such a curriculum. ACLITS scaffolds onto the skills provided throughout the CCSS, and we know that students need more practice with academic language and discourse beyond their experiences in writing classes.

Conclusion

Our ENGL 101 and 201 curriculum, delivered in two quarters over 20 total weeks, provides a basis for students to be able to read and write academic texts, but students need more instruction related to academic reading across the disciplines. We are currently engaged in additional data gathering of instructor perceptions from courses across the disciplines, and we are using the information from this study to look longitudinally at student progress as they proceed through their college careers. Additionally, the implementation of the CCSS is ongoing, and more study will be needed. However, we do know that the CCSS acknowledge the need for reading instruction across the disciplines and provides a possible model for setting cross-disciplinary standards for academic literacies. Although they are not perfect, the CCSS present, at the very least, a way to consider the process of reading across the disciplines. In a prospective higher education model, we could use the CCSS standards as scaffolding for a cross-disciplinary curriculum that focuses on the progressive development and acquisition of reading skills, replacing the focus on cultural texts of the CCSS with a focus on academic literacies-based texts and supplanting the "informational" texts of the CCSS with academic texts.

The CCSS suggest a "spiral curriculum" model in which foundational skills are returned to in increasingly complex learning situations across the disciplines in the K-12 continuum (Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman, 2012). More specifically, for the first time in K12 education, English Language Arts (ELA) standards are embedded in disciplines outside of English; teachers in science, technical subjects, and history/social studies will now be expected to prepare students to meet ELA standards in their own disciplines. This spiral model of curriculum and assessment has also had a long-standing presence in composition and WAC studies; the curricular approach has informed both the early development of WAC programs (Spear, 1983) and the recent development of first-year writing programs (Phelps & Ackerman, 2010). As the CCSS already follows a spiral model of cross-disciplinary assessment similar to models followed commonly by first-year writing and WAC programs in higher education, practitioners should be able to build from the CCSS to add, parallel, college-level, Reading Across the Curriculum standards and curricula. A curriculum that follows this proposed model acknowledges the difficult task of reading college texts while adding value to (rather than repeating) the skills students learned in the K-12 environment.

Fortunately, the ACLITS model provides a means of doing so (see Appendix C for an overview of two English 101 units based on an ACLITS model). As Russell et al. (2009) suggest, ACLITS provides a useful compliment to the effective WAC program; we suggest that ACLITS should also play a key role in the effective development of any Reading Across the Curriculum program. ACLITS offers a framework for developing standards and curricula for cross-disciplinary college reading programs that build off of K-12 standards while asking students to frequently and repeatedly engage for the first time with academic texts, concepts and practices.

Perhaps most importantly, an academic literacies model engages the student not only in the practice of reading and comprehending academic texts; it also enables the student to connect such texts to his or her own experience, as well as recognize the material and cultural forces that shape both those texts and the student's own experience of them. The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (2008) indicates that students should "Understand the relationships among language, knowledge and power." The CCSS do not include this kind of student learning goal, and it is unlikely they ever will; it is the responsibility of those in higher education, then, to add this critical goal to the student learning experience across the disciplines. An ACLITS-based Reading Across the Curriculum provides a useful means for effectively building off of K-12 curriculum in order to teach new, college-level abilities that even college-ready students will not possess; specifically, it provides a means for

teaching students across the disciplines the ability to read an academic text and to understand that text as it is situated within the interplay of knowledge, language, and power.

Appendix A - Student Survey Questions

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your answers will help us become a stronger university and K-16 community.

1. Last Name:
2. Student ID:
3. Major or Prospective Major (if no major, list Undecided):
4. Level (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior):
5. How often does vocabulary or academic language inhibit your ability to read the assigned work in your college courses?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

6. Rate your confidence in your ability to read college level materials:

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

7. Rate your confidence in your ability to read high school level materials:

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

8. When it comes to college level reading, how strong are your reading skills in relation to your peers?

Very Strong	Strong	Similar	Fair	Poor

9. How often does vocabulary or academic language inhibit your ability to write the assigned papers in your college courses?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

10. Rate your confidence in your ability to write college level materials:

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

11. Rate your confidence in your ability to write high school level materials:

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

12. When it comes to college level writing, how strong are your writing skills in relation to your peers?

Very Strong	Strong	Similar	Fair	Poor

13. How often do you finish the reading for your college courses?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

14. How much of the reading for your ENGL 101 class did you finish each week?

All	Most	Some	Little	None

15. How much of the reading for courses in your major do you finish each week?

All	Most	Some	Little	None

16. How much of the reading for courses outside of your major do you finish each week?

All	Most	Some	Little	None

17. What are the most significant challenges you face as a reader of college-level texts?
18. What are the most significant challenges you face as a writer of college-level texts?
19. How well did ENGL 101 prepare you to read college level materials?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

20. How often do you use the reading skills from ENGL 101 in your other classes?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

21. How well did ENGL 201 prepare you to read college level materials?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

22. How much of the reading for your ENGL 201 class did you finish each week?

All	Most	Some	Little	None

23. How often does vocabulary or academic language inhibit your ability to read the assigned work in courses for your major?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

24. What is academic, peer-reviewed research? Define to the best of your ability.
25. How much did your reading strategies change as a result of ENGL 101?

Radical Change	Significant Change	Some Change	Little Change	No Change

26. How much did your reading strategies change as a result of ENGL 201?

Radical Change	Significant Change	Some Change	Little Change	No Change

27. How often do your college instructors attempt to connect college course readings to your interests and experiences outside of college?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

28. Approximately how many academic, peer-reviewed articles were assigned reading in your classes this *academic year*?

16+	10-15	4-9	Less than 3	Unsure

29. How often do you use the reading skills from high school in classes for your major?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

30. How often do you use the reading skills from ENGL 201 in classes for your major?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

31. How often do you enjoy reading materials for your college courses?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

Appendix B - Instructor Survey

1. Last Name
2. Student ID
3. How long have you been teaching college composition as a primary instructor of record?
4. How well does ENGL 101 prepare students to read college-level materials?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

5. How well does ENGL 201 prepare students to read college-level materials?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

6. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to read college-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

7. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to read college-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

8. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to read high school-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

9. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to read high school-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

10. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to write high school-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

11. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to write high school-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

12. Rate your students' confidence in their ability to write college-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

13. Rate your confidence in your students' ability to write college-level materials.

Very Confident	Confident	Sufficiently Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident

14. How often does the vocabulary or academic language of a text inhibit your students' ability to read the assigned work in your courses?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

15. How well do your 101 students analyze or synthesize academic reading material in their own writing?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

16. How well do your 201 students analyze or synthesize academic reading material in their own writing?

Very Well	Well	Sufficiently	Poorly	Not at All

Appendix C - ACLITS Curriculum Overview

This appendix provides two example assignment sheets from a composition course focused on reading skills that reflects the ACLITS model. Lea and Street suggest (1998) that an academic literacies approach to writing instruction encompasses two other models of writing instruction: "study skills" and "academic socialization." These assignments enable students to practice study skills necessary to success in college (annotation and test taking strategies), and provide a means for academic socialization (introducing the research process and guiding students through the reading of scholarly sources). They also reflect an ACLITS approach by situating student inquiry within cultural and ideological contexts, by asking students to relate personal experience to issues of literacy, language, education, and power.

Unit One: The Essay Exam Assignment

For this unit, we will critically read and discuss a number of academic articles on literacy, education and power. We will also learn and practice strategies for writing a successful essay exam— a type of test that is very common in the college classroom. We will read carefully, work together in groups to lead class discussions, practice essay exam strategies, and take an essay exam on the readings for the unit.

In this unit you will:

- Practice critical reading strategies, including annotation and note-taking.
- Discuss and ask questions about our assigned articles.
- Work in a group to plan and lead a class discussion on one of the articles.
- Practice strategies for reading essay exam questions, planning, and writing a successful timed essay.

- Practice strategies for studying in preparation for an exam.
- Take an essay exam on the readings we have studied discussed.

You will take many essay exams, for a wide range of classes at Eastern; after completing this unit, you should be able to strategically approach and successfully complete essay exams for any class.

Unit Two: The Researched Argument

Step 1) Analysis

You will begin the process of writing the Researched Argument essay by asking a question related to one or more of the articles we have read this quarter (in the Essay Exam Unit) and then find, carefully read, and analyze related academic texts to help you answer this question. In other words, you will use critical reading and analytical writing as tools to help you learn about and inquire into an issue raised by our reading that you care about personally.

Before you can write persuasively about a topic, you need to learn about topic—the reading that you do and the written analysis that results will provide a way to learn about the topic that you are planning to argue.

Be sure to choose a topic and question that interests you personally, something that is connected to your own experience and life. We all have experience with as least some of the issues covered by our readings: language, literacy, education, work, power— think about something we've read that really had an impact on you, and consider what kinds of further questions you could raise in relation to this reading and your own experience.

Then find sources (articles or books) related to this question or topic that can be analyzed. Read these sources carefully before analyzing them. You should ideally read and analyze academic articles related to you topic, but you can also analyze credible popular sources as well. Your analysis should result in a piece of writing that can be included as part of your Researched Argument paper. **Your analysis should**:

- Arise out of a question related to the themes covered in the Essay Exam Unit, which can, at least in part, be answered through analysis.
- Demonstrate that you've read and examined a set of texts closely, carefully, and critically.
- Be situated within the research that you have begun. Note: The final draft of this paper should include 5-6 outside sources. The research process should begin here.
- Include a clear interpretive frame through which the text(s) will be analyzed.
- Note trends and patterns that are significant in the texts, in relation to your interpretive frame. • Show a critical awareness of the authors' choices and strategies.
- Develop a clear and specific thesis that invites the reader to read the texts in the same way that you do. • Integrate textual evidence to support your thesis.
- Provide a clear and persuasive argument for your interpretation of the text.
- Incorporate peer and instructor feedback in the final version.

Step 2) The Researched Argument

For the next part of this assignment, you will build upon and add to the analysis you've done in Step 1 creating a researched argument that focuses on a central claim that is supported by reasons and evidence. In the first part of this assignment, you asked questions and then conducted analysis in

order to begin answering that question. In this second part, you will take a position on the issues raised by your analysis. Successful essays will:

1. Offer a unique thesis based upon the analysis that you conducted in Step One.
2. Use research and credible scholarly evidence to support a unique argument. At least 5-6 credible sources must be used; at least 1-2 of those sources needs to be a scholarly text.
3. Include a clear central claim (or thesis) that states your position on the topic at hand.
4. Support the central claim with reasons and evidence.
5. Consider and respond to the plausible reactions to your argument in your essay.
6. Raise questions for further study on this topic.
7. Include proper documentation of all outside sources.

References

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