

Renn, Elizabeth, Ph.D. *Toward a Theory-Based Developmental Reading Program*. (2008)  
Directed by Dr. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 145 pp.

Developmental reading programs have historically resisted intentional application of literary and rhetorical theoretical frameworks. This dissertation argues that a developmental reading program would benefit from curriculum design that is based on reading theory, specifically reception theories and rhetorical theory. Pedagogical practices based on these theories would shift the focus of reading instruction away from the text and toward the student, allowing and empowering the developmental student to take ownership of the meaning-construction that takes place during reading. By tracing the history of the developmental reading department of one community college, I am able to demonstrate why a developmental reading department would fail to rely on reading theory from the start, how a department can unify its basis in developmental education theory with reading theory, and how this will impact developmental reading students in the department.

TOWARD A THEORY-BASED DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro  
2008

Approved by

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Committee Chair

*For my mother, Louise*

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my utmost thanks to my committee chair Dr. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and my committee members Dr. Hephzibah Roskelly and Dr. Christian Moraru. Without their consistent guidance and constant support, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my friends, family members, and colleagues for all of the warm wishes, thoughts, prayers, rainbows, energy, light, crossed-fingers, and admonitions sent my way. I couldn't have done it without each and everyone one of you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The field of developmental reading has been shaped through the years by the evolving philosophies of education and human development, and is pervasive in U.S. higher education. Although remediation or preparatory courses in higher education have been documented as far back as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wyatt 13), they became primarily the purview of the community college when such systems were established in response to the G.I. Bill of 1946 (Wyatt 17). In 2004, the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that 98% of community colleges in the US offer developmental education courses (Boylan, et al 1). Often called remediation (a medical reference to an “illness” that needs a “remedy”) or basic skills, “developmental education” grew out of the educational theories emerging during the late 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Now, developmental education is a term that encompasses interventions including course work in developmental math, English, reading, and study skills, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and counseling. Organizations such as the National Center for Developmental Education (NCDE) and the National Association of Developmental Educators (NADE) have expended considerable effort to validate the field of developmental education by providing research and training opportunities for its practitioners. Numerous quantitative studies have explored the efficacy of developmental programs, and a growing body of works share best practices and suggest possible new directions for developmental education programs.

Similar to English composition's successful attempts in the 1970s - 1980s to establish itself as a valid field of study, developmental education, too, has tried to legitimize itself as a valid and necessary field of study over the past few decades, relating itself in particular to adult education theory. But being such a broad field—one that covers English, math, and reading—has seemed to limit efforts to help each area advance simultaneously. Falling under the umbrella of developmental education, developmental reading has not experienced the same rigorous investigations as compared to composition studies. While developmental English has benefited from composition theorists who address “basic writing,” there is no directly related field from which developmental reading can draw. Developmental English studies relies on the work of Mina Shaughnessy and her Errors and Expectations as the field's seminal study; Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren's How to Read a Book (1940, rev. 1972) continues to attract the attention of developmental reading educators. Although both of these works were written in the early 1970s, their theoretical frameworks are quite different: Errors and Expectations leads the field of basic writing in a new direction while How to Read a Book largely promotes a framework based on New Critical theory—a theory which both literature and composition were beginning to disengage from thirty years ago. Reception theory and the “process” approach to composition instruction led literary and composition studies away from the text as the sole container of meaning, read and written for what the product could express, toward a more holistic approach to English studies which emphasizes the reader/writer's role in how meaning is constructed with a text.

While composition theory and literary theory have evolved over the past thirty years, practices in developmental reading seem to have stagnated until recently. The battles fought in English studies over the applications of the New Critical approach are only now appearing in developmental reading.

### Argument

Due in part to the identification of reading as a study strategy, developmental reading programs have resisted intentional applications of recent literary and rhetorical theoretical frameworks found in other English studies. In this dissertation I argue that a developmental reading program would benefit from curriculum design that is based on reading theory, specifically reception theories and rhetorical theory. Pedagogical practices based on these theories would shift the focus of reading instruction away from the text and toward the student, allowing and empowering the developmental student to take ownership of the meaning-construction that takes place during reading. By tracing the history of the developmental reading department of one community college, I am able to demonstrate why a developmental reading department would fail to rely on reading theory from the start, how a department can unify its basis in developmental education theory with reading theory, and how this will impact developmental reading students in the department.

In an initial examination, developmental reading theory and other reading theories do not seem to overlap because the purposes proposed by each seem at odds. Since at least the 1920s, developmental reading has been discussed as a matter of study strategy

(Wyatt 16). Caverly, Orlando and Mullen call this “textbook study reading,” and others follow up this type of reading with discussions about metacognition and memory, strategic learning, and critical literacy. Other works discuss motivation of resistant readers, new-to-English readers, and vocabulary enhancement.<sup>2</sup> While these authors talk about ways to read strategically, very few address the underlying reading process—how students actually read—or refer to the reading process described in Frank Smith’s Understanding Reading, the foundational work for the whole-language approach to reading, as a basis for their arguments. Developmental reading educators do seem to respond, however, to the literature on developmental reading because it addresses the needs and purposes we have set as our goal. Reader-response theory, while it relate to what developmental reading instructors teach in their classes and in fact forms the basis of how they should approach reading, does not make the direct promises that developmental reading theorists do, promises of a strategic method of reading improvement for our developmental students.

One other issue that has prevented reading theory from wide-spread permeation into developmental reading is a delicate one: the qualifications of its instructors. In North Carolina, a developmental reading instructor who teaches at a community college must have a Bachelor’s degree in a field related to English or education. Applicants with Master’s degrees are preferred, but in a field where 50% - 80% of courses are taught by adjuncts, it is often difficult to find applicants with advanced degrees. Since reading theory is not a common major, most applicants and instructors are unfamiliar with the field and tend to rely on what they know about reading already or how others before them

have taught reading. If someone does hold a “reading” degree, the degree is often based in elementary education practice rather than adult literacy. The problem lies less in developmental reading instructors’ resistance to reading theory than it does to their lack of familiarity with it.

In this dissertation, I argue that reading theory, as articulated in psycholinguistic theory, reader-response theory, and rhetorical theory, do impact developmental reading programs and should be systematically considered when creating or revising new curricula. I will explore the connections between developmental reading and reader-response theory, interrogating why it is absent, how its major premises are present but largely unarticulated, and how the field can strategically apply its concepts to improve developmental reading instruction. Other works have explored the connections between reader-response theory and college composition or literature courses, but no study like this has been conducted regarding developmental reading. I will argue that an examination of the connections between reading theory and developmental reading will provide insight and a point of discussion for the continued evolution of developmental reading as a field.

### Purposes

My purposes for choosing to address this topic vary depending on my audience. First, I have discovered that many higher education professionals outside the field of developmental education do not know much about the field as a whole. My first purpose is to introduce non-developmental education faculty and administrators to developmental

education, and developmental reading in particular, and how it is influenced externally by the state and internally by its students' specific needs. I invite and encourage reading theorists to consider developmental reading's special needs in future discussions of reading theory. Second, I hope to influence developmental reading instructors directly. I have seen no other works that describe in detail the external influences to what ultimately takes place in a developmental reading classroom, and I believe that a comprehensive description of this will enlighten instructors about why and how they teach their classes. Further, I hope that this audience would gain insight into how a department can evolve by reading a close description of the evolution of my own developmental reading department at GTCC. While praising the department's efforts and the field as a whole for continuing to provide instruction without a comprehensive theoretical guide, I offer a realistic and not necessarily flattering picture of developmental reading's approach to teaching underprepared students. By exploring the transition from competency-based instruction, which emphasizes discrete skill building, to a holistic approach to instruction, which emphasizes the rhetorical aims of reading, I am able to offer a clear picture of the differences between the two and how a reading theory-based curriculum will help improve developmental reading goals in every program.

My final purpose for choosing to explore this topic is completely personal. While writing and researching the relationship between reading theory and developmental reading, I have been able to make better decisions regarding my own developmental reading program at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC). Although I did not originally study reading or adult literacy, I accepted a position as developmental reading

instructor and then became department chair. Although my background in English and rhetoric and composition has directed my thinking on developmental reading curriculum design, it did not fully prepare me to address the expected outcomes of a developmental reading program. GTCC's developmental reading department weighed heavily on measuring student ability to demonstrate discrete reading skills such as selecting main ideas and determining meaning based on context clues through repeated worksheet practice—much different than the approaches to process and assessment that I learned in UNCG's composition program. Due to the tremendous growth of GTCC's developmental reading department over the last fifteen years, the department has come to rely on a high percentage of adjunct instructors to teach its courses, so to ensure reliability and replicability, each instructor in the department taught the same subjects using the same worksheets and teaching to the same tests, many of which were created in the late 1980s when GTCC's developmental reading program became “competency based.” Sensing that the department had stagnated but not sure where to go next, the department chair who hired me explained that my goal was to update and revise the program. Therefore, the fulltime reading department faculty and I began exploring other ways that we might teach these courses to enhance students' ability to transfer what they learn in developmental reading into subsequent courses more clearly and effectively. Through data analysis and my continued research, I attempted to move the program away from teaching what I will call “discrete skills” (often referred to as “skill and drill” or “drill and kill”) towards a process-based curriculum. The work I do on this dissertation topic—examining the connections between developmental reading and reading theory, in



particular the reading/writing relationship—will be the basis for course revisions on all levels of developmental reading at GTCC as well as a training source for our developmental reading instructors.

### Chapter Descriptions

Before I can draw the connections between reading theory and developmental reading, I first need to define developmental reading. Unlike English courses taught at the university level, developmental reading programs are bound by a number of factors. In chapter one, I describe those factors—the influence exerted on developmental reading classes by the state, by the educational philosophy of the community college, by the belief systems of individual program leaders, and by the history of how the field originally emerged. I use as my guide a work initiated by Mina Shaughnessy who set the task of “taking inventory” of what was happening in developmental education courses at her own college in the mid-1970s. This work, Teaching Basic Skills in College, seeks to uncover the practices of developmental education as it emerged; now thirty years later, I will reflect back on the external and internal influences that have lead developmental reading to where it is today.

Using chapter one as a frame for my discussion, in chapter two I delve further into my description of developmental reading by looking specifically at the origins and evolution of one specific department—my developmental reading department at GTCC. Using interviews, historical documents, and Lee Kinard’s recent fifty year history of GTCC, I demonstrate how the history of GTCC directly influenced how developmental

reading has been taught at the school. Other community colleges will have unique histories that influence their developmental education programs differently, but by examining one, I have a context from which to discuss why developmental reading has not evolved along with reading theory. Rather than following Frank Smith's lead and exploring the whole-language approach to reading, GTCC's developmental reading department aligned with a competency-based educational (CBE) framework that in some ways worked against what we now believe to be a viable explanation of how to improve reading ability. Instead, it reinforced the concepts of reading found in New Criticism that had been in place within the department for years. Further, because of the external influences by the state, the CBE educational framework was reinforced at GTCC and remained in place for twenty years as department leaders attempted to explore viable alternatives.

Using the evolution of GTCC's developmental reading department as a frame for my discussion, in chapter three I argue for an approach to developmental reading which fuses elements of developmental education theory with reader-response theory. I describe the issues that permitted a move away from its New Critical framework once it decided to leave competency-based education behind. In contrast to teaching discrete reading skills, the department moved towards a holistic approach to teaching reading. To teach holistically is to emphasize each step of the reading process that students engage in when they read longer texts. Further, students are expected to reflect on their own reading processes and build a deeper well of knowledge from which to draw, enabling them to read more effectively and efficiently in their future classes. This holistic model aligns

directly with the psycholinguistic and reader-response theories of reading. Using the definition of reading fluency provided by these theories, I am able to contrast GTCC's developmental reading department's former reliance on New Critical principles with the new course strategies which embrace these newer theories of reading. By providing an explicit description of the new developmental reading curriculum, I reinforce my argument that a curriculum design based on these theories of reading aid student progress to a greater degree.

Finally, in chapter four, I further my explanation of the benefits of infusing reader-response theory into developmental reading coursework by analyzing the role of rhetoric in teaching reading. Using Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations as a guide, I first track how her descriptions of basic writers relate to developmental readers and how the strategies she developed can be used in developmental reading classrooms. In order to argue that her instructional strategies for writing relate to reading, I further the discussion by looking at the connections between reading and writing. Rhetoric is the hinge between them. Using Roskelly and Jolliffe's Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom, I am able to discuss the interconnections that can further improve developmental reading instruction. I end with an argument for a course design which uses writing as a key element in reading instruction.

Overall, from the explicit descriptions of developmental reading programs in North Carolina and specifically at my home institution, to my analysis of the benefits of transitioning from a developmental reading course design that relies on New Critical methodologies to one that relies on psycholinguistic, reader-response, and rhetorical

reading theory, I believe this dissertation will serve to enlighten and perhaps direct thinking for all who read it.

<sup>1</sup> Although I use basic writing and developmental English interchangeably here, “basic skills” in the community college is a term used to indicate work that is completed towards a GED as in “ABE”—adult basic education. For the purposes of this dissertation, “basic writing” will refer to developmental English and “basic skills” will refer to the discrete skills needed to be successful in a college program.

<sup>2</sup> Two primary collections of developmental reading theory contain selections on these topics. See Flippo and Caverly’s Handbook of College Reading and Study Strategy Research (2000) and Stahl and Boylan’s Teaching Developmental Reading: Historical, Theoretical, and Practical Background Readings (2003).

## CHAPTER II

### TAKING INVENTORY: THE SHAPE OF DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSES

#### Introduction

My first semester of teaching developmental reading changed my life. I had been teaching Expository Writing and evening classes of developmental English, but had never studied the reading process or how to teach it. The three inch thick three ring binder called “Instructor’s Manual for RED 090” that my department chair gave me in August 2003 was my guide. The manual, which represented nearly twenty years of hard work and planning by the GTCC developmental reading faculty, contained the common course syllabus, course calendar, and subdivisions for each skill I needed to teach including worksheets, tests, and guidelines for how to teach each one. Class sets of the worksheets and tests had been photocopied and placed in filing cabinets for all developmental reading instructors to use. Armed with the manual and my over-confidence, I entered the day classes thinking “How hard can it be to teach students how to pick out main ideas from paragraphs?”

I learned very quickly that being a good reader put me at a disadvantage: after being a successful reader for so many years, reading had become second-nature to me, and the process was not transparent. I found the department’s lesson plans challenging to work with, even though they were clearly explained. Since I had not designed the plans, I

found it tricky to teach from someone else's perspective. I realized that to make this work, I needed to reflect on my experiences as a reader and try to approach each text as if I were a struggling reader. I needed to take inventory of what my students knew and what I knew about reading and try to match that with what the pre-designed course implied would help my students become stronger readers. As Margaret Waters notes in her chapter on reading in Teaching Basic Skills in College, "Greater understanding of the reading process will help the teacher to choose methodologies most appropriate to the needs of individual students" (112). From the beginning, learning about the reading process was my goal.

Over the next few years, I continued to learn about developmental reading, and through multiple training opportunities and formal and informal meetings with other developmental reading faculty, curriculum level faculty, and administrators, began to comprehend the intricacies and politics of developmental reading and community college teaching in general. The other developmental reading faculty and I knew it was time for a change in our methods, so we collectively revisited our goal: how can we make developmental reading more beneficial to our students?

In this chapter, I plan to seek out and categorize all of the elements that influence what takes place in the developmental reading classroom.<sup>1</sup> The supervision at the state level, the educational frameworks adopted by each community college and its developmental education program, and the theoretical point of view of developmental reading department leaders all affect developmental reading instructional design. As an

agent of change, my first step is to take inventory and assess the current state of developmental reading. This chapter begins that process.

### Taking Stock of Assets

Mina Shaughnessy, noted for her influential work in basic writing and the abilities and challenges of “remedial” students, became the first director of City University of New York’s (CUNY) new Instructional Resource Center in 1975 (Trillin x). Founded on the philosophy of ““free education for the sons and daughters of the immigrant poor who could not afford to attend college,”” CUNY opened its doors to all who applied in 1847, only to restrict entry by 1867 because of its inability to meet the needs of the extremely undereducated (1). Nearly one hundred years later, CUNY administrators recognized the racial and ethnic imbalance of its attendees and sought to increase its minority population by re-inventing CUNY as an open-admission institution (2). In July 1969, the NYC Board of Higher Education passed three resolutions that would help CUNY fulfill this goal:

- 1) all high school graduates in NYC would be allowed admission into some program at CUNY.
- 2) CUNY would provide remedial support and other support services to those who needed it.
- 3) CUNY would continue to maintain and enhance its standards of academic excellence. (2)

In the fall of 1970, CUNY once again functioned as an open-admission university (2) only to re-establish admission standards in 1976, eventually relegating most of its basic skills programs to the city's community colleges (3). Alice Trillin, documenter of the basic skills program of CUNY during these few years of open admissions, argues that the failure of the open admissions policy was in part due to the “optimistic” yet “naïve” goals set by the Board (3). She believes the Board underestimated the amount of work and resources needed to make goal number two work, and goals one and three depended solely on the success of goal number two (3). Although her intent was to document best teaching practices in basic skills programs rather than the successes and failures of the open admissions policy, by providing some of CUNY's history, Trillin is indicating that a basic skills program is equivalent to more than its coursework—it is affected by state and local administrators, students, theoretical frameworks, ancillary programs, and faculty buy-in (5).

Upon accepting the directorship of the Instructional Resource Center, Mina Shaughnessy chose as the center's first project not to begin a new research development project but to simply take inventory of her most valuable products. Shaughnessy believed that CUNY's greatest resource was its teachers, so she initiated a project to uncover promising teaching methods in CUNY basic skills classrooms and simultaneously explored effective basic skills program design. (Trillin 3) She and her colleagues made several observations about CUNY's basic skills program that seem to relate universally to all basic skills programs:



- 1) The evolution of a program is most often led by instinct and is vetted and reinforced over the years (Trillin 3-4). If there is little or no research data on which to draw, instructors must establish their own practices based on what they find to work well.
- 2) Dedicated instructors must be convinced that students can learn. Additionally, instructors will meet with success only if they carefully analyze course design and align it with the needs of the students. Instructors need to understand the rationale for the choices they make in the classroom; for instance, they must explore why students are making the mistakes they make, whether the methodology uncovers the reason for the errors rather than simply corrects the errors, what the student may need to learn before entering the class, and whether the students will be able to use the skills developed in this class in subsequent classes. (Trillin 5)
- 3) Basic skills course objectives should be clearly defined based on how the institution defines “college level material;” however, defining what qualifies as “college level” is problematic (Trillin 6). Different programs require different literacy skills. A student majoring in humanities may benefit from a different course of literacy training than a math major or an automotive technology major. Although the ultimate goal is to help students become as literate as possible, time maybe a factor, as well as student interest.
- 4) More attention should be given to adult literacy and development, but it is evident that language learning in particular “often takes place in spurts and

in defiance of neat hierarchical arrangement” (Trillin 8). Basic skills students need more time than has been suggested to attain the skills necessary for success in college level courses (6). Students in a developmental reading department who test below a sixth grade reading level need more than the three semesters of developmental reading to reach college level reading ability.

- 5) Centralized (an isolated skills program) and decentralized (skills courses are subsumed into relevant departments) basic skills programs both have benefits and draw backs. Choosing the right faculty is key for success in either situation. In the 1973 work Catching Up: Remedial Education, Roueche and Kirk describe a good basic skills department as one that is ““a community of learning specialists who can collectively know and relate to each individual student as a person”” (quoted in Trillin 9-10).

In summary, Shaughnessy and her team identified the key elements of a successful basic skills program: administrators should select faculty who believe basic skills students can succeed, who recognize the flexible nature of learning, and who are able to set clear course objectives based on a definitive analysis of student abilities and course methodologies.

Mina Shaughnessy’s colleagues completed her examination of CUNY’s basic skills program after her death in 1978 and published Teaching Basic Skills in College in 1980 (Trillin x-xi). In this compilation, the researchers looked specifically at CUNY’s basic writing, reading, ESL, and basic math programs. For each basic skills area, the team

discussed diagnosis and placement of students, instructional models and methods, course objectives and content, and support services. When Shaughnessy and her team began their project, the basic skills program at CUNY was new. However, in this dissertation, I have the benefit of evaluating a program with the vantage point of thirty years passed. Using Shaughnessy's study as a model, I too am going to "take inventory." Although I will be addressing similar topics as Shaughnessy's team did, looking specifically at Guilford Technical Community College's developmental reading department and other community college reading departments across North Carolina, I will add layers to this analysis—layers that a program develops over thirty years and layers that are specific to community college practices. Like Shaughnessy, I want to examine what makes a successful reading program, but in light of state regulations, community college administrative programs, reading and education theory, and the history that propels my developmental reading department forward.

#### Inventory Control: North Carolina State Mandates and Influences

State-level guidelines and mandates influence and dictate elements of the developmental reading classroom; therefore, before discussing what takes place in individual classrooms, it is important to note what strictures community college instructors are working under. Unlike four-year colleges and universities where governing is relatively autonomous, NC community colleges are governed by the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) office. Decisions about all programs in North Carolina community colleges are made by a committee of invested participants and

are enforced on every community college campus in the state through an elaborate auditing process.

While it may seem that there should be more freedom in the community college system because it aligns its adult education programming with other institutions of higher education, community colleges, nee junior colleges, industrial education centers, and “13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> grade” institutions, instead align more with the NC Department of Public Instructions (DPI) in terms of its governance, having at first been run by local school boards (Wiggs 7). The first NC community college opened in Buncombe County in 1928 as a tuition-free junior college (1). Through the subsequent fifty years, philosophical arguments about the function of a post-public school education program, pressure from industrialists to train NC’s citizenry to work in its factories, and much political wrangling, the community college system evolved into what we have today—accessible, comprehensive college-transfer and vocational centers which aim to provide adult education for those who seek it (1-13).

Historically, the NC Community College System has strictly supervised its community colleges for two reasons. First, the state government required oversight of its fiscal investment in tuition-free community colleges. Having once been supported solely by the NC state budget, the state government expected systematic results. The government only wanted to open new institutions if there was a verifiable need and only wanted to continue supporting those institutions financially if they were producing the results promised by the founders of the institutions. (Wiggs 1-13)

In addition, fearing substandard education practices in the community college, four-year colleges which would receive the community colleges' transfer students wanted assurance that their own standards would not be compromised by under-prepared students (Wiggs 8). The ultimate result of this concern was the "Comprehensive Articulation Agreement" (CAA) developed to assure senior institutions that the students they accept have received an appropriately rigorous academic training. The CAA, established in 1997, is based on the assumption that "institutions recognize the professional integrity of other public post-secondary institutions that are regionally accredited for college transfer programs" and that "sufficient commonality exists in the lower-division general education requirements" so that the student transfer process would be more efficient (Comprehensive 1). When the NCCCS completed its Common Course Library in 1996 which identifies and describes approximately 3,800 courses written for community college programs, a Transfer Advisory Committee consisting of University of North Carolina and community college faculty and administrators met to select one hundred seventy courses that would form the general education "core" courses which would be accepted throughout the UNC system (13). The CAA provides a system that dictates academic standards to ensure comparable coursework is completed at NC community colleges.

The effects of the establishment of the Common Course Library (CCL) extend beyond the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement, however. Even though developmental education courses are not credit bearing, they serve students who may transfer to four-year institutions and therefore must maintain consistent academic

standards across the community college system. Additionally, before the CCL was written, developmental education credits were not transferable between community colleges, but after the course descriptions, course objectives, course titles, and contact/credit hours for each course were standardized, each community college could easily and confidently accept transfer courses from other NC community colleges.

Although the establishment of the Common Course Library increased transfer efficiency and sought to ensure academic standards, the CCL dictates what should be taught in each course at the expense of the judgment of its teachers. Community college instructors must work within the course descriptions and are not allowed to alter them except through an extensive appeals process. For developmental reading, that means that even though individual developmental reading departments may approach reading instructions from different viewpoints, they must all work within these course outlines. The CCL lists three levels of developmental reading—RED 070, RED 080, and RED 090—as well as the combined developmental English and reading courses of ENG 075, ENG 085, and ENG 095. (See Appendix A) These course descriptions reflect a hierarchical model of literacy education in which specific skills are emphasized at each course level, and those skills become increasingly challenging in subsequent levels. Appropriate placement of students into these course levels is crucial to the success of developmental reading students. Placed too low, students may become bored with the work. Placed too high, students may reach a frustration level that makes them want to quit school. Student assessment and placement, therefore, is a key factor in the success of developmental reading students.

Every student who enters a North Carolina community college must demonstrate reading proficiency through either college transfer credit of Expository Writing, an SAT reading score of at least 510 or equivalent ACT Verbal score, or the student must take a placement test. Community colleges administer the COMPASS or ASSET test to every student who does not meet the first two requirements. A state committee determines the score students must make in order to exempt developmental reading altogether. All colleges must adhere to that score and may not set it lower or higher.<sup>2</sup> The state does not, however, dictate minimum scores for placement into the lower levels of developmental reading. Scores that place students into RED 070 or RED 080 rather than RED 090 are determined by the individual community college and are based on student enrollment and demonstrated student ability.

A third element at the state level that influences developmental reading courses is creation of Critical Success Factors established in 1989 and significantly revised in 1999 to ensure that all colleges are meeting agreed upon standards. Of the twelve performance measures which make up the “Core Indicators of Student Success,” the first of the five Critical Success Factors, two are directed at developmental education. “Success Measure F” sets the performance standard that “seventy percent (70%) of students who complete a developmental course will have a grade of "C" or better for that course.” The performance standard for “Success Measure G” indicates “that there will be no statistically significant difference in the performance of developmental students as compared to non-developmental students” in subsequent curriculum courses. Success rates of developmental reading students are tracked as students enroll into their first

humanities course after completing developmental reading.<sup>3</sup> (2006 Critical Success Factors) In order for faculty in developmental reading departments to make effective instructional designs and to then evaluate the efficacy of those designs, faculty must look towards what students will need to be able to accomplish in subsequent courses. Community college administrators strongly urge developmental education departments to meet these standards for the sake of the students and for the state funding that is attached to the achievement of these goals.

A final state-level requirement that shapes developmental reading is the establishment of developmental education course competencies. (Table 2.1) These competencies were determined by participants in the Developmental Education Project (DEP) of 1994-1996. Using the curriculum improvement project model, this committee created semester length course competencies for each level of developmental reading courses used as the basis of the Common Course Library descriptions. These competencies paved the way for the establishment of state-wide standards in developmental education as defined in the Critical Success Factors: Core Indicators of Success; therefore, developmental reading faculty are required to spend eighty percent of instructional time addressing these competencies. (NCADE)

The State Board of Community Colleges and its policies determine the primary course goals for developmental reading. NC community colleges are given the course objectives, student success goals, and placement levels. In “Reading and Learning Strategies: Recommendations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Simpson, Stahl and Francis, noted developmental reading theorists, provide ten recommendations for academic literacy



Table 2.1 NC Developmental Reading Course Competencies

<p><b>RED 070 COURSE COMPETENCIES</b></p> <p>At the completion of this course, the student should be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Apply word attack skills to derive the meaning of unknown words</li><li>2. Identify meanings of words from context clues</li><li>3. Use the dictionary for information about words</li><li>4. Identify the stated and implied main ideas in written material</li><li>5. Identify supporting details in written material</li><li>6. Interpret graphic materials</li><li>7. Summarize written material</li><li>8. Map and outline written material</li><li>9. Identify transitional words and organizational patterns</li><li>10. Distinguish between fact and opinion</li><li>11. Draw conclusions</li><li>12. Use active reading strategies in a variety of materials</li></ol>
<p><b>RED 080 COURSE COMPETENCIES</b></p> <p>At the completion of this course, the student should be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify the stated and implied main ideas in written material</li><li>2. Identify supporting details in written material</li><li>3. Distinguish between fact and opinion</li><li>4. Interpret graphic materials</li><li>5. Map and outline written material</li><li>6. Summarize written material</li><li>7. Understand the use of transitional words to signal basic patterns of organization</li><li>8. Draw conclusions</li><li>9. Use the dictionary for information about words</li><li>10. Identify meanings of words from context clues, word attack strategies, and/or dictionary usage</li><li>11. Use the dictionary for information about words</li><li>12. Employ a variety of vocabulary building techniques</li><li>13. Use active reading and comprehension strategies appropriate to a variety of reading materials</li></ol>
<p><b>RED 090 COURSE COMPETENCIES</b></p> <p>At the completion of this course, the student should be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Employ a variety of vocabulary enhancement techniques</li><li>2. Identify the stated and implied main idea in written material</li><li>3. Identify supporting details in written material</li><li>4. Map and outline written material</li><li>5. Interpret graphic materials</li><li>6. Make inferences and draw conclusions from written material</li><li>7. Use comprehension strategies appropriate to a variety of reading materials, including content area textbooks</li><li>8. Demonstrate an understanding of figurative language</li><li>9. Analyze author's purpose, tone, style and bias</li><li>10. Apply selected critical thinking skills to written material</li><li>11. Demonstrate comprehension by responding to written material in a variety of methods</li></ol>

Source: <http://www.cfcc.edu/ncade/R090pub.doc>

department faculty. Suggestion number ten is to “Understand that Neither Research nor Pedagogy Can Be Divorced From Policy” (12). The authors warn and urge developmental education professionals to “understand the role that policy has had on our programs and to be proactive as additional policies are proposed and debated. Policy decisions at the federal, state, or local levels have influenced financial support for students and programs, requirements for assessment and evaluation, and mandates for academic standards and rigorous curriculums” (12). This advice is timely for developmental educators in North Carolina. The decisions regarding course objectives, placement, and evaluation were strongly influenced by developmental education faculty in the 1990s, but as these people retire, new developmental education faculty need to be aware of the influence and become active in the revision and future development of state-wide mandates.

### Taking Inventory of Institutional Frameworks That Influence Developmental Reading Courses in the Community College

The educational philosophy that a community college adopts directly influences how many of its courses are taught. Ideally, the developmental reading department will make use of elements of the community college’s initiatives and rethink the way reading might be taught. For instance, in the early 1980s, GTCC promoted competency-based learning as a theoretical framework to be adopted by its faculty. The developmental reading department adopted the methodology and designed its courses based on the methodologies suggested by competency-based learning proponents. Now, GTCC’s focus

has shifted to a new theory called the “Learning College” paradigm, and the adoption of this theory has helped to pave the way for the evolution of the developmental reading department.. Competency-based education programs are now considered the “traditional” approach; but many community colleges are beginning to adopt strategies related to the “learning college” initiative. GTCC’s adoption of learning college principles has had a positive effect on the developmental reading department—from the administrative restructuring of our department through the holistic approaches we are trying in our developmental reading classes

Competency-based education theories that developed in the 1970s were attractive to developmental educators of that time, and many community colleges still adhere—all or in part—to those principles. Frequently referred to as “mastery learning” or “outcomes-based learning,” competency-based learning is defined as “an educational framework which systematically focuses on student attainment of a hierarchy of ... learning outcomes...” (Herrscher 53). This philosophy is particularly relevant to proponents of developmental education for it “includes the goal of diagnosing a student’s level in a given competence area and treating for deficiencies while giving credit for accomplishments. It includes the idea...of learning as a developmental process” (52). The steps for implementing a competency-based program include:

- 1) determining the rationale for the course
- 2) defining expected outcomes
- 3) creating summative assessments
- 4) developing learning strategies to help students meet the competencies

- 5) creating a management system to track student progress
- 6) evaluating and refining the course (22).

Given the list of course competencies for developmental reading, this educational framework provides a systematic process for course delivery and student assessment. Careful attention must be given to the sequencing of competency instruction in order for students to build the skills required of them to succeed in college level courses. To this end, some developmental reading programs expect students to master each competency before moving on to the next and some require that students achieve mastery level (typically 80%) on every competency to pass the course. “Teaching to the test” in competency-based learning courses is “not a negative concept but rather a deliberate strategy” since instructional design intentionally leads students to the summative assessments of each competency (21).

In a competency-based developmental reading program, effective implementation relies on two key management issues. First, if the department has established competencies for every section of a course to adopt, then the courses must provide a high degree of consistency and replicability. Fulltime and adjunct instructors must be trained to deliver the course and assess students. Developmental reading programs will often create and provide instructor’s manuals with guidelines and examples of tests and practice exercises. In addition, Daniel Levine notes that a successful competency-based program “must be manageable and feasible for teachers” (273) in order to maintain faculty buy-in. The clarity and consistency in course design as well as the transparent measurement of skills in the competency-based model is attractive to many educators, but

for educators who believe that students do not necessarily learn hierarchically, competency-based education is problematic. The “learning college” framework provides an alternative to competency-based learning.

A learning college is any institution of higher education that switches its emphasis from instruction to learning—to student success determined through verifiable outcomes. Instead of emphasizing the mastery and assessment of isolated skills, the learning college paradigm shifts the focus from instructional models to the needs of the learner, emphasizing a holistic rather than atomistic approach to student learning. John Tagg, co-author of the article that initiated the learning college paradigm, argues for a “hot cognitive economy...[which] promotes a deep orientation to learning, hence encourages risk-taking, learning goals, and incremental self-theories” (Tagg 97). Institutions that have adopted the learning college paradigm attempt to adhere to six key principles: creating a substantial change in learners, engaging learners as full partners in the learning process, creating a variety of learning options, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning, and refining the role of the instructor based on the needs of the student (O’Banion 47). Instruction in this model shifts towards an emphasis on “deep learning” rather than surface learning (Tagg 80-81). (Table 2.2) The developmental reading departments at GTCC and all learning colleges are given the charge of assessing and improving their instructional design to better meet the needs of the learners in those programs based on these premises.

Table 2.2 Approaches to Learning

Deep	Surface
Focuses on the signified: meaning of the text, problem, etc.	Focuses on the sign: the surface appearance of the text, problem, etc.
Active: learner is the conscious agent of understanding	Inert: learner receives what is given, remains static
Holistic: learner sees how object of learning fits together and how it relates to prior learning	Atomistic: learner sees object of learning as discrete bits of data
Seeks to integrate information into semantic memory	Generally stops with episodic memory
Reinforces and is reinforced by incremental theory	Reinforces and is reinforced by entity theory
Reinforces and is reinforced by mindfulness	Reinforces and is reinforced by mindlessness
Experienced as enjoyable, open to flow experience	Experiences as unpleasant, closed to flow experience

Source: Tagg, 2003, p. 81.

In addition to the theoretical framework of the community college, developmental reading departments are directly affected by the value administrators place on developmental education. If developmental education is seen as a necessary and valuable academic department of an open-admissions system, administrators are more likely to support the department with alternative support services such as learning communities, supplemental instruction, professional tutoring, skills lab instruction, adjunct study skills courses, counseling services for developmental education students, and on-going professional development for its instructors. One way that GTCC reinvented itself as a learning college is through its renewed dedication to developmental education as evidenced in its support of these types of programs. In 2005, for instance, I was permitted to lead a team of faculty to create a learning communities committee. GTCC had offered learning communities in the past, but this committee formalized the process after receiving extensive training in the value learning communities and the implementation of a learning communities program. The developmental reading department has directly

benefited from this program by reinvigorating the faculty who teach in learning communities and by providing more authentic reading courses for students as developmental reading is linked with courses in other fields. The primary reason this committee still exists and flourishes is due in part to the support that GTCC administrators provide through funding and encouragement.

The size of the community college also affects how developmental reading programs run. Smaller schools may face having a limited budget for resources such as tutoring and support services that may benefit developmental education students. They also may not be able to support multiple levels of developmental reading and will only offer the highest level. Therefore, students who at larger colleges may have been placed into lower levels of developmental reading will be grouped with all the students who place into RED 090, and instructors will be challenged to meet the needs of students at all ability levels in that one course. A larger community college, though able to offer multiple levels of developmental reading, will have a more diverse student body, and instructors may be faced with teaching students who display a wider range of challenges. EFL students with advanced degrees but limited English may be in the same classes with displaced workers, students with learning disabilities, prison parolees, and students who have graduated from high school but who are barely literate.

The size of the community college may also help to determine whether developmental education is delivered in a “centralized” or “decentralized” format. A centralized program combines developmental education courses in an autonomous developmental education department. In a decentralized program, developmental reading

is subsumed into developmental English, and developmental English and developmental math courses are taught in curriculum level English and math departments. Community colleges that elect to decentralize may have selected this option if the school is too small to support a separate developmental education department, but this option may also be implemented as an attempt to increase fluidity between developmental education and upper level classes. A centralized program promotes a focus on developmental education theory and practice. It hires faculty who are suitable for teaching developmental education, promotes itself as a valid and professional theoretical framework, and represents itself to school administrators for funding specifically to meet the needs of developmental students and programs. A centralized program faces the challenge of maintaining standards unto itself and to promote consistency between itself and curriculum level courses. Both centralized and decentralized programs should actively develop the community college's entire faculty to learn more about the special needs of developmental education students and teaching strategies. (Trillin 9)

A final institutional level practice that affects developmental reading is that individual community colleges in North Carolina are allowed to set their own grade scales. While many NC community colleges assess students on a six point grading scale, some use a ten point grading scale. This affects developmental education programs as they try to determine the level at which competency of course objectives have been met. Community colleges that set a ten point scale may determine student competency rates at a B (80) or above, but community colleges using a six point scale may set competency at a C (78) or better. Having this freedom to set grade scales also allows developmental



education departments to determine how or if they will use the grade of F. Most developmental education departments have a way of indicating that students have not met proficiency and will be required to repeat the course without assigning the grade of F. This notation shows that a student's work is in progress ("IP" for instance); however some schools do continue to assign a grade of F to students who show little or no effort throughout the semester. Typically, grades of D are not given. Developmental reading courses must make decisions about whether to allow retesting to achieve competency level, if the department is competency-based, and whether the assessments they create set high enough expectations for their students based on the grade scale determined by it college.

#### Taking Inventory of Developmental Reading Department Classroom Methodologies

Developmental reading courses are shaped by established state guidelines and community college and developmental education program theoretical frameworks, but ultimately they are shaped by how individual developmental reading departments interpret the given course descriptions. After speaking with several developmental reading coordinators, identifying the highest developmental reading textbook sales, reading about practices in developmental reading, and reviewing decisions that have been made in my own developmental reading department over the decades, I believe that there are three main, distinctive approaches to teaching developmental reading.<sup>4</sup> These three approaches differ in terms of which elements of the course description are emphasized,

which theoretical frameworks are represented, how content is presented, and how students are assessed.

When the NCCCS Common Course Library was written, the upper level of developmental reading was named “Improved College Reading”. The title “Improved College Reading” implies a great deal. First, it claims an understanding of what college-level reading entails. Second, it implies that the NCCCS knows what should happen to improve students’ abilities to read at the college level. The adjective form of the verb *improve* implies that a student already has some ability to read at a college level, but through prescribed coursework can get better at it. But what must a student be able to do to read at a 13+ grade level? And how do developmental reading instructors help students master that ability? Based on the course description, students who have a strong vocabulary and who can interpret and respond to texts have achieved a college level reading ability. Even though NCCCS provides the course description, it does not endorse one instructional design model over another, nor does it attempt to standardize how the goals of the course description are met. Each developmental reading department must interpret the course description, evaluate student abilities, and choose a theoretical framework that best aligns with the culture of the community college and its faculty. In general, there are three main approaches to teaching developmental reading: the hierarchical, discrete skills approach, textbook study reading, and critical reading. Each methodology emphasizes different aspects of the course description and reflects a specific philosophy about what effective reading entails.

The approach that most closely aligns with the course description is the critical reading approach. In this approach, students are taught to interpret non-fiction and fiction texts with emphasis placed on understanding the author, the context for writing, and how the author relays his/her information. At the same time, it is constructivist, helping the reader to engage with the text and to become an active participant in the construction of meaning. Melinee Lesley, a proponent of the critical reading approach in developmental reading, merges concepts of literacy from Vygotsky to Freire to define critical literacy as “literacy that begins with a rising consciousness of not merely the functionality of print but also the power of language to both silence and give voice to instances of oppression in issues of socially determined disparities” (77). She argues that to read textbooks at a college level, students must first develop their academic literacy (78), a concept that Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater investigates in her ethnographic exploration of college students as they develop their own understanding of themselves in an academic community (xx). Students must understand what they are doing in college and why they are there. Lesley further notes that critical literacy theorists such as Ira Shor argue that students will not develop their academic reading ability by repetitive reading drills but instead become engaged readers through holistic reading strategies with contextualized skill practice (78) such as those represented by the critical reading approach.

One method of teaching critical reading directly engages students in a discussion about literacy and academic standards. Melinee Lesley writes about her use of Mike Rose’s Lives on the Boundary to help students connect with the issues they were facing in developmental reading. Students entered her class resentful about having to take

developmental reading, so she used this book as the real world context from which students would find the impetus to read and discuss the issue further. She helped students identify a purpose for reading while they learned to see themselves as constructors of meaning by writing in weekly reading journals. By reading and responding to these journals, Lesley was able to help direct students towards academic literacy.

Instructors of critical reading may choose to emphasize the context for reading less while emphasizing the use of writing for reading development more. Through “learner-teacher dialogues” written in “reading journals”, instructors are able to steer students towards what Michael Polanyi calls a “‘tacit awareness’ of the world around us by exploring, testing, and discovering” through writing (Cooper et al 3). In Teaching College Students to Read Analytically: An Individualized Approach, the authors argue that teaching critical reading can work for students with a wide range of reading abilities. In their experiment using writing to support reading, students “slowly start to develop the reflective state of mind of a good critical reader” (6).

A third direction critical reading may take is to infuse a discussion of rhetoric with reading comprehension. A developmental reading instructor can help students strengthen their reading ability by helping them analyze the interconnectedness of the author’s and the reader’s roles of any text. This aspect of critical reading instruction focuses on argument analysis and interpretation of pathos, logos, and ethos. Roskelly and Jolliffe unveil this approach in their textbook Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing, which emphasizes the construction of a written text and how

students can use this knowledge of text construction as they compose written works and as they “compose” the works they read.

Of the three developmental reading frameworks, the critical reading approach is the most holistic, yet it is not as easy to assess consistently as are the other two approaches. For students to be successful in this type of approach, faculty must be knowledgeable in these more complex literacy theories, and students must arrive in these courses with considerable strengths in reading ability. It may not be as effective with students who have basic vocabulary deficits. Developmental reading faculty, however, are at a disadvantage since most do not have extensive training in adult literacy<sup>5</sup>; and students place into this upper level developmental reading course with a wide range of reading abilities.

Although the critical reading approach most directly relates to the interpretation of the course description for RED 090, many theorists agree that teaching students to read and manipulate textbooks should be the goal of a developmental reading class. If success in college reading can be determined by the grades students make in subsequent gateway curriculum courses, developmental reading instructors should arguably concentrate their efforts on making the textbooks in those courses more accessible. A typical textbook is designed to provide a dense, immense amount of information to students to provide them a scaffolding of the major concepts of the course. Textbooks are noted for their “high conceptual density; compression of information...; use of special terminology...; multiple ways of presenting information...; and organization that reflects the logic of the discipline” (Pugh, Pawan, Antommarchi 30-31). These textbooks “do not invite reader

constructions of meaning, honor the knowledge the reader brings to the text, or lend themselves to critical reading” (30); therefore, proponents of the textbook study reading approach believe it is the developmental reading instructor’s job to help students learn to maneuver through a range of textbook reading materials.

Caverly, Orlando and Mullen define textbook study reading as “a strategic approach to reading in which students adjust their comprehending behavior before, during, and after reading with the purpose of satisfying a specific task...such as gaining knowledge for a future career or for passing course test” (105). Typically, textbook study reading introduces students to chapters of content level textbooks. Instructors provide opportunities to practice pre-reading, reading, and reviewing strategies for textbook chapters. Some courses also emphasize time-management and goal setting to help students practice the strategies as if they were preparing for a test in a curriculum level course.

The five most common study reading strategies taught—underlining, notetaking, outlining and mapping, an SQ3R (Caverly, Orlando, Mullen 109)—are difficult for these students to master if they are still struggling to identify what information is most important to learn. Therefore, the processes taught in a textbook study reading course “should not be taught to students who are developmentally struggling with word recognition and basic comprehension skills” (131). Given the range of ability of students who place into RED 090, attention should be paid to ensuring students can identify the main idea of a paragraph or passage and that they can determine the meanings of unrecognized words through context clues in addition to teaching the structure of

textbooks and the ability to recognize which strategies will work best given the reading assignment (131-2). Textbook study reading provides authentic classroom reading experiences and attempts to increase student awareness of a variety of reading strategies and of what they bring to the text to help them understand and remember what they are reading.

The third, traditional approach is what Margaret Waters refers to as the “hierarchy of skills model” (Waters 103). According to Waters, this approach “invites a systematic sequential teaching of skills until mastery is reached” (103). Though out of favor with contemporary theorists, most current developmental reading textbooks continue to promote this atomistic approach (Wood 29). In many developmental reading textbooks, each chapter introduces a skill, explains strategies to accomplish that skill, and provides numerous exercises to practice the skill. The primary skill introduced asks students to locate a main idea (stated or implied) in a paragraph. In addition to finding the main idea, students must identify a topic and the major details. Students are asked to demonstrate this skill primarily by underlining sentences in the paragraph or outlining the paragraph. For instance, on a main idea test, students may be asked to read a paragraph, underline the main idea sentence once, the key words of the major details twice, and then use the main idea and key words to write a one sentence summary of the paragraph. By practicing on a wide range of non-fiction paragraphs, usually from content textbooks, students are expected to generalize these skills and transfer them to other reading assignments.

Although identifying the main idea of a paragraph is not listed as an objective in the course description for RED 090, proponents of this approach posit that if students cannot pick out a main idea and details, that they are unable to understand the paragraph. Therefore, identifying main ideas and details becomes a major element of the course design.

In the hierarchy of skills approach, students are also introduced to strategies intended to build vocabulary by learning to read for context clues and analyzing word parts. For context clues, students are provided categories of context clue types—definition, comparison/contrast, example, logic—and then given numerous sentences to read and analyze to identify the type of context clue, where the clue is in the sentence, and what the underlined word means based on those clues. Some books introduce uses of word parts, providing definitions of prefixes, suffixes, and roots, and ask students to form a definition of a word based on those word parts. Vocabulary is rarely taught as isolated lists of words to be memorized.

After studying main idea and context clues, students are presented with a chapter on inference, a chapter on determining the difference between fact and opinion, and some work with study skills. In the inference chapter, students are again provided paragraphs, but with these paragraphs they are asked to read for underlying meaning. Again, the paragraphs studied are non-fiction, content textbook paragraphs. After students learn the difference between fact and opinion, they are given sentences to interpret as either fact or opinion. The study skills elements of the skills-driven approach may introduce the



concept of memory, concentration, reading strategies such as SQ3R, note-taking, test-taking, and flexibility of reading rate.

The discrete skills approach grew deductively from a premise from the traditional reading model of comprehension: if students cannot read and understand an extended text, then they need to be introduced to the strategies that will help them understand isolated elements of the text. Proponents of this approach teach the elements of paragraphs and vocabulary skills in a strategically systematic order. This approach is often favored because it is easy to assess and fits neatly with a competency-based program design. A negative aspect of this approach, however, is that although students may be able to master these isolated skills, students are often unable to transfer the use of these skills into subsequent courses even if the instructor expends considerable effort to explain the relevance of the strategies s/he has taught. In Improving Student Learning Skills: A New Edition, Martha Maxwell takes issue with traditional, skills-driven developmental reading courses, instead favoring courses that teach skills more directly related to success in content courses.

Regardless of the primary methodology a developmental reading department chooses, the use of writing in reading courses reflects the department's overall philosophy about reading development and is a primary indicator of the program's philosophy of how to teach developmental reading. Whether or not writing is valued as a mode of learning or as means of constructing knowledge in developmental reading courses influences the way students strengthen their literacy. Reading assessments such as the COMPASS or ASSET tests model the view that reading comprehension can be

most easily and valuably assessed through multiple choice questions and answers. In turn, skills-driven developmental reading textbooks and classes ask primarily for students to identify elements of the reading passage rather than attempt to demonstrate a constructed meaning of the text through writing. Programs that emphasize the reading process rather than product will use writing as a creator, indicator, and reinforcer of comprehension. Some program designers resist using writing in developmental reading courses, arguing that writing is the domain of developmental English courses. However, others view reading and writing as inextricably connected. In this light, some programs offer the combined developmental reading/developmental English course referred to as ENG 095 which links the objectives of RED 090 and ENG 090 together in a 6 credit hour/7 contact hour course. ENG 095 links the related objectives of developmental reading and English, concentrating on how reading influences writing and writing influences reading.

Critical reading and textbook study reading are considered more holistic than the discrete skills approach which emphasizes the mastery of isolated skills. The holistic approaches correspond to current educational theories like those represented by the learning college paradigm and contemporary reading theories such as those presented in psycholinguistics and Reader-Response theory. It is important to note that the three methodologies are not taught in isolation. Each approach tends to use strategies found in the others, but the degree of emphasis may make the difference between how effective the program is and how quickly students gain reading strength. The strategies I describe in the next few chapters isolate these strategies, explore what theoretical frameworks are

represented in each, and then demonstrate how they can be intentionally merged to create a more effective reading curriculum.

### “Sum Total” of the Influences on Developmental Reading Courses in North Carolina

Given the parameters of the state, community college, and developmental education program, developmental reading courses have a set agenda—guiding students who want to take college-level courses reach an ability level in reading that will help them meet their goals. In summary, the primary influences that affect the delivery of developmental reading courses in North Carolina include:

- State mandates
  - Common course library descriptions of developmental reading courses
  - Course competencies
  - Assessment and placement of students
  - Critical Success Factors regarding developmental reading
- Community college and developmental education department initiatives
  - The educational framework of the community college such as the competency-based framework or the learning college paradigm
  - Targeted support services for developmental education
  - Size of the college
  - Location of developmental reading in the community college structure
  - Grade scales
- Developmental reading department methodologies
  - Critical reading
  - Textbook study reading
  - Skills-driven model
  - Influence of writing as a mode of learning

In “Reading and Learning Strategies: Recommendations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Simpson, Stahl and Francis recognize that “[as] the landscape of developmental and academic assistance continues to shift, both politically and economically, time-honored professionals and those new to the field consistently search for practical ideas they know are embedded in sound theory and research” (1). Therefore, they have revised their ten recommendations originally published in 1992 to accommodate this new landscape. Much has changed in the NC Community College System since then, too; then why has so little changed in GTCC’s developmental reading department? Simpson, Stahl, and Francis explain that changes in developmental reading are slow to occur because “such recommendations are often difficult to unearth, especially for beginners who are less aware of professional organizations and scholarly journals” (1). Their remarks are only partly accurate. While it is true that developmental reading departments have expanded considerably over the past fifteen years and I was one of the “beginners,” I entered into a department of developmental reading veterans who have resisted influence by theoretical developments in reading from the past thirty years.

In chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation, I will explore the theoretical underpinnings of developmental reading as the field continues to evolve, but this exploration must take place in the context of the external forces influencing this evolution—what has happened historically that would cause a department to stagnate, why have developmental reading faculty been resistant to change, and what happens when they are finally introduced to a new theoretical framework. By writing the history of GTCC’s developmental reading department, I am able to provide a context for my

discussion regarding how reading theory is represented in developmental reading pedagogy and how a department that lacks a clear theoretical framework of reading can be invigorated and renewed by an infusion of reading theory.

It's not enough to simply "take inventory" as Shaughnessy's team did. Waters, the author of the section on developmental reading in Teaching Basic Skills in College, simply describes both the discrete skills approach and the holistic approach and does not claim one approach is more affective than the other. It is time to argue for one approach over another, rather than simply state that two approaches are equally viable. It is time to call for a revised curriculum based on psycholinguistic, reader-response, and rhetorical reading theory.

<sup>1</sup> My examination will be general, based on discussions with other developmental reading instructors from community colleges across the state through the NC Association of Developmental Educators. Speaking with instructors from California, Texas, Kansas, South Dakota, and New Mexico, I believe that the practices described in this dissertation are representative of a wider base, but since most of my contacts are in NC and since I am most familiar with the state guidelines for developmental education, I will limit my discussion to NC.

<sup>2</sup> A recent re-examination of the state placement scores provoked a disagreement between some community colleges. Durham Technical Community College, for instance, had placement scores slightly higher than others in the state as a way of setting higher standards for their students. They will be forced to lower their placement scores to be in accord with the rest of the community college system.

<sup>3</sup> This success factor for developmental reading is currently under review due to irregularities in data collection. Nationally, developmental reading subsequent course pass rates are typically determined by comparing student success rates in ENG 111 (Expository Writing).

<sup>4</sup> My primary argument here centers on the differences between approaches to teaching RED 090 rather than all levels of developmental reading. Focusing on only the highest level of developmental reading allows a more consistent and precise comparison.

<sup>5</sup> Developmental reading instructors must have a bachelor's degree in a field related to reading such as English or psychology and must have prior teaching experience. There are currently no degrees in developmental reading offered in this state and very few individual courses. Degrees in reading are primarily geared towards elementary school reading. Therefore, instructors base teaching decisions on intuition, the department chair's vision of instructional design, and the professional development they may or may not receive. California requires all developmental reading instructors to have either a degree in reading or to have a reading certificate through a higher education program designed and administered by the state to enhance developmental reading courses.

## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAMS LACKING READING THEORY: GTCC—1958 – 2005

*Armed with my dust mask and hand sanitizer, I entered the developmental education department storage closet where I found two boxes of very old documents. When Jane Stilling retired in 2005, after being a reading instructor for five years, department chair for eighteen years, and then a reading instructor for five more, she left a wealth of documents behind. The documents, some handwritten notes, some typed and mimeographed on onion skin, told the story of a department which constantly tried to better itself. She had saved the minutes from most of the NC Association of Developmental Education (then “NCADS”) meetings over which she had presided for several years and attended for the others, which traced the history of the activities at the state level that were aimed at designing standards for developmental education and promoting professionalism within the field. Stilling had saved newspaper and journal articles in which GTCC’s developmental education department had been highlighted. She kept years worth of significant in-house memos, proposals, and reports which wrote the history of the efforts of the department—some representing old battles which continue to be fought.*

#### Introduction

Educational change can be a slow process. As need arises and theories evolve, then ideally, so will classroom practices. This chapter will provide a close description of the history of one developmental education department, including the political impetus

for change, the educational theories that supported the changes, and the reading theories that are incidentally reflected in the practices that were adopted. While certainly there are many developmental reading programs who are intentionally designing curriculum based on literary and rhetorical reading theory, there are just as many, like ours, which are slow to evolve. Only in the past two years has reading theory begun to impact the methodologies of GTCC's developmental reading program. By reviewing the history of my own developmental reading department at GTCC, I hope to draw connections between reading theory and the educational theories that tend to direct resistant developmental reading programs and argue for an intentionality in curriculum design which basis its pedagogy on contemporary reading theories rather than simply reflects it.

Historically, the decisions about how to teach developmental reading have been based on education models, teacher instinct, and the guidance provided by textbook publishers, rather than on reading theory. Although I have found no studies that fully explain the reason for the lack of reliance on reading theory, I believe the disconnect occurs for several reasons. First, literary reading theory assumes a level of reading fluency that developmental reading students have not yet reached. Therefore, second, developmental reading instructors may disregard literary reading theory concepts as being too abstract and not practical for the developmental reading classroom. Third, the demands placed upon developmental reading programs by community colleges originally required these programs to serve students in vocational training, an audience whose literacy needs are different from traditional university students.

A final reason developmental reading departments are not reading theory-based is that their histories have pre-determined the purpose of developmental reading programs. “Preparatory” departments such as the first on record established at the University of Wisconsin in 1849 (Wyatt 15) were created in order to attract paying students who may or may not have had the academic skills needed to succeed in higher education. Universities like Harvard initiated these programs and then, embarrassed about their existence, disbanded them, only for them to re-form again in later years (15-16). In 1927, William Book of the University of Indiana was the first to praise these programs after recognizing that students did not lack intelligence, just the study and reading strategies to succeed in their courses (16). “Book’s analysis of college reading...foreshadowed modern admonitions...on the importance of using actual content material in developmental reading and in focusing on the use to which college readers put information in the real world of the classroom” (16). Thus began the developmental reading program’s emphasis on textbook study reading rather literary interpretation. Several other universities in the 1920s developed “How to Study” courses (17), out of which grew developmental reading. From this point, developmental reading focused on helping students read and retain information from textbooks and lectures, a program design which has remained grounded in study strategy theory rather than literary reading theory.

Rather than continuing to hone the methodologies present in the model grown out of the study programs of the 1920s, I believe a review of literary and rhetorical reading theories as they have evolved over the past few decades will help to inform and



strengthen current practices in developmental education. Although the current literature regarding developmental reading may nod at Frank Smith or Louise Rosenblatt, these works tend to rely on other developmental reading theorists such as Michele Simpson, Sherrie Nist, David Caverley, Rona Flippo, Martha Casazza, and Norman Stahl<sup>1</sup> who tend to promote educational theoretical frameworks rather than those based on psycholinguistic theory or reader-response. By looking closely at a forty-five year period of developmental reading instruction at one specific institution, GTCC, I hope to illuminate the history of its practices, noting how the changes in the department reflected the needs of the students and administrators of each time period. The history will expose the literary theory that was merely incidental in the developmental reading department's practices, and serve as a point of departure for a discussion of how a developmental reading department could systematically consider literary reading theory as its leaders make decisions about how to improve developmental reading instruction. Although there are multiple examples of compositionists describing the unique histories of composition studies, this type of institutional history has not been fully represented in the literature about developmental reading. Its findings, I believe, will be vital to understanding and improving any program.

#### Influence of Community College Attitude Toward Developmental Education

If community colleges are Honored But Invisible, as the title of W. Norton Grubb's 1999 book exclaims, developmental education is the dirty little secret of the community college. Though developmental education programs provide a bridge for

underprepared students into higher education, are a large source of funding for other programs on the campus, and make the open-admissions policy possible, developmental education is rarely heralded for its efforts. Typically, when developmental education moves to the forefront of political discussions about community colleges, the discussion is about the cost of tax payers having to pay for developmental educators to re-teach students what they should have learned in public school (Roueche et al 6). However, when academic articles and books are written about the functionality of a community college, developmental education is necessarily the focus of attention. In Roueche, Roueche, and Ely's 2001 analysis of the Community College of Denver's successes, the authors say that they

did not intend to write about remedial or developmental education. Rather [they] intended to write about the responses an institution made to academically at-risk students as enthusiastically as it did to any other... [They] have witnessed the enormous effects that an institution's caring deeply about the success of those who are most underprepared for college work and least able to contribute to society can have on an entire institution, on its community, and on the nation. (ix)

A community college's attitude toward its underprepared students and the support it provides for its developmental education program sets the tenor for the school. Although a community college gains recognition and accolades for its connections to and support of local industry through its vocational programs and students who are graduated from those programs, the community college should also demonstrate an appreciation for students as they enter school, often underprepared, and praise the progress that these

students achieve during their education—from developmental education which provides students the foundation they need to succeed through the co-ops and internships out of which many students are hired. On one side of the scale, by providing developmental education courses, the community college is serving a democratic imperative to offer education to all who seek it. On the other side, the community college relies on successful graduates to satisfy the needs of local employers who in return will support the efforts of the community college. The Community College of Denver took a risk to embrace its developmental education program, which resulted in a higher graduation rate and a one hundred percent satisfaction rate of employers who hired CCD graduates (Roueché et al 70). In other words, a community college which provides support and respect for its developmental education program and developmental education students frontloads its efforts and achieves a greater pay-off in the end. More students graduate with stronger skills, a community is strengthened, and local businesses and industries benefit.

GTCC has recently begun to demonstrate a greater concern for its entering, underprepared students. Although GTCC sells itself as a premier community college due to its support of local industry—Lee Kinard’s recent book detailing the school’s fifty year history is subtitled Creating Entrepreneurial Partnerships for Workforce Preparedness—GTCC has begun to recognize and value the work of its developmental education program. A community college that emphasizes its value to industry is not necessarily at odds with a humanist philosophy of education, where the impetus for education is meant to improve lives of its students; but in GTCC’s case, a fissure developed between these

two stances regarding the role of education when the school was founded. Created by industrialists for the support and advancement of industry, GTCC's focus has taken decades to shift from a total emphasis on "training" workers to "educating" humans. This debate is central to GTCCs history and to any analysis of its developmental reading program because the educational framework of this community college directly influenced the pedagogical approaches in developmental reading courses.

#### GIEC to GTI to GTCC in Twenty-Five Years

Guilford Technical Community College opened its doors in 1958 as the Guilford Industrial Education Center (GIEC) on the land formerly used as the Guilford County Tuberculosis Sanatorium (Kinard 5). The history of the land portends its eventual use: in 1917 the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare authorized the county to build a facility to care for "the dependent, the defective, the delinquent and the seriously ill" (quoted in Kinard 5). The tuberculosis hospital that opened January 1, 1924, was intended by its founders not as "a place to die" (quoted in Kinard 6) but as a place to teach its patients how to live better, more productive lives with the illness. Fifty years later, GTCC's (then Guilford Technical Institute) second president Dr. Luther Medlin announced in 1967 that

Our programs have literally trained thousands of people for better jobs. Additional thousands have received a new lease on life, a second chance. GTI has accepted students when no other school would. They have come from the jails and the prison campus, from the public school and college drop-out rolls, and from other circumstances under which the door of

opportunity has been shut in their faces...and enabled them to prepare for worthy and productive employment and useful citizenship (143).

The description given of its patrons by the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare and the description given of GTI's students are remarkably similar. Both groups lacked something that made them successful citizenry. Similarly, both institutes provided opportunities for people to live better lives. However, magnanimity towards humankind was not necessarily the intention of GTCC's founding fathers.

Leaders in Guilford County's burgeoning industry sector took what was once a training center for "toe boys" and "loopers" for the hosiery industry in High Point, NC, and turned it into the Guilford Industrial Education Center (GIEC) in Jamestown, NC (Kinard 4). These local industrialists, led by Zalph Rochelle who was GIEC's co-founder and first chairman of the school's Board of Trustees, believed that the purpose of the college was to support the growth of local industry which lacked a sufficient number of trained workers (32). From the start, GIEC was intended to support local industry and train "disadvantaged, poorly educated dropouts, many of whom were marginally socialized" (6), in upholstery, sewing, and machining classes. Courses in automotive mechanics, plumbing and heating and air conditioning soon followed (7).

In 1965 the debate began. About the same time that the Board of Trustees voted for GIEC to become a "Technical Institute" (GTI), they hired Dr. Herbert Marco who became GTI's first president. From the start, Marco, a WWII bomber pilot, NASA scientist, and college administrator, was determined to change the focus of the school

towards its students (Kinard 18-19). Having studied the role and function of the new concept of the “community college,” he understood that a technical institute could serve a broader purpose, perhaps ““offer to adults something more meaningful to their lives and mentioned a course in government for better understanding by the people’” (19). Zalph Rochelle continued to argue that the Institute’s emphasis would remain focused on technical training (42), while Marco continued to fight for ““the general education so necessary to the mental growth of all individuals’” (46). Lee Kinard notes that in hindsight, GTCC would have stood to expand more quickly and benefit financially from an earlier transition to community college status (48), but Rochelle refused to accept Marco’s arguments out of concern that the school’s focus on vocational training would be minimized. Local private colleges were concerned that a “community college” would duplicate the efforts of the eight colleges and universities in the Triad area and would shrink enrollment numbers for those schools if students chose to attend the community college instead. Debates also ensued over whether a “community college” could provide the same level of instruction provided at the university level. Marco’s response was that GTI’s faculty were highly qualified for their jobs, but the fact remained that GTI was not yet an accredited institution nor were its classes universally transferable to other institutions of higher education. Marco’s ultimate goal was not to diminish the role of vocational training provided at GTI, but to offer a humanistic depth to the programs by adding humanities courses to the course schedule in order to create better “Americans” (19). He also argued that enrollment numbers would not be siphoned from other local colleges and universities, but instead would provide an alternative opportunity for people

who would not otherwise attend college. The debate became a battle in the press and ended with both Rochelle's departure and Marco's resignation in 1967 (65).

Although Dr. Marco's attempt to turn GTI from an "institute" into a community college failed, two important aspects of his short tenure continued to influence the quality of education at GTI during Dr. Luther Medlin's presidency which began in 1967. In 1969, GTI gained accreditation status through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (Kinard 124). Also, University of North Carolina at Greensboro Chancellor James Ferguson and Guilford College President Grimsley Hobbs worked out a provisional transfer credit program between GTI and their respective schools. Though not overtly mentioned in Kinard's history of GTCC, these two developments helped to ensure standards within liberal arts and vocational classes, the success of which relied heavily on the strength of remedial instruction of its students in math, reading, and writing. In 1971, GTI provided its first courses bearing four-year college credit in English and Math, taught by instructors from UNCG.

If underprepared students were going to succeed in college-transfer classes, they were going to need some extra help. In a brief presented to the Board, Dr. Herbert Marco noted that "ninety percent of the school's students had failed recent mathematics and English tests...with a majority of students enrolled in remedial or developmental courses" (Kinard 29). There are no archived records of how these courses were taught nor how students were placed into developmental courses, but the mention of them in this quote implies that there was some form of remediation taking place on campus. The necessity, therefore, of developmental education at GTCC has never been in doubt, but

the debate over the purpose and intent of education at GTCC has shaped developmental education's pedagogical framework. In 1969, Alwayne McClure, the Human Resources director, shared her vision of creating a separate department for remedial classes and the "Guided Studies" department was created (Lambert 2008).

### A Centralized Developmental Education Program Is Born

The name of the new program—Guided Studies—adequately reflected how the courses in the program were administered throughout the 1970s through early 1980s. Guided Studies Reading was based on the behaviorist model of instruction in which students are expected to demonstrate a behavior (reading) after reinforcement. "The basic principle of behaviorist psychology is that behavior is motivated by external stimuli and that if its consequences change the behavior itself will change" (McCrimmon 2). Students were motivated to pass exit exam by completing the programmed instruction provided by developmental reading instructors. Students worked independently to improve skills in reading, writing, and math, while instructors "guided" their progress, presiding over class sessions but offering little general instruction except regarding test-taking strategies. The courses were conducted as labs. Reading and writing instruction relied heavily on the well-marketed boxed education programs of the day. Developmental reading students used SRA (Science Research Associates, Inc.) boxes of programmed instruction and worked through multiple series of reading exercises aimed at increasing reading fluency, memory, and "comprehension." Vocabulary lists were also memorized. This



methodology was used to help students meet the single course objective: to make a score of 60 or better on the exit reading test. (Lambert 2008; Archives).

Since guided studies courses were not credit bearing, students often considered the exit exam the only course requirement. Many students were unmotivated to complete extra assignments given by instructors, concentrating only on passing the exit test, unable to connect the idea that the practice provided in the course would help them achieve a higher score on the test. Students, then, were unlikely to experience any meaningful scaffolding during these courses nor were they likely to transfer any skills they practiced into subsequent courses. (Hunter 2008)

The school's placement test, the "Diagnostic Reading Test" test, referred to as the "Mountain Home Test" because of the location of the test creators (Hunter 2008), was created by the "Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests" whose members hailed from a variety of colleges and universities around the country and whose base of operations was located in Mountain Home, NC (Diagnostic Reading Test 1). Vetted professionals in the field of reading at the time, the committee's test design reflects a theory of reading specific to the period in which it was created—1971. The test asked students to demonstrate reading speed, memory, vocabulary level, and an ability to answer multiple choice questions about a short passage. The test is composed of three parts. First, after students read the detailed instructions, which were arguably more difficult to understand than some of the passages on the test, they were asked to read a long passage with each line numbered. When the test administrator said "Mark," the student was to check what line she/he was currently reading and write down that line number. Test-takers would

continue to read until the test administrator said “Mark” again, at which point they would write down the line they were on then. After several of these “Marks,” students were instructed to turn the page and answer multiple choice questions about the text they had just read without looking back at the material. Then, students turned to the vocabulary section where they had to choose the correct term to match the definition provided. In the third part of the test, students were given short passages to read silently after which they would answer multiple choice questions about the topic, main idea, and implications of the passage. (Diagnostic Reading Test 1-8) All of the answers on the test were scored in a way that identified a student’s “reading level,” and this reading level proved to the community college that students could read.

The same year that this test was produced, Frank Smith wrote his first version of Understanding Reading which redefined the experience we call reading. The Mountain Home test gauged the speed at which words could be recognized and compiled in order to make meaning. It valued whether test-takers could identify which words were most closely related to the vocabulary words, and it valued whether a test-taker could decode meaning from isolated passages. As I discuss in the next chapter, the values of the Mountain Home test creators reflect an outmoded and possibly damaging view of reading—one that does not take into consideration the experiential knowledge of students nor of the reality of how meaning is constructed. Whether the Guided Studies Reading instructors of that time knew about the psycholinguistic theory of reading or not, they recognized that the reliance on a test as sole indicator of student success only proved that a student could succeed at passing this reading test (Hunter 2008).

### Events That Shifted the Paradigm Towards Competency-Based Education

From 1982-1985 several factors converged which enabled and encouraged a new direction for guided reading. First, in 1982, under the presidential leadership of Dr. Raymond Needham, Guided Studies became “Developmental Education and Special Programs” (Kinard 202). The new title implied a shift in values away from self-paced instruction towards instruction that embodied the developmental education philosophy grown out of the 1970s. Briefly, developmental education philosophy places “the learner at the center of our practice....that begins with a determination of where learners are, what they want to achieve, and how to help them realize their greatest potential as they work toward their goals” (Casazza and Silverman qtd. in Boylan 6-7). It focuses on “the notion that personal growth and intellectual development are possible” (McCrimmon 1). Further, developmental education philosophy recognizes the diverse population of students in our classes which calls for “diverse instructional methods,” and that affective characteristics play a significant role in student success; so developmental educators are dedicated to teaching not only “basic academic skills but also on improving students’ attitudes toward learning, autonomy, academic self-confidence, and motivation” (Boylan 7). The new name of the developmental education department intentionally reflected this shift toward understanding the role of developmental educators as one that does “not rely on teaching the way they were taught, but, instead, are constantly searching for ways of improving the design and delivery of their instruction” (7).

The second situation which enabled the paradigm shift occurred in 1983 when the long debate which started with the embattled leadership of Dr. Marco in 1965, ended

when GTI was granted community college status by the state (Kinard 119). GTI became GTCC, a comprehensive community college, moving away from its focus on “training” to a focus on education, balancing the scale between vocational and college-transfer courses. Third, in 1984 Margaret Cain, a dental hygiene instructor at GTCC, was appointed to a federal task force on competency-based instruction. After she completed her training, she brought the idea to GTCC where she trained the faculty on competency-based methodology. (Hunter 2008) Fourth, part-time instructor Claire Hunter was hired as a fulltime instructor in 1985 (Hunter 2008). Hunter and her colleague Bobbi Van Dusen led the developmental reading department toward a more educationally sound program of instruction—competency-based education. The competency-based education model still reflected behaviorist underpinnings, but it expanded to provide additional behavioral objectives.

#### Phase Two: Competency-based Developmental Reading

*“With time and the opportunity for additional investigation, identifying one’s objectives, organizing material in sequential steps, and providing students with feedback have been recognized as critical factors in the development of [a behaviorist] instructional plan” (McCrimmon 2).*

Realizing the weaknesses of the current curriculum in developmental reading, Hunter and Van Dusen began to explore the benefits of the competency-based education paradigm. The two developmental reading instructors attended multiple training sessions in this educational framework, and they saw how this framework could serve to reinvent the developmental reading curriculum. (Hunter 2008) “Students and teachers often

became frustrated because instead of concentrating on the reading and study skills students need to perform well in their other courses, course content was geared primarily toward enabling students to pass the retest” (Open Entries 6). Hunter and Van Dusen took the elements they found in the current developmental reading coursework and made those the goals of the course, not the exit exam (Hunter 2008). (Table 3.1)

During this time, there were no state-mandated course objectives. With the help of the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) program, a collaborative program designed to help faculty specify anticipated outcomes in a field, a panel of vocational and college-transfer faculty at GTCC identified the basic reading requirements they believed students needed in order to be successful in their courses. During these team meetings,

Table 3.1 Summary of Guided Studies Reading Program Before and After Adoption of CBE

Before

Course emphasis:  
 general reading skills  
 vocabulary  
 test-taking techniques for  
 standardized tests

Course requirement:  
 A. Passing the CGP reading test  
 (getting 21/35 questions correct—60%  
 mastery)  
 -test dominated course content  
 -students perceived passing placement  
 test as the **only** course requirement  
 -passing placement test required good  
 performance on **one** test of general reading

After

Course emphasis:  
 general reading skills  
 vocabulary in context  
 study skills  
 student responsibility for his/her own  
 success or failure

Course requirements:  
 A. 80% mastery of specific reading  
 and study skills competencies  
 B. Completion (with a C average or  
 better) or assignments  
 C. 70% mastery of general reading  
 tests

Source: adapted from Hunter and Van Dusen (1); Developmental Education Archives

Table 3.2 DACUM General Areas of Competence for Developmental Reading Students

A. Apply Basic Reading Skills

A-1 Comprehend instructional material (e.g. texts, charts, graphs, drawings)

A-2 Demonstrate a knowledge of basic vocabulary

A-3 Use context clues

A-4 Identify main ideas(s)

A-5 Identify secondary and/or supporting ideas

A-6 Identify main concept(s)

A-7 Distinguish fact from opinion

A-8 Distinguish literal and figurative language

A-9 Draw inferences

A-10 Paraphrase reading material

A-11 Interpret and apply information

Source: Developmental Education Archives,  
adapted from GTCC DACUM Project, 1985

developmental education instructors were not allowed to contribute to the discussion; instead, they were expected to sit quietly around the edges of the room while the vocational and college-transfer instructors identified several “competencies” for developmental reading and other developmental courses at GTCC. (Table 3.2) Once these were established and published in 1985, Hunter and Van Dusen used the competencies to write specific course objectives that would apply to each of the three levels of developmental reading courses.

Focusing on competencies rather than reading level was a great shift in thinking for the developmental reading department and for the college’s administrators. For so long, reading ability had been discussed in terms of reading level as indicated by the student’s exit exam score. Even though GTCC introduced the department to competency-based education, administrators were still doubtful of its outcomes for the reading

department. Over a two year period, Hunter and Van Dusen meticulously planned and piloted a course using the new curriculum, and then tracked the students to provide evidence of student success in subsequent courses to prove that focusing on developing competence in necessary reading skills was more important than the ultimate score that a student would make on one test. (Hunter 2008)

Though now equated with discrete skill-building courses, the competency-based education plan that Hunter and Van Dusen used was quite forward thinking for that time and much in line with current discussions of “outcomes-based assessment.” Herrscher and Watkins (1980) describe competency-based education (CBE) as “a way of bringing congruence and coherence to curriculum and instructional decision-making—a way of analyzing new ideas in education to see how they fit or affect the ultimate goal of enhancing student growth and development” (1). Hunter and Van Dusen used this framework to systematically analyze developmental reading instruction in order to help students attain the skills they would need in subsequent courses.

Herrscher and Watkins further define CBE as

an educational framework which systematically focuses on student attainment of a hierarchy of publicly stated and validated intellectual, attitudinal, and/or motor learning outcomes (competencies). It includes instructional processes that facilitate, measure, and certify such attainment. (5)

Hunter and Van Dusen identified which skills students would need to accomplish at each level of developmental reading in order to be successful at the next level. Within each course, they concentrated on the ordering of skills so that students would concentrate on a

hierarchy of skills, building from the easiest to the most difficult throughout the quarter. The new developmental reading program at GTCC was highlighted in the competency-based education newsletter Open Entries:

Under the new system, the reading courses are sequential: Lower level courses emphasize basic reading competencies; upper level courses emphasize more advanced reading skills and the application of reading and study skills to college textbooks.

Criterion-referenced tests are used to measure mastery of the material...Those who do not succeed on the first try receive prescriptive assignments and additional instruction. When a student successfully completed all course competencies, he or she progresses to the next level course...(6)

They had created a hierarchical model of discrete skill instruction which was measured by in-house tests and exams.

During the two years that Hunter and Van Dusen created and piloted CBE developmental reading, they wrote the course outlines and syllabi, a supplementary diagnostic test for each reading course level to be administered during the first week of class, the assessments for each objective for each level of reading, supplementary materials for each level to be used in conjunction with the textbook materials, and an Instructor's Resource Manual for each level which would be provided to every reading instructor.

In order to provide a context for my discussion of how the CBE course relates to reading theory, a brief description of the CBE course content is necessary. The course materials emphasized practice, testing, and retesting when needed, on a progressively difficult level of competencies. GSR 091 (Developmental Reading's advanced level)<sup>2</sup>



required students to read and analyze paragraphs to identify the topic, main idea, and details, and also to write a one-sentence summary of the passage. After several weeks of practice, students would take a test on this skill, and if they did not make a C or better, would receive remediation, and would then take a second, similar test. (See Appendix A for a sample of the Main Idea test.) For the study skills unit, students would learn about learning styles, memory, concentration, and a reading strategy such as SQ3R. At the end of this unit, students would take an objective test that expected them to recall the information learned in the chapter and use the study and test-taking strategies they had just learned to study for the test. For reading comprehension, instructors assigned longer reading passages and assessed students with a multiple choice quiz. Students also practiced with graphic aids and vocabulary in context and took multiple choice tests on these two areas. The two lower levels of developmental reading provided instruction similar to that provided in GSR 091, but used easier reading passages and did not include the study skills element.

No longer were students expected to drill on general reading comprehension exercises independently through programmed instruction in order to pass a final reading test that measured reading rate and memory. Rather, they were expected to focus on, study, and excel in the skills needed to be successful readers. Instructors were no longer tutor-facilitators, but provided direct instruction to students to help them build their skills in specific areas.

Throughout the next few years, as the department grew in faculty and students, the courses that Hunter and Van Dusen created could be effectively duplicated for new

faculty and seemed to provide a high degree of consistency. By 1995, the Developmental Education Project (DEP) had created standard course objectives for all developmental courses across the state. The developmental reading course objectives they identified mirrored those developed by the DACUM panel at GTCC which seemed to reinforce the CBE developmental reading program. However, the growth of the department began to degrade the original intent of competency-based instruction. New instructors questioned the methods used in CBE developmental reading courses, specifically the department's heavy reliance on practice worksheets, testing, and retesting. We questioned the rule that students must pass every course competency with a 78 or they must retake the entire course. Hunter and Van Dusen's original intent to revise developmental reading courses to reduce the need to "teach to the test" during the prior pedagogical framework had degraded; the rules surrounding the competency-based developmental reading program led new instructors to believe that the courses could be best taught by teaching to the *multiple* tests Hunter and Van Dusen had designed for each competency. Significant instruction time was given to explaining how to take the tests and how the tests would be scored.

Hunter was still a proponent of competency based education when she became department chair in 2000 but realized that the department should continue to grow and improve. When I was hired as a fulltime instructor in 2003—the first new fulltime instructor hired in years,— Hunter hired me with the intention of taking the department in a new direction. Although she welcomed new ideas, we moved slowly toward a direction that we felt confident taking the entire department. Competency-based education had

served its purpose, and Hunter was cautious as the department explored alternative ways to increase student success rates and subsequent course pass rates of our students.

### Locating the Theoretical Underpinnings of Guided Studies' Reading and CBE Reading

When I joined the faculty of GTCC, I had completed my coursework in the Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition program at UNCG where I had studied literary and rhetorical theory and experienced a significant and meaningful period of training as a compositionist. Both of these fields emphasized reading and interpretation, but when I started teaching developmental reading, nothing was familiar. I began retraining myself on what it means to read based on the construction of the developmental reading courses at GTCC. When I returned to UNCG to study for comprehensive exams, the disconnect between literary and composition theories of reading were starkly illuminated, and I began my investigation to find out why.

By exploring the history of GTCC's developmental reading department, one factor that shaped the developmental reading curriculum became clear: developmental reading originated and further evolved into a program designed to serve content courses. From its origins in literacy training in the vocational fields to the new pedagogical strategies employed in the 1980s, developmental reading courses at GTCC continued to serve upper level courses, both vocational and college-transfer, by helping students learn to manipulate and understand the textbooks in those courses. No attempt was made to teach reading for the sake of reading in developmental reading courses or to develop strategies for reading fiction. Reading was a tool. The entire thrust was toward decoding

textbooks, a philosophy which makes sense given that the DACUM panel, the original authors of developmental reading competencies, was composed of curriculum level instructors whose purpose was to improve student reading in their own courses. Additionally, the NCCCS Critical Success Factors served to reinforce this “service” framework by evaluating developmental reading’s influence on students’ subsequent course pass rates. If the developmental reading department were going to be judged on how successful students were in subsequent courses, it seems logical that the developmental reading program would emphasize content area reading. Literary and rhetorical reading theories were not purposely avoided from the outset, they were simply not considered, even as they evolved.

#### Reading Theory AND Developmental Education Theory

Although the intent of creating a competency-based reading program was to diverge from the Guided Studies Reading course, the two were more similar than different. The CBE format of developmental reading instruction placed similar value on the elements required by the Mountain Home test. The difference was in the methodology. CBE reading at GTCC claimed itself as “student-centered” rather than test-centered (Open Entries 6) and process-oriented rather than product-oriented, but upon closer inspection and glossed with a current definition of what it means to be student centered, the CBE program did little more than reinforce a modernist definition of reading.

In the 1992 article “A Foundation for Developmental Education: Three Approaches,” Suella McCrimmon claims that humanism, developmental theory, and behaviorism are “three major families of theory which have informed the practice of developmental education” (1). The CBE reading program design does represent elements of each of these theories. It is humanist in its “confidence that in the proper setting and with appropriate support and attention both intellectual and personal growth will occur” (1). The CBE developmental reading course promises remediation when needed, multiple chances at passing tests, and encouragement to complete skill sets. It supports developmental theory in that it serves as a “tool that may guide teachers in facilitation growth” of its diverse student population (3). And it is behaviorist for the reasons previously described in this chapter. Based on these descriptions, the CBE reading program is student-centered. But these are *developmental education* theories. The tendency for developmental reading to base its strategies on developmental education theory is relevant due to the nature of the student demographics, but it cannot be all. Developmental reading must first be based in *reading theory*.

“Student-centeredness” as it applies to reading theory means something else—something that the CBE reading program is not. To place the *reader* at the center of instruction is different from placing the *student* at the center. Rather than the classroom as the context for which a student can be its center, the rhetorical experience becomes the context for which a reader can be placed in the forefront of instruction. In Reader-Response theory, theorists may debate over how much weight a reader’s interpretation of a text holds,<sup>3</sup> but the theory is based on the concept that the reader actively constructs

meaning as s/he engages with the text. The CBE reading program does not encourage the idea of the reader as meaning maker; rather it returns to the Guided Studies Reading program's approach of teaching students how to be effective decoders of texts and, ultimately, efficient test-takers.

Further, although the CBE reading program appeared to be process-oriented because it identified and isolated skills for students to practice, the repetitive practice exercises served to reinforce the decoding approach to reading.<sup>4</sup> In "Reading and Learning Strategies: Recommendations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," the authors warn that

atheoretical programs emphasize, sometimes exclusively, goals that focus on reading skills...such as drawing inferences, identifying main ideas, and understanding contextual clues. Students typically practice these skills in materials that decontextualize the reading experience to brief narrative or expository passages that are followed by multiple-choice questions.... Such practices may lead to growth on tests...but it must be questioned whether these activities lead students to becoming active readers and learners (2).

The main idea test in the CBE reading course, for instance, appears to be process-oriented, but the process that readers are expected to demonstrate is a process of decoding. Students are assessed on whether they can identify the structural elements of the passage rather than investigate meaning at a deeper level. Reading strategy in the CBE reading program is equated with the reading process.

In chapter three, I describe the new holistic approach to developmental reading instruction at GTCC. This approach unifies developmental education's concept of "student-centered" with a student-centered reading process, and it unifies reading strategy

with a process-oriented approach to reading—what the CBE reading program intended but failed to do.

#### From New Criticism to New Criticism in Fifty Years<sup>5</sup>

In the 1999 article “Modernism, Postmodernism, and post-structuralism and Their Impact on Literacy,” authors Shuaib Meacham and Edward Buendia argue that discussions of literacy often fail to recognize the impact that these three theoretical movements have on literacy instruction. They further outline how definitions of literacy have evolved along with development of the “post” movements. They provide a useful and brief description of modernism as being primarily associated with the qualities of “objectivity and universality. Modernism sees real knowledge as that which is derived by a detached or ‘objective’ investigative approach, and which, in the end, may be viewed as having ‘universal’ importance or relevance” (510). Modernism as it relates to literacy is best known through the movement called New Criticism which bases literary interpretation on the characteristics described above, “like that of a scientific experiment” (511). By tracing its roots to the McGuffey Reader, in classrooms where students learned to read by reciting moral maxims and later to an industrial, mechanistic model which led to programmatic guidebooks and later basal reading models, “Modernist reading instruction consists of an authoritative figure who teaches basic reading concepts to a passive audience” (511-12). Although my description of this broad topic is brief, it provides the groundwork for an analysis of reading instruction at GTCC. Once again, the CBE reading course, though it intended to diverge from the guided studies’ instructional

model, remains more like its predecessor than different. Both formats call for objective responses.

Although not much is known about how developmental reading was taught from 1958-1969, the reliance on the exit exam score as the sole indicator of student success from 1969-1985 demonstrates the guided studies' reading program's New Critical approach to developmental reading instruction. New Critics argue in part that the meaning of the text is inherent in the text and that interpretations of the text must be verifiable within the text lest the interpretation be deemed subjective: "The most rigorous of the American New Critics, including Ransom and Wimsatt, would reject the reader-oriented formulation of [I. A.] Richards and [William] Empson: The "affective fallacy" would insist that the form of a poem is not to be identified with the psychological process undergone by its audience" (Richter 704). The text, not the students, held the information that must be acquired, not constructed.

Students were presented with passages to read and asked to answer questions based on those passages, all of which must be verifiable within the passage. Personal interpretations were neither requested nor encouraged. In fact, in the instructions of the Mountain Home test, students are warned to "choose the answer that agrees with the test selection you have just read, even if you have a different opinion about it" (Diagnostic Reading Test 8). There was no room for subjectivity or personal interpretation.

In the CBE reading program at GTCC, reading ability was equated with the scores students made on assessments—the entrance and exit reading exams as well as the competency tests given for each unit. All of these assessments asked objective questions



and required students to provide only objective responses. Even with the main idea test, which asked students to write responses rather than answer fill-in-the-blank questions, students were basically asked to “fill-in-the-blank” by selecting relevant sentences and writing them down. Students were expected to read and understand brief textbook passages without regard to the students’ lack of experiential knowledge. Reading deficiencies, therefore, existed in the reader’s inability to interpret the text accurately. Further, the study skills unit, one place that should be intentionally personal as students learned about their own learning styles, concentration strategies, and memory and reading processes, required an objective test, allowing no opportunity for students to relate their new knowledge to themselves.

Though I could extend this description of the elements of instruction that reflected the New Critical philosophy, I believe it is more important here to describe the atmosphere of the New Critical developmental reading department. Ease is one word that comes to mind. The New Critical approach, with its emphasis on objectivity, translated into the CBE reading program as objective assignments and tests. New instructors have been pleased to be able to enter the department and the classroom with clear cut questions and answers provided for them, and even happier that they can quickly grade student assignments without having to take any work home—not like the developmental English faculty who have to take home armloads of compositions to read each night. Some are protective of this “right.” Once when I rewrote the study skills unit test for my own students in a way that allowed them to apply concepts and relate their new knowledge of learning styles to themselves rather than simply recall it, a veteran instructor approached

Hunter, then department chair, to tell her that I was “teaching study skills wrong.” I had encouraged students to put themselves into the text they were reading in order to connect with the information. Although several articles warn that programs should not adopt competency-based education because of its convenience, one has to wonder why a department would resist moving towards a new direction of instruction. Why, when reading theory has changed and grown and influenced composition departments, do developmental reading programs stagnate? Many have not. Many have grown and developed, but GTCC was resistant. I propose that further research on the stagnation of some developmental reading departments will reveal not that departments are unmotivated or uninspired, for the most part, but that they are afraid to trust trying out a new direction when so much is at stake.

### Conclusion

In the past few years, developmental educators have been encouraged to publish research-based articles regarding developmental education rather than documentations of successful classroom practices. Still, this push for quantitative proof, while it may be attractive to politicians and college administrators as statistical evidence of developmental reading program success, fails to encourage another important connection—the connection between developmental reading and contemporary literary and rhetorical theories of reading. None of the documents I’ve read in GTCC’s developmental education archives nor any of my interviews with veteran GTCC developmental reading instructors demonstrate an observance or reliance on reading

theory as the basis of the developmental reading program. This is not to say that the strategies employed at GTCC do not in some way relate to reading theories, but they have not been intentionally designed with reading theories in mind. I believe reading theory as discussed in literary and rhetorical theories can be applied to textbook, content reading strategies intentionally and with positive results.

According to Simpson, Stahl, and Francis, renewed emphasis on accountability at the state level may cause a resurgence of outcomes based programming like the CBE reading program at GTCC. They warn, however, that “although ...skills-oriented programs may be able to demonstrate a form of immediate accountability, we question whether such a pedagogical orientation will actually lead to positive outcomes related to long-term retention and completion of degree objectives” (12) caused by improved reading ability. As a final note, I believe it is possible to create a competency-based program that is not at odds with reading theory. The topic is one for future exploration.

<sup>1</sup> Hunter Boylan, Martha Maxwell, John Roueche, Vincent Tinto, et al, are also heavily cited, but in regards to general developmental education topics, not specifically developmental reading.

<sup>2</sup> Although the department had been renamed Developmental Education, the course identifier GSR (Guided Studies Reading) was still used until GTCC shifted to a semester system when the course identifier RED was first used. GSR 089 = RED 070; GSR 090 = RED 080; GSR 091 = RED 090. The change allowed for developmental reading courses across the state to be recognized as similar.

<sup>3</sup> I address reader-response theory in more detail in chapter three, but for now, a quick comparison: David Bleich, for instance, argues that the reader’s interpretation is the most important measure of the meaning of a text. Stanley Fish argues that the reader’s interpretation is bound by the interpretive community out of which the interpretation is derived. Louise Rosenblatt argues that the reader engages in a transaction with the text, and while the reader is bound by reasonable conventions of interpretation, is an active constructor of the meaning of the text.

<sup>4</sup> I will address the reading process in detail in chapter three.

<sup>5</sup> My purpose here is provide a general overview of New Criticism in order to demonstrate how it relates to developmental reading programs, not to provide an in-depth analysis of the history of New Criticism.

## PRÉCIS

The valuing of developmental education at GTCC grew slowly and with significant distrust, but developmental education is finally being recognized as the workhorse of the community college. The distrust stems from a non-solvable problem: developmental education is the open-door element of the open admissions policy. We take the students who have significant educational deficiencies, whether or not those deficiencies are caused by weaknesses in the public school system. In addition to the students who enter developmental education directly from high school, a large number of students are older, displaced workers, and just as many are English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Some students join our classes as a condition of their parole, and others as “Occupational Course of Study” students who are special education students who receive an OCS diploma when they leave high school. Most of these students simply, for one reason or another, did not meet with success in their earlier years and are testing themselves to see if they are ready for school again.

Developmental education is a funnel through which its educators invite and mold its students to become “college material.” Our success rates are understandably low or remarkably high, depending on your position. Students who do make it through developmental education courses have demonstrated academic improvement, although they may not perform at levels of students who were “prepared” for college. Developmental education students do not stop having developmental needs after they complete developmental coursework. They continue to require instructors to provide a

framework that helps them understand how to proceed and succeed in subsequent courses. The distrust from administrators and curriculum-level faculty exists because they only see the students as they leave the developmental education “funnel,” not as they enter it.

Developmental education has been criticized for being unregulated and unable to produce results, which in turn has forced developmental education programs into extensive data collection and self-reflection in order to prove their efficacy or stand as a point of departure for change. At GTCC, the Division of Developmental Education is recognized as being on the forefront of data-driven decision making, volunteering itself for scrutiny and welcoming suggestions over the years. Several factors over the last three years have influenced GTCC’s administration to look more positively at developmental education, recognizing the effort and results that are occurring.

## CHAPTER IV

### LITERARY READING THEORY IN DEVELOPMENTAL READING: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

#### Introduction

In the 2007 article “Towards a Unified Theory of Reading,” authors Mark Sadoski and Allen Paivio argue that first, unified theories hold a privileged place in scientific communities, and second, that the various theories of reading would benefit from identifying an umbrella under which they can all fit, noting that reading theories of decoding, comprehension, and response “lack of a viable overall architecture to unify them and provide heuristic growth directions” (338). After describing several of the scientific theories of reading, the authors suggest that the “dual-coded theory,” a theory of the mind applied to literacy, provides a possible unifying framework.

In this chapter, while my goal is not to provide a scientific alternative to Sadoski and Paivio’s unification theory, I do plan to demonstrate that one instructional model can address multiple approaches to reading with developmental education theory and the Learning College philosophy. The “holistic” model that I describe here offers instruction that addresses the major concerns not only of psycholinguistics and reader-response theory, but also of these educational frameworks. Although the holistic model as I describe it is, as are all theories, incomplete and in need of further revision, it offers an alternative to the discrete skills model and provides a broader base of exploration than the cognitive theory of reading described in developmental reading theory.

When competency-based education emerged as the guiding theoretical model for GTCC in the mid-1980s, it provided some unified educational foundation for developmental reading. It enabled the department to promote itself “student-centered,” a term revitalized by the recent Learning College movement, even though upon closer inspection it lacked some of the key qualities of what it means to be student-centered. Although the designers of the CBE reading program at GTCC attempted to make decisions that would positively impact students, it failed to locate students as the center of the reading process. Once again, GTCC is encouraging “student-centered” instructional design as the key element of the Learning College paradigm. Accommodating this theory in developmental reading will require a shift away from the product-based delivery methods previously used, towards a new curriculum designed with specific reading theoretical underpinnings.

#### 2005: The Paradigm Shift at GTCC Begins

Much like the series of events that enabled the paradigm shift into competency-based education for the Developmental Reading program at GTCC that occurred in the 1980s, several events converged in the mid-2000s that helped redirect curriculum design in this developmental reading department. First, I was invited to attend the Kellogg Institute, a month-long developmental education training event sponsored by the National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University. Every summer for nearly thirty years, “Kellogg” has provided an intense educational experience for developmental educators, counting for six graduate credit hours and led by top

developmental educators in the field. “It is intended as an advanced professional training program to assist practitioners in expanding their knowledge of the field and improving their own developmental or learning assistance program” (Kellogg 2008). Although I had been teaching developmental English and reading courses, this experience provided me with research-based instruction and a clearer understanding of assessment and placement, curriculum design, alternative interventions for developmental education students, and program evaluation, in addition to learning from the other forty-four participants from around the country about the practices of their home institutions. The experience energized me and gave me a new sense of professionalism and a realization that developmental instruction and curriculum planning should be based on research rather than instinct only.

In addition to my personal growth in understanding the field of developmental education, around this time, events at GTCC created a shift of opinion and valuation of developmental education. Primarily, GTCC was chosen to receive a large grant from the Lumina Foundation called “Achieving the Dream” (AtD), targeting at-risk students. GTCC’s large financial boon and nationwide recognition for being an “AtD Institution” —initially one of forty community colleges nationwide—forced the school to think differently about developmental education. With \$400,000 to spend on issues related to at-risk students, suddenly attention was directed towards developmental education, and a team was created to develop and initiate plans for helping these students.

The same year GTCC was awarded the AtD grant, John Chapin joined the staff as Vice-President of Instruction. His innovative ideas, in addition to the monetary and



philosophical support of AtD, had a positive effect on GTCC and the developmental education department. Chapin brought to GTCC the concept of the Learning College, which I briefly described in chapter 1. The Learning College paradigm mirrors aspects of developmental education philosophy and supports elements of reading theory. (See Table 4.1) I revisit this subject now because it supports a different, contemporary view of education, one that encourages flexibility and an awareness of the diverse mental processes that occur during learning.

Demonstrating GTCC's willingness to embrace the Learning College paradigm from the top down, the school significantly impacted developmental education when, initiated by Chapin and supported with funding from AtD, GTCC took the developmental education department out of the Division of Arts and Sciences and made it its own division. The department of developmental education, led by department chair Claire Hunter since 2000, included developmental reading, developmental English, and developmental math. In the Division of Developmental Education, each of these areas became its own department. Becoming its own division allowed developmental education a seat at the college's bargaining and decision-making tables that it had not had previously. Just as important, this restructuring provided a new leadership structure which enabled each developmental education area to turn its attention toward re-visioning itself. Claire Hunter had been effectively leading the department for several years as it doubled in size, spending much of her efforts managing the large department. When the department became a division, her position was divided into a division chair

Table 4.1 “New Views of Learning” that support the Learning College Paradigm	
Old Learning	New Learning
<b>Closed:</b> Inputs are carefully controlled.	<b>Open:</b> We are provided a rich variety of inputs (“immersion”).
<b>Serial-processed:</b> All learners are expected to follow the same learning sequence; learners only learn one thing at the time.	<b>Parallel-Processed:</b> Different learners simultaneously follow different learning paths; many types of learning happen at the same time for individual learners.
<b>Designed:</b> Both knowledge and the learning process are predetermined by others.	<b>Emergent:</b> Knowledge is created through the relationship between the knower and the known. The outcome cannot be known in advance.
<b>Controlled:</b> The “teacher” determines what, when, and how we learn.	<b>Self-Organized:</b> We are active in the design of the curriculum, activities, and assessment; teacher is a facilitator and designer of learning.
<b>Discrete, Separated:</b> Disciplines are separate and independent; roles of teacher and student clearly differentiated.	<b>Messy, Webbed:</b> Disciplines are integrated; roles are flexible.
<b>Static:</b> Same material and method applied to all students.	<b>Adaptive:</b> Material and teaching methods varied based on our interest and learning styles.
<b>Linear:</b> Material is taught in predictable, controlled sequences, from simple “parts” to complex “wholes.”	<b>Non-linear:</b> We learn nonsequentially, with rapid and frequent iteration between parts and wholes.
<b>Competing:</b> We learn alone and compete with others for rewards.	<b>Co-Evolving:</b> We learn together; our “intelligence” is based on our learning community.
Source: O’Banion 90	

and three department chairs, one for each area. Wanting to spend her last few years before retirement back in the classroom focusing her attention on teaching reading, Hunter stepped aside, and Dr. Nwachi Tafari was hired for the division chair position. I became the developmental reading department chair after having served as area coordinator for one year. The amount of time spent managing the department was divided, permitting more time to be spent leading change within the department.

During the mid-2000s, GTCC was at a point of growth and change. The introduction of the Learning College paradigm and the school-wide impact of the Achieving the Dream grant combined with the energy created with the tremendous

structural shift of becoming a division set the tone for changes in developmental reading. The developmental reading department was still using tests and worksheets that had been created in the early 1990s. Since then, the department continued to hone its competency-based curriculum, but the developmental reading faculty members had resisted the possibility that alternate methods of instruction could be viable. These changes that occurred at GTCC around 2005 opened the doors to new possibilities in the developmental reading department, and since I was the new department chair, I had the delicate position of directing the department toward seeing developmental reading in a new light.

#### Revising GTCC's Developmental Reading Curriculum

Since at least the fall of 2003, the topic of discussion at developmental reading area/department meetings centered on how we could improve developmental reading instruction. We bandied several ideas, but always came back to Hunter's insistence that students cannot read or be successful in subsequent courses if they cannot pick out a main idea from a paragraph. But when Jane Stilling (former developmental education department chair, reading teacher, and competency-based instruction supporter) retired, and when our department hired two new faculty members who were not tied to competency-based education, the balance shifted. In one meeting, I asked the heretical question, "What would a developmental reading class that never mentioned 'main idea' look like?" Although I did still believe that students needed to understand authorial cues

during textbook reading, I wanted to jolt the department's perspective. At that point, we started to consider a program design that promoted more than discrete skills

As a department, we believed it was possible to make our developmental reading courses more meaningful for students, but we needed to settle on a new view of developmental reading as it could exist outside of competency-based instruction. First, we began with the concept of "realignment." We wanted to make sure that what students learned in our classes was what would be most helpful to them in subsequent courses. Developmental reading instructors first collected course syllabi from humanities courses as a starting point for our analysis of the type and amount of reading completed in these courses. We talked with instructors from these courses about areas of weaknesses they saw in their students. In spring 2005, our developmental reading department members met with the Psychology department faculty for a roundtable discussion of students' needs; in fall 2006 we invited the entire GTCC faculty to a discussion of how to incorporate reading strategies into all courses (11 people attended), and in 2007, we met with the English department.<sup>1</sup> Our goal was to meet with faculty to ensure that what we were teaching was what the students most needed to learn. In "Reading and Learning Strategies: Recommendations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Simpson, Stahl, and Francis encourage developmental reading programs to be aware of the requirements in subsequent courses so that developmental reading instruction can help students "decipher their own academic tasks" (6). We concluded the developmental reading courses objectives aligned with what the students needed, but that we needed to place more emphasis on strategy application. So, after several more department meeting

brainstorming sessions on curriculum design, we sketched a developmental reading 090 course which approached textbook reading holistically.

In the “Reading” section of Alice Trillin’s Teaching Basic Skills in College, Margaret Waters describes the “holistic reading course paradigm” as one in which “specific reading skills are taught through the content of a general academic area” (108). Waters further describes the holistic approach as being one of two types. One approach is to link a developmental reading course directly to a curriculum content course (109)—a concept we have piloted in the past at GTCC but have been thwarted by the limits imposed by the NCCCS state pre-requisites. If developmental reading is a state pre-requisite for a course, then students are not allowed to take both courses simultaneously without the school risking an auditing exception. A second approach is to teach a reading course using “content taken from a range of college material” (108). We agreed that the skills were important, but they needed to be learned within the context of actual textbook chapters similar to those students would see in subsequent courses. Our belief was that by practicing study-reading strategies in a realistic setting, students would recognize “the immediate relevance to their major area of concentration” (109) and more likely be able to transfer some of these skills when they take those courses. Simpson, Stahl, and Francis call this “explicit instruction” which “is characterized by instructors modeling essential reading processes and providing students guided practice in texts that are authentic and represent the kinds of tasks they will encounter during their college career” (3). This holistic approach would introduce students to discrete skills but in a recognizable context; it would emphasize the structural cues specific to different content area texts; it would not

only provide instruction on strategic processing of content area texts but would also help students build content area knowledge and concept recognition within those fields.

### The Course

After our department determined the holistic approach as a viable alternative to competency-based instruction, we began to look for a textbook that reflected our ideals but retained an easy course replicability for our adjunct instructors. Surprisingly (or perhaps not), all of the best-selling developmental reading textbooks we previewed were designed for discrete skills instruction. After beginning the process of writing our own textbook, we found one book that met our needs: Sheila Allen's Making Connections: Reading and Understanding College Textbooks (2005) from Thomson Wadsworth Publishers. Allen's motivation and philosophy mirrors much of our own:

My reasons for writing this text are twofold. The first is being accountable to the students. The effectiveness of my reading course was being determined by how well students were doing in other courses once they had successfully completed the reading course. Talking to students and instructors and understanding how students best learn, I became aware that many factors other than how well students read determine their success in a course. I also knew that I had to do more than just teach and practice reading skills with the students. Many of them saw my course as something they had to take and pass in order to get into some college-level courses. I wanted them to understand the connection between my course and their future success in college coursework.

That brings me to the second reason for creating this textbook—adapting to the students' needs. My old reading course was skills based. Students learned and practices skills such as finding the main idea, making inferences, distinguishing fact from opinion, and determining important details; the last unit of the semester was on outlining and notetaking.... I decided... I needed to cut down the number of skills that they were

learning and spend more time practicing application of those skills....(xvii-xviii)

Like Allen, the developmental reading department was being judged by how well its students succeed in subsequent courses, and like Allen, our students tended not to see the connection between what they learned in our classes and how they could use these skills in subsequent courses. In this preface, Allen indicates that she understands that “many factors” other than what happens in our developmental reading classes contribute to a student’s literacy successes and failures, and that developmental reading instructors need to adapt “to the students’ needs.” Although she doesn’t expand on this subject in her preface, Allen hints at two basic premises of developmental education theory, Learning College philosophy, and reading theory: students’ personal and collective histories shape their learning processes, and instructors must be flexible enough in their teaching strategies to accommodate the ways students construct meaning. Allen’s textbook and course model reflect these values, and therefore we chose this book to pilot in our RED 090 classes.

Before discussing the reading theories supported by Making Connections, I first need to describe the strategies, assignments, and expectations of the textbook. Allen divides the book into three sections. The first section introduces discrete skills—study skills, context clues, identifying main ideas and details, reading graphic aids, inferences, and distinguishing fact from opinion—but does not belabor this instruction by making the skills the primary aim of the course. In part two, which consists of content area textbook chapters, Allen walks students through the process of how to approach a textbook chapter

and directs them through different forms of notetaking as she moves from prescriptive practice into independent work. Students are then introduced to study strategies as they prepare for a content-based test on each chapter. Part three consists of additional reading materials such as journal articles that provide information related to the textbook chapters in part two. Another recommendation that Simpson, Stahl, and Francis make is to “require [students] to interpret and synthesize from a variety of primary and secondary sources, especially when those sources offer conflicting information or philosophical interpretations” (8). Textbook chapters are not all that students will be expected to read and digest in college courses, so this material provides not only additional basic background knowledge but also practice synthesizing and assessing different forms of content material. Allen has put great effort into making all sections of her book recursive and into providing guidance for instructors who will teach with this book.

### Piloting Making Connections

During the spring of 2007, I teamed with another developmental reading instructor Beth Bynum to pilot four sections of the holistic approach to RED 090. Convinced that the book would provide solid substance for our students, we were able to experiment with the assignments Allen provided, but focused on three main concerns regarding the transition from the CBE reading course design: the readability of the book (it is more difficult to read than the textbook the other RED 090 courses were using), the pace of the course (having taught RED 090 where six weeks were spent on determining main ideas and details, for instance, we were concerned that we would have to move so



quickly through the book that students would not comprehend the material), and student motivation (the book requires a great deal of homework, and we were concerned that students would balk).

Bynum and I came to the same conclusions on these three issues. First, although the book was more difficult to read, Allen strategically designed discrete skill exercises using easier paragraphs in one practice and then moved to more difficult paragraphs from the textbook chapters in part 2 of the book in the second practice exercise. Second, we did find that pacing was an issue. Although we were initially concerned that students would not be able to master the skills presented in part one of the textbook, by shifting our focus from discrete skill mastery to simply introducing students to the skills in order for them to be familiar with the concepts when we actually put them to use in the content area chapters, we agreed that the minimal amount of time we spent on these chapters was sufficient for our students to grasp the concepts. Finally, the students in our courses rose to the challenge of more difficult work. Students who had failed RED 090 the previous semester commented that they found the new version of RED 090 more difficult but more beneficial. Weaker students who completed assignments found themselves successful because of the close interaction they had with the instructors throughout the semester and the recursive instructional model of the course. The key to all of these issues involves the amount of instructor engagement. We found we worked much more closely with students all semester and were therefore able to provide immediate and consistent feedback due to the nature of the new program. The new course does put a considerable amount of more

work on the instructor to engage with the students compared with the old course, but this engagement is required to help students develop their metacognitive skills.

### The Intentional Use of Reading Theory in the Holistic Developmental Reading Course

The premise of this dissertation is that the developmental reading programs will benefit from an intentional reliance on reading theory during curriculum design. Louise Rosenblatt notes that “the past half century has seen an increasing gap between the intellectual schools like logical positivism and behaviorism that try to eliminate the human factor and concentrate on what can be construed as ‘objective’ facts, and the various movements like pragmatism, phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis that seek...to incorporate the human consciousness” (16). Developmental reading programs find themselves divided into these camps, and an attempt to reconcile the two approaches is a necessary step to improving student reading ability. Simpson, Stahl, and Francis suggest that developmental reading courses adopt a cognitive theory approach to reading instruction that “emphasizes the development of active learners who are in control of their learning” (2). Cognitive theory as it relates to reading supports the “belief that reading and studying are dynamic and context-dependent tasks, and active learners have a command of the essential cognitive, metacognitive, and self-regulatory processes” (3). In the holistic approach to reading, cognitive theory as it is described by Simpson, Stahl, and Francis, is heavily represented. Students are encouraged to understand how different texts require reading and strategy flexibility. But still, cognitive theory as it relates to reading is an educational model which emphasizes course management rather

than reading theory. With his 1971 work Understanding Reading, Frank Smith, initiator of the “whole language” approach to reading, argued that reading is “a matter of making sense of written language rather than decoding print to sound” (2). Further, Smith argues that “drills, exercises, and rote learning play little part in learning to read and in fact may interfere with comprehension and provide a distorted idea of the nature of reading” (4). His work in psycholinguistics emphasized processes that occur in the brain during reading rather than the ‘objective’ models Rosenblatt critiques. Still considered part of the field of “literary theory,” his approach unified literary theory with cognitive theory, linguistics, and education. The holistic approach to reading instruction that I propose unifies all of these theories as they relate to the reading process.

#### What Does It Mean to Read Fluently?

One way to understand the relationship between psycholinguistics and other theories of the reading process is to define how these theories define fluent reading. In Understanding Reading Smith argues that reading is an act that requires no special ability, since we are all born with language learning ability (1). He argues that reading is not a matter of decoding print to sound, but “that reading and learning to read are essentially meaningful activities” (2). In this meaning-filled process, “fluent reading demands knowledge of the conventions of the text, from vocabulary and grammar to the narrative devices employed” (178). Inexperienced readers “are less in control of their reading...because they bring less prior knowledge to bear...and have more trouble identifying individual words” (178).

Fluency occurs when readers unconsciously predict letters in a word, words in a sentence, and sentences in larger passages. Only through this prediction and the constant checking and rechecking to see if our predictions are correct, are we able to construct meaning. Frank Smith argues that prediction is the basis of comprehension: “Prediction is the core of reading. All of our schemes, scripts, and scenarios—our prior knowledge of places and situations, of written discourse, genres, and stories—enable us to predict when we read and thus to comprehend, experience and enjoy what we read. Prediction brings potential meaning to texts....” (18) We make these predictions based on our previous experiences with words and texts, what he calls “non-visual information” (66). Inexperienced readers who do not have enough non-visual information to support predictions must slow down to read each word more carefully, thereby making meaning construction difficult or impossible.

But, according to Smith, readers do not develop fluency by practicing a range of skills; rather, fluency lies in the purpose for reading and “in the *familiarity* with a range of different kinds of text” (177; emphasis in original). Smith resists suggesting classroom methods based on his arguments, but a course design which is based on his theory would resist relying solely on discrete skills, would provide instruction that emphasized recognition of rhetorical cues within a wide range of texts, and would help students increase their non-visual repertoire.

Reader-response theory is supported by Smith’s definition of the reading process. In her 1978 work The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work, Louise Rosenblatt argues that a reader “evokes” the “poem”—

Rosenblatt's word for "an event in time" when a reader engages a text (12)—and constructs meaning during the transaction with the text. Opposed to New Critical arguments that the text can be objectively analyzed, Rosenblatt argues that meaning lies not solely in the text but also in what the reader brings to the encounter. She chooses the word "transaction" to illustrate that the reader nor the text is super-ordinate to the other, but that meaning takes place through the linguistic transactions between the two. She argues that "the transactional view is ...reinforced by the frequent observation of psychologists that interest, expectations, anxieties, and other factors based on past experienced affect what an individual perceived" (19), which underscores Frank Smith's position that "non-visual" information informs a reader's understanding of the text event.

Wolfgang Iser, however, takes the concept of the reading event a step further. He agrees with other reader-response theorists that readers construct meaning during interaction with a text, but he provides a different theory of reading fluency in The Act of Reading. Iser argues that a text is composed of "gaps" which the reader must fill in order to construct meaning from the text. The reader constructs meaning within these gaps, enabling a reader's "wandering viewpoint"—the meaning as it is constructed at a specific moment in time and then reconstructed during the next meaning making moment. Iser argues that the completion of the wandering viewpoint takes place in the context of the "repertoire" that the reader possesses, a concept similar to Smith's "non-visual information": "the repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged" (Iser 69). The reader's repertoire is

controlled by the “schema” present in the text: “it is as if the schema were a hollow form into which the reader is invited to pour his own store of knowledge” (143). For Iser, the construction of meaning breaks down when the reader’s repertoire is not large enough to enable him to fill the gaps in the text. The experienced reader reads with more flexibility and competence because he can draw on his fuller repertoire, and the less experienced reader struggles as he tries to make connections to the text with the schema he does have available. Further, a person who reads a text in a familiar field may be considered an experienced reader, but when he reads in a field for which he has little related repertoire, he becomes a struggling reader. A person may consider himself both a struggling reader and a competent reader, depending on the text he is reading, on what the reader can bring to the reading experience. This explains how I will occasionally have an avid fiction reader in my developmental reading classes. She can and does read extensively in one area—mysteries or religious related writing for instance—but struggles with non-fiction, content area reading.

Rosenblatt would argue, however, that it is not the type of text a person reads that complicates the transaction but the purpose for which the person reads. She labels two different kinds of reading “aesthetic” and “efferent” reading. “The distinction between aesthetic and nonaesthetic reading...derives ultimately from what the reader does, the stance that he adopts and the activities he carries out in relation to the text” (27).

Aesthetic reading, according to Rosenblatt, refers to a reading experience where the reader is reading for the sole purpose of the experience of reading. Efferent reading refers to a type of reading where the reader is reading with the purpose of extracting something,

information perhaps, from the experience. (27-8) My developmental reading student, then, can read her mystery novels quickly and easily, not only because her repertoire in that area is abundant, but because all she is expecting of the experience is the pleasure derived from reading the text. If she misses a few words or if her predicting ability falters, she continues to read for the overall effect of reading. However, if she were reading for the purpose of studying or learning from the text, she would want to make sure she understood all that the author was trying to get across. If she were reading a Patricia Cornwell novel,<sup>2</sup> for instance, she could even skip over the scientific descriptions of forensic pathology if she were reading the book aesthetically, and it wouldn't affect her overall understanding of the novel; but if she were required to read this for a forensics pathology science course, she would read the novel with a different eye—she would read for how and what Cornwell describes regarding autopsies. Still, my reader, being somewhat familiar with this sort of novel, might understand the scientific descriptions in the novel, but if she had to read about a similar topic in a science textbook, she might struggle with the language and density of the information, even if she possessed a fuller repertoire about this topic due to her Cornwell reading experiences. According to Rosenblatt, no reading event is entirely efferent or aesthetic but a combination of the two. To combine Rosenblatt and Iser, the fluency of a reader, when evoking meaning through the textual/reader transaction, depends on the breadth of the reader's repertoire and the purpose for which the person reads.

## How this Definition of Fluent Reading Relates to GTCC's Developmental Reading Program

The instincts of GTCC's developmental reading instructors and the foresight of Sheila Allen have directed our developmental reading program towards a reading theory based curriculum in RED 090. Although the course also teaches reading and study strategies, the primary aim of the holistic RED 090 is helping students increase their content area reading repertoires.

Allen has built Making Connections with this concept in mind. In part one of the book, the skill development section, each chapter has two sets of exercises, both of which address the same topics found in part two of the textbook, the content area chapters in health, history, business, and psychology. The first set of questions in each skills chapter is from simpler texts written about these topics. The second exercise in each chapter use sample texts from the actual content chapters from part two. Students, then, can use the first exercise in each chapter to build a conceptual knowledge of the topics discussed using less complex language. They then use this newly built repertoire as they go to the second exercise in each chapter that is a higher readability level. Not only does this gradation of difficulty stretch the student's ability, but it also begins to build their repertoire of the content in addition to the reading strategies they are learning. The most important benefit of Allen's use of the content area material in the skills section is that it provides students the opportunity to hear, read, and talk about the subjects well before they are expected to read the content area textbook chapters. Instructors find they must provide mini-lectures on Freud, the U.S. Civil War, and worker's compensation during



the skill development chapters in order for the students to complete the work. Being introduced to these fields before they actually read the content area chapters allows students to begin building the schema they will need once they are asked to study the subjects in depth.

Once students reach part two of Making Connections, students have heard the language of the content areas but have not fully developed their repertoire in each area. For each content area chapter, Allen provides extensive instruction about how students can frontload their efforts by further developing their schema. First, students must heartily survey the chapter in-depth. Although this is not a new concept (SQ3R begins with “Survey”), it is worthwhile in that students are learning about the content as well as the rhetorical cues the content area textbook chapter authors use to aid students. Students are expected to predict what the chapter addresses and to identify elements such as marginal definitions and stated learning goals so that students can make better predictions about how the chapter will present information.

Further, students are asked to connect personally with the information. After surveying the chapter, students are asked to write a journal entry in which they relate their personal experiences to the topics that they will read about. But not only do they write about the content connections, they are also expected to write a journal entry about the reading and study strategies specific for that chapter. For instance, in the health chapter students are introduced to the Cornell note-taking method. They are asked to think and write about what they already know about note-taking and how they have taken

textbook notes in the past. Both of these journal assignments prepare students to reflect on what they will be doing as they read the content chapter.

To further build repertoire, students are asked to read more about the topics in the content area chapters. First, they read and summarize a journal article on the subject that Allen provides in part three of her book. She includes two journal articles related to the topics which serve to broaden student understanding of the topic. Reading and reflecting on these articles invites students into the conversation about the topics and are engaging enough to provide a hook for which students will ideally want to learn more. This effort to help students engage with the content chapters also happens through individual research projects. Allen suggests in her instructor's manual that instructors try to build in projects on these subjects, and many GTCC instructors have done so with significant success. For instance, in the psychology chapter, I give students a list of psychology-related subjects for them to choose from and research, ranging from personality disorders to Indigo children. I briefly introduce the topics to the class, and then students are encouraged to select a topic that relates to them. The self-selection makes the assignment meaningful and purposeful. Students are then expected to search the internet for information on the topic (many developmental reading students have never used the internet for this purpose), cite the source, summarize the information they find, and present the information to the class. The presentations are relatively informal, and the students are able to share their enthusiasm with the rest of the class, allowing repertoire-building to occur collaboratively. By the time students actually read the content area chapter, they have experienced the subject several times and in several ways, which not

only helps them to read the chapter with more ease and experience, but it also ideally prepares them to enter these classes once they leave developmental reading.

If, then, the goal of RED 090 at GTCC is to prepare students for reading in subsequent content area courses, this new approach to RED 090 goes very far towards that goal. Students build repertoire for each area which helps them within RED 090, and they have built a knowledge base of content and strategies that they can bring with them into those subsequent courses. Since RED 090 has only been taught in this format for one year, we are still anxiously awaiting the statistics that will prove or disprove our belief.

One other area that needs consideration is how we can help students consolidate their newly developed schema. An idea that we have not yet pursued but that I believe will be valuable, is the role of reflection in the reading class. In Reflection in the Writing Classroom, Kathleen Yancey argues that reflection encourages students to engage in metacognitive thinking regarding their writing. I further this standpoint by arguing that reflection is key to building repertoire, but also as a form of closure to a subject. Students would benefit from reflecting once again on a subject after they have read about it, studied it, and been assessed on their new knowledge. Although we have not yet tried post-reading reflection, I believe it will further our departmental goal of helping students in subsequent courses by reinforcing the schema students have developed and by letting them compare what they did know before reading with what they know after.

Overall, the course redesign has been a positive experience. Instructors who had initially resisted this new approach have reported that although they doubted the design in the beginning, they clearly see the benefits provided by this new structure and the value

of writing in a reading course. The next step will be to redesign RED 080 and RED 070 to align more closely with the new RED 090.

### Lower Level Developmental Reading Courses and Reading Theory

So far, I have focused my attention on the upper level of developmental reading at GTCC, but if RED 090 has made significant inroads towards helping students read by basing instruction on psycholinguistic and reader-response theory, the lower levels of reading need reconsidering as well. Students who begin developmental reading at the 070 or 080 level and move into RED 090 experience a significant disconnect between what they learned in the lower levels and how RED 090 is presented. My department was concerned that these students would not be prepared for the advanced strategies we were introducing in RED 090, so we have begun to look at how we can increase the fluidity between levels.

Before RED 090 was revised, students learned the same discrete skills at three different readability levels. Currently, both RED 070 and RED 080 use two different levels of the same skills-based textbook, the best-selling Ten Steps series from Townsend Press. These texts and RED 090's former textbook present reading as a series of skills which need developing in order for the student to be able to read longer selections. This is what Frank Smith would refer to as a "bottom-up" approach, "putting the text in charge, with the letters on the page the first and final arbiters of the reader's responses" rather than the "top-down" approach which he endorses, "implying that the reader determines how a text will be approached, dealt with, and interpreted" (221). Students are

instructed in the same manner for both 070 and 080, being led through multiple practice exercises in finding the main idea, topic, implied main idea, and fact and opinion, as well as in the skill of underlining and outlining, resisting the “top-down” method of meaning construction. The textbooks both provide longer reading selections in the appendices, followed by multiple choice questions about each. The difference in the two levels is the readability level of the practice paragraphs. Both courses teach paragraph reading in isolation, providing no emphasis on discussion of topics, the reading process, or of building repertoire. However, from what we’ve learned in RED 090, RED 080 and RED 070 are now being revised.

Although the GTCC developmental reading department considered changing textbooks, we could not locate one that satisfactorily presented reading holistically at an appropriate reading level for 070 and 080 students. Therefore, we decided to pilot a RED 080 course using the same textbook in a different way. To prepare students for the kind of holistic approach used in RED 090 and to help them engage in the reading process and repertoire building, the pilot RED 080 begins with the longer selections in the appendix. Students are instructed from a top-down approach.

The ten longer selections in the appendix are non-fiction essays on a variety of subjects, an essay on baseball great Jackie Robinson, for instance. Like in RED 090, students are asked to complete mini-research projects on an aspect of the essay topic, present their research to the class, and reflect on how the topic relates to them. For the Jackie Robinson article “He Was First,” one instructor asked her students to go to a website that describes life for different decades in the U.S. She asked them to find out

things like how much gas cost and what were people wearing in the 1940s (the time frame of the essay), the year of their birth, and today. I particularly liked this assignment because it helped students build a sense of the past—how different and how similar times can be. Depending on the essay, students were then taught reading strategies such as locating main idea, outlining, creating a timeline, and summarizing, based on what worked best with the essay. The rest of the book—the skills chapters—were used only as reinforcement of the concepts being taught within the essays.

The instructor found that students could outline, summarize, and discuss the essays with relative ease, but they failed to be able to answer the multiple choice questions correctly consistently. We have been slightly confused by this outcome, because it seems that if students understand the essay well enough to talk and write about it, they should be able to answer multiple choice questions that refer directly to the texts. However, looking at this phenomenon through a psycholinguistic perspective helps to solve the mystery. If, as Frank Smith argues, that once readers slow down and focus on individual words and letters they are unable to make meaning, it is not too far of a leap to use this argument as an explanation for why students have difficulty answering these specific multiple choice questions. They have understood the meaning of the essay through extended repertoire message and can identify main ideas when outlining the essay, but when stopped and asked specifically to refer to a single paragraph and pull out the main idea, the individual paragraph fails to hold the same meaning for them that the essay as a whole does.

This phenomenon supports the idea of a holistic approach to teaching reading, but it also poses a problem: not being able to answer multiple choice questions about a text students are familiar with shows that they are still experiencing some disconnect with the text. “Purpose” may address this problem. Although the essays are written to be enjoyed, students must read the essays efferently. In addition to engaging with the text, they must be able to understand the text as a whole and still recognize how the author has made his/her arguments clear, which they have demonstrated they can do. The difference lies in how the instructor guides the students. She could have worked with the students and guided them towards strategies for taking multiple choice tests regarding the text, but the purpose of the reading assignment ultimately was to understand it as a whole. It is possible that the weaker readers in the class, readers who still struggle with basic level sight words, were floated by the stronger readers in the class to complete the assignments, which is still a problem, but readers learn to read by reading, and the experience of the texts is improving their reading abilities in different ways.

We are just beginning to pilot a new version of RED 070. Students at this level struggle with understanding the construction of a paragraph and have even more limited repertoire of sight words and contexts. Instructors typically spend weeks trying to help these students understand the hierarchies that exist within the paragraph structure. After seeing the results of RED 080 and RED 090, however, it is clear that we need to test whether it is perhaps the approach to teaching reading that is more flawed than the readers themselves. This fall, we will be piloting 070 classes in a similar format to 080s, but in this class we will be experimenting with fiction for the first time in GTCC’s

history. One section will be reading To Kill a Mockingbird along with the essays and work in the textbook. Ideally, students would be asked to read fiction aesthetically, for the experience of reading fiction, but as soon as a text is assigned in a class and grades are attached to the work completed regarding the text, the experience becomes efferent.

To Kill a Mockingbird was selected by the instructor who will be piloting the course after surveying all RED 070 students in spring 2008 and found that none had read the novel. She chose this novel because she argues that students need to read a classic work, a challenging work, and that this work contains a depth of elements for which the students can discuss and build repertoire, specifically in the areas that may relate to them—family, the judicial system, fairness, relationships—and also pull in elements that they will read about in RED 090—stress and health, history of the South, personality theories in psychology—thereby helping students build the background they will need to succeed in RED 090. She does not want to use a classic text that has been rewritten at a lower readability level or a novel that is easier to read, arguing that she believes this text will move students as it did her when she first read it. While it is true that students do have some of the repertoire already in place to understand this novel, my concern is that with the novel's content. The majority of non-EFL students in RED 070 fall into the demographic of low income African-Americans. Although I agree that this is a classic text, I worry that the message will be interpreted negatively: that black males are wrongly accused of crimes, white males play the role of savior-martyr to help them, white children bear the innocent truth, and all black people stand in honor of the white male savior-martyr even though he fails at his quest. No matter how beautifully the novel is written, I



believe that it will take a talented instructor to deal with these aspects of the novel, aspects that may well turn students away from the text if they are perceived as reinforcing negative stereotypes as much as it draws them in.

Currently less than 25% of students who begin developmental reading in RED 070 will complete the developmental reading series of courses (Hunter 2008). We are hoping that this experience with reading, rather than the competency-based reading approach that is still in place, will not only provide students a stronger reading experience so that if they do still decide to leave GTCC it will help them more than if they had simply studied main ideas and details, but moreover, that it will provide them with a view of reading that will encourage them to stay the course, engaging with reading rather than seeing it as a punitive experience.

#### Other Holistic Strategies: Townsend Press' Effort to Get Books in Homes

Townsend Press, the publishers of the Ten Step series of developmental reading textbooks, counters their textbook's focus on discrete skill development by creating programs to get students to read, to get books into the homes of these students (Townsend). They have over 30 classic works that have been trimmed for readability (for instance, Bronte's Jane Eyre has been edited to delete the thick Victorian descriptions to help readers stay focused on the plot) in addition to a number of non-fiction works that speak to the experiences of developmental reading students on topics such as addiction, teenage pregnancy, the foster care system, and developmental students who change the world after getting an education.

For one of the programs, Townsend Press donates one work from their collection for every one of their textbooks sold at any community college. I take them up on their offer each semester and order a range of works for students. At first, I asked instructors to have students place orders for which book they wanted, but students were not interested. Rather, I ordered several copies of the whole collection and put them in front of the students to choose from. Students as a whole did not take a book just to read for pleasure. When they did, they gravitated towards topics they were familiar with. Why would a non-reader choose Ethan Frome over Letters My Mother Never Read—a series of well-written “letters” from a daughter to her mother who left her in foster care for the majority of her childhood. Townsend Press’ John Langan also wrote a series of novels set in the high school and urban community with teenage African Americans as main characters who face problems many students find common to themselves. Several students took these novels home for their children to read, and came back to request more when their children completed those. I still have several copies of Call of the Wild and Frankenstein on my shelf, but continue to run out of Everyday Heroes, Reading Changed My Life, and Facing Addiction. The selections students make tell a story. They are motivated to read non-fiction works that relate directly to their experiences and from which they believe they will gain some insight into their lives. Many of these students have yet to read aesthetically, and choose efferent reading even when it is not assigned reading for the class. They are less willing to read fiction, perhaps because they are unfamiliar with what an aesthetic reading experience will do for them or because they have too little experience with reading fiction to realize they can still learn life-lessons from classic

texts. Since GTCC's developmental reading department is going to continue using Townsend Press textbooks, I would like to use their donated works more effectively in our RED 070 and 080 classes to see how this will affect student attitudes towards reading and overall reading ability.

### Conclusion

Student resistance to reading is a problem that we are only beginning to address, one that a holistic model of developmental reading may or may not affect. Since this unified approach is new, our department continues to reflect on the successes of the new reading theory-based instructional model and continue to explore more ways we can make reading meaningful for students. This approach will force some developmental reading instructors out of their comfort zones by requiring more flexibility, additional grading, and the inclusion of writing in a reading course, but the benefits to the students will be worth the initial discomforts.

Overall, I am very pleased with the new direction of developmental reading at GTCC. I believe we are headed in the right direction, a belief that is reinforced each time I speak with Claire Hunter who agrees that students are really beginning to learn (and I add, teachers are beginning to learn as well). One area that we touch on in the holistic approach is the role of writing in reading instruction. As previously mentioned, in the past, reading comprehension was determined by objective tests, but more and more we are beginning to see how writing can be used not only to indicate student comprehension but to generate new knowledge about the texts. A popular topic with composition

theorists, discussions regarding the connections between reading and writing are relatively underdeveloped in developmental reading theory.

In the next chapter, I explore the connections between basic writing and developmental reading, using rhetoric instruction as the hinge between the two. Rhetorical reading will be the next new direction, the new angle of our holistic approach to reading instruction at GTCC.

<sup>1</sup> Both English and Psychology departments indicated that the three critical needs areas they see in their students are a need for stronger vocabulary, critical thinking skills, and self-motivation as it applies to a desire for knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Cornwell writes best-selling forensic pathology mysteries. Her main character Kay Scarpetta has been a medical examiner and free-lance criminal investigator. In the novels, Scarpetta solves crimes in conjunction with local police agencies and the FBI through her scientific explorations of the crime scenes. The novels often involved graphic, scientific details regarding necropsy.

## CHAPTER V

### THE (DEVELOPMENTAL) READING AND (BASIC) WRITING CONNECTION

*“Samantha,” a student I had seen in the halls of my developmental reading department for several semesters, finally made it into my RED 090 class after taking and passing RED 070 and RED 080 twice. This was her second time taking RED 090, and from talking to her, I believed she had an undisclosed learning disability. Finally, after attending class for two months, Samantha felt comfortable enough to come to my office and ask her question: “My mama said I should come ask you if you could help me read better.” She had had a conversation with her mother, a high school drop-out, about her reading problem, and they had agreed the best thing she could do was to ask an “expert”—me—for help.*

*On that day, I learned that I was the one who needed help. Our department and I had shown all of our cards already. She had studied and practiced finding main ideas, context clues, fact and opinion, and study strategies, well enough to pass the tests and the courses with a C average. But those courses had not helped her learn to “read better.”*

*Once in class, she had come to my desk, pointed to a word, and asked me to read it out loud so she could understand what it was; the word was “determined.” When she heard the word, I believe she knew what it meant, but I couldn’t understand what was going on in her mind when she saw the word. Was “determined” not part of her sight words? Did she concentrate on it so long that it looked like something else? Why couldn’t she understand the word based on the context of the sentence? And it was such an easy word—one I would expect anyone above elementary school to know. The reading process is invisible, which makes it tricky to teach.*

*That day in my office, I talked with her about a plan to help her read better. It involved more reading—reading books that were about mature subjects but that were*

*written on an accessible reading level. She left the office with a book to read and a sense that I could not help her either. Reading in order to learn to read didn't sound right to her, and the painful truth that there was no magic, immediate answer was not what she was hoping for; but it was the only answer I had to give.*

*Although I had given her an appropriate plan of action, I felt my response was inadequate. When I asked her where she had the most trouble with reading, she didn't have the vocabulary to answer. I needed a way to identify where her reading was going astray, where she was making "errors" and how those errors came about before I gave her a prescriptive strategy. I had no means of discovering her reading errors, so I relied on providing the generic strategy of "reading more."*

### Introduction

In chapter three, I argued for a reader-response, psycholinguistic approach to developmental reading. These two theories provide a valid theoretical underpinning for any course which attempts to address the reading process. However, literary reading theory can be only half of the story. Developmental reading should also be firmly grounded in rhetorical theory. Whether developmental reading is taught separately or in conjunction with a developmental English course, writing must be used to help students generate meaning during reading as well as to demonstrate consolidation of newly constructed meaning.

The infusion of writing, however, is not a simple task for developmental reading students. Most developmental reading students are also underprepared writers, and most have affective characteristics that create personal resistance to literacy instruction. Mina Shaughnessy's 1977 work Errors and Expectations provides a description of

developmental writing students and their writing issues that is still relevant in 2008.

Moreover, her descriptions apply directly to developmental reading students. Using her work as a basis for my discussion of developmental readers, I am then aligned to explain more effectively why and how writing should be used in developmental reading.

Rhetorical reading is the hinge.

### The Errors of Basic Writers: A Developmental Reading Concern

When Mina Shaughnessy wrote Errors and Expectations, she was one of the first to attempt a comprehensive approach to understanding basic writers. In her work, she noted that there were “no studies, nor guides, nor even suitable textbooks” for instructors of what she calls “basic writing” (3). Although preparatory classes at colleges and universities had been in existence for over one hundred years, the field of developmental education emerged primarily when college systems opened their doors to students who would otherwise have been blocked from entry due to entry standards (1). In Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy suggests that writing instructors, rather than staring gaped-mouthed at the atrocities inflicted on the English language by people who have no chance of ever learning to write well, should instead look more closely at what is happening in the writing samples of these students, and not immediately write these students off as unsalvageable (3). She argues that basic writing students are far from illiterate. Their writing displays a complicated, albeit confusing, set of rules which they have developed through mis-learning writing instruction. These rules follow a pattern unique to each student and call for interpretation from the writing instructor. (5-6)

Shaughnessy's argument was unique. Before assigning prescriptive strategies to try to teach students specific rules of grammar, she believed that we first had to understand the student. In her introduction, Shaughnessy describes what has happened in a basic writer's life that has led to him/her having to take a basic writing class. In her subsequent chapters, Shaughnessy goes on to look at specific writing errors, develops a theory about the causes of those errors, and then suggests strategies for teachers to help students learn to be stronger writers. (4)

Unlike Errors and Expectations, works about developmental reading often fail to illuminate the causes of reading "errors" or what is actually occurring when students fail to comprehend. Works about reading tend to address what it means to "comprehend" texts, what happens during reading process, or what should happen, and then suggest strategies for instructors to teach the reading process rather than directly addressing specifically what is happening with the struggling student as he/she tries to read.

One difficulty reading instructors face is that the act of reading is invisible. Although Shaughnessy argues that "since teachers can read only words, not minds, they cannot judge the 'fit' between what a student intends and what he has written" (80), but with writing, an instructor at least has a visible sample of a student's writing to discuss and help shape. With reading, however, the instructor must find a way to make the invisible visible. All reading instructors can rely on is what students tell us they understand or what they write about what they read. As with Samantha, many struggling readers are unable to verbalize what problems they are having. Reading tests that ask students to read a passage and answer multiple choice questions about the main idea and



details of the passage do not get at the heart of the struggling reader's problems.

Developmental reading instructors, then, must take what they know about their students and formulate a hypothetical model of reading error by which they can try to compare their students.

If reading and writing are inextricably related, as many theorists argue, then applying some of Shaughnessy's observations about struggling writers to the problems of struggling readers could provide relevant insight into developmental reading. In addition to addressing the affective and cognitive problems of developmental readers, I believe that the writing process and the reading process are interwoven and can be used to support literacy instruction in a meaningful way.

### Who Are Developmental Students and What Is Their Problem?

First of all, it is important to understand that everyone is at some point "developmental." Since we all engage in the same reading process, experienced readers who struggle with a difficult text face similar challenges of inexperienced readers. That is the nature of the "developmental" philosophy: the National Association of Developmental Educators' motto is "Helping underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel" (NADE 2008). But "prepared" and "advanced" students have at their disposal a number of strategies to help them handle the difficult academic situations they experience. For the "underprepared" student, academia is a strange land with foreign expectations; they are "unacquainted with the rules and rituals of college life, unprepared for the sorts of tasks their teachers were about to assign

them” (Shaughnessy 4). Shaughnessy’s descriptions of the affective characteristics relate not only to basic writing students but to literacy learning in general; therefore, her descriptions of basic writing students mirror descriptions of the developmental reading student as well.

Mina Shaughnessy does what few other writing or reading theorists do: she argues that the affective characteristics of her students significantly influence how they learn to write. Most literary reading theories fail to address the specific needs of the underprepared student. I believe this is one of the primary reasons developmental reading programs do not rely on literary reading theories in determining how to instruct students: these theories do not take the characteristics of developmental education students into consideration. Developmental educators know that the affective characteristics of our students *must* be considered during curriculum design.

Therefore, the first, necessary step to understanding how to teach basic writing and developmental reading students is to understand who they are. Adult students bring personal histories with them that elementary-aged students do not have; and further, developmental students have a life-story that is generally different from “prepared” college students. These personal histories often include negative experiences with teachers and learning. Developmental education instructors, therefore, need to be aware of the baggage their students bring with them and be prepared to be sensitive to the affective characteristics that will affect how they perform.

Shaughnessy classifies all students into three levels: 1) the students who meet the traditional college entry requirements and are competent readers and writers; 2) the

students who “get by” in school, who write and read well enough to pass but lack any enthusiasm about school; and 3) “those who had been left so far behind the others in their formal education that they appeared to have little chance of catching up, students whose difficulties with the written language seemed of a different order...where even very modest standards of high-school literacy had not been met” (2). Although sometimes students from categories one and two will place into a developmental reading or writing class, this happens, according to my experiences talking with students, because they failed to take the placement test seriously or were otherwise distracted during the test, causing them to score in a range that places them into a corresponding level of developmental reading or writing. This testing error also happens with the students in category three, but the difference is that they were not capable of placing any higher.

Category three students—the underprepared—can be further divided into several types of students. In her article “Who Belongs in College?: A Second Look,” Carlette Hardin describes seven types of developmental education students that I believe clearly delineates the affective issues of these students and furthers Shaughnessy’s description of the underprepared student. First is the “poor chooser,” the student who chose not to take college preparatory classes in high school and subsequently was “misprepared rather than underprepared” for the rigors of college work when they decided to attend college (16). Next is the “ignored” student, a passive student who quietly completed high school coursework and required no specific attention from her teachers, allowing her to slip through school unnoticed and perhaps unchallenged (20). Third, “student[s] with limited English proficiency” are another category (20), and they are often the strongest students.

I have had numerous students who place into developmental reading even though they hold degrees from universities in their home countries. Fourth, students with disabilities ranging from physical, to cognitive, to emotional handicaps form another group (19). Deaf students have a particularly difficult time in developmental reading classes because of the differences between American sign language and written language. At GTCC we have also seen a rise in the number of autistic and Asperger's students. All of these students must adjust to a college experience which does not provide the same support that is provided at elementary and secondary levels (19). Fifth is what Hardin calls "the extreme case" (22). "Students in this category have such extreme academic, emotional, and psychological problems that they...not only create problems for themselves, but they prevent faculty members from teaching and fellow students from learning (22). These students have intense personal problems that prevent their success. Take for instance the former postal worker and Viet Nam veteran who so disliked his instructor that he exclaimed he couldn't be held accountable for what he would do if he "ever had to see that lady again," or the student whose 9mm handgun fell out of his book bag during developmental math class. Sixth, Hardin describes "the user"(21), the student who does not know what else to do after high school but has to take classes to stay on her parent's insurance at her parents' insistence; or the student who has learned that if he registers for classes, he will receive a large financial aid reimbursement check, not understanding or caring how taking the money and dropping out of school will affect his future. Finally, the "adult learner" brings the baggage of adulthood after being absent from an educational setting for years, whether they are displaced workers, single parents, former

drug addicts, or have simply come to realize that education is important, and modeling that belief is important to the development of their children (18). These students are experiencing the double emotional challenge of personal life changes as well as being a first-time college student.

Hardin argues that

[i]n the past, many labels have been used to describe developmental students, such as disruptive, probationary, remedial, alternative, high-risk, at-risk, and nontraditional. Most of these labels focus on the weaknesses rather than strengths. The purpose of [her] article is not to add new labels by listing the categories of students in developmental programs. However, by focusing on the characteristics of these categories, one can see that the backgrounds and needs that put developmental students at a disadvantage can be overcome. (23)

Studies have been completed that show the demographics of developmental education classrooms, including gender, race, and age, but Hardin's descriptions do something more—they get at the heart of where developmental students are coming from, their diversity. Developmental education instructors, and developmental reading instructors specifically, need to be aware of who their students are as they help them to draw on their prior experiences to help them develop their repertoires.

#### Attitudes of Basic Writers and Developmental Readers Toward Literacy Instruction

In addition to the general yet unique problems that all developmental students face, developmental reading and writing students have often developed negative literacy histories that have shaped their attitudes toward reading and writing instruction. Although

in Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy refers only to her basic writing students, I believe these characteristics are not only found in writing students, but also developmental reading students. Shaughnessy cites that her students' have experienced failure and subsequent humiliation because of their writing abilities in the past. They may have suffered a "humiliating encounter with school language, which produces ambivalent feelings about mastery, persuading the child on the one hand that he cannot learn to read and write and on the other that he has to" (10). "They have become resigned to this confusion...have lost confidence in the very faculties that serve all language learners: ...their ability to draw analogies between what they knew of language when they began school and what they had to learn produced mistakes...and not one saw the intelligence of their mistakes or thought to harness that intelligence in the service of learning" (10-11).

"The student lacks confidence in himself in academic situations and fears that writing [and I add reading] will not only expose but magnify his *inadequacies*" (Shaughnessy 85; italics in original). This self-doubt also exists for developmental reading students. Each semester, I ask about my students' previous experiences with literacy, and inevitably, one or more students confess that they were humiliated by teachers in elementary school when they were not able to read aloud as quickly or as well as other students. Being placed in the "Raven" group (an example title of a lowest level reading group) rather than the "Eagle" group (the highest level group) is a traumatic labeling experience for students. Generally, their early failures led to a lower self-worth as a student, which followed them as they were then tracked into the lowest levels of

English courses, in which they were assigned either no novels to read or they were assigned The Outsiders or Sista Soldier's Coldest Winter Ever, which were meaningful to them, but were not as challenging as the classic texts that were assigned in the higher level English classes. The older developmental reading students in particular demonstrate a high frustration level, believing they are going to fail until they realize that with effort, they are some of the strongest students in the class. Shaughnessy notes that these students, having failed in previous experiences with writing (and I add reading), that they believe that the way to learn in this field is to try to go back to how they were taught before and try to accomplish the requirements previously asked of them: they tend to believe that practice exercises and worksheets will help them learn to write (or read) even though those strategies had not worked for them in the past (11). Their vision of what it means to learn to write (or read) is skewed by these past memories.

Another reason students are resistant is because literacy is not highly valued in their personal communities. Shaughnessy argues that since it is easier to communicate through speech in their communities that they are resistant to adjusting to the literacy requirements of a college class (10). "Standard English" does not equate with the language they know, and students therefore must go through an adjustment period where they first recognize that they are speaking in local vernacular and then realize that learning standard English is not a threat to their identity but simply a formalized way of communicating in academia.

What it comes down to is, in Shaughnessy's terms, an "economy of energy." Shaughnessy describes the limits to the amount of energy a reader will want to put into

interpreting a text and compares that to the amount of energy a student is willing to put into learning to write (or read). (11) In my experience, community college students are rarely what I would consider on the “professional student” track. When I tell them that I’ve now been a student for twenty six years because of how much I enjoy learning and because of the life-changing directions education can help me achieve, they gasp. They typically want to spend as little time as necessary in school to get their degree and start working in their chosen field and want to learn “academic language speedily” (188). They do not want to take courses that are not required as part of their major and are easily frustrated when they are expected to take classes they do not believe directly relate to their major. Students are particularly frustrated by the time it will take them to complete the requirements of developmental education. They want to start classes in their major immediately, but most have a trouble reconciling that they must take time, sometimes several semesters, for reading and writing instruction to get them to college level ability. In class, they recognize that they are under-prepared, they know that they must strengthen their writing and reading skills, but expect, like Samantha did, that they can accomplish this in a brief amount of time. It is a struggle for them to recognize that they must now make up for all of the time they spent in public school or in the workplace without achieving what they needed to in terms of writing or reading.

In contrast, I remember one student, a self-proclaimed former crack addict, who included education as one of her goals when she had her life back together. She is one of the few students I’ve interacted with that started in RED 070 and ENG 070, and completely understood her weaknesses and sincerely wanted to know how she could



improve. Even though I was her reading teacher, she would bring her writing samples to me to help her understand where her writing needed help. I only helped her with her writing two or three times, but her desire to improve rather than simply trying to get a grade and pass a class was refreshing. I have also had many EFL students who sincerely wanted to improve their English skills. One student in particular would take notes in class and go home at night and compare where his answers mismatched with what we discussed in class and learn through his mistakes. Most students, however, tend to do as little as necessary to pass the class, and many others fail to do even that. Each semester, my colleagues and I struggle with the enigma of students who never do homework or pass a test, who have no hope of passing the course yet continue to attend class. Shaughnessy's "economy of energy" varies between students and is defined by how much effort they want to put into reading and writing.

One effect of the economy of energy that Shaughnessy describes is an intense expectation on the part of a basic writer for instructors to provide purposeful and efficient instruction (291). Adult students in particular have a reason for being in school—most often it is to redefine themselves through education. It has taken them a long time to come back to school and they expect each assignment to help them achieve their goals and demand to know the relevance of each assignment they complete. The maturity, according to Shaughnessy, permits an awareness of their educational experiences, a metacognitive ability that young students sometimes lack (291). I quickly realized when I started teaching developmental reading that I needed to explain the point of all the activities we were doing. Recently, a colleague recounted a learning moment in her class

that reflects the developmental student's expectation of purposeful instruction. One student, a former foster child and drug addict, wanted to know how studying main ideas and details would help her in her chosen career. She wants to be a school counselor. In addition to explaining how this reading practice would help in future classes, the instructor began to talk about the responsibilities of a school counselor and the manner in which a counselor must take notes and write reports. Other students in the class started to join in and brainstorm about ways they too would be using the structure of main ideas and details, including how it relates to résumé writing. The students began to understand the point of what they were studying, and it was very important for them to know that to keep their attention focused on the task. If they had been unable to relate the reading practice with their reality, their experiences in the class would have been quite different.

In Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy stops short of describing the pressures basic writing students face external to the classroom experiences, but as developmental educators often say, "Life interrupts sometimes" and pulls the student's attention away from school matters. The responsibilities at home often prevent students from dedicating enough of their selves to the basic writing or developmental reading coursework that would help them achieve their goals more quickly. For instance, I had a student once, a refugee from southern Sudan, who had six children under twelve years old, who was married to a man that expected her to cook and clean for the entire family, who worked a third shift fulltime job, and continued to take multiple developmental education classes during the morning each semester. Her lack of experience with English and her responsibilities at home did prevent her from studying and completing practice exercises

well enough to pass the course, but over a two year period, she was able to complete the developmental course work and move into her chosen major. Our students, more so than students in a typical university setting, come to class with much more baggage—fulltime jobs, children, resentful family members—with which they must contend, in addition to studying for their courses. Students who *do* pass my class with these challenges are remarkable and inspirational. A developmental educator must take students' personal responsibilities into consideration while still holding students to high standards and teaching them about the responsibilities involved in being a college student.

#### Basic Writers and Developmental Readers: The Rhetorical Hinge

In Errors and Expectations, Mina Shaughnessy provides a description of her students' affective issues and the readjustment in thinking that many instructors will need in order to teach this population of students, but she predominantly addresses specific student errors in student writing, provides numerous examples of each found in students' writing samples, suggests why students make these errors, and how instructors might redirect students towards correct usage. Although the dominant errors she describes begin with handwriting and punctuation and end with broader problems of entangled syntax and longer passages, her argument has a central theme: basic writers' main error is that they fail to understand the connection between the writer and the reader. Most of the errors they make are due to this one major misunderstanding. In Hephzibah Roskelly's and David Jolliffe's 2005 textbook Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing, Roskelly and Jolliffe contend that rhetoric is the key that ties these two issues together.

Under the umbrella of rhetoric instruction, students learn about the role of the composer—the writer and the reader—as well as stylistic issues. In Everyday Use, rhetoric is defined in two ways:

- The art of analyzing all the language choices that writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a given situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective
- The specific features of texts, written or spoken, that cause them to be meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners in a given situation (4).

Their definition includes rhetoric as an act of analysis and rhetoric as textual elements.

Further, Roskelly and Jolliffe argue that rhetoric, or the act of composing (152), is the hinge that binds reading and writing together. Their work addresses “how reading with a rhetorically sensitive perspective can help a student become a better, more capable writer, and how writing with an eye to rhetorical effectiveness can lead a student to become a more observant reader” (xiv). Because reading and writing are related, the problems basic writers face are also problems that developmental readers face. Both groups lack the same understanding of what it means to be a writer/reader, and both groups fail to understand the importance of structural elements of texts as they affect how the text is interpreted.

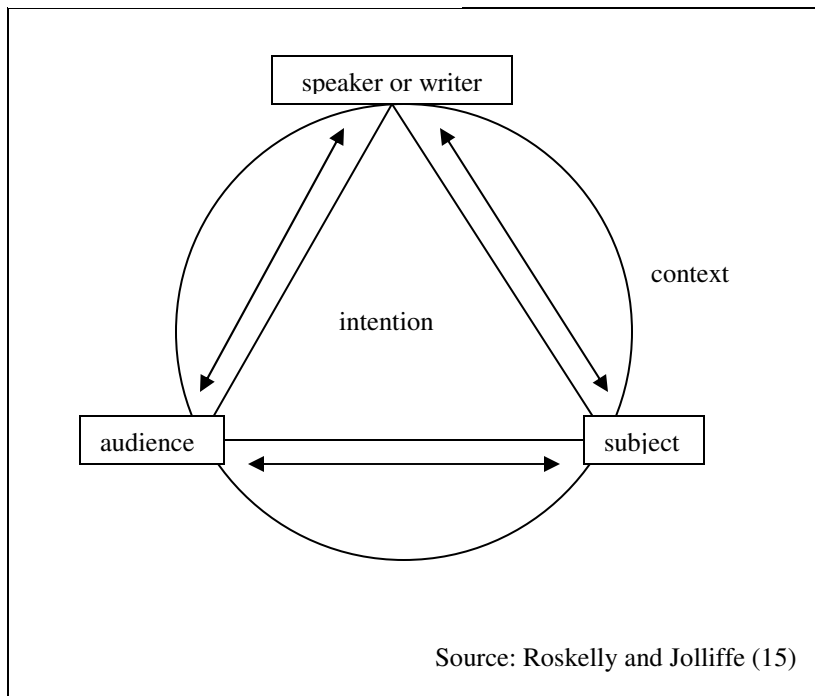
## The Errors and Expectations of Developmental Readers: The Roles of the Reader and Writer

According to Shaughnessy, a basic writer's lack of understanding of the purpose of grammar and style stems from the fact that the basic writer fails to understand the connection between what s/he writes and what a reader reads. They fail to understand that they are "a writer producing reading" (Shaughnessy 223). Understanding how an experienced writer processes the written word is key to helping basic writers begin to write purposefully. The developmental reader, too, fails to see the textbook author as a person making intentional choices. My students tend either to not contemplate where their textbooks come from or they think of the textbook as being written by a corporation. When I refer to the author of the textbook and what s/he is trying to accomplish or how s/he has presented their information, some ask me who I'm talking about: "Who's Sheila Allen?" When developmental readers begin to understand who the author is and why the author has made the choices s/he has made, they begin to understand that the text is more like a conversation than a container of information out of which they are supposed to scoop data to store for a later test. They begin to understand that they are a part of the conversation, that they play a role in creating the text, and are allowed and encouraged to ask questions about how the text is presented. If a developmental reader criticizes a textbook and how an author writes about his/her subject, s/he demonstrates to me that they are engaging in the process rather than suffering through it.

To help students understand the writing process and the role of the reader in this process, Roskelly and Jolliffe describe the rhetorical triangle and include the elements of

context and intention (15). (Table 5. 1) The revised rhetorical triangle serves as a model for students as Roskelly and Jolliffe explain the transactions that occur between the reader, the writer, and the text. Like Shaughnessy, Roskelly and Jolliffe argue that writers must be aware of their audiences as they shape their words. But Roskelly and Jolliffe balance their emphasis between a how a writer constructs a message, the purpose that the writer hopes to accomplish, and the context in which the message is being written and read. The extra emphasis they give to the role of the reader, including how a reader engages with the text, provides writers with a clearer purpose and goal. Roskelly and Jolliffe succeed where so many writing handbooks fail: by analyzing the role of the reader, they make the audience real—what Shaughnessy claims is a problem for basic writers.

Table 5.1: Revised Rhetorical Triangle



### What Should Writers Know About Readers?

When writers begin to compose, they need to know about their readers—what the reader expects, how the reader engages with the text—in order to know better how to write the text. Frank Smith, Roskelly and Jolliffe, Paulo Freire and others argue that reading is an extension of what people do naturally—interpret signs. To read is to interpret the symbols on a page, much like people interpret the events surrounding them (Roskelly and Jolliffe 152). People make these interpretations based on two things: prior knowledge and cues. They look inward for what past experiences tell them about the sign, and they look to the sign itself for intention. These two directions—inward and outward—shape the reader’s interpretation of the sign and a text.

Using Louise Rosenblatt’s model of transactional reading, Roskelly and Jolliffe contend that meaning is derived from an interaction between the reader and the text (126). Readers are both the “consumer and producer” of texts in that they “help create them by using [their] own experience, opinions, and ideas to make sense of the text and respond to it appropriately” (141). A reader uses his/her repertoire to make assumptions about the text and the author, to interpret the text, and in this way, compose the meaning of the text. A writer needs to be cognizant of the repertoire of his/her audience when writing—“what in the text or the reader’s experience created” the reader’s response, in order to help shape the reader’s interpretation of the text (Shaughnessy 223).

Readers rely on more than their general past experiences when interpreting texts; they rely on specific experiences they have had with past texts in order to help them create meaning from the text. The reader is looking for the writer’s structural and stylistic

cues to help him/her create meaning. The reader tries “to map the thinking of the writer and finally to see in relation to that map where he, as one reader, traveled” (Shaughnessy 223). The reader “[picks] up on the writer’s cues—the indications given about aim and through words and punctuation and sentence structure...” (Roskelly and Jolliffe 130). Further, the text’s “form—length, paragraph breaks, dialogue, chapter headings, and so on—guides readers in their expectations and predictions” (131).

While reading, readers construct meaning as they constantly and relatively subconsciously predict, “make decisions, formulate ideas, and revise them” regarding the text (Roskelly and Jolliffe 157, 160-1). Everyday Use provides multiple relevant examples of how we as readers predict, or infer, aspects of the text including assumptions about the speaker, the subject, the author, and specific words. Writers must be aware of the locations in their texts that permit and encourage prediction—the gaps in the texts—for it is in the gaps that “decisions about the meaning of the text and the writer’s intentions” are made (Roskelly and Jolliffe 132). “Just as writers create a text so that it achieves an intention, readers likewise process a text so that it achieves an intention. Readers invent and revise ideas about what they read. They add details to texts; they agree or make arguments. They are above all actively involved with what they read...” (122).

Shaughnessy’s study of basic writers indicates that basic writers lack the ability to see how their writing is perceived by readers. They are unable to see where their gaps may prove too large for a reader to make reasonable predictions. Therefore, basic writers must learn to include what the reader needs if they are going to write effectively. (240)



### What Should Readers Know About Writers?

Conversely, developmental readers would benefit from learning more about the writing process, authorial intent, and their own reading process. Basically, they need to understand everything that writers need to know about readers. The first step is understanding that reading is, according to Frank Smith, a process of making meaning by interpreting texts (2). This idea shifts the bearer of meaning from the written word to the reader. When readers understand texts as more than a repository of information, that readers enact the construction of meaning by engaging with the text, they can begin to take ownership of what they construct. When readers begin to understand how they participate in constructing meaning through prediction—of not only the gaps in the text but also of themselves as they “predict” how they will respond—their collaboration with the text supports this construction.

By understanding the precision with which an author has chosen and maneuvered his/her words, the reader is perhaps more capable of believing that meaning comes from an interaction between the writer and the reader. Moreover, if readers understand that the writer has written for an implied reader, attempting to evoke a particular response, the reader can choose to play the writer’s game or reject it. The reader may also find that his/her repertoire of experience and/or vocabulary is not full enough to comprehend the “game” that is reading, and therefore must go to work to build his/her repertoire to a more useful level by reading other texts, exploring more deeply what s/he already knows, researching on the internet, and so on (Roskelly and Jolliffe 140). Roskelly and Jolliffe point out that unless a reader’s repertoire is sufficient enough to allow him/her the ability

to predict without much effort, a reader will have “to read word by word... (123) If the reader’s repertoire is too slim, a reader will “...encounter a text that’s too difficult for them, one where [they] must reread often, go back continually to check what [they] might have missed” (123).

The developing reader should know what the basic writer is learning—all the lessons rhetoric can teach them. “The central aims of a college writing course ought to be to teach students to *read* texts to see how their purpose is made manifest and to *produce* texts that accomplish the purposes that students and their teachers aim to have them accomplish” (Roskelly and Jolliffe xiii). Everyday Use, though written for use in a composition class, provides instruction regarding the reading/writing interaction that is relevant to every developmental reading student.

#### What the Reader and Writer Should Know about Rhetorical Canons

Mina Shaughnessy’s first chapter in Errors and Expectations is a discussion of handwriting and punctuation—the two most specific and recognizable basic writing errors. She argues that until basic writers understand the function of punctuation and are able to use it, meaning will remain convoluted. Shaughnessy illustrates that one reason students use punctuation incorrectly is that they do not understand the purpose for the marks. “Something about this convention poses difficulties for BW students. Some may see no importance in it, no gain in communication” (39). Before teaching students the rules of punctuation, Shaughnessy argues that “students should be helped to understand...the need for punctuation, both as a score for intonations, pauses, and other

vocal nuances, and as a system of marks that help a reader predict grammatical structure” (39). If instruction of basic writers includes rhetoric, as Roskelly and Jolliffe suggest, the writer will learn to “view his[/her] own work from a reader’s perspective” (Shaughnessy 39). In this way, punctuation becomes relevant and purposeful, not simply a series of exercises one must complete to pass a course.

The developmental reader, too, needs to understand the role of punctuation. Often, when students are reading aloud in my class, they will read a word at the time, failing to pause and intonate in conjunction with the indications provided by punctuation. They may read directly from one sentence, skip the period and read the next, which makes me doubt their comprehension of what they have read aloud. “They have to work so hard to identify individual words that they can’t make sense of the text as a whole, or even of the meaning of the sentence” (Roskelly and Jolliffe 154). When I read aloud for them, I demonstrate reading with exaggerated pauses and inflections in an attempt to help students recognize the role of punctuation. Understanding that a text is actually a piece of writing, intentionally dotted with punctuation which adds meaning to the text, should be a primary aspect of a developmental reading student’s instruction. This can happen if the goal of the developmental reading course is to help students understand that the author is writing purposefully.

In Everyday Use, Roskelly and Jolliffe discuss writing improvement in the context of the five canons of rhetoric—“invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery” (39). Their work supports Shaughnessy’s claim that the writer must understand how to construct a piece of writing in an attempt to affect the reader as the reader engages

with the writing. In their discussion of the rhetorical canon of style, Roskelly and Jolliffe argue that students need “to comprehend the structures of language—whole texts, paragraphs, sentences, words, punctuation marks, mechanical conventions, and so on—and to understand both how writers put these structures to work in texts and how readers use them to make sense of texts” (xiii). Understanding the writing process and the author’s intentions goes beyond a discussion of punctuation to include experiences in understanding the underlying structure of the text, including why a writer chose to write how s/he did.

As a part of understanding how an author constructs a text, basic writing students, according to Shaughnessy, struggle to understand how authors elaborate ideas and move between abstract and concrete statements (227). She provides multiple examples of students who limit each idea to one sentence, and explains that instructors who simply tell their students to provide an example (much as the instructor who writes a marginal note instructing a student to “‘Proofread!’” (Shaughnessy 5)) miss the point. It is not that these students mean to make the errors, but that “the mind is not allowed to play upon the topic, to follow out the implications that lie within statements, or to recover the history of the idea as it developed in the writer’s mind. Instead, the writer moves abruptly from one point to the next...” (228). A developmental reader, in addition to not understanding the function of punctuation, further fails to understand the import of elaboration as well as the language the author uses to indicate that a concrete example is being used to illustrate an abstract point.

I highly value class discussion as a generator of ideas and literacy training, but there has been a stark difference between class discussions I have held in my freshman composition classes than in my developmental reading classes. In freshman composition, students could and would like to take up the entire class period discussing a particular subject, but in developmental reading, once students have been prompted to respond to a topic, they are satisfied and perhaps unable to expound on that topic after their first comment. Perhaps this is due in part to a lack in critical thinking, but in this case, it is that they do not see other sides to their topic, do not see how to question the topic to generate more ideas, or the value in listening to opposing viewpoints. More than likely, some students believe class discussion is a waste of time, irrelevant to what they must complete on their worksheets. In addition to understanding the role and usage of punctuation, developmental reading students should understand the thought processes the writer is trying to express and understand how they are putting those thoughts together. Rather than teaching “main idea” and “details,” perhaps another approach would be to look at abstract versus concrete ideas when helping students learn to comprehend.

Although Mina Shaughnessy addresses several more specific problems of basic writers, the question of memory clearly affects both developmental readers and writers. Memory as it relates to word, sentence, and passage order is a key process that both basic writers and developmental readers must master. According to Shaughnessy, the basic writer has “difficulty remembering where he is going” if he doesn’t maintain a sharp awareness of purpose (233). The examples Shaughnessy gives is of students who lose sight of their purpose and move from one idea to the next without providing a direct

focus. Writers must be able to hold multiple ideas in their memories at once as they select which ideas to use and which order to place them in, “but the task of remembering and constantly returning to one’s purpose in a piece of writing is difficult, particularly for the inexperienced writer” (233). Readers, too, must be able to remember the multiple ideas a writer presents in order to create an overall picture of the information.

In their discussion of memory as the rhetorical canon, Roskelly and Jolliffe touch on how a writer’s memory influences the writing event, how the writer can “tap into the memory sources available” (80). Memory as it relates to the reading process is a significant function of prediction. As writers predict how their implied reader will respond, they are activating memory. As readers predict why an author has presented a text in a particular way, they are activating memory. Although this view of memory does not align directly with the ancient rhetorician’s view of memory, Shaughnessy argues that “the ability to hold larger and larger units of discourse together...is in fact an important measure of a student’s intellectual growth...” (233). The developmental reader, too, must learn strategies to balance large amounts of memory in order to construct meaning with a text.

### Conclusion

According to Frank Smith in Understanding Reading, “the function of teachers is not so much to *teach* reading as to help children read” (4; italics in original). Children are born with “the ability to construct a theory of the world and to predict from it... but the actual contents of the theory, the specific detail underlying the order and structure that we

come to perceive in the world is not part of our birthright” (183-4). Smith argues that most of what we learn is not “*taught*” to us but instead is learned through observation and experience (184). Therefore, Smith asserts, learning only takes place under certain conditions: through “*demonstrations*, which are learning conditions existing in the world around us; *engagement*, which is the interaction of the learner with a demonstration; and *sensitivity*, the learner’s learning state” (192; italics in original). This theory fits well with developmental reading and writing instruction. First, demonstrations take place constantly in the classroom. Smith contends that a frustrated teacher is demonstrating frustration, for example (192). Shaughnessy argues that for vocabulary instruction, “more than any exercise in word discrimination, the teacher’s personal use of the language, . . . his pleasure in precise language and his courtesy in offering words . . . nourish the student’s will” to learn (225). The teacher’s demonstration of language, his/her acceptance and reverence towards the standards of academic writing invites students to join in, to “engage” with the experience, and his “courtesy” towards the students permits a receptive “sensitivity” rather than enforces the adversarial stance towards language of many basic writers and developmental readers.

The role of the developmental reading and basic writing instructor appears to be twofold, but it is really a single track: we must treat the student with “sensitivity” as we provide opportunities for students to “engage” with literacy in a way that no other English teacher has done for them before. It is a complicated task, frequently undervalued, and certainly not a job suitable for every teacher. Frank Smith argues that readers “focus their attention on meaning and become concerned with individual words,

occasionally letters, only when understanding fails” (5). His comment helps me to better understand Samantha’s issue with the word *determined*. She must have recognized that she was not understanding the reading material and focused in on that word as a possible key to her misunderstanding. But more than that, she felt safe enough in my classroom to ask me about that word, knowing that she would not be humiliated by my response.

In Alice Horning’s 1978 article “The Connection of Writing to Reading: A Gloss on the Gospel of Mina Shaughnessy,” Horning reads Errors and Expectations through the lens of reading theory and argues that “a holistic look at the literacy skills of reading and writing suggests that their integration furthers the analytical approach to error that Shaughnessy would have us take, and increases the possibilities of both encouraging student reading and reducing error in student writing” (268). She uses reading theory to provide a context for basic writing instructors as they explore the concept of error. In this chapter, I have also glossed Shaughnessy’s work but in an attempt to provide clarity and a possible new direction of thinking for developmental reading instructors, how understanding basic writers can inform developmental reading curriculum design.

In this article, Horning make a single statement that demonstrates a 1978 attitude about reading and writing which I believe partially explains the reason GTCC’s developmental reading program had stagnated. She claims that “the problems of reading and non-reading can be relatively easy to deal with, perhaps, because reading can go on by itself; that is, *it can go on without writing*” (265; emphasis mine). She intimates that



reading does not rely on writing. Since that time, reader-response theorists have posited that reading is in fact a form of writing—readers “write” (construct) meaning during the reading process. In contrast to Horning’s statement, we now understand that reading *cannot* go on without writing because it *is* writing. It relies on rhetorical theory just as writing does. But in the developmental reading department at GTCC by 1978, department leaders had already completed their Master’s degrees in reading and special education. During the Master’s degree programs of early 1970s, there was no discussion of adult literacy, no discussion of reader-response theory, and little discussion of the psycholinguistic approach to reading (Hunter 2008). Although Stilling, Van Dusen, and Hunter continued to study effective reading practices throughout their careers, their education had grounded their thinking in the New Critical approach to literacy.

Now that I have instigated further investigation into contemporary reading theory, our department is joining me in this exploration and has shown remarkable willingness to adopt some reading theory-based practices. Bobbi Van Dusen and Jane Stilling have retired, but Claire Hunter is still with us to emphasize elements of the CBE approach to teaching reading, such as identification of the main idea, that need to remain central to our curriculum plan. The department has come to understand her insistence for students to understand the main idea of a passage not as a New Critical approach to reading but as a reader-response approach to identifying a writer’s cues to the organization of the text. The new holistic approach to our developmental reading courses, however, changes how we approach teaching and assessing this skill. Reader-response theory and psycholinguistic reading theory have redirected our thinking so that we approach this

skill as a process rather than simply the product of the act of reading. Further, we are beginning to infuse writing into our courses, using writing to help students generate background connections to text and to demonstrate understanding of texts, as well as to help readers understand the structure of language—an area we find that developmental reading students are in great need of developing.

Contemporary reading theory, specifically post-structuralism and postmodernism, also serves to support our dedication to developmental education theory. In Meacham and Buendia’s article “Modernism, Postmodernism, and Post-structuralism and Their Impact on Literacy,” the authors demonstrate the shift that is occurring in literacy instruction from the Modernist approach toward postmodern/post-structuralist literacy. According to the authors, post-structuralism affects individual and cultural elements of literacy. They claim reader-response theory as post-structuralist for it emphasizes the individual’s role in the construction of meaning during reading. The reader is encouraged to experience a sense of autonomy and responsibility when interpreting a text. (513) Further, “cultural post-structuralism” as it relates to literacy promotes classroom environments that explore and “integrate communicative and cultural assumptions of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds” and in some cases promotes an analysis of systems of power as they exist within the scope of language.

“Like post-structuralists, postmodernists also emphasize the fact that each of these media is funded and promoted by specific institutions which exercise social and cultural power” (514). Postmodern literacy “involves intertextual interpretation”—reading texts from a variety of sources in order to analyze the subject at hand (514). Although

Meacham and Buendia claim that postmodern literacy instruction “is a small yet emerging phenomenon,” it appears that the approaches they discuss harken back to How to Read a Book in which Adler and Van Doren call the highest form of reading ability “syntopical reading,” a reading ability in which readers read, compare, and evaluate a variety of texts about a single subject. The difference between their discussion and the postmodern intertextual approach is that comparative texts now include a variety of media sources, and in addition, the reader would be reading with the intent of creating “possibilities for personal growth and strategies for social change” (515).

Post-structural and postmodern literacy instruction as described by Meacham and Buendia supports the goals of developmental education theory in that both encourage the student to become comfortable with the autonomy and responsibility that it takes to be a strong student. Additionally, the responsibility extends not only for the self but for the community. “They are taught to use their knowledge of the status quo to change the status quo” (515). Students are encouraged to view themselves as agents of change, enabled by education. Already in GTCC’s developmental reading department, we are beginning to encourage comparative reading, and already we are providing opportunities for students to explore subjects that they find relevant and helpful to their personal lives. Students are being provided the opportunity, perhaps for the first time in their educational experiences, to see how reading and “school” relate to real life—a powerful experience for developmental students.

Now that GTCC’s developmental reading department is experiencing some momentum, we plan to continue to explore ways to make our courses even more

effective. NCCCS has provided us one possibility when they created the course ENG 095—the course that combines developmental reading 090 and developmental English 090. Historically, GTCC’s developmental education department has resisted offering this course primarily because it reduces the number of contact hours students would receive in both classes from ten to seven. However, now that we are beginning to explore the interconnections between reading and writing, using rhetoric as a connector, we plan to move forward with requesting that this course be added to GTCC’s course catalogue. In addition to creating the curriculum for the course, a larger issue will be selling the idea to the administration and other school leaders. Change, at least in developmental education, will be closely scrutinized, as evidenced by the detailed descriptions of the state and community college influences that I have described in this dissertation which have shaped developmental reading until now. But armed with the philosophical groundwork and with our reputations as hard workers who keep the best interest of the student in mind, Claire Hunter and I will move forward with this project thoughtfully and carefully.

The politics surrounding developmental education remain. Even as the Community College of Denver was demonstrating remarkable results with its developmental education programs, CUNY was canceling its remedial programs in the system’s universities, relegating them entirely to their community colleges. A taskforce created by then NY governor George Pataki and NYC mayor Rudy Guiliani in the late 1990s insisted that offering remedial education courses in the university degraded academic standards in upper level classes. Students are now required to pass three Freshman Skills Assessment Tests before being admitted to a bachelor’s degree program.

(Gleason 488) While I agree it is important for students to have a certain academic ability to be successful in college-level classes, the reliance on a single test for admittance standards is dubious at best. Ironically, “a key but little publicized finding [of the task force’s] report is that...the Writing Assessment Test has unacceptably low predictive value for student success in college” (490). Further, the original intent of the open admissions policy was to increase diversity in the student body, since minority students were under-represented. Minority students fail these entry skills tests in higher numbers than white students, thereby delaying entry into the bachelor’s degree programs at CUNY, possibly reverting these student bodies toward a disproportionately low number of minority students (490). In addition to CUNY’s 2000 decision, in July 2008, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University has moved to refer applicants who require remedial education to GTCC before transferring to the university (Burchette 2008).

My point is not that these institutions are making bad decisions but simply that developmental education remains a topic of interest at the state and local level, primarily, I believe, because of its visibility due to its impact on student success in subsequent courses. Developmental education is inherently political. No doubt it will remain in the forefront of discussions about higher education. The most developmental educators can do is to continue to lobby for our students, for the benefits derived from the courses, and for ourselves as professionals. A recent move for developmental education programs to gain certification status through NADE may further this agenda. The certification process is extensive and demonstrates a program’s willingness to reflect on its theory-based

practices and evaluate itself and the improvements it strives to make. GTCC's developmental education program is beginning this certification process, which will be a key element to curriculum improvement in developmental English, math, and reading. As for the developmental reading department specifically, we are beginning the process of evaluating our new holistic approaches to reading instruction but remain confident that by uniting developmental education theory, reader-response theory, psycholinguistic theory, and rhetorical theory, we are moving in the right direction.

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Appendix A. NCCCS Common Course Library Course Descriptions for Developmental

Reading

NCCCS Common Course Library Course Descriptions for Developmental Reading		
Course Title	Course Description	Contact/lab/ credit hrs
RED 070 Essential Reading Skills	This course is designed for those with limited reading skills. Emphasis is placed on basic word attack skills, vocabulary, transitional words, paragraph organization, basic comprehension skills, and learning strategies. Upon completion, students should be able to demonstrate competence in the skills required for RED 080.	3 2 4
RED 080 Intro to College Reading	This course introduces effective reading and inferential thinking skills in preparation for RED 090. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary, comprehension, and reading strategies. Upon completion, students should be able to determine main ideas and supporting details, recognize basic patterns of organization, draw conclusions, and understand vocabulary in context.	3 2 4
RED 090 Improved College Reading	This course is designed to improve reading and critical thinking skills. Topics include vocabulary enhancement; extracting implied meaning; analyzing author's purpose, tone, and style; and drawing conclusions and responding to written material. Upon completion, students should be able to comprehend and analyze college-level reading material.	3 2 4
RED 111 Critical Reading for College	This course is designed to enhance critical reading skills. Topics include vocabulary enrichment, reading flexibility, metacognitive strategies, and advanced comprehension skills, including analysis and evaluation. Upon completion, students should be able to demonstrate comprehension and analysis and respond effectively to material across disciplines.	3 0 3
ENG 075 Reading & Language Essent	This course uses whole language to develop proficiency in basic reading and writing. Emphasis is placed on increasing vocabulary, developing comprehension skills, and improving grammar. Upon completion, students should be able to understand and create grammatically and syntactically correct sentences. <i>This course integrates ENG 070 and RED 070.</i>	5 0 5
ENG 075A Reading/Language Ess Lab	This laboratory provides the opportunity to practice the skills introduced in ENG 075. Emphasis is placed on practical skills for increasing vocabulary, developing comprehension skills, and improving grammar. Upon completion, students should be able to apply those skills in the production of grammatically and syntactically correct sentences.	0 2 1
ENG 085 Reading & Writing Found	This course uses whole language to develop proficiency in reading and writing for college. Emphasis is placed on applying analytical and critical reading skills to a variety of texts and on introducing the writing process. Upon completion, students should be able to recognize and use various patterns of text organization and compose	5 0 5

	effective paragraphs. <i>This course integrates ENG 080 and RED 080.</i>	
ENG 085A Reading & Writing Found Lab	This laboratory provides the opportunity to practice the skills introduced in ENG 085. Emphasis is placed on practical skills for applying analytical and critical reading skills to a variety of texts and on the writing process. Upon completion, students should be able to apply those skills in the production of effective paragraphs.	0 2 1
ENG 095 Reading & Comp Strategies	This course uses whole language to strengthen proficiency in reading and writing for college. Emphasis is placed on applying critical reading skills to narrative and expository texts and on using the writing process. Upon completion, students should be able to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate college texts and to compose essays in preparation for college writing. <i>This course integrates ENG 090 and RED 090.</i>	5 0 5
ENG 095A Reading & Comp Strat Lab	This laboratory provides the opportunity to practice the skills introduced in ENG 095. Emphasis is placed on practical skills for applying critical reading skills to narrative and expository texts and on the writing process. Upon completion, students should be able to apply those skills in the production of effective essays in preparation for college writing.	0 2 1

Appendix B. Sample of CBE Main Idea Test for Developmental Reading

**RED 090 TOPIC, MAIN IDEA, AND DETAILS TEST FORM A**

**PART 1: DIRECTIONS:** Read each paragraph carefully. Underline the complete topic sentence (6 points); highlight the key words in the major details (3 points for each major); do nothing with the minors (1 point subtracted for each time you highlight a minor), and write a one sentence summary of the paragraph (6 points)

**PARAGRAPH A**

The major weapon of the Reform New Deal's war on poverty was the Social Security Act of 1935. The first feature of this milestone legislation was the creation of a system of unemployment insurance based on contributions by employers into a fund administered by the states. Second, the legislation granted small federal stipends for dependent persons such as parentless children, the blind, the deaf, and other people with disabilities. Third, it created an old-age pension program. The plan called for establishment of a pension fund on the basis of regular contributions from employers and employees. After the age of sixty-five, workers were eligible for modest old-age pensions, depending on the size of their contributions.

One sentence summary of Paragraph A: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C. Sample Table from CBE Study Skills Test

Learning Styles Grid			
Write Each Learning Style Type	Major strength	Major weakness	2 Study strategies
(Spatial)			
(Non-spatial/verbal)			
(Social)			
(Independent)			
(Visual)			
(Auditory)			
(Pragmatic)			
(Conceptual)			
(Creative)			
(Applied)			