

Introduction: Setting the Purpose for Building Collaborative Literacy

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What does building collaborative literacy mean? When the authors of this book collaborated on the idea of using gifted and higher level thinking strategies to increase literacy engagements, they were guided by a collaboration framework to generate the key ideas used in this book. The book begins with one author generating one idea. Eventually the ideas are discussed with further development of new ideas, with each author adding more knowledge to construct the product. The value of how collaboration helps develop and enrich reading, writing, speaking, and thinking experiences was realized by the end product, a book on building collaborative literacy for all students in the regular classroom.

According to *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* by Harris and Hodges (1995), the term “collaborative learning” means learning by working together in small groups, as to understand new information or to create a common product (p. 35). Harris and Hodges follow that definition with a note that reads, “There are many variations of collaborative learning, from exploration of a topic to its mastery and from the beginning to final stages of product development. This term does not specify roles or responsibilities of members and groups, and the practices it describes include little to intensive group interaction” (p. 35). The same resource defines literacy in five different ways. The authors of *The Literacy Dictionary* believe all the definitions of literacy are employed at different times and are further defined on the basis of the

2 COLLABORATIVE LITERACY

expectations and goals of the engagement or learning tasks. That said, we follow the definition presented by Richard L. Venezky on page 142 (Harris & Huges, 1995) to construct a definition of literacy to mean the ability and knowledge necessary to read, write, speak, and think in order to develop and refine understanding. The expression “building collaborative literacy for teachers” means the capacity to provide opportunities for engaged learners such as gifted students to increase, extend, modify, and evaluate their own literacy development. The first chapter of this book provides the theoretical framework for the guiding principles of building a collaborative literacy framework that supports all learners in the regular classroom who want to benefit from gifted and higher level thinking strategies to improve and enhance literacy.

Collaborative Literacy: Using Gifted Strategies to Enrich Learning for Every Student is a book to help teachers who want to build collaborative literacy and provide engaging research-based learning experiences for all students, including advanced readers, gifted students, gifted students with special needs, and high-achieving students in the regular classroom. It also provides ways educators and parents can work together to extend the learning process from the school environment to the home environment related to literacy instruction. This user-friendly volume is divided into four main parts. Part one summarizes the most recent research in gifted education, as well as the concept of building collaborative literacy. Part two summarizes how to build learning communities with gifted students and all students in the regular classroom. Part three summarizes how specific gifted and higher level thinking strategies can be used when building collaborative literacy environments. Part four summarizes key aspects on how to begin implementing the ideas and strategies in the book, as well as synthesize resources for all educators. The key elements in each part are discussed below.

PART ONE

- Current research on gifted education and literacy
- Understanding how to build collaborative literacy
- Identifying and engaging advanced readers and gifted students in collaborative literacy
- Making connections with how to build collaborative literacy with all students

PART TWO

- Creating enriched collaborative literacy environments
- Meeting the needs of advanced readers and gifted students in a multicultural classroom
- Building collaborative literacy during reading and writing instruction
- Constructing collaborative literacy with parents

PART THREE

- Developing comprehension and higher level thinking
- Increasing natural curiosities and creative thinking and speaking
- Learning through inquiry and technology
- Evaluating collaborative literacy

PART FOUR

- Increasing teacher self-efficacy about building collaborative literacy
- Responding to questions
- Reflecting in the mind of a busy teacher
- Building rich collaborative literacy environments with effective resources

The rationale for the book stems from the need to provide regular-classroom teachers with a research-based resource that synthesizes literacy strategies used in gifted education and higher level thinking strategies from the field of reading education to build collaborative literacy. There are many other benefits to using gifted and higher level thinking strategies to improve literacy development. First, the field of literacy can benefit from learning how to incorporate gifted education literacy strategies into the regular literacy classroom. This approach not only benefits advanced readers, gifted students, and gifted students with special needs, but more important helps all achieving students benefit and learn. Second, special-area teachers receive much training in the area of gifted education, and unless this training is shared with others, it never reaches the regular-classroom teachers. Teachers in the regular classroom will learn about specific literacy strategies that can readily be incorporated into their classrooms. Third, this book makes a distinct contribution in that it focuses on strategies used in gifted education and literacy strategies to build collaborative literacy. Fourth, throughout the United States, most gifted students spend a significant part of their week in classrooms with regular education teachers who may or may not have received training in developing higher order thinking and questioning and education strategies for the gifted.

HOW DOES BUILDING COLLABORATIVE LITERACY RELATE TO ALL TEACHERS IN K-12 EDUCATION?

- *Teachers of reading and writing:* The focus in all classrooms, regardless of the content area or grade level, is reading and writing instruction. Current research in the areas of gifted and literacy is presented in a friendly manner, and it follows the research by providing practical applications.

4 COLLABORATIVE LITERACY

- *Reading specialists and literacy coaches:* The trend in education and literacy is to provide professional development for all teachers including reading specialists and literacy coaches. These teachers play a significant role in the literacy development of their students. Each chapter provides details on the role of the teacher and the student in building collaborative literacy; therefore, training in how to build collaborative literacy for reading specialists and literacy coaches can be easily integrated in the curriculum.
- *Teachers of the gifted:* The material presented in the book can be used by teachers of the gifted in any setting because the material is presented in a unique and well-researched yet practical manner. This is the first comprehensive book on how to help gifted students and all students develop in the area of literacy by using approaches that work with gifted students and advanced readers.
- *Parents:* This book can benefit all parents who want to help their child develop in the area of literacy regardless of their ability level. Parents of the gifted can benefit because the book provides details on how to integrate the strategies. Parents can use the strategies and modify them at home and follow the building collaborative literacy ideas to help their child.
- *Individuals teaching undergraduate and graduate education courses:* This book is a valuable research-based resource to aid educators in higher education who desire to help classroom teachers understand the current research in gifted education and literacy and how this research can be integrated in classroom settings.
- *Small study groups:* Small study groups will find studying particular chapters helpful. Those who have no knowledge or training in the area of gifted education or literacy might want to read chapters specifically related to those areas. Parents of gifted children can use this book in small study groups with other parents to help them understand the current research and how to use the research in home and school settings.
- *Accomplished teachers:* Many accomplished teachers who have been teaching students over the years who want to continue to provide meaningful learning experiences to all their students, including gifted students, will find this book to support that need with the goal of reaching all learners. Ideas presented in the book can be easily incorporated. Accomplished teachers will find the book extremely useful because the ideas are backed by proven research.

WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF THIS BOOK?

In every chapter, you will find the following unique features:

- *Personal Reflection:* Summarizes personal thoughts from a perspective of individuals involved in gifted education, including teachers of gifted

students, gifted students, and parents who are familiar with issues in gifted education. These reflections exemplify the contents of the chapter to follow.

- *Graphic Organizer*: Provides an overview of the goals of the chapter. Each chapter opens with a graphic organizer designed to enhance and synthesize the connections within the chapter and the goals included for each chapter.
- *Collaborative Literacy at Work*: Summarizes the key ideas found in the chapter, as well as defines key terms that will assist the reader in building prior knowledge regarding the strategies being discussed.
- *Rich Research Base*: Describes the research base for the ideas in each chapter and reflects the contents of the chapter.
- *Ideas Into Action*: Provides examples of how collaborative literacy looks in action and how to adapt the benefits and results of the program's ideas and literacy strategies.
- *Teachers Putting Ideas Into Action*: Provides activities or asks questions that teachers and professors can use to extend the contents of the chapter.
- *Summary*: Presents the key points presented in the chapter in a way that will allow the reader to reflect on the ideas and create practical steps for implementation prior to going on to the next chapter.

HOW TO USE THE MAJOR STRENGTHS OF THE BOOK TO ENHANCE YOUR READING EXPERIENCE

Are you interested in learning about rich research-based strategies?

- Pay attention to the research base guiding each of the strategies.
- Use the references as a way to extend your personal and professional repertoire of research and readings on the topics being discussed.
- Each chapter outlines strategies that will keep the reader's interest and are relevant to regular classroom teaching experiences.
- Credence to the viewpoints is given by providing research from learning experts in the field of gifted education and literacy education.

Are you interested in learning about personal reflections of other teachers on similar topics and how you can use the reflections to guide your thinking?

- First investigate each area by reading the personal reflections located at the beginning of each chapter, which have been included to make the ideas presented seem more real and more doable.
- Locate specific research-based strategies that apply to your personal area of interest.
- The lessons are easy to adopt. Identify the ways you can adopt the ideas immediately following the chapter being read. This can be done using the Teacher Idea Organizer at the end of the book.

6 COLLABORATIVE LITERACY

Are you interested in reading a book that is user-friendly and understandable regardless of whether you are a first-year teacher, literacy coach, parent, or accomplished teacher?

- The purpose and goals have been clearly stated and will help the reader transition from simply reading the book to becoming engaged in the book.
- The unique features in each chapter have been written to help the reader create a mental pathway that is consistent from beginning to end. The chapters are logically ordered and flow from learning about the gifted to understanding how to develop collaborative literacy communities and to understanding specific research-based strategies on how to realize the goals of the book.
- The overarching purpose and ideas emphasize demonstrating how to build collaborative literacy to help gifted students, as well as other students.

Are you interested in using the ideas presented in this book to enhance the workshop methods of reading and writing instruction?

- The main emphasis of the book and chapter contents is on enhancing literacy experiences by building collaborative literacy environments.
- The wealth of literacy ideas is presented in a way that can be easily implemented in reading and writing workshops.
- The reader will experience the breadth and depth of many of the strategies during the experience of reading this book and will learn how to integrate them in literacy engagements. At the same time, the reader will also simply be introduced to strategies, with more detail provided in the references discussing each strategy. This model allows the reader to develop a more robust repertoire of strategies and select specific ones they want to learn about in-depth.

ESTABLISHING READER GOALS

This book provides the reader with a unique window into understanding how to build collaborative literacy by responding to the statement, *Why not use gifted and higher level thinking strategies for all students in the regular classroom?* With that in mind, you can establish several personal goals for reading this book and use this list as a reflection tool while reading each chapter. When you are finished, you can return to your list of goals and evaluate what you have learned and how you can apply this new information in the classroom. The goal of this book is to help you learn about the following:

- How to create collaborative literacy classrooms where all students have access to new and enriching knowledge.
- How to integrate gifted education and higher level thinking strategies in the regular classroom in literacy instruction and content areas.
- How to use collaborative literacy tools to enrich the learning environment for all students.