

Sturtevant, E. G., & Linek, W. M. (2003). The instructional beliefs and decisions of middle and secondary teachers who successfully blend literacy and content. *Reading Research and Instruction, 41*, 74-89.

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Summary: This study asked nine content area middle and high school teachers, identified by recommendations and interviews, about the combination of teaching their discipline and literacy practices. In particular, their instructional beliefs and decision-making processes were examined. Each teacher was observed and interviewed multiple times in an effort to discover the essence of their teaching experience. Analysis yielded the following categories: teachers' perceptions of the qualities of a good teacher and teachers' perceptions of influences on their teaching.

Assumptions:

- Problems in blending effective literacy practices and content area teaching include time, curriculum requirements, and high-stakes testing.
- More is known about the problems of blending literacy and content area teaching than is known about the successes.

Results:

- Theme One: Teachers' perceptions of the qualities of a good teacher.  
Subcategories: Teachers' focus on classrooms that are "student centered" in which students are "problem-solvers"; teachers' focus on student needs beyond the classroom; focus on the value of a teacher's relationship with students; focus on lifelong learning.
- Theme Two: Teachers perceptions of influences on their teaching.  
Subcategories: A focus on how the teachers perceived that their own past and current experiences affect their teaching; contextual conditions that teachers perceived as affecting their teaching; engaging in professional development.

Conclusions:

- All of the teachers described good teachers as strongly concerned about student needs and lifelong learning and as implementers of instruction that engaged students in thinking, problem solving, and discussion.
- Teachers showed strong consistency across grade levels and disciplines in their focus on student problem solving, curriculum relevancy, relationships, and lifelong learning for themselves and their students.
- In general, teachers believed that successful teachers are more concerned about the environments they create than the curriculum they teach.
- All of the teachers believed in the importance of staying involved in professional organizations and continuing education.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Create student-centered classrooms.
- Focus on students' needs beyond the classroom.
- Focus on your relationship with your students.
- Focus on lifelong learning.

- Understand your own past as a learner.
- Stay current in professional development and continuing education.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Support teachers who focus on students' needs beyond the classroom, their relationship with their students, lifelong learning, and their own past as learners.
- Support teachers' continuing professional development and education.
- Help teachers find balance between content and literacy processes.