

Book review

Writing and Reading Connections: Bridging Research and Practice

Philippakos, Z.A., & Graham, S. (Eds.) (2023). *Writing and reading connections: Bridging research and practice*. New York: Guilford Press | 340 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4625-5046-3

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The book *Writing and reading connections: Bridging research and practice*, edited by Zoi A. Philippakos and Steve Graham (2023) is a collection of works concerning writing–reading relationships and suggestions for instructional practices that can support the synergetic development of writing and reading. The editors commence by pointing out that an instructional divide that promotes separate instruction of reading and writing exists. With this book, they argue that this divide is unfortunate and that bringing together writing and reading in research and in the classroom can yield positive effects.



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Organization and content

The book comprises an interesting foreword by Jill Fitzgerald and four sections with a total of sixteen chapters that explore various perspectives on the relationship between writing and reading.

Part I consists of one chapter. This first chapter, *The history of writing and reading connections*, written by Timothy Shanahan provides a historical overview of how writing and reading have been dealt with in American classrooms. It describes a shift from no writing instruction and a sole focus on learning to read, to writing gaining an important role in education. The chapter also serves as a framework for the book, illustrating how the perceived connection between writing and reading has altered over time, with writing gaining more equal status.

Part II is a collection of chapters describing special applications of writing and reading connections. Chapter two, *A tale of two closely related skills: Word reading and spelling development and instruction*, by Young-Suk Kim describes the development and instructional principles for the foundational skills, decoding and spelling, for reading and writing development. It highlights how word reading and spelling draw on the same skills, and important implications of this. The chapter includes principles for how teachers can support the development of word reading and spelling skills. The author abundantly describes activities to teach phonological awareness, grapheme–phoneme correspondences, chunking, and decoding and encoding. She emphasizes how these skills mutually support each other, and that instruction should exploit the synergy between them.

In the third chapter, *The role of vocabulary in and for writing*, Margaret G. McKeown explores the lack of focus on vocabulary in different theoretical models of writing. The author discusses how vocabulary is essential to writing (and reading). However, she points out that there is little research on the contribution of vocabulary instruction to writing. The chapter provides suggestions for activities that support both vocabulary and writing, that are easy for teachers to integrate in their classrooms.

Chapter four, *From talk to text: Implementing student discussions that matter*, by Deanna Kuhn, Mariel Halpern, and Sybille Bruun gives a description of a discourse-based approach aimed at developing argumentation skills. This chapter underlines discourse as a core activity and an activity crucial for democracy. The authors argue that students' talk can function as a bridge to critical thinking and further again critical writing.

Chapter five, *Writing to promote better reading comprehension*, is written by Steve Graham and Adiba Nusrat. The chapter presents writing practices that enhance students' reading, these practices are evidence-based and the authors provide examples from a wide range of studies. Two things we like about this chapter are that: First, it opens for the possibility that more writing activities than

what has been tested can promote reading comprehension. Second, it explicitly urges teachers to monitor any writing activity to observe if it achieves the intended goal.

The sixth chapter, *Genre and text structure in writing and reading instruction*, by Zoi A. Philippakos explores universal text features, common to reading and writing. This chapter demonstrates the application of writing–reading connections in genre and text structure instruction. It provides examples of how instruction in text structure can support both reading comprehension and the quality of written texts. An important point is that combined approaches to text structure and genre instruction, addressing both reading comprehension and writing, are more effective.

In chapter seven, *Assessment in writing and reading*, Paul D. Deane introduces the reader to theoretical perspectives of assessment and suggests classroom practices that can support students' growth in writing and reading. The chapter is structured in three parts – formative assessment, diagnostic assessment, and summative and interim assessment. The author explains the purposes of these types of assessment and how the different types can complement each other and all contribute to enhancing students' learning. We appreciate the specific advice and examples of teaching practices that are used throughout the chapter.

Chapter eight, written by Karen R. Harris and Linda H. Mason, is entitled *Self-regulated strategy development: Reading source materials to learn and write*. In this chapter, the authors describe two examples of evidence-based instruction that can be used by teachers to support students in integrating what they read into their writing. Both examples are based on the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) instructional model, and one is aimed at helping students from 3rd grade and up, while the other is intended for adolescents. The chapter starts off with briefly referring to the vast research base that the SRSD model is based on. In addition to providing examples for teachers, the authors provide a list of additional resources for SRSD instruction.

The ninth chapter, *Writing and reading connections in the digital world*, is written by Allison N. Sonia, Laura K. Allen, and Scott A. Crossley. This timely chapter describes how the internet and digital tools have altered the relationship between writing and reading, making them more entangled. With a focus on challenges related to source selection and new forms of peer collaboration provided by digital technologies, the chapter provides an overview of writing and reading connections in the digital world. The chapter is an important reminder that students need instruction to learn digital literacy skills. Further, the chapter provides useful guidance for the teacher in how to support students in developing digital literacy.

Part III of the book consists of four chapters devoted to how writing–reading connections can be applied in different content areas. Chapter ten, *Integrating writing and reading instruction in the English language arts classroom*, is written

by Carol Booth Olson, Jenell Krishnan, and Huy Q. Chung. This chapter is packed with examples and ideas for how teachers can integrate writing and reading in L1 literacy instruction. We argue that the examples also can be implemented in foreign language teaching. As former teachers, this chapter sparked a wish to go back into the classroom to try out some of the examples of classroom practices.

Nell K. Duke, Anne-Lise Halvorsen, and Abby Reisman have written chapter eleven, *Writing, reading, and social studies*. They highlight that development in writing and reading can support the learning of social studies, but also the other way around, that education in social studies can support development in writing and reading. The authors provide examples of how teachers can situate reading and writing as an integrated part of students' social study inquiry.

Chapter twelve, *Liberation through literacy in science*, by Catherine Lammert and Brian Hand gives an interesting account of the relationship between science and connected reading and writing. The chapter provides both an overview of two theoretical frameworks and several practical examples of how the teacher can apply shared writing and reading activities in their teaching of science. The authors particularly discuss how marginalized students can benefit from practices where reading and writing are brought together in science education.

The thirteenth chapter, *Thinking beyond symbols: Writing and reading in mathematics*, is written by Sarah R. Powell and Michael A. Herbert. The authors of this chapter highlight how reading and writing are inherent parts of mathematics. They focus on two reading skills essential for reading in mathematics, namely understanding mathematical language and strategies for solving word problems. The second section concerns writing in mathematics, with one part directed toward how teachers can teach their students how to write mathematically and one on how teachers can assess mathematical writing. A very helpful rubric of analytic scoring is provided to support teachers in their assessment of students' mathematical writing.

Part IV concerns writing–reading connections with specific groups of learners. In chapter fourteen, *Writing and reading with emergent bilingual learners*, Alison Boardman and Sandra A. Butvilofsky, explore the integration of writing and reading in supporting emergent bilingual students. They discuss why explicit instruction, language support, student collaboration, translanguaging, genre-based pedagogy, and technology use are important aspects of effective instruction for students who use and are developing in two or more languages. The authors also consider assessment practices and present a framework for examining the writing of this group where the student's full linguistic repertoire is recognized. By analyzing a writing sample, the authors convincingly illustrate how this framework can provide the teacher with knowledge not only about students' writing, but also their reading development.

Chapter fifteen, *Addressing the needs of students who struggle with literacy*, is written by Michael A. Herbert, Pamela Shanahan Bazis, and Tanya Santangelo.

The authors provide recommendations and examples of explicit reading instruction that research has shown to improve writing, and also writing instruction that improves reading. A strength of the instructional examples is the way they illustrate and emphasize the importance of explicit instruction. The authors further link recommendations for instructing students who struggle with literacy to recommendations made about writing–reading connections in part II of the book.

Finally, chapter sixteen, *Integrated writing and reading instruction in college*, is written by Charles A. MacArthur. The focus of this chapter is twofold, with the first part reviewing research on teaching students to read sources critically and to write their own compositions using multiple sources. The second part discusses research on supporting those students who are underprepared for college work and attend developmental courses in writing and reading. Both sections elaborate on how instructional approaches that involve teaching of genres, strategy instruction, and explicit use of evaluation criteria can lead to better learning of writing and reading skills required in higher education.

Final remarks

The book stays true to its title – it does bridge research and practice! Throughout the book, research and theories that are presented are illustrated by extensive examples of how these theories and principles can be orchestrated in the classroom. This is a major strength of the book. We also appreciate the theoretical perspective presented in the foreword by Jill Fitzgerald. The framework developed by Fitzgerald integrates the reader, the writer, and the text in a social and cognitive universe. This provides a theoretical connection between reading and writing or writing and reading. For readers with more practical experience, we believe this framework usefully can be consulted while reading the chapters in the book to further bridge practice and theory.

The book is reader-friendly and easily accessible for readers regardless of whether they are teachers, students, or researchers. As a book about writing–reading connections, it is a pleasure that the chapters are written by authors very aware of their readers. This is evident in the concise language and the common structure of the chapters. It is particularly useful with questions at the beginning of each chapter guiding the reading process and questions at the end of each chapter inspiring reflection and action.

By integrating theory and practice and through accessible writing, the editors succeed in addressing both teachers, researchers, and graduate learners as the audience of the book. Although the volume is written with references to an American context, it is interesting and applicable to other contexts and languages as well.

The book contributes to the field of writing research and reading research, particularly by connecting the two. While reviewing the book this brought up a discussion between us – are we writing researchers or writing and reading researchers? Provoking us as researchers to reconsider our position and our object of study is for us a valuable merit of the volume. In the future, we look forward to more research on how teachers can integrate writing and reading instruction, and we hope the research will extend to how student motivation can benefit from connecting writing and reading.