



# AN ANALYSIS ON “DEVELOPMENTAL READING AND NURSING PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS: HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED IN READING-INTENSIVE COURSEWORK”

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## ABSTRACT

*Reading skill is one of the foundations to build critical thinking ability. The improvement of reading ability will help to cultivate students' critical thinking and understanding ability. This paper focuses on the relationship between reading skills and critical thinking skills, and further analyzes and discusses the effectiveness of seventeen targeted strategies that are helpful to improve students' learning ability and reading skills. Through the test on students from Mount Aloysius College, the researchers found out that there is a positive relationship between improving reading skills and critical thinking ability. Because of the importance of reading ability to critical thinking, the author suggests introducing effective developmental reading courses to help nursing students improve their learning ability. At the end of the article, the author gives some suggestions on the future research direction, such as expanding the experimental samples and changing the teaching methods.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Critical thinking skills; Reading skills; Nursing students; Study strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

Textbook reading is essential in every higher education students, especially to those who will impact human lives such as nursing course as it was one of the skills needed in order to have critical thinking. Nursing students who utilize tutoring services often report to tutors and instructors that they find it difficult to complete the assigned readings outside of class, as what is said by the authors, making it difficult for them to get toe to toe with other critical thinkers. Comparing to today's situation, this can be proven true when it has been linked to how students are living at the moment. Most of the classes are being held via zoom or google meet because of the corona virus disease or COVID-19 pandemic. In this kind of system, students are often being tasked to read textbooks, power points or in electronic sources (e-books) at home as a part of take home activities. On the other hand, reading tasks that are not being conducted in-campus tend to have a higher difficulty than in campus reading even if the topic to read are a hundred percent similar. This is because of the many things and events at home that serve as a distraction to a student who is trying to learn. Hallmark University (2020) states that barriers such as noise, social media and home activities are some of the reasons why a person cannot focus on their reading tasks. Struggling students often demonstrate ineffective approaches to learning from their textbooks in conjunction with time management issues. Students with high level of critical thinking can still fail when they have low reading comprehension. Studies and subjects nowadays are more focused on textbooks or e-books that can be considered as part of a student's self-study in order to keep up with the degree level of the subject they are taking. Having low reading comprehension comes in many different situations in which nothing stays in the mind but rather similar to entering from one ear and escaping to the other in a listener's perspective.

While many nursing students struggle in reading comprehension because of their lack of reading skills, abilities and strategies that results to low ability in critical thinking, students like them can still develop their reading skills within the discipline of nursing in a number of ways (Leibold, n.d.). In addition, Newton and Moore (2010) conducted a descriptive study and found that between reading and English aptitude to formal writing ability are linked to each other. However, some students still struggle despite this known fact. If the choice is up to the students, they will often avoid the developmental courses in to which they have been placed, as often as possible and in many ways. The school and the nursing program itself must remind its students that fundamental skill and strategies are gained into their own reading and studying routine, in detail, it will largely contribute to the development of critical thinking and understanding of the nursing student. Not only will this become a step forward



to the capable yet underprepared students but will also give them a sense of self-pride, knowing that they can learn many things through textbook reading that will further boost them as critical thinkers.

As the title suggests, “Developmental Reading and Nursing Program Partnerships: Helping Students in Reading-Intensive Coursework” is an article that talks about the importance of reading, critical thinking and its need to be a crucial part of nursing students. It focuses on the causes and barriers that hinders the students from learning more than what they should that hinders in building a good critical thinker. Additionally, containing the proposed solution and conducted activities that can help build strategies towards making a new system of teaching and studying that will encourage students to partake and engage in textbook reading, as well as so that they can make up for their shortcomings in terms of reading skills and abilities and test-taking. Another topic it promotes and persuades is that the developmental reading educators should collaborate or partner with nursing educators. Written by Dr. Ryan Constanzo, who is an assistant professor of educational enrichment at Mount Aloysius College in Cresson, Pennsylvania, and Amanda Fritzpatrick, R. N., a professional nursing tutor at the college, they pursued to identify the main problem as to why nursing students are having a hard time given that they already know all the basics at their disposal. The study is stating that while clinical competence and hands-on ability are crucial to nursing, students in college-based nursing programs face almost certain failure if they lack skills, critical thinking abilities and strategies for textbook reading.

### SUMMARY

The purpose of the article is to give awareness not just in Mount Aloysius College but also to different schools and colleges, public or private, in regards to the importance of cultivating students’ critical thinking ability when it comes to textbook reading and the impact it will make if the skills and abilities of each and every students are on par with their skills in nursing activities. In preparing aspiring nurses, the authors focused how these developmental reading educators have an important role to fulfill. Developmental reading educators can provide an invaluable service to underprepared students by collaborating with nurse educators to provide mandatory and effective remediation prior to students’ entry into a nursing program. Seeing this possibility, they, the authors, made the article and conducted an interview in order to learn the shortcomings of their school’s nursing program as well as to know whether they have a plan after identifying the core of the problem.

In the article, it gives a statement similar to “slow learners are not to be viewed indifferently.” First of all, there is simply a lot to know within the discipline of nursing. It is not possible to know every single thing in being a nurse. It is more similar to compare them to Jack of all trades but master of none. This is why the authors proposed the need of textbook reading comprehension along with the needed skills, abilities, strategies and knowledge in order to make up for each of their weaknesses. Although textbook reading can also be one of the students’ weaknesses, it is considered as the general knowledge that every student in all of the different courses has to comprehend and reach a certain level as it was one of the basics. It is also one of the biggest contributor in developing a student’s critical thinking abilities. These struggling readers should be targeted for remediation, the earlier the better since it was a time-consuming process, not an overnight procrastination. There are many strategies for the capable but unprepared nursing students to try in order to be able to read with intellectual capacity. Some of the applied strategies will be listed in the tackling of Mount Aloysius College’s strategies that the authors prepared in their study.

In order to gather data about the nursing students without overseeing anything that might be an important variable, the campus made focus group interviews as a method. In this way, the students will volunteer on their own and will get highly engaged in the conversation that took place or is taking place at the moment. This will help them boost their self-esteem as they are the ones who, out of their own will, will be involved in the focus group interview. They are then grouped into two: First-semester (n=7) and final-semester (n=10). The volunteered participants had not taken a developmental reading course at Mount Aloysius College but is said to be largely able to score high enough on the institution’s placement exam for them to test out developmental reading coursework.

Results of the gathered data above showed that one of the students viewed participation in the study as being beneficial to nursing education and the profession of nursing seeing it as the obligation to further teacher-researchers’ understanding of how students need to read and study in order to become proper graduate nurses. As a matter of fact, the article states that 30% of the students need to be taught the reading and study strategies that are used by students who are academically successful within two-year nursing program. Given that the curriculum is harsh to those with weak reading and study habits, adding their low comprehension of textbook contents, providing useful strategies prior to students’ entry into the nursing program is highly essential.

### REVIEW

The authors of the article discussed an important topic as they assessed not only the students’ reading skills and critical thinking abilities but also finding about the different ways regarding to overcoming such difficulties and struggle in order to become better nursing students and critical thinkers. In their case, students are underprepared and are still in need to know what reading skills and proper study habits are in order to maintain a balanced knowledge in the course they are taking. Those who do not understand this matter tend to fail the course even if they have the talent for it. Capability is not the only thing that makes a person pass a certain obstacle. This is why the words ‘tricks and techniques’ were invented. In order to fit a paper in a circular object, one must fold it circle. In other words, student must know how to make proper adjustments so that they can fit in to the course they are taking. This idea, for example, will develop their ability to think critically.

Nevertheless of the problems stated throughout the article, the method that the authors used and implemented can be considered highly impeccable. It does not bother the students and in fact, it engage them into a



relaxing chat in which the interviewee can feel at ease with the interviewer. According to their results, the total of 17 students give rise to 17 newfound strategies that involves mastering course content and fourteen out of 17 strategies were mentioned by the students in both first-semester and final-semester groups. The listed strategies in the article are impressive as well for it can make studying a lot easier as they were easy to accomplish to begin with. Below are the listed strategies from Mount Aloysius College that served as the backbone of the authors' solution:

1. Re-reading and reviewing the text.
2. Answering end-of-chapter questions.
3. Cross-referencing instructor-generated notes and the instructor's lecture with the textbook.
4. Predicting potential test questions when reading.
5. Highlighting and underlining critical portions of the text.
6. Creating personal study notes from the textbook.
7. Analyzing text structure while reading (e.g., distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details).
8. Analyzing pictures, charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, etc., to increase comprehension of concepts discussed in print.
9. Skimming the chapter prior to reading it more carefully to get a sense of the material.
10. Reading prior to class in order to follow the (textbook focused) lecture more easily.
11. Gauging comprehension by taking online tests; using electronic sources of information (e.g., CD-ROMs, DVDS, websites) to improve comprehension.
12. Referring to other print sources to gain background knowledge or strengthen overall comprehension (e.g., workbooks, handbooks, other textbooks).
13. Making flashcards to allow for self-testing.
14. Reciting information aloud to assess comprehension.
15. Studying with classmates in pairs or groups.
16. Recording (textbook-based) lectures for later reference.
17. Connecting clinical experiences to textbook reading, and vice-versa, thereby reinforcing the textbook's role in achieving professional competence.

In this way, this can be counted as a proof that success in the undergraduate nursing program required a high level of engagement with textbooks as it boost their critical thinking abilities in another level. These strategies are proven to be useful in the rise of the students' learning capacity and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the solutions proposed are considered as an alternative way in developing the students' critical thinking abilities.

The first one that is stated in the solution proposed by Mount Aloysius College that is listed above is all about rereading and reviewing the text. This one is ranked first from the other sixteen because it is the easiest way on becoming a critical thinker with good comprehension. Moreover, textbook reading can be a bit boring that is why the ninth on the list of strategies is pertaining on skimming the chapter prior to reading it more carefully to get a sense of the material. This is being encouraged to do so that readers can still get the gist of the topic they are reading and by rereading or re-skimming, they will surely remember three to five terms or important keywords in a span of minutes. The authors also included answering end-of-chapter questions. If a student is struggling to read and comprehend because of the number of words in the textbook, this is also a good way to make him or her focus on reading. Answering the end-of-chapter question is a tad bit difficult. Specifically, if one does not have any prior knowledge about the topic being asked. This will force the student to think critically and read or skim through pages back and forth and it will allow him or her to be able to read. Furthermore, the fifteenth strategy listed by the authors is also proven effective. Studying with classmates in pairs or groups will help struggling learners to focus on their reading tasks. The only downside of this one is when the group of people the struggling one is with are also unenthusiastic about the activity they are doing. As the saying goes, "Many will influence one." Meaning, if the unprepared nursing student is grouped with student who are willing to spend their time learning how to comprehend textbooks, he or she is bound to do the same thing.

Some of the common things even an amateur reader does are also included in the strategies that the authors discovered after conducting the interview of the 17 nursing students. Highlighting and underlining the important phrases are one of the simple things a reader could do in order to remember a certain part of the chapter he or she is reading. Again, one way for a critical thinker to further develop the said ability. This can also include the words or statement that the reader cannot comprehend. If highlighting makes the unprepared student dizzy, another critical thinking strategy is proposed in the study. Creating personal study notes is the sixth strategy written in the article. One of which is a splendid way to organize and summarize information that is written in the textbook. These common ways or habits can potentially get rid of reading anxiety. This can also further become a tool in learning comprehensive reading. The strategies listed above are the skill set that the capable yet unprepared nursing students in Mount Aloysius College are honing with care for the development of their reading as well as their comprehension.

As the results of the focus research conducted revealed that those with intention on belonging in the group of nursing students now have an opportunity to learn exactly what their fellow students are doing to succeed. Moreover, opportunities are given fairly to them in order to practice effective reading and study strategies using authentic nursing, anatomy, biology, chemistry and psychology text. This, as a way of encouraging others to engage in similar efforts to make sure that underprepared nursing students are made mindful and aware of what they must do in order to increase their chance at success, can pave another path for struggling students to find their own faults, identify them, and somehow turn them into strength.

To further recognize the need to incorporate reading in order to develop critical thinking, studying and test-taking strategies in the nursing curriculum, effective developmental reading courses are said to be designed with



content area courses like nursing in mind. The authors are also willing to offer their support for cross-disciplinary collaboration between developmental education departments and nursing departments. This will aid the retention and training of the capable but underprepared nursing students as students such as them demand a high level of sophistication when it comes to reading and test-taking, and because students may underestimate the demands of such programs, it is essential to enroll in a developmental reading course. As stated earlier, students will want to avoid this type of course since it reminds them of repeating the one they already thought they would and should know. Some might have anxiety on how other people will look at them. Especially when the unprepared nursing student is socially anxious.

The study helps students realize the value of reading comprehension and its benefits to the person taking the developmental reading course. Additionally, this will serve as a promotion to the capable yet unprepared students to be more productive in class when they can finally easily comprehend what is written in the textbook. Developmental reading course will not only make the unprepared nursing students to have a better reading comprehension but also will further improve their skills, abilities and give them plenty of strategies at their disposal in order to be able to catch up to those who are capable and prepared nursing students using their own method. For instance, students can learn and then use the strategies they have in mind that work best for them depending on the text they are reading. Pulling deeper meaning out of text through the use of thinking strategies can be beneficial not just in reading comprehension but also in critical thinking (Parrish, 2020).

The authors are also thorough in their study which is a good thing. Advising educators to ground their classroom discussions of effective reading and study habits in what they have learned from their own successful students as well as from published research, as well as telling them that developmental reading educators and nurse educators must work together to train and retain capable but underprepared nursing students. Pointing out the problem is a good thing and the better thing is finding a way to cover up the hole of the study. This is why students who lack skills and strategies are required for proficient textbook reading for them to avoid failing because of something so basic. Promoting and encouraging students to participate in this activity is a lot easier than them actually taking this activity in a serious manner. Reading is being taught since pre-school and this has become a reason as to why older students such as college ones do not take this basic necessity seriously that tends to result in poor critical thinking abilities. Most of pre-adults prefer watching or listening rather than indulge in reading – except when it is really needed. Nursing students in Mount Aloysius College have similar behavioral problems that eat away their willingness to read, resulting to having comprehension difficulties. This behavioral patterns, once manifested, is difficult get rid of. It can be called a bad habit that gnaws the students' optimism of, "I will understand it better once I read it." Into, "This is difficult, I can't understand it, what's the point?"

Keep in mind that effective developmental reading instruction takes into account students' reality. Students who cannot learn from the book and pass the examinations will not become graduate nurses. At the same time, nurse educators must make certain that the textbook-centered reading and study strategies discussed in the developmental reading classroom are reinforced in the nursing classroom, as there is evidence that students hesitate to use strategies not valued by content instructors (Sherman, 1991, as cited by Beyeler, 2003, p. 313). This stated reasons can serve as a signal of breaking bad habits of students such as not wanting to put in extra effort in reading. Not wanting to put effort will only likely to result into failure. Understanding what is in the book is also crucial in terms of medicine and nursing. Capable yet unprepared nursing students have to put in more effort in order to be able to make up for their lack of skills and strategies by learning how to understand and comprehend textbook contents.

The conducted study also successfully captures what is missing in the school's nursing program that prevents their nursing students from achieving new heights, especially the capable yet underprepared nursing students. The authors followed the examples of Cramber and Davidhizar (2008), and Symes, Tart, Travis and Toombs (2002) in proposing interventions that would help and greatly benefit underprepared nursing students. The latter, Symes, et al. (2002), is focused primarily in improving academic performance within a nursing program. While the former, Cramber and Davidhizar (2008), focused on the issue of improving the performance on the nursing licensure examination (the NCLEX-RN). By taking into account of what these previous researchers have made, the authors of the article decided to adapt to their point of view by adding reading competence relating to critical thinking abilities and applying it to the system of Mount Aloysius College. The said college is home to approximately 2,500 students and most of the nursing students there are proven to be struggling when it comes to self-reading and textbook reading comprehension.

The argument the authors raised are well backed-up by relevant substantial reports. Mandatory placement into developmental reading courses is an efficient and effective means of preparing students for what lies ahead, provided that such courses offer students the opportunity to engage with the kinds of texts they will deal with as students in an undergraduate nursing program. Also, learning to engage with authentic texts in ways that successful nursing students report doing is critical for the underprepared reader as well are amateur critical thinkers, and reading educators should take every opportunity to share with underprepared readers what successful nursing students actually report doing to master course content.

Specifying that underprepared students need explicit instruction on necessary textbook reading skills, critical abilities and strategies prior to their entry into the nursing program, which, due to the quick pace and intensity of the lessons, does not allow them extended amounts of time to decide how best to handle the reading load is also another good thing to point out in the article. Students who are neither skillful nor strategic textbook readers run a high risk of failure, and the task facing educators is to select and implement preventive measures that offer those at-risk students the opportunity to succeed. Even outside school premises, each one of us should have one or two things that we need in order to do something successfully. One good example of this is when buying something. First, you should know market prices in order to be practical and second, you should know the direction of the



market as to not waste time. This is similar to nursing program takers. A nursing student must be capable, knowing what process and procedures to do, knowing what the stuffs are but also knowing how to comprehend what is written in the textbook. In becoming a successful nurse, one must not lack in skills, abilities and strategies. Similarly, one must also have a high reading comprehension and critical thinking. This is what the authors are pertaining as to why they conducted a study.

DiBartolo and Seldomridge (2008) argue that nursing programs that are planning to implement intervention strategies should require participation and offer them to all students. This appeal for nursing students' mandatory participation in remediation was also made in the earlier article by Symes et al. (2002). Now, participation for all gives the capable yet unprepared nursing students a shot in developing their skills and abilities in school and at home. It was obvious that one of the things a person should do in order to get better at reading is to continue on reading as well as listing and browsing unfamiliar words in order to familiarize it. One of the things I do when I am having a hard time in understanding what I am reading is to reread it once again until I can finally get the gist of it. Although it might be tiring and a pain for some, it is quite useful. Once the head starts to ache, it is advisable to take a rest and close your eyes for a while. The more relaxed the mind, the more focused a person will be when he or she began reading once again. This also applies in thinking critically. Critical thinking can happen in different places and event as long as the person is rational and has a calm and collected mind to analyze the situation. As it takes time to find a solution and develop the abilities necessary for critical thinking, it also takes time to fully like and appreciate the value of reading just as it takes time to bake a pie. Slowly but surely, once a person truly tried to invest into something they have a hard time on doing, they will still find a way to do it, especially if it is a matter of need rather than want. No one wants to fail to something that they have been working hard for years. Failing means taking extra study sessions or repeating the course itself which is obviously devastating to these students. Particularly, college students. In other words, it is comparable to a knife's edge, hanging on a thread, walking a tightrope or in a state of a do or die situation.

Obviously, it is not good to fail if one has talent for it. The authors value their students that is why they insist that underprepared readers must be taught these same strategies for how to deal with the intense reading associated with undergraduate nursing, and such instruction should be mandatory and provided prior to entry into nursing coursework. Developmental reading educators are urged to partner with their colleagues in nursing to support underprepared readers who aspire to become nurses. It is agreeable that the authors urge to make the partnership into a reality. It is stated in the article that cross-disciplinary collaboration between developmental education and nursing has been of benefit to students at Mount Aloysius College's Nursing Programs.

Furthermore, reading is one of the English skills that have to be mastered by all of students in learning language. Reading is simple, adding comprehension will make reading work as understanding will follow. To summarize, reading is generally defined as the process of constructing meaning from written texts (Silvia, 2016). Reading comprehension can be defined as an active process in constructing the meaning and the understanding about the text. To be able to do this, there are two ways a reader should do. One is to reject all the irrelevant information and find what he or she is looking for. In this one, the reader would rather reject the excess information as to not get confused. On the other hand, the second option is only comprehending the gist of the text. In this one, more comprehension is needed in order for the latter to work. Since the underprepared nursing students are still in need of training with regards to reading, these two strategies can be considered helpful because they are lacking comprehension skills. Especially if they jot down notes every once in a while. Only, one thing to point out is that the authors should add activities that will make the students active when it comes to participating. Improving a student's intellectual capacity is actually highly commendable. Nevertheless, studying while disregarding mental and emotional health of the students will only make the situation worse. Thus, it is advised that the authors should add these variables in their study so that it can gather more data not just to their nursing students' reading comprehension but also to their stability – mentally and emotionally.

## CONCLUSION

The study is well presented from the beginning to end. The beginning of the article quickly tackled the main problem at hand and before proposing a possible solution, the authors first talked about the importance of the developmental reading course to indirectly persuade the reader of its significance in the problem presented in the paper. It was then followed by the data gathering and result that lead to them, the authors, finally openly promoting the partnership between nursing educators and developmental reading educators. After doing so, it can smoothly transition to the solution of the problem. Moving on, the structure of the article is well written, it is neither out of the place nor excessive, it was kept professional from the introduction until the last topic that was discussed. The title was given thought in the content of the study that will surely make the readers think about the collaboration of the two parties that the authors are persuading to stick together.

The format of the article is also correct. It followed the APA format and a journal format. In addition to that, there are no grammatical errors present throughout the article, giving it a clean and professional atmosphere. Besides, it also did not fail to give proper citations using APA format version 6 and every claims are supported by a good amount of strong evidences that follows after each claim. The study wants capable yet unprepared students under nursing programs in Mount Aloysius College to further develop textbook reading skills, abilities and strategies, as well as test-taking, not underestimating the demand of reading and to find a better solution in solving the problem regarding students in college-based nursing programs facing almost certain failure because of their lack of skills and strategies for textbook reading even if they are capable enough and are able to be a part of the nursing program.



The article focused on an important topic within higher education, nursing program adjustments for capable yet underprepared nursing students. It also focused on the necessity of a critical thinker in order to hone his or her critical thinking abilities. One of the barriers that unprepared nursing students face is their unwillingness, rather, lack of willingness to further develop their reading comprehension, making it more difficult for them to pass and easier to fail the course even if they are gifted to the said course. This makes it difficult for the school to raise their system of education because they are lacking eagerness. This is why the authors conducted the study. In order to eliminate the current problem at hand, they proposed a collaboration between developmental reading educators and nurse educators in order to enhance their capable yet unprepared nursing students learning capabilities. Overall, the article is highly persuasive in tone and way of conversing to the readers.

For the further development of the article, one must not forget to look for the authors' perspective and interests as to why they decided to conduct this particular study in order to determine the need of a new method in teaching. However, widen the delimitations that they set. For example, find article that is almost similar to the authors' work, not just in one school but in general, to check whether nursing students from different school truly struggle in reading comprehension, as well as, lacking of skills, abilities, strategies and knowledge that dulls their critical thinking skills. Check different sources, references and other citations attached in the study that may help in expanding the development of the given study.

The future reviewers or critiques of the article can also suggest a different method in the study that is as effective as the proposed one or one that can be more effective and less time and energy consuming. This critique paper is only able to give minor suggestions because of the absence of innovativeness and the strategies proposed above are most likely similar to one that may be a start of the development of the nursing programs in Mount Aloysius College. Therefore, giving and suggesting a convenient, accessible and manageable method is one of the great things to consider.

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