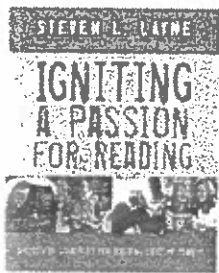


Reading News

For the Love of Literacy

*Connecticut Reading Association 60th Annual Conference
November 2 & 3, 2011*

This fall, a group of teachers attended the Connecticut Reading Conference at the Crowne Plaza in Cromwell. The conference theme, "For the Love of Literacy", provided many inspirational workshops by national presenters who reminded us of the importance of being literate in the classroom and of inspiring that love in the lives of children with whom we are entrusted. We have the power to enable children to continue to grow as learners beyond the confines of the classroom. Their interactions with each other, adults and the world of books is a sure guarantee that they will be productive citizens in our global society. This newsletter summarizes some of the sessions presented.



The keynote speaker on the first day of the Connecticut Reading Conference was Dr. Steven Layne, full time professor of

Literacy Education at Judson University in Elgin, IL. He asked us to identify the people whose contributions to our lives have altered our direction, smoothed

the path ahead, or guided us across treacherous ground. Those who have helped us become all that we are - our personal cheerleaders - deserve to be remembered. These are our balcony people. Steven Layne reminds us that teachers reserve a tremendous number of balcony seats in the lives of their students.

The keynote speaker on day two of the conference was David Booth, Professor Emeritus in education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and one of the leading experts on literacy in Canada, about engaging the reluctant reader. He spoke of engaging readers in text that matter in the age of technology.

Special thanks to Sharon Truex who contributed the "Creating Classrooms Where Readers Flourish" and "Moving Readers Into the Deep End of the Pool" articles.

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INVITATIONAL GRAMMAR AND EDITING INSTRUCTION BY JEFF ANDERSON

Jeff Anderson talked about the need to build concepts. He says "correction" is not teaching. Students' brains are changed by the experiences they have. Marks all over students' work does not help them become better. We must teach them.

He cautioned teachers to be careful of teaching do's and don't's. Why do we tell them to never do something when real writers write this way? For example, we teach them to never begin a sentence with "and", yet this can be an effective writing technique.

Daily Oral Language (D.O.L.) has no research basis. In fact, it teaches them bad habits. The incorrect sentences that are on the board get burned into their "visual stores" of their memory and teaches them bad habits. Often, students wait to see who has the right answer and then they copy it. Sending a message that there is

a right and wrong way to edit instead of teaching them that you edit your writing to improve the meaning.

Teaching grammar should be based on function and practical application. Real writers read and notice what writers do. They highlight it, think about it, talk about it. We need to invite students to pay attention to language in new ways. Ask them, "What do you notice?" Then honor what they say. Name it. Extend it. Remember the importance of wait time. Ask, "What else do you notice". Take multiple answers. Then ask them "What's that (comma) doing when I read it aloud? What's that (comma) doing when I read it with my eyes?"

When Jeff Anderson teaches grammar, he uses quality texts and then discusses it using the questions above. Then, he extends the discussion on Day 2 by modeling his own attempt to

model his writing after the original. On Day 3, he invites the students to use their writer's eye to look at their world, the places, the people and the things they see. The students look at their world through the author's pen and try creating a sentence of their own.

He recommends always reading a sentence twice. This helps students process the language.

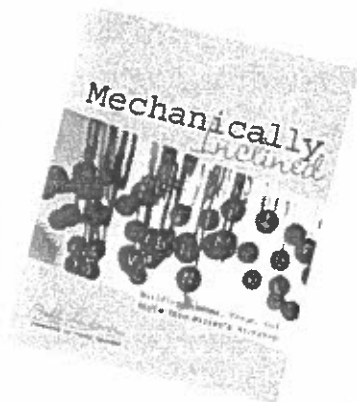
He ended by reminding us that what is celebrated gets repeated. Celebrate the writers in your classrooms!

Suggested websites for future reference:

- Writing Now - NCTE Policy Research Brief
- Writing Next - Research based practices for teaching writing
- writeguy.net - Jeff's personal website

JEFF'S BOOKS FOR TEACHING WRITING AND GRAMMAR

"What gets celebrated, gets repeated!"
- Jeff Anderson



MOVING READERS INTO THE DEEP END OF THE POOL BY PROFESSOR DAVID BOOTH

Having entertained the attendees with his keynote address, "What Does a Book Look Like?" (hint: it can have a screen), Professor Booth of Toronto faced the tough task of following himself, in his afternoon discussion of promoting critical and creative comprehension. No highfalutin theories from this wry old gent, he speaks in plain language: "If they got nothin' to bring to it, they get nothin' from it," to explain why different readers can make sense as they read, and others can't. His message affirmed the earlier message from Donalyn Miller advocating for student choice in book selection, to allow the reader to visualize himself in the book. "You Gotta BE the Book!" Booth proclaimed. It all made sense as he provided anecdotes which demonstrated the personal nature of comprehension, or the skill of interpretation. He dutifully listed the thinking strategies in which everyone in the audience

believes, but he reminded us that the strategies aren't the end in themselves. They aren't useful in isolation; they are to be used with text, high-quality, thought-provoking text. He envisions the role of the teacher as a change agent, to change the students' thinking. A good teacher challenges what the student presumes to know. He shocks them. When setting a book club free to discuss their reading, he gives them this assignment: What did your group discover? What shocked you? Pick the moment of truth in the text, the moment of shock, the moment of understanding. The teacher in turn reads the students as text to study their thinking, to interpret their responses. The middle grade students who participate in Professor Booth's lessons read provocative titles, (which are listed below), meant to encourage deep thinking...in the deep end of the pool.

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS BY DAVID BOOTH

Please note that the content of some of these books may not be appropriate for elementary students. Teachers are reminded to preview books before using them for instruction.

Nightjohn by Gary Paulsen
The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis
War Horse by Michael Morpurgo
Silverwing by Kenneth Oppel
Egghead by Caroline Pignat
Wringer by Jerry Spinelli
Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary
Strider by Beverly Cleary
Ludie's Life by Cynthia Rylant
Trouble on the Voyage by Bob Barton
Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse
Joey Pigswallow Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos
Ghost Train by Paul Vee

