



RUTGERS

Graduate School of Education

Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education



Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

VOL XIII. NO. 2

Winter 2022 Newsletter

Letter from the Director

Happy New Year! We hope that you had a wonderful holiday and a restorative break. This issue of the Center for Literacy Development Newsletter has four great articles by outstanding Educators. Lauren Battiato an Instructional coach in Rahway N.J. makes you think with her article ***Is Your School a Book Desert and If So What You Can Do About It***, Amanda Yonks 4th and 5th grade teacher in Highland Park, NJ shares her success in her article ***Giving Students Choice with Literacy Based Science Projects***. Valentina Arango-Correa an English Teacher in Roselle Park High School discusses in her article ***Engaging Readers by Choosing Books Representing all the Children in Your Classroom***. Finally, Caroline Ruiz a Literacy Coach in Plainfield NJ, suggests that we ***Be Mindful of Online Teaching and Never Forget the Value of Human Interaction During Literacy Instruction***.

The Center for Literacy Development had a busy fall, Cornelius Minor did a fabulous job discussing how we can make changes within our own school systems to meet the needs of our students. He talked about Sharks and Lions being the most ferocious predators in the water for sharks and on land for lions. However, he asked, "How would a lion or a shark manage out of their environment." He compared this idea, to our students, suggesting that we need to change our system to provide an

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Letter from the Editor (continued)

environment they can relate to match the students we serve. At this same meeting, Kenneth Kunz discussed Planning Literacy Instruction with New Jersey's Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum Mandate. The audience went away with lots of ideas to put into practice immediately. At our next event, Doug Fisher really got us thinking as he talked about engaging children. Children often have no ideas why they are learning what is presented and if they have achieved the goals. Doug suggested when teaching students they are likely to become more engaged in what we present to them if we provide them with the following:

What am I learning today?

Why am I learning this?

How will I know that I have learned it?

At all of our events we in the paragraph At all of our events we strive to treat teachers especially well by providing a continental breakfast, outstanding speakers, lunch, networking, door prizes, book signing, and vendors sharing their recent materials.

At the Oct. Conference, I asked the participants to write what makes them happy about their schools and what worries them. I received at least 100 responses and have pooled that information as follows.

To answer the question ***What Makes You Happy About Your School***, the pooled data was consistent. Responses suggested that what made teachers happy about their schools was that the teachers, supervisors, and administrators were supportive, passionate, and enthusiastic about their work. Those who they worked with were friendly, kind, and flexible. They were in environments where problems were solved by listening to each other and collaborating to handle difficult situations. They agreed that their buildings there was a persistent theme to strive to create the joy of reading. In addition, they said their schools valued professional development in their buildings with coaching and time for reflection and discussion. They also allowed teachers to go to Professional Development meetings such as those held by the CLD and other PD meetings out of their school buildings.

To answer the questions ***What Worries You About Your School***, the following was what was found in the pooled data. The Teacher shortage is scary. We can't seem to fill all the spots we need in our buildings and we have substitutes that aren't qualified. Teachers are retiring and well-trained replacements are hard to find.

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Letter from the Editor (continued)

Many wrote that a lot of teachers are tired, overwhelmed or sometimes use the phrase burned. They fear change and prefer to do things as always done in the past, even if they are working well. We have too much testing and don't use the data to inform instruction. More time could be used teaching if there was less testing. There is a great deal to teach and as a result, we fear that the children's just won't be able to get it all. There is a considerable diversity in the cultural backgrounds of children and a great deal of variation in the differences in children's achievement levels, who are in the same grade. Behavioral issues seem greater since COVID, and class sizes are large making it difficult to attend to individual differences.

Looking ahead, we are delighted about our **Day Immersed in Literature and Poetry** with John Schu and Janet Wong on Feb. 23. Both presenters have a wealth of information to share and both are outstanding and enjoyable presenters. April is our National Writing Project conference with a day all about writing with Penny Kittle. Her topic is called **The Writing Lessons I Learned from the Broadway Show Hamilton: Relevance, Engagement and Community**. The final event of the year we have Gholdy Muhammad author of Cultivating Genius. She will discuss **An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy**. On that same day, Matt Glover will present Current Issue About Engaging Readers and Writers.

We are always interested in knowing what speakers you would like to hear, and what activities the center could initiate to help you with your work. Please let us know your ideas.

Lesley



Kelly Clarida
Program Coordinator
Kelly.Clarida@gse.rutgers.edu



Dakashna Lang
Media Communications
Consultant



Lesley Mandel Morrow, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor
Director: Center for Literacy
Development
Rutgers Graduate School of Education



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Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

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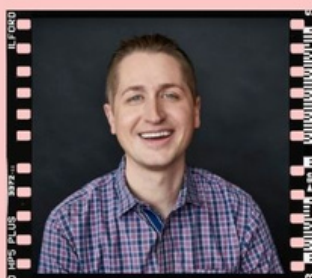
2022-2023 Speaker Series

Feb. 23

**Registration
cost for one
event: \$175
Discounted cost
for all 5
events: \$750**

John Schu

Motivating Children to
Love Literature by
Exploring multiple
genres and the Affective
side of Reading Life



Janet Wong

*Poetry Suitcase and
Poems to Fill Your Belly
and Soul: A Makerspace*

April 20

Penny Kittle

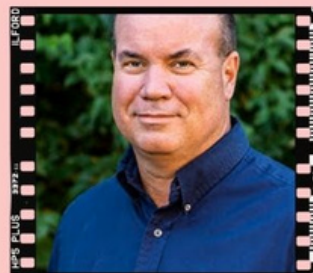
The Writing Lessons I Learned
from Hamilton: Relevance,
Engagement, and Community



May 25

Gholdy Muhammad

Cultivating Genius: An
Equity Framework for
Culturally and Historically
Responsive Literacy



Matt Glover

Nurturing Language
Composition in
Young Writers In
Writing Conferences



Is Your School a Book Desert, and What Can You Do About It?

By Lauren Battiato
Instructional Coach,
Rahway 7th and 8th Grade
Academy



As educators, we must be allies in the fight for empowering our young people with the gift of literacy. One of the challenges we face is to make our schools and communities rich with literacy materials. We must avoid having book deserts. “A book desert is defined as a geographic area with limited access to age-appropriate books, print materials and reading culture” (From TeachBetter.com).

In this article I will share how my district has made our schools rich with books when we were almost a book desert. I will also provide ideas for your community as well.

What we’ve done in our schools:

In my district we have what we call “book wells” throughout our building. Every English Language Arts teacher has a well-stocked classroom library that serves as a source for independent reading. The department supervisor frequently asks teachers to send her lists of titles so she can purchase new and relevant books for the classroom libraries. Our ELA department is also infamous for scouring town-wide yard sales and library book sales. Several of our ELA teachers have committed to starting their classes with periods of Independent Reading.

-Encourage well-stocked classroom libraries in all areas of school. Imagine a Social Studies classroom with a library full of historical fiction titles, and a science classroom stocked with sci-fi and biographies of science icons. The art room has a shelf of graphic novels, artist biographies, and a few art history textbooks. Go beyond your traditional classrooms as locations for these libraries, too. Our guidance counselors have curated a collection of books that includes SEL, social justice, inclusivity, and LGBTQ+ content. Several of our administrators have YA books in their offices. My computer lab even has a classroom library that is well stocked with great books.

One year, we surveyed our entire staff on their favorite books. We used this feedback to create a bulletin board in the cafeteria so students could see what their favorite school staff members (teachers, ESPs, admin, safety officers, etc.) were currently reading or recommending. We are expanding this to include social media by making videos of school staff members talking up their favorite titles. These initiatives promote literacy to our students in ways that are engaging and low cost.

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Is Your School a Book Desert, and What Can You Do About It?

By Lauren Battiato

Our ELA departments are collaborating to build a Google Site full of attractive book trailers, author interviews, free excerpts, and links to our public library's inventory. We make parents aware of this wonderful resource. Consequently, on the first page of our site, we communicate that it's okay for different households to have different norms for literacy. Content deemed acceptable in some households may be deemed unacceptable in others. We strongly encourage our families to be active participants with their children by reading books together. In this way, we've reserved a place at the literacy table for everyone

One of my favorite ways we have enriched literacy in our district is our approach to summer reading. We call our summer reading program the Freedom to Read Challenge. In lieu of a summer reading assignment, we give our students the freedom to read whatever they want. In our middle school, we ask our students to keep a log of what they read. We do; however, provide them with a healthy amount of well-curated suggestions.

What can be done outside of school?

Sometimes our libraries need to rethink their policies that restrict access to books. Syracuse University School of Information Studies published a study called, "Five Unexpected Benefits of Eliminating Library Fines". The study showed that, "children have more access to literacy resources as a result of eliminating overdue fines. Fines can be particularly detrimental to children from lower income families that have no other means of access to books than the library."

Engage in literacy with community stakeholders. In my town, one of the local laundromats has partnered with the public library to provide a cart full of books for children and adults to read while they wait for their wash. The skate shop in New Brunswick has a crate full of recycled skateboarding magazines for patrons to read while they shop or to borrow and return. These community partnerships can truly bloom with school's support.

There is no reason for a school or community should be a book dessert. The ideas discussed don't cost a lot. Please call on me if you like to help with making a book dessert rich with literacy materials.



Giving Students Choice with Literacy Based Science Projects

By Amanda Yonks



How can we engage all students across content areas?

In our Fifth Grade Science Unit on Earth's Systems, students learned about the different spheres on Earth and how they interact. Students became "Sphere Experts" through their studies. As a culminating activity, students were asked to choose one problem that they felt passionate about to research more information about on how human impact affects Earth's spheres.

How did we engage all of our learners?

A) Choice of Topic (Content)

Students were provided with the choice of content they wanted to become "experts" in while doing the research. Students were able to choose if they wanted to focus on Water Pollution, Air Pollution/ Climate Change, or Deforestation. Other students wanted to explore their own ideas such as the Impact of Red Lantern Flies and how we can prevent the spread of them and stop the killing of trees. Research states that providing choice to students allows them to engage with reading topics of interest, which motivates them to learn.

B) Choice of Reading Materials and Accessibility (Process)

Students were able to choose what texts they wanted to read from an assortment of teacher- selected and leveled texts. Students were given articles about their topic from Readworks.org, Newsela.com, Online Websites, and a variety of hard- copy books from the school and local library. If an online book component for the hard copy book was

Giving Students Choice with Literacy Based Science Projects

By Amanda Yonks

accessible, students accessed it via Getepic.com. These options for reading provided all students with access to how they learned best, what motivated them (some chose to read children's picture books and board books), and engaged struggling learners by allowing them to use tools such as text- to- speech.

By providing students with choice for Literacy- Based Projects in Science, it is evident that giving students ownership over their learning results in student engagement, motivation, and completed tasks. Students are successful when they are given options on what they want to learn and how they want to learn.





Engaging Readers by Choosing Books Representing All the Children in Your Classroom

By Valentina Arango-Correa MEd
Former English Teacher, Roselle Park High School
Training and Consultation Specialist in Person-Centered Approaches in School & Transition The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities



As the only Latina English teacher in my school when I started my teaching career, I tried to convince my students and myself that the books we read were essential and exciting. The books were, for the most part, about white characters and written by white authors. It wasn't until I found books representative of the students that we truly believed it.

In 1990 well-known children's literature researcher Rudine Sims Bishop wrote about "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors." This concept discusses how books can be like windows into the realities of others, not just imaginary worlds, and books can also be mirrors that reflect readers' lives. Sliding glass doors allow readers to become fully immersed in another experience (Bishop, 1990).

Students in my classes became more engaged and invested in the books and the classroom work when they saw themselves in the stories. Representation meant they did not just see themselves in stories where Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and other historically marginalized populations are shown stereotypical roles. It meant we had to find books written by BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Disabled (etc.) authors.

First thing first, we have to get to know our students. Not just knowing their likes and hobbies but truly digging deeper to discover their strengths and what is important to them (Person-Centered Approaches to School and Transition). Further, they need space in the classroom to explore their identities. I had my students create an Identity web for themselves, and we created identity webs for characters in the novels we read. By practicing self-discovery skills and using model texts with a diverse range of characters, we are creating a more inclusive classroom culture and disrupting cycles of oppression. One book at a time.

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Engaging Readers by Choosing Books Representing All the Children in Your Classroom

By Valentina Arango-Correa MEd

What does this mean for your classroom? My advice is to look for model texts by authors that are representative of diverse populations, choose texts that do not perpetuate stereotypes, make connections with students, bring their identities into the learning process, and model high expectations for all

Book Recommendations:

K-5:

- Where Are You From? by Yamile Saied Méndez, HarperCollins
- Eyes that Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho, HarperCollins

6-8:

- The Last Last-Day-of-Summer by Lamar Giles, Versify
- The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie Little, Little, Brown

9-12:

- Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally by Emily Ladau, Ten Speed Press
- The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin, Vintage

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Be Mindful of Online Teaching: Never Forget the Value of Human Interaction

By Caroline Ruiz
Literacy Coach
Plainfield Public Schools



Grandma said there would be days like this. Days when cars will drive and park themselves. Days when you will be able to see the person on the other side of the phone when you talk to them. Days when children will be taught by computers instead of live people. We were already on the brink of losing the “human” touch to teaching prior to the pandemic, but now, after we attempt to recover what we know about brick and mortar classrooms, we find ourselves returning to a multitude of computer programs replacing our instruction. While technology is, by no means, our nemesis, we do find ourselves trying to figure out how we can strike a balance between program usage and human instruction. This is especially significant when we are talking about our literacy instruction.

Literacy instruction, by nature, is rooted in our fundamental understanding of what it means to be human. We make connections and form opinions based upon our human experiences. We determine cause and effect relationships, sequence events and make predictions using our prior knowledge of cycles and order in our daily lives. We characterize the people we meet by their actions and speech to form friendships. Yet, no two people on earth are alike, nor do they experience things the same way, and people are the ones who write computer programs. This leads me to wonder how much of the programmers’ experiences are imbedded in how the computer responds to interactive lessons. Even if several programmers are involved in the process, and a multitude of surveys have been taken to attempt a “fair” spectrum of answers, how can we ever ensure that we are including all possible human responses? We already use this reasoning to dispute the validity of standardized testing and whether a text is culturally biased. If this is true for printed texts in assessments, how can it not be true for computerized instruction?

In addition, online instruction has no way of observing reading “behaviors”. Is the child tracking the print with their eyes? Do they require their finger to keep their place? How do they hold a book? The computer does not know. It only knows if the students can click on the arrow to turn the page. Do they look confused and stare at the ceiling when they come across a word they don’t know, or do they focus on the word and use their word attack skills? The computer only knows that they stall, don’t respond, or read the word

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Literacy Instruction: We're Only Human

By Caroline Ruiz

incorrectly. As humans, we look for body language. We look for a human response. When we notice certain responses, such as crying, we ask the student what is causing them to be sad. The response may be related to the text, a reminder of something sad in their life. The response may be related to something completely unrelated to the text, such as an issue at home or with friends. The response could just be total frustration because the text is too difficult. Will the computer know the emotion of the child and provide comfort? No. The computer will only calculate the rate of their reading or the time they were “inactive”. The unintentional consequence of this may be a child who associates reading with negative experiences and, therefore, determines that they “don’t like to read”.

While online literacy programs have their deficits, they also have some valuable uses in our classrooms. They are beneficial in calculating reading data that have “right” or “wrong” answers, such as letter/sound recognition. They are wonderful in providing a variety of texts, at multiple levels, and various genres. They can help teachers reinforce skills after the mini-lessons have been conducted by the teacher, and they can check for understanding with questions that have one correct answer. But literacy instruction has its limits on definitive answers that are based in mere logic. Literacy is life. It is the people we meet, the events we participate in, and the problems we face and solve. It is sometimes illogical and fantastical. It is always personal. Let us try to remember that as we enter this “new day” in education. Let us be mindful of the online instruction we use in our schools, fully understanding how and why we are choosing them, and never lose sight of how valuable human interaction is in developing lifelong readers.



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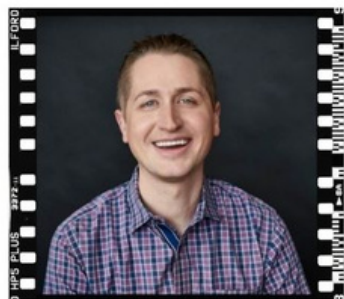


Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

2022-2023 Speaker Series

Feb. 23, 2023

Motivate your Students to be Avid Readers by Spending a Day Immersed in Literature and Poetry to Develop their Affective Side of Reading. (PreK through H.S.)



John Schu

Motivating Children to Love Literature by Exploring multiple genres and the Affective side of Reading Life

In this presentation John Schu, who is a teacher, librarian, children's author, book lover and story ambassador, invites us to consider the benefits of developing students who love books. He highlights the ways stories speak to our hearts using literature from multiple cultural genres for all grade levels. You will leave this presentations with ideas to carry out with your students as you help them develop the love of reading.



Janet Wong

Poetry Suitcase and Poems to Fill Your Belly and Soul: A Makerspace

Janet Wong is known for her Poetry Suitcase, a technique that makes poem-sharing easy and fun for students in early childhood through the high school.. Janet shares diverse and inclusive poetry, social justice poetry, and poetry related to STEM, social studies, and SEL in meaningful ways a minute at a time, at any time. Attendees will receive a packet of poems and props to help start your own Poetry Suitcase to use in school the next day. Janet will lead a writing exercise for attendees who are eager to tap into their inner poets

Each conference day includes a continental breakfast, lunch, vendors, networking, door prizes, and book signings. Everyone will hear all speakers at each of our meetings. Registration cost for one Speaker Series event: \$175.

Discounted registration cost for all 5 events: \$750.

Visit us at:

<http://rutgersliteracycenter.org/>

Register at:

<https://cvent.me/qzBDYL>



Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

Coaching Services

Contact the Center for Literacy Development for expert Coaching and Professional Development using scientifically based Literacy Strategies. We design coaching to meet the individual needs of a district and provide coaching in the areas listed below.

What do educators have to say about our services?

Literacy Coaching for Educators in the following areas:

- Assessment
- Close Reading
- Comprehension
- Culturally Responsive Instruction
- Differentiated Instruction
- Digital Literacies
- Dyslexia
- English Language Learners
- Evaluation and Organization of your Language Arts Program
- Family Literacy
- Fluency
- Guided Reading groups
- Motivation
- Phonics
- Project Based Learning
- Reading and Writing Workshop
- Response to Intervention
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Struggling Readings
- Vocabulary

"Teachers and principals have expressed how knowledgeable, skilled and professional coaches are during visits and how well they support the goals and vision of their schools."

James Salvo
Roselle Park
School District

Coaches develop plans using scientifically based strategies and utilize our school's resources."

Tina Monteleone
Holmdel School
District

"Coaches established a positive relationship with the faculty. They model lessons, and engage in reflective discussions when providing feedback for lessons taught by the teachers."

Lois Bohm
Hillside Public
School District



Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

Rutgers Reading Club

An After School Literacy Intervention Program for Struggling Readers

"The only person who understands me and my reading is my Rutgers Reading Club Teacher!"

Research Based Practices

- Motivating and engaging children
- Building self-esteem
- Time for socializing and snacks
- Building relationships between student and teacher
- Allows for choice and success
- Differentiating instruction
- Provides added time for literacy instruction in the school day
- Allowing for practice

This after school intervention program focuses on the child's needs. The teaching plan includes the integration of the language arts with developing: word work, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and writing.

Motivation is a major goal in sessions. For example, the child can choose a book for the teacher to read to them that is too difficult for the child to read themselves. Literacy games are also played.

Each child is taught twice a week for 12 weeks for an hour by a teacher who is certified. Teachers work on building a relationship with the child.

Rutgers Reading Club Cheer

Rutgers Reading! Rutgers Writing! Hoo-Rah! Hoo-Rah!
Rutgers Reading! Reaching Red Team! Writing Red Team! Rah! Rah!

"Students' reading levels improved along with their confidence."

"Rutgers Reading Club proved to be a very positive experience for all! Teachers and students loved being part of the club."

For more information, email
Lesley.Morrow@gse.rutgers.edu
or Kelly.Clarida@gse.rutgers.edu
(848) 932-0762

Attendance Rate (%)	Sight Words December	Sight Words January	Sight Words March	Running Record December	Running Record January	Running Record March	Phonics Inventory December	Phonics Inventory January	Phonics Inventory March
94	46	78	185	E	G	I	48/75	55/74	57/74
88	104	171	255	E	H	J	51/75	63/74	68/74
94	55	62	88	D	E	F	51/75	58/74	52/74



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Improve literacy development in your school by applying to our Reading Specialist Programs.

Rutgers Graduate School of Education is a top ranked School of Education in the Country



Rutgers University Graduate School of Education is accepting applications for our Reading Specialist programs that range between 30-33 credits. These programs help accepted students learn about evidenced based best practices, helping struggling readers and current issues in literacy development. The offered programs include:

NEW DOUBLE CERTIFICATION:

Ed.M. Program for Reading Specialist and NJ Supervisor's Certification

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30 credits

Become a better teacher of reading and writing, become a basic skills teacher or an interventionist.

(4 courses)

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CENTER FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT PARTNER: REACH OUT AND READ



The Center for Literacy Development partnered with the Reach Out and Read National Center, Eric B. Chandler Pediatric Health Center, helps put books into the hands of every child.



Reach Out and Read's Unique model:

- Reach Out and Read-trained doctors and nurses perform routine health checkups from infancy through five years not only with a stethoscope, but also with a children's book.
- The book is used as a clinical tool to encourage parents to read aloud, to give them a simple, practical way of spending time and engaging in conversation with their young children.
- The child is given a new book to take home and read with the family.



For more information about giving books, contact
Rutgers Center for Literacy Development
kelly.clarida@gse.rutgers.edu



THEIR SUCCESS STARTS WITH YOU

Your book donations at our events go to this clinic and have made family literacy possible for these children. The Center will collect new or gently-used books at each of our events.

