



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
Graduate School of Education



Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

VOL XIV. NO. 3

Winter 2024 Newsletter

Letter from the Director

The Center for Literacy Development has had a busy summer and fall. We had two book clubs; one was about the Science of Reading, in preparation for the Webinar on the topic by David Pearson and Rob Tierney. We had a good sized audience for that event. The next book club was with Jennifer Serravallo's book *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0*. We shared ideas from her text and related the ideas to the classrooms of the teachers who participated.

Our first live event was in October with Jennifer Serravallo and a colleague of hers, Leah Steiner. They talked about *Reading Strategies Essential Teaching for every Classroom*. We had an audience of over 200, the largest since before COVID. It was a very lively day filled with excellent information. In December, Sara Ahmed talked about *Leveraging Identity and co-construction* social comprehension in our schools. Sara is a dynamic speaker with strategies to put into place easily. I used some of her ideas in my college classroom.

Our next speaker is Carl Anderson who is talking about *Helping Students Learn to Write Well by Teaching with Mentor Texts*. We have excellent registration for this event in February. We will probably have 200 educators from about 70 different districts. Many districts send more than one teacher. We are grateful to the districts for allowing teachers to attend our events since it is difficult to get substitutes.

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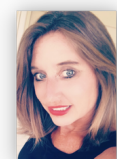
We look forward to our two events in the spring Jan Burkins who will speak about Shifting the Balance: Aligning Literacy Instruction With What We Know About How the Brain Reads. In May we already have many registered for Wiley Blevins, who will talk about High-impact and Engaging Routines for Phonics, Word Study, Vocabulary and Fluency in Grades K-6.

Coaching has been busy as well. We are working in 20 districts from PreK to grade 12. Coaching in High Schools is new for us. It seems many of the students have trouble reading the textbooks in content areas and writing informational pieces. In the elementary schools, it seems everyone wants to refresh what guided reading should look like as well as strategy groups. Schools want consistency of types of strategies used throughout the grades. We have found with our work around the state that coaching is by far the best forms of Professional Development. Coaches model lessons, co-teach and sometimes if teachers agree, we videotape their teaching and have constructive conversations about them.

In 2023, we talked a lot about the Science of Reading, Disciplinary Reading, and Culturally Responsive Teaching. As a result, a lot is happening at the New Jersey Department of Education. Our literacy standards have been refined with some changes. The state is revising criteria for the Reading Specialist Certification and creating a new Certification in reading for early childhood. They have also contracted with many different groups to create Webinars about the Neurobiology of reading, Foundational Skills which includes, phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study. There will be webinars on Vocabulary, Comprehension and Fluency. The final module is for Administrators with sections on Foundational Skills, the Culture in Classrooms that Effect Literacy Instruction, High Quality Materials, High Quality Assessment, High Quality Professional Development and Monitoring Instructional. These webinars are being created for grades K through 6 and will be provided free for all school districts in the state this spring.

In this newsletter, I asked the authors to write about motivating literacy strategies that have engaged their students. I hope you find you can use some of their excellent ideas in your classroom.

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Engaging Literacy Activities

Danielle Gardner
first-grade teacher
Sayreville Public Schools



Making Literacy Fun!

Throughout my experience as an educator, I have often been faced with reluctant readers. I observe students who are more engaged in literacy tasks each year than others. Those who are more involved in literacy activities show tremendous reading success. Why do we see these reluctant readers each year? Marinak and Gambrell (2016) discuss the impact motivation has on supporting students to reach their full literacy potential using the “ARC” of motivation: access, relevance, and choice. Creating literacy activities that promote student engagement is crucial in setting students up to reach their full potential. As the new year begins, consider these literacy activities for your classroom.

Literacy Scavenger Hunt: As a kindergarten and first-grade teacher, a literacy scavenger hunt is always a hit! This activity follows the “ARC” of motivation by providing students with access (opportunities for discussion and exposure to the material) and choice (self-selected literacy findings). It requires minimal preparation and is highly versatile. Students can work individually, in pairs, or teams, and you can adjust the focus of each scavenger hunt. Students are also allowed to MOVE and engage with materials in the classroom. For example, I challenged students to identify beginning letter sounds in my classroom. Students were given a recording sheet and, in pairs, found different objects in the classroom for each beginning letter sound of the alphabet. Students recorded pencils for the letter p, desks for the letter d, flag for the letter f, etc. Other focuses could be final letter sounds or long vowel sounds. Working with older grades? Challenge your students to find objects in the room that are multisyllabic or compound words!

Reading Scavenger Hunt: Very similar to a literacy scavenger hunt, a reading scavenger hunt encourages access, relevance, and choice. In my classroom, a reading scavenger hunt is completed during independent reading, but you can also use it in pairs! Reading scavenger hunts are versatile and can be used in all grade levels. Using a book of their choice, students can participate in reading scavenger hunts that focus on finding punctuation marks, features of fiction texts, features of nonfiction texts, verbs, adjectives, compound words, problem and solution, etc. The opportunities are endless! Tasking students with a scavenger hunt while reading gives them a goal and purpose for reading, encouraging them to be more engaged.



Digital Storytelling

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



My role as an instructional coach and a technology facilitator brings me the opportunity to bring literacy into the digital space in interesting ways. One of my favorite approaches to amplify student engagement is through digital storytelling; specifically, digital storyboards. My middle school and elementary students use Microsoft Flip (formerly FlipGrid) to plan their own short films. Students start on paper, mapping out characters, plot, and dialogue. They transfer to the digital space using the free website Flip. Students record their voices as narrators and characters. They also use digital filters, stickers, background music and stickers to enhance their storytelling creations.

Book Talks

Jeannette O'Rourke
Carteret School Bloomfield, NJ grade 6



My students turned book talks into Commercials for Books. Students selected book to read and created presentations as commercials for why others should read the book. Many were quite creative using technology, props, and acting in their presentations. While doing this they developed the courage and confidence to speak in front of the class, and deep comprehension of the text. Student's presentations were creative, developed literacy skills, and confidence. Our classroom community was filled with laughter, applause, and smiles in a way I did not think was possible.

The Power of Choice

Maria Lamattina, EdD



Ask most high school English teachers about their goals, and they will invariably include getting young people to love reading literature. Ask many candidates for high school English teaching positions if they had to answer a question regarding motivating students who say they don't like reading, and they'll tell you they have. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Not long ago, I found myself with the time needed to engage in quite a bit of professional reading—from research articles to practitioner-written books. My reading left me quite “hyped”; I felt well-prepared to develop new units of study and classroom routines designed to not only help students at various levels of readiness and abilities, but to also actively engage them as they did so. But then reality hit—I had a required curriculum to follow and texts to read (whether or not the students were capable of comprehending those texts didn't seem to be a concern).

Fast forward to a more recent conversation with some high school English teachers who work in a variety of school settings—urban and suburban, public and private. Some bemoaned the need for following a specific sequence of texts while others celebrated their freedom to choose the texts their classes would read. What was common to both, was the fact that even where there was choice, it did not extend to the students.

Some of those teachers had also taught middle school. At that level, they used both a shared, whole class read and related text sets that allowed for students to choose books for independent (or small group) reading. The rationale? Students will be more engaged in reading texts that more closely reflect their interests and abilities. Those teachers believed in that approach and were clear on its advantages. They also believed that the solution involved integrating whole-class and independent choice. As Roberts (2018) points out, “students need individualized instruction...in reading, and text choice is...part of this equation, and...students also need...the supported experience of reading a...text...they may not have chosen for themselves” (xii).

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The Power of Choice

Maria Lamattina, EdD

So, what happens over the summer between middle school and high school that allows for a total switch to school/teacher-selected whole class reads? I asked, but they didn't answer.

What then might be some questions to consider about the whole-class texts used in high school English?

- What kinds of things might students gain from reading a specific text?
- What knowledge/skills do they need to accomplish that? Do they already possess such knowledge/skills?
- What demands does a particular text make on its reader?
- What will students learn from engaging with this text? Will it build knowledge about a topic/perspective/event in the world?
- Are there related texts that might be used to create a "text set" from which students can choose independent reading?

Sorry, I don't have answers that address all contexts, but if you'd like to brainstorm with someone regarding these questions, please, contact me. I'm still grappling with this!

Work Cited

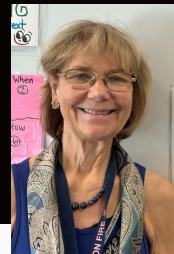
Roberts, K. (2018). A Novel Approach: Whole-Class Novels, Student-Centered Teaching, and Choice. Heinemann.





Reciprocal Teaching Techniques Motivate My Students to Read Thoughtfully

Patricia Keppler and Kimberly Johnson, Reading Specialists, Paterson Pubic Schools, School #15



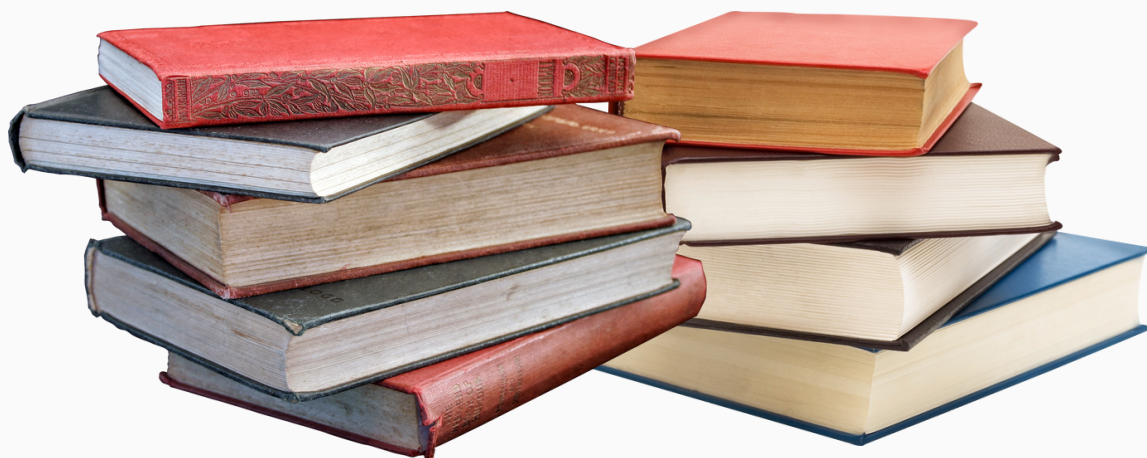
I work with children in grades 2 to 4. We utilize Reciprocal Teachings. This involves

(1) Questioning: To promote deep critical thinking about the text students write their own comprehension questions for their peers to answer. To help them make up the questions we suggest that they begin with How, Why, or Explain.

(2) Summarizing : Students use sentence starters and paraphrase the essential ideas.

(3) Prediction: Students select pages from the text and then make predictions about what they believe will come next in what they are reading.

(4) Clarification: Students focus on one word in a passage that they select as being essential to the text .



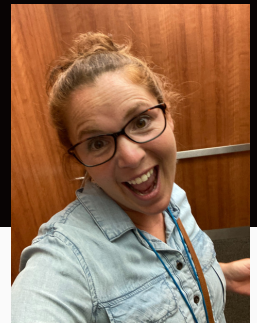


Memoir Scrapbooks

By Cara Walters

Grades 6 to 8

Sea Girt Elementary School



In my 8th Grade ELA class, I created differentiated Memoir Book Clubs with 3 to 4 students in each group. Prior to being placed in a group, the students were given the first page of each text to read through and were able to choose the one they wished to read in their leveled Book Club.

The four memoir groups were Farewell to Manzanar by James D. Houston and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston Red Scarf Girl by Ji-li Jiang, Bad Boy by Walter Dean Myers and Boy on the Wooden Box by Leon Leyson (some other choices were Proud by Ibtijah Mohammed and Someone Like Me by Julissa Arce).

As a culminating project, the students worked collaboratively to create a scrapbook, showcasing the life of the individual they read about. The scrapbook components included a section on the setting (geographic location and historical timeline), examples of adversity/resilience in the person's life, examples of the stylistic devices the author used to convey their life story, images and, significant symbols, and evidence of a major theme.

The 8th graders were told they could use a digital programs such as Google Slides or Google drawing, yet each group preferred this hands-on crafting experience in ELA. They enjoyed decorating their scrapbook with pictures of important people in the memoirists life, original drawings/images of symbols, and, of course. scrapbooking stickers.

Most importantly, each group was proud of their final project and it was evident they gained so much - reading analysis, writing tips, and historical background - from the reading of a "window world".



What Motivates Our Students

By Linda Saraceno, Ed.D
Supervisor of Instruction
Manchester Township School District
Manchester, NJ



I have found that classrooms are a mosaic of thought. All students, kindergarten through grade 12, enter the schoolhouse gate with a schema that affects their ability to understand what they read and how or if they make connections to what they are reading or writing about at the time. If students lack exposure to the lived experiences of others, their schema will remain limited to their own experiences. When introducing students to the readings, thoughts and writings of those who differ from themselves, their schema widens and a ripple effect occurs when the outer rings of their thoughts expand and open to new perspectives and knowledge. It is through those experiences that we create loving, nurtured but structured, classroom learning experiences where children feel safe to take academic risks and make connections.

In addition to making connections to others and building background knowledge, disciplinary literacy plays an integral role in literacy instruction across all subject-areas. The idea that literacy instruction takes away from discipline-specific instruction is a fallacy. On the contrary, teaching students how to read, write, speak, and think critically helps students to grapple with, understand and even question content. In that way, disciplinary literacy is a part of how we teach and learn a subject, not something separate.

Once students connect to what they are reading and better understand how to read, write, think, and speak like age-appropriate disciplinary experts, reading and writing can become joyful experiences because reading and writing are relatable and engaging to them. To add context, it has been my experience, that if students are not given a choice of what to read, whether it is a guided choice or a self-selected independent read, students may feel forced to

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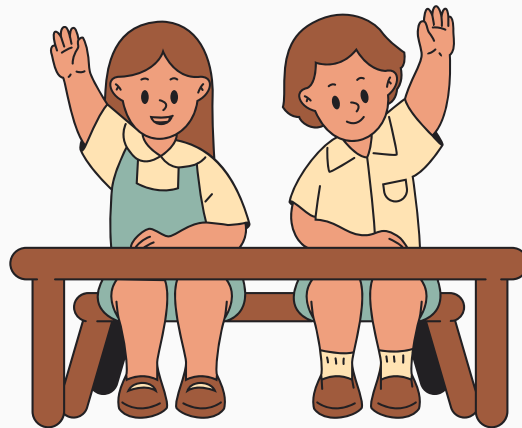
What Motivates Our Students

By Linda Saraceno, Ed.D

engage in assigned readings that are hoisted upon them that have little to do with their current lived experiences or society. That is not to say that there is not a place for a balance of whole class reads or even classics and self-selected texts. The point here is that diverse voices need to be heard so that students build background knowledge, make connections, and experience the joy of reading and writing.

What can we do to help encourage the joy of reading and writing?

- Believe that all students can succeed as readers and writers
- Build diverse classroom libraries
- Provide students with choice readings
- Allow students to develop writing topics that connect to what they are reading
- Use formative assessment to guide instructional decisions
- Conference with students about what they are reading and their writing





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Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

2023

Speaker Series

2024



April 17

Jan Burkins

Shifting the Balance: Aligning
Literacy Instruction with
What We Know About How
the Brain Reads

May 21

Wiley Blevins

High-Impact and Engaging
Routines for Phonics,
Word Study, Vocabulary
and Fluency (K-6)



Register at <https://cvent.me/gvxPxN>



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

**[Click here to visit our
RutgersLiteracyCenter.org](http://RutgersLiteracyCenter.org)**

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



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

The RRC is an after school intervention program for struggling readers focusing on the child's needs. Teaching includes the integration of the language arts with developing: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and writing. Sessions are motivating with children choosing books to be read to them they can't read themselves. Sessions are an hour twice a week for 12 weeks by certified teachers. Building relationships with the child is crucial.

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
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(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



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
Graduate School of Education



Reading Specialist/Supervisor Programs

Improve literacy development in your school. Apply now for one of our Ed.M Certification programs for Reading Specialist/Supervisor; we have rolling admissions. Rutgers Graduate School of Education is ranked in the top 50 nationally and is #1 in New Jersey. Our courses use scientifically based research, theory, policy and practice. We focus on reading achievement of high, middle and struggling students. We also address current issues of social, emotional, and equitable teaching of literacy. Most of our students become interventionists, coaches, and supervisors of curriculum or literacy as a result of completing this Ed.M. This program is associated with GSE's Center for Literacy Development which provides literacy conferences, Professional Development in schools and is affiliated with the National Writing Project.

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33 credits

Non-Degree
Rutgers Certificate in
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30 credits

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Basic Skills teacher, or an
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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.

