

Title of Session: Language Arts Forum

Moderator: Donna Hendry

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Room: After School Online

BJ: while we wait for Donna....a couple tips

BJ: go to the Actions menu in the top right of your chat window

BJ: and click on DETACH

BJ: once you've done that, can you please introduce yourselves and tell me where you are located and what brings you to this discussion?

CathyJW: Hi Everybody! I'm Cathy Wright, a senior at University of Houston. I will graduate in December and will take my content certification (for grades 4-8, language arts) on December 10.

BJ: congratulations, Cathy!

AndreaB: Hi all! I'm Andrea Buxton. I teach 7th grade ELA in Sulphur, Louisiana. I'm a grad student at McNeese State, and my professor, Dr. Hunt, introduced us to Tapped In.

BJ: and ELA is?

AndreaB: English/Language Arts....English/spelling/reading in one block

BJ nods. Thanks

AndreaB: All three suBJects are taught through literature

DonnaH joined the room.

DonnaH: *phew, made it*

DonnaH: *waves a cheery hello*

AndreaB: Hi there!

DonnaH: (for those of you who may not have guessed, I'm running a bit late)

BJ: I do have a couple sites to share with Andrea, though

AndreaB: Great!

DonnaH: please do!

DonnaH: it will give me a few moments to get myself together;

BJ: Andrea teaches English/LanguageArts/Spelling in one block

BJ: these are all pdf files, I think

BJ: <http://lib4000.lib.uwf.edu/d2l/platt/eld4850/6th/fulltext.pdf>

AndreaB: Our curriculum is literature based, and we have our students for 90 minutes at a time

BJ:

http://journals.sped.org/EC/Archive_Articles/VOL.36NO.2NovDec2003_TEC_Regan36-2.pdf

DonnaH: (it can be really difficult to plan enough, and motivate the children forthat long)

BJ: <http://lib4000.lib.uwf.edu/d2l/platt/eld4850/5th/fulltext.pdf>

BJ: those are all sites for spelling

BJ . o O (I'm taking a sped class)

AndreaB: Awesome! They actually told us to not focus on spelling!

AndreaB: Can you believe that??!!

DonnaH: I'm finding that the lack of focus on spelling seems to directly relate to students being more unable to sound things out, etc.

DonnaH: (but, that's a personal, not a professional opinion)

AndreaB: I'm saving these in my favorites so I can spend some time later checking them out! Thanks so much for digging them up for me!

BJ: or recognize patterns

DonnaH: exactly

AndreaB: I agree

DonnaH: words within words, word families...

AndreaB: AND not to mention they are having more and more problems with decoding words.

DonnaH: (was helping a colleague tonight who was studying for the verbal section of the GRE...

AndreaB: They don't remember the rules

DonnaH: and a good number of words I haven't heard before, but could answer, because of the roots

DonnaH: phonemic rules are nearly impossible to memorize...they have too many exceptions

AndreaB: We have been given a comprehensive curriculum which is geared more toward "the test"

AndreaB: They can't even remember the vcv patterns...etc

DonnaH: well, in Connecticut, the CMT test doesn't penalize for misspelling.

DonnaH: I learned that years ago, when I was teaching summer school.

AndreaB: We are integrating a new test. We used to take the ITBS...this is the first year we will take the iLEAP

DonnaH: the students couldn't read because they didn't have the phonemic building blocks...didn't even know what a short 'e' should sound like.

DonnaH: a change in test always seems to change the mode of teaching.

AndreaB: You mean other states have the same problems??!! All we hear here (hey, there's a name for words like that!) is that Louisiana schools are in decline.

AndreaB: In fact, our governor is talking about cutting teacher pay again

CathyJW: that's ok, we hear the same stuff about Texas

DonnaH: I don't know about the whole state....but in my daughters' school system, it's created huge problems.

DonnaH: personally, I blame the push on whole language...it is good in theory, but only for a limited number of students who don't require a very structured learning process.

DonnaH: and many teachers who think they're doing 'whole language' are actually ignoring whole areas, such as phonics.

AndreaB: I taught 6th and 7th ELA last year, and I actually had to create a remedial reading class for 16 of my students because they were reading on a beginner level

AndreaB: beginner - meaning K to 1st grade

DonnaH: we found that there was a whole generation of students who were functionally illiterate, because phonics was removed from the program.

CathyJW: so what's the status of phonics now?

AndreaB: I'm not sure what they are doing with phonics now

DonnaH: certainly you had the ones that did just fine...but those were the ones who would have done well regardless of instruction style now.

DonnaH: I'm seeing a huge comeback in most places.

AndreaB: My oldest is in 1st grade, and she often sounds out words

DonnaH: a simple thing to consider....have you noticed a sudden influx of 'Dick and Jane' books?

DonnaH: (I mean, heck, my mother-in-law bought a treasury of them at WALMART)

AndreaB: YES!! I've bought tons of them lately!

AndreaB: I LOVE

DonnaH: and I'm finding even Scholastic is carrying them now.

AndreaB: those

DonnaH: I think the loss of basal readers...no matter how *shudder* yucky they were, made a difference too.

CathyJW: It's funny because in a class I took last year, Dick & Jane were scorned upon because of their stereotypical roles that were not realistic

DonnaH: exactly.

AndreaB: But they work!

DonnaH: so you have to question, why are they coming back..?

AndreaB: You know what else I've noticed....

DonnaH: and that's the reason, Andrea...everyone is tired of seeing children struggle with their reading.

AndreaB: of course I teach reading, so I read with feeling while I'm reading to my kids...but my 6 year old can read the Dick and Jane books with inflection

DonnaH: exactly.

AndreaB: I have 7th grades who read on a monotone

DonnaH: my younger daughter has SOOO much trouble with reading...but didn't get excited about reading until she started her Dick and Jane...because she could feel successful.

DonnaH: the whole 'whole language' movement certainly pushed 'good' literature...which is fine...

DonnaH: but if the book has words above the child's ability, it stunts their feeling of independence and in the end, their feeling of success.

AndreaB: Does anyone else use SRC?

AndreaB: Scholastic Reading Counts

AndreaB: Very similar to Accelerated Reader

CathyJW: We use A/R here

AndreaB: Cathy...you're in Houston, right?

CathyJW: Close to it

AndreaB: One of the great aspects of SRC is that the students take a computer based comprehension test. This gives us his/her reading level...Lexile level

AndreaB: Our students are only allowed to check out chapter books in his/her lexile range

AndreaB: And every two weeks, they take a computer generated test on the book

DonnaH: we use the DRP scale.

AndreaB: DRP = reading level?

DonnaH: degrees of reading power (and wow, I'm surprised I remembered that!)

CathyJW: It's the same with accelerated reader; the kids seem to like it but I have some teachers complain about it; too much focus on certain books when there are other books the kids could read but they won't because they want the a/r points. Also, I've heard some teachers that use the a/r test scores as large part of reading grade.

DonnaH: that's what is in my children's schools...the system I'm in now, I have to admit, I don't know, as I work mostly with the technology aspects.

AndreaB: I can't believe teachers would complain...I guess my attitude is anything that gets them to read!!

DonnaH: I think around here at least, we're in the beginning of the curve of change.

CathyJW: me too

AndreaB: I've even allowed students to bring their favorite magazine to class to read

DonnaH: you know how they say learning theories come around about every 20 years or so.

CathyJW: In my children's junior high, they have sustained silent reading during advisory once a week. They can read anything.

AndreaB: Yes! I've been teaching for 13 years now, and I've seen several "failed" trends

AndreaB: I love SSR!!!

AndreaB: In my classroom, I call it DEAR (drop everything and read)

CathyJW: I like that acronym better.

AndreaB: We might be in the middle of class, and I just say DEAR! The kids grab an SRC book and read

DonnaH: we do DEAR as well.

DonnaH: in both districts.

AndreaB: Here

DonnaH: but they can read anything they want during DEAR time.

AndreaB: Here's a question for you. I still do TMR (teacher modeled reading) with my

7th grade students. What's your opinion of that?

AndreaB: I have a short novel that I will read orally to my students about 2-3 times a week...20 minutes or so

CathyJW: I've done that during a week as a substitute, I read them Walk Two Moons. They loved it!

AndreaB: My 7th graders still LOVE being read to.

DonnaH: I think its a great way for students to internalize rhythm, inflection, etc

CathyJW: I bet even high school students would enjoy it.

DonnaH: and they like it because you can share something that would be a bit challenging

CathyJW: and don't forget some high school students will have a very low reading level

AndreaB: I think I would still enjoy it!

DonnaH: I had a long term assignment 3 years ago, that was 5th-8th grade gifted reading...

AndreaB: In fact, I often get the books on CD to listen to while on the road

DonnaH: and WE would do it...and I would let them choose which books we'd read next.

DonnaH: so yes, I think it does help...

CathyJW: I did that last summer, listened to Hearts in Atlantis for 23 hours from Virginia to Texas.

DonnaH: I think cd don't work as well...because it's too perfect...they don't hear any errors, (and I think they learn, by the teacher making mistakes, that it's not a big deal)

AndreaB: I don't let them listen to the CD...I listen to it while in the car!!

DonnaH: *snicker*

CathyJW: One thing I noticed in a 7th grade class I worked in last year, the kids preferred to have the teacher read rather than listen to the CD, I think it depends on the reader.

DonnaH: well, I guess I was thinking in terms of a listening center.

AndreaB: humph...my students will tell you that I'm perfect!!!

DonnaH: but that really is an elementary thing...not a middle.

AndreaB: I do sometimes play the CD of a story...but we would have already read the story aloud in class

AndreaB: That seems to really help comprehension...especially with my lower level kids

CathyJW: Andrea, do you ever create a photostory or show film clips to accompany literature?

DonnaH: sort of like watching the movie after reading the book?

AndreaB: I haven't

AndreaB: but I have thought about it

AndreaB: we don't have great technology in our classes

AndreaB: I do use literature launchers

AndreaB: I guess that would be what you're talking about...

AndreaB: it's a short clip relating to a specific story

DonnaH: we have had to read a good deal of historical fiction...

CathyJW: Where do you get the clips?

DonnaH: so that is a great way to integrate all sorts of outside resources.

AndreaB: They are VHS tapes that came with our textbooks

DonnaH: Our school has a subscription to United Streaming, which is run by Discovery

DonnaH: School, among other things.

DonnaH: (huge database of movies and clips...all annotated and searchable...really handy.)

AndreaB: We aren't allowed to use United Streaming unless it is after 4 pm

DonnaH: I've also found places that offer free stuff.

CathyJW: I've heard about streaming.

DonnaH: you know you can download the clips though, right Andrea?

CathyJW: How?

AndreaB: Yea...they're great

AndreaB: but very time consuming

DonnaH: well...if you want the whole movie, I suppose it might be.

DonnaH: but we usually use clips.

DonnaH: it's a choice they give you when you pull the clip up, Cathy:)

AndreaB: Most of the time, I have to be gone from school before 4, so I'm not able to search

CathyJW: Tell me more!

DonnaH: you can choose to play live streaming, download...or...there was a 3rd choice, but I can't remember it.

DonnaH: here...you can't log in, but it will give you info:

DonnaH: <http://www.unitedstreaming.com>

AndreaB: We have to d/l everything, since we are "banned" from the site during school hours

CathyJW: Thanks -- this will come in handy.

DonnaH: it also has things like grammar lessons, etc.

DonnaH: why ever so, Andrea?

BJ: you can get a free trial of united streaming

DonnaH: seems rather foolish, if they are paying for it.

DonnaH: unless they are afraid that it would overload your server, if too many decided to live stream at the same time?

AndreaB: I dunno'...but it came from the school board

AndreaB: I think they were having a problem with it bogging down the system

DonnaH: *nods*

DonnaH: still seems rather foolish.

DonnaH: (is very very very fortunate to have such a forward thinking administration)

AndreaB: I didn't get to use it very often. Just as I was getting into it, we had to stop using it!!

DonnaH: *nods*

DonnaH: a lot of our teachers use them.

AndreaB: Since Rita hit us, I haven't really had time to reconnect all of my computers. My classroom is a little "technology handicapped" right now

DonnaH: (is everyone looking at the site?)

DonnaH: *nods* I can believe that!

AndreaB: And, I walked into my classroom two days ago...my AC was dripping...right on one of my three student computers

AndreaB: it ruined the keyboard

DonnaH: (as an aside...I got an article sent to me...MIT has nearly completed a \$100 laptop for educational use)

DonnaH: keyboards aren't too bad to replace though.

DonnaH: (esp, if you're a packrat like me...I have 3 just at home from old comps)

CathyJW: The total cost of the laptop is \$100?

AndreaB: I actually just upgraded at home from a 1999 Gateway to a DELL Inspiration 9300

AndreaB: (notebook)

AndreaB: I can't believe the \$100...since my new notebook was \$1500!!!

DonnaH: lemme see if I can't dig up the url

DonnaH:

http://www.betanews.com/article/MITs_100_Laptop_to_be_Demoed/1132075667

AndreaB: I'll have to dig for a keyboard...I just heard the other day that several of the schools have 25 palms that the school board is holding onto because they don't want to train the teachers

DonnaH: what a bloody waste of money

AndreaB: The palms were part of TAP that we just started

AndreaB: Teacher Advancement Program

AndreaB: Anyone heard of that??

DonnaH: no, but that doesn't mean anything.

AndreaB: I'm sure we borrowed the idea from Oregon.

DonnaH: *chuckles*

DonnaH: however, it's the top of the hour...and i'm afraid my battery is about to go as well.

AndreaB: Well, I'm so glad that I visited tonight

CathyJW: Thanks for the ideas and stuff. Nice to meet you Andrea -- I'm an Andrea wannabee.

DonnaH: good luck!

AndreaB: LOL...not if you saw how many kids I have

AndreaB: but thanks! It was great to meet all of you, also!