

Title of Session: K-12 Language Arts

Moderator: Karen Lemmons

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BJB : Welcome to this month's Language Arts discussion, everyone!

KarenL : Okay, I'm going to get started. First, we do introductions. Who would like to go first?

BJB : I'm in Pennsylvania and am on Tapped In helpdesk. I'm also a retired communication and art teacher

KarenL : when did you retire, BJ?

BJB : last June

KarenL : OMG, good for you!!!

BJB smiles. Thanks

KarenL : I wish I could. . .

JohnAp : 'OK, I'll go. I'm John. I teach fifth grade at Mountain View. I teach all subjects and have this idea to integrate reading into all subjects. Moderate success so far with mathematics and science.

BJB cheers for John. Good for you!

BJB . o O (I try to do the same with art)

AmyLR : I teach students with autism in Stafford County, VA. I am taking a educ. tech class at University of Mary Washington...which is how I was introduced to Tapped In. Looking for interesting ways to get my students interested in reading, lang. arts, etc

KarenL : My name is Karen. I am the moderator and a library media specialist in an elementary school in Detroit.

KarenL : Before I begin my agenda, I would like to know if there is anything particular you want to know about. If so, we can easily forego my agenda, and try to meet your wishes.

AmyLR : I am happy with sticking to the agenda....

KarenL smiles.

JohnAp: Karen-I'm looking for the answer to this question...what do you think of the idea of aiming low with the reading level of text to nurture concepts?

BjB: wow, that's a double edged sword, John

KarenL: well, John, that is happening in quite a few textbooks.

JohnAp: It's not meant to be. A few days ago I introduced fractions with "Apple Fractions" I forget the author. Text is simple so kids can focus on the idea of whole and parts of a whole, etc...

KarenL: I don't like it, but the reality is quite a few students are not reading at grade level for many reasons.

KarenL: yes, I understand. Remember, John, we are working with students who are more visual than textual.

JohnAp: Good point.

KarenL: so, as much as I dislike the approach, we have to use far more pictures to teach concepts.

BjB: I didn't mean to diss using pictures and picture books...

BjB: and I understand you need to use books that have words the students are able to experience success reading

BjB: but there is also a fine line between "easy reading" and bored students

KarenL: No, and I don't think you are dismissing books, but the reality is, and especially with fractions and time, you need visuals.

JohnAp: No, I take your point exactly. I guess I'm headed toward students being able to explain it in their own words in writing. My idea is that if students can explain it, they can understand it.

BjB: . o O (have them make their own books!)

BjB: . o O (and share them with younger classes)

KarenL: Oooh, great idea!!!!

KarenL: Talk about engaging students!

KarenL: Can you imagine the enthusiasm the students will have when they have to "teach" fractions to younger classes?

KarenL: How proud they would be of their work and their learning!

BjB: Amy, is this something that you would be able to use with your students?

AmyLR: I like that too...and with some of my autistic high-functioning students, they actually do better with younger kids than with kids in their own classes

JohnAp: My kids (some anyway) love becoming the "teacher" to their parents at home.

BjB: lucky kids, John!

AmyLR: And if they could use the computer for making the books.....whoa. I wouldn't need to help them at all!!!!!! :)

KarenL: Or, if you are willing, maybe some students would like to "teach" the class. I have learned some students are very good in explaining something that I cannot.

AmyLR: exactly

KarenL: I remember using a special education student to teach math to other students. He was very good at it.

JohnAp: I've had some success with the idea. I want to expand it so all students get the opportunity to present. A teacher friend of mine once said

KarenL: Math is not my subject. So the vocabulary of "grouping" and other terms are new to me.

AmyLR: Yes! And sometimes my kids come up with better words to use after I spend all this time explaining.....and I think..."Exactly!"

KarenL: Okay, BJ, what are some good math/reading math stories websites?

AmyLR: Math is not my favorite either

BjB: John, do you collaborate with your library media specialist?

JohnAp: A friend of mine once said, "the less I talk, the more they learn." This applies to reading comp. math, science, etc... Any reaction to this?

KarenL: Amy, sometimes I think I speak a foreign language. Then a student says something and the other student says "Oh I get it now!"

BjB . o O (always make friends with the librarian!)

KarenL: of course!!!!

KarenL: to making friends with the librarian. Talking less, it depends. . .

AmyLR: yes!!!

BjB : John, that is another way to say that you are a guide on the side instead of a sage on the stage...

KarenL: demonstrations help.

JohnAp: Bj it's funny you mention that. We wanted to present at this year's NCTM Conference in DC with the idea of Media Specialist-teacher collaboration and were rejected. Oh Well

KarenL: ooh, I love that saying! I'm going to remember that one!

AmyLR: Talking less for my kids, who are very visual, is usually a good idea. For typical kids, I guess it depends.

JeffC joined the room.

KarenL: try again. . .can you try your local math association?

BjB : the kids are becoming engaged in the lessons and you are facilitating their learning

JohnAp: Yes. Absolutely. We've already got our high school diplomas. Let's give the students a shot at being the stars. Some would say that makes teachers lazy. I say it makes us creative.

JohnAp: Hi Jeff

BjB : there are sooooo many books to use to integrate all subjects across the curriculum

JohnAp: Keeps me learning Bj.

BjB nods...the sign of a good educator, John :-)

KarenL: I'm trying to remember some particular authors who are good with math and reading.

KarenL: I want to say Stuart something. My memory fails me. . .

AmyLR: My favorite math picture book is Sir Cumference and the round table

KarenL: the title is cute!!!!

AmyLR: It's Great!

AmyLR: Yes!

JohnAp: Yes. The kids love Sir Cumference and all of his sequels.

KarenL: oooh, I'm going to have to add that to my collection. Thank you very much for that information.

AmyLR: (hard one for my kids to understand with the play on words, but again, for regular ed kids...adorable)

JohnAp: Here's a fly in the ointment-What do you all say to the idea that this is a sales job. Not only to the county curriculum staff but also to the parents? The parents I've got but the admin is a different story entirely.

BjB: here's a real academic resource for a list of math and picture books: <http://www.amazon.com/Math-Picture-Books/lm/R2HTKE1AI97LI>

JohnAp: Thanks-nothing speaks as loudly as research.

AmyLR: lol

BjB: here's another list <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Learning/MathsInPictures/>

JohnAp: got it, thanks

AmyLR: thanks!

AmyLR: always good to have

BjB: there is a chapter book too that I can't think of ...devils arithmetic?

JohnAp: I like the title

KarenL: now I remember the guy's name! Stuart Murphy! He did a book title Lemonade for Sale, which is a good book on graphing!

BjB: cool, Karen. Thanks

KarenL: not sure about that title, BJ.

JohnAp: Karen - in VA there's an interest in entrepreneurial education. This sounds like a fun text.

KarenL: tell me about. It is not exclusive to Virginia. In Michigan, and particularly in Detroit, where I teach, we are ripe for either a state takeover or turning our schools into charter schools.

BjB: <http://www.harperchildrens.com/hch/mathstart/murphy.asp>

BjB: that lists all of Stuart Murphy's books

BjB: . o O (level 3 lists Lemonade for Sale)

KarenL: thank you, BJ!!!

KarenL: we have quite a few charter schools and we are competing for students and dollars.

KarenL: We have quite a few schools in the suburbs that are run by the Edison Project.

JohnAp: I had another question. This is from one of my students actually. We read short chapter books and some of the kids want to read larger epics. I'm torn about this. Short chapter books prevent kids from getting bored. Longer books allow for greater story telling. Any thoughts?

BjB: does the whole class have to read the same book?

KarenL: I don't think the length of the book matters, it's the story that will keep the students reading.

AmyLR: You can always give it a try and see what happens....They might not be bored if they are the ones requesting it....if they are interested, I think that's the easiest way to give it a try

KarenL: what kinds of books do your students like to read?

JohnAp: Yes. I struggle to manage several books at once.

KarenL: have you thought about literature circles?

KarenL: let the students run the group.

KarenL: Harvey Daniels has written an excellent book on literature circles.

KarenL: I used it for an after school class. It was awesome!

KarenL: The students are assigned particular roles and they have to report each time they meet.

KarenL: The roles change as often as they meet, to keep the same person from hogging the same role.

BjB: <http://www.literaturecircles.com/>

KarenL: thanks BJ!!!

JohnAp: The kids seem to like fantasy, adventure stuff. (Girls too) Yes, you're right. I just need more self confidence with it. How about groups with Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys. It's adventure, mystery, and the kids can run the circle. I like it. Sounds like I can experiment with it with the Island trilogy.

KarenL: go for it!!!

AmyLR: I think so too! Give it a whirl

KarenL: If it doesn't work, be honest with the students, get their input and try something else.

KarenL: kids are pretty honest with what works and what doesn't.

JohnAp: You're right. I'll give it a try.

AmyLR: Yay! :)

KarenL: great!!!

AmyLR: You could even introduce it by doing a read aloud with a long chapter book while you finish up what you are doing now

BjB: if you get really brave, open a classroom in the Tapped In K-12 Student campus and have your students type their reflections to the books they're reading

BjB: you could do that also, Amy.

AmyLR: That's what a coworker (fourth grade teacher) does everyday after lunch

KarenL: John, have you tried Hatchet? It has good endings that leave you hanging. . .

AmyLR: My kids are included!

AmyLR smiles

AmyLR: oh, you mean going to the student campus....

JoseR joined the room.

KarenL: Hello Jose!

AmyLR: I suppose I could

KarenL: Welcome to our session!

JoseR: HELLO

JoseR: THANKS

JohnAp: Welcome Jose

KarenL: Jose, we're talking about math and reading, and reading chapter books in general.

JoseR: ok

JohnAp: Jose what students do you teach?

JoseR: I don't teach I plan to teach though

JoseR: I'm a student

KarenL: that's fine. What grades do you plan to teach?

JoseR: 9-12

KarenL: what subject?

JoseR: Spanish

KarenL: may I suggest a website that I think you would like?

JoseR: yes

KarenL: it is a cool website that has Spanish books, in their original language, that your students could read.

JoseR: cool

KarenL: It's called the International Children's Digital Library. <http://www.icdlbooks.org>

BjB : wonderful resource, Karen!

JoseR: thank you

KarenL: I love it! Some books, written in other languages, may be translated in Spanish. You'd have to check the individual book, though.

JoseR: it looks very interesting I'm looking at it right now

KarenL: Amy, John, are you familiar with this website?

KarenL: Could help your "bored" students by reading books online. . .

KarenL: it helped some of mine.

JohnAp: No, I'm not. It's something I'll check with my media specialist about tomorrow.

AmyLR: no...I saved it though

BjB . o O (a reminder that when you log out you are automatically emailed the transcript from this discussion....which will include all the urls)

KarenL: okay, how am I doing so far? Am I answering questions? Is there something else you would like to ask?

JohnAp: Karen you're doing fine. Thanks for all of your help.

KarenL smiles. You're welcome, John.

AmyLR: yeah, thanks, I've enjoyed it

SusanR joined the room.

SusanR slips in quietly

KarenL: listen, I'd like to ask you two a question. I'm into teaching some basic sight (high frequency) words to my special ed students. I must confess this is a new venture for me. Any ideas about teaching these words? I have some flash cards and I have them writing sentences, but I think they should do different activities. Help!

KarenL: Hi Susan!!!!

AmyLR: All I do is sight words!!!

AmyLR smiles

SusanR thinks

JohnAp: I say keep having them write sentences. They're never too young for application.

KarenL: what do you do? Tell and help me!!!!

AmyLR: There is a Dolch Sight word list....do you use that?

AmyLR: Or something else?

SaraAn joined the room.

KarenL: Yes, I have that. I will keep them writing sentences, John. It was so cool to hear a student repeat a sentence he wrote.

BjB: hi, Sara. Welcome

AmyLR: I also have a reading program called Reading Milestones....do you know about this?

KarenL: Hi Sara!!!

KarenL: No, we are using the Open Court Reading program.

JohnAp: My gang is old for sight word lists. However I do have them keep lists of content words in journals.

SaraAn: Sorry so late??? I had some trouble

KarenL: Totally understand, Sara. I'm sure you can get a copy of the transcript.

AmyLR: oh...I am not familiar with that one

SaraAn: Is everything almost done?

SusanR: what about trying this site

SusanR: <http://www.netrover.com/~crose/dolch/dolch.htm>

JohnAp: Our son had Open Court in first grade and loved it. As parents we did too. It made him feel like a grownup reader.

SaraAn: I know : (

AmyLR: There are lots of sites with little activities

KarenL: really? Wow!

KarenL: I have mixed feelings about Open Court.

JohnAp: Elaborate

AmyLR: Get them reading & writing the words over & over using different activities & they will progress.

KarenL: But, I can say that when students read aloud, I actually see them sounding out the words.

JohnAp: What's the problem?

SaraAn: I teach 1st grade and I have my students reading aloud all the time it really works!

KarenL: Well, I'd like to see different themes, but we are using the 2002 edition.

JohnAp: How often do they publish?

SusanR: Reading buddies works

KarenL: Oh, I am all for reading aloud. I'm saying it is fascinating to me when they are sounding out the words.

JohnAp: Reading buddies, sure. My fifth graders look forward to it every Tuesday.

KarenL: I believe there is a 2005 or later edition.

SaraAn: Reading buddies is great too! We do indiv reading groups and they help each other read it is great!

AmyLR: Karen...if they are sounding out words, then keep that going! I have lots of kids that simply do not have the ability to sound out word, so they are taught strictly with sight words- everything becomes a sight word for them....

AmyLR: but if they can sound out words, I usually add in word families

KarenL: okay, will do. ooh, I like the idea of reading buddies. tell me more.

AmyLR: Helps because many word family bases (an, at) are ALSO sight words

KarenL: so true.

AmyLR: The kids love that when they discover it

JohnAp: We use Words Their Way. With each list I have students find the word in context. This seems to help ease decoding and focus on comprehension. (that's the fifth grader in me)

SaraAn: I am really unsure about sight word many of my students have trouble with them?

AmyLR: Sara, I teach kids with autism

JohnAp: How about a list the size of a wall that grows as the kids grow?

KarenL: see, I was taught to teach vocabulary words in context. It's a little different for me to teach sight words out of context.

KarenL: well, I would love to have a word wall, but I don't really have a wall to put words on. Most of "walls" are glass.

AmyLR: Sight words are not really vocab though

SaraAn: I teach 1st grade and they are not doing well with understanding the concept of a sight word?

SaraAn: Even spelling them is hard for them and these are very bright children?

AmyLR: I mean Pre primer & primer sight words....none of them are going to have much meaning

SusanR: exposure ..pick these as word of the day

AmyLR: Karen, you can have each kid make their own little dictionary

KarenL: tell me about it! When I'm trying to explain these words, I sometimes struggle.

SaraAn: I put up a word wall but it seems useless, the word of the day is a great idea!

AmyLR: I bought really easy format ones from lakeshore

KarenL: but, I like the idea of their own little dictionary. Cool!

AmyLR: Then when they are spelling, you could encourage them to use their dictionary, which is a skill that teachers will always tell them to do when they can't spell a word

JohnAp: Thanks again for everything but it's time for me to log off. I enjoyed our

discussion very much.

KarenL: thank you, good idea. I see the kids tomorrow, and they can start their own dictionary!

BjB: wow! That hour really flew, Karen!

KarenL: They will love it!

KarenL: yes, it is time to go! OMG you're right. Time flew!!!

BjB: The next K-12 Language Arts discussion will be on December 17

SaraAn: I always have my kids use their dictionary but they do not understand the whole you cannot sounds these words out etc.

AmyLR: They will

KarenL: I have no idea what the topic will be, but we will discuss something.

AmyLR: When they have a better understanding of sounding out, they will get it

AmyLR: first graders are still experimenting with all of that

AmyLR: be patient

KarenL: Amy, thank you so much for these ideas. . .I'm going to have them do the dictionary.

AmyLR: cool!

KarenL: I think they will love that, complete with their own sentences.

AmyLR: They will like it

AmyLR: yes!

SaraAn: Thank you, wish I could have come earlier. I will let you go now. Thanks again. I like some of the ideas I have seen I will apply them and see how they do.

AmyLR: In ours we put a box for a picture.

SusanR: Thanks for allowing me to pop in, Karen!

KarenL: ooh, great!!!

AmyLR: We use Boardmaker, so there is a picture even for words that you can not actually draw

AmyLR: But for your guys, you can talk about whether or not you can draw it

KarenL: Susan, thank you. I need to visit you! I need some help with math and science for my k-3 folks, and social studies, too.

AmyLR: make a big deal about crossing out the box if it's something" we can not see"

AmyLR: I just keep going on....

AmyLR smiles

JoseR: bye guys I have to go also thanks for the website Karen

KarenL: Amy, this is great, keep talking, so we can have it in the transcript!

BjB: Amy, you have a lot to share!

AmyLR: lol

SusanR: Come to my session in December. We will talk!

AmyLR: will do!

BjB: Amy, you also might want to join the Special Education Forum

KarenL: Susan, will do!

KarenL: I need to do that, too BJ.

AmyLR: I think I did back when I was still learning the site

AmyLR: I will double check

KarenL: when is the next session?

KarenL: for special ed?

BjB: the next SPED? December 8

AmyLR: let me see if I can find it

KarenL: Okay, I'll put it in my calendar.

KarenL: thanks, bj!

BjB: Amy, you joined Web Tools for Education

KarenL: bye everyone, I must go!

SusanR: chow

BjB hugs Karen. Goodnight. Thanks again

KarenL hugs BJ. Thank you, BJ!! you rock!!!

AmyLR: Bye!!!