



Teacher Tip of the Week

New Teacher Support Program 2009-2010

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New Teacher Support
Program
Wilson County Schools
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The "Read-Aloud Experience" in today's classroom

HOW TO DO IT— CHECKLIST



Instructional Materials Storage

Make instructional materials and equipment accessible. Determine which materials and equipment you will use most often. Place these in the most accessible storage areas. Check to see that accessing the items will be easy when the class is full of students and several students will be going to the storage areas at the same time. In other words, make sure students will be able to flow into and out of the storage area. Those that you use less often would be stored in the sequentially organized cabinets.

Some teachers in today's classroom find their reading instruction heavily scripted -- every minute accounted for. For those teachers, read alouds are squeezed out by stressful, non-stop instruction. Any teacher caught reading aloud is accused of wasting time. Other teachers dabble in read alouds because they still have some control over what goes on in their classroom, but when read-aloud time comes, they simply open a book and read for a few minutes (while struggling with classroom management). They expect students to gain from the experience.

Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension -- the five key components in teaching reading* -- provide a great foundation, but how do we move students from learning those skills to becoming engaged, thinking readers?

We immerse them in the experience by reading aloud. According to international literacy expert, former teacher, and best selling author Mem Fox, "If every parent and every adult caring for a child read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in their lives, we could probably wipe out illiteracy within one generation."

A REFRESHER COURSE

Reading aloud, however, has become a lost art in many of today's busy classrooms. The following refresher course, therefore, is designed to help all teachers put that powerful tool back to work in preK-12 classrooms:

- Read aloud for at least 15-20 minutes a day, at the same time(s) each day. Choose mornings/homeroom, after lunch, or just before dismissal. If you can't commit 15 minutes at a time, try three five-minute blasts.
- Present the read aloud as an enjoyable experience, not as a "learning opportunity." A goal with read alouds is to show students the *application* of what they're learning -- an end result they can relate to, that's fun! No one remembers favorite worksheets; we remember favorite books. Students need to see reading as a way to find information, a way to learn how to do something new, or just as an activity to enjoy. Your challenge is to change how students view reading by sharing the most delicious stories and information you can find for *your* mix of students. (Try *Who is It?*, by Sally Grindley, or the front page of your local newspaper).
- Choose materials of interest to your students and think outside the box. Read up to two grade levels above your student's reading level. (Listening vocabulary is higher.) Bring two or three books and let students choose which to hear first; stories like *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*, by John H. Ritter or *Charlotte's Web*, by E.B. White, for example. Connect books to content learning -- *but don't tell students you're doing it!* For example, *The Scarecrow's Hat*, by Ken Brown, is a great example of sequencing as well as an introduction to animals. If students are learning about the eye in science or people with disabilities in health, share the lives of Helen Keller and Ray Charles, two people who moved beyond their blindness to contribute mightily to our world.
- Introduce new vocabulary in at least one daily read-aloud session. Choose one word from the text, and only take a minute or two. Begin by saying: "Today, students, we are going to play a game." (That always gets their atten-



continued on page 2.....

The “Read-Aloud Experience” (continued from page one)

attention!) "When I write the word of the day on the chalkboard, if you know the meaning of the word, put one hand over your mouth and raise the other hand." (That technique prevents students from blurting out the answer, allows the teacher to select who will participate, and interjects an extra element of fun).

If you get no response, try asking, "Do you know the meaning of any part of the word?" (letters, suffixes, prefixes, roots...)

"Can you tell the word's meaning from its use in the sentence?" (context clues.)

"What do you *think* the word means?" (predicting)

Watch a few hands go up. Through this exercise, you have modeled meaningful comprehension strategies and shown students the context in which to use those strategies. Remember to reinforce the lesson by pointing out the word of the day when you next encounter it in the text.

Make it your aim to turn reading from a chore into an adventure. The cardinal sin of reading aloud is to have no interruptions and little expression. That is *not*

how good readers approach text. Stop to interject questions or comments, such as "I wonder what will happen next?," "I think that's a clue!," or "That reminds me of . . ." (Share a personal connection to the text.)

Sparingly allow student to do the same, but keep the story moving -- especially if you are working with a limited amount of time.

Close the read-aloud session at a cliff-hanger moment. Use such natural breaks as pages or chapters, but always stop at a suspenseful moment or at a moment of uncertainty. Leave them begging for more!

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aloud time comes, they simply open a book and read for a few minutes (while struggling with classroom management). They expect students to gain from the experience.

What Really Matters

If every adult caring for a child, read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in their lives, we could probably wipe out illiteracy within one generation...

~ From Mem Fox's *Reading Magic*



“What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul.”

— Joseph Addison

A New Series: Testing Tips for Students



Now that standardized tests are drawing near, a new series to help students and teachers prepare for the months ahead:

"Psyching-up" students, parents, and staff for test time with pre-test activities can be an important motivational strategy. You might display information about upcoming tests on a marquee outside the school building or in neighborhood stores, hold pep rallies, or have students create banners and posters to place around the school.

'09-'10

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Josh Johnston

Mt. Juliet High School

Inclusion/Resource

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I became a teacher because I want to play a positive part in young people's lives. My experiences with educators before college was not that great and I want to do what I can to make sure I can touch as many kids in a positive way as possible."—
Josh Johnston

TEACHER WEBSITE of THE WEEK:

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/>



PBS Teaching Source

A part of the main site for the Public Broadcasting System, the Teacher Source provides a large collection of classroom resources, mostly supporting the programs on PBS. Many of the sections devoted to specific PBS programs are often worthy of note and could stand on their own. Africa, for example, which was developed to support the series of the same name, is an excellent resource for students studying the regions profiled. Free to Dance, part of the Great Performances series, offers some great information about the world dance scene.



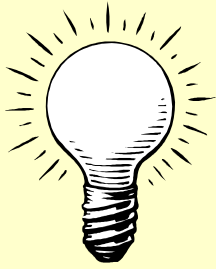
OFF THE BOOKSHELF



Catching up or Leading the Way : American Education in the Age of Globalization
by *Zhao, Yong*

At a time when globalization and technology are dramatically altering the world we live in, is education reform in the United States headed down the right path? Are schools emphasizing the knowledge and skills that students need in a global society—or are they actually undermining their strengths by overemphasizing high-stakes testing and standardization? Are education systems in China and other countries really as superior as some people claim?

These and other questions are at the heart of author Yong Zhao's thoughtful and informative book. Born and raised in China and now a distinguished professor at Michigan State University, Zhao bases many of his observations on firsthand experience as a student in China and as a parent of children attending school in the United States. His unique perspective leads him to conclude that "American education is at a crossroads" and "we need to change course" to maintain leadership in a rapidly changing world.



Strategies for New Teachers . . .

PARENT COMMUNICATION

- Come to an agreement about how each party (the student, the parent, and you) will address the issue. "Thanks for agreeing to check Johnny's book bag for his homework every night. I think we can solve this homework problem if you check on that, if Johnny fills out his log every day and if I remind him that I need to initial it.
- When meeting with parents in person, ask for the student to be present. This can help minimize potential miscommunication and denial on the part of the student.

HOMEWORK

Homework has its place in education. It should help learning, not discourage it. It should provide practice, not crushing weight. You can maximize the benefits of homework if you remember:

(continued next week...)



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WORLD AIDS MONTH

SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS MONTH

UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONTH

COOKIE CUTTER WEEK
Dec. 1-7

TOLERANCE WEEK
Dec. 1-7

NATIONAL COOKIE DAY
Dec. 4

COATS & TOYS FOR KIDS DAY
Dec. 6



Back to school

**Mother: Does your teacher like you?
Son: Like me, she loves me. Look at all those X's on my test paper!**



INSERVICE REMINDER:

January 26, 2010—Parent/Teacher Relationships—
Survival Tips for New Teachers 4:00-6:00 pm at the TTRC