

## Integrating Books into the Content

Esther Fusco, Ph.D.

### Messages from Mars

By Loreen Leedy and Andrew Schuerger

Illustrated by Loreen Leedy

Holiday House

What a wonderful book to use to connect literacy, technology and science. This story takes place in the year 2016. A group of children get to travel to Mars. They write by email about their experience. In the emails, they write about their experiences and relate these to information about Mars. They describe what they are seeing and surprises that they discover. Some of the scientific information is about Mars and some tells about the history of space exploration like what Viking I discovered about Mars.

### The Friendly Four

By Eloise Greenfield

Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist

Harper Collins Publishers (2006)

Developing students reading fluency is an important part of reading instruction. This delightful book provides teachers with the opportunity to allow students to develop their fluency as they read the poems describing the summer Drum, Dorene, Louis and Rae share. Students can read the individual poems or the ones that have a shared voice. Each poem presents a different perspective and experience that the reader can appreciate. As they read them, the children's voices come alive. The come to understand the growing changes in the children. This is a wonderful book to incorporate in a unit on friendship.

### The Princess and the Dragon

By Audrey Wood

Child's Play International (2000)

What happens when a princess doesn't behave like a princess? How do her parents and community treat her? How do people feel when she plays tricks on them? What happens when the princess encounters the dragon? All these questions and more are answered in this fantasy about being a princess. This is a funny but pointed book to discuss students' behavior.

### Once Upon 1001 Stories

Written and Illustrated by Lila Prap

Kane Miller Book Publishers, 2006

What happens to fairy tales if we mix them all up. Lila Prap gives the reader the chance to try this and enjoy the funny results that occur. The reader gets to control this text and can redo it in so many different ways. It is a charming book to incorporate in a unit on fairy tales and to use with the writing process.

### How to Survive in Antarctica

Written and Photographed by Lucy Jane

Bledsoe

Holiday House, 2006

This is an excellent informational text to capture the interest of students. The book contains amazing sights, interesting experience, information about the challenges and hazards that exist in this part of the world. The lay out of the book is well organized so that the reader can engage with the writer. I also liked how information was separated so that the writer could focus on one piece at a time.

## Book Reviews - Fall 2006

By Joshua Higgins

Hofstra Graduate Student

Long Island, NY

### What a Day It Was at School

Jack Prelutsky

Pictures by Doug Cushman

Greenwillow Books, 2006

A delightfully irreverent look at the school day, this book is a wonderful collection of 17 primary school poems. Prelutsky's whimsical poetry guides the reader through the ups and downs of the day, including homework, field trips, show-and-tell, and more. Aided by Cushman's vivid illustrations of the feline protagonist and his eccentric animal friends, this is one book that is sure to be a hit in early elementary classrooms.

### The Mixed-Up Rooster

Pamela Duncan Edwards

Pictures by Megan Lloyd

Katherine Tegen Books, 2006

The Mixed-Up Rooster is a lighthearted tale of Ned, a muddled rooster who is more of a 'night owl' than an 'early bird.' When Ned loses his job to a replacement rooster, he finds a new group of nocturnal friends and discovers his true calling when a sinister snake tries to infiltrate the henhouse. With his new position as head of night security, Ned teaches that it is OK to be different; everyone has his or her own talents. Lloyd's lively illustrations add the perfect touch to this enjoyable early elementary picture book.

### The Extinct Files: My Science Project

Wallace Edwards

Kids Can Press, 2006

Wally has made a discovery of gigantic proportions - dinosaurs are alive and well in modern society! With his trusty camera and "sneakiest sneakers," Wally sets off to observe and record the behaviors of these secretive creatures. Full of shocking revelations and illuminating illustrations, Wally details the habitat, diet, recreation and occupations of today's diverse dinosaurs. Edwards brings his contemporary dinosaurs to life in this witty and entertaining account, a fun read for ages 4-8.

### Change It! Solids, Liquids, Gases and You

Adrienne Mason

Illustrated by Claudia Dávila

Kids Can Press, 2006

Change It! is a fun introduction to the properties of matter, conveyed in a way that is easy to read and understand. The book uses colorful illustrations and a number of fun science activities in its discussion of solids, liquids, gases and how matter changes states. There is also a special section for parents and teachers that includes ways to help children explore the concepts further.

## Recent Books for Young Readers [and Selected Titles Too Good to Miss]

### Andersen, Hans Christian. (2006).

Translated by Naomi Lewis. Ill. Joel Stewart.

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

Thirteen of Andersen's best-loved tales in a definitive edition. The fairy-tale realm is presented in a playful design of miniature theaters.

### Barretta, Gene. (2006). *Now and Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin.*

New York: Henry Holt.

In this informative book, Franklin's genius is brought to life, describing his designs, which were inspired by his common sense and intelligence in responding to needs: lightning rod, daylight savings time, bifocals. Add this picture book to early reading list and shelf. (The tri-centennial of Franklin's birth is January 17, 2007.)

### Burg, Sarah Emmanuelle. (2006). *The Secret of Love.*

NY: Penguin.

This wordless picture book of space-pencil drawings offers a sensitive text of friendship through the promise of nature. A delight for early readers and discussion spark.

### Cave, Kathryn. (2003). *One Child, One Seed. A South African Counting Book.*

Photos by Gisele Wulfsohn. NY: Henry Holt.

Information about the life and culture of South Africa are the framework of this counting book, which offers a satisfying story of the fruits of a communal effort. (One Child, One Seed, Two Hands to Plant the Seed, Three Ways to Help It Grow)

### Colman, Penny. (2006). *Adventurous Women: Eight True Stories About Women Who Made a Difference.*

New York: Henry Holt.

This is a compelling collection of true stories about eight women who were bold enough to confront obstacles and take risks in pursuit of their goals. For middle grade readers, this non-fiction book can be read selectively by chapter - a special feature.



Spotlight on

# LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND LITERATURE

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A Newsletter of the ASCD Network

## Facilitator's Message

Lenore Sandel, Ed.D.  
Professor Emerita  
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When Sonia Nieto (2003) asks, "What keeps teachers going?" she shares her personal philosophy in answering the question.

"I believe in the process of touch, of connection, and in the potential resulting from a nurturing relationship with my students." (p. 32)

"I believe a teacher can be the single most influential person in a child's academic life." (p. 1)

Parker Palmer (1999) responds to his personal inquiry with his philosophy of "The Courage of Teacher."

"My ability [says Palmer] to connect with my students and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning." (p. 10)

My own view of the teacher's role throughout decades of sharing professional growth with both graduate and undergraduate students has been a clear emphasis on all associations and on all subject areas. That is, the teacher as a person - personal strengths and weaknesses - should be recognized and considered in the teacher's fulfillment of professional assignments and expectations. Honest self-reflection reveals the personal gifts of talents and tastes, gifts of both mind and heart, and self-recognition of the "multiple intelligences." (Sandel, 2006)

With the present mandates of standards and time schedules, school assessment as well as student assessment, classroom teachers are not likely to align their qualities of self in meeting the demands of each day. Teachers are assigned the content of teaching, the "what" of curriculum and often the arbitrary "how." The personal "how" of presentation, reflecting a teacher's self - the teacher as a person - must often be relegated to the famous, or infamous, "storage closet."

While teachers should be aware of the several roles they fill in the classroom, and administrators be cognizant of their roles in staff relationships, the individual teacher or administrator may easily select those roles of personal strength or favor. Those choices are a boost to creative teaching and student learning.

In a report of teacher reform efforts, author Linda Darling-Hammond (1984) concludes that policy initiatives to improve education have resulted in "saddling good teachers with standardized teaching prescriptions that reduce their ability to teach effectively, which added to the woes that plague the educational system." (p. 10)

Surely, these words may describe the tenets of the federal legislation No Child Left Behind. On today's scene, assessment is reported for student, teacher, school and district based on level of achievement.

Finally, dear friends, place your personal gifts in the creation of excellent instruction in the classroom every day, interact with your students, share trust and sense of inquiry, be a partner in learning, model mutual respect and treasure a sense of wonder, and hope - and always the joy of learning as achievement.

Enjoy a good year!  
Lenore Sandel

## References

Nieto, Sonia. (2003). *What Keeps Teachers Going.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Palmer, Parker. (1999). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sandel, Lenore (Ed.). (2006). *Teaching With Care: Cultivating Personal Qualities That Make a Difference.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



## Designing Exemplary Reading Programs Esther Fusco, Ph.D.

Esther Fusco, Ph.D. Co-Facilitator  
Assistant Professor, Hofstra University

According to the International Reading (2000), there are three components for an exemplary program. They include

1. Teachers should meet the needs of individual students by a adapting various methods of early instruction to meet those needs
2. Teachers need to provide wide access to books and encourage voluntary reading because students who read more read better.
3. Teachers should use reading assessment to identify students' strengths and weaknesses to determine which instructional activities will foster their individual learning.

Establishing these essential components into an effective reading program is more complicated than ever before. Strickland, Galda, and Cullinan indicate that, today, teachers face many challenges in creating this type of program for their students. They list these instructional challenges and emphasize that active learning in literacy is key to creating to fulfilling these requirements. Their list includes:

1. What it means to be literate in our society has changed.
2. Expectations for student performance have increased.
3. Expectations for teacher performance have increased.
4. Accountability for student achievement is at the center of school reform.
5. The demographics of the student population have changed.
6. Educators strive for a balanced and effective language arts curriculum.

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With all these challenges, teachers must carefully consider how they will implement the different strands of literacy in their classroom. There are a number of methods that have been used to deal with these challenges. The Balanced Literacy Approach, which is similar to Literacy Collaborative, highlights an interactive reading model that combines eight major components of reading. It is a structure that supports teachers in designing the daily instructional program to meet the diverse needs of their students. According to Martha Combs these components are Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading Shared and Interactive Writing, Guided Writing, and Independent Writing, Read Aloud, Literature Study and Word Study. The key factor in a balanced approach is that the components can be integrated in a lesson and therefore help improve students' performance. This approach has the teacher systematically implement the integrated components in coordination with the materials in the text and the state's standards.

Let's translate this into a lesson. The teacher is working with poetry and in the lesson can develop comprehension, word study and fluency simultaneously. The students begin by reading the poem as a Shared Reading experience and then discuss the meaning of vocabulary in the poem. The poem is reread to consider the writer's tone. Then the poem is reread and discussed focusing its meaning. The class highlights the poem's connections to a theme that is being studied or another poem. Time is spent in making connections with the poem to the content learning that is going on in the class. Students practice reading the poem several times building their fluency. This is an opportunity for the all students because they get to build their fluency and expression with their peers in paired readings. This might occur later in the day.

There is nothing very new about this process. What is essential is that teachers begin to consistently focus on the integration of the balanced literacy components when they are teaching their reading lessons. Another example of integrating the components might occur in a shared writing experience in which the teacher uses an acrostic poem. The topic is Oceans, which related to a thematic unit of study. Students write the poem together as a Shared Writing Experience. Then, students write their own poems using the words related to this concept (waves, beach, and urchins). In this lesson students' knowledge and skills are enhanced as they work on Shared Writing, Shared Reading, and Word Study.

When these balanced literacy components are integrated in authentic, knowledge-based, literature rich programs, the learning experiences scaffolds students learning and foster a

love for reading. The balanced approach honors the integration of skills and the use of comprehension instruction and emphasizes that the readings should occur in relevant materials for students. Interestingly, this type of instructional program can be used with students of all ability levels. More than ever, this type of literacy program seems necessary with so many students being in inclusion classrooms. Teachers merely have to have the appropriate resources for a balanced approach to be successful.

#### References

Combs, Martha. (1996). **Readers and Writers in Primary Grades**. Upped Saddle River, NJ: Merrill / Prentice Hall.

Strickland, Dorothy S., Galda, Lee, & Cullinan, Bernice E. (2004). **Language Arts: Learning and Thinking**. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

#### Story/Title?

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It is often disheartening to see the figures put out by national pollsters telling of the number of dysfunctional readers present in our country. Pointing fingers is an easy and very inexpensive way to assign blame away from ourselves, regardless of who is really to blame. Parents can blame teachers, school districts, and their spouse's gene pool. Teachers can blame parents, the previous years' teachers, NCLB and the testing debacle that has come from it, lack of resources, and low functioning students. Lists of people and situations to be targeted for blaming can also be generated for principals and anyone else who might feel the need to send blame away from the group in which they belong. Rather than put on our thickest Teflon overcoat, let's be part of the solution rather than busily trying to deflect responsibility away from ourselves. By accepting responsibility for what we can do rather than trying to assign blame we will be that much closer to reducing the incidence of dysfunctional readers in our society.

There was a tune in Disney's production of Mary Poppins called *A Spoonful of Sugar* by Sherman and Sherman. The message carried by that song was that if an activity is made as enjoyable as possible, then the task becomes easier and progress is steadier. As you might remember, when Julie Andrews and supporting cast performed the tune's scene, the audience learned that the tonic being dispensed

took on the favorite flavor of the person being dosed. Andrew's character favored rum punch. This also applies to our students, what is a spoonful of sugar to some may not be to others, but teaching and learning situations can be structured to be enjoyable for many different learners.

Part of the problem with reading instruction is that reading is often as distasteful as a dose of nasty tonic and, like that nasty tonic, needs something to help it go down easier. Please notice that no mention was made of changing what had to be taken in, the only modification was in the way it was presented. We all have our motivators and as educators with keen interest in literacy instruction, we know our students do best when tap into where their interests lie and use that as a conduit for moving along instruction. Students are expected to master what is specified in our state's instructional standards. Watering down instruction to the point that our students are not mastering the mandated skills for their level is counter-productive for everyone.

Some thing that I have found that makes reading more enjoyable and profitable for dysfunctional or reluctant readers is to chunk the text. In keeping with the image of ingesting things that are difficult to swallow. Think about a peanut butter sandwich. If you try to take a big bite, chances are that you will have a very hard time getting it to go down and may even have to have someone do a Heimlich maneuver on you. But, if you take much smaller bites, the sandwich is much easier to swallow and you are far less likely to choke. The same applies to reading text. If a text selection is divided up into smaller, manageable units, it will be far easier for students to chew, swallow, and ultimately digest what was contained there rather than be overwhelmed by huge portions to be consumed in one sitting. Other strategies, such as embedding questions and visual organizers might also be used to make the reading experience more palatable for the student.

One of the easiest ways to chunk text is to use the text structure as a guide to where the breaks should come. There are far more headings and subheadings in more recent versions of textbooks. If we model and teach on a continual basis how to use a text's structure to chunk text along with self monitoring strategies, our students should become more skilled readers of a variety of text formats.

Please do not mistake these urging for palatability as thinly veiled urgings for dummying-down text because that is not the intention here. Students need to be able to negotiate meaning from required texts. If we provide them with watered-down, altered versions, then they lose the flavor of what the author had to say. Reading comprehension must be

more than what is contained in a *Cliff's Notes* format or a *Readers' Digest* condensation. There are certainly places for those formats but students need to experience text in an authentic not ersatz format for them to get an optimum reading experience. I have never found an instant coffee that delivered the same satisfaction as did one brewed from real coffee beans. Please give your students the real deal when it comes to texts but help them with the ingestion and digestion.

#### Good Books

**Emilia Osborne Bodnarchuk**  
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Stafford, Virginia

#### *Emeril's There's a Chef In My World*

By Emeril Lagasse  
Harper Collins Publishers  
New York, 2006

This is a wonderful book for children. It teaches them how to cook all kinds of wonderful meal. The recipes are well laid out and the directions are easy to follow. The recipes are surrounded by pictures of the countries of the recipes and bits of information. Students will love reading this book. It is also a great gift.

#### *Earth Magic*

By Dionne Brand  
Kids Can Press Ltd.  
Tonawanda, NY 2006

This revised book shared in poetry form about the life in the Caribbean. The beauty of the land and its inhabitants comes through in the rich language of each poem.

#### *Crazy Cars*

By Mark David  
Kane Miller Book Publishers  
La Jolla, CA 2006

According to Mark David adventure begins the minute you step into your car. This book is filled with creative ways to view the world of cars. Crazy Cars will appeal to children who like to read and think about unusual ideas but also to those who like to draw. This is a fun, nonsensical book.

#### *Hello Hello*

By Fumiko Takeshita  
Kane Miller Book Publishers  
La Jolla, CA 2006

This is an informational text for young children. It presents how the telephone changed how we can now communicate.

#### Books in the Classroom

By Ginny O'Sullivan and Fredi Norris

Thomson, Sarah. (2006). *Amazing Dolphins*. NY: HarperCollins

This is yet another fine book in the "I Can Read" series. Children are so drawn to the world of dolphins that this book will be an automatic winner in their eyes. Simple, but beautifully written text, accompanied by stunning photographs, compliments of the Wildlife Conservation Society, makes this a welcome addition to any classroom nonfiction collection. This book can be used as a read-aloud in the lower grades and as an independent or shared read for inquiry in the upper grades.

Peck, Jan. (2006). *Way Far Away On a Wild Safari*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Follow the footsteps of a young lad as he "tramps" through the forest on a wild safari. Inventive text full of repetition invites the young reader to join in this adventure. Each paper ends with "hike away" leading to the next part of this "wild safari." It's a delicious surprise that awaits the brave traveler as the journey comes to an end. Colorful illustrations add to the humor of this story.

Mackall, Dandi Daley. (2006). *Seeing Stars*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division.

"The sky tells a story, and you hold the key." People young and old all over the world love to gaze skyward and imagine the stories that can be told through the night sky. This rhyming text opens the door to the observation and identification of the constellations. Each constellation is highlighted in sparkly foil, allowing it to seemingly pop off the page. So look to the night sky and join children from all around the world as they study the stars. Don't limit this book to a study of the stars – this simple book has many layers and many possibilities.

Wilson, Karma. (2006). *Bear's New Friend*. Margaret K. McElderry Books.

The lovable old bear from Bear Snores On is back again. This time he is strolling through the forest on his way to the swimming hole and he hears a strange noise. One by one his friends join in the search for the source of the noise. Each time bear asks the question, "Who?" he never gets a reply. Finally bear and his friends discover a shy owl hiding in a small hole. Encouraged by all the new friends, the shy owl clammers out and joins the parade to the swimming hole. This rhythmic text makes for a sweet read for young and beginning readers and a great bedtime story.

Burleigh, Robert, and Ed Young. (2006).

*Tiger of the Snows*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

This is a book for dreamers. Tenzing Norgay is a boy whose dream is Mount Everest. Edmund Hillary is a beekeeper from New Zealand who shares that dream. This is the true story of an unlikely partnership between these two men and their dramatic climb to the top of the world's most challenging mountain. The language allows you to hear the crunch of the snow and the beating of their hearts as they look "back on chasms of down-falling darkness." Soft but powerful illustrations carry you into the falling snow as these men climb toward their goal. An informative afterword adds a factual dimension to this true and amazing quest.

## Spotlight on Language, Literacy and Literature

*A Newsletter of the ASCD Network*

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