

Philosophy of teaching literacy



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The effective teaching of literacy originates from a strong and well-balanced collaboration between the methods and principles embedded within the teacher-centered approach to dispensing facts, information and skills; and the learner-centered model. Within this model, the focus of instruction is directed toward the empowerment of the student. Long-lasting learning and self-reliant discovery of solutions to demanding and multi-plex circumstances are realized. The cohesion of the teacher and the student in the classroom is aimed at achieving optimal results gained through skill in reading, writing, understanding, listening, remembering, and articulation. Each of these distinctions of literacy are paramount to contemplate and execute into classroom methodology. The facilitation of the individual, essential needs provided for, and pursuit of student's interests dispense enduring lifelong success beyond the school age years. This enables the student to accomplish on an individual level, and triumph in their own way.

In the pursuit of literacy, having the ability to remember is the foundation for understanding. Therefore, providing opportunities to read is vital. In an environment conducive to self-expression and safety, students should be aware that they are developing skills, and that failures and successes coexist. Shared reading, as well as independent reading are beneficial for the below grade level as well as the avid student reader. Practice and repetition, using texts that appeal to the student's interest, tapping into and establishing their own rhythm assists in dissolving the wall which a struggling reader erects. In comparison to graduating a child from tricycle to bicycle, the shared reading encourages the young reader to do what they

see modeled. It is during this time that the teacher is able to observe body language, pacing, fluency, understanding, and inevitably, pinpoint struggle. Observation of young readers indicate that they innately measure and challenge themselves using their peers as a gauge. Some otherwise shy students, have been strengthened due to the aloud, group readings. On the other hand, some shy students have cowered in dread. The teacher must know her students and use this extraordinary particular reality, while addressing their distinct needs and interests both culturally and academically. In this case the avid reader is challenged to improve as well as the struggling student is empowered. It is at this time that the teacher learns the idiosyncrasies of the students through their participation in the shared reading and during the independent reading opportunities. Frankly, I believe in being transparent with students. Statistics report that close to 70% of all fourth graders are struggling or are below grade-level in reading. I have noticed in-session improvements after equipping students with subtle hints like: using an index card or having their other hand at the corner of the page for immediate turning after the last read word. Shared knowledge of my experience, as an early reader, also causes the student to identify and connect with the instructor-figure, as if to be propelled by the thought, "*If she can read like that, so can I.*" Providing time for students to read aloud prompts self-regulation, self-correction in pronunciation while increasing word retrieval and in-text comprehension. When students are exceptionally apprehensive about shared reading, while another student is reading, the apprehensive one is so afraid that they are not benefiting from the information of the text; they just hear noise. Creating an easy reading atmosphere takes a skillfully delineated plan.

As inscribed between the pages of “ The reading strategies book: Your everything guide to developing skilled readers” Jennifer Serravallo displays activities and techniques strategizing lesson language that should be used by the teacher, aimed at equipping the struggling reader. Among the many, one particular strategy resonates with me, “ when you have to pause to figure out a word, go back to the beginning of the sentence and reread. This time read the word right away like it’s a word you’ve already known.”

Reading the sentence as a whole after you’ve figured out each word will help you hold on to the meaning. My perception and interpretation of that action plan substantiates self-correction. She urges the reread and read it again throughout this book, explaining the effects of reading recovery. This is tremendously impactful, massaging and firing synapse while committing to memory. This teaches children to be independent and in charge of their own upward spiral of fluency in literacy.

It is imperative to the student’s life-long literacy goal that they are provided the opportunity to rehearse reading of various genres, write in different styles, apply their understanding and listening skills, and show what they remember when given the chance to articulate. These can be satisfied in a myriad of dimensions. When promoting understanding across languages it is beneficial to students with disabilities, deaf students, and ELLs to use transitional translation tools. In the book, “ Design and deliver: Planning and teaching universal design for learning,” Loui Lord Nelson expounds, “ have English language learners/students with disabilities related to learning pair with typical students for computer/cooperative activities. Explain directions clearly and repeat key terms,” (Nelson, 2014, p. 71). When the knowledge

gap is bridged students are able and willing to travel the path, applying attained reading skills to their writing. Honing this dexterity provides inclusion and the potential to establish their voice. Some teachers incorporate the use of auditory devices, visual aids, along with music and movement. Of course, it is crucial to optimize all opportunities to utilize any beneficial implementation to assure that the student feels appreciated and involved in their learning processes. Music and movement appeal to both sides of the brain. Nonetheless, students should know the intent behind the writing assignment. Knowing, allows them to combine prior knowledge and experiences to present experiences and elaborate from their perspective, in first-person voice. Nelson states, “ written language includes more than letters. How those letters are combined to create language can require clarification,” (Nelson, 2014. p. 68). It must be considered that diverse students do have more levels of diversity than those that are visibly noted or the statistics yield from standardized assessments. Therefore, I believe that at intervals, the teacher should check in with the student in order to ensure the focus of the assignment remains clear. Once this has been established, the student is free to write and give concise understanding to the reader of their drafts. I have observed this taking place in the classroom and it dissuades the student from loitering during the assignment. Once the teacher assists in this manner, the student is more trusting and able to complete their assignment, and share willingly. I think that a student should be apprised of the fact that a good writing piece is produced through continuous writing endeavors. Students should know that making changes from draft to draft does not denote error, but could be the result of additional mastery of acquired knowledge.

Although teachers are the initiators of the materials presented, assignments given, and activities allocated, students must have the freedom to be in charge of understanding and making sense of the printed materials.

Students know when their needs are not being met, and by nature, seek the support that affords the feeling of being anchored firmly. Since the written text is a conveyance of meaning, empowering the student to understand means that the tools used to assure their acquisition of literacy must be relatable and appropriate. In their book, "Improving reading: strategies, resources, and common core connections", Johns & Lenski state, "Students at all ages must realize that reading is the process of making sense from print. They must learn that spoken language—their own and that of others—is made up of words that can be written down," (Johns & Lenski, 2014, p. 83). The skillful breaking down into syllables, appropriate sounds, or phonemes is acquired later. Favorable communication takes place through understanding and listening. Understanding an expectation or assignment yields productive results. Bridging the all-existent language barrier, which exists in our schools, is an initial fundamental facet. Since the expectation is that our children make connections through and convey understanding through their writings, the teacher has to listen with clarity and care enough to recognize the student's point of view. The authors state, "provide a print-rich environment in which students are encouraged to explore and talk about their literacy experiences" (Johns & Lenski, 2014, p. 88). Within this print-rich environment, students must be allowed to freely explore as they are empowered. The teacher should never drive the learning, they should oversee and allow the students active participation and the ownership of their own learning.

Techniques and pedagogy have transitioned over the decades. Many decades ago, as an elementary student, in a suburban parochial school, we sat in perfectly rowed desks while the instructor guided every aspect of the classroom. We recited times tables and rules. At a specific time, we turned to a peer and recited pages of typewritten materials, and encountered the Friday quiz. Today, from the vantage point of a birds' eye view, the classrooms in which the students receive instruction and actively commandeer their own learning experiences, through a myriad of educational tools has changed. Navigating through technological gadgets and apparatus; students strive to become proficient in their reading, writing, and understanding of conceptual knowledge, listening, remembering, and articulation aptness. In the article, "Tell me a story: Enhancing literacy through the techniques of storytelling," Teresa Cherry-Cruz expounds on the aspects of storytelling. Embedded within storytelling, there must exist a strong ability to listen, remember, and articulate. She states, "speech-language pathologists who provide services in the public schools all know that there are not enough hours in the day to provide quality services to the ever-increasing numbers of students that are identified with language-based learning disabilities" (Cherry-Cruz, 2001). The complexity that weighs on educating this multi-diverse segment of the school enrollment requires an integrated approach. These students deserve adequately trained educators in order for their unique set of needs to be sufficiently addressed during their quest for literacy. She continues by stressing that flexibility is required, "in the movement of literacy, language intervention must focus on enabling students to excel at a level of communicative competence that is characterized by fluent reading, proficient writing, and articulate speaking

skills,” (Cherry-Cruz, 2001). Storytelling is a powerful, developmental tool which, single-handedly, encompasses the maturation of listening, verbal expression, comprehension, verbal reasoning, meaning linguistically and logically, word arrangement, morphology, organization of speech sounds, language in context, reading proficiency, and communication through written language. Its effectiveness has stood unscathed since antiquity. Storytelling begins before entering a learning institution and is enhanced with repetition which is beneficially evident in: speaking and articulation, building-blocks to understanding, assists in the ability to logically work concepts and problems, alignment of word arrangement, the organization of speech sounds and language in contest, reading proficiency, and communication of language through writing.

Each of these characteristics should be constituted into the classroom where students have authorization to engage in gaining skills. Students learn best in a literacy rich environment.

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