Round Robin Reading and Other Perils of Literacy Education

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Each Peril will Include - Some Humor, Considerations and Recommendations

Perils of Literacy Education # 10: Inauthentic Texts
For Consideration
Reading inauthentic texts (Textoids) is like scrimmaging without ever getting to play in the game!
Answering questions on literal details and finding "hidden" main ideas diverts our attention from actual comprehension.
Readers learn to read by reading REAL Texts.

Perils of Literacy Education # 9: The Book Report
For Consideration
Buying "three-for-one" leisure suits is still a leisure suit; 1001 new ways to do a book report is still a book report.
Just because **WE** faked our way through countless book reports does not mean that our students should have to do the same.
For a Change
Try Book Reviews! They exist in the world outside of school and have an intended audience other than the teacher.
Reader Response Journals can provide accountability, as well as support for discussion and comprehension.

Perils of Literacy Education # 8: "Extension" Activities
For Consideration
Readers should NOT spend 30 minutes responding to 10 minutes of reading.
Most extension activities have little to do with comprehending what was read.
Where in the world outside of school do these activities ever occur? What is the point?
For a Change
Consider what you, as a proficient reader, do when you finish reading a book.
Consider the relationship between the activity and the text.
Consider whether the extension activity extends students' thinking or just their time.

Perils of Literacy Education # 7: The Invasion of Pop Culture!
For Consideration
What students read OUTSIDE of school should have a place in their reading lives INSIDE school.

Teachers need to expand their own reading lives to explore what students are reading.
Novels (even classic ones) should not represent 90% of the reading students do in school.
For a Change
Subscribe to magazines and newspapers for the classroom.
Encourage on-line reading for purposeful tasks.
Integrate Classics with Contemporary Novels, Picturebooks, Websites, etc in Text Sets.
Teach students how to read various "new" genres through focused units of study.

Perils of Literacy Education # 6: Overemphasis on Literal Recall
For Consideration
Literal recall is more about memory than thinking.
Literal recall privileges the text over the reader and their thinking.
Literal recall is boring and undemocratic.
For a Change
Texts have multiple main ideas, treat them accordingly.
Why "Max wore a wolfsuit and made mischief of one kind and another" is more important than the color of the suit.
Stop asking questions you know the answers to!

Perils of Literacy Education # 5: Round Robin Reading
For Consideration
Round robin reading focuses on oral performance and accuracy, not comprehension.
Round robin reading may cause anxiety and embarrassment.
Students rarely pay attention when they are not the one reading aloud.
RRR is about CONTROL, not about effective reading instruction.
For A Change
Practicing a poem overnight to read aloud in class is different than round robin reading.
Most adult reading is silent. So our students' reading should be also.
It's about our students' Comprehension, not our Control.

Perils of Literacy Education # 4: The I-R-E Interactive Pattern
For Consideration
Unless we consciously focus on changing these "traditional" interaction patterns we will invariably fall back on this "default setting."
It is not our job to "FILL" students up with main ideas, it is our job to help them MAKE SENSE by themselves.
For a Change
Begin to ask questions with more integrity.
Openly discuss with students what we are trying to do in our discussions.

Set new expectations for discussions.

Perils of Literacy Education # 3: Being a Boy Reader
The U.S. Department of Ed reading tests for the last 30 years show boys scoring worse than girls in every age group, every year.
Eighth grade boys are 50% more likely to be held back than girls.
Two-thirds of Special Education Students in high school are boys.
Overall college enrollment is higher for girls than boys.
For a Change
Let Boys Be Boys! Let them read some of the things they want to read. It won't kill you. Honest.
Look at the Children's Choice Awards as well as the Teacher's Choice Awards
Magazines, comic books, video catalogs, how-to-manuals, sports books, humor, adventure, animals & nature, graphic novels, and more need to be part of our classroom libraries.
GuysRead.com

Perils of Literacy Education # 2: High Stakes External Assessment
For Consideration
Overemphasis on test reading narrows our vision of accomplished reading.
The tests assume reading is about answering questions.
We all can't all be above average (except in Lake Wobegon).
Reading is not a race, nor a competition.
For a Change
Teach standardized test passages as a genre.
Separate reading for a test from reading for life.
Don't beat students up with test anxiety, even if you have it yourself.
Remember, the biggest factors in test performance have little to do with teaching and schooling.

The # 1 Peril of Literacy Education: The DeProfessionalization of Teachers
For Consideration
Unskilled Laborers Don't Learn Anything New Each Day, They Just Repeat Motions Without Thought
Reading a Script is NOT teaching, it is simply babysitting.
After three years of following a scripted program, teachers are the same teacher as when they started.
For a Change
Teachers conducting research on their teaching to demonstrate what they know about their students and the profession
Working as Collective Voices to rally against Scripted Programs
Working with Administration to develop better literacy programs
Developing a Sense of Constructive Irreverence

Some Final Thoughts

Life Long Readers would not tolerate some of the things we do to readers in school.

We read for enjoyment, information, escape and a sense of adventure, not to get better at reading.

Readers need Time, Choice, Access and Response to be Successful.

Let's Think or Ourselves as Readers First and Teachers Second, What Do We Need?