

Three Principles of Reading Achievement

- ❖ **The Reading Principle**---Readers must read extensively in text they can and want to read. The more kids read the better they read. “Reading volume—the amount students read in and out of school—significantly affects the development of reading rate and fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge of the world, overall verbal ability and last, but not least, academic achievement”. (Cunningham and Stanovich 1998 a and b) So we need to have text on a wide range of topics and on many levels readily accessible for the kids in our classrooms. (Allington 2005) Readers need a multi-source multi-genre curriculum if they are to read and understand.
- ❖ **The Response Principle**---Readers must have opportunities to respond to their reading by talking, writing and drawing about their reading. The best way to better understand what we read is simply to talk about it. We must increase the amount of purposeful student-to-student talk in our classrooms. (Allington 2002) Book clubs, Lit Circles (Daniels 02) Read Write and Talk (Harvey and Goudvis 05) all provide opportunities for readers to talk and write about their reading. And don't forget authentic artistic response for those who want to draw, sing etc.
- ❖ **The Explicit Instruction Principle**—Readers need explicit instruction in the strategies to decode text as needed. They do not need phonics instruction if they can already read. And they need explicit instruction in the strategies to comprehend text. (Pearson et al 1992, Keene and Zimmerman 1996 Harvey and Goudvis 2000) Teachers need to make their thinking visible by modeling how they use a strategy and then give kids time to practice collaboratively and independently.

(Harvey 2006)

The critical role of reading widely cannot be overemphasized. Many parents, administrators, and teachers still believe that literacy is primarily a matter of skill instruction. The importance of practicing, using and “living” literacy is often overlooked. Perhaps this is partly because we live in a society that does not always practice the literacy it preaches and supposedly values—libraries are underfunded, television is the predominant source of entertainment and information and 70% of all reading is done by only 10 % of the population. (Sanders 1994) We know that parents, teachers, and communities can dramatically affect how much children read. (Gambrell, 1996) But we also know that a relatively simple intervention—reading---can have a powerful effect on students' comprehension, thinking knowledge of the world, and choices in higher education and life careers.” (Shelbine 1998)

In short, we need to build in a ton of time for our kids to read, just plain read. To go and get a book of their choice, read it, talk to someone about it and then get another one. Worksheets don't help. Quizzes are not linked to achievement.

Reading, talking, and thinking are what are kids need to be doing. Just plain reading and giving kids time to talk about it will make all of the difference.

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