

Secondary Reading League

Volume 2 Issue 4
November 20, 2012

Content Connections

Cindi Koudelka
SRL President-Elect

You have been reading about content literacy for several years now and how it is important to help students navigate the informational text in their content area classrooms. Tons of books have been published to help both reading specialists and content teachers employ strategies in those classrooms to improve literacy. The recognition of content literacy has certainly helped students to better approach text challenges in those classrooms, but there is more work to be done. Students need support to differentiate between the types of strategies they need to use when reading various types of content. This shift in thinking is leading to a focus on "disciplinary literacies" in which we ask the students to learn and use specific strategies that are more closely related to how the particular disciplines use literacy to add to their understanding of the content. With an eye on Common Core, this paradigm shift emphasizes the different ways that students will be using text in all of their classes.

IRC Initiative: *Illinois Reads*

SRL is working under the Illinois Reading Council on their new initiative designed to promote lifelong reading for everyone from birth – adulthood. The program called "Illinois Reads" will be selecting books written by Illinois authors, providing copies of the books to schools and communities, and implementing activities to promote reading for life. Our committee of people interested in supporting this program is forming now! If you are interested in participating on the committee, please contact Cindi Koudelka at koudelka@fieldcrest.k12.il.us.

Strategy of the Month: Save the Last Word for Me

Patti Tylka
SRL Secretary

The Common Core State Standards challenges students to "cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text," as well as to "participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions." Here's a classroom activity, applicable in most content areas, which gives students practice in both discussion and using textual support: Save the Last Word for Me.

Here's how it works

1. Each student reads the same passage, noting (highlighting, underlining, sticky-noting, etc.) a few statements that are worthy of discussion, e.g., connections, confusing ideas, main ideas, arguable ideas, interesting phrasings, author's point of view.
2. Each student selects 3 to 5 favorite quotations and writes them on one side of an index card. On the opposite side, the student writes his own thoughts on this quotation.
3. In groups of 4 (the optimal number for team discussion) students share their quotations, one at a time. The first student reads a quotation to the group and may point out where it is in the passage, but she does not share why it was chosen. In a RoundRobin, each of the other group members reacts to the quotation, saving the last word on the quotation for the original reader. This allows the reader to augment and modify her thoughts after hearing those of his teammates. Each of the other students takes a turn reading, listening to comments and, finally, voicing her own thoughts until every student has had at least one turn. If time allows, students may share more than one quotation.
4. Here are suggestions for closure to Save the Last Word for Me
 - Each student writes a journal or exit slip explaining how the activity helped deepen understanding of the passage.
 - One member of each team reports out his team's discussion, summarizing or paraphrasing an interesting point of conversation

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Legislative Issues: Pension Problems Not Over

Liz Strejcek
SRL Treasurer

Although many describe pensions as an entitlement, most employees pay into their pension fund. The pension amount is usually deducted from their salaries. Businesses and employers also pay a share into the fund to make the "employment package" more "attractive" but that can be argued as part of the employee's "salary". It is the State that has been underfunding their "share" of the pension, for many years now, which brings everyone to this issue. A pension is not an "entitlement" that gives the public worker something for free, but part of the whole "package" that was negotiated and agreed upon. An "entitlement" is not an "entitlement". It is a contractual obligation.

The Illinois Pension Amendment failed. It needed a 60% "yes" vote to pass but received only 58%. It could have passed with a simple majority of all ballots cast, if voters did not skip the amendment question entirely. As it was, only 48% of all votes cast were "yes" votes for the amendment. It was the first item on the ballot and was very long and confusing which caused many voters to just skip it.

The fact that some voters felt that the pension is an "entitlement" and that public workers should not have something that regular workers don't shows how confusing the word entitlement is to an issue like Public Worker Pensions. Allowing the State or the Government to change their contractual agreement with workers whenever they please is also not fully understood. The idea that teachers are "overpaid" and have three months a year "vacation" is a myth that still permeates our society. On the other hand, an executive or CEO who makes millions every year and receives a cushy "bonus" for simply "moving money around" is considered more worthy of his "package" which was negotiated when he/she was hired. This is something that rarely makes the news, while teachers are being criticized almost daily. Teachers just don't have the political or financial clout.

Although House Speaker Michael Madigan insisted that the Amendment would force officials to "think more carefully" before addressing pensions, that would probably not be one of the results. Ask any teacher who has had an elected congressperson in their class when that person was younger and in school. "Thinking" and "hard working" are not generally two descriptions that are used in describing such a former student.

Rest assured, the pension question will come up again.

Med Head: Compelling Non-Fiction Read

Stacie Rossiter
SRL Newsletter Editor

James Patterson, best selling author, teams with Hal Friedman to write an account of Friedman's son's battle with Tourettes Syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. *Med Head: My Knock-down, Drag-out, Drugged-up Battle with My Brain*, told from Cory's perspective, not only chronicles Cory's struggles as he works to fight his medical issues, but also addresses issues that arise because of them: alcohol addiction and depression to name a few. *Med Head* is a riveting read that is sure to hook you quickly. It is especially compelling for reluctant readers. The story is brutally honest at times, and my students have shared that they can connect with Corey's struggles. An appendix contains Cory's journal entries, medical reports and photographs. This book uses graphic language, so I would suggest this book for mature readers. Though this book deals with tough issues, it is ultimately an inspirational tale. Be sure to add this book to your classroom library.

Last Word

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- Each team creates a mindmap, web, or other graphic organizer that reflects the group's thinking. Teams can carousel the room so that all teams see the others' creations.
- Each student pairs with another student, not from his group, to share the group's findings.
- Students use the discussion as a prewriting activity. They are now ready to make a claim, support it with text, and explain their thinking

For further information, visit the following websites:

- Averette, Patricia. Harmony Education Center. Save the Last Word for Me. http://www.nsrffharmony.org/protocol/doc/save_last_word.pdf
- Bergland, Roberta L. and Johns, Jerry L. (2002). Strategies for Content Area Learning. Kendal/Hunt.
- Buehl, Doug. Save the Last Word for Me . . . Project CRISS. http://www.projectcriss.com/pdf_files/2_F94_BUEHLLASTWORD.PDF.
- Daneils, Harvey and Stineke, Nancy. (2004) Mini-lessons for Literature Circles. Heinemann. <http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00702/minilessons.pdf>
- Facing History and Ourselves. (2012) Save the Last Word for Me. <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/save-last-word-me>.