Here it is, June already and another academic year is drawing to a close. I wish for each of you a smooth transition to your summer activities. Endings always bring to mind Sandra Boynton’s book, Moving Out, Moving Up, Moving On! If you’ve never read it, you must check it out next time you are in a bookstore.

NERA Board members have been busy on various committees, keeping our nonprofit operating smoothly and efficiently. We are excited about our upcoming conference, Genuine Reading and Writing = Competent Readers and Writers! We know you will find our keynoters and breakout sessions to be inspirational and informative. Nothing can be more refreshing and invigorating in late September than highly informative speakers who nudge us to keep growing and learning. Be sure to join us in Nashua on September 27th and 28th. For the low price of $249, you will also be treated to full sit-down luncheons and continental breakfasts. Don’t miss it!

Also, Georgia Heard has agreed to offer her webinar series: A Unit of Study in Poetry: One Month, Unlimited Potential during the fall. Webinars are a perfect venue for collegial discussions and faculty initiatives. Encourage your administrator to keep budget lines open for this amazing professional development opportunity (only $200 per school for all four sessions). More information will follow.

Finally, our new website will be launched by the time you read this newsletter. All NERA news will be regularly updated on this website, so be sure to bookmark it to keep up with our book project awards, scholarship opportunities, mini-grants, conference news, webinar news, directory of Board members, special recognition awards, and much more. NERA has secured three domain names that refer to New England Reading including www.nereading.org or www.nereading.com or www.nereading.net, so it won’t matter which one you use. Ah, technology, it’s amazing.

Find some great summer reading and take that well-deserved break. Enjoy. If you haven’t read Laura Hillenbrand’s book, Unbroken, add it to your list. It’s unforgettable.

Kathy Itterly, President

News from our President: Kathy Itterly

News From Our Conference Chair: Lindy Johnson

Mark Your Calendar!

Mark you calendars for September 27-28, 2012! NERA’s 64th annual conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Nashua, NH. The two days will be filled with keynote speakers, breakout sessions, authors, researchers, and a hall full of exhibits. This year’s conference features Kylene Beers and Robert Probst (they will change your practice and make you think about engaging your students and teaching in a way that is relevant to your students); Sy Montgomery (a fascinating scientist, writer, and explorer); Francine Johnston (word study guru); and Donna Scanlon (accelerate your students’ growth in reading and ensure they will be strategic lifelong readers). In addition to our keynote speakers, we have a wide variety of presentations that meet your needs and engage your inner educator. To access the complete program and registration information, go to: http://www.nereading.org/nera.php?id=4

Don’t be the person who hears about the conference and wishes you had attended! Act now, register and spend the summer looking forward to this great conference in Nashua, NH.

Lindy Johnson
2012 Conference Chair
President Elect
To put it bluntly, the traditional approach to teaching struggling readers by focusing on remediation and teaching isolated skills does not work! The U.S. Department of Education Reading First Impact Study (2009) reported that Reading First programs showed "No measurable gains in reading comprehension." At the same time, the Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse (2012) gave its highest Reading Improvement Index rating to Reading Recovery, which uses an accelerated, integrated, authentic approach to teach struggling readers.

We need to change the paradigm for teaching struggling readers. The chart below identifies how this new paradigm will increase motivation, engagement, and achievement by focusing on what successful readers know and apply when they read so that this knowledge can be used to teach struggling readers.

References:
Robb, (2003). Teaching reading, in social studies, science, and math: Practical ways to weave comprehension strategies into your content area teaching. New York: Scholastic
### What Students Should Know — What You Can Teach

#### Ideas for Reader Success

From Michael Shaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT SUCCESSFUL READERS KNOW AND APPLY WHEN THEY READ</th>
<th>WHAT TO TEACH STRUGGLING READERS TO BE SUCCESSFUL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading is the process of constructing meaning from text.</td>
<td>Focus on comprehension in every lesson. Use stop-and-think strategies so that students periodically summarize what they are reading and self-monitor for understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading is rewarding; it touches the mind and the heart.</td>
<td>Make reading a rewarding experience. Use &quot;just right&quot; books and scaffold so that every lesson leads to success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading is a strategic process.</td>
<td>Use before reading, during reading, and after reading strategies. Explicitly teach strategies and provide daily guided instruction and independent application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors write texts to communicate BIG ideas that relate to one’s own life and the world.</td>
<td>Focus on BIG ideas and critical analysis. Teach readers to read the ending of a text two times because this is where the author emphasizes the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension depends on accurate fluent, expressive reading with attention to punctuation.</td>
<td>Model fluent and expressive reading. Implement reader’s theater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading depends on prior knowledge of content and concepts.</td>
<td>Activate prior knowledge before reading, and fill in gaps in knowledge base (e.g., K-W-L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading depends on an extensive vocabulary and sight word knowledge.</td>
<td>Focus on expanding vocabulary and increasing sight word knowledge. Teach using context to figure out words that make sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading depends on knowledge of our alphabetic system.</td>
<td>Explicitly teach phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding skills within the context of authentic reading. Teach integration of the cueing systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers use text structures and organization to support meaning.</td>
<td>Introduce multiple genres that have a wide variety of text structures and organization. Use a nonfiction scavenger hunt to focus on text features (Robb, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brain learns by organizing information.</td>
<td>Use graphic organizers to support comprehension and emphasize patterns when teaching vocabulary and sight word knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading is a metacognitive, reflective practice.</td>
<td>Have students reflect on their reading through journals and discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers read a lot !!!</td>
<td>Provide extensive, authentic reading experiences. Create school/home connections to support out-of-school reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The adoption of the Common Core State Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, 2010) by 45 states has caused teachers of all content areas and grade levels to realize the importance of including literacy pedagogy and varied instructional materials in all subjects. In many classrooms in the past and present, textbooks are prominently used for content-area instruction. Yet, textbooks have been criticized for the different obstacles presented to students such as above-grade level readability levels; varied organizational structures (enumerative, sequential, chronological, compare-contrast, cause-effect, question-answer, narrative); abstract and technical vocabulary; complex sentence patterns; terse, straightforward, expository style; and dense amount of facts located in the textbook. Thus, teachers need to find alternatives to the traditional textbook to enhance the information the students are acquiring.

Nonfiction is a valuable literary genre that can be employed in content-area teaching. The nonfiction genre consists of various literary types such as picture books, trade books, primary sources, brochures, manuals, photo essays, how-to books, almanacs, world record books, newspapers, magazines, biographies/autobiographies, and the Internet (Pike & Mumper, 2004).

Some nonfiction books are dense with factual text and contain some illustrations, photographs, and diagrams to support the text. Others are replete with multiple photographs and illustrations that provide as much information as do the author’s words. No matter which format the nonfiction writer chooses to represent the content, nonfiction supports students’ learning to read from texts other than narratives and facilitates reading to learn new content.

In addition to including varied nonfiction in content subjects, instructors should consider explicitly teaching specific literacy strategies before, during, and following the reading of the text. Prior to the reading task, teachers should provide different opportunities for students to activate their prior knowledge for the content subject as well as to directly explore unique concepts and terms associated with the content. Examples of prior knowledge activation activities are the KWL Procedure (Ogle, 1986); Quick Writes; and the Think-Pair-Share strategy. In like manner, effective vocabulary strategies include the creation of Word/Concept Maps (Schwartz & Raphael, 1985); Semantic Maps (Johnson & Pearson, 1984); Word Banks; and Venn Diagrams. By interacting with relevant information before reading, students should be able to more easily comprehend the varied novel facts they are learning.

In addition to including prior knowledge/vocabulary activities in content-area lessons, instructors need to provide a classroom environment that encourages learners to become active readers. Questioning is a prime technique for active reading. Questions pupils pose to themselves when reading silently, ask each other during text discussions, and exchange with the instructor during teacher/student discourse allow students to delve deeply into the text and to increase their reading comprehension.

Once students have read and discussed a content-based text, there are various avenues of response to this reading. First, pupils can respond to the book by means of writing journal entries and learning logs. Additionally, responses to reading by means of the creative arts allow students to practice multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Finally, pupils can conclude their reading by conducting additional research and by the sharing this research with others.

Throughout this article, the value of including varied nonfiction sources and different literacy strategies in content-area instruction has been discussed. It is the educator’s responsibility to guide his/her students to uncover the multiple layers of information found in varied nonfiction sources in order for these literacy experiences to be accessible and rewarding for all learners.

References


Coaching Then

During the first decade of the 21st century, literacy coaching rose to prominence as one of the most important sub-domains in the field of literacy. Every year between 2005 and 2011, coaching was rated as a hot topic, and one that should be hot, by nationally and internationally known experts surveyed for the International Reading Association’s “What’s Hot, What’s Not” list (Cassidy, 2007). During those same years publications discussing literacy coaching (targeting both new and experienced coaches) grew exponentially. In 2012, a search on Amazon.com reveals 60-90 books and reports (depending on search strings) published between the years 2000 and 2012 with some combination of “literacy,” “reading,” “coach,” and/or “coaching” in the title. While researchers and teachers were certainly writing about reading specialists and teachers mentoring and coaching colleagues before 2000 (perhaps most famously the work of Joyce & Showers [1983, 1988, 1996] around peer coaching, and the work of Costa & Garmston [1993] around cognitive coaching, or coaching in response to teachers’ individual professional needs), it was not until the turn of the century that No Child Left Behind pressures coupled with Title I money to produce a literacy coaching boom.

Literacy coaching quickly became a national phenomenon in the United States, and large school districts invested heavily in cohorts of coaches (Boston being one of the most prominent). The International Reading Association published standards for coaches in its Standards for Reading Professionals (2003, revised 2010), in its position statement titled The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach (2004), and in the Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches (2006), emphasizing the content knowledge and skills needed to coach at secondary levels. The “Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse” (http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/) was established as a bustling warehouse and forum for new research and practices related to coaching, and an annual conference related to coaching was begun in 2009 (The National Literacy Coaching Summit, later renamed the International Literacy Coaching Summit).

Coaching Now

Now, in 2012, four years after the national and global economic recession began in 2008, the literacy coaching landscape has changed significantly. Most states and districts that invested heavily in coaches around the turn of the century have reversed course and eliminated coaching positions. For the first time in eight years, the 2012 “What’s Hot, What’s Not” list shows “literacy coaches/reading coaches” as “not hot” even though they “should be” — authors of the report, Cassidy and Loveless, explain it this way:

It was hoped that literacy coaches could deliver the individual professional development to teachers who would, in turn, provide all students with quality literacy instruction. Unfortunately, the economic downturn and the loss of federal funding have forced the elimination of many of those positions” (Cassidy & Loveless, 2012, p. 20).

While the original Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse remains archived online, the active organization has transformed into a smaller National Council of Teachers of English “connected community” (http://ncte.connectedcommunity.org/LCC/Home/), just one of dozens of such groups. The publication of books and reports related to coaching has slowed, and it is uncertain whether the International Literacy Coaching Summit conference will continue.

Preparing All Educators to Engage in Coaching

Some might cite the aforementioned events as evidence of yet another educational fad coming to the end of its natural life cycle; however, there is another much more optimistic and productive way of viewing these issues. While it is true that coaches may be disappearing due to tight district budgets, there is no need for coaching to disappear from our schools and districts. As Rita Bean emphasizes, we need to emphasize “coaching” in schools more than “coaches” because “many
Continued: As Literacy Coach Positions Disappear “Coaching” Doesn’t Have To By Jacy Ippolito

**********

individuals within a school may have coaching responsibilities: teachers who work with student teachers … the principal who visits teachers to provide support and guidance … even the reading specialist whose primarily role is instruction” (2009, p. 108). The notion that any adult in a school can coach another is critical, and frankly it is the only way that adult learning and professional learning communities in schools can prosper. One of the biggest misconceptions of the coaching movement in the past decade was that literacy knowledge and skill resided within the professionals we called coaches. Instead, schools, districts, and universities working to prepare and support teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches, and principals must highlight how all adults in schools can mentor and coach one another toward increasingly effective instructional practices.

Having worked as both a reading specialist and literacy coach, as well as being a faculty member in higher education who has designed and taught multiple courses at the graduate level on the roles of reading professionals, literacy coaching, facilitative leadership, and teacher leadership, I have come to believe that there are roughly seven domains of content knowledge and pedagogical skill that all adult educators can and should acquire (over time) in order to better provide (and receive!) coaching for/from colleagues. These domains include foundational knowledge and understanding of:

- Reading, writing, and oral language development and instruction for all students preK-16, including English Language learners and students with special needs
- Adult learning and stages of cognitive development
- School reform and how schools as organizations behave (and misbehave)
- Professional development theories and practices
- Facilitative leadership, group mentoring, and the use of protocols in structured discussions
- The specific roles of teachers, specialists, coaches, and principals—how these roles overlap and interact effectively
- The specific practices of literacy coaches as they engage adults (e.g., one-on-one coaching, group coaching, data coaching, cognitive coaching, establishing cycles of inquiry, etc.)

These seven domains perhaps do not cover everything that an expert coach or literacy professor might consider when thinking about his or her work; simultaneously, this list is likely to overwhelm a novice teacher, specialist, or coach just entering the conversation. While educators cannot be expected to become experts in all seven domains, savvy school and university leaders can emphasize the need for these areas to be highlighted across teams and coursework. In my own university teaching and professional development work, I strive to balance these seven domains, emphasizing some more than others in particular courses, depending on the audience and exact nature of the work. University and district-based teacher preparation and support programs must focus on the transformative knowledge, skills, and experiences adults need to work together effectively. As schools nationwide adopt and adapt the Common Core State Standards, universities and school districts (as well as individuals and teachers in professional learning communities) must consider a broader range of knowledge and skills that all educators need to promote adult learning and student literacy achievement. (See Figure 1 on page 7)

References


### FIGURE 1. Sample Texts Used to Address the Seven Domains 

The compositional practices of adolescents have undergone numerous shifts—from the page to the screen and from text to multimodal. A growing majority of young people, 64% of those ages 12 -17 who use the Internet (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007), rely heavily on multimodal composition—incorporating a variety of modes including image, sound, movement, text, and gesture—to express themselves, connect with others, and fashion their identities (Jewitt, 2008). Kress (2003) explained that these shifts in compositional practices “are producing a revolution in the uses and effects of literacy and of associated means for representing and communicating at every level and in every domain” (p. 1).

In an effort to catch up to the out-of-school multimodal practices of today’s adolescents, educators have started to see the value in these compositional practices and slowly begun to incorporate multimodal literacies into the curriculum for a variety of reasons—including to make schooling relevant, improve equity, prepare students to be critical and global citizens, and meet the needs of today’s adolescents.

Recent research has shown that the integration of multimodal composition in the classroom—including but not limited to digital videos, video games, websites, online fanfiction, blogs, and podcasts—involves different ways of composing not always afforded with print-based assignments (Smith, 2011). First, the most common finding in research on multimodal composition is that it is highly engaging for adolescents—often allowing students to choose their topic and include popular culture or personal narratives. Second, the process of multimodal composition is a social and collaborative endeavor. Students often work in pairs or small groups—dividing labor, discussing modal decisions, and providing feedback (Black, 2009; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003).

Third, multimodal composition is particularly beneficial to “marginalized” adolescents with a large body of research describing how language learners (Lam, 2000; Thomas, 2007), at-risk (Goodman, 2003), or struggling learners (O’Brien et al., 2007) were empowered by projects that allowed for them to capitalize on their unique strengths. Multimodal projects allowed these adolescents to express their voice in agentive ways, perceive themselves as capable students, and develop language skills.

The incorporation of multimodal composition in the classroom also comes with its challenges, including how to design assignments that capitalize on the affordances of technology and media in meaningful ways. For the past few years, I’ve been collaborating with Melanie Hundley on her preservice class for English teachers, “Teaching Writing and Multimedia Composition.” Along with a variety of multimodal assignments, students are asked to create a hypertext analysis of a poem. By linking out from specific words or phrases in the original poem in PowerPoint, students make cultural connections, analyze literary devices, and provide personal responses with multiple modes. For example, Figure 1 shows my hypertext analysis of “Hips” by Lucille Clifton. I hyperlinked to a YouTube video of the author reciting the poem, biographical information, and connections to art and pop culture. This example illustrates how multimodal composition can still teach foundational skills like literary analysis in technologically innovative ways.

To explore the role of multimodal composition in your classroom, think about the range of writing activities in your curriculum and choose one that you think would benefit from a shift towards multimodal expression. Try it out and see how it goes! Recently, Bridget Dalton and I worked with middle school students on folktale retellings in a digital story format (Dalton & Smith, in progress). We chose retelling because it was a familiar literacy activity that lent itself well to a multimodal format. Students were highly engaged in creating and sharing these multimodal pieces and we found it to be a worthwhile teaching and learning experience.
Example of Hypertext Poem Analysis (main page and linked pages)
Created by Blaine Smith

References


Continued: Multimodal Composition in the Classroom
Blaine E. Smith
During the Spring Semester, in a Language Development and Early Literacy course, students completed an assignment where they explored family and community involvement in a meaningful manner. They demonstrated many techniques for families to become involved in promoting literacy learning at home. Family involvement is critical. “Yet school reforms have not accomplished as much as they might because academic achievement is shaped more by children’s lives outside the school walls, particularly their parents. When parents are involved, students get better grades, score higher on standardized tests, drop out less often, have higher aspirations, and more positive attitudes toward school and homework. What’s more, these positive impacts seem most important for children growing up in disadvantaged, highly-stressed families” (Bogenschneider & Johnson, 2004, p.19).

The goal of the Family Project Assignment was for students to learn more about a topic, take initiative, assume responsibility, make decisions and choices, and pursue their interests. To complete the assignment, students developed a research question and determined what they wanted to learn, how they would find the information needed, then presented the information to the class in a poster session model. Students created an assessment rubric to grade their final product. They had to include criteria to show: how their projects included linguistic and cultural differences in a respectful manner; how activities, materials, and equipment could be adapted to the language needs of families; an appreciation of each child in the context of their family, socioeconomic circumstances, language, culture, and community; and evidence of research. Students reflected that they enjoyed having control over what they studied and how they presented the information. The projects were creative and show the multiple ways classroom teachers can meaningfully involve families in the learning process. I hope you find their topics and strategies useful.

References

The table below offers students’ ideas to promote language development in your classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Topic</th>
<th>Final Product – Classroom Ideas for You!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detecting possible special needs in preschool Dual Language Learners with the help of families</td>
<td>A bulletin board in 3 languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific literacy skills for families to prepare children for Kindergarten.</td>
<td>A summer calendar with a no cost idea given for each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing in meaningful learning opportunities for literacy development (Several students)</td>
<td>Brochures in several languages Interesting information such as there are at least 3 different sign languages used in Vietnam Orientation packets used at open house in the beginning of the year in multiple languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does music promote the development of the five components of language?</td>
<td>CD with multicultural songs and brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairments and “red flags” for families</td>
<td>Brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to engage families in the learning process.</td>
<td>Wiki: See <a href="http://literacyfamilyinvolvement.wikispaces.com/">http://literacyfamilyinvolvement.wikispaces.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of teen parents on Language Development [preterm birth, HIV, and media viewing were also studied]</td>
<td>Brochures that included statistics and community resources for family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the building structure of home environments promote literacy skills?</td>
<td>A bulletin board showing an ideal living space for positive language learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Dos and Don’ts of Vocabulary Instruction
Sheelah M. Sweeney, Ph. D.
Literacy Consultant, PCG Education
Pamela A. Mason, Ed.D.
Director, Language and Literacy Master’s Program and the Jeanne Chall Reading Lab
Harvard Graduate School of Education

It is well established that vocabulary knowledge is essential to students’ academic success (Blachowicz, Ogle & Watts-Taffe, 2006). There are many practices that can be utilized with any materials or curriculum that will result in more long-term word learning by students. A recent review of vocabulary research from the past ten years reveals an important list of dos and don’ts for vocabulary instruction.

First, the Don’ts:
1. Don’t subject students to drill and practice! They will not retain the word meanings.
2. Don’t depend on reading alone to build the vocabularies of struggling readers. They don’t read enough to pick up an adequate amount of new vocabulary incidentally.
3. Don’t teach words in isolation. New words must be connected to context.

Now the Dos:
1. Do teach vocabulary deliberately using direct instruction. This will help all students, especially English Language Learners (ELLs) and struggling readers.
2. Do create language-rich environments where teachers and students attend to and celebrate language in all forms and contexts.
3. Do engage students in multiple inputs and outputs of language where they are hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and drawing representations of new words and concepts (Wood, Harmon & Hedrick, 2004). This will help them make connections between new and known words and build conceptual knowledge.
4. Do have students use morphology to infer the meanings of new words.
5. Do involve students in making judgments about the selection and use of certain words, and analyze their and others’ use of words (Boulware-Goeden et al., 2007; Kindle et. al, 2009; Ruddell & Shearer, 2002; VanDeWeghe, 2007; Vitale & Romance). Instruction should include the following aspects of words and language usage:
   1. Word families
   2. Affixes
   3. Synonyms and antonyms
   4. Cognates including Greek and Latin roots
   5. Multiple meanings
   6. Idioms and figurative speech

Instructional Practices
Just like with reading instruction, vocabulary instruction should involve cognitive skills instruction. Students should draw on their background knowledge, be metacognitive as they encounter new words, notice things about words, predict and infer meanings, question the use of specific words, analyze words and parts of words, make judgments about the selection and use of certain words, and evaluate their and others’ use of words (Boulware-Goeden et al., 2007; Kindle et. al, 2009; Ruddell & Shearer, 2002; VanDeWeghe, 2007; Vitale & Romance). Instruction should include the following aspects of words and language usage:

Word Selection
Research recommends that students learn fewer words well and that they learn how to use morphology to infer the meanings of new words. Common academic words that apply across content areas (Santoro, Chard & Baker, 2008) and that represent important concepts can be chosen using this six-step process:
1. Read the text in advance to determine your instructional purpose
2. Identify words or concepts students need to know
3. Identify connections and relationships between words or concepts chosen for instruction
4. Choose words students must know prior to reading
5. Decide which words students only need to know incidentally (they don’t require direct teaching)
6. Determine what you want the children to learn

A pre-reading strategy that activates students’ background knowledge and sets a purpose for reading is called “Possible Sentences.” It requires student pairs to define a word they will encounter in a text and write a sentence that they think they might find within the text using the target word (see http://www.adlit.org/strategies/19782). Other active learning strategies include semantic word mapping http://www.learningpt.org/literacy/adolescent/strategies/semantic.php and morphemic analysis http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/rooting-meaning-morpheme-match-880.html
Word Walls are now common fixtures in elementary classrooms. They provide a visual reminder of sight words, spelling words, concepts, and content-area words, and they are particularly helpful for English Language Learners and struggling readers. Word Walls are also appropriate for use in middle and high school in English/Language Arts and content area classes because they reinforce the increasingly complex language that students encounter in those subjects. Word Walls should be created with students and should change as new content is learned or once students no longer need the visual reinforcement (Harmon, Wood & Kiser, 2009; Pierce & Fontaine, 2009).

For more information on effective vocabulary practices read the Vocabulary Research Paper by the Massachusetts Reading Association http://www.massreading.org/resources/index.html

Here's a vocabulary riddle for you and your students:

What word begins with E and ends with E but has only one letter?

Answer on page 16


It all starts out when one day Maureen discovers that the ThreePees are planning to sit next to Allergy Alice in the cafeteria and eat peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches on whole-wheat toast with mango marmalade for lunch. Maureen decides that it's time to topple the eight-grade social regime. She joins forces with Alice and Barbara and the Nerd Girls was formed.

This book is an amazing book for teenagers about three "nerd girls": Maureen is addicted to fast food, Alice is allergic to just about everything, and Barbara is an extremely clumsy young lady. These outcasts don't have much in common, other than the fact that they are often targets of the "ThreePees": the pretty, popular, and perfect girls. These three misfit middle-school students team up to try to beat out the catty and mean ThreePees at the school talent show. Proclaiming that they are dorks and that they are proud of it.

As you can guess, Maureen is the main character in the story. Maureen is a very strong-minded girl, yet at the same time, she is somewhat insecure and a bit paranoid of what others think about her. The further you go throughout the book, the more you can see her evolve into someone more free who knows who she is and who she wants to be. I definitely think that her two other friends, Alice and Barbara helped her with this. What I like about Maureen at the end of the book is that she is more confident with herself. She has now come from hiding behind the scenes and following others to being her own person.

I definitely loved this book without a doubt. In the beginning I could barely put it down. It took a while for the book to kind of get into the action, but once it did it was fantastic. Also, I loved this book because it had a good message to it, but at the same time it revealed it in a comedic, fun way, which made it enjoyable. For example, at the end of the book, when the girl's plans for the talent show didn't turn out exactly the way they hoped for, they still performed, had fun and just did their own thing. The girls did this in a very comical, wacky, but at the same time this was teaching a lesson by saying that even when things don't work out, you should still do it anyway and have fun with it. This book is basically saying that it's okay to be yourself, whoever you are and don't let people intimidate you or put you down because if you put your mind to it, you can accomplish big things. You won't always be first or come out in the top, but you will have fun doing it. If I had to rate this book, I would give it a sturdy 8 or even 8.5. I would recommend it to other girls between ages 12 or 13, not only because the main character in the book is around that age, but also because girls between these ages feel the most peer pressure and often think that they have to be a certain way to fit in or be happy. This book for sure proves them WRONG!


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**Hip-Hop High School** by Alan Lawrence Sitomer

Reviewed by Anabell Janvier, Grade 8, South Middle School, Brockton, MA

Theresa Anderson is not any different than others kids her age. Even though she is smart, she still has problems like other kids do in high school, such as peer pressure to try drugs and the pressure to do well in school. She never knew that these issues could impact to her or her close friends. Theresa is worried about her older brother Andre, who people keep comparing her to, she starts to despise her brother because she is sick of being compared to him. Her life is like a roller coaster, going up and down. Like every other kid, Theresa has big dreams, but she might realize something about it. Once she takes hip hop music into her life, the ride has stopped. If you think that high school is all fun and games, you might want to think again.

One of the main themes in this book is courage. Guts is another word for the theme because high school is not easy. The next four years of your life could go off the track. Kids might go wild; get into fights or make wrong choices. Theresa was full of power when she was able to tell her friend Devon that she filled out a college application and was denied twice but, was accepted to The University of Southern California. Even though she knew that telling him might hurt him because his chances of getting into Harvard after being shot and put into the hospital were slim, she still got the courage to tell Devon her success. After reading this book, you might learn a lesson, that High school is not a dream, it's the real thing. Anything can step in your path, you need to find and get your education back.

This book has given me insight into high school and the types of problems that can arise and the right way to solve them. For example, Theresa's best friend accidently made the wrong choice and became pregnant; once she has the baby she can never change her mind. I highly recommend that any students entering high school or even students already attending high school should read this book. If I was the judge of rating books, I would give this book 10 out of 10 because I strongly believe that this book is very good. Overall, this novel, by Alan Sitomer, is a page-turner, and it is so worth buying! I hope that you read this book and enjoy it as much as I did.

*Hip Hop High School* by Alan Lawrence Sitomer 384 pp.ISBN 978-0786855155
Book Review by Nancy Witherell, Professor, Bridgewater State University

The Name of the Tree by Celia Barker Lottridge
Illustrated by Ian Wallace

It is a bit unusual to write a book review about a book I have never read. Ian Wallace, the illustrator of The Name of the Tree, is a captivating and dramatic story teller. Having seen Ian a number of times perform his enchanting rendition of this story has only reinforced my fondness for its message: Don’t let anyone tell you your limits and continue to believe in yourself.

In this endearing story, animals are in need of food and the slowest animal in the jungle, against popular belief, saves the day. Wallace’s illustrations bring the story to life almost just as much as his storytelling. This recipient of the Mr. Christie’s Book Award for the best Canadian’s children’s book is a winner that deserves a special spot in your classroom and in your heart.

Looking for a Good Book?
Recommended for Summer Reading, from your friends on the NERA board

In no particular order:
Buddha in the Attic by Julie Otsuka
Moneyball by Michael Lewis
Breakfast with Buddha by Roland Merulla
Birdology by Sy Montgomery
The Good, Good Pig by Sy Montgomery
On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford
Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives by Peter Johnston
The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein
I Capture the Castle by Dodie Smith
The Outliers by Malcom Gladwell
Invisible Snow (e-book) by Quinn Barrett
All Over Creation by Ruth Ozeki
The False Prince by Jennifer Nielsen
Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

For those of us with the Peter Pan syndrome:

Intermediate level
The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate
Wonder by RJ Palacio

Young Adult
My Thirteenth Winter by Samantha Abeel
Between Shades of Grey by Ruta Sepetys (not to be confused with Fifty Shades!!!)
Dear NERA E-newsletter Readers,

I choose not to say, “Dear NERA members,” because I know many of our members pass the e-newsletter on to others in their district, organization or higher education institution. And that’s a good thing, fostering both the work of NERA and literacy!

This will be my last issue of the NERA e-newsletter as my term on the NERA board expires at the conference in September. The NERA bylaws allow state delegates two three-year terms on the board. This forced departure is part of why NERA remains the oldest literacy association in the United States. Limiting board terms allows for new people, new ideas and renewed energy to enter the board.

My six years on the NERA board has been a rewarding and productive experience. Meeting literacy specialists throughout New England and beyond, learning about different literacy events happening in our area, advocating for literacy, enjoying professional experiences and projects, and working on the conference encompasses just part of what NERA is about. Making friends with kindred souls has been the icing on the cake.

When Margaret Salt, NERA’s current secretary, and I began this e-newsletter three years ago we had no clue how it would evolve. We had an idea and a mission; we volunteered to get it accomplished. I had never used Word Publisher in my life and will never be able to quote the APA manual. But, somehow, it has worked and will continue to do so.

Two new NERA board members, Kelly Andrews-Babcock, a Connecticut delegate, and Ellie Papazogiou, a New Hampshire delegate, will be taking over as the new editors of the e-newsletter. Kelly and Ellie (great sounding team) have been forewarned that rarely are articles as short as they are supposed to be--which is great for the reader, but challenging for the person formatting the newsletter! I offer the new editors my support, and the best of luck!

It has been my pleasure to serve as your NERA editor. Hope to see you all in Nashua in September!

Nancy Witherell

New England Reading Association since 1948

New England Reading Association’s 64th Annual Conference

Genuine Reading and Writing = Competent Readers and Writers!

September 27 and 28, 2012

Radisson Hotel, Nashua, NH
We publish two NERA newsletters annually, one summer and one winter. We need submissions for various articles. Articles should be 200 to 500 words in length. We appreciate any literacy topic. Some suggested feature topics are: Energizing Classroom Practices, What’s Happening in Literacy Education, What’s New in Literacy Research, Children’s Book Review, Young Adult Book Review, Professional or Adult Book Review. (See the NERA Journal for Journal submission specifics.)

Please submit a newsletter column piece to kandrews-babcock@killinglyschool.org or epapa48@yahoo.com. The next submission date will be December 1, 2012. Please feel free to send inquiries in advance. Articles may be delayed for a later publication.

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Riddle answer from page 11: Envelope