



LIT BITS

Growing Students Through Staff Development

Volume 2, Issue 4

April 2005



Staff Development Day was a *literacy bonanza*. Presenters included Harvey “Smokey” Daniels, Tim Rasinski, Fred Wolff and Mark Forget. Smokey Daniels is the name most closely associated with literacy circles. In addition to being a highly energetic and engaging speaker, he has fine-tuned strategies associated with cooperative learning, one of the research-based effective strategies that work. Tim Rasinski’s work promotes greater understanding of fluency. Fred Wolff is a consultant who works alongside Vicki Spandel, and his message provides support for *6 Traits*, our district’s assessment tool for writing instruction. Mark Forget is the President and Director of Max Teaching. He presents a framework for reading and writing instruction that helps students develop a sense of reading as a solution instead of an obstacle to success. These grant-funded speakers joined over 30 presenters at Cleveland Heights High School on April 15th. This is the third annual Staff Development Day. Deb Delisle was the catalyst for launching this day that includes all staff members of the district, allowing us to re-energize with the support of outstanding facilitators, our shared vision of “Every Student, Every Day, Some Success, Some Way.”

DATES TO REMEMBER

Balanced Literacy Task Force

May 18 (11:30-3:30)

Short screening completed for students in grades 1st-2nd

May 20

ELA Task Force

May 25th (3:30-5:30)

Last Day of School

June 10th

SIRI R: June 13—16

June 20-23

SIRI D- June 13, 14, 15 & 17

June 20-23

SIRI A- June 20-23

June 27-30



The Noble staff break for a family photo.

Smiling faces from the Wiley Team



Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss!

Read Across America Day was March 2nd which was Dr. Seuss’s birthday. First grade teachers at Fairfax celebrated his birthday by studying rhyme, writing, and elements of story. The students in Mrs. Schmidt’s class wrote a different version of Dr. Seuss’s book, *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* The new version’s title was *Mr. Brown Can*

Read Moo! Can You? The students’ version of the book focused on the characteristics and reading skills of Mr. Jacky Brown, Fairfax’s principal.

Mrs. Hertz’s first graders wrote their own version of *The Cat in the Hat*, which was entitled, *The Mule In School*. They studied sentence structure, rhyming patterns, and

story elements. The story was about a mule that didn’t follow the school rules and got into quite a bit of trouble. Both stories were displayed on the first grade literacy bulletin board, surrounded by balloons to further celebrate Dr. Seuss’s birthday and to urge everyone to read daily.

A happy belated birthday, Dr. Seuss!



Language-Literacy Connection

Do your students speak the same way at home as they speak in the classroom? Do they speak the same way with friends as they speak with adults? We all speak differently in different situations. These ways of speaking differently are known as the registers of language. Every language has five registers, but it is most important for students to learn the difference between formal language and casual language.

As cited in the work of Ruby Payne, formal language can be described as speaking in complete sentences and using specific words to convey the message. Formal language is most often used for business and school functions. Casual language is the language we use when we are in conversation with our friends.

These words can be less precise and rely more on assistance from non-verbal cues.

It is important for students to have an understanding of these two types of registers and to know when it is appropriate to use each. Some ideas to address this in the classroom are as follows:

1. Have some students write a fairy tale in formal register while others write the same story in casual register. Share and compare the differences.
2. Ask students to think of synonyms for a word such as woman. What different words can they think of and in which register would they be most frequently used?
3. Create a list of different sayings; one in formal register, the other in casual.

Building a Community of Learners

Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the advantages of peer coaching. Wanting to build their own foundational knowledge of guided reading, Oxford teachers Ellen Cook, Joi Curry, and Monica Rogers went to visit 1st grade teacher, T.J. Schmidt, at Fairfax Elementary. The teachers were able to gain insights on alternatives to organizing and managing a small group guided reading lesson.

The morning was spent at Fairfax with

the Oxford group observing the literacy rotation. Teachers were able to take back activities for innovative literacy centers, as well as some good ideas for guided reading!

The main advantage of intradistrict professional learning is the commonality of student needs and district expectations. Each teacher shares in the district mission and with this shared vision, ideas can be more easily implemented to positively impact student achievement.

Read Around the World



The literacy team at Boulevard has embarked on a journey to encourage students to “Read Around The World.” At the kickoff assembly, teachers traveled to different regions with the help of Constance Dickerson, a public librarian and Boulevard parent. The students were amazed to learn that they could travel to far-away lands by simply opening a book.

Each student received their personal reading passport which included a variety of genres they can read, along with their personal photograph. Student have until the remainder of the school year to complete their passport.

Celebrities at Fairfax



On March 18th the third grade at Fairfax had a chance to meet all of their favorite celebrities. Under the direction of teachers, Mrs. Stacey Cohen, Mrs. Lauren Epstein and Mrs. Beth LaGamba, each student chose a famous person to research. Students read biographies (and some did internet searches) to learn about the life of their chosen celebrity. Students wrote a five paragraph “flip book” about the different aspects of their celebrity’s life. On March 18th, students came to school as their celebrity. They had costumes and props. Parents were invited to meet all the famous people. Brunch was served and everyone had a chance to mingle and introduce themselves. Then individual celebrities made short presentations about their lives. It was amazing how much the children knew. Everyone left impressed and star-struck!

Building Your Professional Library

As summer is quickly approaching, here are a few books you may want to add to your personal , professional library.

- The Fluent Reader by Tim Rasinski (Scholastic, 2003)
- Data Driven Differentiation in the Standards-Based Classroom by Gayle Gregory & Lin Kuzmich (Corwin Press, 2004)
- Teaching the Best Practice Way: Methods that Matter K-12 by Harvey Daniels & Marilyn Bizar (Stenhouse, 2005)
- Subjects Matter: Every Teacher’s Guide to Content Area Reading by Harvey Daniels & Steven Zemelman (Heinemann, 2005)

WRITERS ADVANCE TO STATE LEVEL

The Power of the Pen Competition encourages middle school students to explore the art of writing. Carolyn Hockey and Alexis Jung, both 7th graders at Monticello, along with Meagan Coggins, an 8th grader at Wiley, are headed to the state competition in May.

Coached by Yolanda Harris of Monticello and Heather Penny of Wiley, the team has practiced writing simulations and discovered various techniques to improve writing. Time together has been spent critiquing one another's writing.

Regionals were held at Ford Middle School on March 5, where 122 seventh graders and 130 eighth graders represented forty-six schools.



Coach Harris remarked that she "was amazed at the depth of writing exhibited by the students specifically at how well-developed the characters and plot are in a short amount of time and space." She also observed that multiple interpretations of the prompt led to a variety of pieces.

Coach Penny stated, "I like watching them prepare and have them succeed and be positive about writing."

Each of the student writers had advice for others who want to write well.

Carolyn suggests "Practice writing a lot and reading a lot of books to inspire you."

Alexis says, "Let your mind flow and write what you feel in your heart."

Meagan gives this advice, "Don't be safe; don't always write about what you know. Try to expand [yourself] and make it interesting for your reader."

All three writers state that they read for hours every day. Sometimes even for 5-6 hour stretches when they do not want to put a book down until they finish it! Their ideas have come from other authors

that they have enjoyed reading such as, Philip Pullman, Anne Rice, J.K. Rowlings, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Shonda (a cousin of Meagan's who has published a book).

All three girls will have the opportunity to compete in the state competition on May 27th at the College of Wooster. We extend our best wishes to these talented, young writers. Good luck, girls!

Left: Coach Yolanda Harris with

Below: Coach Heather Penny



Leaping into Literacy

The importance of literacy is being integrated throughout all classrooms at Fairfax. Evidence of literacy is seen in the classroom, on the bulletin boards, and even in the gym! Physical Education teacher, Miss Karen Blair, incorporated reading into her first grade lessons. Words like *jump*, *walk*, *leap*, *slide*, *run*, and *hop*, were written on cards in different areas of the gym.



First graders demonstrated the appropriate action as they read the word cards. Miss Blair photographed the students completing the activities and created a bulletin board for the entire Fairfax School community to share.

Incorporating literacy-based activities during unified arts classes is an excellent way to integrate the standards across the content areas.

Shakespeareans At Boulevard

Mrs. Dunlevy's third grade students at Boulevard were delighted when Gary Blackwood, author of *The Shakespearean Stealer*, wrote a response to their letter. He wrote his response to the students on the back of a manuscript page from *Stealer* providing an opportunity for students to get a first-hand glimpse of the revising process. Interestingly, Gary Blackwood explained that he used to live in Cleveland. He went on to explain that he

has had experience with local theaters such as Dobama Playhouse, Euclid Lyric Guild, and Chagrin Little Theater.

In a letter to Mrs. Dunlevy, Blackwood wrote,

Thanks for sending along your students' entertaining and enthusiastic letters. I'll reply to them en masse. I'm gratified to know that kids as young as 3rd graders can appreciate my work and get so much out of it- and, of course, that they're getting such an early introduction to Shakespeare.



Action is eloquence!

“Ask Reeves”



101 Questions & Answers about Standards, Assessment, & Accountability,
from Douglas B. Reeves, Ph.D. (2001)

Once again, *Lit Bits* continues with “Ask Reeves” as chapter two, “Standardized Tests,” is explored. Try your hand at the true or false questions below. The statements are based on Reeves’ responses to very important questions about standardized tests.

1. _____ Standardized tests should be banned. (p.27)
2. _____ Administering the same standardized test in the fall as a pretest and in the spring as a posttest is an appropriate practice. (p.31)
3. _____ Useful test prep should lead to effective teaching strategies, improved learning, and then higher test scores. (p.33)
4. _____ Evidence suggests that higher test scores are associated not with test drills, but with more writing assessment and with more interdisciplinary writing. (p.36)

Answer Key: 1 (F), 2 (F), 3 (T), 4 (T)

In our next addition, look for more information on “Performance Assessment” found in Chapter Three.

Testing Update

March testing is complete. Scores for all the Achievement Tests are expected back to the district in May. Cut scores for the *new* Achievement Tests will be determined in May, and will be announced in June. Scores for the *4th and 6th Grade Proficiency Tests* will be returned to the district on May 24. Seniors will be able to take the *9th Grade Proficiency Test* again during the week of May 2 and again in July. The *3rd Grade Reading Achievement Test* and the *OGT* will also have a summer administration.

The 2005-2006 school year will see the administration of the following **new** tests:

- 4th Grade Math Achievement
- 5th Grade Math Achievement
- 6th Grade Reading and Math Achievement
- 7th Grade Reading

The only state tests administered in the fall of 2005 will be *3rd Grade Reading Achievement*, *9th Grade Proficiency Tests* (seniors), and the *OGT* for 11th graders.

Websites for Literacy Instruction



Check out these great websites !

www.eduplace.com

- Graphic organizers for reading comprehension
- Interactive reading and writing

www.readinglady.com

- Fluency building activities

www.mightybook.com/home.htm

- Reads stories aloud
- Poetry & sing alongs
- Parent resources

www.readertheatre.ecsd.net/collection/htm

- Variety of reader’s theatre plays for students

www.funbrain.com/grammar

- Identify parts of speech

<http://pbskids.org>

- Stories to read and vocabulary assistance

“We are here to help children succeed. It’s that simple.”

- Elaine Collins

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