

Abstract of Teachers College Saturday Reunion— Mary G. Schnitter

On Saturday, October 22, 2016, I attended the Saturday Reunion, at Teachers College, Columbia University. I attended four sessions, 1. Classroom Management, Tools and Routines that Support Stamina, Independence, and Volume in Writing Workshop, 2. If You Lift the Level of Your Kids' Writing about Reading, You Lift the Level of Their Thinking---And Give Them Tools for the Road, 3. Going Digital with Planning Tools and Resources to Make Work (and Life) Easier and More Collaborative and 4. You Can do BIG Work in Small Texts: Tap the Power of Short, Shared Texts in Your Reading Workshop. All four of these workshops provided valuable information that can be incorporated into my classroom instruction immediately. The sessions focused on promoting student engagement, tips for ratcheting up the level of students' writing and thinking, and collaborative learning. Resources and writing prompts were given to make implementation easy and quick. The Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Reading and Writing are involved and require a great deal of reading and practice in order to implement them. The information gathered at this Saturday Reunion will help to maintain better classroom management and hopefully lift the level of students' learning. I truly appreciate the opportunity to attend this conference. Thank you.

Mary G. Schnitter Summary of Sessions Attended at Columbia Teachers College Saturday Reunion—October 22, 2016 TEPS Funding

I attended the Saturday Reunion at Teachers College on Saturday, October 22, 2016. As a teacher of both reading and writing, the sessions I attended will help to enhance my instruction. I learned many valuable ideas that I can implement into my instruction immediately. Below is a summary of the four sessions I attended.

Session I—Classroom Management, Tools, and Routines that Support Stamina, Independence, and Volume in Writing Workshop. (Simone Fraser)

Simone Fraser's session offered practical ways to assist in the classroom set up that support stamina, independence, and volume in the writing workshop. During the very first weeks of school, (or anytime if it is not done right away) it is a good idea to establish routines. Students should be able to produce one to two pages of writing in a 40 minute class period.

Classroom Set up Tools include:

1. Timers (Can be used for challenges and getting reluctant writers going)
2. Establish a central meeting area
3. Decide on technology
4. Choose two different color papers (one for drafting and one for publishing) The writers notebook is used only for generating ideas.
5. Set up the writing center: paper baskets, process baskets, mentor text basket, revision baskets, revision tools basket (post-its, black fine point markers for revision, colored pencils)
6. Choose a bulletin board to celebrate student work.
7. Dictionaries and Thesauruses (or online tools)
8. Chromebooks for students who need assistance (Use Google Docs—Students can speak into it and it does the typing for them)
9. Folders for narratives from first unit (Keep them for use during the second unit at the end of the year. Students can use them for reference.)

Establish ongoing structures:

- How to gather kids and what to bring
- Always bring writers notebooks

- Where will students sit?
- Students will need a turn and talk partner
- Establish how to get students' attention
- Have a checklist captain. Someone who has the writing checklists. When students use the checklist, they should color code in their writing so we can see proof that they used the strategy.

Thought needs to go into partnerships:

- They should be ability based
- Kids who talk and who don't talk—Don't mix these
- Trios may work better—two proficient students and a striver. Have the two proficient students talk first so the striver listens and gets ideas.

Be Consistent:

- Use same structures each day
- Keep language the same in the mini lesson: "Writers are writing"; "Readers are reading"
- Tell kids what you are doing in the minilesson so they focus better (Describe each step)
- When you say, "Today I want to teach you . . .," Kids should really listen and pay attention
- Ask them what strategies they will try. Have them look back at what they've learned, turn and talk and establish three goals.
- Debriefing after minilesson is important before sending them off.

- Keep minilessons short. The more I talk, the less engaged are the students. Keep my cellphone nearby to use as a timer. Keep the minilesson to ten minutes even if I am **not** done.

Ways to Promote Engagement:

- Post writing quotes around the room (see photo). Have students stand under which quote they can identify with. Then have them write long as to what type of writers they are.
- Decorate notebooks
- Number notebook pages
- Label S for school and H for home
- Fill two pages in 40 minutes
- Two times a week for homework, write about any genre you like.
- Hand out stickers for encouragement (Wow! You wrote all the way to the end of the page!, etc.)
- Have writing challenges—try to increase the volume as a class. Celebrate!
- Give students time to share a favorite part of their writing

Session II—If You Lift the Level of Your Kids’ Writing About Reading, You Lift the Level of Their Thinking—And Give Them Tools for the Road (Lucy Calkins)

In this session, Lucy Calkins discussed the proper allocation of writing about reading time and actual reading time. She indicated that as a teacher, you do not want to ruin a child’s love for reading by having them write about it too much. All writing about reading should be purposeful. Writing about reading should not replace reading. Students should have their eyes on print for at least one hour a day. Time spent reading is

the single best predictor of how well a reader will grow. Only 10 percent of reading time should be writing time. For example, in a 40 minute class period, only 4 minutes should be spent writing. Some students, in fact, should only be writing on post-its.

Explicit Ways to Teach Kids How to Lift the Level of Their Writing About Reading:

- Have students think about reading as a writer.
- They should only write a literary essay at the end of the book. Otherwise, writing should be free choice.
- Have students discuss why writing about reading helps them think better.
- Have students write a bad entry and a good entry and discuss the differences.
- Suggest they try to write about some other aspect (language, word choice, metaphors, patterns in writing, etc.) if they are always writing about the same thing.
- When you want to write well, write about the BIG ideas and include tiny, concrete details. (Can copy these from the text—text evidence).
- Students need to cite and unpack the text
- When students write about reading, ultimately they are thinking more about reading.

The following writing prompt can be used during minilessons or as a game:

In _____, the author uses _____ in order to _____. For _____ example, _____.

Use the charts, Narrative Writers Use Techniques Such As and Narrative Writers Aim Towards Goals Such As, and a short text. Students fill in the blanks.

Nonfiction Reading:

- We need to make sure that students read NF text with pencils DOWN.
- They should read about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page per minute.
- Note the BIG ideas, supporting details and author's purpose.
- Give students different purposes or sides and have them debate.

Session III—Going Digital with Planning Tools and Resources to Make Work (and Life!) Easier and More Collaborative (Cornelius Minor)

In this session, taught by the dynamic Cornelius Minor, the main focus was on how to use technology in a purposeful way. The first thing we should ask is, “What are my literacy goals?” We should then decide what technological tools will help to reach those goals. **It is important to be purposeful with literacy and technology.** Cornelius suggested that what leads to mastery is practice so, therefore, it is not the teacher's role to teach to mastery. The student needs to practice. Rather, the teacher's role is engagement. Engagement is defined as the ability to fail at a difficult thing and have the social and emotional stability to go try it again. He also

suggests only adopting two new innovations a month. It takes time and effort to establish routines that are new.

Cognitive Demand: The brain can only do a certain amount of things at a time. When introducing new content, it should be done within a familiar context. You can then introduce new content and students should have a better understanding as to what to do.

Writing Engagement Barriers include:

- Physicality of writing
- Spelling
- When students are not interested
- Time
- Fatigue—school is a sport, students need conditioning.

When Students Aren't Interested in a topic, you can try:

- Incorporate a SWAT (Students Who Assist With Technology) into the classroom. One child who is in charge can sort articles, get a diplomat to get kids excited, ask students what websites they go to.
- Ask librarians for databases (collections of texts) EBSCO is one and Opposing Viewpoints.
- Chrome is best browser for education
- Announcify reads the screen for students who may be having a difficult time
- Read and Write also gives voice and visual functionality to what students are trying to do.
- Incorporate the use of timers. Students should be

-]'able to measure their own stamina. Ask students to stop when their hand hurts. Keep trying to write longer.
- Have writing races or challenges
- Keep squishy toys nearby for students to exercise their hands

Session IV: You Can do BIG Work in Small Texts: Tap the Power of Short, Shared Texts in Your Reading Workshop (Kristin Smith)

This session focused on various uses of short texts. Some uses include, highlighting a skill, flash debates (students reach back to text evidence), and moving readers across levels.

Highlighting a Skill: (Can use the Bands of Text Complexity from the Lucy Units)

- Use the reading learning progression, hitting certain aspects of it
- Skills to highlight: Theme, author's craft, character response to problems/change, role of secondary characters, perspective
- Debate Work (Use prompts-see photo)
- Which seems like a stronger theme in the story, _____ or _____? Get students to think broader about theme. Sometimes in life . . .
- NF:
 - Is it more harmful or helpful?
 - Which is the central idea _____ or _____?
- Author's Craft:
 - Which is a better explanation as to why the author _____. _____ or _____.
- Persuasive Article:

- Which reason is more persuasive _____ or _____?

Debates:

- Set up Partners ahead of time
- Academic Argument—our ammunition is text evidence
 - i.e. Is (the character) a good person or a bad person?
 - Partner A/Partner B
 - Kids can debate and then put all A's together and then all B's and look for best text evidence
 - Can post/chart evidence
- Possible debate prompts/questions to use with “Maybe a Fight” from *Hey World, Here I Am!*
 - Was the mother an instigator or a referee?
 - Did they actually have a fight?
 - Was the mother right?
 -

Evidence of Bands of Text Work:

- Role of secondary characters
- Setting
- Complexity of Characters

Short Texts:

- Level M—Honey I Love
- Level NOPQ—Mini Mysteries
- Level NOPQ—Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash
- Level RST—Every Living Thing, Cynthia Rylant
- Level S---Marshfield Dreams, from *When I was a Kid*, by Ralph Fletcher
- NF—Toolkit Texts, Cynthia Harvey—Grades 4 and 5
- Youtube Pfizer Graffiti Commercial (Good for perspective, author's craft, and POV)