

Literally Speaking

Middletown Township Public Schools



For more resources, please join us at our Diigo group, Middletown Literacy
<http://groups.diigo.com/group/middletownliteracy>

**Bring Your Passion Into the Classroom
and unlock a passion for reading in your students**
*The following idea was presented at the Rutgers
Conference on Reading and Writing by Bev Gallagher
from the Princeton Day School.*

Close Reading

Annotating the Text to Increase Comprehension

The Common Core standards require our students to read more detailed informational texts. A great strategy to help students find success is the close read.

Close Reading 101

Begin by reading with a pen.

Why? Your job is to annotate the text.

Annotating means highlighting/underlining important information in the text. In addition, make notes and ask questions of anything that catches your attention. This will be helpful to students when they locate information and cite evidence as per the new standards.

What should students do?

- ❑ Write the objective of the article/book. Why did the author write it?
- ❑ Underline important information about the text-main idea, facts, statistics..etc.
- ❑ Put a box around any higher-level vocabulary and clarify it below the word with a word that you know.
- ❑ Ask questions about the text-higher level-questions that show you are interacting with what is written on the page. How? Why?
- ❑ Make comments. What are you thinking about what you just read? Any revelations? Connections?

Every September Bev shares her love of baking with her students. No, she doesn't bring in cookies but rather bins of books. She starts with her cookbooks, dividing them into the beautifully illustrated, the humorous, the down home ones with snippets or whole paragraphs depicting homespun tales from the chefs (reminiscent of the memoir). Because baking is her passion, Bev's enthusiasm comes across to her students, and these books become the perfect mentor texts to illustrate how the authors create voice and set the mood through their language.

Bev doesn't stop with cookbooks. There are bins for autobiographies of chefs, biographies, memoirs, novels (think *Julia and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously*), the history of food, informational text, and even poems about food.

Once she has shared her passion, she challenges her students to share theirs with the literature they discover and the resources she is now able to channel their way, having uncovered their interests. Bev's bins disappear, replaced by literature the students have discovered.

As Bev will attest, middle school students are passionate about everything and nothing at the same time. Seeing one's passion come alive in literature just might spark an interest in reading.

Professional Enrichment

The National Council of Teachers of English website has a wealth of professional information, including policy statements on trends and practices in literacy instruction. One such document deals with the philosophy of writing instruction. The paper explores the role of the teacher, the capacity of the student, the relationship between reading and writing, and the purposes for writing. It also discusses technology and the importance of informed judgment in assessment.

<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs>

Some websites to explore for next year...

<http://www.parconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs>

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/modelcurriculum/ela/>

<http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources.html>

Remember to discuss summer reading
with your classes!