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reading with meaning reflection

*Reading With Meaning*, by Debbie Miller, illustrates a very detailed and methodical approach to not only teach reading skills to young learners but to establish a connection between readers and the cognitive processes that develop in a student by purposeful reading practices. This approach in developmental reading demonstrates the value planning and utilizing enrichment activities to create a high quality curriculum that instills internal motivations in students to excel in reading programs. The focus on beginning level learners is a good place to start considering that middle and secondary level instructors may have to go back to foundational reading practices to do patch work in order to develop the reading skills of struggling students. There are many benefits to bare in a classroom that uses the techniques and theories in the book that I am anxious to discuss.

One of the most important features that I find int *Reading With Meaning* is the need for a good reading environment. Students develop at such varying degrees that it becomes a constant struggle to accommodate so many at once and this is especially so with reading. Whether students are reading allowed or to themselves they require an environment that is safe from judgments and disturbances. I like how the month of September was used to focus on the personal relationships and the procedures necessary to create that quality reading environment.

Another point that I was particularly fond of was the use of schema to organize the subject matter and how that serves to build a workable understanding for readers to reflect upon. The use of schema also was impactful as a learning guide that helped students reach the learning goals set up by the teacher. In both instances having interactive discussions about the reading material gives students the opportunity to relate to the stories and characters they read about and using schema to guide and track the developments is certainly a productive way to go for students at any level.

Some of the techniques like reading workshops and the focus on concepts and meanings will definitely by useful in middle to secondary level education, but *Reading With Meaning* is written for primary students. The concern is that there is a solid foundational structure to the teaching methods prescribed by the book, but may be only applicable in the middle level schools in an intervention type setting. The other concern would probably be the most common and that is the release of the instruction over to the students. I know that is the goal because it leads to a deeper level of understanding but the element of subtle to chaotic malfunction exists. I believe that there is a way that was mention in the book that I could best describe in a metaphor regarding flying a kite. You cannot let out too much string at any point in time because the kite would crash. I take gradual release that maintains a constant tension (on the string) that will allow the kite (or students) to reach greater heights.

The benefits in using *Reading with Meaning* are quite apparent when looking at the structure it provides in teaching reading comprehension. First is the monthly organization and schedule that the approach provides gives teachers a template that the teacher could go by and take much planning time out of the picture, especially when you just have to add the novels you wish to use. Another great benefit is the structure also allows a teacher to apply the learning standards as goals or check points to reach through out the school year. In addition, the approach facilitates deeper level study of material that is enjoyable for students to read as they discover characters and even some thing about themselves.

*Reading With Meaning* provides an influential approach to delivering high quality reading instruction to primary level students. The fundamental structure that it provides can be used in higher level education to bridge gaps in student reading practices while making the effort enjoyable and practical. The final point is that learning to read and reading to learn go hand in hand and *Reading With Meaning* emphasizes that ultimately and provides students what they need to get on that path to success.