
Reading Quest

Judy Sima

In my twenty-five years as a media specialist I've always "recycled" the ideas of other media specialists and put them to work in my schools.

This year I "recycled" a reading incentive program that is proving to be a great success. The idea for our **8th Grade Reading Quest** was recycled from reading programs used in five other media centers: Independent Reading Program created by Victoria DeField at Bridgman High School; Challenge Reading Program modified by Freda Richards at Groves High School and adapted for junior high by Julie Killeen, formerly of Heritage Junior High; and the Reading Rally developed by Kathy Wade of West Maple Middle School and Debbie Lecours of Berkshire Middle School.

I even "recycled" an absolutely wonderful Battle of the Books team poster one of my students submitted last year. She called her team the "Reading Quest" so I changed the name of the program from "Reading Challenge" to "Reading Quest."

In Reading Quest I asked staff members of my middle school to read young adult novels over the summer and during the fall. Each teacher agreed to sponsor the book(s) read. In February, I introduced the program to our 8th grade Language Arts classes.

The students were then asked to read the same books as the staff members. After reading one of the books they were to make an appointment with the sponsoring staff member to confer about the book.

The sponsoring staff members were given the following general questions to ask the students to help them reflect on the books they read.

1. What are your feelings about the book? the characters? the ending, etc.?
2. What were the best or worst parts of the book? Why? Did any part of the book confuse you or make you wonder? What part would you change if you could? How?
3. What character would you like to be in this book? Why? What personality traits of this character would you like to acquire? In what ways are you like any characters in the book?

Judy Sima is Library Media Specialist at Chatterton Middle School, Fitzgerald Public Schools, Warren, MI.

4. What do you feel is the most important element (an event, a character, a feeling, a place, a decision) in the book? Why was it important?
5. Who else should read this book? Why?

After the conference the staff member signed a coupon or ticket which the student then submitted to the media center. A chart showing the names of students and number of books read was posted in the media center.

A student who had read at least three

books was invited to a special party given 8th hour near the end of the school year. At the party pizza, ice cream sundaes, and pop were served, and best of all — prizes were awarded.

I sent letters and made personal visits to local merchants to ask them to donate gift certificates and prizes for our drawing. Each book the student read was worth one entry into the drawing. The more books they read, the better their chances of winning one of the prizes.

Twenty-four teachers, administrators, counselors, and secretaries agreed to read more than fifty books. □

AIT Publishes Book of Readings for School Improvement

Bloomington, IN — School reform is a confusing and time-consuming business. Everyone has ideas about how the job can be done, but no one knows for certain what works.

Every Child Can Succeed: Readings for School Improvement, a 400-page anthology of recent articles, will help overworked restructuring teams, staff development coordinators, and teachers-to-be sort through the evidence about what makes school successful at helping **all** their students learn.

The book is introduced by Asa Hilliard, professor of urban education at Georgia State University. It includes articles and essays by education experts Barbara Sizemore, James Comer, Herbert Walberg, Harold Stevenson, Robert Slavin, Harry Levin, and many others.

Articles and newspaper reports describe eight successful schools around the country and the principals whose leadership has turned these schools around. Several essays look at concerns that must be addressed in restructuring schools. The greatest number of the book's articles discuss the special ingredients that make schools effective at helping even very disadvantaged student populations learn and succeed academically. The writers consider the timely topics of instructional leadership, creating high expectations, monitoring for teacher and student progress, parent involvement, and staff development. There are reports on such tested reform programs as Success for All, Reading Recovery, and Accelerated

Schools.

Conceived to accompany **Every Child Can Succeed**, a 17-program video public television series on school improvement that AIT released in January, the book's valuable background articles were originally published in leading educational journals, newspapers, and a variety of other sources. While the book can combine with the video programs of the series to provide a substantial foundation for a college credit course, it also stands alone as an important resource for education professionals and all others interested in upgrading the nation's schools.

Every Child Can Succeed: Readings for School Improvement, was published by the Agency for Instructional Technology (AIT). AIT, a non-profit U.S.-Canadian organization located in Bloomington, Indiana, has provided leadership and support for technology-based instructional materials since 1962. The agency develops video, videodisc, software, and print materials for schools in association with state, provincial, and local education agencies.

The book of readings is available for review or purchase from AIT. The book costs \$24.95 including shipping and handling. □

Editor's note: Check with your REMC to see if this program is available there.