**Reflections on our Collaborative Days**

Reflection on Shared Reading  
September 26, 2014

I came to a better appreciation of shared reading and its role in Balanced Literacy.  
Over the last week, I found “big books” in our school library and will incorporate them more during our LA time.  
I also did two poem studies this week, with an emphasis on working through it more – reading it together as a class in different “voices”, finding chunks, vowel combinations, rhyme, etc. as a whole group then branching off into individual activities that are still related to the poem we worked on (cut & paste the poem in order, copying the poem, coming up with another stanza that follows the poem’s pattern, and putting the poem in order word-by-word on a hanging chart.) I found the students were very engaged throughout the process.  
I like the poems from my colleagues in our literacy group and plan to use them in the next couple months.

Reflection on Close Reading  
October 3, 2014

Today we focused on “close reading”. At first we used “Drinking Fountain” but the strategies we used were very much like what we do in the classroom already. I was surprised when we closely read the “Celebration” poem because our group had sooo many ideas on why it was written, who it was written for, and the various connections (bonfire night in Newfoundland, our family reunions in Chicago that “weave into the night”, etc.)  
I will admit that I feel like some of the symbols will hard for my group to grasp, and I’m not sure how to really use this while still keeping everyone engaged. One of the teachers thought that we could use the Smartboard and drag the symbols when we go through the poem as a class; this is good but still wondering how it would look like when each student gets their own copy of the poem to mark up. Perhaps this would work better in January when students can read better (so much word work going on right now!!)

This type of higher level close reading is something I have to do more of. I encourage text-self connections but not this much!

Reflection on Writers Workshop  
November 7, 2014 – Absent

To make up for my absence today I read excerpts from the book The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (And They’re all Hard Parts) by Katie Wood Ray and Lester L. Laminack. It gave me a lot of basic information on how to start up an effective Writers Workshop routine in my classroom. I realized I need to organize my supply shelf a bit better. I will get some highlighters and different types of paper; I know a few students will definitely respond positively to that. I also made a lesson plan template that is basic but will help me to plan effective Writers Workshop lessons.

I liked this book because it made Writers Workshop look do-able. I have been worried about the extra “work” but I realize that much of it is common sense, things I am already doing, and effective management.

I have decided to use Writers Workshop as my Essential Question for this project.

January 16, 2014 – canceled due to weather (work afternoon)

February 27, 2014

We focused on non-fiction writing today. Every teacher brought in their favorite NF book. Kathy mentioned that most classrooms focus on fiction writing/story writing/imaginative writing. I find I am the opposite. We have done more NF writing – writing about ourselves (weekend writing), writing about our opinions, and writing about something we have done or something we like. I am more comfortable with NF writing because it is factual and children seem to love to learn about real things around them. I suppose some of it could be the Montessori focus of my school, although I know much of it is my preference. Although the basis of today’s discussion was on increasing NF writing in the classroom, I am thinking that although I will use some of the (awesome) NF writing method ideas we talked about today, I will increase some fictional writing in the classroom as well. The students often play imaginative games but I rarely focus on fiction as a writing activity.

March 20, 2014

Today we worked on early literacy, especially concepts that you teach in September-November in Grade One. We shared our word work ideas – word booklets, word sorts, word-based games, templates, etc. I find sharing resources one of the most helpful parts of collaboration. I noticed that a few of us had literally created the same thing (on a word document) so it was nice to just share what we had so we all don’t “reinvent the wheel”. I also got a lot of ideas on different ways to use an alphabet chart – singing just the sounds instead of the latter names, saying every other letter, reciting just the vowels/consonants, fun songs to sing while the students uses a pointer (A says a, B says b…), etc.