



## Features

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## Important Dates

- **March 7, 2006:** Field Advisory, Rooms 2417 and 2435, 4:00-4:50.
- **March 15, 2006:** Application Deadline for Fall 2006 Cohort.
- **March 20, 2006:** Transition to Teaching Special Education seminar, Room 3008, 4:00-6:00.
- **April 4, 2006:** Field Advisory, Rooms 2417 and 2435, 4:00-4:50.
- **May 10, 2006:** Transition to Teaching Special Education seminar, Monarch Center Conference Room, 4:00-6:00.

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## Literacy Artifacts

One way to focus on students' learning is for teachers to have conversations based on classroom literacy artifacts. Literacy artifacts allow us to demonstrate how we address literacy issues across all subject matters. Why do we focus so much on literacy? Studies have shown that as many as 90% of students with learning disabilities exhibit problems in reading either in decoding, comprehension, or both. Students who struggle with literacy may have difficulties in all areas of curriculum in terms of using resources and understanding text, e.g., math and science terminology, dense textbooks. Teachers can use a variety of different classroom artifacts to demonstrate what they do. Some teachers may focus on pre-reading activities, e.g., "Mystery Bag"

that holds hints about the story to come; a "prediction organizer" that provides a graphic for students. Others may show modifications during reading, e.g., altering language in a math word problem, creating "strategy cards" while reading, a "to do" list of strategies to use while reading. Still others might emphasize ideas for post-reading, e.g., KWL and QARs. Writing is also integral to literacy, and teachers can show artifacts about the writing cycle of brainstorming, drafting, revising and finishing, e.g., writing workshop forms, writing planners, and daily journals. Classroom artifacts, with a focus on literacy, can provide the source and extension for ongoing conversations about teaching and learning.

## Having a Collaborative Conversation

Talking and listening are integral parts of literacy. By participating ourselves in talking and listening that require both problem-solving and much more than yes and no answers, all educators can gain practice in breaking typical school patterns of talk. One common pattern is "IRE" in which the teacher initiates (I), students respond (R), and the teacher evaluates (E). Here is one example: Teacher asks the answer to a math problem; student responds; teacher says right or wrong. Such patterns are not authentic to real conversation (outside school talk) in which people wonder, disagree, take time to consider, interrupt, etc. Students with disabilities are frequently in direct instruction situations, so we need to provide additional opportunities for them to reason about ideas during other parts of the

day. When provided with rich opportunities to wonder aloud about a problem, to hear others' views, and to alter their own, students can build their understandings.

How do we teach ourselves to build such discussions in classrooms? We have them ourselves with colleagues. We focus on making collegial exchanges more active by asking more questions instead of just "show and tell" about our artifacts. All persons participate by offering a viewpoint, making a comment, asking a question. Generally, through collaborative exchanges we learn the strategies for listening carefully, drawing on others' thinking, expressing our views and alternate ideas, and speaking purposely and concisely. Then, we participate in the kinds of conversations we want to create for students in classrooms.

**Partners' Corner:  
Focus on Taryn Chrapowski-  
from M. L. King Jr.  
College Prep High School**

**What do you teach, and to what populations?** I currently teach in a direct instruction model classroom for high school students with autism.

**Can you identify two main things you like about your work?** I find it professionally rewarding when my students successfully find gainful employment, and I see on a daily basis the breakdown of stereotypes and the acceptance of my students by their peers.

**Likewise, can you identify two things you find most challenging?** Finding ways to motivate my students to push themselves in their

skill development, and effectively gaining financial backing for various programs that we would like to implement.

**Can you identify a few issues and/or dilemmas you discuss with colleagues?** Including students with low-incidence disabilities in the general education classrooms in a manner that will benefit all members involved, effectively initiating and gaining needed transition services for students as they approach graduation from high school.

**In your mind, what is the most important thing about teaching/ becoming a teacher?** Wanting to do it for the right reasons and putting your heart into what you do.

For the full interview: <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/stepup/tarynchrapowski.shtml>

**Digital Corner**

Using WebQuests is an efficient way for teachers to mine internet resources. WebQuests are websites in which a teacher selects a topic and uses interlocking text pages to guide students through a teacher-designed and project-specific website. The WebQuest has links to external, relevant websites. The activity ultimately becomes a web-based scavenger hunt, with templates and software to make design easy for educators. WebQuests come in two forms, a shorter and longer version, allowing students to have a day-long WebQuest or a long-term, project version. Sections of a WebQuest include an introduction to the topic, a task section that describes what students must do, a process section that lists the components, and a resource section that links to helpful external websites. Many WebQuests can be found at: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/>

and <http://webquest.org/>. Selected examples include creating a restaurant, el Niño, or real life geometry

Another website, Filamentality, can be found at <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/index.html>. It focuses on building hotlists, subject samplers, and treasure hunts. It offers templates for organizing web resources for your students to use. It also provides a powerful search tool to link to other teachers' work.

Research findings show that computer assisted instruction does not replace good teacher planning or instruction. Websites can help teachers expand students' experiences. Through animation, students can see how cells can reproduce. Alternatively, students can manipulate all sorts of data from varied sites. In such ways, the internet becomes a window to worlds outside the classroom and community.

**Building Effective Practice:  
Using Small Discoveries to  
Enhance Literacy Learning**

By Marilyn Stewart in *The Reading Teacher* (2003), 56(6) p. 540-547.

From doing 10 years of teacher research, Stewart offers clear ways to improve literacy learning that focus on students' strengths. Look at what you can make happen, Stewart suggests, by knowing your students' backgrounds and holding high expectations. She gives us many examples. In one, she shares her discomfort about a new student who was very disruptive and would not comply with norms. Only when videotaping him with a book did she discover that in spite of a significant speech impairment, he was a reader! The video allowed her to see that his constant movements actually helped him stay on task. Eventually the student became a leader in helping others. Stewart shares how she needed to "reexamine my own attitudes...continually."

Her students wanted to share a lot of stories and objects, but never had time to do so in-depth – very much the time problem we face as teachers wanting collaboration. Stewart created an "Expert of the Day" in which students used artifacts, books, and other materials Stewart provided to lead the discussion. Audience writing and talk as well as photos helped create authentic conversations..

Focusing on potential for student learning is key. But likewise, she implores us to talk with colleagues. "I found myself trying to see in my classroom the types of growth (the other teacher) described in hers, and she mentioned looking for similarities to positives I had mentioned." (p. 546)

For full article:<http://www.reading.org/publications/journals/rt/selections/abstracts/RT-56-6-Stewart.html>