Building a Culture of Reading: How A School’s Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction Help Promote Reading in Middle School

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School Facts

- Catholic School serving students in grades K-8
- 430 Students (150 middle school students)
- Northeast side of Indianapolis—part of Archdiocese of Indianapolis
- 26 credentialed staff and 11 supporting staff
- Emphasis on research-based teaching strategies and utilizing technology effectively as a teaching tool.
- ISTEP+ (Indiana state test); Indiana Reading Diagnostic Assessment; locally-constructed math and writing assessments
Creating a Context for Student Engagement: A Research Base

- NAEP data reveals that highly engaged readers evidence higher achievement than less engaged readers (Campbell, Voelkl & Donahue, 1997)
- Students benefit when provided opportunities to select from a wide variety of texts (Morrow, 1996).
- Students’ achievement and motivation to learn increase when presented opportunities to explore texts in conjunction with outside resources (Morrow & Young, 1997; Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, & Alban, 2000).
- Social collaboration and discourse among students fosters interest and active learning over time (Zahorik, 1996; Nolen & Nicholls, 1994).
A School’s Philosophy About Reading

An effective teacher...

- values reading and helps students to value reading
- helps students to select relevant and interesting literature from a classroom library
- provides time for self-selected reading
- models good attitudes and behaviors related to reading
Micro-Curricular Reading Strategies

- Varying novels
- Teacher read-alouds
- Partner reads with reflective writing
- Participating member of Young Hoosier Book Award Program (Association for Indiana Media Educators)
- Reading to younger students
- Collaborative projects
- “Rocking Chair Reads”
An Authentic Approach to Literature Instruction

- Interviews
- RAFT Writing
- Newspaper Editorials
- Character Poems
- Postcards
- Interview Responses
- Using Webquests (Handout 1)
- Panel Discussions (Handout 2)

Holocaust Panel Discussion (Video)
Macro-Curricular Reading Initiatives

• Valuing reading in a school’s curriculum planning
  – DEAR time
  – Great Books Seminar
  – Summer Reading Books
  – Using novels and small group experiences in earlier grades
• Ipod Initiative
• Book Clubs
• Reading Incentive Program (younger grades)
Results

- Since 1999-2000: Average of 96.5% proficiency rate among 8th graders on Eng/LA portion of state assessment
- Overwhelming majority of middle school students rank in the 95th percentile of students on statewide assessment
- Attendance at after-school book club sessions
- Qualitative data suggests positive support from parents and students
Key Learnings

Philosophy and Values

Macro-Curriculum

Micro-Curriculum
Challenges

1) How do we continue to integrate technology to further promote a culture of reading (e.g. blogs, Wikis, podcasts)?

2) Foundational Reading Skills

Love of Reading