The Reading Connection
By Janice Blanton

New Year’s Resolutions for Educators--Food for Thought?

Another year has passed. Do you find yourself reflecting on what you did not address in 1998 or on what you did accomplish in 1998?? This is not a trick question; it is merely meant to remind you that you touched many lives; created avenues to literacy; opened up opportunities by making new knowledge available to students who may have been weak in reading skills before they met you; and, in general, you made a difference. These are extraordinary feats in just twelve months! However, due to the nature of a caring and conscientious educator who is usually never satisfied with his or her accomplishments, I thought I would list some potential resolutions for your consideration in 1999. Most are noble. Some are fun.

1. If you find that you are handicapped time wise to give a struggling reading student individual assistance, make the effort to link this student to a cross-age tutor, a peer tutor, or a reading specialist if available. Do not allow the student to slip through the cracks.

2. Discover and then apply an interesting instructional strategy that you have never used before such as semantic webbing, graphic organizers, time lines, prior knowledge brainstorming, student journals, literary circles, dialogue journals, the software "Inspirations," Gist, oral book talks, etc.. You may excite the interest of a "bored" student?

3. Brainstorm with colleagues for clever and successful units/approaches that they are using. Form a monthly get-together for this purpose and do not cancel for any reason.

4. Organize an adult literary group where each member reads the same current or old book of value and then discusses it as a group. Be kind and realistic. Meet every three months--probably everyone can find the time to read a book in three months time. We all need intellectual stimulation, feedback, and interaction of the adult kind.

5. Attend a relevant conference. Do not be discouraged with the details of applying for permission/release time/reimbursement or with the size of the conference catalog!

6. Create collaborative learning groups on a regular basis. The students benefit in numerous ways--authentic learning, a forum for un-self conscious expression, and student bonding. Often, when students work as a group, they are motivated to apply themselves for the sake of the group?

7. Attend a movie that your age group students would be sure to see. Use a portion of a class to discuss the movie with them. Let them tell you what they thought the point of it was or why they liked it or how they may have changed the ending. As a result, you bond a little and you give your students a chance to express themselves orally and comfortably.

8. Employ occasional lessons using the newspaper. Allow your students to discover how a newspaper is organized, how to scan it, how to find amusement in it, and how to become informed about local, national, and world events. As adults, they will be more inclined to see the value of reading a newspaper.

9. Expose your students to a college or professional sport. Share with them the rules, the participants, and the objective. On a given day, have everyone watch the same game at their homes and then return
to school the next day to discuss it. The discussion may be five minutes or thirty minutes, but what does it matter? You will all benefit from the shared experience even if no one is a sport enthusiast!

10. Distribute a weekly written joke or humorous anecdote to your students. There are plenty of sources on the Internet or in the newspaper. As a result, they are smiling at least once a week and they are READING for fun!

That's all. In 1999, just for the heck of it, try at least one of these resolutions that you have not used before or DON'T!!!! Happy New Year!

Alumni Hall Of Fame

REG welcomes and congratulates the Fall 1998 graduates of the Reading Program.

Allison Ayares
Colleen Bair
Steve Belyea
Jennifer DeVries
Carrie Haskins
Kathleen Hatchell Eileen La Morte
Ana Ligorio-Tramp
Sharon McCabe
Mary Madison
Jan Morgan
Betty Othmer Anita Peacock
Jennifer Ras
Laura Rocca
Brigitte Roy
Diane Sandlin
Silva Sahmassian

Faculty Footnotes

by Kathi Bartle Angus

REG is delighted to announce that Dr. Norma Inabinette will be the speaker for our annual winter dinner. Norma needs little introduction to graduates of the program. Those of us who have had the privilege to be her students know that she delivers important and relevant ideas with candor and humor.

We encourage members to make their reservations early because seating will be limited.

Norma's topic will be "A Reader's Bill of Rights." The intriguing title was inspired by an encounter Norma had with an elderly woman. In conversation with Norma, the woman confessed she had never learned to read. She expressed sadness and frustration that she was never given the opportunity to learn.

The woman went on to tell Norma, "I deserved to learn how to read." REG members will be in for a treat as Norma expands on this theme of rights to literacy.
HANCOCK FUND

The Hancock Fund was established to honor Dr. Deborah Osen Hancock for her contributions to the field of reading and specifically to the Reading Department. The fund is solely for use by the CSUF Reading Clinic. Over the years, the fund has supplied books and technology for use by clinicians and students.

REG would like to thank the following members for their generous contributions to the Hancock Fund:

Peggy Hammer
Sarah Ross
Denise Dale

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Recommended Reading

By Carla Thomson

Join the Fray!!!
Comments on the Reading Excellence Act (U.S.)
by Ken Goodman

In December, 1998 Ken Goodman posted his “Comments on the Reading Excellence Act (U.S.).” to Reading Online, an electronic journal of the International Reading Association to share his views about this act recently passed by federal legislators in the United States. Goodman’s article is thorough, thought-provoking, and well-documented with many links to relevant articles and websites. By taking advantage of this opportunity to follow the links and read the referenced material for ourselves, we are not obligated to accept Goodman’s conclusions. We have access to the information (literally) at our fingertips and can easily read, research, and do our own critical thinking to determine where we stand on this issue.

Some excerpts from Goodman’s online article:

"How'd we get to this?" a colleague asked me the other day. She was talking about new laws that mandate instructional methodology in reading, outlaw bilingual education, and at times narrow teacher education to indoctrination in specific commercial curricula. The Reading Excellence Act is the culmination of a campaign to establish direct instruction—phonics as the national paradigm for reading instruction; it goes so far as to specify materials, instructional methods, inclusions, and exclusions. It puts control over federal, state, and local district reading programs in the hands of a "peer panel," three-quarters of whose members are appointed outside the control of the Secretary and Department of Education.

Who would have thought this possible? But then, who would have thought that California, Texas, Ohio, Arizona—and on and on—would be enacting such laws and mandates? How have we come to this absurd situation, in which reading and reading research are being defined by federal and state law? Visit the posting at http://www.readingonline.org/critical/ACT.html and then join in the discussion about this controversial piece of legislation by adding your comments to the online forum. Some examples of readers’ responses to whet your appetite for the article and encourage you to share your reactions:

"We in Canada are feeling the effects of this trend as well. I do not have a problem with explicit teaching of phonics to those children who need it. I do have a problem with mandating one method for all. It makes no more sense than mandating that all children must crawl before they walk (and it must be a standard on-all-fours crawl)." Another reader writes:
Our politicians, not educators, are steering the direction of education. Who are the experts? This is clearly a political agenda. They have forgotten those on whom we should be focused. THE CHILDREN!!

And another:

Even more disconcerting is the fact that parents have bought "hook, line and sinker" into this propaganda. Had enough? I hope not. Read and get involved.

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Editor: JoAnne Greenbaum

Faculty Footnotes: Kathi Bartle Angus

Recommended Reading: Carla Thomson

The Reading Connection: Janice Blanton

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, by being a regular column writer or just an occasional article donator, please contact JoAnne Greenbaum at jgreenbaum@fullerton.edu. We need all of you to help make REG great!