

4-1-1993

READING: THE CONFERENCES

Janet Dynak

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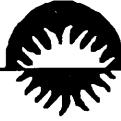


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Recommended Citation

Dynak, J. (1993). READING: THE CONFERENCES. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 33 (4). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol33/iss4/8

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READING: THE CONFERENCES

Janet Dynak
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A Celebration of Diversity
Association of Teacher Educators
Los Angeles California — February 1993

“A Celebration of Diversity” was the theme of the Association of Teacher Educators’ meeting in Los Angeles during February, 1993. Several thematic sessions presented instructional models to promote use of multicultural literature in classrooms. Kay Moore of California State University and John Smith of Utah State University discussed a joint project titled “Teachers as Readers of Multicultural Literature.” Moore and Smith used guidelines established by the International Reading Association and the Association of American Publishers to organize a program where university faculty, student teachers, and supervising classroom teachers form a readers’ book group to study multicultural literature. Volunteers from each university have established their own readers’ book groups, on the basis of collaboratively developed goals.

The program has five goals. The primary purpose is to promote awareness of multicultural children’s literature. Additional purposes are to develop and share strategies for teaching with multicultural children’s literature; to promote collegiality among teacher education faculty, student teachers and cooperating teachers; to view multicultural

children's literature through each group member's eyes; and to demonstrate to participants that reading of multicultural children's literature can become a part of their lives.

This is the structure that planners have found useful. Meetings are scheduled one semester at a time, and are held in a centrally located comfortable setting approximately every two weeks, with each meeting focused on one or more books which have been read in preparation for the meeting. A volunteer begins the discussion with a brief summary of the book and a personal thought about the multicultural issues which are raised. Discussion revolves around participants' sharing of personal responses, connections and questions about the multicultural issues in the book, and reaction to other participants' comments. In conclusion, participants share ideas on how to use the book in the classroom. Throughout the semester, participants are encouraged to keep reading response journals and it is useful to have participants write a brief project evaluation after the semester's last session.

Using evaluation received from past participants, Moore and Smith suggest that structure of the sessions should provide a time for socialization and refreshments, book and activity sharing, and a selection of a book or books for the next session.

Information about this project may be obtained from:

- Gerald Casey, Field Services Coordinator, International Reading Association, PO Box 8139, Newark DE 19714-8139.
- Kay Moore, California State University, Sacramento School of Education, 6000 J Street, Sacramento CA 95819-6079.
- John A. Smith, Utah State University, Department of Elementary Education, Logan UT 84322-2805.