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## READING: THE CONFERENCES

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# READING: THE CONFERENCES

Jeanne M. Jacobson

## *Educating the Imagination*

**National Council of Teachers of English,  
80th Annual Convention, November, 1990**

Many of the presentations at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, held in Atlanta in November, stressed the theme of teachers educating themselves, and one another, through reflective practice, shared theory — and ongoing exercise of perceptive imagination. Our own minds need cultivation; our own practices need change; our own professional lives need to grow.

Regie Routman, author of *Transitions*, and the forthcoming book *Invitations*, described her own process of professional development in her introduction to a session titled, "Firing the imagination: Using literature to support teacher change." Preceding other participants who spoke of children's literature as a vehicle for teacher change, Routman discussed the ways professional literature has

affected her own growth as a teacher and writer. Reviewing a list of recommended books, she pointed out the changes that have occurred in the views of scholars in the field of education as they have created new ways of teaching, and then observed and modified their own practices.

**It has been most of all the professional literature that has created change in our teaching. ...It is the professional literature that has enabled me to look at the ways I teach and say, "Aha! That's why it's working."**

*Regie Routman, speaking at the NCTE conference  
November 17, 1990*

Susan Hepler, addressing the same session, showed that children's literature itself, through the power of ideas and the beauty of language, constitutes a powerful change agent in teachers' lives. (The bibliography she provided is shared on pages 170 and 171 of this issue.) She also offered suggestions for engaging parents in learning about the best current theory and practice. Parents want to learn about what their children are doing, and why, yet teachers often lament that opportunities for communication with parents are difficult to arrange. Hepler advises using displays of students' work as occasions for informing parents about current educational theory and practice. When students' work is displayed, she advised, teachers should include a statement describing the activity and the rationale for it. "I see so many *inert* displays," she commented. "Displays that are explained give parents an understanding of the theory behind the instruction given. When we really educate parents about what we are doing, they really understand."

*The next annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English will be held in Seattle Washington on November 22-27, 1991. For further information about the convention, write to National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana Illinois, 61801 .*

## FIRING THE IMAGINATION: LITERATURE WHICH SUPPORTS CHANGING TEACHER PRACTICE

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