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READING: THE CONFERENCES

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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

Bibliography prepared by Susan Hepler, November 1990, NCTE

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2. Grouping for Comparisons
   a. Variations on Hanging In There
      James, Betsy. THE RED CLOAK. Chronicle, 1989.
   b. Tracking Down Cinderella

3. Writing Connections

4. Calling Attention to Words

5. Convincing the Hard Core Resisters

6. On the Non-linear and Capricious But Worthwhile Nature of Change