

Woodworth Middle School is found in Dearborn Michigan, birth place of Henry Ford (Woodworth is only about 1/4th a mile from where is born) and today home one of the largest Arab populations in the United States. Dearborn Public Schools are split into three sections that represent the city, West, South and East and those three sections correspond to the three High Schools in the District, Dearborn High, Edsel Ford and Fordson. Woodworth is one of three feeder schools to Fordson High School. Woodworth like Fordson has a student's population that hovers around 97% Arab. I have 120 students of those 9 are of non-Arab decent. There are three main ethnic backgrounds found in my classrooms, the largest is Lebanese at 83%, followed by Yemeni at 8% and a growing Iraqi population at 6%. The Lebanese students are mostly 2nd, 3rd and even 4th generations immigrants with many of their families coming over in the 1970's and 80's. With the Yemeni and Iraqi students most are 1st or 2nd generation with almost all of the Iraqi families coming over since the start of the Iraq War. Due to the population dynamics of the school we as teachers are faced with a completely unique learning environment.

For this project what I decided to explore and to analysis my first hour students. On our team during first hour, advanced math meets as a result there is an obvious drop in the other class as far as the number of the "higher level students." The class is made up of 23 students and it is by far my smallest class. The class is broken down into 15 boys and 8 girls. In order to collect data on the students' reading literacy practices, what I did was use "March is Reading Month" to my advantage. I told the students that because March was coming up and that it is "Reading Month" we were going to ask some questions about the students and their reading habits. So on the Friday before we went on Winter Break Vacation, I handed out a 10 question paper that asked the students about their literacy practices. Some of the questions included, "How often do you read at home?", "When you do read at home what do you read? (Books, magazines, newspapers, internet articles)", "What was the last book you read?" "Do you read in Arabic or just English", "Do you have a favorite book or a series?", "Do/did you ever read with your parents?", and "Do you remember you parents read to you?" The students then took a few minutes to write their answers; while they were answering I was walking around and looking to see what they were writing and if I didn't see an appropriate answer I made them fill it in correctly. I collected their answers and then we discussed each question as a class, it was interesting to hear the way the students reacted to different answers given by their classmates. For the question about what is their favorite book, I had one girl bring up the Twilight Series and she was so enthusiastic about it, it seemed to get the other girls in the class interested in reading the series and not just going to see the movies.

After compiling all the answers and looking at the data retrieved from my students I came to the following conclusion, my students are Digital Natives; they were born in the digital age and as a result do most of their reading through digital outlets. They complete roughly 80% of their reading either on their computer, phones or I-pads. Only 1 student out of the 23 in class said that he read the paper daily, what is interesting is that student is also consistently the highest achiever in class. Out of the 23 students only 7 said they read for fun of those 4 were girls and 3 were boys. 5 of the students said that they were currently reading a book at home that was not assigned in school.

Breaking it down by gender, out of the 15 boys in the class most listed sports related internet sites as what they read most, ESPN, Yahoo sports, CBS Sports and 4 of the boys said they read about Soccer online. Other interests for the boys included reading about new video games that were coming out soon, games that were already out. As for the girls they too liked to follow celebrity gossip online, they also read about the newest fashions in clothing and Twilight themed websites, with 3 even admitted to reading about the newest video games. But all, boy and girls, wrote down social networking sites like Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter as sites that they went on everyday. The data for my classroom, pretty much backed up the age old beliefs that most middle age students do not really have any interest in reading, as in reading book for leisure or pleasure, especially this new generation. They're more interest in action video games and reading to them is boring. Most of the students attitudes reflected this when we discussed the questions together in class. There was a lot of "reading is boring" and "why read when I can watch a video," "reading takes too long," and "I don't want to read at home, I read enough at school" not to mention the ever popular "reading is for losers."

There are three literacy goals that we will focus on in my classroom throughout the remainder of the year. The first goal is to produce students who can use various reading strategies to maximize their comprehension of text; through this they are able to identify relevant and non-relevant information. The next goal is for my students to be able to read a text and give a comprehensive reflection or summary that shows understanding of the reading as a whole and not on a word-by-word comprehension. The third and final reading goal is a basic one, to just get the students interested and engaged in reading. Making reading fun, the more fun or interesting the topics the better chance that students will continue to read on their own outside of school. For the sake of time and space instead of looking at the entire years Grade Level Content Expectations for 7th grade Eastern Hemisphere Social Studies I thought it would be better to concentrate on what we are going to cover in the next couple of weeks in class. In my class that happens to be a Unit based on the 5 Major World Religions followed by a cross curricular project with Language Arts called the Capstone Project. In the Capstone project the students will be writing a research paper on one of three topics all related to Asia, which is the current Continent we are studying. In Social Studies the students do all the research, note taking and start their outlines for the paper and then complete the writing and revision with their Language Arts Teachers. For the World Religions Unit students will need to be able to compare and contrast the World's 5 major religions, they will also need to be able to identify and distinguish between Monotheism and Polytheism, who founded the major religions and what some of the basic principles of each religion.

For students to enjoy reading it must be authentic, students need to be reading for reasons that make sense and have relevance to them. "Because the teacher assigned it" is not an authentic reason for reading a text. It is also important if the students have some type of cultural or social connection to what they're reading. When the reading connects to their everyday lives in some way they take a greater interest. Which is one reason the Religion unit is always a big hit with the students. Since 98% of my students are Muslim, religion plays a very important role in their lives. Roughly half of the girls wear the

Hijab or religious scarves over their hair and religion really does seem more important to Muslim youths than other schools where I have taught where most of the students are Christian. The students are more attentive, interested and ask many more questions about the different religions than they do during other lessons. Connection to the reading can also be found in the data that I took from the students about their reading habits at home. The websites visited by the students were visited not because of school work but because they found those topics interesting, whether it was sports or celebrity gossip sites. The students while not necessarily reading for school were reading none the less. One way to incorporate this type of reading into the classroom or a way to bring the classroom writing and thinking structures home would be to have the students complete current events. I have given current event assignments out where students need to read articles and then summarize them. A way to combine the two would be to have the students read maybe two articles at home; one on the current topic covered in class the other on any topic they wish to explore. Have them complete summaries of the topic and then allow them to present their topics to the class.

Summarizing refers to the students forming an accurate representation of the text after reading most or all of the material and for a majority of 7th graders summarizing is difficult. Most have not yet attained the necessary skills involved in summarizing a reading. They add in facts and information that are irrelevant or even meaningless, many times because they do not fully comprehend what they read, they write frivolous and completely off topic summaries. As a result a literacy goal for my students is to be able to read a text and give a comprehensive reflection or summary that shows understanding the reading as a whole and not on a word-by-word comprehension. We work on this constantly, first as a class to refine what we have just read. What is important, what is not important, how do you restate what was just stated in the article, do you understand what was just read? If not will someone else explain it in their own words? After we work as a class we will break up into smaller reading groups. Each group will be responsible for a section, with each group member being an “expert” for that section. Once those sections are completed we break up into different groups which consist of one group member for each section. Those group members must then teach their section to the group, at which time everyone should now have a completed summary and an understanding of the text. Other times students are also asked to summarize on their own, and then we will critique that summary, looking for either things that were left out or things that are not needed in the summary.

A third reading strategy that I use in the classroom is called QAR or Question Answer Response. Our school district is currently pushing to implement QAR in all of the Middle Schools. This strategy consists of identifying the relationship between texts, a question related to that text, and the answer to the question. Possible relationships include: (a) explicit (answer is right there), (b) implicit (answer is inferred from a sentence or possibly two), and (c) combined information (answer required integration of text

information from many locations, and integration with prior knowledge). When answer the questions students have to complete three different objectives. First they have to determine if the answer is explicit, implicit or combined information, which they then write down in the space provided. Then they use different colors to underline in the reading where they obtained the answer from. If it is explicit they underline exactly where they found the answers. If it is implicitly they highlight the sections where the information was available to imply where the answer came from and if it is combined they must show where in the text and explain what type of prior knowledge they have that allowed them to answer the question. Third, they have to answer the question. While it takes a while to get everyone going after a few times the students do seem to get the hang of it and it goes much faster and it really helps in grading because I can see either where they don't have the prior knowledge necessary to answer a question or if they were not using the correction section of the reading when answer the questions.

QAR, summarizing and making the reading selections relevant to the students are just a couple of ways that are used in my classroom and will continue to be used in an attempt to help my students become better readers by giving them a number of different strategies to use when they are reading a text.