

WinkWorld November 2005

Hello Friends,

In October I was at the University of Arizona for the Western Humanities Alliance, <http://wha.ucdavis.edu>. I worked with Sini Prosper Sanou of State University of New York @ Stony Brook, psanou@notes.cc.sunysb.edu; Santo Nicotera, Co-founder, El Pueblo Integral / Paulo Freire Freedom School of Tucson, snicotera@elpueblointegral.org, and www.elpueblointegral.org; LeAnn Putney of UNLV putneyl@unlv.nevada.edu; Jaime Eyrich of the Native Peoples' Technical Assistance Office of the University of Arizona, Jaimee@email.arizona.edu, and Gopa Goswami of Tucson Unified School District, GopaG@aol.com. The theme of the conference was Borders, and our group discussion focused on borders in pedagogy and partnerships. We were very pleased with our experience and hope to work together again this summer in a dialogue about "A Sense of Place" in schools and communities.

Amerind Foundation

While in Arizona, I was lucky enough to visit the Amerind Foundation. The last time I was there was about 25 years ago with a gaggle of 8th graders from Benson Middle School. It was thrilling to be there again. I encourage you to check out their website, <http://www.amerind.org/>. The Amerind is an anthropological and archaeological museum and research center dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of Native American cultures. It is located in the fabulous Texas Canyon near Benson, Arizona.

To Make a Difference

Why teach? Many teachers teach because they want to make a difference—a positive difference in the lives of others. Usually, we never know how we may influence another. I reflected on this when I heard the news of the death of Rosa Parks. I so remember being a little girl on the prairies of South Dakota, when I heard on our crackly radio of her courageous action in Alabama in 1955. I was immediately captivated, even though in those days I never spoke of it. I never met her, but she made a profound difference in my life. Many times, I have reached back and taken courage from her action. Thank you, Rosa Parks. We can never pay back, but we can pass on.

The Reading Wars

While in Tucson, Le Putney and I had a discussion of the various approaches to literacy. We focused on the two most prominent points-of-view regarding literacy, and we sketched as we talked. These are our re-written notes.

Scientific Approach

Memory
Decode
Scripted
Replicable
Levelized instruction.

Organic Approach

Meaning
Comprehend
Constructing
Contextualized
Differentiated instruction.

On the same page at the same time. Where they need to be, when they need to be.

Le and I are aligned philosophically with the Organic Approach. A colleague asked if we would concede 15 minutes daily of systematic phonics for beginning readers, and he/she would give the rest of the reading time for organic/holistic/literature-based reading instruction. Would we agree? Absolutely. This got us to thinking if there was anything else that the two sides of this debate could agree upon: Our list follows:

Cognition
Main Idea
Summarizing
Clarifying
Strategies/tools/skills
Word Recognition
Mental images
Inferences
Connections throughout the curriculum
Inquiry/questioning

We have no illusions about solving the problems of the reading wars, but we did have fun trying to think of components of reading instruction, which both sides might accept. However, we agreed that we all need to listen harder to the other and hear better.