

WinkWorld November 2004

Hello Friends,

In this issue of *WinkWorld*, I am sharing a new website which focuses on NCLB, a website with book reviews for kids by kids, information on the "new" ERIC, a look back at history in Birmingham, AL, which Kelly Russell shared with me. In addition, I am sharing "What is Socratic Dialogue." This month Dean, my husband, wrote Prairie Pedagogy.

*Please remember to vote tomorrow.

NCLB GrassrootsMovement

<http://www.nclbgrassroots.org>

This is a grassroots movement calling for widespread reform of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The purpose is to highlight how communities are faring under the law. The results, they say, are anything but encouraging. Largely a collection of newspaper articles culled from local and national sources, the site contends NCLB, although well-intentioned, "is having profoundly negative effects" on public education.

Retrieved October 20, 2004 from eSchoolnews.com

The original article was written by Corey Murray and published October 15, 2004.

ERIC

For those of you following the saga <http://www.saveeric.org> of the government shutting down our ERIC last year, I want to report that the new ERIC is up and running. . . sort of. The following information is available from AACTE.

Retrieved September 20, 2004, from aabdulbarr@aacte.org; also available from <http://www.aacte.org> and from <http://www.edpolicy.org>

On September 1, 2004, the U.S. Department of Education unveiled its reconfigured Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). After closing the 16 subject-specific clearinghouses that formerly made up a major component of the ERIC system, the government has designed a more centralized and streamlined Google-like database that provides a free online thesaurus, and enables users to save searches for future use. Despite these added features and the new look, the system still does not offer full texts of all the 1.1 million reports, articles, speeches, hearings, and other documents it houses. Department officials announced that they will add extra useful and user-friendly features in October, and that beginning October 1, 2004 users will have free access to 107,000 documents entered into the system as of 1994. In December 2005, scholars can begin submitting new materials to the database, which will be processed and available through ERIC within a month. Phoebe H. Cottingham, the commissioner of the National Center of Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance in the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences claims that ERIC still offers what it always did except that there exists a new way of accessing the materials. Some of the system's users expressed doubt about the changes wondering whether researchers will want to use it under its current design.

Book Reviews for Kids by Kids

Young Adult Book Reviews

Jim Burke (www.englishcompanion.com) shared the following information.

Flamingnet Book Reviews

www.Flamingnet.com

Book reviews and a reading list for young adults, including advance literature reviews by student reviewers. Created by a student who loves to read and his dad. Proceeds from book sales on the site are used to buy books for libraries in need.

Thank you, Jim, Seth, and Gary for your contributions.

Reflecting on History: Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

One thing about writing books, which no one ever told me when I was doing my first one, is that the readers write back and share the most interesting stories. Writing is such a solitary task, however it is also social because there is a constant dialogue ongoing online with new friends and colleagues I have never met. Such is the case of Kelly Russell from Alabama, who I will meet in June. Kelly teaches second grade at Hayden Elementary School in Blount County, Alabama. She is a doctoral student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she serves as a member of the adjunct faculty.

Kelly wrote:

We just passed the anniversary of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. One woman in the class teaches at a school where some of the girls attended. She has the McNairs come to her classroom to speak to her sixth graders. Birmingham is such a rich city. The Civil Rights Museum is across the street from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. I don't think you can stand in or next to that building and not walk away profoundly moved.

When friends come to visit me, I look for things to show them about my Birmingham home. I recently took a friend from Iowa to visit the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. We arrived too late for an official tour. In fact, we couldn't even get into the building. Instead we walked around the exterior of the building while I told her the story that I have heard so many times. When we reached the spot where, on September 15, 1963, a bomb was placed that took the lives of four young girls, my friend and I found ourselves crying. We realized that between the two of us we have four little girls of our own. Three of them are the ages of the girls who lost their lives on that spot.

The people responsible for murdering four children that day intended for their actions to divide our city. They were wrong. The outpouring of grief in 1963 crossed racial boundaries, and people of all races in Birmingham look to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church as a symbol not of hate and divisiveness but of love and healing. Above the front doors of the church is a stained glass window depicting black and white hands coming together. The people of Wales donated the window at the time the church was rebuilt in the 1960s. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is still an active congregation, and the people of Birmingham have recently come together to raise money to make needed repairs on the building. Despite the fact that the bomb was meant for evil, the people of Birmingham still use the memory of that day for good. We teach our children that it is hate that separates and love that brings people together.

What is Socratic Dialogue?

Recently, as Dawn was preparing for the second International Conference on Education, Labor, and Emancipation: Reinventing Critical Pedagogy in El Paso and Juarez , she asked me, "So what is socratic dialogue?" This was my response.

One legacy from Socrates is, of course, the socratic dialogue, often found in more progressive and even transformational classrooms. So what is Socratic dialogue? Think of peeling the layers off an onion to discover the center of the onion, which is filled with the complete meaning of truth, love, or justice. As we peel off each consecutive layer, we come to a clearer understanding. Socratic dialogue is the process of asking deeper and deeper questions.

Socratic dialogue does not cost anything. You cannot buy it in a box. It requires a terrific teacher who has the expertise and wisdom to lead students to find their own truth. For example, Sonia Nieto (2003) tells of Mr. Mannheim, a social studies teacher in a dilapidated urban public school in Brooklyn, who used Socratic dialogue with the 8th graders. The students come alive with learning and give answers worthy of the loftiest college-bound class anywhere (p. 11).

The Socratic dialogue is a way of bringing the knowledge out of students, even if they are not aware at the time that they know it. For example, Plato wrote on his papyrus leaf about an incident when Socrates met up with a young boy on the street. Socrates began questioning him about the Pythagorean theorem. Initially, the boy was sure that he did not know what it was. However, with Socrates adept questions, the boy soon came to understand that he, indeed, did know it (Johnson, 2005, p. 316).

In its most basic form the socratic dialogue begins with the teacher asking a question which on the surface may appear simple and even easy. For example, What is justice today? As students answer, the teacher continues to respond with deeper questions. This continues until teacher and/or students feel that they have taken the question as deep as they are able. Or, in today's world, unfortunately, it could also mean that they have run out of time.