

# Mary Blanton's TE 843 Core Assignment 3:

## Self as Reader/Reader Identity Unit

### Introduction:

#### Student population and class structure:

- Junior and senior at-risk intervention students in an English class
- Students who typically struggle with basic literacy skills and tend to be less motivated and engaged than other students
- The majority of these students are Latino males, though the group also consists of higher level ELL students and many students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- This class meets every other day for 90 minutes during the class before lunch (9:20 - 10:50).
- The desks in the room are generally arranged in a circle, unless we are doing groupwork, so no student sits in the back of the room. Having the desks in a circle seems to keep the focus of students on one another because we can all see everyone. I also move locations each day, so the focus is not necessarily on me at the "front" of the room. By moving around the circle each day, I can also get a sense of what students are doing, and how they are focusing/not focusing.

#### Purpose:

I decided to do a series of lessons on reader identity because of the group of students I teach. Most of the students in my class are the "George's" of Kylene Beers' book. The majority of students struggle with reading and they usually have no motivation to read - especially when it

has been assigned in a class. One of my goals is for my students to understand that they can learn how to be successful readers, and that their past history with reading, whether positive or negative, has an effect on the readers they have become. In addition, I want my students to be able to start making connections to texts, and to see that they can connect to any text, whether it's a text to self, text to text, or text to world connection. I also want them to be able to find a book they are interested in reading in order to practice some new reading strategies they will learn.

## **Curriculum Map:**

### **Primary Goals:**

- I can examine and develop my reader identity in order to understand my purpose for reading.
- I can read a choice book employing reading strategies that enhance my understanding of a theme from the book.

### **Essential Questions:**

- What is the purpose of reading?
- What experiences have I had that have made me the reader I am today, and how have those experiences impacted my reading?
- What active reading strategies do successful/independent readers use when they read?
- How do I pick a book to read that will interest me?

### **Content:**

- Terms: metacognition, inner voice, CARPE notes, strategies
- Skills:
  - Developing a purpose for reading.

- Creating a reading map in order to visually represent past reading experiences.
- Practicing active reading strategies - mainly CARPE (margin) notes. (I try to give them copies of everything we read so that they can write directly in the margins, otherwise, I provide them with sticky notes)
- Developing reading goals.
- Choosing a book to read from the library.
- Practicing discussion skills.

### **Assessments:**

- Formal:
  - Presentation of reading map to the class.
  - Showing evidence of metacognition and CARPE notes when given a short piece to read.
- Informal:
  - Practice with metacognition, inner voice, and margin notes.
  - Class discussions surrounding all topics.
  - Interest surveys and exit slips.

### **Instructional Strategies:**

I am usually a proponent of facilitating class discussions. I rarely stand in front to the room and talk, and I rarely write on the white board. The only thing that is usually on my board are the essential questions, semester learning targets, and a daily agenda. I usually try to start class with a discussion, model strategies or whatever we'll be doing on a given day, have the class do individual or groupwork, and then come back together at the end of class to debrief and discuss.

### **Daily Lessons (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Tuesday):**

## **Monday:**

### **Objectives: Students will...**

- Understand different purposes for reading and ways we read.
- Understand and practice metacognition and inner voice.

### **Lesson:**

- Begin with a quick write of reasons for reading and different ways each student reads throughout a typical day.
- In groups of 4, students will discuss what they wrote, and then they will put some of their responses on the board.
- Have a whole class discussion about reasons we read, and our different approaches to reading depending on the context.
- Give them an interest survey based on their own reading - both in and out of school, and again, students will be in groups to discuss similarities/differences between some of their responses. Each group will create a poster of sorts with their responses, and then each student will be given 4 sticky notes.
- Gallery walk where they will write responses to other group members, and then we will discuss the gallery walk and information they noticed as a class.
- Define and explain both metacognition and inner voice for the class. I will give the class copies of Tupac Shakur's "The Rose That Grew From Concrete." I will read it out loud, and model my inner voice and metacognition.
- Give everyone copies of the short story by Julia Alvarez, "Hold the Mayonnaise," and we will read it together, stopping at certain points for students to write their inner voice and other thoughts. "Hold the Mayonnaise" is an autobiographical story about Alvarez's

worry when she was young about her mother dying and how she would get a step-mother that would make her eat mayonnaise - something she despised. Ultimately, she grew up and became a step-mother to two young girls, and one day the girls visited Alvarez's classroom and she introduced them as her husband's daughters. The girls were offended, and Alvarez didn't realize it.

- To end class, I will give them an exit slip asking 2 questions: How can your past experiences explain the person you are today? Do metacognition and inner voice help you understand your reading? How?

### **Wednesday:**

#### **Objectives: Students will...**

- Create a reading map focusing on past reading experiences.
- Discuss and practice CARPE notes, with a focus on the connection piece.

#### **Lessons:**

- Refer back to exit slips from Monday. Discuss how past experiences impact our development and the choices we make as adults.
- Explain reading map expectations, and have students create a list of 15 reading experiences they can remember from their past (both positive and negative, in and out of school). Tell students these maps will be presented next class.
- Have them visually represent these experiences to create some sort of map.
- Define and explain CARPE (connect, ask questions, review, predict, and evaluate) notes, and explain how they connect to metacognition.
- Model CARPE notes with "Hold the Mayonnaise."

- Give class copies of Francisco Jimenez's "Crossing la Frontera" and have them practice with CARPE notes. Give each student a copy of Ide's "Text to self, text to text, and text to world" handouts to complete with their reading. Get into pairs and compare notes than discuss as a class.

## **Friday:**

### **Objectives: Students will...**

- Present reading maps.
- Discuss techniques for picking out choice books.

### **Lessons:**

- Review CARPE notes from last class, and give class another chapter from Francisco Jimenez's book. Have a whole class discussion about our notes, and show the class the notes I did.
- Each student presents their reading map and tells what they learned about themselves as readers from the map.
- Discuss how their experiences have affected their current attitudes toward reading assignments in school. How do we begin to change these attitudes? Why is changing attitudes important? Look at the charts from <http://www.focus.com/images/view/8740/> that show earnings based on levels of education.
- Move to discuss choice books. What are they? What are our expectations of one another? How do we pick books? What are different genres of books? What recommendations do we have for each other. Show them my book cart and give a book talk about certain titles.

## **Tuesday:**

### **Objectives: Students will...**

- Read a short story and use CARPE notes that I will assess.
- Develop individual reading goals for the quarter.
- Go to the library, pick three books, and do 5 page chance.

### **Lesson:**

- Give students a copy of Eugenia Collier's "Dean Man Running," and have them show evidence to metacognition and CARPE notes.
- Have students write what their strengths and weaknesses are in terms of reading skills/abilities, and show students my strengths/weaknesses list.
- Show a list of potential reading goals and have students develop 3 personal reading goals that they will work on for the semester. Discuss goal setting, and what it means to have a solid, measurable, attainable goal.
- Discuss the 5 page chance assignment. (They will pick three potential book choices from the library, read the first five pages, and write why they chose the book and what they thought of the first five pages.)
- Go to the library and give students the rest of the period to work on 5 page chance. Have them pick one book they will read in its entirety.

## **Evaluation:**

I chose to do this unit because I've always done some form of reader identity, but it's never been this formal. I've realized over the last year or so that my students (especially at-risk seniors) would benefit from such a unit. Reading through Kylee Beers' book had a greater

impact on me because the students she targets in *When Kids Can't Read* are the students I come in contact with on a daily basis. Not only do I come in contact with some of these students, but I have two classes filled with them. The potential that these students have is there, but it has never been fully developed - and I assume that part of the reason they struggle so greatly academically is because they have never been given the tools to connect to reading. Once they are exposed to these tools (literacy strategies), and they are taught how to connect with the texts we read, a whole new world is opened up to these students. They become more comfortable with the reading process, and as their skills develop, they are better able to challenge themselves with more difficult texts - such as those they find in textbooks.

One of the reasons for starting with choice books is to give students the opportunity to pick a book that they are able to connect with on some level. There are so many ways to approach reader identity, and obviously, these four lessons are just a start. Once they pick a choice book, there are so many more lessons I can use to continue discussions based around connecting to texts, practicing literacy strategies, and discussions of themes. I love the idea of using Roethke's, "My Papa's Waltz," to get kids to discuss how their experiences change their views of a text and to get them focusing on inference. I would use this poem probably at the beginning of our reading of choice books as a way to segue from the reader identity unit, and to introduce inference as they begin to make inferences with their choice books.

This unit, while only four class periods long for this assignment, is realistically about a month long in my classroom - working with different texts and focusing on different ways to connect and strategies to give to students to help them feel more comfortable with reading. Also, while this unit may last a month, some of the practices and discussions are ongoing throughout the entire school year. I never stop talking to my students about why we read, and what the

purpose of reading is. As the year progresses, we discuss how the level of reading in their classes is changing (if it is) and how their approach to reading is changing. We do evaluations often that are centered around their essential questions. They rate their understanding of the essential question, and they write a short piece about how their understanding of that question has changed. This is done before we start a unit, when we're done with the unit, at the end of the semester, and then again at the end of the year. I want my students to be aware that the essential questions I give them at the beginning of a unit don't just take us through that unit. They turn into guiding questions for the entire year.

There was also a question stated in my first draft about how I will assess margin notes, and I wanted to address that. Because I grade on proficiencies and learning targets, I have a completely different system for assessing student work. All students receive rubrics for each target that is assessed (I've included my margin note rubric). They receive the rubrics at the beginning of the unit, and as we practice each target, students work with the rubrics. The students don't get a percent grade, they receive a 3, 2, or 1. A 3 means they are highly proficient, a 2 is proficient, and a 1 is not yet proficient. The collection of evidence from assessments throughout the semester will ultimately determine their overall transcript grade. Also, with something as important as margin notes, I extensively model and show student examples of what I expect. I also don't expect that many of my students will reach proficiency on a skill like margin notes the first time they are assessed. They will have multiple opportunities throughout the semester and the year to show evidence of their metacognition and margin note proficiency.

After completing this assignment, I am looking forward to starting school in the fall to work with this unit. I am more comfortable now that I have planned it out, and even though I'm

sure I will make small changes to it as I meet my students and assess their needs, knowing that I have a focus and a direction is reassuring.

**Readings and Handouts:**

**The Rose That Grew From Concrete**

Tupac Shakur

Did you hear about the rose that grew  
from a crack in the concrete?

Proving nature's law is wrong it  
learned to walk without having feet.

Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,  
it learned to breathe fresh air.

Long live the rose that grew from concrete  
when no one else ever cared.

## **CARPE note rubric:**

### **3 means:**

I can connect, ask questions, review, predict, and evaluate a text in a way that enhances my understanding of the text.

My notes are in depth, complete throughout the text, and I note instances of literary technique.

I have gone beyond surface level information, and my notes have become a relevant tool to aid in my understanding of plot, theme, purpose, tone, etc.

### **2 means:**

I can connect, ask questions, review, predict, and evaluate a text in a way that enhances my understanding of the text.

My notes are sometimes in depth, complete throughout the text, and I note some instances of literary technique.

While my notes may sometimes be surface level, they have become a relevant tool to aid in my understanding of plot, theme, purpose, tone, etc.

### **1 means:**

I can connect, ask questions, review, predict, and evaluate a text, but it does not enhance my understanding of the text.

My notes are not in depth, and I rarely note instances of literary technique. My notes also may not be complete throughout the text.

My notes are mostly surface level, and they have not yet become a relevant tool to aid in my understanding of plot, theme, purpose, tone, etc.