



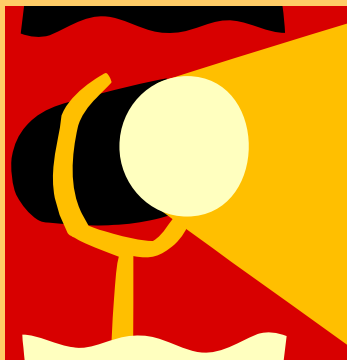
# SPOTLIGHT ON LITERACY

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Written and Edited by Instructional Literacy Facilitators and Specialist

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The Instructional Facilitators for Literacy would like to wish you a relaxing summer. We have enjoyed working with you for the last five years and know that you will continue the great work that we have done together.



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## Technology and Research @ Gateway

### *A Winning Combination for 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Students*

Teachers and students using the Big 6 as their model have been integrating technology as they become proficient researchers this year. Dynamic teacher inspired learning activities have taught students how to be effective users of information while flexing their creative research muscles at the same time.



### Ancient Egypt Uncovered by Sixth Graders

Sixth grade students at Gateway learned about each step of the Big 6 research process as

they investigated life in Ancient Egypt. After defining their topics and finding resources, they became expert extractors of important information. They gathered notes on the roles of men and women in Ancient Egypt, views on burial and life after death, pharaohs, and the construction of pyramids. Once they had their information, they put themselves in the shoes of a teen from Ancient Egypt, creating journals to record their observations and way of life. To synthesize what they learned, students gathered images to support their topics and narrated their journal entries in order to create dynamic Photostory presentations.



(Gateway Research continued on page 2)

( Gateway Research continued from pg. 1)

## **Seventh Graders Research Opposing Viewpoint**

Meanwhile, seventh graders have been busy looking at opposing viewpoints. Using the "Opposing Views" on the Gateway Library page, they researched topics including teen suicide prevention, abuse of animals for fast food, and chocolate and the slave industry. Once a topic was selected they took a position on an issue and delved into further research using both print and internet sources. Once the information was gathered, students wrote a persuasive business letter to a key person within the industry. Students then followed-up on their issue by creating a commercial or participating in a classroom de-



bate.

## **Eighth Graders Pursue the Constitution from Multiple Sources**

Concurrently, eighth graders were honing their research skills as they prepared for their Classroom Based Assessments (CBA). For them, research was taken to a new level as they defined their topics based on current issues relating to the Constitution. In order to find relevant information they had to go beyond Google and learn how to access information using databases. Using key word inquiries, and narrowed topics, they effectively used Facts on File, Opposing Viewpoints, and Proquest. They had to think

critically to evaluate information as they looked at divergent viewpoints to determine their own stance on their topic. Once they gathered information, they wrote persuasively to share their in-



sights on the topic and related it to current events.



Article submitted by Barbara Tibbits

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A special thanks to all of the IFLs for their contributions to this newsletter and especially to Pat Collins and Cindy Foster who organized and formatted *Spotlight on Literacy*.

## READ 180—Celebrates Successes—May PLC, Model Classrooms Visited by Moses Lake, Everett READ180 Applauded by Scholastic

### May PLC Meeting

Secondary READ 180 teachers met after school on May 19th in the Eisenhower Middle School Library for our end-of-year PLC. Participants completed the end-of-year Zoomerang Survey and reflected on successes and challenges around student and teacher learning throughout the year.

#### Data inquiry around successes and challenges of student and teacher learning during the 2008/2009 school year

Using a protocol from *Data-Driven Dialogue*, we gathered qualitative data related to successes and challenges around learning. Teachers identified three high points (successes) and three low points (challenges) related to student learning and/or their own learning between September and May. High points were written on yellow sticky notes and low points were written on blue sticky notes. Before compiling our high and low points data, teachers made predictions about the distribution of the data. Then, on an 8-foot grid, teachers positioned each sticky note (high points

and low points around learning) according to the degree of success or challenge (+2, +1, 0, -2, -1 along the y-axis) they observed or experienced during a particular month. In small groups, teachers analyzed the distribution of successes and challenges related to learning across the school year.

After analyzing the data, participants were surprised to see a fairly even horizontal distribution of high and low points across the school year, as well as an even vertical distribution of high and low points. Teachers noticed low points tended to cluster before the SRI windows, and high points tended to cluster after the SRI windows.

From these observations, each small group concluded that the SRI may have a significant impact on student attitude regarding individual progress and motivation. This conclusion was valuable for teachers, since students are currently preparing to complete or in the process of completing the fourth, and end-of-year SRI.

(READ180 continued on pg. 4)





## Applying our learning from data inquiry



The impact of the SRI on student attitude and motivation, became even more relevant when Peter Hendrickson shared his recent data analysis of mid-year SRI growth. Peter's analy-

sis reveals significant growth among students across all grade levels who took the SRI in September and again in March. Upon reflecting on the mid-year SRI growth presented by Peter, teachers expressed the importance of providing instruction around "Academic English" and test-taking strategies so that struggling readers can access the language of standardized tests and district assessments.

## Moses Lake Public Schools Visits READ180 Middle and High School Classrooms

On May 13th, ten teachers, building administrators, and program directors from Moses Lake Public Schools visited three middle school and three high school READ 180 classrooms. Five members of the Moses Lake team visited Carmen Boggs and Ed Glazer at Evergreen Middle School and Jackie Bosworth at Eisenhower Middle School. Cindy Foster, Middle School IFL, and Monte Scholz, Cascade High School IFL, assisted in touring our guest around READ 180 classrooms.

In each classroom, our guests observed students actively participating in READ 180 Routines such as the Oral Cloze and Think-Write-Pair-Share routine. Students also participated in the independent reading rotation or the instructional software rotation. In debriefing the classroom visits, each visitor discussed the

strong, consistent implementation witnessed from classroom to classroom. In addition, they were impressed with the high level of engagement among all students, whether the students were participating in small-group instruction, reading independently, or practicing comprehension skills on the instructional software.

Earlier this school year, educators from Marysville and Seattle Public Schools visited several READ 180 classrooms and were equally impressed with student engagement and our implementation model. The evidence of extraordinary work produced by our READ 180 students continues to inspire educators outside and within Everett Public schools.

## Scholastic Shows Supports for READ 180 PLC, Again

Last month, Abi McNaughton (Scholastic Account Executive) participated in our April PLC, and this month Roberta Harrison, a newly hired Implementation Consultant for Scholastic, joined us on behalf of Scholastic to show their appreciation of Everett Public Schools' dedication to employing an implementation model that exceeds Scholastics expectations and serves as a model for school districts across Washington State. Roberta praised teachers on their fidelity to the instructional model and for the significant SRI growth among our students.



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## High School Literature Review

Thanks to the hard work of the district literacy review team listed below and on-going participation of English department members across the district, we were able to present our recommended books for adoption (both CORE and Supplemental) to the school board last week. Our process and selections were well received. Board members were happy with the variety of texts we chose as well as the focus on issues of diversity and the inclusion of contemporary novels and nonfiction. The board members were familiar with many of the books and appreciated the controversial nature of some of the selected texts. Books will go before the school board again in two weeks when they will vote on the proposal. The books will be on public display at the Center from June 16-18. If passed, we are expecting to have 300 copies each of *Ender's Game*, *A Place Where the Sea Remembers* and *The Crucible* in your buildings by fall. Teacher support materials are to be housed in your libraries. We are in the process of creating weblinks with resources for each book. An email will be coming out soon with the website information.

Thanks again to our district team for all of your hard work to make this happen!

### Literacy Review Team Members

<b>Cascade High School</b>	<b>Everett High School</b>	<b>Jackson High School</b>
Ed Bowers	Margie Burr	Nick Andersen
Michelle Crews	Chani Craig	Judy Baker
Ruth Hunter	Heather Hoffman	Eric Bush
Sue Johnson	Victoria Johnson	Keith Gerhard
Bev Nyberg	Kathy McCormack	Steve Johnson
Monte Scholz	Tessa O'Connor	Debora Kalina
Jennifer Stockdale	Bruce Overstreet	Jared Kink
Carole Woods	Deb Payne	Torrie McEntire
	Jen Weber	Barb Stolzenburg

### Recommended CORE Books

<u>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</u>	<u>10<sup>th</sup> Grade</u>	<u>11<sup>th</sup> Grade</u>
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Chinese Cinderella</i>	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
<i>Ender's Game</i>	<i>Night</i>	<i>Black Boy</i>
<i>Mice and Men</i>	<i>A Place Where the Sea Remembers</i>	<i>The Crucible</i>
<i>Who Am I?</i>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	<i>Glass Castle</i>
	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>	<i>Into the Wild</i>

These supplemental texts are books that the Literacy Review Committee read, discussed and recommended for use, not as core texts, but as books that teachers may choose to read with select groups of students or in small literature circle groups: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, *The Bite of the Mango*, *The Book Thief*, *The Color Purple*, *Kaffir Boy*, *Kite Runner*, *Long Way Gone*, *Nervous Conditions*, *Nickel and Dime*, *Persepolis*, *Secret Life of Bees*, and *Wild Thorns*.

# Revisioning *The Argumentative Paper*

By Monte Scholz

It started nearly two years ago with an ambitious goal: to get 85% of the class of 2009 to standard on the Argumentative Paper by the end of the school year. Cascade High School's Junior English Team worked hard to achieve that goal, but ultimately, it was a dream unrealized. They were not alone. The instructional challenge of implementing the Argumentative Paper requirement, and the feelings of dissatisfaction at both a student and teacher level, were shared across the district. It was bigger than any one grade-level team at any one school.

Last summer, members of Cascade's Grade 11 English Team joined with teacher representatives across the district to collectively problem solve, review and revise Argumentative Paper standards, and strategize instructional approaches based on best practices. Carole Woods, CHS's English Department Chairperson and a member of the summer review team, said that by participating in last summer's work, "I finally understood the skills we were trying to get the students to learn and demonstrate."

CHS participants in the district task group brought back other ideas based on their summer work to their building-level colleagues, which served to change how argumentation would be taught at Cascade this year.

- The team would start to chip away at the monolithic perception of *the* Argumentative Paper. Students (and teachers) should not expect to merely write *one* paper. Woods shared, "Argumentation is part of a comprehensive course in which the targeted skills are purposefully and intentionally taught and connected to other course content." Students should have multiple opportunities to practice and hone their skills over time.
- Second, the team would de-emphasize the research intensive aspects of the Argumentative Paper. Instead, deeper analytical skills, synthesis, and elements of argumentation would be the focus. "It is less about the hunt and more about a student's ability to connect information across text(s) and use that information to take a stand and defend his or her position," said Woods. The self-selected topic aspect of the Argumentative Paper unit would be dropped in favor of a collective, group topic.
- Since the content focus of Junior English is supposed to be a survey of American Literature, efforts would be made to focus argumentation through a literary lens. Finally, the team wanted the time to intentionally scaffold the argumentation and writing skills necessary for student success in meeting standard on the Argumentative Paper, and because students should be provided multiple opportunities to develop and fine tune those skills, the team decided to wait until third quarter to assess their students on the full Argumentative Paper Rubric. Since there would be no chance for students to "make up" the graduation requirement if they failed to meet standard in their junior year, it would be an all or nothing endeavor for both students and teachers to meet their performance goals.

Students in Woods' class had already written four (4) argumentation papers by the third quarter and would go on to write at least two more by the end of the year. "The irony," Woods said, "is that we've done way more writing over the course of the year than when we focused a whole quarter—sometimes a semester—on the production of just one paper." There was a greater emphasis on in-class writing with short turnaround times.

**Woods partnered with Bev Nyberg**, who teaches Junior Honors English, to develop argumentative writing prompts connected to the literature they were studying in class. After reading Native American and Slave narratives, accounts of early American colonists, Washington Irving's account of Columbus discovering America, and Emma Lazarus's poem, "The New Colossus", students were asked to argue if America was the land of opportunity.

**After a unit on Transcendentalism**, students were asked to argue the advantages or disadvantages of being a non-conformist. Students were asked to defend or attack the decisions of central characters in *The Crucible* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Woods' class went on to write arguments linked to the content of *Black Boy* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, while Nyberg's class took positions on whether or not *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should be taught in public school.

**Other classes in the junior team** wrote about immigration, monetary policy, and school start times. When asked if they felt part of the rigor was compromised in not having students research their own topics, both teachers felt that something else was gained. Woods related that, "Students synthesis and higher level thinking skills greatly improved as well as their confidence. Students get that 'I can do this' feeling and are able to talk about argumentation and their learning with more authority." Nyberg added, "Students' lack of research knowledge and skill—something that needs to be addressed way before they get to us in Grade 11—severely limited student success in self-selection of topics. Students experience greater connection and relevancy to the topic when it is based on literature that all students are exposed to. Students are also more engaged critical reviewers of each other's work because they are all familiar with the topic and challenge their colleagues' arguments and evidence in a meaningful way."

**Does writing more papers increase the workload and burden of feedback for the teacher?** Nyberg says that with students providing more quality peer feedback, the number of revisions she has to read has decreased. Although Woods says she is reading and providing feedback on more papers, at least it is not the same paper over and over again. And ultimately, the students are learning more by producing more.

**Final Thoughts**—Both teachers see themselves and their Junior English Team moving ahead next year on embedding instruction of argumentation skills and establishing essential questions around more units and lessons in their American Literature courses. More than being a graduation requirement, deeper reading involving critical analysis and synthesis, taking a position and developing an argument, and being able to clearly articulate that position and rationale through writing are life skills. Skills that Cascade's Junior English Team is committed to instilling in each of their students.