Sonni Potts

EDUC 342

Reading with Meaning Reflection

When I think back on my past years of education, I begin to wonder if I received this type of instruction that Debbie Miller speaks about. I can remember in elementary school, reading book after book, as if it was some contest to see who could read the most. I don’t remember reading workshops, large group instruction, or even small group time. We were taught the fundamentals of basic reading, and writing. So as I sit and read this book, I’m left with the feeling that I was ill prepared and that I have a bit of catching up to do. Fortunately I have the benefit of the Language Art class and this Developmental Reading class. If I had not, I don’t feel as though I would be prepared to teach children these methods. I agree with Ms. Miller, that there is a process and the reading starts with the teachers. Teachers have to be fluent, reflective readers, and not just fast and an okay reader. So when I take my past experience and the new knowledge I have retained, I wonder if all teachers are doing these steps.

Ms. Miller states “Be the teacher that ‘knows her stuff’.” Whether you are addressing parents or your students, show confidence in what you know. A teacher should always be looking at new ways to improve upon their students’ comprehension. This is not just being a reader, but a reflective reader. Teachers must establish a framework for their students. One of the ways to implement is by using a readers’ workshop. This will include mini-lessons, block time for reading and response, and a time to share. Readers’ workshop can be and should be done everyday. Practicing this everyday will allow students the ability to gain responsibility and independence. This process will help students to know what the process is and do it automatically. Of course, there will be some that it takes longer to adapt, but with consistency they will catch up to the others.

Teachers must model for their students how to be a fluent reader. They must show students how to be thinkers, how to make connections, and how to understand what they are reading. In a world that consists of visual and kinesthetic learners, just telling them how to do it won’t work anymore. Take a text and read it to the class. During the process, stop and ask yourself questions about what you are reading. Allow the students to help you answer. Make statements of how this book reminds you of a book you once read that had a similar storyline, or an experience you once had. Take the book by chapters, and ask the students questions about what you have read. This will teach the students how to be a reflective reader. Since reading is the core of every student’s education, it is essential that they learn to take what is needed from the text that they are reading. This is not a single occurrence, and then you never use it again. This is what is incorporated into your mini-lessons. Teach the students how to teach each other. Allow them to be the thinkers and teachers along with you.

Once you have established how you want your students to think, it is time for them to show you how they are thinking. Ask deeper questions, have the students write their thinking in their journals. Have a daily check for what they are learning, so that you can see what they are thinking and where they are in the process. Having the students take ownership of the learning is essential. Once you have given them the steps and the instruction, they have to give it back. Journaling, exit tickets, blogging, and small groups are ways that you can check upon their knowledge.

I believe in this approach whole-heartedly. I have seen this process in motion and I know that it works. I know that it takes practice and time, and that it does not come automatically. I also know to not give up and to keep trying until it is discovered what works best. Look at yourself as a reader and decide what areas need improvement. This has to be decided before you can instruct students in how they should read. I’m excited to implement this process into my classroom. Teaching students to be life-long learners is one of the most important things I can teach.