

**Juli Kendall's
2003-04 Reading/Writing
Workshop Journal
Week #23**

My Spring Break-through

It's time for the infamous "Spring Cleaning." I've got wood floor cleaner, Windex, my feather duster, and anything else you could hope to use to make your house spotless. I've even brushed up on "how to clean." My new goal was to become a domestic goddess. But all that has turned to dust. The windows will just have to wait until summer.

It's Spring Break, and instead of scouring, I'm curled up on the TV room couch watching videos — videos of teacher/author Cris Tovani. This new set of four videos from Stenhouse is titled, *Comprehending Content, Reading Across the Curriculum, Grades 6-12*. It's a perfect fit for my focus this year on content literacy in science.

So, off "to the movies" I go. My mission? To discover what Aurora, Colorado (that's where Cris works) has to do with my teaching context.

I start with the 28-page "Viewing Guide." It gives guidance and suggestions for facilitators of groups watching the videos. Since I'm on my own, I treat the guide as my facilitator and follow several of the suggestions for how to get the most out of my viewing. I'll read the discussion questions ahead of time and pick one as a focus question to prompt my thinking. Then, as I'm watching I'll take the guide's suggestion and use notes on a two-column chart to record my thinking. It's described as "a kind of double entry diary or journal."

As I begin the first video,” I discover that Cris has two roles -- working with teachers and teaching kids. She also has students with a range of abilities, including struggling readers.

My focus question – “How is the organization of Cris’s classroom/teaching similar to mine? What does she do differently?” (p.5)

My Two-Column Notes for Tape #1
 “Modeling What Good Readers Do”

(I followed the format for two-column notes but I adapted it to suit my purposes.)

<i>Similarities to My Classroom</i>	<i>Differences and Comments</i>
Kids need to be drawn into the lesson. Their teacher and her examples fascinate them.	
Kids like examples of other kids who have trouble and who say things like, “Isn’t it your job to make sure I get it?”	
She uses thinking aloud to teach and model for her kids. She works with the whole class.	I work with small groups of 4 to 5.
She walks around and monitors their work.	I sit with the small group and monitor.
She models using the overhead and writes on the text so everyone can see.	I don’t use an overhead.
She tells the kids that she is going to teach them a plan to figure out when the meaning breaks down.	(I wonder if they understand what that means...)
These kids don’t know that they are confused until someone asks them to do something with the information and they realize they don’t get it.	
She shows them where she gets confused and how she gets unstuck. She talks about how she is not going to quit.	She gives herself a job and tells the kids what it is.
Assesses kids informally as she is teaching, modeling and thinking aloud.	She has them highlight what they don’t understand.
Models a conclusion by drawing the kids into her story.	(Maybe I could try that...)

Follow-up Reading Recommendations from Cris Tovani’s book, *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?*

Chapter 1, “Introduction”

Chapter 2, “Parallel Experiences: Tapping the Mother Lode”

My Two-Column Notes for Tape #2
 “Interpreting Data: Charts, Graphs, Standardized Tests”

<i>Similarities to My Classroom</i>	<i>Differences and Comments</i>
Cris needs to teach kids what they can do to read text for assessments.	I wonder what the state assessments tell us about what kind of text is most difficult from my kids. I'd bet it's informational text. I'll take a look at our data to confirm this.
	I'm going to ask my kids the question, “What kind of text is the hardest to read?” and then share the test data and their answers with them.
She works on determining importance in text with her kids.	
She uses highly engaging topics with her kids like, “Is the US justified in waging war with Iraq (terrorists)?”	Sharing information about other classes might be a big motivator. Using data from other classes to create conversation.
She spends time helping them draw conclusions as a whole group.	I work with my kids in small groups.
Cris talks aloud to help her class understand what she is doing to help them.	
Talks about fact and opinion.	My kids have a big confusion with this...
	Teaches how to look at graphs and data as another kind of text structure to help with other classes, work situations, and the state test.
She works to help kids understand the difference between retelling and drawing conclusions.	“Looking for clues and then we're interpreting them”

Follow-up Reading Recommendations from Cris Tovani's book, *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?*

Chapter 2, “The ‘So What?’ of Reading Comprehension”
 Chapter 7, “Group Work That Grows Understanding”

My Two-Column Notes for Tape #3
 “Reading Like a Mathematician”

<i>Similarities to My Classroom</i>	<i>Differences and Comments</i>
She’s trying to figure out how to help kids be better math readers. We’re working on that too – content readers in math.	
She works with other teachers, collaborating and coaching, just like me.	
The teachers walked around and conferred individually with students about the math problem.	As Cris and the math teacher walked around the asked kids, “What did you do first? Where did you start? What would you do next?”
	Kids had trouble if they jumped right to the formula.
Asked the kids, “Tell me where you got stuck..”	These kids went first to the formula.
	Very few looked at the 2 nd page. Very few went on to the 2 nd problem. They assumed it would be harder.
	There were 2 problems in the assignment but kids didn’t seem to realize that.
Suggested that kids underline important vocabulary, etc.	
	Responsibility to our content and our responsibility to teach them how to be better readers “in the big picture”

Follow-up Reading Recommendations from Cris Tovani’s book, *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?*

Chapter 5, “Why Am I Reading This?”

My Two-Column Notes for Tape #4
 “Synthesizing Complex Ideas”

<i>Similarities to My Classroom</i>	<i>Differences and Comments</i>
Figuring out the things that allow us to synthesize	This is really hard for my students!
	What’s synthesizing? Taking information that they have read and really going beyond it
	“We’re trying to synthesize our thinking. We’ve got a big question, which gives us our purpose. We’ve activated our background knowledge and now we’re trying to acquire new information.”
	This is an advanced group of students. That’s OK because my goal is for my students to be able to synthesize so I can learn from this class.
	Have groups star their two most important facts – (helps the kids focus on importance.)
Using questions to generate thinking and synthesizing	
	Good idea! Gallery Walk! Having groups share with the class – more important for them to do that than for me to do it.
Use what they learn about reading and writing and thinking to become lifelong learners	
Debbie Miller’s book – Ben’s idea of synthesis – USE IT!	

Follow-up Reading Recommendations from Cris Tovani’s book, *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?*

Chapter 4, “Real Rigor: Connecting Students with Accessible Text”

Chapter 6, “Holding Thinking to Remember and Reuse”

So now that I've thought about my focus question, watched the videotapes, and taken 2 column notes, what have I learned that I can use with my students?

-- I'll try talking more about myself as a reader (and a writer) to let the kids know what I do to use these strategies.

-- I'll analyze the data to see which kind of text structure is most difficult for them and then involve them in figuring out why that's the case.

-- I'll think more about how to teach reading in math, science, history, and other content areas, and I'll ask some questions of content experts.

-- I'll, once again, go back and see if I can do a better job of teaching synthesizing since it's such an important comprehension strategy and it helps kids learn content.

Whew! Now it's time for the beach!

SOURCE: http://www.middleweb.com/ReadWrkshp/JK_CL_23.html