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Library-Classroom Collaboration Stimulates Reading, Teaches So Much More

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Media center specialists and classroom teachers continually search for innovative ways to stimulate readers to try new genres in order to increase reading in all disciplines, be aware of the latest great novel, and locate a series or author that spurs them to read one book after another.

In order to motivate students to investigate and effectively use the media center collection, the media center specialist and social studies teacher work together to get students involved in reviewing books they like.

To kick off the year in the media center, the media center specialist or social studies teacher presents a booktalk to the class, reviewing a book new to the collection. In presenting the booktalk, the speaker uses note cards and exhibits a copy of the book along with a prop representing an idea from the text. The speaker describes a character, setting, or event in the story. If an informational text is reviewed, the speaker will explain events, procedures, or ideas from the text. A short blurb about the author may be included, along with a brief reading of the text. This early booktalk serves as an example for student presentations to come.

Another advantage of student booktalks is to facilitate the process of learning more about new students. At the beginning of the school year, it's beneficial to know more about students' particular reading interests, their strengths and struggles in reading, and materials they've previously discovered. At the Lamplighter School, an independent school of 480 students from pre-K through fourth grade in Dallas, Texas, the media specialist and fourth-grade literacy teacher have the advantage of collaborating and coteaching each week. By coplanning and carrying out lessons collectively, these two professionals provide a deeper and more compelling curriculum while covering the curricular goals of both the media center and the fourth-grade literacy programs. At Lamplighter, the goal is to support development of confident, well-spoken, engaging students, and therefore the children have a plethora of opportunities for public-speaking experiences, including

first-person historical impersonations and biweekly video news broadcasts. Video booktalks are one in a series of planned public-speaking projects, which provide teacher and media specialist with valuable information about students and give students a public-speaking experience based on their individual interests.

In the media center, students are assigned to prepare a booktalk about a book they completed over the summer in order to encourage their peers to try something new. There are no limits as to type of book the children can review: fiction, nonfiction, one in a series, a part of the library collection (or not), or a graphic novel. Anything is possible if students read a book and want to inform their classmates about it. By enlisting students to choose the books they will review, teachers can note the interests of a particular child, the reading level of each student, and themes, authors, and genres most popular with a particular group. Additionally, no matter how well read the media center coordinator and teacher are, every year students will bring to attention new and exciting books. This is a wonderful advantage to use to continually update the media center collection with informational and literary content that supports the Common Core standards. In the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) model, this would fall under Modification. Using technology allows for significant task redesign

because each booktalk is unique and the students control the camera, filming their peers. In order to read the resulting QR code video, technology must be used.

In the classroom, students are taught how to construct note cards, with title, author, and key ideas to inspire other readers. Discussion includes ways to present a booktalk by providing enough of the story or information to spark an interest in the audience without giving away the ending of a suspense novel or too much information from a text. Additionally, students plan to bring a prop to stir interest or to help a listener remember the book. Props range from a baseball to a feather duster or cherry pie, all in the interest of hooking peers to read and explore the book. Students use direct evidence of the text by reading aloud a favorite paragraph.

One to two weeks after the assignment, students present the booktalks in the media center. They bring a copy of the book, or in some cases display the cover of the book via an iPad or Mimio-Board, and individually present their booktalks using note cards and props they choose to include. During the presentations each student will be the videographer, taping another peer as his or her book review is presented. Video taping the presentations allows each child a chance to step up and make a finished presentation that can be reviewed for assessment by the student and teacher. Students can then plan for adaptations to improve the next public speaking assignment. Serving as cameraman allows students to build technology skills. Each booktalk is uploaded to YouTube by the technology teacher and assigned a QR code by the media specialist, building a resource where students, teachers, and parents can view the booktalk on an iPad or iPhone as they explore new books in the media center.

Children love to watch each other on video, so the collection of QR-coded booktalks is a popular feature in the media center. Not only can the students observe their own videos, but they can also enjoy videos of older students recorded in previous years, as well as their peers' videos. By watching the videos, children learn to analyze what makes a booktalk valuable

and entertaining. They compare their own presentations to those of others. They learn to emulate those whose delivery style and content they find most compelling. Students have specific guidelines to follow, including a rubric for self-evaluation. To assess and plan for needed changes, both teacher and student review these video recordings. It is an immensely valuable learning tool used by the children at their own choosing. As students are having fun observing and critiquing delivery styles or writing techniques, they are constructing a personal understanding of public presentations, and of the value of literature. At least 95 percent of the students meet or exceed our expectations. When students play a major role in this or any learning process, everyone benefits.

The process of presenting individual book reviews is an essential part of the Lamplighter curriculum, with multiple benefits for students and professionals. One immediate and valuable result is that every student in the class and the two professionals have heard multiple enthusiastic booktalks. This helps professionals in selecting new materials to order and supports students in reading new books.

Second, the professionals develop insight into the interests and reading proficiency of students. These booktalks increase students' reading motivation and personal enjoyment in reading. The students can select their own reading from this social interaction. Reading affects all areas of the curriculum. The students' listening skills improve because they are asked to comment on the booktalk, which requires effective listening.

Third, students actively construct a booktalk and have a means to review and revise future public presentations. The students must follow an outline for their booktalk, and that requires organizational and writing skills.

Fourth, using the QR-coded collection of videos, many more students and patrons throughout the school are able to review and reuse the booktalks on iPad or iPhones for years to come. This is a popular assignment—made easy when two professionals orchestrate it together—and it pays off with

big dividends. The third-grade teachers were so excited about these booktalks, the language teachers took the project, developed a unit of study, and added new QR codes to the media center collection.

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