Activity: Closing Curricular Gaps with Close Reading (75 minutes)

Overview

Not all texts call for close reading, but understanding close reading is essential to implementing any curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. This activity allows teachers to dig deeply into the idea of close reading by defining it for themselves, engaging in it, and then participating in an activity they can do with their students around a text they've read closely.

Guiding Questions

- What does reading closely look like?
- How does annotation/group annotation enhance student learning and teacher practice?

Outcome

Teachers will develop a clearer sense of what it means to read a text closely and will learn an activity that they can use in their classrooms to support students in close reading.

Materials

- "Little Tokens in Hardened Clay Envelopes" (excerpt from *Proust and the Squid: The Story of Science and Reading*)
- Chart paper with copies (enlarged if possible) of "Little Tokens" text taped on it (at least 2 per table) so that there are **no more than 4 teachers working on the activity**
- Chart paper with directions for group annotation (see "Prepare to Facilitate" section, below, for directions)
- Highlighters and pens
- ***Optional***: for post-session reading, Shanahan on Literacy handout (blog post about close reading)
- ***Optional***: for post-session reading, Collaborative Annotation handout

Preparation

1. Seat teachers in table groups.
2. In addition to their individual copies, make sure you have enough copies of "Clay Tokens" (enlarged if possible) on chart paper so that **teachers work in groups no larger than 4.**
3. Copy the directions for group annotation on a piece of chart paper to post at the appropriate time (step 6). Directions are below.
   - Round 1: write an initial reaction to the text. It could be a connection, a question, a prediction—anything that they noted during their personal reading.
   - Round 2: **respond** to a comment that is already on the communal paper. These additional comments can include questions, responses, reactions, challenges, or extended thinking.
   - Subsequent rounds: introduce new ideas from their own reading, or continue to comment on what others have written.
   - Refrain from talking during the 15 minutes allotted for this activity.

Facilitation Notes

1. **Introduction. (5 minutes).** Open this activity by telling teachers that people discuss close reading in many different ways. One thing they all have in common is that *there is meaning, often hidden, in text, and that careful reading and close analysis can help students uncover that meaning*.
    - Tell teachers that the Common Core standards require students to read closely because they require:
    - Teachers to engage students with challenging texts
    - Students to read/analyze/interpret such texts
    - Students to determine *what a text says* explicitly and implicitly
    - Students to determine *how a text says it*
    - Students to determine *what the text means*

2. **Teachers address question. (5 minutes).** Individually, participants write responses to the question "What does it mean to read a text closely?"

3. **Discuss with group. (10 minutes).** Discuss teachers' answers to the question. If time remains, pose the follow-up question:

    - How can we model and motivate students to read closely?

4. **Conduct two close readings. (15 minutes).** Teachers will read the "Clay Tokens" text twice. Tell them that the <u>first time</u>, they should make any annotations they need as they read. Share examples of ways to annotate.
    - Underline key words, phrases, or sentences
    - Write comments or questions in the margins
    - Bracket/circle important sections of the text
    - Connect ideas throughout text with lines or arrows
    - Number related points
    - Note what is important/questionable/interesting

    The <u>second time</u>, teachers should pay particular attention to the *strategies* they employed to read the text closely and comprehend ideas in it. Participants will be engaging in a conversation about what they do *specifically*, as readers, to understand the text.

5. **Discuss participants' strategies. (10 minutes). T**eachers should share the strategies they employed in order to read the text closely. Press for them to be as specific as possible when they share the moves they made as readers. For example:

If a participant says…	**Prompt them further by asking…**
I made an inference	What is the specific inference you made? What textual evidence is it based on? How did that impact your overall understanding of the text?
I made a connection	What was the exact connection? To what in the text did you connect? How did that connection further your understanding of the text?
I asked a question	What question did you ask? What prompted your question? Did you answer your question?

	How/when/why/why not?
I reread	What did you reread? Why? How did you know you had to reread? What was your purpose for rereading? What happened as a result of your rereading?
I made a prediction	What did you predict? Why? Was it accurate? Where in the text was it confirmed or did you learn you were mistaken?

6. **Post chart paper with directions for Group Annotation and divide table into groups, no larger than 4, to do the activity. (15 minutes).** Introduce Group Annotation by explaining to teachers that the idea of it is to have a *written conversation* about a close reading, so participants should refrain from having any verbal discussion while sharing their reading responses. Written conversations are effective bridges from reading to discussion, which then sets students up to write about what they've read.

   Group Annotation is a way to uncover *essential understandings* of a text.
   - Explain to teachers that when doing this with *students*, each student can get his/her own color pen to distinguish his/her comments.
   - Explain to teachers that they should use the margins of the chart paper for their annotations. For example, they can circle what in the text they are referencing, then draw an arrow out to the margins.
   - Explain to teachers *not to get hung up on small details about the text*. The idea behind Group Annotation is to uncover the *big understandings* necessary to understand a text they've read closely.
   - Teacher groups should be no larger than four.
   - Teachers will follow the steps on the chart paper you have posted to conduct a Group Annotation. Directions are repeated below:
     - Round 1: write an initial reaction to the text. It could be a connection, a question, a prediction—anything that they noted during their personal reading.
     - Round 2: **respond** to a comment that is already on the communal paper. These additional comments can include questions, responses, reactions, challenges, or extended thinking.
     - Subsequent rounds: introduce new ideas from their own reading, or continue to comment on what others have written.
     - Refrain from talking during the 15 minutes allotted to this activity.

7. **Conduct group or table debrief. (15 minutes).** Teachers should discuss the following questions:
   - How did the group annotation process change or add to your understanding of the text?
   - What benefit might this close reading strategy have for students?
     - <u>Possible answers include</u>:
       - Helps develop the metacognitive, self-questioning habits students need to be successful close readers
       - Encourages students to go back into a text to challenge another student's comment or add on to what another student wrote
       - Promotes logical thinking, reasoning, and questioning the validity of others' interpretations
   - What benefit does this activity have for teachers?

- If a participant does not mention that one benefit group annotation has for a teacher is that it provides *"in-the-moment"* assessment, offer this perspective and mention how it is an example of *Danielson 3d*.