

Date: Thurs, 18 Jul 2002

Today was the first day of one of the four graduate courses I am co-teaching this summer. This course is our BASIC course entitled: Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in the Reader's Workshop. We use Mosaic of Thought as our text. It is always both exciting and nerve-wracking getting prepared to face a new group of teachers. Will they be receptive to the information? Do they have the willingness to consider this teaching? Will they share and talk? Will they just stare at me in that flat stare that some teachers do so well at times to the "presenter"? Will there be unbearable silences when we ask for their thoughts on a reading? Can we hook them with what we have planned? Will they feel the class was worth their time and money? Will what we do together make an impact on their teaching when they return to the classroom this fall? How many children will this touch as a result of our work together?

I have co-taught this course probably 5 times now. Each time, including today, I have been relieved to see interested, eager faces looking back at me. Teachers who are there because they WANT the learning, not just the credit to boost their pay. I was reminded today how on each first day, the energy in the room turns almost electric. The chapters we have read (we build in time to read at class), the social processing we do together after each reading (first at their tables and then whole group), the sharing my teaching partner and I do about how WE have put this into practice as we continue to learn ourselves, and the hints of what's to come all seem to light sparks and little fires in the participants. As I listened in on their talk I heard cravings of wanting MORE. Wonderings about how they can do it better. How to instill the love of reading in older students. How to get the younger students to share their metacognitive thinking. Wondering if the younger students can even DO this work? Worrying that they will just return to what is comfortable and familiar once school starts instead of risking this paradigm change. Believing what the first 3 chapters talk about in Mosaic but not really having a clue how to proceed. Eager faces looking to us for direction. Wanting to KNOW! Wanting it NOW!

They have caught the bug!

I am co-teaching with a new partner this time. Kelly actually teaches with me at my school and had taken this course last summer. She remembers very well, the summer she was hired to come to our school, sitting at home reading Mosaic. Never having even heard of it before. Knowing that the building she was going to work at in the fall had done extensive staff development around the comprehension strategies for two years. Work she had missed. Today she shared with me that she felt terrified and concerned as she was doing her first reading, alone, with no one to discuss/share it with. Worrying that she was going to be so far out of it compared to the rest of the staff. Believing we all knew more than she did about this teaching. And PANIC set in. Kelly made the leap of faith when school started and got right in there with the rest of us as we continued to process our understanding of the strategy teaching. The more we understand the work ourselves, the clearer the teaching becomes. The panic transforms into gradual clarity and confidence grows. Kelly sensed the ambivalent discomfort in the teachers at the end of our first day. She KNOWS it will move from panic to clarity if they hang in there.

Today the energy was panic but not the kind of panic that makes you run from

something. It is the kind of panic that pulls you toward something. Something happens on these first days after they have been teased and encouraged to see a different way to teach reading. The teachers got a taste of a better way. Ellin and Susan write from the research, from their hearts, and from what they have seen work. I witnessed today the potential for another 26 teachers to come on board and embrace this teaching. They see the need, they catch the bug, they want to KNOW. They are hooked. I will never forget the first time I co-taught the BASIC course. We do a culminating activity where the teachers have to "synthesize" their learnings from the entire course on chart paper using pictures and words as a table group. As the groups presented their masterpieces one by one, sharing their representations of all they had learned in just four full days, I got teary eyed and felt like a proud momma. The difference in each of them was amazing! From day one to day four!! It was like a massive rebirth! Massive transformations right before our eyes. Teachers gave us feedback about how they had felt in a rut with their teaching of reading, but after the work we had done together, they were so invigorated and refreshed and challenged to return and get going in a new way. I still hear from some of them a year after taking the BASIC course. They tell anyone who will listen about the strategy work and encourage them to get on board.

Some of our participants return to buildings where they are the only ones trying to teach this way. That is a lonely place to be. So here is why I am writing to you all: what have you experienced, tried, been a part of, as far as staff development efforts to bring more teachers on board? I know we have a lot of reading support/coaches out there. I know we are almost 500 strong on this listserve and there is a wealth of experiences at varying degrees of understanding. I know we also previously had a thread running for a while about the frustrations of the change process. I am more interested in what has WORKED and made an impact in your buildings. What are some of the ways/activities you personally have participated in learning to teach the strategies from Mosaic that YOU found helpful and supportive?

Change is not easy. The willingness to be open to something new is the piece I find the most powerful. Being able to risk doing it a different way and possibly giving up some of the things previously used can be frightening. The NOT understanding of the strategy work is also a huge roadblock. Can you share with all of us what seems to help or work where you are?????

There is no perfect work place. We are all on different planes of understanding. There is no ONE way to interpret this teaching. We are all on the journey. I need to hear from you.

Day TWO

It's me again! :) I felt so good writing last night about our class that I thought I would continue a little journal here. Hope it's not too much. Well, today we had the teachers applying the information from the first 4 chapters of Mosaic. They had to read 2 pages from the Graves book, "The Energy To Teach" and make all three connections. I think it was the first two pages of his book. We are actually having them do the post its themselves all throughout the course. After they shared their at their table groups, we had one table group share one or two connections back whole group. After that they had to get up and walk over to a wall chart we had made (another example of modeling for them what to do in their classrooms) with the three

connections (both a visual and sentence starter at each column heading) and put their post its in the corresponding column. Then we asked a second table group to do the same process. Until all 6 table groups had their turn. Two things we are sure to always stress is the difference between a coincidence (something you have in common with the story) and a true connection; and to ALWAYS remember to have the child tell back how the connection helped them understand the story.

The next hands on activity was to help them grasp the concept of building author schema. We talked about how most of us are familiar with doing an author study. But that this is different. We had pulled 5-6 different books written by 6 different authors. We had a bin of Chris Van Allsburg, David Wiesner, Patricia Polacco, Gail Gibbons (nonfiction), Jack Prelutsky (poetry), Jan Brett. Each table got a bin and a piece of chart paper. They had to look through the books and determine that author's style. They were to become the experts on that author. Paying attention to text placement, illustration medium/style, characters, use of space on the page, possible themes/messages, etc. What seems to be consistent or similar in all the books, and what is different. They wrote about it on chart paper and we hung them up around us. Each table group then shared back whole group while holding up the books to show us all examples of what they had noticed. We talked with them about how this supports a reader for the future when they come across one of these authors. It is a way to build background knowledge for authors. We had them think quietly for a few minutes about how they could see themselves doing something like this in their own classrooms and then share that at their table groups. Then back whole group if anyone felt like it. (Of course there are other interpretations of how to build schema (background knowledge) of various authors. If you do something different could you write us about it?)

I had actually done this very activity with my third graders last year on a whim and a risk. I didn't know if they could do it, but they just BLEW ME AWAY!!! I of course had modeled an author myself and done a chart on Jan and Stan Berenstain thinking aloud my discoveries combined with what I already knew about those books. The day I had my kids writing their charts and sharing was parent visitation day. And while that was taking a huge risk, (in case it bombed!) I had the parents working in their child's group doing the task along with the kids. Some of you might have read my post about this part of my schema study earlier in the year. It is on the archives page somewhere around November. (For those of you who are new, you can take some time and view all the previous posts since we started at: <http://www.u46teachers.org/mosaic/archive/archive.htm>) Others have shared their lessons as well!!! :)

Next we passed out a set of the Pair-It books (do you know of these?) to each table. They have a non fiction and a fiction book written on the same topic. I think Steck Vaughn (sp??) publishes them. We gave each table a copy of a Mondo Safari magazine at two different levels and some Newbridge non fiction books. We asked each table group to discuss the difference between fiction and non fiction and make a t chart to share back whole group. We gave them some time to just get into the books. I know in our district there has been a push in some buildings to do more non fiction teaching, but it is not something all teachers are experienced at. So we built this into the course. How to teach non fiction. We make a class chart on the differences and then share with them several different handouts about making non fiction conventions books, the non fiction features and how

they help the reader, and some First Steps Before, During, and After teaching activities. We suggest they read "Non-Fiction Matters" by Steph Harvey and "Is That a Fact" by Tony Stead. Kelly shared how she does this study (reading non fiction) in her room. (Kelly I KNOW you are reading this! Chime in anytime you feel like it!!!) :)

After a break, we started the activity for building schema for text types. Each table was given a new book bin with a different genre. We used: historical fiction, mystery, realistic fiction, function text (specifically how-to books like cookbooks, craft books, scrap booking, how to make science fair projects, any kid reading level books that have items needed, steps to follow and real life photos to support the directions), diaries/journals, and biographies. They repeated the task from author schema noticing what that genre had in common and what they felt kids needed to know about that genre in order to be able to read it to be successful. They made their charts, shared back with all of us, and we processed how to modify this at the different grade levels. (We always type up these charts and copy them off for the teachers before the end of the class so they don't have to worry about writing everything down) (I haven't tried this activity with my third graders YET! I'm thinking older students could definitely do it, don't you think???)

Next we read the Sensory Imagery chapter in Mosaic. Processed that as I shared with you yesterday. Our activity for SI was to read part of chapter 4 from the adult novel, "Icy Sparks" (a good Oprah book!!!!) The reason we use this piece is that when I was in bed reading it last year we were also planning for this course. The book just oozed SI opportunities and I knew I would use it in the class. It's a longer piece, but we feel it's well worth the time because of how all the five senses plus emotion just jump out at the reader. As they read we had them code each post it note at the top and write what they pictured in their mind (code: eyeball), smelled (code: ear), tasted (code: mouth), heard (code: ear), touched (code: hand), and felt (code: heart). This time for a little variety (and they need to get up and move!) we had them all at one time go place their post its on the individual chart papers headed with the same coding symbols (above) For example: draw a heart and then write: I can feel.... And on another chart paper draw an ear and write: I can hear..... etc. So there were 6 different chart papers up around us. Then we told them to gather around ONE chart and study all the post its and be ready to share back whole group 3-4. We also talked about how it is important to teach our kids that our own mental images can change after discussing them with someone. Debbie Miller has a great simple chart in her "Reading With Meaning" book for kids to do this! (EVERYONE NEEDS TO GET HER BOOK NO MATTER WHAT GRADE YOU TEACH!!!!) I tend to be more anal and actually take a few days for each sense (plus emotion) and do a short study separately and then put them all together. So it takes longer but I thought they went deeper.

I wrote about my sensory image strategy study back around December. There was a lot of sharing from others then about this strategy too! So go to the archives!! :)

We finished the day by reading the Questioning chapter in Mosaic. Monday we will do our activity and spend a LOT of time sharing how we do this study in our classrooms.

This is the first time we are teaching this four day course on Thurs, Fri, Mon, Tues. So far the feedback has been overwhelmingly in favor versus

A Mon-Thursday schedule. It does feel better this way. During the School year we run our courses one night a week for 8 weeks. That isn't as fun for, me. I LOVE the full-day time we spend together!!

I sure don't mind sharing what we are doing. If it is too much or too Long for you, just delete me away! Those of you who know me already, know that I started this listserve to try and help fill the HUGE need I have to talk about this teaching, learn from others, and get support along the way. And as you can tell, I can go ON and ON and ON! We aren't a very vocal group, but I know you are out there. I invite you to use courage to share! Ask questions. Argue with me! (Yes, yes, I KNOW it is summer! But if you Are at all like me, this stuff just never goes away! I can't get enough of hearing from you!)

Feeling alone in this teaching is so lonely! That's what we are here for. Right now our grad courses are just offered to our district teachers. Yes, we are in a northwest suburb of Chicago- Elgin, IL. I suppose I could consider doing something for others but I would have to look in to the graduate credit issue since our district does all of that with Aurora University. Let me ponder that possibility! I would LOVE to work with An entire staff who is raring to go on this.

DAY THREE

Today was day 3. We left day 2 after reading the questioning chapter of Mosaic. As we do throughout the course, after reading a chapter (the teachers post it 3-5 times as they are off reading), we have the Teachers share their post its and their thinking about that chapter at their Table groups. Then we ask for one comment from each table group to be shared back whole group. We find that if we put that out up front- that they need to be prepared to share back something they found interesting/ striking in their conversations for the whole group, it goes better than just to ask if anyone has anything to share whole group.

For our activities today we used pieces out of a GREAT book called, "Micro Fiction" by Jerome Stern. It's a small book of award winning essays That are 250 words or less. These could be used with high school and Possibly middle school if you select carefully. They fit nicely on a zerox page. They are short and to the point and elicit great talk. We had the Teachers write "I wonders..." about the article individually, then share their post its at their table groups. After they were done processing, we gave them a 3 column sheet with BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER as headings. They were to stick their table post its to one sheet and discuss their findings. Of course as is typical, there are more DURING post its. We discussed the importance of modeling and teaching the value of BEFORE and AFTER questioning as well as DURING.

Then Kelly and I shared how we teach our questioning study. There have Been a lot of posts about teaching questioning so go to the archives. I Know mine was written on Feb. 25. (To get to the archives go to: <http://www.u46teachers.org/mosaic/archive/archive.htm>) The most important beginning point is to model, model, model making "I wonders..." yourself. (And don't get in a hurry to ANSWER the questions YET. That will come later. Just model and then have your kids start to "wonder" about whatever you can. In all content areas. During this time have your writing

workshop focus be writing what they are wondering about. You model that. My kids LOVED writing "I wonders....." in their learning logs for DAYS!! Those wonderings could be turned into stories at a later point in the year.

We talked about THICK and THIN questions, coding of A for answered in the text, and Un for not answered (unanswered), and how teaching inferring is a natural next step after the questioning study. Always remembering to take the TIME to go slowly and deeply with each part. Save some of your charts/post its from whole group stories so you can go back to them when you are ready to teach inferring. We talked about how the upper grade levels can code more specific kinds of questions. Kelly talked about doing "I wonders....." with nonfiction books in a simple way: Have the kids each choose a nonfiction book about an animal they are wondering about. Have them write some "I wonders...." about that animal and "research" to find the answers. One of our second grade teachers shared an idea of how to report their learning with us. Make small matchbook like pieces of about 3 x 4 inches. That fold down like a matchbook. The students can write their "I wonder...." on the cover and then flip it up to write their answer. These little matchbook pieces can be glued on a larger piece of construction paper that is folded in half so they end up inside. Make a cover and title and you have a simple, fun to read, presentation of what they learned.

Next we read and processed the inference chapter.

Kelly has a file full of the greatest way to teach inferring. She takes magazine ads and cuts out a crucial piece and then mounts a piece of construction paper behind the hole that is left behind. So just color shows through. The kids have to use the clues from the picture and their background knowledge to INFER what the missing piece is. She has one of Sammy Sosa sitting on a bench with his bat cut out. So they know of him and that he plays baseball, and they see the shape of the bat so they can infer it's a bat. Another one is a close up of a sink faucet with the HOT cut out. They look at the COLD and know that it must be HOT that is cut out.

She had an ad for a camera showing three girls in Hawaiian tourist outfits.

One girl was holding the cut out camera shape up to her eyes. The clues were they were dressed for a trip, etc. You could find ads to do this with all age groups.

After that we talked about our own struggles with teaching this strategy.

It's been tossed around on this list this past January so read about it there in the archives. I've had to finally make it very specific for my students as well as for myself. I know there is more to making inferences than what I understand but this is how I explain it now (Jan helped me understand this). An inference is when you use the seen text (the words and the pictures) along with the unseen text (your own schema/background knowledge) to infer meaning. Another way to put it that was helpful for me to hear is: the clues from the text + my background knowledge = inference.

I found myself standing in front of my class one day trying to model and then validate their use of making inferences and I was totally inept!!!!!!

They were making predictions (which some will say ARE inferences) and I was not able to tell them the difference. I TOTALLY admitted to my kids that I was very confused myself and that I had to seek some help from teachers who know more about this. So I wrote to the list and picked Jan's brain. So... here again, I am making a judgment call out of my own

discomfort. I needed to have it be two different things in order to help my students REALLY understand how to make inferences. So Jan, who I also co-teach the grad classes with, said this: When you are reading and you get to a point where there are clues from the text and your background knowledge (schema) pops out at you, at THAT point using what you have ALREADY read, you can make an inference. For example if I am reading about a boy who was on the phone with a friend and as they were arguing he slams down the phone. I would stop there and INFER that he is angry. I used the clues from the text (that they were arguing and he slammed down the phone) and my schema (you usually don't slam down the phone unless you are angry and I've wanted to do that at times myself and also when people are arguing they are usually angry) to infer the character is angry. The text did not read: "The boy was angry."

Every time I could I would model this process with my class. A PREDICTION is when you are reading and come to a point where there are clues from the text and your schema pops out at you, it is then you PREDICT WHAT IS GOING TO COME NEXT. (that you haven't read about yet!!!) All I can say is once I modeled these two separate actions, my third graders became experts at inferring. It might be a lame way to teach it but for me it worked.

Do you know of the Chris Van Allsburg book, "The Mysteries of Harris Burdick"?? It's a hard book to explain. Go on Amazon.com to read about it.

But we have poster size pages of each of the illustrations from the book.

(it's called the portfolio edition) That's all there is to the book. These unrelated black and white drawings that have a title and a caption. We give each table group one poster and we have them write "I wonders....." about the picture and then come up with one group inference. Then they get up and share their picture, their "I wonders....", and their group inference in front of the whole class. You have GOT to see these to appreciate the power of this activity. It is perfect for practicing inferring.

We then did another Micro Fiction piece using inferring, discussed our inferences and our thinking behind them. We read the Essence of Text chapter for determining importance/theme, processed it as above. We then gave them a short newspaper article and told them to read it and think of two separate words to sum up the point of the article, and share at their table group as to why they chose those two words. Then we discussed it whole group. For fiction application we gave each partner group a different Eve Bunting book (her serious books). They were to read it and be prepared to share whole group about the story line as well as the over arching themes they found in the text. This was very helpful as so many of us don't know the books that are out there for this teaching. I loved hearing their sharings about her books. I use her books a lot in my classroom. Many of her books go along with the social studies curriculum at various grade levels.

Last year was my first year to do an official determining importance study.

I'm not even going to write about here because it wasn't that good. Trust me! I just skimmed the surface and that is my challenge for this fall. I am going to combine my "how to read non-fiction" study with DI. Probably at the beginning of the year. I'll write about it then.

We talked about accessible short text to be used in this teaching.

Trying

to share our own movement away from whole group novels and full length basal stories. Not that you can't use those, but for us, we have moved to picture books, articles, poetry, SHORT texts. It was scary to give up the "fluff" as I say in class (the cutesy art projects that we used to do after reading a story, novel packets, whole theme units that go on and on) but once I did, and I made the strategy studies my main focus (along with decoding work as needed, retelling, and story elements) my life was SO MUCH SIMPLER! I can't stress that enough. Anyone else experience the freedom this teaching brings??? And I don't have tons of worksheets to grade anymore, and I LOVE TO TEACH THIS WAY NOW!!!! But most importantly, my students LOVE learning this way. Last day is tomorrow! We are taking them to the computer lab and will have our website already loaded and have them read some of the archives. They are not required to sign up for this listserve but many do. So we'll have more members joining us soon, I imagine.

Day Four

Well, here is my last "journal" entry. We started off with another Micro Fiction piece and a reporting form that I had made up to "hold the tracks of their thinking" of all the strategies we had "studied" so far. (connections, questioning, inferring, sensory imagery, and essence of text)

Basically all I did was draw different handwritten borders around clumps of blank space and head each one a different strategy. The backside of the paper was divided into 6 equal boxes filling up the entire page. Each box had the visual code for sensory imagery at the top along with the sentence starter for THAT sense. (I can hear....)The teachers had to read the text (it is often good to suggest they read the text straight through the first time and then go back and do the strategy work on a sheet like this, because of past feedback, they can have a complete uninterrupted read FIRST) and then complete the form. This would be a form (and you can create various forms like this) done ONLY AFTER you have explicitly taught EACH strategy on the form. Something you might use to monitor that they are integrating all of the strategies. I make different reporting forms that range from one strategy to two strategies to three strategies on a page, etc. Depending on where I am in my strategy studies at that point in the year. I often have students who ask if they can continue to use these compilation forms as they are independently reading. So now I keep them out as a choice. The piece we picked from Micro Fiction was about three kids who are suspected of eating berries (red messy faces) in the wild and how their moms FREAK out. One kid tried to say he/she (we weren't sure) said he/she didn't eat the berries, but his mom (who we all agreed was not the model parent by any means) wouldn't hear him. She forced that poison syrup in him anyway and they were all vomiting, etc.

(I guess you had to be there to appreciate this piece, sorry!) Trust me! It leads to good use of all the above mentioned strategies and lots of good discussion. One thing I haven't mentioned at all is that when the teachers are sharing their post it notes/thinking at their table groups we try to sit with different tables and actually participate in the discussions. We didn't always do that, but what I know is when I do that, I continue to learn and grow MYSELF in these classes. After all, we are just facilitating their opportunity to learn. Not standing up there as the

experts. I think that message was clear from our feedback sheet we had them do at the end of the day today. We then did some work on the gradual release of responsibility model.

I struggled this time as to why we did not have this part earlier in the course. I alluded to it often and still am pondering if it needs to be moved earlier. But I am still sitting with the idea that on this last day, their might be more understanding of the model now than earlier in the course. I have broken down the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) stages into 9 different steps. (You probably can already tell I get a bit anal about some of this, huh??) I wrote about that on June 15 in the archives. It is just my take on it (along with lots of talk with Jan as we were planning our first graduate course last year!) but I know it helped me to be more specific. Here is the activity. We cut apart the 9 steps into strips. (3 are in modeled, 2 are in shared, and 4 are independent including guided reading/conferences done during independent reading) I thought today of adding a 10th step: whole group share at the end of the reading workshop.

What do you think? We mix up the strips and put them in an envelope. We use bright pink paper for this! (why I have no idea???) Each table group gets one envelope and together they are to put the strips in the correct order of the release model. Then we read them one at a time and further talk about which ones are modeled, shared, independent and why. We do give them their own full sheet of this to take back with them.

After that we passed out what Kelly and my building did last year as a 3-6 grade level group. We wanted to have common language/understanding of the stages/terms (modeled, shared, guided reading, independent) so over several weeks we brainstormed and refined a list until we were all basically comfortable with it. (Can you get the feel for how we just share and share and share what we ourselves have been going through in our own learning process?? But hopefully it was not ever loaded with EXPERT/KNOW IT ALL energy. Because that was not our INTENT!!!)

Then we tried something new this time. We had a wide span of grade levels in this course. There are always the questions of management and where to begin, etc. So we broke into three different groups: K-2, 3-6, MS/HS. Kelly went with one group, I went with another group and we let the MS/HS group fend for themselves (just kidding! They had some experienced members to share their thinking). My group was very concerned about where they will fit this teaching in. Especially they K-1 teachers. They have such a responsibility to teach their kids TO READ (and don't we all APPRECIATE THAT PRESSURE!!!!) that they are really struggling with how to do it all.

If any K-2 teachers are out there with insight/experience in this management issue please write to the list with what has helped you. Another concern was how to meet with all the guided reading groups and do this. We talked about centers vs. independent reading. Marcia: I would LOVE to hear your transition from centers to independent reading with your at risk kids!!!

Please share with us!

I guess for me if K-2 teachers would find time to do this work with their kids by modeling the thinking and doing most of this during the shared portion of their reading block it would be place to start. What do you all think? At third, I still have kids that don't read well yet, but most of mine don't need basic reading instruction. Laura K. could you check in on this? Next we talked to them about going to the computer lab. Kelly and I had already loaded www.u46teachers.org/mosaic for them. We discussed how the website started (at our very first

grad course it was suggested to come up with a way to list books to use and to get support from others!), the listserv option (I didn't twist their arm to sign up I hope! I know I am ga ga over the listserv, but they were not required to subscribe) I shared readinglady.com information and the "teaching is a work of heart" site that are linked to at the bottom of our website homepage. I posted the www.readinga-z.com address and talked about that site. Especially for teachers in building without guided reading books. So we went to the lab and it appeared that they were very happy with the time to explore and consider books off of the database, etc. Several teachers DID go to readinga-z and printed a few of the FREE books and FREE lesson plans (GREAT lesson plans for guided reading for those who are wanting more support on what to do/say in a guided reading group! EXCELLENT!!!)

During lunch (remember we build in time to read during the day) they read the synthesis chapter. Then met back at table groups and processed it best they could. That chapter continues to be the one (along with DI if I am honest!) that I still don't have a clear interpretation/understanding of. Kelly and I both freely admitted that. You sometimes feel like an idiot standing in front of 26 teachers saying you don't get it at all, enough to help them through it, but that is my reality. I think as a group we came up with that when you synthesize, it's more than just a retelling/summary: you use all the strategies you know to use, and bring YOURSELF to the text and after reading/processing your thinking, you end up different than when you began reading. You experience a change if you bring yourself deep into the text. (Oh BROTHER!!! I should just shut up here!) Anyone want to share THEIR thoughts on synthesis. Since I obviously haven't a clue!!!! Our final activity was for the table groups to SYNTHESIZE their experience of the entire course. It worked perfect to say, "Because of your reading of Mosaic and all the work we did together, you are now a changed person. Different than who showed up to class last Thursday." We gave them larger pieces of bulletin board paper and they had to use drawings and words to represent their experience. I LOVE this part! You should have heard the chatter and laughing and brainstorming about what to draw and how to show their learning. I wish I could show you their finished pieces. Seeing and hearing about their creations always bring tears to my eyes. In four full day the transformation is striking! Sure, there is much to integrate and process and ponder. But I believe that is what good teachers do. I expect most of these teachers have a lot to consider now.

For their final exam we have them write a letter to themselves and put it in a sealed envelope addressed to their school. In their letter they were to write where they predict they will be in their teaching of the comprehension strategies by second semester. What their classroom will look like, sound like, and feel like. Who they will seek out for support and collaboration.

They put their letters in a bin for us to keep in a safe place until later.....

This was a fantastic group of educators! I am always in awe of the work that gets done in this course. I feel blessed to have been a part of their learning. For those 18 of you who signed up for the listserv from class today, I am glad you are here! Write when you feel the need and keep the flame burning inside! Thanks for "listening in" on my thinking throughout this course. It means a lot to me to know that our work might be reaching out to the listserv members and trickling down to the children we are entrusted with in our classrooms. It's powerful stuff.

Fondly,
Ginger
grade 3