

Two weeks ago I worked with my class to create an Independent Reading rubric. I used the rubric shared by Juli Kendall from the MiddleWeb listserve. Julie teaches older students and shares her great rubrics and other PERFECT resources to download and print off. I have learned a lot from reading her weekly reading and writing workshop journals. Here are two links to find out more about MiddleWeb (for intermediate/middle school teachers) and the link to print out the resources:  
<http://www.middleweb.com/ReadWrkshp/RWindex.html>  
(general information)

<http://www.middleweb.com/ReadWrkshp/RWdownloads.html>  
(direct link to fabulous online resources that can be printed out)

First I gathered my students to our living room and we discussed together what it should look like and sound like during our independent reading time. (I do this before EVERY transition and I find it really helps with behavior) I explained the idea of a rubric to them and told them we were going to write one together and put it up on an anchor chart. So with Juli's rubric on my lap to guide ME, I started with the level 1 which consists of the behaviors none of us hope for during independent reading. I had the kids brainstorm what someone does when they are not taking the opportunity to enjoy a good book. They came up with most of the things Juli had on her rubric. You know how they LOVE to point out how NOT to do it. I had my steno notebook in hand and took notes, telling them I would chart it after school. We called this a LEVEL 1 reader. Here is what we came up with:

#### LEVEL 1

- \*I was looking around the room or staring into space instead of reading.
- \*I was pretending to read most of the time.
- \*I did not pick any just right books.
- \*I didn't understand what I was reading.
- \*I didn't think as I was reading.
- \*I got up a lot for no reason.
- \*I did not respect the readers around me.
- \*I wasted my learning.

Of course when there was something I "wanted" on the rubric I posed a situation to them in hopes of getting back what I KNEW was a LEVEL 1 reader.

Then we moved to LEVEL 2 and talked about how a LEVEL 2 reader is a step up from a LEVEL 1 reader but still a long way from the best example of how it should look and sound. I found it a bit harder for them (and me) to distinguish between LEVEL 2 and LEVEL 3 but with my shaping the talk (and Juli's rubric), we came up with the following:

#### LEVEL 2

- \*I just read part of time.

\*I read too fast.  
\*I was off-task about half the time.  
\*I wasn't careful when I selected my books. I wasn't honest.  
\*I wasn't paying attention to my thinking as I was reading.  
\*I skipped over the tricky words and didn't try to figure them out.  
\*I distracted the readers around me.  
\*I got up a couple times during independent reading time.

#### LEVEL 3

\*I read most of the time.  
\*I mostly selected just right books.  
\*I respected the readers around me.  
\*I sometimes used tricky word strategies.  
\*I sometimes went back and reread when it didn't make sense.  
\*I sometimes caught myself thinking as I was reading.  
\*I moved around during independent reading.

As you can see these are pretty close. I feel o.k. about it though, because my goal was for them to see the CONTRAST between a LEVEL 1 reader and a LEVEL 4 reader.

I purposely did the desired behavior level last. So they would have had time to shape their thoughts for the expected behaviors. It worked perfectly!! Here is what we came up with:

#### LEVEL 4

\*I read the whole time.  
\*I carefully selected just right books.  
\*I respected the readers around me.  
\*I knew when my reading was not making sense and I did something to fix it up.  
\*I talked to myself in my head about the story a lot.  
\*I used tricky word strategies whenever I came to a word I couldn't decode.  
\*I slowed my reading down when I was reading a confusing part and reread it.  
\*I stayed in my space the entire time.  
\*I enjoyed my learning.  
\*I felt great about myself as a reader!

When I sent them off to "practice" being a 4 reader I verbally reinforced what I saw during independent reading. I said things like, "I see Mark carefully checking to see if the books he is selecting are just right." "Susan is finding a quiet spot in the room and getting down to business without talking to anyone around her." "Mary has her eyes on the text and is making time as she reads to THINK about what she is reading." (Of course I can't REALLY see that but I was hoping!!) "David is not getting up to switch books. He chose enough to keep him busy the entire time." "I see Nancy using her finger to figure out a tricky word." "Tim has a puzzled look on his face and that tells me that he "caught himself" being confused. He will probably go back and reread that part to figure out what it means."

BLAH BLAH BLAH.

Then about halfway through I ask them to hold up the number of fingers that THEY feel tells what kind of a reader they are being. So they did and I look around and comment that I see lots of 4 readers and a few 3 readers. I thank them for being honest because good readers DO NOT PRETEND. They admit when they are not being a level 4 reader and try to get back to it.

Then after independent reading was over I had them share how it went for them. I asked them if having talked about our class rubric had helped them. Many kids said it did. I asked for their EVIDENCE (I am trying to get that word in WHENEVER I CAN!!) and they said things like: "I really worked hard to choose just right books this time so I took the time to try the five finger rule before I decided on a book." "I wanted to be a 4 so I slowed down when I was reading a confusing part." "I knew I could have done better when I got to a tricky word and didn't try and figure it out." Stuff like that.

So I wrote up the rubric on chart paper and it hangs on our wall. Everyday I remind them to strive for being a 4 reader. I quickly name the LEVEL 4 behaviors as they are milling around choosing their books. They LOVE IT. I check in with them during independent reading and have them hold up the finger for their score. This gives THEM the ownership for deciding how they are as a reader for that day. I have seen them being more focused and engaged since we started this. I think now that they KNOW what is expected and were a part of the process, it makes sense to them and they try to reach that goal. I hope to have them reflect individually and at their table groups about their placement on the rubric just for a few minutes at the end of each independent reading time. Sometimes I forget that part and move on. But THAT is the step I MUST do. They need time to reflect and CONNECT themselves to the rubric or it will become meaningless and ignored.

I want to thank Juli Kendall for sharing HER class rubric. Without it I would have floundered and it would not have been as successful as it was. Check out her stuff. You won't be sorry.

Ginger  
moderator