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President's Message: Literacy Beyond the Classroom

Theresa Hasenauer

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President's Message...

Literacy Beyond the Classroom

by Theresa Hasenauer, MRA President 2019-2020

Literacy skills are crucial to success in college, career, and life. When we collaborate with others about instruction, how often do we focus on what our students will need to learn in order to gain, share, and communicate information? Another way of looking at our instruction is to ask ourselves whether we are teaching the skills needed to navigate through the world and make sense of it. This begins early with environmental print that is on labels, signs, and cereal boxes. A young child may not be reading in a conventional sense, however these first steps help emergent readers understand that letters make up words and words mean something. It's also a way to get them excited about reading and learning.



Theresa Hasenauer

Our primary students have many interests and opinions about the world. Scaffolding research projects and sharing interests as they relate to their world serve them well now, but also prepare them for later experiences in life such as looking for jobs, choosing a college, or figuring out how to plant a garden in their own backyard or community. This is more than reading novels and writing responses to prompts. This is helping students learn to take what they've learned and apply it to their world. This is what makes learning relevant and meaningful. It is important for students to make the connection between their learning and the benefits they will gain from it.

Teachers are not the only resource students have to gain knowledge. Teaching them how to find the information is our job. Many of our students are already seeking out information about what interests them. They find this information online, through texting, emailing, blogging, and even connecting with others across the world. They listen to podcasts, Ted Talks, and watch science experiments.

Many young people are self-taught as they use the knowledge and information readily available to them in the digital world; they provide their own support to move beyond their current capabilities. They are continually interacting with the world around them, submitting and decoding messages, drawing inferences from what they see and hear. They use a wide range of media and many are adept at choosing the most appropriate medium for a particular message or activity (Ward, 2013, p. 2).

“We live in a networked world, a world in which communication is no longer bounded by time or space, and in that world we have many choices about how and when we interact with others, with the physical world and with information” (Ward, 2013, p. 2). As educators, now more than ever, we must ensure we are connecting our students to the knowledge they need not just for the classroom, but what waits for them when they leave the walls of school.

Theresa Hasenauer, Ed.S., Michigan Reading Association President

Reference

Ward, L. (2013). Literacy within, across and beyond the curriculum. *The Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA), 190*. Retrieved from http://www.petaa.edu.au/imis_prod/w/Teaching_Resources/PPs/PETAA_Paper_190.aspx

Theresa Hasenauer, Ed.S., is currently enrolled at the University of Michigan-Flint in the doctoral program and has her National Certification in Literacy. She is a School Improvement Facilitator for the Macomb Intermediate School District and has been teaching for over 19 years. She can be reached at thasenauer@misd.net.