

NLLN Scholarship Report for 2008/2009

Louie Lauer Spotlight on Books Conference April 3rd-4th

This year's focus on "Keep Them Reading" highlighted ways in which teachers and librarians can help students build important habits in lifelong reading. As a middle school teacher who has also worked in the elementary setting, I know the work that goes into getting students to read, but I also see how incoming middle school students seem to "drop" their reading habits as soon as they walk in the door. John Coy's afternoon presentation provided a philosophical underpinning to the importance of targeting boys in middle school reading efforts and practical tips for providing these opportunities. Of special importance is the need to find material that engages boys and provide experiences that might key into their active nature. To piggy-back on Coy's important work with this age group, I have started boys book clubs during lunch and have enjoyed the chance to connect with "at-risk" readers. Using an engaging story, *Knuckleheads* by Jon Scieszka, students have been able to interact with each other in positive ways as well practicing oral fluency.

The reader's theater on Friday night introduced me to books and authors that I was not familiar with. Author's Marsh Chall, David LaRochelle, John Coy, and Lynne Jonell collaborated to create a reader's theater presentation that highlighted works from each of these authors.

Saturday was a time to hear from all of the above authors. Of particular interest was to hear how Lynne Jonell has used her book, *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat* to connect with "reluctant readers". The blogging component of her work is a great way to connect her character, Ratty, with students who are resistant to reading. Lynne's technique of creating different expressions with students was also an excellent way to communicate to students the importance of the illustration.

I appreciate every opportunity I have to attend Spotlight on Books. The presentations are always timely, the selection of literature is comprehensive, and networking with colleagues is invaluable. I am always able to take the information learned here back to my class and will also use it in my future library.