Welcome to the Journal of Classroom Research in Literacy 2013!

In its sixth year of publication, the Journal of Classroom Research in Literacy continues to bring readers classroom-based research on teaching practices in this Spring 2013 issue.

This edition highlights how four teacher-authors motivate their students to write. In a recent study on best writing practices, Zumbrunn and Krause (2012) interviewed seven leaders in the field of writing, including Steven Graham, Thomas Newkirk, and Linda Flower. Motivation and engagement are the main factors in the teaching of writing according to these writing experts. In his interview, Graham emphasized the importance of context stating that writing teachers “need to set the stage to increase the chances that students see writing as an enjoyable activity. This includes ensuring that there is a nonthreatening environment where kids write” (p. 348). Other factors contributing to students’ enjoyment of writing include writing teachers’ own positive beliefs about writing, practicing writing daily, having planned writing instruction, and scaffolding collaboration between teachers and students (Zumbrunn & Krause, 2012). When interviewed, Newkirk shared his belief that “a strong writing teacher creates the itch to write. It’s deliberate. It’s the opening that a teacher uses to spark something in a writer to try something new” (p. 348). The feature authors in our Spring issue use their various teaching practices to create that spark in their students to be writers.

From using digital tools to self-reflection and oral storytelling, in elementary and high schools, our four authors share their literacy teaching practices and different motivation strategies for student writing. Michael McClenaghan, in his article They call me Mr. MOODLE: How I used my Virtual Learning Environment to increase the motivation in my Writer’s Workshop: A Self-Study, reflects on his use of a MOODLE with his grade 6 class. Through a dedicated literacy block to use a MOODLE, a virtual learning environment, McClenaghan’s Writer’s Workshop produced increased student engagement, more peer collaboration, and an authentic publishing community. McClenaghan discovered that while utilizing technology has ongoing issues, it also has positive implications for students’ writing and for teaching practices, as well. Lindsay Harris also focuses on reflective practices in her article entitled Improved vocabulary outcomes through student reflection: Report from an urban high school. Teaching grade 10 students in the United States, Harris explores how her students could improve their vocabulary through a motivation technique. By providing time to self-reflect after weekly vocabulary quizzes, Harris found that her students began to invest more of their own time into preparing for quizzes and internalized at least some of the new vocabulary. Maria Gauthier investigates how a web-based program helps her senior high school students with their French compositions in her article, Anglophone boys using BonPatronPro to engage in and improve French writing. While Gauthier did not find a change in language development through her action research project she did discover that this digital tool engaged her students and was helpful in providing feedback for student compositions. Jessica Mostowski’s research, presented in The use of oral storytelling in the pre-writing stage, studies the tool of oral discussion in order to motivate her grade 4 students through the writing process. Through the use of oral storytelling and discussion, Mostowski found that her students’ confidence in their writing increased while developing story ideas with their peers.
While discussing supportive writing instruction during her interview, Flower stated, “Ideally, there is a collaborative planning where students talk through their plans with a supporter who offers thoughtful feedback” (p. 350). All of the authors in this JCRL issue found various ways for their students to collaborate during their writing process in order to motivate their students to write and to improve their writing. We hope you continue to find inspiration and helpful teaching strategies in this edition of the Journal for Classroom Research in Literacy!

References

The JCRL Editorial Team: Shelley Stagg Peterson, Lena Glaés Coutts, Grace Chan, Carol Doyle-Jones, and Elana Shapiro-Davidson