

CONFERENCE REVIEW:

Reading Apprenticeship Realized and More Important Than Ever



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It is hard to imagine we had the fifth annual Metacognition & Mindfulness Conference on March 8 and 9, 2019. The journey has been a learning curve, and we are at the cusp of even more professional development as we grow and expand our trainings together in the state and region. Thinking about what a force the faculty, administrators, and the staff played in bringing Reading Apprenticeship (RA) to the national level is almost unbelievable to me. We have done this work in unique ways: teaching faculty, presenting at conferences, attending WestED institutes and research groups, and by a lot of our own ingenuity; in other words, we have learned how to fit the RA framework into our classrooms, which offer vast curricula and serve unique students of varied educational experiences.

When I think about the trajectory of change, I realize that Reading Apprenticeship is a very real way to make changes in the classroom; these have a lasting impact on how students approach text. This is important work with real consequences for students. We use this framework to bring equity to classrooms, valuing student ideas and incorporating their ways of thinking about a text in our curriculum. Students delve into text eager to share what they know and validate or even re-evaluate their own life experiences. By focusing on the process of reading and meaning making, we have created a positive community around code breaking and engaging the texts in front of us; this method has encouraged faculty and students alike to approach challenging texts with confidence. We have moved beyond the deficit model and into a supportive journey of making sense of text in a community of learners. In this model, students layer their understandings and share their misunderstandings, which solidify the learning experience across time, cultures, and issues. Our students are the reason why we have worked so hard to bring Reading Apprenticeship to the state and region. I am reminded that with the changes in the new CASAS Goals tests, we will have our work cut out for us to ensure that students are learning and the College and Career Readiness Standards for adult education levels and have classroom materials and curriculum that focus on the standards.

Sometimes, making institutional change feels like an uphill battle. Of note, we are resilient professionals, and we have all persevered even if our campuses had a small number of folks trying to incorporate the framework into their mindsets and their classrooms. Change makers are often lonely souls before they are recognized as innovators or forward thinkers. I try to provide a perspective for newer faculty: the paradigm shift at Renton Technical College took a good eight years to become a formidable part of our academic landscape. Trust the practice and keep honing your methods.

Next year, the conference will be held at Bellingham Technical College. Caren Kongshaug will be working with her team to bring another Reading Apprenticeship conference to the region. I will be there to support this work and hope to see many of you there.