

District Literacy Leader Interview

I chose to interview the lead reading and writing coordinator at Aubrey ISD. Terrie McNabb wears many hats as assistant superintendent for the district that I work for. Any questions that our directors have go directly to her as she helps lead the reconstruction of our school's writing program. With all the changes STAAR as brought, there are many tweaks that need to be made to our system so that 100% of our students can be successful learners under these new testing formats.

Terrie's job is to coordinate instructions across grade levels for our district. She meets bi-weekly with all directors to discuss what they are seeing in the classrooms and from data that is being constantly collected through various types of testing (benchmarks – reading and writing that are STAAR directed, CSCOPE unit test, and past STAAR results as they have come in this year). In these meetings they look for weaknesses with students and with our curriculum. They brainstorm ideas to support all of our students so that they can be successful in their current year's assessment testing, and for years to come as they build upon their knowledge.

The first semester of the 2012-2013 school year, our grade levels met by subject area. We met and discussed our grade level's TEKS, and then analyzed what the same TEKS looked like in the grades below and above use. We focused on the verbs to clarify what the student was expected to do when mastering that TEKS. This is exactly what we are doing in class with our small groups, and that I read about in the article "*Elementary Programs: Guiding Change in a Time of Standards*" by Kathryn H. Au.

As STAAR results began to come in earlier this year, Terrie and the directors met and looked at the data. They were shocked at the writing scores and knew that what they had been doing was not working for this new testing standard. They set up a system to support the

students and help prepare them for the coming state tests in March/April, but were once again shocked at the low scores in writing when results came back in May. As they analyzed their data, they were asking themselves the same question Fenwick English did in his PowerPoint “PowerPoint Presentation to Mid-Winter”, “Is what we are doing enough?” Terrie and the directors at Aubrey ISD said, “No!”

As they prepare for the coming school year, they are attending trainings to help guide their revampment of their writing curriculum and instruction. Aubrey ISD uses Region 11 STAAR trainings to guide their learning right now. As suggested in “*The Administration and Supervision of Reading Programs*” page 164, Terrie reads professional journal articles and studies about research and practices in teaching to stay up on new learning. They will use information from these trainings and readings to guide new learning for staff, and eventually the students. As curriculum is designed, they will continue to look across grade levels to provide consistency in learning for the students. They also want to incorporate reading and writing together in unison and with other subject areas as much as possible so that the learning is reinforced.

After my interview with Terrie, I have an even greater respect for the leadership role that she holds. She is able to bring our districts’ educators together, and find a common ground to have an open and honest discussion that will help support our students from kindergarten to high school and beyond. She had great people skills that bring others together. She is able to get other to eagerly jump on board to create a new vision for learning as they too see a weakness in our current system. She sees a need. We see a need. It is nice to know that, as a classroom teacher, I am alone in supporting my students. The support is all around us from teachers in other grade levels, the directors that are stationed at our campus, all the way to the top of our

administration. We all work together with the students' success as our end goal. Terrie, as our leaders, makes this look so effortless and easy. In reality, we all know how hard it can be to get people to change, to accept that they have weaknesses, and to agree to work together when we may be very different types of people/teachers.

I look forward to becoming a vital part of this wonderful team that guides our districts instructions. They have such a clear vision for the future, even though there is still so much that is unknown till August when the state releases the tests. It is great to see that their team is so strong and positive during such a stressful time. So much work and planning went into supporting students for testing this past spring, and to have such low writing scores was a blow. They are not letting that get them down in any way. They see it as a stepping stone to getting better. They know where their weakness is, and they are looking for ways to design trainings to support that area of weakness.

With Terrie's over twenty years of educational experience, she is full of wisdom. Her door is always open to anyone within the district. **She is always visiting campuses and classrooms to offer support and guidance. She is a great model for a lead instructor, and I hope to be as effective as she is in a leadership role one day. For now, I will watch and learn from my educational leaders as they redesign our writing program, and offer my assistance during teaming to ensure our students' learning is consistent across grade levels.** I will support my students' learning based on Lieberman's words about constructivism, "*students bring with them their unique knowledge and experiences which they use to make meaning*" (McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996.) I will help them build upon that prior knowledge from where they currently are through various types of assessments to help them be successful learners while in my classroom and for years to come.

Resources

McLaughlin, M., & Vogt, M. E. (1996). *Portfolios in teacher education*. Newark, DE:

International Reading Association.

Shearer, B. A., & Vogt, M. E. (2011). *Reading specialist and literacy coaches in the real world*.

3rd ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Strickland, D. S., & Wepner, S. B. (2008). *The administration and supervision of reading*

programs. 4th edition. New York: NY: Teachers College Press.