

Book Talk: A Culture of Literacy



With all the discussion about deeper learning, college- and career-ready standards, and the latest research on assessments, assignments, and instruction, it turns out that what many principals prescribe to chart a new course for meaningful literacy instruction is engaging readers and fostering a love of reading from an early age.

Minnesota principal Steven S. Geis uses book talks to pique the interest of young readers and to motivate them to read on their own. “You can think of a book talk as a short commercial for a book. Any time I’m in front of students, I bring a book to share,” says Geis, who is NAESP’s past president. Book talks are short, simple presentations about a book that tantalize others to read it. Over the past five years that Geis has been using book talks at North Trail Elementary School in Farmington, Minnesota, the school has seen an uptick in reading fluency and library circulation. And where Geis used to deliver book talks during the daily announcements, now students have enthusiastically taken on this role. Even younger students get engaged; they use the Seesaw app to record their own book talks and to share with parents.

Creative techniques such as book talks help facilitate the required shift to a culture of literacy that extends beyond English-language arts, and nurtures both cross-curricular literacy and entry into various 21st century information sources. “Young people today are contending with what is, by many magnitudes, the largest and most complex information landscape in human history—one whose contours and conventions are continuously shifting and evolving,” writes Peter Adams, who is senior vice president for educational programs at the News Literacy Project. In his article for this issue of *Principal*, “Where Literacy Is Heading: News Literacy as a Signal of Change,” Adams traces the skills for news literacy as the ability to access, comprehend, and evaluate information—which all readers will need to master.

This issue of *Principal* features additional practitioners and thought leaders who address a wide scope of literacy topics—from news literacy to cross-curricular and disciplinary instruction to quality feedback to choosing and evaluating a literacy program. With an eye toward the evolving literacy skills that students will need to know and be able to do, I hope that these leading voices will guide your instructional leadership.

—Kaylen Tucker, Ph.D.
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IN THIS ISSUE

- 40 Effective Dialogue Between Principals and Their Evaluators: How an ongoing coaching and mentorship model is building strong principals
- 54 How to Work With the District Office: 12 tips to get what you want, when you need it

Bonus: A special salute to the 2017 class of National Distinguished Principals starts on page 33.

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