

Erekson Bio

Jim Erekson has been teaching language and literacy at the college level since 1989. His Ph.D. in learning and development focused on language and literacy development. He has a wide K-12 background in both elementary and secondary schools, including research, teaching, and consultation. His presentations at this conference will involve much of his experience from 1999-2007 running a middle school Reading Workshop in Colorado. He is currently Assistant Professor of Reading at University of Northern Colorado.

Presentation Synopses

Content First: Reading with Purpose

In middle schools, many students hate to be put in a class with the word “Reading” in the title. Negative perceptions about reading grow and take deep root during elementary school, making it difficult for teachers to reach readers in middle school. The Reading Workshop model presented here was successful at reaching readers so that they succeeded inside class and also began to transfer new skills and motivation to other settings (including achievement tests). Key elements of the model were: 1. an acceleration mindset as opposed to a remediation mindset; 2. putting content first to help students find and apply reading strategies for a reason; 3. an inquiry model that allowed students to read within a topic over great lengths of time. The presentation will include modeling of the key concepts in the context of an inquiry.

86 Types of Text: Real Demands on Real Readers

When text types and structures are presented to educators, the focus is usually on two types: narrative and expository. This conventional approach grossly underestimates the variety in form and structure of authentic text. In one analysis of authentic text, the presenter found over 86 different types of text, 36 of which came from a standardized test. From restaurant menus, to death certificates, from shopping catalogs, to game cards and comic strips, each type of text makes specific demands on readers, with different ways to make sense of the information presented. Each type of text has its own conventions for readers and writers. Participants in this presentation will learn to examine these text demands and consider appropriate reading and writing instruction to support success with authentic text in mind.

How to Rewrite Text (Without Really Rewriting it)

Teaching content in classrooms where readers approach classwide texts at different levels (independent, instructional, frustrational) often prompts educators to request texts written at different levels. Some publishers respond to this call, publishing ‘easier’ versions of Science and Social Studies texts. This is an inappropriate message to send learners in our classrooms. This presentation focuses on methods that allow teachers to keep the ‘original’ text but also to provide readers with points

of access to the text. A variety of steps in the process help teachers differentiate text for struggling readers, English Language Learners, and some special education students.