Fostering Meaningful Middle School Literacy Learning: Investigating Beliefs and Practices

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Purpose
The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast two teachers’ classroom literacy programs.

The Article
This article discusses the ways two European American monolingual English-speaking teachers (Ms. Lawson and Mrs. Baird) from suburbs in the Midwest, teach sixth grade at Washington Heights Middle School in urban Michigan. The students in each teacher’s classrooms roughly reflect the overall racial make-up of the school which is approximately 85% African American and 15% Latino, Asian American, European American, and Middle Eastern. While both teachers are known for working hard and caring for their students, one teacher has a classroom is produces more successful literacy learners. This article examines each classroom to learn which teacher’s instructional practices are most conducive to effective literacy learning for adolescent youths from nondominant backgrounds and why. The authors discovered that Mrs. Baird’s classroom produced the most successful literacy learners. They then explored Mrs. Baird’s beliefs about language, literacy, teaching and learning. Overall, Mrs. Baird assumes an inquiry stance as a teacher and has a love for learning and finds herself to be a lifelong learner.

What this Means for the Field
Having an understanding of various teaching methods provides numerous perspectives on instructional learning. This paper provides two different, yet similar, instructional practices that can be compared and contrasted to see which one yields a more successful literacy learner. This knowledge thus informs teachers of methods that will provide them with a more effective and efficient teaching curriculum.

Citation

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