



Reading Counts

2003 Children's Literature Conference

Laura Perry
Team Leader - Head Start/Preschool Programs

Through the grant that funds the America Reads and America Counts program at SUNY Geneseo, I was able to attend the 2003 Children's Literature Conference. The conference was an outstanding experience! At this conference, held on January 31st and February 1st, there were more than ten sessions. Within each session (lasting one to two hours each), there were 10 choices. I literally had the choice of hundreds of things to learn about! Topics included writing children's books, dealing with multiculturalism, and recommended young adult books. Without a doubt, however, the most exciting and valuable time I spent at the conference was in the sessions with children's authors **Tomie dePaola, Nikki Grimes, Gary Paulsen, and Denise Fleming**. Each author had a different message, yet the common thread was that each author encouraged literacy.

Continued on page 2



A Livingston County Head Start student shares the gingerbread he made with an America Reads tutor

Geneseo Teachers Talk about the America Reads/America Counts Program

Jamie Mullaney
Team Leader - Geneseo Central Schools

Three America Reads/America Counts teachers at Geneseo were asked how the program has benefited their classrooms.

Mrs. Sleggs (kindergarten)

"One of the biggest benefits of having America Reads students is having one-on-one reading time. I feel this is a wonderful quality time to be able to offer students. My students have gained a lot of reading experience and learning through modeled behavior about concepts of print."



Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 2003 Children's Literature Conference
- 1 Geneseo Teachers Talk about the Program
- 3 Book Review - Stepping on Cracks
- 3 Book Review - Savage Inequalities
- 4 Math Activities
- 4 Tips for Teachers
- 4 Contact Information

Conference

Continued from page 1

Tomie dePaola spoke about how humor is an essential part of children's books. Nikki Grimes stressed the importance of poetry in the elementary classroom. Gary Paulsen spoke about how his life experiences contributed in the most unlikely ways to the material in his books and his success as a writer. Finally, Denise Fleming entertained all with humorous personal anecdotes interwoven into an exploration of the text and illustrations of some of her picture books. By meeting the authors, my ability to teach their books was enhanced. I know that Gary Paulsen was downed twice in planes over the Canadian wilderness, the topic of his book Hatchet. I know that Denise Fleming has a cat she calls Mama Cat, the title of one of her books. The authors are inspirational, gifted, and most importantly- human. To those of you considering attending this conference next year, or any education conference, consider the following hints:

- Register early so that you will be able to get your first selections.
- Save on costs by staying in a nearby hotel, rather than an on-site hotel.
- Once you get your schedule at the conference, plan what sessions you want to go to.
- Arrive at the sessions early to get good seats.
- Read session descriptions well. Sometimes wording can be misleading.
- Go to everything that is offered, if possible-- including general sessions.
- Familiarize yourself with the works of authors that will be in attendance.
- Make an effort to get to know the authors. Make yourself or your group known! You won't regret it.
- Bring money to buy the discounted books at the bookstore.

Selected Bibliography of Authors Mentioned

Tomie de Paola: 26 Fairmount Ave., Strega Nona, The Popcorn Book

Denise Fleming: Lunch; In the Small, Small Pond; Alphabet Under Construction

Nikki Grimes: Meet Danitra Brown, My Man Blue, Jazmin's Notebook

Gary Paulsen: Hatchet, Nightjohn, Sarny, Dogsong, The Winter Room

Geneseo Teachers

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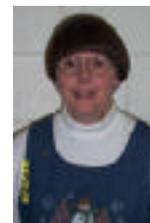
Mrs. Bennett (kindergarten)

"The America Reads program is very beneficial to the students in my classroom. It allows students to get a great deal more one-on-one reading time, which is not always easy for a classroom teacher to give her students. Also, the children who are in need of extra reinforcement of reading readiness skills get additional time on task. I just got done assessing my students in order to mark report cards. I was pleasantly surprised at the progress the children who work with America Reads tutors have made this marking period. It was thrilling to see how much confidence they have gained. Thank, you America Reads!"



Mrs. Christiansen (1st grade)

"Great opportunity to provide tutoring help in reading for students who might not receive the help otherwise. This year our reading tutor has been helping us prepare books for The Young Authors and Storytellers Festival in Mt. Morris. How exciting it is for the students to author and illustrate their own book!"

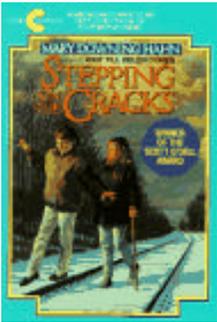


Book Reviews

Stepping on Cracks

Katie Ilardo
Team Leader - Mt. Morris Central Schools

With the possibility of an upcoming war between the United States and Iraq, educators should begin focusing on activities that bring in the topic of war and how it impacts us as individuals and as a whole community. One way that students can be informed of the impacts that a possible war may bring is through literacy and constant discussion about how it can relate to their own lives. Mary Downing Hahn's book, *Stepping on the Cracks*, is about how World War II brought many Americans together with feelings of patriotism and support for their country. Many soldiers felt compelled to go into the war to defend their country, however they truly felt that killing was wrong. This book looks at both the feelings of some soldiers involved in the war and also the effects on their loved ones, friends, and family members who were afraid of losing them. While reading this book with students, ask them how it will compare to our situation if we become involved in a war. How is it similar and different? What are your feelings towards the possibility of a war? How do you think it will affect you personally? *Stepping on the Cracks* offers a personal view of the war and helps students look more in depth at their own feelings and beliefs about a war for the United States.



Other books about war:

Civil War: Sarny, by G. Paulsen

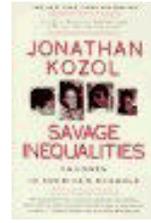
World War I: The Night Journey, by K. Laskey

Korean Conflict: Year of Impossible Goodbyes, by Sook Nyul Choi

Vietnam War: Fallen Angels, by Walter Dean Myers

Savage Inequalities

David Smith
Team Leader - Livonia Central Schools



As future teachers, we are often inundated with titles of books in our profession that are recommended reading. Although they all have value, one book in particular stands out as an excellently written, researched, and highly readable account of the systemic failures of the American education system, and how they can be fixed.

Savage Inequalities, by Jonathan Kozol, is more than an account of the persistent financial problems besieging urban school districts in some of the biggest cities in the U.S.; it is a vivid story about the children who suffer emotionally and even physically from racially segregated schools and inequitable funding practices.

Jonathan Kozol began his career as a fourth-grade teacher in an over-crowded, segregated school in Boston in 1964. After being fired for reading Robert Frost and Langston Hughes poems to his class, Kozol went on to teach in a more affluent district, and noticed right away the differences and advantages in a wealthier school environment. He began a "journey" in the fall of 1998 that lasted two years—visiting approximately 30 neighborhoods from Illinois to Washington D.C., and from New York to San Antonio. The amount of segregation he saw in the schools he visited startled him.

Savage Inequalities is divided into six chapters. Each chapter takes the reader to a different part of the country and shows examples of inadequate funding and abhorrent conditions in inner city schools—such as classes held in bathrooms, a total lack of sports facilities, and dead rats on the floor of the cafeteria. Testimony from school administrators, teachers, and the children themselves depicts the overwhelming odds these children must overcome to get a good education.

In the last chapter, Kozol suggests an idea for a more equitable funding system for public schools, raising the bar so all schools can succeed. Until change is made, however, *Savage Inequalities* leaves little doubt that some children will have to continue learning their ABCs in an environment more conducive to failure than success.

**Note - Jonathan Kozol will be speaking at SUNY Geneseo on April 23rd in Wadsworth Auditorium. Tickets are free and available at the SUNY Geneseo ticket office. This is a GOLD workshop.*

America Counts Activities

Stacy Jusaniec
America Counts Tutor - Dansville Middle School

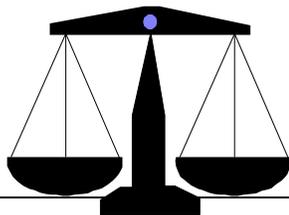
MATH CAN BE FUN!!

Hands-on, fun activities are great ways to get children interested in and excited about math. These types of activities can make the children feel involved and they can then benefit from taking what they have learned and applying it to math concepts in their own lives.. You can make your own activities and projects or you can use the examples given below to capture the children's attention and get them involved. Either way, just make sure that you make math FUN!

Division (grades 2-3) -- Use the story [A Doorbell Rang](#), by Pat Hutchins to help students understand division as a process of sharing. The book begins with 2 children who are about to share 12 cookies. Just as they are about to share the cookies, the doorbell rings and 2 friends join them. Now there are 4 people to share 12 cookies. Then 2 more friends arrive and now there are 6 children to share the cookies. The doorbell rings again and 6 more children are there. Now there are 12 children sharing 12 cookies. Have students use either real cookies or cut outs to demonstrate each situation and decide how many cookies each child will get in each situation. Younger grades can learn addition and subtraction concepts from this book.

Measurement / Estimation (grades 2-3) -- Select 5 objects, examples are - a book, a box of crayons, a sneaker, a paperclip and a stapler. Have the students arrange the objects from lightest to heaviest, in terms of what they think, just by holding and looking at the objects. Draw the object in order from lightest to heaviest on a piece of paper. Use a balance scale and weight to weigh all 5 objects and write the weight below each picture. See if their calculations order match their estimation!

Equivalent Forms (grades 5-6) -- Students are given a grid that is 10x10, instructed that the grid contains 100 squares and that the entire grid is equivalent to one with each square equivalent to 1/100 or .001 or 1%. Students are given a series of fractions in groups of their common denominator (e.g. 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4) and are to divide the grid into those fractions and to count to find the decimal equivalent and percent. If students start with easy fractions like halves, 4ths, and 10ths, they are then able to use the strategies. They then will discover how to figure out more difficult fractions like 3rd, 6th, 8ths, etc. using the grids.



America Reads/America Counts Tips for Teachers

- Use your America Reads tutor for reading, writing, and ELA support only. Use your America Counts tutor for math support only.
- Make sure that you or another school employee is present while tutors are working with students. **Please never leave tutors alone with the children.**
- Set up times to give feedback to your tutor(s); give ideas and suggestions for their tutoring.
- Make your tutor aware of the particular needs of the children in your classroom and offer suggestions for tutoring topics.
- Make your tutor aware of the supplies and resources that s/he can use.
- Utilize the strengths of your tutors. If appropriate, allow them to design games, activities, or lessons.
- Communicate problems, concerns, or conflicts with the America Reads/Counts program coordinators if they occur.
- Allow us to monitor our program by completing tutor and program evaluations.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT AND FLEXIBILITY!**

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