

Education 340 Reading in the Secondary School

Patricia Gross, Associate Professor
Department of Education

The 26 students in the Spring 2005 course EDU 340 Reading in the Secondary Schools explored general information sources (Standard I) and applied the new information in a variety of ways (Standard IV) in response to a course requirement of a project worth 25% of the final course grade. The assignment caused students to delve into print and non-print sources to gather the necessary information to write an annotated bibliography and create a visual to present to the class and to teach their students in the future about a minority figure influential in their academic discipline.

Betsey Moylan presented a workshop in the Weinberg Library on March 16 th, introducing students to a wide range of reference books that enabled students to begin the search for minority figures, other than the most commonly discussed. This hour-long workshop gave students an excellent start.

The annotated bibliographies that students produced evidenced a rich number of sources. The class presentations that have all been videotaped illustrate the student depth of knowledge gained from researching individuals they had never heard of before. The visuals – three-sided display boards and Power Point presentations – evidence well-organized analysis and synthesis of information.

I presented their findings at the Pennsylvania chapter of the National Association of Multicultural Education in April at Susquehanna University where it was enthusiastically received. Audience members intend to replicate the project.

In the last class session of the semester, I debriefed the course with students and asked for written reactions to each assignment and its value to them in increasing their knowledge of literacy teaching and learning. What follows are sample excerpts from their reactions:

Math students:

"Researching a minority mathematician tests the teacher's literacy skills as well as the students! We had to adapt our reading, writing, and speaking skills into one lesson while motivating our `students' to excel in their listening skills (as well as writing, if they took notes). Presentations and research need so much literacy effort to accomplish them well."

"With the annotated bibliographies and presentations, I learned how interesting the history of math is. I would love to have my students do research on other mathematicians."

Science students:

"The annotated bibliography exposed me to ideas of expanding research into my classroom. Students can really benefit from research on a very narrow topic (like minorities). Students must read, research, write, present, etc. All of these are methods to increase student literacy."

"The research presentation taught a lot about literacy. It allowed me a way to teach a new topic, but most importantly, it allowed me a process for teaching my students how to research effectively and present the topic."

History students:

"The annotated bibliography forced me to look at different types of books and sources that I normally wouldn't — videos, tapes of speeches, poetry."

"The multicultural assignment gave the idea and the concept of using all sorts of information. It can provide for different types of reading comprehension from sources and provides information to students. It also allows students to be involved in research and formulate different ways to take in information..."

"I found this assignment valuable in my progression because I realized sometimes in the classroom students need to investigate outside the textbook."

English students:

"The concept of using a variety of sources is something I could instill in my students because many students do not recognize the variety of sources available to them."

"The annotated bibliography helped show the variety of resources available for students. While I researched, I came across interviews, videos, etc., which were much more interesting than just reading texts."