



PEIRCE CENTER

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I WISH MY READING TEACHER

KNEW

by: Ashley Messner

Kyle Schwartz's *I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids* is a book based on the now-viral activity in which Schwartz asked her third-grade class to write on notecards what they wish she knew about them. From this exercise, Schwartz discovered the extent of students' honesty and what many of her students were dealing with and willing to share. From this activity, Schwartz learned some of her students were struggling with poverty, grief, abusive family situations, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, she also learned that her students were interested in their education, strived to work hard despite the obstacles in their lives, and wanted to learn.

Inspired by this activity, I brought two questions to the students at the Peirce Center in order to find out what students with reading difficulties would want reading teachers to know. The first question was "What is reading like for you?"

All of the students noted the difficulty of the activity in their responses. Ari, a 3rd grader, made note that the big words were the most challenging for her. Colton, a 3rd grader, noted that he liked reading, but didn't care for the Lexia Core app utilized in his classroom because "...it's annoying because it shows you things you haven't learned yet, and you have to learn it while doing it." Colton's response is a reminder to reading teachers that students who struggle with reading need explicit instruction with concepts and skills, rather than exposure-based learning. For students like Colton, exposure-based learning is frustrating and ineffective.

(continued on the next page)

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The second question was a prompt that students were asked to complete on a notecard: "I wish my reading teacher knew...." Students could aim it at a specific reading teacher or any reading teacher in the world.

Owen, a 2nd grader, said that he wished his reading teacher knew how tricky reading can be and that the classroom was too loud, highlighting the importance of being able to focus. This may be a factor that teachers have to consider--not just inside their classrooms--but outside of the classrooms. Do their students have a quiet place to read at home? What ways can teachers accommodate students who do not have this?

Colin, a 4th grader, noted that he wished his reading teacher knew that he liked to read about sports. Engaging with students' interests can be a simple motivator for students who may be reluctant to read. Schwartz has observed that her own students are driven to take ownership of their own learning and engage deeply topics when they have a stake or interest in them. Teachers should never discount the role that students' natural curiosity and interests will have in their education; rather, they should harness that to the best of their abilities.

As of now, "I Wish My Reading Teacher Knew..." has been turned into a wall of notecards at the Peirce Center that current and new students will be able to add to in the future. These students will no doubt--as we have already seen-- be able to give us insight in how best to help them become better readers as well as to appreciate the vast wealth of knowledge that they already bring into our classrooms.

A special thank you to all the Peirce Center students who participated with their insight and honesty!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 1: Beware- The Science of Reading Does Include Comprehension (Core Learning Webinar)
- February 6: Reflecting on the Science of Reading (Kendore Learning Webinar)
- February 7: Supporting Literacy for Students with Dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder (edWeb Webinar)
- February 14: The Science of Reading and Biliteracy (edWeb Webinar)

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I wish my reading teacher knew that I need more time.

I wish my reading teacher knew it is tricky and the classroom is to loud.

I wish my reading teacher knew I like reading and it spots.

I wish my reading teacher knew that I have dyslexia.

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STUDENT READING INVENTORIES

In I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids, Kyle Schwartz frequently refers to a variety of inventories that students can fill out to inform their teacher of different aspects of their lives such as family makeup, grief and loss, and allies in their lives. For reading teachers, one common inventory used is a Student Reading Inventory, which surveys students' reading interests.

When building a reading inventory, you may want to include questions relating to:

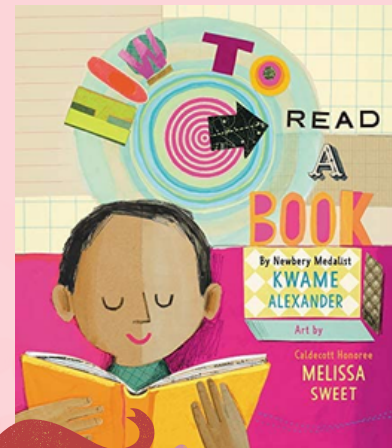
1. Student Interest in Reading/Confidence in their Reading Abilities
2. Format in Which They Prefer to Read (Independently, With Partners, As a Class, With an Audiobook, etc.)
3. Genres of Interest
4. Topics of Interest
5. Reading Challenges (such as noise, needing extra time to read)
6. Reading at Home Considerations: Who at home can help them with their reading? Do they have a quiet place at home in which to read?

Answers to these questions can inform your instruction by allowing you to group students with similar interests, choose the best reading formats, and prepare for challenges students may experience both in the classroom and at home.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- What Kids Wish Their Teachers Knew (New York Times Article)
- Family Literacy Bags
- Reading Adventure Packs for Families
- Building Character Through Literacy with Children's Literature (Scholarly Article)
- 2022 Notable Children's Books (Association for Library Service to Children)

BOOK OF THE MONTH



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