

CREATING STRATEGIC READERS

BY VALERIE ELLERY

Literacy Leadership Institute, K-12

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE  INTERNATIONAL
Reading
Association

Create and Sustain Strategic Readers

February 2-4, 2012

Disney's Coronado Springs Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Florida



JOIN VALERIE ELLERY as she partners with the International Reading Association for a multi-day institute designed to empower literacy leaders with high-quality professional development that will enhance teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Goals for the institute include:

- Discover how to motivate and engage the “Whole Learner” using multiple intelligences
- Explore implications of the Common Core State Standards
- Analyze student scenarios for strengths and weaknesses to effectively inform instruction
- Incorporate embedded technology in literacy content
- Apply strategies and techniques to raise students’ reading and writing achievement in word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension

These goals and many others will be addressed with practical approaches ready for classroom implementation.

Enrollment is limited so early registration is recommended.

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Sirje Torim

Estonia is a small Nordic country that celebrates high rates of literacy amongst its population. Yet, like most educated societies, teachers seek ways to improve literacy for all. Although literacy is high, parents are often uninformed on strategies to encourage and celebrate reading at home.

Since 2004 the Estonian Reading Association (www.lugemisyhing.ee, www.tallinn2011.ee) has conducted “Reading Nest” workshops for teachers to equip them with ideas and advice on how to create child-friendly, comfortable reading nooks in kindergarten and elementary school classrooms. These workshops use a variety of creative activities and games to support learning how to read.

Reading Nest project won the International Reading Association Award for Innovative Reading Promotion in Europe 2009. Over those seven years while the Reading Nest Project has been active, almost 2000 teachers all over Estonia have attended the workshops. Now those teachers are willing and able to maintain better reading environments for children. The Estonian Reading Association has trained volunteer mentors who have spread their knowledge and know-how to other teachers in workshops. The enthusiasm of those mentors is the reason why this project has been so sustainable.

Tallinn Reading Nest Nurtures Children and Parents

After success was gained from these services, it was decided that these techniques would be beneficial to parents’ understanding of developmental literacy approaches as well.

Adding Parents to the Mix

In 2011, Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, was named the European Capital of Culture and the Estonian Reading Association applied for and was awarded a grant from the organizing group to increase literacy by preparing a project called “Tallinn Reads in a Reading Nest” in Estonian, Russian, and English. This new program was to introduce techniques to help parents to support reading at home.

As a result on September 8-International Literacy Day workshops were given in ten different locations in Tallinn. Workshops were given by professional and experienced educators from the Estonian Reading Association. With funding support, the professional educators of Tallinn welcomed parents, grandparents and other caregivers to spend an afternoon exploring the topics of reading development, reading interest, supportive attitude, environment, and activities.

Parents were given training that answered such questions as:

- How to ignite and sustain interest in reading?
- How to help a child to become a reader?
- How to support a child’s reading development?
- How to create a supportive reading environment?”

In a friendly and encouraging atmosphere adults asked questions, shared examples, listened to advice, looked at books and played literacy games. The primary message was that reading is a

process and everyone will learn to read at their own pace. Educators spoke to the fact that learning to read happens best in a caring, positive, fun and enjoyable environment. Parents were advised to give their children easy access to an abundance of print material (from labels and self-written notes to books and magazines).

Reading Regularly to Children

The most important piece of advice was for parents to regularly read aloud to their children. Teachers emphasized that listening to captivating stories and a beautiful rich language is a major influence in igniting reading passion in many children. At the “Tallinn Reads in a Reading Nest” workshops, parents were encouraged to set an example as readers, give a child new opportunities to share thinking, spend time talking about texts, and foremost notice and comment on the progress their children are making.



“Tallinn Reads in a Reading Nest” workshop

According to Sirje Torim, the project coordinator and Reading Nest Mentor of the Year, parents left workshops with a better understanding of how they already support their children’s reading development at home and were given more ideas on how to do it naturally. The feedback from workshop leaders and parents was quite positive and there were requests for more workshops in future. ■