

My name is Andrea Levy Ozeran. I have been in the field of education for 16 years.

I met Rosemary Ruthven at Washington Elementary school in Santa Ana, California, about ten years ago, when I was teaching Kindergarten and she was teaching third grade. I remember speaking with her one day when she told me she knew how to teach very young children how to read and write. I immediately felt a special connection with Rosemary and I really wanted to learn how she did it. I remember visiting her classroom often and asking a lot of questions. Rosemary was so giving of herself, her time and her expertise. She became a mentor for me, not only as an educator but as a human being. Rosemary is a kind, loving, nurturing, intelligent and caring individual. She conducts herself in a highly professional manner and is a pleasure to work with.

Three years later, Rosemary was hired as a curriculum specialist for our school district. She worked tirelessly to help reform an inner-city school system. She chose my room as a Demonstration model for new teachers. Working with her in this capacity, I not only learned a great deal about excellent, developmentally appropriate teaching strategies that are meaningful, exciting and successful for young students but I grew both professionally and personally.

The techniques I learned from her are the ones I keep dear to my heart and use regularly in my teaching. 90% of the children in my classroom are English Language Learners (ELL's) which means the teaching strategies I choose need to develop English skills as well as literacy skills. Rosemary encouraged all of us in the district to use a prescriptive and comprehensive approach to developing reading and writing. She promoted a strong phonemic and phonics based foundation combined with meaningful and purposeful real-life reading and writing activities. This way, children saw the connection between learning about sounds and the alphabet and how that learning applied to their every day lives. The Interactive Collaborative Story writing activity is so powerful. The little kinder kids just love it; they're so engaged, which is motivating in and of itself. In fact, I can't wait to get back to school after our winter break to begin our first collaborative story for the new year. The interactive journaling is equally amazing and powerful.

I continue to enjoy high levels of student literacy level attainment very early in the year. I truly do feel blessed to have had the opportunity to work and learn from Rosemary. It has helped me to become the successful teacher I am today, and I thank her dearly, from the bottom of my heart, for sharing her expertise with me.

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