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Editor's Corner - Professional Reading and Other Priorities

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Professional Reading and Other Priorities

Teach till three, coach basketball, write a lesson plan, grade tests, call Jason's mother, schedule the bus for the trip to Des Moines, find the "Must Do Today" list ----

If you found your "Must Do Today" list next to this editorial, you have plenty of *other priorities* in hand and I need not continue the list started above. If you have read this far, perhaps you can be persuaded to read on while I share some thoughts about increasing the depth of our professional reading which may be at the level of our "Must Do Today" list.

My "Must Do Today" list is professional (I could not continue my profession without it) and it even becomes an object of contemplation. However, the contemplation usually does not foster much growth. Perhaps we are cheating ourselves and our students by not doing more contemplative professional reading. Grabbing a bit of information from an electronic bulletin board or skimming to get enough teaching ideas to fill tomorrow's class time is helpful, but does not provide the opportunity for growth that contemplative reading provides. Reading slowly enough to let your mind wander through varied related thoughts — that is the stuff of creativity. The modern educational environment interrupts, the mind wanders to the "Must Do Today" list, and we are lost again to "getting things done."

There is a way to improve professional reading by using your "Must Do Today" list! Before we can do professional reading, someone must do professional writing. And professional writing involves a greater depth of concentration and contemplation. Once you have committed yourself to writing to share ideas, you will find yourself committed to contemplating the writing of others. The result is the weaving of ideas and experiences, theirs and yours, and as you contemplate, you generate more ideas worthy of sharing. What made that one lesson from last week so good that you would like to live it over and over? Was it what you did? The way you did it? How does it relate to ideas put in writing by other teachers?

Add this to your "Must Do Today" list: "Make a list of my favorite things — things that happened in my classroom!" Commit yourself to sharing one of those favorite things in the light of what others have written. Don't know which one to pick? Read some pieces written by others, and that weaving process will start, and one idea will stand out. Do some reading — do some writing — do yourself and your kids a favor — share your writing with the new editor of this journal and do a favor to kids all over the country. (This journal isn't read just in Iowa anymore!)

So, go ahead and contemplate your "Must Do Today" list, but add an item to the list, an item that will lead you to contemplate and share: "List my favorite classroom happenings."

If you wish, include this item with your *other priorities*. The professional reading will take care of itself!

— C.W.B.