

Joanne Larson, USA
Professor, University of Rochester
jl Larson@warner.rochester.edu

Focusing on literacy: A multidisciplinary approach to reform in one urban high school

Co-author 1: Jennifer Rees, Assistant Principal, East High School,
Jennifer.Rees@RCSDK12.ORG

Co-author 2: Jessica Anderson, Teacher leader and literacy coach,
East High School, Jessica.Anderson@rcsdk12.org

The authors of this paper bring together multiple epistemological and methodological perspectives of literacy to describe how one urban high school in the United States is attempting to improve the teaching and learning of literacy in a novel university/school partnership. The seriousness of the problem of literacy in this school cannot be understated. 87% of incoming 6th grade students failed the state's English Language Arts (ELA) exam. We developed and continue to refine a comprehensive literacy program to address these issues, while at the same time providing an authentic and meaningful literacy curriculum for students who excelled. We therefore ask what sort of literacy program is needed to support the full range of literacy needs in a 6-12 urban high school in a high poverty community. We bring together the diverse methodologies of long-term participatory ethnography with practitioner research using traditional quantitative school data to describe the literacy program and to interpret its outcomes. Findings show how one urban school developed and implemented a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to literacy that showed promise in improving the teaching and learning of literacy.