



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** The Heart of Reading  
**Name:** Sheryl Sparks  
**Other Team Members:** David Breese, Meredith Rojek, Samantha Steinfelds  
**Program:** San Francisco Program  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001  
**Location Visited:** New York  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

### **Project Summary:** Project Summary

Our team, consisting of 3 special education and 2 general education teachers, attended the Summer Reading Institute given by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University, from July 6th to 10th. Columbia Teachers College has been a leader in the research of reading and writing instruction and provided professional development for schools in New York City, across the nation and internationally for over three decades. The Reading Institute will provide us with the opportunity for intensive work in small groups as well as larger sections. We will be exposed to “the premier thinkers and teachers in the field and learn best practices that will help us support our students in becoming avid, passionate readers.” (Columbia Teachers College) The 5 day institute will introduced us to strategies for implementing school-wide approaches to change the way reading is taught at every grade level. Our school has made tremendous strides last year integrating special education students with those in general education. It has afforded a chance for children to develop respect for individual differences and appreciate each other’s learning styles. The spirit of the Reading institute is one that encourages a sense of community in the classroom in which students support each other and learn to be independent, critical thinkers. Our team will be able to share approaches that are beneficial in meeting the needs of all students. We acknowledge that the ongoing commitment to the transformation of the professional communities within our school will unfold over a period of years. We embrace the challenge of building a community of life-long learners committed to developing a vision for supporting teachers in collaboration and drawing on each other’s strengths to learn from one another.

### **Career Impact:** Personal and Professional Growth

This reading workshop model demands that teachers utilize higher level thinking. In order to successfully implement this program, teachers need to fully engage their students and encourage active participation. We have learned how to structure our class time so that we spend more time listening to students and less time lecturing to them. In addition, we’ll be able to attend to each student’s reading needs through individual and small group conference and to let students work at their own pace instead of pushing them to fit into a prepackaged curriculum. We will deepen our collaboration with our fellow teachers to develop a sequence and scope of reading instruction. As a unified group, we will learn to celebrate all of our successes and to reflect on our failures. As part of a school-wide effort to change our literacy practices, our team will share what we have learned with other staff members not only on professional development days but through many small group and individual conversations about the efficacy of the Reading Workshop model.

### **Classroom/Community Impact:**Benefits to Students and School Community

It is critical that students develop comprehension strategies early on in the development of their reading. Many of the students in our school are lacking this skill and the Reading Workshop at Teachers College deals specifically with this discrepancy. Many of our readers are able to decode text but are not getting meaning from the text. Without comprehension it is impossible to develop a love for reading that we are striving to ingrain in our population. The Reading Workshop at Teachers College creates a classroom of real readers who enjoy reading as well as talking about books. Students are given the freedom to read things that are interesting to them while at their independent reading level.

### **Open Response:** Works in Progress

In order to instill the strategies of good readers in our students, we need to become more in tune with what we do as readers by encouraging each other to have a reading life. We will engage in book clubs where we’ll discuss books and share our thinking so we can apply our own experiences to support our students in having a reading life. This year, our school will continue the work we began last year by bringing out coaches from Columbia come to model lessons in the classroom with our staff. We intend to continue this professional development by having teachers host each other in their classrooms to share the work they are doing.

**Quote:** The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more place that you'll go.

Photos:



listening to keynote speakers



Closing speeches



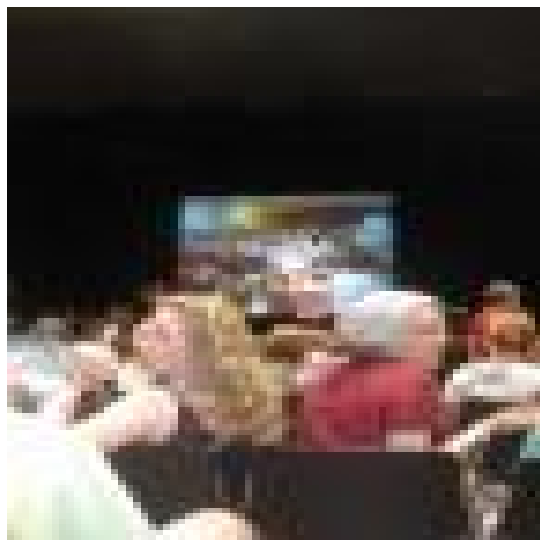
Meredith and Sheryl



David and Sheryl



Meredith, Samantha and David



Closing speeches



Meredith and David



Sheryl, Samantha and Meredith