

2016 LITERACY SUMMIT YEARBOOK

Volume 2: October 2016



*A Combined Yearbook of the
Specialized Literacy Professionals & Texas Association for Literacy Education*

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University of the Incarnate Word
ATTN: Elda Martinez
4301 Broadway, CPO 293
San Antonio, TX. 78209

University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
ATTN: Jodi Pilgrim
900 College Street, Box 8017
Belton, TX 76513

ISSN 2168-0019

Cover Design: Elda E. Martinez

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Elda E. Martinez is the Director of Teacher Education and is a professor at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. Elda earned a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Trinity University and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University. She completed ten years of classroom teaching in both general education and special education settings. Elda's work in teacher preparation is focused in special education, assessment, and teacher induction.



Jodi Pilgrim is an associate professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas. Jodi received her doctorate in Reading Education at the University of North Texas and currently teaches literacy courses for undergraduate and graduate students. Jodi's passion is ensuring struggling readers receive the instruction and motivation they need to experience success in the classroom. She is an active member of the International Literacy Association, the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers, and the Texas Association of Literacy Education. Jodi's personal research interests include digital literacy and teacher preparation.



Diane Kern is an Associate Professor at the University of Rhode Island and the International Literacy Association SPA Coordinator to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. Her research interests include English language arts and literacy teacher education, cultural competence, and transformative pedagogy.



Evan Ortlieb is a Professor and Coordinator of the Literacy Program in the Department of Education Specialties at St. John's University in New York City. Evan has previous work experience in Singapore and Australia with expertise in issues involving struggling readers, literacy teacher preparation, language diversity, and differentiated literacy instruction. His outreach efforts are highlighted by serving as the President of the Ortlieb Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides college scholarships for cancer survivors.



Laurie A. Sharp, Ed.D. is the Dr. John G. O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. Laurie teaches undergraduate and graduate courses, and she also works closely with area public school districts to identify best practices in education. Prior to being a faculty member in higher education, Laurie was an elementary and intermediate level classroom teacher in Florida and Texas public schools. Laurie's research interests include literacy, educator preparation, and learner engagement for all levels of learning. Laurie also serves as an active member and leader within several community and professional organizations, including serving as TALE's President-Elect for 2016-2017.



Wolfram Verlaan (Ph.D., N.B.C.T.) is an assistant professor of literacy and reading and the coordinator of the M.Ed. Reading Specialist Program at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He taught middle and high school for 9 years in Texas and is a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in Early Adolescence English/Language Arts. Wolfram is also an active member of ILA, ALER, and LRA. His research interests include the relationship between listening comprehension and reading comprehension, pre-service teacher preparation, effective literacy instruction, and ways to address the literacy achievement gap in the US between less-advantaged and more-advantaged students.

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On February 12 & 13, 2016, over 300 educators from around the nation gathered at the University of Incarnate Word campus in San Antonio where the Literacy Summit was held. This year's conference theme was "Literacy Research and Practice: Celebrating 20 Years of What's Hot" and co-sponsored by the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG of the International Literacy Association (www.literacyprofessional.org), the Texas Association for Literacy Education (www.texasreaders.org), and the University of Incarnate Word (www.uiw.edu).

A multitude of vendors provided additional support including: Zaner-Bloser, Center for the Collaborative Classroom, The DBQ Project, Captstone Classroom, Heifer International, Avian Kingdom, Pearson, Booksource, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, National Geographic Learning, Cengage Learning, American Reading and Writing Company, Lakeshore, New Readers Press, USborne Books & More, and Heinemann.

The program included highly regarded keynote speakers who highlighted hot topics and other topics that should be hot in the field of literacy instruction and research. Keynote speakers included Jack Cassidy, Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Evan Ortlieb, Victoria Risko, Jill Lewis-Spector, Estanislado S. Barrera IV, Linda Gambrell, Rona Flippo, and Marcie Craig Post. Other featured authors such as Johnathan Rand, Sonia Gensler, and John Micklos, Jr. provided insight into their writing craft and vision for children's literature as well as adolescent and adult literature.

From large-scale talks to poster sessions to small group discussions, the 2016 Literacy Summit featured over 120 peer-reviewed presentations delivered by expert teachers and researchers to captive attendees. This yearbook is a compilation of some of those presentations with an aim to widely share these advances in literacy research and practice with inter/national audiences. We encourage you to read and contact authors regarding their critical works. We thank you for your interest and look forward to the next Literacy Summit!

Best,

Evan Ortlieb, Ph.D.

President, Specialized Literacy Professionals

The theme for the fourth annual conference for the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) in San Antonio centered on three important questions posed 20 years ago by Dr. Jack Cassidy, TALE's first president: *What's hot? What's not? What should be?* We asked TALE members and conference participants to share their answers to these questions on Twitter and Facebook during and after the conference by using #summit2016. Overwhelmingly, the comments shared on social media revolved around the hot topics of collaboration, conversation, and the power of our words as educators. One TALE member tweeted this tidbit from Dr. Linda Gambrell, "What students read and talk about is what they learn best and remember longest." This seemed to resonate strongly with the conference participants on social media. Attendee after attendee reflected on the fact that the professional and personal conversations they shared with literacy experts and colleagues from around the state and nation were the moments that they would treasure and take back with them to the classroom. Another TALE member reiterated this line of thinking when she tweeted the words of Dr. Evan Ortlieb, "Conversation and curiosity about any topic creates motivation and engagement in literacy."

After the conference, TALE sent out a reflective questionnaire to conference attendees. The majority of respondents indicated that the most valuable benefit from attending the conference was networking with other literacy professionals who were knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and committed to best practices in literacy instruction. One attendee wrote, "The camaraderie in our shared commitment to literacies was a boon for my teaching, research, and service." Another attendee stated that the "networking opportunities in addition to the high quality speakers and presentations for professional growth and development were most beneficial." Others shared that they liked how they could take ideas gleaned from presentations and implement them immediately in their classrooms.

TALE's mission is to promote literacy that will enhance the lives of all Texas citizens personally, socially, and economically. Guadalupe Garcia-McCall, one of our dynamic featured authors, shared this reminder and call to action with her audience, "Teachers have the power of words – inspire courage, instill wisdom, inculcate strength." With each annual conference, TALE's goal is to bring together educators of all ages and grade levels, diverse backgrounds, and varying levels of expertise to use the power of their teaching practice, research, and service to inspire, educate about, advocate for, and support the importance of lifelong literacy.

We thank you for choosing to read the articles compiled here in Volume 4 of the TALE Yearbook. I will leave you with more wise words from Dr. Gambrell that resonated with conference participants, as evidenced by the amount of tweets and retweets, "The more you read, the smarter you get!" Dr. Gambrell communicated a simple concept, which is supported by a plethora of research, that should be the maxim of all literacy professionals. Please also join us at TALE's 2017 Conference, which will be held February 10-11, 2017 at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi!

Robin D. Johnson, Ed.D.

President, Texas Association for Literacy Education

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~CHAPTER 1~

NOT HOT ENOUGH FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: INSTRUCTIONAL CHALLENGES AT THE STATE, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Manuscript written from a Literacy Summit keynote presentation delivered with
Victoria J. Risko, Jill Lewis-Spector, and Linda B. Gambrell

Estanislado S. Barrera IV, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Louisiana State University, LA

Abstract

This paper addresses the current literacy issues facing English language learners at the state, national, and international level. Beginning with results for ELLs in literacy from the 2016 What's Hot in Literacy Survey by Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, and Ortlieb, the discussion then moves to specific issues relevant to ELLs, such as demographics and societal issues, state-level Language Instruction Education Programs (LIEPs), and teacher quality and preparedness. With specific attention on Texas, the discussion then takes an international shift towards migrant ELL students returning to Mexico. The paper concludes with reasons why ELLs in literacy should not only be hot, but very hot.

Keywords: *English language learners, English as a second language, literacy, Language Instruction Education Program, los retornados.*

The educational needs of minority students have always required much attention, yet they often receive the least. This is certainly the case when it comes to teaching students whose first language is not English. In fact, this issue is represented in the latest survey by Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, and Ortlieb (2015), with the topic of English language learners (ELL), emergent multilingual learners, and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) only being considered 50% hot or receiving attention in the field of literacy. However, 75% of participants in the study felt that issues dealing with educating ELLs should be *very hot* and deserved more attention from field.

In order to address the current status of ELLs within the field of literacy, reasons why it should be at the forefront of the educational agenda will be discussed. This paper provides an overview of the ELL demographics in the US, reasons and emphasizes the importance of a focus on ELLs at both the national and state level. The paper also addresses an international issue being faced by Texas and Mexico. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations for a more responsive approach to education and overall implications of ELLs as migrants.

Who are the English Language Learners?

So, just who are the ELLs we are teaching at the national level and in our classrooms here in Texas? Based on the most current demographics provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2014), the majority of ELLs are, with respect to race and ethnicity, Hispanic (77%), Arabic (2%), and Chinese (2%). Specifically, NCES (2014) reports that Hispanics represent the largest group with almost four million students who qualify as ELLs. Nationally, these students are primarily female and are concentrated in the lower grades, which is significant with respect to literacy development. It is also important to note that ELLs mainly reside in the southern and western parts of the country and predominately attend urban schools.

Looking more closely at Texas, the state demographics have both similarities and differences when compared to the nation. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2016), there are approximately 900,000 ELLs in grades prekindergarten through twelfth grade. Texas roughly has one fourth of the nation's ELL population. Of those 900,000 students, approximately

500,000 are in the lower grades (prekindergarten – third grade). Although national demographics reported a higher percentage of ELLs being female, the gender make up of ELLs in Texas is actually even, with 50% female and 50% male. With respect to Texas, the ELL population is 91% Hispanic and 87% of the students are categorized as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2014).

As if it wasn't challenging enough acquiring a second language, we know that low socio-economic status may also create a barrier for those who are in the developmental years of literacy (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009). This situation is often paired with other issues such as high mobility and limited oral language development. The given demographics at the national and state level as well as other societal factors impacting the learning environment of ELLs support reasons why the issue of ELLs in literacy should be very hot.

State-Level Language Instruction Education Programs

The variances in Language Instruction Education Programs (LIEPs) at the state level across our country are another reason why ELLs need additional attention. In many instances, ELL programs are the extent to which the needs of non-English speaking students are addressed. Unlike the differentiated approach often found in classroom instruction, ELL students with very diverse and specific needs are often expected to succeed in a one-size-fits-all LIEP. According to Lopez, McEneaney, and Nieswandt (2015) the most successful model employed is that of bilingual education. The bilingual education model is unique in that it requires that the students' native language(s) is incorporated into daily instruction. However, the majority of the states that do have LIEPs in place opted for the Structured/Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) model instead. This model is more commonly known as the English-only model and an ELL's experience can be described as "sink or swim." This is currently what states such as Arizona, Arkansas, New Hampshire, California, and Massachusetts are implementing.

Luckily, not all states take such a harsh approach to second-language acquisition. Fourteen states have more supportive LIEPs in place that are based on NCLB requirements. An example of this can be found in Louisiana, which has seen a 177% increase in the Latino population over the past 40 years (Lopez et al., 2015). Only four states have a mandated bilingual education policies based on the number of students enrolled in a specific grade at the state level—Illinois, New York, Michigan, and Wisconsin. In fact, Illinois has witnessed a 400% increase in the Latino population since 1970 and is the only state to include pre-schools in the bilingual mandate (Lopez et al., 2015). Fortunately for some ELLs,

there are five states that mandate bilingual education when a minimum number of students in a grade level share a native language at the district level—not state level. They are Alaska, Connecticut, New Jersey, Texas, and Washington. And only one state in the country mandates bilingual and multicultural education for all students, and that is New Mexico.

Understanding the variances in LIEPs from one state to another is important because Lopez, McEneaney, and Nieswandt (2015) found that bilingual programs are associated with higher achievement outcomes than LIEPs that do not develop students' native language(s). Those states that have a bilingual model or allow for bilingual elements within their LIEPs showed higher achievement in areas of reading and mathematics compared to states that operated from an English-only model. There clearly is a policy issue within many states who fail to provide the most appropriate instructional approach for ELLs. The adoption of less than adequate LIEPs creates a snowball effect as the first language is not supported and developed to the extent that acquisition of English becomes impeded.

Who Teaches English Language Learners?

We have discussed how demographics and issues such as disadvantages in economic status fail to provide a foundation for ELLs. We have also acknowledged that instructional programs at the state level can also impede the success of ELLs. As if these two reasons were not significant enough to demonstrate why the topic of ELLs should be hot, this next section on the quality of inservice teachers and teacher preparation programs will certainly add to the building argument.

Inservice Teachers

ELLs are primarily taught by unqualified teachers. According to a meta-analysis by Samson and Leseaux (2015), ELLs are most often taught by teachers with temporary or alternative certifications. These teachers also have the least years of experience compared to those not teaching ELLs. Even more alarming is the fact that the majority of ELL teachers with the least amount of teaching experience were concentrated in grades K-2 where literacy development needs are most significant. It is also not surprising that teachers of ELLs had very low self-confidence when it came to meeting the needs of their students. Although this may not be case with respect to teachers in states with high concentrations of Hispanics, such as Texas, it is important to be aware that this is the current status of ELL teachers nationally.

Teacher Preparation Programs

One of the reasons why inservice teachers are unqualified to meet the needs of ELLs is because many teacher preparation programs are not attending to this

particular student population in their degree requirements and/or coursework. Both the research of Samson and Leseaux (2015) as well as the NCES (2014) reported that teachers of ELLs had less reading/literacy coursework than non-ELL teachers. Samson and Leseaux (2015) even went on to point out that ELL teachers had an average of 3 reading courses while non-ELL teachers had an average of 4-6 courses concentrated on literacy. When this is broken down by grade level, the differences are even more significant. Only 15% of first ELL first grade teachers had taken six or more reading courses compared to 28% of the non-ELL first grade teachers. With respect to the upper elementary grades, only 25% of all ELL third grade teachers had 6 or more reading courses compared to 40% of the non-ELL third grade teachers in the study.

Some can argue that this is because ELL teachers have coursework specific to working with ELL students; however the topics of these courses cannot be allowed to supplant courses in literacy because most ELL specific courses focus on knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the areas of language and culture (De Jong & Harper, 2011), not academic skills and certainly not literacy instruction. What was more surprising was that even with the extra courses that addressed language and culture, many of the teachers reported a lack of preparation when it came to connecting with their students on a cultural level (De Jong & Harper, 2011). This lack of confidence in ability to teach combined with culture shock or a cultural disconnection is yet another obstacle preventing ELLs from successful literacy development. Instead, programs and professional development need to engage inservice and preservice teachers in ways that develop and foster “educational responsiveness and an awareness of social and linguistic diversity” (AUTHOR CITATION, 2014a).

English Language Learners as Migrants

This chapter has focused on national issues as well as those specific to the state of Texas facing ELLs today. However, a widening of the lens shifts our attention to an international dilemma significant to Texas. As Cassidy, Ortlieb, and Grote-Garcia (2016) pointed out, “English is not every students’ native language; perhaps, nowhere is that more evident than in the state of Texas” (p. 4). Although this statement holds relevance, the experience of many ELLs often leaves them unable to fully develop a single language that would qualify as native (Cummins, 1979; Hipfner-Boucher, Milburn, & Weitzman, 2015). This occurs because many ELLs do not receive instructional support for their first language while also not receiving adequate instruction for the second language. Although a poorly maintained first language may not be as serious a problem for most ELLs because they remain in the United States, some ELLs are realizing the limitations of a neglected mother tongue when they return to their homeland.

When we think about Texas’ ELLs we often see them as immigrants, however recent research is shedding light on the fact that many of them are in fact migrants who return to Mexico or even further south. This concept of returning back home is not new. Gloria Anzaldua spoke of this in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* since the mid 1980s. However, taking a more contemporary look with an educational lens, we can see the impact bilingual education has on these students—both good and bad.

Known as *los retornados* or the returned, by the teachers, administrators and state officials in Mexico, these students are gaining attention as they enroll in the school systems in places such as the state of Jalisco where they stop being ELLs and instead become foreign language learners because their mastery of Spanish (their first language) is now inadequate at the academic level. These students are falling even further behind due to disconnected educational systems and efforts made here in US have no way of being communicated to the new teachers. Even more concerning, the Secretaría De Educación Pública, has revealed that they do not have teachers prepared to work with ELLs who are now foreign language students of Spanish.

In addition to the academic challenges *los retornados* are faced with, they are also experiencing new social problems of identity and belonging. Similar to Bhabha’s (2004) theory of third space, *los retornados* develop hybrid identities by “experiencing much culture bumping” (AUTHOR CITATION, 2014a). These new cultural experiences and forms can occur in the sharing of linguistic practices, code-switching, and the invention of new words. It is this transculturation, this shifting process that provides both challenges and opportunities for those who navigate between cultures and languages.

Conclusion

The longer ELLs must wait for policy to move from a one-size-fits-all approach to one that is more differentiated and specific to the needs of the individual students in regards to culture and language, the more difficult it will become for them to experience success. Educating ELLs *is not hot enough* because this is a special population is continuing to increase and with that growth comes more and more diversity. There is also a lack of well-qualified and well-prepared teachers in the field to meet the needs of ELLs—this is specifically true with respect to reading preparation/course work. And, the current state-level LIEPS that are in place are not requiring the appropriate instructional approaches that support achievement in ELLs. There is another reason why this approach deserves attention—especial when considering the Latino student

population here in Texas—and that is because some of them are returning to Mexico with a poor command of Spanish.

literacy, and ELLs. And to bring awareness through advocacy to policy makers at the state level and demand changes to the guidelines mandated by their LIEPS as well as begin to develop international relations with Mexico to foster an educational network that can support those students who do eventually return.

Two specific ways that we can begin to address this growing need are: (1) to evaluate and redesign current teacher preparation programs to maximize opportunities to take courses more relevant to teacher education,

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~CHAPTER 2~

REDEFINING TEXT COMPLEXITY AS A SUPPORTIVE PARADIGM

Manuscript written from a Literacy Summit keynote presentation delivered with
Jack Cassidy and Evan Ortlieb

Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Ph.D.

*Associate Professor of Education & Sister Theophane Power Endowed Chair in Education
University of the Incarnate Word, TX*

Abstract

Text complexity has been a hot literacy topic (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2012) since the widespread adoption of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA CCSS). Unfortunately, with the intense focus on the ELA CCSS and its related topics (e.g., close reading, college and career readiness), other important issues such as those addressing struggling readers have received less attention (Cassidy, Ortlieb, & Grote-Garcia, 2016). In response, the present article presents a different paradigm of text complexity. Instead of thinking of text complexity as a way to make text increasingly more difficult, this chapter explores the idea of authors embedding text supports within the three measurements of text complexity (i.e., quantitative factors, qualitative factors, the reader and task).

Keywords: *text complexity, text supports*

Text complexity is presently one of the “hottest” literacy topics (Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Ortlieb, 2015), and consistently has been since 2013 (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2012). The suggestion of students encountering more texts written with increasing difficulty is largely the focus of current discussions (Allington, McCuiston, & Billen, 2015). Such conversations are a result of the national goal that all students leave high school effectively prepared to address the complex materials they will encounter in college or a career.

The increased attention being directed toward text complexity is a product of its relationship to the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA CCSS) — a publication of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010). In fact, Wixson and Valencia (2014) share that the three-part model used in the ELA CCSS (e.g., quantitative measures, qualitative measures, and the reader and task) is the model for the evaluation of text referenced across the Nation due to the majority of the states adopting the ELA CCSS.

Unfortunately, with the intense focus on the ELA CCSS and its related topics (e.g., college and career readiness and close reading), “other important topics in

literacy have moved out of the direct focus and have received less attention” (Cassidy, Ortlieb, & Grote-Garcia, 2016, p. 99). By utilizing a historical context of the *What’s Hot, What’s Not* expert surveys over the last 20 years, Cassidy and colleagues (2016) have identified that “particularly disturbing is the lack of attention being paid to children and youth who may fail to meet these new rigorous standards” (p. 99). Cassidy et al. refer to this finding as “one of the unintended consequences of the heightened focus on the CCSS...” (2016, p. 99). In response to this unintentional consequence, this article presents a different paradigm of text complexity. Instead of thinking of text complexity as a way to make text increasingly “harder,” this chapter explores the idea of authors embedding text supports within the three measurements of text complexity to support readers.

Embedded Text Supports

Text complexity is comprised of quantitative and qualitative measurements. Also included are the reader’s background knowledge and the reading task being completed. This section provides a description of these three measurements along with the text-embedded supports that authors may include within each of the three measurements.

Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures include “countable” factors such as sentence length and the average number of syllables in a sentence. Lengthier sentences are often considered more difficult to read than shorter sentences because of the increased syntactic complexity they present (Alvermann, Gillis, & Phelps, 2013). For example, the increased length of sentences provides more opportunities for embedded clauses, passive constructions, and other features that can increase the complexity of a sentence’s structure.

The Fry readability formula (Fry, 1968) helps illustrate assessment for quantitative factors. This particular formula measures text difficulty through a combination of counting the number of syllables and sentences per 100 words. Alvermann, Gillis, and Phelps (2013) explain the reasoning behind this formula. First, it is assumed that texts with more syllables per 100 words contain larger words and on average, larger words are

more likely to be more difficult to understand than smaller words. Secondly, the readability of a text is likely to decrease if more sentences are present per 100 words. This idea is because the sentences would be short and would *most likely* present less syntactic complexity — this assumption, of course, is not always true.

Quantitative Supports

Authors can provide embedded text supports by doing more than simply using smaller words and shorter sentences. By incorporating repetitive words and phrases into texts, authors reduce the number of original unfamiliar words and add predictability to the text — a technique that functions as a scaffolding device for the reader (Zipprich, Grace, & Grote-Garcia, 2009). Table 1 provides a list of children’s picture books that provide text embedded supports in the form of repeated words and/or phrases. The authors of these books have embedded a supportive system within the quantitative measures of their texts.

Table 1

Books with Embedded Texts Supports in the Form of Repeated Words and/or Phrases

List of Books
Bjorkman, S. (2012). <i>Dinosaurs don't, dinosaurs do</i> . New York, NY: Holiday House.
Fosberry, J. (2011). <i>My name is not Alexander</i> . Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Jabberwocky.
Gibbs, E. (2013). <i>I spy pets</i> . Dorking, Surrey: Templar.
Litwin, E. (2010). <i>Pete the Cat: I love my white shoes</i> . New York, NY: HarperCollins.
Mortimer, A. (2011). <i>Pumpkin cat</i> . New York, NY: Hyperion Books.
Norman, K. (2012). <i>I know a wee piggy</i> . New York, NY: Dial Books.

Note: The listed books are recognized by the International Reading Association (2011, 2012, 2013) as books “children really enjoy reading” (2011, p. 1) and featured on their *Children’s Choice Lists*.

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures can be broken into the following four components: levels of meaning, structure, language, and knowledge demands (Fisher & Frey, 2015). *Levels of meaning* include figurative language and density/layering of the text; while, *structure* includes genre, organization, and graphic elements. *Language* includes register and voice; whereas, *knowledge demands* includes prior knowledge and vocabulary.

Since qualitative measures do not include “countable” items, initially it may seem difficult to

assess the qualitative difficulty of texts. However, rubrics provide an appropriate means of measurement. Recently, Fisher and Frey (2015) shared a three-point Likert scale for measuring qualitative factors of text complexity. Their scale gives one point to “comfortable” texts, which are texts that are comfortable and/or build background, fluency, and skills. Two points are given to “grade-level” texts that require grade-appropriate skills; and finally, three points are given to “stretch” texts. These texts stretch a read and/or require instruction. Within their three-point Likert scale, Fisher and Frey

measure each of the four components of qualitative measures mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Qualitative Supports

Authors can provide embedded qualitative supports by offering clues or direct explanations for such items as figurative language, the purpose of the

text, and advanced vocabulary terms. Context clues such as synonyms, antonyms, examples, or general sense statements (Langan, 2008), are one-way authors embed clues for readers. Table 2 provides a description and example for each type of context clue mentioned.

Table 2
Types of Context Clues

Type of Context Clue	Description and Signal Words	Example
Synonyms	Words that mean the same as the advanced vocabulary term <i>Signal Words: as well as, similar to, like</i>	Susan was an exceptional teacher. She was an outstanding dancer as well .
Antonyms	Words that mean the opposite of the advanced vocabulary term <i>Signal Words: unlike, but, however, instead of</i>	Unlike Susan who is an exceptional ballerina, I am a mediocre dancer.
Examples	The advanced vocabulary term acts as a “category” and examples for the “category.” <i>Signal Words: such as, includes</i>	You use Skype, Google Hangout, and Zoom to visit with friends, but you do not use Videoconferencing for work-related meetings?
General Sense	The “sense” of the remaining text provide clues to the advanced vocabulary term	You used red, orange, yellow, and green in your drawing. Are there any colors of the rainbow that you neglected to use?

Note: *College Reading with Phonics* (Langan, 2008) further explores the four types of context clues.

Authors also embed text features (e.g., index, headings, subheadings, and table of contents) and graphic elements (e.g., captions, diagrams, and maps) to aid readers throughout the text. Roberts and colleagues share that, “graphics in children’s texts are increasing in their diversity, complexity, and importance” (Roberts, Norman, Duke, Morsink, Martin, & Knight, 2013, p.12).

Furthermore, Roberts et al. stress that graphic elements support readers’ comprehension of texts, with the most common graphic devices include the following: captioned graphics, diagrams (i.e., cross-section, surface), flowcharts, graphs, insets, maps, tables, and timelines. Table 3 provides a description for each of these graphic devices and suggests texts with strong examples.

Table 3
Types of Graphic Devices and Suggested Texts

Graphic Device	Description	Suggested Texts
Captioned Graphics	Visuals accompanied by text that is separate from the running text	Belanger, J. (2008). <i>Who's haunting the White House? The president's mansion and the ghosts who live there</i> . New York, NY: Sterling Children's Books.
Diagrams: Cross-section	Visuals that include labeled interior portions of an object or scene	Floca, B. (2008). <i>Locomotive</i> . New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Kudlinsk, K.V. (2015). <i>Boy, were we wrong about the human body!</i> New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.
Diagrams: Surface	Visuals with the exterior surface of objects or scenes labeled	Lacey, S. (2015). <i>How to build a car: A high-speed adventure of mechanics, teamwork, and friendship</i> . Lake Forest, CA: Quarto Publishing Group USA Inc.
Flowcharts	Visuals that depict the chronological order of a process	Richmond, B. (2014). <i>Why is the sea salty? And other questions about oceans</i> . New York, NY: Sterling Children's Books.
Graphs	Visuals that illustrate the relationship between various variables (e.g., line graph, bar graph)	Theodorou, R. (2001). <i>Animals in danger: Leatherback sea turtles</i> . Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Library.
Insets	A visual that is a magnification of another visual and used to highlight something important	Stewart, M. (2011). <i>Inside earthquakes</i> . New York, NY: Sterling Children's Books.
Maps	Visuals drawn to scale to represent a specific area or location	Keating, J. (2016). <i>The world of weird animals: Pink is for blobfish</i> . New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
Tables	Visuals that display data into rows and columns	Arnosky, J. (2011). <i>Thunderbirds: Nature's flying predators</i> . New York, NY: Sterling Children's Books.
Timelines	A visual that chronologically displays specific historical events within a period of time	Markel, M. (2016). <i>Hillary Rodham Clinton: Some girls are born to lead</i> . New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers. Rappaport, D. (2001). <i>Martin's big words: The life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.</i> New York, NY: Jump at the Sun.

Note: *Diagrams, Timelines, and Tables* — Oh, My! (Roberts et al., 2013) further, explores the various types of graphic devices.

Authors can also provide embedded qualitative supports by writing texts that follow patterns (e.g., add-on stories, circle-tales, and rhyming texts). The more clues authors give to the organization and structure of their texts, the more they are supporting the reader's comprehension. In fact, over thirty-five years of research

(Kintsch, Mandel, & Kozminsky, 1977; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977) supports the idea that knowledge of the text's structure increases comprehension. Table 4 provides a list of children's picture books that provide text-embedded supports in the form of patterned text structures.

Table 4
Lists of Patterned Children's Literature

Pattern	Description	Suggested Texts
Add-on	Text is cumulative with a new story event added for each repeat	Norman, K. (2012). <i>I know a wee piggy</i> . New York, NY: Dial Books. Pinkney, J. (2013). <i>The tortoise and the hare</i> . New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
Circle-Tale	The story unfolds into a circular pattern that involves the ending of the story terminating back at the starting point	Heos, B. (2013). <i>Mustache baby</i> . New York, NY: Clarion. Hale, B. (2013). <i>Clark the shark</i> . New York, NY: HarperCollins. Winters, K. (2013). <i>The bears go to school</i> . Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman.
Rhyming	Pairs of rhyming words are presented within the text	Cousins, L. (2013). <i>Peck, peck, peck</i> . Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. Docherty, H. (2013). <i>The snatchabook: Who's stealing all the stories?</i> New York, NY: Scholastic. Park, L. S. (2013). <i>Xander's Panda Party</i> . New York, NY: Clarion.

Note: *Building Story Schema: Using Patterned Books as a Means of Instruction for Students with Special Needs* (Zipprich, Grace, & Grote-Garcia, 2009) further explores patterned texts and their uses in the classroom.

The Reader and Task

The third part of the ELA CCSS model for text complexity includes the reader and reading tasks. Factors in this category include motivation, knowledge, purpose, and the complexity of the expected task. This section focuses specifically on the question, *what motivates readers?*

When exploring the literature addressing motivation to read, it is certain that you will find several publications written by Linda Gambrell, past-president of the International Reading Association (now named International Literacy Association). Most recently, in *Getting Students Hooked on the Reading Habit* (2015), Gambrell reports that children are more motivated to read when provided the following: a) access to a wide range of reading materials, b) opportunities to self-select books, and c) experiences that engage them in social interactions about what they are reading. Other researchers (Purcell-Gates, 2002; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007) have added that motivation increases with authentic literacy tasks and activities; such activities involve meaningful, purposeful, and functional experiences.

Purcell-Gates (1996; 2002) further identifies authentic literacy text as those that exists outside of a *learning-to-read* context. For example, a food label would be considered more authentic than a passage displayed on a worksheet. Gambrell also speaks about the connection between motivation and authentic literacy tasks and adds that such tasks are those “that people encounter in their day-to-day lives, as opposed to typical classroom activities such as completing worksheets or answering teacher-posed questions” (Gambrell, 2015, p. 260). The overall idea is that readers enjoy choosing their reading materials and completing purposeful tasks.

Closing Thoughts

Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory (1978) suggests that a two-way “transactional” relationship exists between the reader and the literary text. Rosenblatt explains that “a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work — sometimes, even, a literary work of art” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. ix). Continuing with Rosenblatt's vision, the current conversation explored the role that

authors take while preparing the text. Authors can create difficult texts that include larger words, copious amounts of embedded clauses, and multiple passive constructs. Authors may also write about unfamiliar topics and provide very few opportunities for readers to build prerequisite knowledge. Such decisions make text “harder.”

Text complexity and “harder text” are not synonymous. Difficult text is just one side of the progressive scale of text complexity. A completely other paradigm involves the author purposefully crafting a supportive conversation by embedding text supports within the three measurements. These supports can take the form of repeated words and phrases, predictable text structures, context clues, and various text features that support readers. Such supports assist readers in not only

building a transactional relationship with the text, but also enjoying the text more since research has identified that readers are more motivated to read when they are successful at understanding the text (Gambrell, 2015).

As a closing thought — perhaps there is a need for further discussion of text complexity being a progressive scale, with neither side housing text that cannot be used for instruction because they are too “easy.” Instead, one end of the scale houses “difficult text” and the other features texts with increased embedded supports for the reader. By redefining text complexity as a supportive paradigm, more attention is drawn toward the uniqueness of each text and the powerful learning opportunities each one presents for various levels of readers.

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~CHAPTER 3~

DISCIPLINARY LITERACY SUCCESS: FROM BIRTH TO COLLEGE

Manuscript written from a Literacy Summit keynote presentation delivered with
Jack Cassidy and Stephanie Grote-Garcia

Evan Ortlieb, Ph.D.

*Professor and Coordinator of the Literacy Program
St. John's University, NY*

Kristin Anderson

*Adjunct Professor and Doctoral Candidate
St. John's University, NY*

Abstract

The current climate of Common Core State Standards calls for literacy learning to occur across all subject areas. Yet, the field of literacy lacks a framework for guiding content area teachers and parents alike to infuse pedagogies across the curriculum. A longitudinal case study from birth to college is presented to demonstrate how everyday events can be capitalized upon by extending learning activities in both the arts and sciences. However, caution is urged as learning environments that are suited towards interdisciplinary learning do not necessarily prepare one to succeed in higher education, which remains a highly disciplinary context for knowledge acquisition.

Keywords: disciplinary literacies; CCSS; motivation; interest; digital literacies

For many individuals, solving quadratic equations is difficult, deriving meaning from poetry is elusive, and contemplating the laws of physics can be abstract. These topics are typically taught in mathematics, literature, and science “class” without overlap or consideration for their interdisciplinary nature. Keeping subjects separate seems like a reasonable and perhaps simplified pedagogical approach that would keep learners narrowly focused on various topics in their respective classes; however, it presents innumerable challenges associated with contextualizing content back into the real world where their application and purpose is truly situated. For learning to segment words into individual sounds is useless unless one can blend those sounds back together. The purpose of this paper is to examine the historical basis for subject area demarcations and then demonstrate how an integrated holistic framework can more readily support disciplinary literacy skill development for school-wide success from birth through college.

Current Climate and Challenges

In an era of increased expectations as evidenced by the introduction and adoption of the Common Core State Standards by 46 states, it is clear that students are required to do more, learn faster, and apply what they learn in print, digital, and increasingly global environments (Drew, 2012; Hutchison & Woodward, 2014). It is universally recognized that students must be prepared to meet both known demands (e.g., multilingual proficiency, computer-based coding abilities, knowledge of data analysis) and those yet to be determined. However, the pedagogies that promote student learning in this digital age are still in their infancy (Marsh, Hannon, Lewis, & Ritchie, 2015).

Curricular standards are increasingly becoming interdisciplinary (e.g., there are several literacy proficiencies recognized to be central to the scientific method). From brainstorming to hypothesizing to writing reports and publishing, the need for scientific literacy, for instance, is widespread (Britt, Richter, & Rouet, 2014). Still, the ways in which science teachers develop these

proficiencies remains to be seen. The notion of a content teacher who only teaches content seems questionable. Further, we wonder how many teachers actually view themselves as only subject area teachers versus teachers of students and their needs.

Historical Perspective

Teaching literacy skills in a scope and sequence is commonplace as some abilities are foundational to other, more complex skills. Although it seems logical to have a structure or rationale for the order in which skills and content are taught, they are often taught in isolation and in turn, lose their meaningfulness (Kirby, 1978; Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Cox, 1996; Witte & Otto, 1981). Skill development is only as relevant as its known and immediate contexts. For example, students must be explicitly taught how literary analysis of a novel relates to argumentative essays of the real world (e.g., workplace conversations; pragmatic debates with parents; job interviews; conflict resolution with friends) (Brozo, 2013).

In the late 1950s, researchers thought that scientific literacy would take the U.S. to new heights (literally) in response to the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik (Laugksch, 2000). Ultimately, a demand for widespread scientific knowledge also beckoned for increased applied sciences (Denis, Lehoux, & Champagne, 2004). The bridge between scientific knowledge and its application lies in data analysis, translation, research methods, and dissemination techniques—all of which are advanced literacy skills. Most facets of daily life involve literacy—computers programmed with language, businesses involving coding and networks, and counting relying upon universally understood numbers. Language arts is increasingly becoming the heart of all learning, as evidenced by companies such as Google and Apple hiring more people from the social sciences to explain to others how things work, and how to benefit from these technologies (Shah, 2011). Employers see literacy as the means to learning and as the vehicle for problem solving.

Merging disciplines, however, requires oversight and a wide-angle lens of planning (Fang, 2014). School leadership and literacy coaches can guide these developments (Bean, Kern, Goatley, Ortlieb, et al., 2015), but ultimately teachers have to work together across the content areas or disciplines. When classroom teachers work within and between grade levels, growth ensues.

Content-Area vs. Disciplinary Literacy Teaching

Are all teachers reading teachers? This question has plagued educators for decades and has been an ongoing challenge especially for subject area, or content

area, teachers. Content area teachers view themselves to be experts in their disciplines and regard literacy as a separate and distinct feature from their subject. They do not have the desire nor sufficient knowledge to teach literacy (Moje, 2008), and are under the assumption that students enter their classrooms equipped with the necessary literacy skills to successfully navigate the demands of the subject. As students progress through the educational system, reading instruction diminishes in favor of content area instruction (Carnahan & Williamson, 2013). It is imperative for teachers to consider the changing nation of student texts as well, as students progress from simple, narrative texts to more difficult, informational texts. Informational texts require close, purposeful reading, thus placing greater cognitive demands on students. Bulgren, Deschler, and Lenz (2007) state that the “emphasis on comprehension of informational text and intensified standards in content area subjects poses a challenge for students of all levels and their educators” (p. 121). Teachers are not in a position to treat the two as separate entities; the application of literacy strategies is critical for student success.

Hal Herber's (1970) seminal book identified the need for all teachers to incorporate literacy into content area instruction (as cited in Gillis, 2014, p. 615), and indicated that generic reading and writing strategies can be used in various content classrooms (Brozo, Moorman, Meyer, & Stewart, 2013). Content area literacy traditionally includes general literacy strategies which can be applied to reading of academic text in any discipline. The practice of teaching literacy strategies in the content areas aligned with assumptions that generalization of skills would be beneficial for students since once they are learned, they are applicable elsewhere (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2015). However, each discipline has unique elements, so a one-size-fits-all approach to content area literacy only results in shallow, surface learning. Strategies like skimming, note-taking, and recall, albeit important skills to have, are not suffice to equip students with the ability to think critically, make connections, problem-solve and apply meaning within each discipline. Shanahan and Shanahan (2015) refer to making our students “sophisticated readers in the disciplines.” Content area reading strategies provide a foundation for disciplinary literacy, but it is disciplinary literacy instruction that will engage the students in the analysis, argument and literacy use common in the respective fields (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2015).

In order for our students to be college and career ready, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010) positioned literacy in the heart of each discipline and extended the responsibility of its development beyond the ELA classroom (Zygouris-Coe, 2015). Yet disciplinary literacy did not just emerge with the adaption of the

Common Core State Standards. While the term has been used interchangeably with content area reading, it is not a new concept or synonym for content area literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). The goals of this concept extend beyond the traditional ideas of generic reading in the content areas and promote both genuine comprehension and mastery of the content. It is necessary for content teachers to recognize the components inherent in their subject that develop the skills required of our students to become college and career ready. Collaboration, inquiry, and reflection reveal disciplinary practices that will improve learning and move our students along this continuum.

When thinking about disciplinary literacy, teachers have to keep in mind it encompasses more than the ability to read or write in the disciplines; it reflects the structure, content, literacy demands, discourse, and the habits of mind that are specific to each discipline (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Brozo et al. (2013) refers to it as “becoming members of the disciplinary culture” (p. 354). As teachers, we must reflect what this means for our students. What goals will disciplinary literacy accomplish? To teach our students to question like a mathematician, analyze like a historian, predict and observe as a scientist, or evaluate literary sources as an author would? Disciplinary literacy aims to have our students think like an expert and emphasizes the unique tools necessary for engagement within that discipline (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Teachers who implement these disciplinary approaches nurture the cognitive processes in the appropriate context as it relates to the discipline, thus awarding students genuine opportunities applicable to the real world.

Literacies Birth through College

In 1908, Edmund Burke Huey stated, “The home is the natural place for learning to read, in connection with the child’s introduction to literature through storytelling, picture reading, etc.” (p. 371). Huey suggested that children’s learning in school begins with parents reading to them at home (as cited in Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Colin, Harrison, & Tracey, 1993, p. 194). Therefore, a child’s literacy journey commences way before formal instruction occurs.

The home literacy environment (HLE) sets the foundation for our children’s literacy experiences. As early as birth, children are immersed in literacies through music, interactive games such as peek-a-boo or pat-a-cake, storybook read-alouds, and of course, play (to name a few). The social nature of these activities paves the ways for communication to develop from oral to written language. These social interactions are catalysts that transfer children’s literacy from listening and speaking

(receptive language skills) to the development of reading and writing (expressive language skills).

Teachers must be mindful that each child enters school with various literacy backgrounds and knowledge, as well as attitudes (Morrow, 1995). The classroom environment becomes more significant since it is now the primary venue to further develop these literacy skills, and our teachers also hold that critical position in nurturing their students’ reading motivation, both for pleasure and information. To be functional members of society, being literate is not an option; it is a required. The traditional definition of literacy has shifted from the concept of reading and writing, to the more complex new literacies of the 21st century, which include information, media, digital, scientific, numeracy, financial, and health literacies, all of which are immersed in technology (Zygouris-Coe, 2015). Being able to navigate these multiple literacies places greater demands on our students to apply their knowledge and skills within the disciplines. Educators are responsible for providing instruction and creating classroom environments that will allow for opportunities of collaboration, inquiry, and innovation; all of which are necessary for success in school and life.

All reading and writing is content-based as we cannot read or write without reading and writing about something. Dinosaurs, fossils, continental explorations, culture, artistic techniques... diverse topics appeal to us in varying degrees, but everyone is interested in reading about something. Educators must capitalize upon a nugget of interest and expand upon that interest, maintain that interest, and grow it into an insatiable thirst for learning.

Literacy as Glue

Literacy is said to be the thread that connects all content areas and academic disciplines. However, if you enter classrooms today, you will continue to see a silo approach of teaching mathematics, literacy, and if we have time for it, science and social studies. This fragmentation causes a disparity between learning inside and outside the classroom. Engineers, doctors, lawyers, educators, contractors, and marketing agents succeed in their jobs by using the resources at hand and solving problems. Therefore, this paper presents one case study to serve as an example of how being taught through a disciplinary literacy lens can promote academic success. Let’s meet Benjamin and see how disciplinary learning experiences prepared him for academic and career success starting from birth and spanning to collegiate study.

Benjamin’s Story

Meet Benjamin, a 15-year-old boy who is from a middle class, separated family. He was homeschooled for

much of his life, which allowed for a flexible delivery of curricula. As a young child, Ben was well-behaved, never cried, and possessed unlimited potential, as some describe as a blank canvas. Nevertheless, he was one capable of learning virtually anything. So his parents contemplated where to start? What content to address? And how might they best prepare Benjamin on his educational journey through learning the subject-areas like science, mathematics, and ELA.

Sounds and Science

Like most children, Ben had interests in his surroundings and was encouraged to explore through multimodality such as mimicking his grandfather play the piano. *Music* played a vital role towards:

- developing vocabulary (e.g., Look Ben, when I *press* the *key*, it makes a sound);
- deciphering the graphic representation of sound called notes (e.g., press and hear one *note*);
- navigating a composition by understanding the musical road maps (e.g., watch me read so I know which keys to press)

Music is an ideal medium to spark content curiosity without the requirement of reading, viewing, or writing about specific topics or lengths of study—just playing with literacy and seeing the outcomes. Assigning value to interacting within a world without the expectation of learning particular standards can promote an interest, a freedom, and an everlasting desire to investigate further.

Though Ben was never a talkative young boy, he was enchanted by listening to his grandparents telling stories—stories about adventure, travel, and triumph, sometimes truthful and sometimes less than truthful. In a sense this began his learning from and with others via social literacies through questioning the validity of scientific claims (e.g., outrunning his shadow), testing those in experiments, and resisting notions of what others assumed to be true. He wanted to learn freely without constraint.

But his understanding of the world around him did not stop at superficial investigations, as his interests soon shifted from object identification (sun, forests, swimming pool, house, and the car) to conversations about fission and fusion during the early years of schooling. Paulo Freire (1970) discusses that kids combine their interpretation of the world by exploring and connecting it to what they are told—the satisfaction of feeling sand under one's toes, cold ocean water on a hot summer day, and the taste of pancakes with maple syrup in the early morning.

All of a sudden Ben realized that reading was a primary vehicle for learning and the means with which to investigate topics that he could not easily replicate, so he read—he could not be stopped. As he grew older, Ben's

curiosity led him to pick up books on astronomy and physics. His pursuits were often blends between grade level expectations and personal interests, but they never emanated from high-stakes assessments or test preparation.

Ben loved picture books, comics in particular, about a man with superpowers. He did not understand how someone could fly in a book but not in real life. He wanted to read further. With that said, he only wanted to read what interested him. He hated to read about content or topics that were of low to no interest, and it was virtually impossible to get him to overcome his disdain for required reading.

Digital Reading, Reacting, and Role Playing

Ben is a calculated individual, first evidenced by his placement of study sheets inside of his desk but within viewing distance before taking his spelling tests in first grade. These problem-solving and logical decision-making skills served as precursors to his interest in gaming and interacting with others within these social and digitally lived environments. He further honed these digital literacy skills through online research. He began connecting social studies and history to his understanding of the world, giving speeches and reporting on his internet research findings.

Even gaining insight from the local meteorologist, Ben was always enthusiastic to learn from professionals (e.g., how to track storms using scientific software and analysis—reading the visual images and information on the screen). Unbeknownst to his parents, he continued advancing his knowledge of the universe through studying about the cosmic microwave background (edge of the universe) via online websites. He took initiative and became an independent learner while using disciplinary literacy skills to develop a depth of scientific knowledge that would serve him well in the years to come. The world around him started to make more sense but it also caused ongoing mental perturbation that never ceased. His desire to learn was endless and his search for more was just starting. In an environment where learning was cool, where learning was fun, and where taking risks was encouraged (Pressley & Allington, 2014), mathematical literacy was an extension of his interest in science.

Turning into Teenager

Thoughts about college and career became commonplace; after all, even home school preparation is littered with incessant talk of college and career readiness. What might he study in a few years? When would he graduate high school? What colleges would be best suited to the ways in which he learned?

Like any teenager, Ben soon became interested in more than his studies. He had the desire to expand his group of friends to include the opposite sex; he wanted more autonomy; he sought out fitness regimens; and he became rebellious to the way of life he had once viewed as normal. He learned valuable lessons of perseverance and the importance of balance in life. What once was an enthusiastic search for knowledge had become a hunger for perfection—a notion that cannot be met nor satisfied. His struggle to deal with struggling, and his inability to capture his emotions towards positive outcomes resulted in early struggles as a 14-year-old college freshman. The ways in which he learned at home varied considerably

from those of a university—the sink or swim, inability to turn in late assignments, and juggling of responsibilities were novel. The lesson, albeit a tough one to swallow while working towards the goal of medical school entry, was one that he needed to experience. His growth from this recent experience is yet to be determined but if anything can turn things around, it is his abilities to connect the dots using disciplinary literacy skills. Though faced with challenges succeeding in a compartmentalized content-based curriculum, he must look beyond the mode of instruction and see the disciplinary connections in supplemental print and digital environments.

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~CHAPTER 4~

IT SHOULD BE HOT: FINDING A PLACE FOR FLUENCY IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Mary Shelton

Forney Independent School District

Dr. Susan Szabo

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Abstract

According to the latest survey poll, “What’s Hot and What’s Not,” published by the International Literacy Association (Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Ortlieb, 2015), fluency was marked “not hot” and “should not be hot” for 2016; however, we disagree. There is a misconception held by students that fluency is equivalent to reading fast and the instructional practices and interventions that are currently being used in the classroom have had both positive and negative results (Rasinski, 2011; Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, Cirino, Carlson, & Pollard-Durdola 2006). Therefore, teachers may be baffled on how to proceed and may be hesitant in their instruction or do nothing about fluency (Nation, 2009). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to report the findings of our extensive literature review, which supports our claim that fluency still should be a hot issue. The paper is divided into six main sections: 1) introduction; 2) history of fluency; 3) fluency’s importance in literacy development; 4) fluency assessments; 5) integrated interventions for improving fluency skills; and 6) assisted reading practices for improving fluency skills. Finally, a summary provides reasons why more fluency research is needed.

Keywords: *fluency instruction, literacy development*

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of our extensive literature review, which supports our claim that fluency instruction should still be considered an essential part of a literacy program. Despite the fact that fluency is an integral part of developing students’ comprehension and was identified as a major component in developing literacy by the National Reading Panel (2000), many teachers either avoid direct instruction and assessment of fluency or fail to focus on the development of all components of fluency (Rasinski, 2011). It is the intent of the authors to provide a brief historical overview, an explanation of the importance of fluency to students’ literacy development, identify the assessments commonly used in determining fluency as well as provide the most common fluency intervention and instructional models present in classrooms today.

History of Fluency

Ironically, fluency reached the zenith of its popularity before formal schooling became regimented (Rasinski, 2011). Fluency, or the ability to read with prosody, accuracy, and automaticity, was a necessity in most early American homes as it was common that only

one person in the house was afforded the luxury of literacy (Smith, 1965). The recitation of the written word, therefore, was stressed to a great degree. As schools began to prosper, teachers stressed the importance of accurate, smooth reading and elocution remained the highest reading goal (Kamil, Pearson, Moje & Afflerbach, 2011). The teachers employed a model-practice-demonstrate instructional routine in which students were expected to perform oral reading before the class after ample time was given for independent practice. James (1892) posited that at the end of the 19th century, a teacher was judged based on the quality of their students’ recitation.

It was also during the end of the 19th century that fluency began its decline. Scholars began to question the role of oral reading in instruction and felt that it overshadowed the importance of comprehension (Kamil et al., 2011). This was supported by Mann (1891), then Secretary of Education, who claimed that the majority of students were unable to understand what they had read. In addition, oral reading became seen as a task important only in schools and so a paradigm shift was made to move away from the practice of fluency and reading aloud to

silent independent reading (Rasinski, 2011). With the standardized testing movement where silent reading became the norm and students were taught a non-oral method of sounding out words, fluency instruction was forgotten (Kamil et al, 2011).

Fluency remained forgotten until the 1970s and 1980s. Huey (1968) claimed that the ability to read with automaticity allowed readers to focus on the content of the text rather than the skill of decoding the words. La Berge and Samuels (1974), in their Theory of Automaticity, posited that the mastery of the sub lexical processes of reading such as decoding and phonemic awareness contributed to the students' overall fluency. Allington (1983) described the importance of the learner's ability to recognize words automatically but it was a neglected reading goal in most schools. Fluency became a hot topic when the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) identified fluency as an important part of reading instruction. The NRP (2000) went on to explain that fluency had three important characteristics: rate, accuracy, and prosody. In addition, all three components were important in the reading process (Ardoyn, Morena, Binder, & Foster, 2013). However, despite the new research showing fluency was necessary for reading success, many teachers and scholars felt fluency was an overrated commodity (Rasinski, 2011; NRP, 2000).

Today, fluency is often neglected "because teachers and learners feel that they should always be learning something new [whereas] fluency is making the best of what is already known" (Nation, 2009, p.2). Scholars continue to assert that there is a positive influence of fluency on reading, yet teachers and administrators continue to treat fluency instruction as something outside the realm of reading instruction, as an intervention to be made for remedial purposes applied to small groups for brief periods of time (Rasinski, 2014).

Fluency's Importance in Literacy Development

There are several theories that explain why fluency or prosody is necessary in literacy development. Fluency means that a reader has both automaticity of reading skills and prosody which enhances readers' comprehension. LaBerge and Samuel's (1974) Theory of Automaticity was the first to attempt to explain how the focus of the reader must be drawn to the text as a whole in order to build understanding instead of focusing on each individual word. However, the limited capacity of the brain during reading is a controversial idea among researchers (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). This limited capacity assumes that the brain can only stay focused on one difficult task at a time and it is not until some tasks become automatic, that the brain can process many tasks at once, as long as only one of these tasks requires focused attention (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Rasinski,

2014). For this reason, struggling readers who are focused on word identification are unable to see the whole picture and develop the larger meaning of the whole text (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011). Second, Perfetti's (1985) Verbal Efficiency Theory explained that the brain must compensate for having ineffective lower lexical skills, as the ability to decode is paramount in being able to read. Third, Logan's (1988) Instance Theory of Automaticity further posited that less capable readers are forced to devote too much time on decoding the words, but that once the words can be read sufficiently then the focus can be returned to the development of understanding of the text as a whole.

Fluency has also been associated with higher comprehension (Grabe, 2010). However, there are few controlled studies that have measured the impact of reading rate in true experimental research. In addition to word fluency, it has also been found that readers need syntactic fluency and passage reading fluency as they contribute significantly to building comprehension (Klauda & Guthrie, 2008). Finally, one's ability to orally read passages fluently strongly correlated with one's ability to comprehend and more capable readers demonstrate a stronger relationship between oral reading fluency and comprehension (Rasinski, 2014).

Researchers have also focused on the benefits of fluency with English language learners and older struggling readers. Language fluency research supports the importance of word fluency, passage fluency, extensive or wide reading, and vocabulary on improving comprehension for English language learners (Grabe, 2010). Time spent working on developing fluency with second language learners has proven beneficial in building their understanding of text (Vaughn et al., 2006). Older struggling students are faced with text that have more difficult academic vocabulary and will continue to fall behind unless they acquire fluency (Ates, 2013). But overall, fluency has benefits for all students and can improve reading achievement. Thus, fluency "is a legitimate goal of the reading curriculum and, as such, it deserves an important place in the reading instruction" (Allington, 1983, p. 13).

Fluency Assessments

Students must be made aware of what they are practicing in order to improve their skills rather than continue to process through practices that are failing to serve them well (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). In order for interventions to be effective they must be clearly matched to the underlying reading problem. Thus, assessments are needed to correctly identify the student's issues in reading (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Independent Reading Level

Fluency assessments should be done with texts that are on the students' independent reading level. These can be determined by using inventory assessments, which are either teacher created or commercially published sets of leveled passages in which running records and miscue analysis are used to determine students' independent, instructional, or frustrational levels of reading (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). It is commonly accepted that independent reading levels are those read with an accuracy of 99% words read correctly (WRC); instructional level readers demonstrates 95% WRC, and below 90% WRC is considered to be a child's frustrational level (Kamil et al., 2011). Inventories often include word lists which contain academic grade level vocabulary to determine if a student is fluently reading grade level texts (Waldron, 2008).

In addition, it must be remembered that teachers should not stress accuracy too strongly. As students are challenged with more difficult texts, they tend to slow down and make more errors and an overemphasis on the accuracy of reading words may in fact discourage students from reading more rigorous texts. Therefore, it is critical that teachers also take into account the sub-skills necessary for reading more difficult text rather than focus on accuracy alone (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

Rate of Reading

The rate or speed with which a student reads received the most attention in the research of fluency since the early 20th century, as it is easy to quantify (Kamil et al., 2011). The most common of these measurements is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS ORF) assessment (Rasinski, 2011; University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2015). DIBELS ORF is a one-minute fluency assessment to measure accuracy and rate of reading texts and provides three benchmarks in reading fluency for students in grades 1-6, in which students are compared against grade level norms (Kamil et al., 2011; Waldron, 2008).

While DIBELS has been validated through a number of studies and correlates with other measures of reading achievement and reading comprehension there is a cautionary note that the assessment may demonstrate more word calling skills and therefore be an overestimation of a students' oral reading fluency (Hamilton & Shinn, 2003). Most teachers agree that measures of the students' DIBELS ORF provide immediate data, which pinpoint and identify students at risk in reading achievement (Waldron, 2008). However, many researchers have expressed a concern about fluency assessment as they tend to only monitor the rate of reading (Rasinski, 2014). Samuels (1997) argued that reading rate is not a true measure of fluency because it

does not include a measure of comprehension, just speed. Thus, teaching fluency with an exclusive focus on accuracy and rate must be excluded from any discussion of effective fluency as it may lead to a disregard for prosody (Rasinski, 2011).

Prosody of Reading

Prosody measures the expressive qualities of rhythmic and tonal features of speech including stress, pitch, and duration of pronunciation that make oral reading sound like oral speech (Rasinski, 2011). However, prosody research has largely been ignored as the measure of prosody is based on a subjective rating rubric and thus subject to vulnerability due to rater consistency (Haskins & Aleccia, 2014). Nonetheless, several prosody instruments are available for use: 1) multidimensional fluency scale which uses 1-4 rating and looks at four components: expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991); 2) NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale which uses 1-4 rating on three components: meaningful phrasing, expression, and appropriate interpretation of sentence syntax (NCES, 2005); 3) Reading Teacher Checklist measured two components -phrasing and tone, and syntactic cueing system (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). 4) In addition, some technological programs are capable of measuring pitch variation and pauses giving more credibility to the measure of prosody as a whole (Boersma & Weenink, 2011). However, the creators of these measures have reported limited reliability data.

Integrated Interventions for Improving Fluency Skills

Interventions for improving fluency skills start with integrated fluency instruction, as it provides a combination of teacher modeling, group instruction in strategies associated with fluent reading, repeated assisted readings, and wide, independent reading (Kamil et al., 2011). An integrated approach was found to be best for younger students between pre-primer and second grade when they received early intervention (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). The following seven interventions, which are currently being used in instructional practice to provide integrated interventions have both positive and negative attributes.

Fluency Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI)

FORI was designed as a whole class instructional model for students in primary grades (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011). Using reading selections, the teacher models fluent reading as students follow along, and over subsequent days students practice repeated readings for 15-30 minutes using choral reading, then echo reading, and finally partner reading (Kamil et al., 2011). In studies, 98% of struggling readers were able to read on grade level by the end of the second year of

intervention with this approach (Kamil et al., 2011). In addition, Kuhn and colleagues (2006) found that long-term use of this approach increased students' sight word reading and comprehension. However, other studies have shown limited evidence of its effectiveness with struggling readers (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Wide Reading

Wide reading involves the reading of a plethora of text with only limited exposures for repeated reading. Because of this, wide reading is highly contested as being effective. While some scholars support the effectiveness of wide reading comparing students' gains to those made by repeated readings (Ari, 2011), the National Reading Panel (2000) found a lack of evidence to support the use of wide reading. However, some are concerned that if students do not get opportunities to master a variety of texts there is high probability that they will not develop into confident proficient readers (Rasinski, 2014).

Oral Recitation Lesson (ORL)

The Oral Recitation Lesson (ORL) incorporates teacher modeling, repeated reading, and standards for student mastery of text (Rasinski & Zutell, 1990). There is evidence that when students are read aloud to, they increase their receptive vocabulary and develop better comprehension becoming more motivated to read based on their understanding of what constitutes fluent reading (Rasinski, 2014). The ORL has three phases. During the first phase, the teacher models the reading, leading the students in discussion of the text, and then has the students create a summary of their reading. The focus of this direct instruction is comprehension. In the second phase, students practice oral reading until they are able to reach the desired fluency goals set forth by the teacher. The final phase has students perform oral reading for the teacher and/or class. The emphasis in the final two phases is to develop fluency and prosody. Morris and Nelson (1992) implemented an adaptation of ORL and recorded substantial gains for struggling readers who had previously made little success. A key characteristic in the success of the intervention is based upon the predictability of the texts (Rasinski & Zutell, 1990). Other researchers have found no statistical evidence to support the effectiveness of the intervention, although it is widely used in many classrooms (Kamil et al., 2011).

Shared Book Experience (SBE)

Shared Book Experience was developed in New Zealand in response to the growing migrant population of Polynesian immigrants and growth of urban schools (Holdaway, 1982). It was based upon the idea of recreating the parent-child book reading experience in a school setting in order to motivate and captivate children to love reading again and make entry into literary a natural progression for young children. SBE integrates the Language Experience Approach (LEA) (Allen &

Laminak, 1982) and builds upon the modeling of fluent reading by the teacher. It also includes a teacher led introduction of the book, whole class discussion of the text, and repeated readings in small groups and pairs (Kamil et al., 2011). However, there is a lack of experimental evidence either in favor of or denouncing the use of the shared book experience.

Fluency Development Lesson (FDL)

Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) incorporates 10-15 minute of fluency focused augmentation, with teacher modeling, class discussion, paired practice, and performance for assessment (Kamil et al., 2011). The key factor that makes FDL different from most intervention programs is that it employs both repeated and wide readings allowing students to gain more from instruction than using one component alone (Rasinski, 2014). Even though this approach is popular in the classroom, the evidence for its effectiveness is split (Kamil et al., 2011). However, when FDL was employed in a university-run-reading clinic, the students who used it on a daily basis saw remarkable growth (Rasinski, 2014).

Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary, Elaboration and Orthography (RAVE-O)

RAVE-O has a unique approach to fluency, as it integrates small group intensive teaching with a phonological approach to language learning (Kamil et al., 2011). RAVE-O attempts to remedy deficits for students who lack both rapid automatic reading and phonological processes (Wolf, Miller, & Donnelly, 2000). The program has a strong vocabulary aspect that focuses on the lexical and sub-lexical orthographic structures (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011). The deep knowledge of word meanings is believed to facilitate word recognition and strongly correlates with comprehension of text (Kellas, Ferraro, & Simpson, 1988). For older struggling readers, the focus of lexical and sub-lexical structures is critical to the success of intervention in promoting fluency (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

There are three goals in RAVE-O: 1) building fluency in reading outcome behaviors, 2) incorporating the lexical and sublexical processes to attack the low-level issues of slow automaticity, and 3) building student efficacy as a reader through an acquisition of cognitive tools and strategies for developing word meaning. Studies have demonstrated significant gains in word attack skills, word identification, and oral reading rate and accuracy as well as comprehension (Kamil et al., 2011; Morris & Nelson, 1992; Wolf et al, 2000). However, research has shown that there is no difference with this intervention and others until after using it for 70 hours (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2008).

Readers' Theater

Readers' Theater is an engaging and motivating activity that incorporates the use of repeated readings (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011; Rasinski, 2011). In Readers' Theater, students practice repeated reading of a text in order to perform the reading as a skit for an audience using all three components of fluent reading: rate, accuracy, and prosody (Rasinski, 2014). However, there is conflicting evidence about the effectiveness of Readers' Theater, as some scholars advocate for the use of artistic performance approach to fluency citing gains made by struggling readers exceeding the normal growth rate (Rasinski, 2011); while others point to a limited effectiveness of overall reading improvement and comprehension (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Assisted Reading Practices to Improve Fluency Skills

Assisted reading is not considered an intervention because it is regularly used as part of a comprehensive reading program for all students. Assisted reading offers students, "practice with consistent input and consistent output pairings" (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky & Seidenberg, 2001, p. 171). A key aspect of assisted reading that separates it from most fluency practices is that it focuses on prosody, instead of rate and accuracy. This engagement with prosody and comprehension is believed to affect the way students approach and engage with the text to derive meaning, instead of racing to correctly call words (Ardoin et al., 2013). The following four techniques are currently used in instructional practice to provide assisted reading.

Guided Repeated Oral Reading with Fluency (GRORF)

GRORF can be done either in small groups or pairs and is easy for the teacher to implement (Ates, 2013). GRORF offers students the opportunity to read a text repeatedly and receive feedback from a peer or teacher (Ates, 2013; Kamil et al., 2011; Rasinski, 2011). Many researchers feel that it is the feedback from an adult or capable peer that brings value to the instruction (Rasinski, 2014). Research has shown that GRORF has increased word recognition, accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and rate not only on the practiced but also on new texts (Kamil et al., 2011; Rasinski, 2014). Therrien (2007) suggests three essential components to GRORF: 1) passages should be read aloud to an educated other, 2) corrective feedback is provided on word errors, and 3) passages should be read until performance measures are met. In GRORF, students are given multiple opportunities to practice and gain feedback for improvement much to the contrary of the next instructional practice.

Round Robin Reading (RRR)

Round Robin Reading, RRR, or popcorn reading as many teachers refer to it, is perhaps the most widely used reading practice in classrooms today despite the fact that it is widely and highly criticized by scholars as being poor practice (Kamil et al., 2011). In RRR, students take turns listening to one student read from the text, while the rest of the class is expected to follow along silently. Beach (1993) pointed out that RRR fails to offer any improvements to students' reading achievement because it limits reading practice time, and produces a negative self-efficacy in struggling readers (Kamil et al., 2011). Despite its prevalence in basal reading programs, RRR has been deemed detrimental to student growth and reading comprehension (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Paired Reading

Paired or partner reading requires only ten to fifteen minutes and complements the regular reading instruction in the classroom, which makes it easy to implement and is favored by teachers (Rasinski & Zutell, 1990). Paired reading takes the same form as GRORF, but the partner or adult first models fluent reading, then the student reads along, and then finally read by themselves (Kamil et al., 2011). This model, which has its roots in the Neurological Impress Method (NIM), explains that students hearing the fluent model and reading along duplicates the prosodic and syntactic essence of the text and thus, are able to reproduce it (Rasinski, 2011). More capable readers support developing readers and it is assumed that the memory trace from hearing the fluent reading of the text develops the neurological pathways in the weaker reader (Kamil et al., 2011).

Technology Assistance

Technological Assistance contains many of the same components as the other methods but instead of working with a partner, the student is paired with some form of technology (Kamil et al., 2011). Students may read along with tape or recorded passage, or they may use the captions on the TV as their guide to build and practice fluency (Rasinski, 2011). *Read Naturally* is a computer program that has been shown to demonstrate growth in developing student's fluency and comprehension (Kamil et al., 2011). As technology continues to grow, so do the opportunities for students to find capable assistance in building their fluency. Because it offers many of the same components as the NIM, technology assisted reading also shares in the benefits (Rasinski, 2011).

Summary

This literature highlights the importance that both speed and prosody play in fluency development and the importance of fluency development in children's overall reading achievement and text comprehension.

Thus, fluency must be included as part of a comprehensive reading program. However, this literature review reveals gaps in the research in several key areas and why we believe fluency should still be a current topic of concern. First, there are very few studies on the effect of fluency intervention with older struggling students. While there is evidence that older students continue to struggle with fluent reading, there are few studies to find the impact of fluency intervention with this group of students. Second, there are several tensions that must be

resolved. The tension between oral and silent reading, wide and repeated readings, as well as automaticity and prosody remains unresolved and has teachers wondering which is more effective for developing students' comprehension and overall reading development. This tension continues to plague the debate over assessment of fluency and continues to keep fluency in the limelight.

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~CHAPTER 5~

DEVELOPING AWESOME LISTENERS AND SPEAKERS: USING ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AND QUESTION STEMS TO PROMOTE LITERACY AND LEARNING

Dr. Susan Szabo

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Renee Sawatsky, M.Ed. Doctoral Student

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Joel Blaylock, M. Div. Doctoral Student

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Abstract

Research indicates that oral language is critical for all students to develop reading and writing skills. Oral language should be integrated as part of the K-12 curriculum. This paper not only addresses the importance of oral language in the reading/writing process, it explores the receptive/expressive aspects of language and the various cognitive levels they promote. The paper concludes with oral language activities that teachers can use to help students build oral language skills and, in turn, improve students' reading and writing skills.

Keywords: *oral language. literacy development, reading/writing skills*

Oral language is one of our first modes of learning and consists of receptive language (listening) and expressive language (speaking). Oral language allows us to communicate with others and to learn about the world around us, as “listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (Brownell, 2006, p. 48). Listening is the ability to receive input through our ears and to understand what is heard. Talking is one's ability to use words orally to convey meaning. Oral language allows us to put our thoughts into words and stimulates our thinking (Fisher, Frey, & Rothernberg, 2008). Because “human intelligence is primarily developed through speaking and listening” (Fisher, 2007, p. 616), the use of classroom talk reflects supports the learning process.

There are two types of oral language: social and academic. Social language is the first to develop as it is used in our everyday communication with family members and/or neighborhood friends. Social conversations take place face-to-face in an informal

setting, and can include such activities as talking at the dinner table, a family picnic, a neighborhood park, a ride in the car, or a shopping trip. As the child gets older, it is language that allows the child to play with others on the playground or other social and school settings. Normally, social language is a mixture of various home languages and slang (Spivey, 2012). On the other hand, academic oral language consists of the words that help one be successful either in school or in the work place. These words are known as jargon words or academic language, and it is these more formal words that describe important concepts and ideas for specific content areas or work-related fields.

One's oral language ability is dependent upon culture, family values, environment, and experiences (Brownell, 2006; Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2007). As the foundations of oral language are developed by age four, children enter school with a wide range of oral language abilities (Fielding et al, 2007). Thus, teachers need to know how to overcome the challenges of developing strong oral language skills particularly with at-risk

students, as oral language is the foundation for literacy development (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhard, 2009).

Importance of Oral Language

According to Joy (2010), oral language growth happens in this order: hearing, listening, understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, and producing. These steps help children to build language fluency which are vital to their getting and expressing their basic needs, wants, and desires with family members. As children enter school, their oral language ability and vocabulary knowledge helps them to be successful in reading and writing activities (Spivey, 2012).

Therefore, it is important that all teachers include both listening and speaking activities in their classrooms and curriculum. There are many types of activities that teachers and parents can use to help improve students' oral language skills. However, this article looks at activities that we believe parallel and support the nine levels of listening as developed by Sampson, Rasinski, and Sampson (2003). These levels include simple listening, discriminative listening, interpretive listening, listening for information, listening to organize ideas, listening for main idea, listening for varied points of view, critical listening and creative listening (Sampson et al., 2003). We believe it is important to talk about oral activities through listening, as listening and speaking are reciprocal skills.

Activities to Build Oral Language and Cognitive Levels

Oral language includes both listening and speaking. However, good listening and speaking skills do not just happen. The skills of being an attentive, active listener and a good speaker have to be practiced. Speaking and listening for the most part have a reciprocal relationship. Thus, one has to be an active participant using both listening and speaking skills as he or she progresses through the nine levels of listening (Sampson et al., 2003). These activities not only build oral language skills but the question stems help to develop cognitive skills.

Simple Listening

This level of listening has the listener appreciating and determining the sounds of things in the environment (Sampson et al., 2003). This parallels and supports the cognitive level (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) of knowledge and comprehension, as students are asked to label various sounds in their environment and to determine what object makes that sound based on prior experience.

Simple listening activities include the identification of rain falling, wind blowing, telephones or

doorbells ringing, birds singing, ocean waves breaking, music boxes playing, clocks ticking, trains or cars moving, ducks quacking, cows mooing, lawn mowers mowing, dogs barking, bees buzzing, and children stomping through the grass. These simple listening activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on careful listening and identifying the object that created the sound. The following examples present three activities that build simple listening skills:

1. **Outdoor Sound Hunt.** Go on a walk around the neighborhood and stop to listen throughout the walk. You can ask the children "What sounds do you hear" or "What makes that sound?" You can also state, "I hear a plane. What sound does it make?"
2. **Indoor Clock Hunt.** Get a clock that ticks loudly. Have the students put their head on their desks and close their eyes. Hide the clock. Then have several students hunt for it. The one who finds the clock gets to hide it next time.
3. **Identifying Recorded Sounds.** This website <http://www.findsounds.com/types.html> has animal, bird, holiday, household, insect, musical instrument, nature, office, people, and sport sounds. Play a sound for students to identify. Use teams to collaborate for a competitive edge.

Teachers need to ask questions that help students focus and think about what they hear. It is always important to have students explain how and/or why they know what the sound is. These questions could include the following:

1. Do you hear that?
2. What is that sound?
3. What is making that sound?
4. Is it alive?
5. How do you know?

Discriminative Listening

This level of listening is a basic level of listening, but the student is listening for something specific and nothing else. This includes such sounds as a baby's cry on the baby monitor, the doorbell ringing as you are expecting guests, the sounds of steps in the hallway, the running of water in the tub, or the tornado siren. The activity involves difference in volume, pitch and duration. In literacy, discriminative listening allows the listener to:

hear and identify the likeness and differences in sounds: for example, high-low sounds on a musical scale, soft-loud sounds at the same pitch, long-short sounds of the same tones, words that have the same beginning sound, words that have rhyming

endings, words that have the same sound in internal syllables, and words that are the same (Sampson, et al., 2003, pp. 97-98).

Discriminative listening parallels and support the cognitive levels (Bloom, et al, 1956) of knowledge and application, as students must recognize and respond to these sounds in their environment as well as the various sounds in words and apply these sounds to new words they are learning.

Discriminative listening activities include the identification of rhyming words, word families, initial word sounds, and final word sounds. These activities help to build phonological and phonemic awareness. These discriminative activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on careful listening to help students differentiate specific sounds from other similar sounds. The following are only three examples of activities that can be used to build discriminative listening skills:

1. Tongue Twisters or Alliterations. These fun crazy sentences start with the same sounds. For example, Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. As the students say these out loud, they have a hard time saying all the words correctly, as there are too many words with the same sound.
2. Picture Sort. Collect various pictures and have students say the words to hear the sounds. Then they can sort them according to the first sound of the picture, the ending sounds or the vowel sounds.
3. Which Word Does Not Belong? The teacher gives students groupings of words where three words in the group have similar sounds and the other one is different. For example, pick the one that does not belong for the following:
 1. train, gain, stain, tree
 2. nuts, new, nice, mice.

Teachers need to ask questions that help students focus and think about what they hear. It is always important to have students explain how and/or why they know what the sound is. Questions that could help children practice discriminative listening include the following:

1. What words rhyme or sound the same (Say 3 words and pick the two that are alike)? What word is different (Say 3 words and pick the one that is different word)?
2. What is first sound of the word (onset of the word)?
3. What is the final single sound of the word?
4. Can you segment the letter sounds in this word?
5. Can you blend these sounds together to make a word?

Interpretive Listening

This level of listening has the listener “interpreting character’s feelings, drawing conclusions, and making inferences” (Sampson et al., 2003, p. 98). Interpretive listening parallels and supports the cognitive levels (Bloom, et al., 1956) of comprehension, analysis and evaluation, as students need to think critically using their background understanding in order to summarize as well as to compare-and-contrast information in order to interpret what they are hearing. They are determining if they like or do not like such things as the message, the music, or the play.

Interpretive listening activities include listening to a story being read out loud and being able to discuss what was heard, watching a movie and comparing it to the book, or reading multiple versions of the same story, like Cinderella, and talking about the differences and similarities in each. Interpretative activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. These activities have the children focusing on careful listening and using their background knowledge to make judgments about what they are hearing. The following are only three examples of activities that build interpretative skills:

1. Reader’s Theater. This allows the students to act out a story and determine intonation of wording to denote feelings of characters.
2. Watching Youtube Videos. There are various Youtube advertisements such as the “French Model” in which the listener has to evaluate the message to determine if the message is correct and explain and support her/his thoughts.
3. Listen for the Tone. Have students listen to a kids’ TV show and point out when tone-of-voice indicates mood changes in the characters. Then they watch the show to see if the actions changed as the tone and mood of the characters changed.

Teachers need to ask questions that help students focus and interpret meaning using both the intonations used and their background knowledge. Questions could include:

1. What do you think will happen next? Why?
2. How do you think the character feels? Why?
3. You read the passage with a sad, low (anything can be substituted) voice? Why?
4. Do you think what you heard was the truth? Why?
5. Do you agree with the ending? Do you think that was a good way to solve the problem? Is there a better way to end the story?

Listening for Information

This level of listening, which is also known as comprehensive listening, has the listener listening for the message. Listeners are taking in new information but not criticizing it or analyzing it; listeners are just learning new facts. This level of listening involves both the comprehension and application cognitive levels (Bloom et

al., 1956), as students cannot do these activities if they do not apply their understanding. Listening for information: includes repeating words that tell the names of things when listening to reading, repeating facts heard when listening to stories or factual text, understanding oral directives well enough to carry them out independently, and recalling incidents from hearing discussions and from listening to reading (Sampson et al., 2003, pp. 98).

Activities include listening to the news, watching a documentary, sharing a recipe with a friend, and/or listening to directions. These listening for information activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on careful listening and then using the information correctly. The following are only three examples of activities that listening for information skills:

1. Simon Says. This game is all about listening and following directions, as you only follow the directions that Simon says. "Simon says put your finger on your nose. Jump up." (If you jump up, you are out of the game as Simon did not say it).
2. I Spy. "I spy something in the classroom that ...," and the child gives 2-5 clues. For example, "I spy something that is green." "I spy something that has 4 wheels." "I spy something that goes vroom." (toy truck or car)
3. Following Directions. Activity 1 - Give students one task to complete orally, then two tasks, and then work up to three tasks that they can listen to and complete. Activity 2 - Have students give directions for things they do every day, and the class guesses what the child is doing. For example: Put your two hands on the handlebars. Put your leg over the bar. Sit on the seat. Put one foot on the pedal and then the other. Move your legs up and down. (They are riding a bike.)

Teachers can help students hone their listening for information skills by asking them literal comprehension questions, as the answers are found within what was heard. There is a right and wrong response to these questions.

1. What did you see?
2. What did you hear?
3. How was the main character described?
4. What happened?
5. Write three facts you heard.

Listening to Organize Ideas

This level of listening has the listener listening to organize ideas. Listening to organize ideas is a skill that "includes the ability to hear and to repeat happenings in the order they were heard, the ability to summarize several points in a discussion, and the ability to arrange points from several discussions into a new organization"

(Sampson et al., 2003, p. 98). This level of listening parallels and supports several cognitive levels (Bloom et al., 1956), as students have to comprehend, apply, analyze, and create. Listening to organize ideas can be done both in and out of the classroom. They include activities that have the children focusing on careful listening in order to put ideas into sequential order or to summarize the discussion points. The following are only three examples of activities that build listening for organization skills:

1. Story Order. Have students summarize a story in the order it was told.
2. Signal Words. These are words that help to scaffold the reader. To help students focus on listening to organize ideas, they need to learn both sequential signal words and conclusion signal words. Sequential signal words include such words as: first, second, third, next, last, and in the first place. Conclusion signal words include such words as: as a result, in summary, consequently, in conclusion and finally.
3. Literature Circles. When students read the same book, normally various jobs are assigned to help students during discussion of the book. These job descriptors could include leader, vocabulary finder, questioner, connector, illustrator and summarizer. The student who is the summarizer goes last, as he or she must summarize the discussion using main ideas from all other participants.

Teachers need to ask questions that promote listening and organization skills by asking them questions which focus on sequencing of events or summarizing discussion points. These questions could include:

1. Put the story in story order. What happens first, second, third, etc.?
2. What happened to the main character?
3. How do these ideas go with ideas from our other text?
4. How do these ideas go with what you have heard on the news?
5. How do these ideas match with what you are learning at home? Or in your community? Or school?

Listening for Main Ideas

This level of listening has the listener set a purpose for listening, as one is listening for the main ideas. Listening for the main ideas "involves understanding the important points of a story or discussion and discriminating between major points and illustrations to support and elaborate the points" (Sampson et al., 2003, p. 98). Cognitive levels (Bloom, et al., 1956) that support this kind of listening are comprehension and application. Listening for main ideas activities include the identification of the main point being discussed in the paragraph and what is specifically

being said about the topic. The topic is the general subject. Details support what the author is trying to say about the subject and gives supporting evidence. If one can give a summary of the paragraph being read in one sentence that will be close to what is the main idea. While the main idea is usually found in the first sentence, another common place that the main idea can be found is in the last sentence of a paragraph. These listening for main ideas activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on identifying the subject and what is important about that subject. The following are only three activities that build listening for the main idea.

1. Website Games. As we have children that like both technology and games there are many websites that have students looking for the main idea. Two such sites include <http://www.roomrecess.com/pages/MainIdea.html> and <https://www.quia.com/pop/120023.html>
2. Picture Perfect. It is not always obvious to students what the point of a text is, as many get lost in the details. In addition, most of us are visual learners. Thus using pictures that have students creating a summary statement describing what is happening in the picture leads them to the main idea. This main idea sentence can then be typed and placed on the picture as a reminder.
3. High-Five. This activity includes writing and having the students create or use a premade handprint. Read a story or passage or watch movie or film clip and have students write the details on the fingers and the main idea on the palm. Thus, the palm is the subject or main idea.

Teachers can help students hone their listening for main idea skills by asking them questions like:

1. What is the general idea?
2. What is being said about the person, thing, or idea (this is the topic)?
3. What point is the writer trying to make?
4. What words or ideas are stressed?
5. What are the details supporting?

Listening to Points of View

This level of listening has the listener appreciating different ways of doing or thinking about things. In order to listen to points of view “children must develop a sensitivity to the language of agreement and disagreement, interpret tones of voice that express controversy, sarcasm, irritation, reasonableness, and perplexity, and watch for basic differences in ideas when listening to discussion” (Sampson et al., 2003, p. 99). This kind of listening supports several cognitive levels (Bloom, et al., 1956) as listeners should be open-minded enough to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate different points of views that do not match their own thinking.

Listening to points of view activities has the student considering different angles or perspectives. Listening to points of view shows one’s opinion, attitude or judgment. These listening to points of view activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on careful listening and identifying the lens through which they and/or the author look at the world and then justifying why that particular lens is the right lens. The following are only three examples of activities that can help to build point of view skills:

1. Empathetic Readings. Read statements to the class, using different tones such as excitement, sarcasm, irritation, fear, etc. Have students guess the reason the author is speaking that way.
2. Difference Perspectives. Talk about different people from different perspectives. For example, describe the bully from the bullies’ perspective, the victim’s perspective and the outsider’s perspective.
3. Story Ending. Have students write different endings to a story based on a different character’s point of view.

Teachers can help students hone their listening-to-points-of-view skills by asking them to use their background knowledge to support the reason why they think something is important or not important. Questions could include:

1. What does the author think? Why?
2. How do you know?
3. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. Do you think the author is right or wrong? Why?
5. What other support could you use to have more people believe the text?

Critical Listening

This level of listening has the listener using questioning and higher order thinking. Critical listening involves the cognitive levels (Bloom, et al, 1956) of critiquing and evaluating the information. This level also includes listening “to recognize bias, exaggerated statements, false connotations, propaganda, half-truths, and name-calling” (Sampson et al., 2003, p. 99). Thus, it is also called evaluative or judgmental listening. Because evaluation or critique of the information is taking place, critical listening involves problem solving and/or decision making.

Critical listening activities involve analyzing the information with what we already know and adjusting our understanding to fit the new information. This process allows metacognition to take place. This deep thinking and adjustment of one’s thinking can be done both in and out of the classroom. The activities have the children focusing on reason rather than emotion and avoiding snap decisions (Kurland, 2000). The following are only three examples of activities that build critical listening skills:

1. Advertisements. Play commercials and jingles to show different tones and musical melodies that have different emotional effects on the listeners. Talk about how advertisers use those to play on the emotions about buying a product.
2. Taking a Stand. Give the children a thought-provoking opinion on a controversial issue (e.g. Should teachers give homework?). Students are given 30 minutes to find research that supports a yes, no or maybe stance. The yes group, the no group and the maybe group get together to determine the support they will use for the stance they took.
3. Can You Find Me? Use rhyming clues to determine which word or picture the rhyme is describing.

Teachers can help students hone their critical listening skills by asking them to support their understanding. Some of the questions that could be asked include:

1. Was the information accurate? How do you know?
2. Why do you think that music was placed there?
3. What is the speaker trying to say?
4. How is what you are hearing different from what you know or believe to be true?
5. Why do you believe this event happened? What would have to take place for the decision to be different?

Creative Listening

This level of listening has the listeners using their imaginations. Creative listening is listening where: children just learn to visualize characters, settings, moods, and situations while listening, visualizing or sketch images in one's mind, evaluating information presented in an oral format such as stories, informational texts, films, and tapes in terms of personal feelings, relate ideas heard in various venues such as in political speeches and plays, and incorporate several ideas heard on various occasions into a new whole (Sampson et al., 2003, p. 99).

We believe that creative listening supports several cognitive levels (Bloom, et al, 1956), as the students are applying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. Creative listening activities include the identification of clues that may spark a creative project. Staying open minded and embracing ideas in a new and different way helps to ignite one's imagination. In this case there are no wrong or right answers. These critical listening activities can be done both in and out of the classroom. They have the children focusing on careful listening and identifying the object/content that promotes curiosity. The following are only three examples of activities that build simple listening skills:

1. Listen and Draw an Illustration. Read *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* to the class. Have them draw her upside down house while you read her description. Share with the class the differences in our perceptions of what we hear, along with their reasoning for the parts of the drawing that do not match others in the class.
2. Listen and Draw a Book Cover. Read a favorite story and have students create a new book cover showing some of the details you read about.
3. Dramatic Vocabulary. Have students act out the meaning of individual words or phrases.

Teachers can help students hone their creative listening skills by asking them to think outside the box. These questions could include:

1. Why do you think that happened to the character?
2. How do you think the character felt?
3. How would you feel if that happened to you? Why?
4. If you were the author, how would you have the character deal with the problem?
5. As you listened to the story being read, what visual image did you draw? Why?

Conclusions

This paper used the nine level of listening developed by Sampson, Rasinski, and Sampson (2003) to share the importance of these levels of listening on literacy and learning. In literacy, our perceptions of sounds and the ability to reproduce them are built on accurate hearing and discrimination of these sounds. By repeating and comparing these sounds with peers, students gain self-confidence and a broader understanding of what they are learning. Without accurate listening skills, students can confuse sounds and/or words and can misinterpret what is being taught. It is vital that teachers speak clearly and frequently check for understanding with their students. This is especially true for ELLs and struggling learners who may not have a catalog of sounds from home and play experiences.

In learning, active listening is important in order to gain those cognitive skills which aid in building one's understanding. Because hearing is one of the major receptive channels for learning both language and content, it is important that listening skills be taught. However, good listening is actually difficult and it takes practice and effort to build these skills (Peterson, 2012). It is vital that children interpret what they hear accurately so that they have the confidence to use these sounds in daily school transactions as well as to become good readers and thinkers (Sampson et al., 2003; Spivey, 2012). When children become adults, these listening skills can carry over to the workplace for better productivity which can possibly improve the chances for career success (Brownell, 2006).

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GOING BEYOND TEXT FEATURES IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT: IT'S MORE THAN JUST A TABLE OF CONTENTS AND AN INDEX

Jennifer M. Smith, Ph.D.
Austin College

Marla K. Robertson, Ph.D.
Utah State University

Abstract

With increased attention on nonfiction and informational text, there has been some confusion about the definition of these concepts. Also at issue is how teachers can incorporate research-based practices around these texts into their classrooms. This article addresses nonfiction and information text and identifies three particular practices designed to help teachers fulfill the standards for their content as they expose students to more nonfiction text: using read-alouds, teaching text structure, and teaching reading strategies such as close reading. These practices are discussed including recommendations for particular texts that might be used in classrooms to ensure students are exposed to a wide variety of texts. Meeting state standards is important, but students need to understand that real-world text is written for different purposes and that often genres are blurred based on those purposes. Students also need to understand how to read and comprehend all types of text in all disciplines. Whether text is identified and labeled as expository, nonfiction, informational, persuasive, procedural, or something else, our goal should be to expose students to as broad a range as possible.

Keywords: *informational text; text features; text exposure; disciplinary literacies*

Nonfiction or informational? As teacher educators, we often reflect on these terms and the types of texts we use with our pre-service teachers. Our goal is to ensure that we are providing appropriate examples of text to help our students prepare to meet the curriculum standards in future classrooms. For the last 15 years or so, an emphasis has been placed on incorporating more informational text in classrooms, particularly in elementary schools (Duke, 2000). Yet, when we talk with teachers about informational text, there is often confusion regarding what texts are considered informational. These conversations include discussion regarding how nonfiction texts are different than informational texts, the types of texts used in different disciplines, and strategies to engage learners with different types of texts. This article is in response to these conversations. Here, we attempt to answer some of the questions we often hear through a review of relevant literature and text recommendations that teachers might use in order to implement the strategies discussed.

What is Informational Text?

Some debate exists about the definition of informational text. Are nonfiction text and informational text the same? If not, how are they different? In some publications, informational text is primarily defined as a way to “convey information about the natural or social world” (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003, p. 16), as it makes use of distinctive text structures, features, and language to achieve that goal. Other authors discriminate between informational and nonfiction by defining nonfiction more broadly as “text that attempts to convey true or accurate information about the world” (Maloch & Horsey, 2013, p. 476). This definition of nonfiction text is not limited to particular text structures or features and includes informational texts, biographies, instructions, and procedures. In some cases, the terms are used interchangeably, which may cause confusion for teachers who are trying to improve their practice and meet standards about these types of text.

Even in the various state standards there are differences in the interpretation of informational and nonfiction text. For example, in the Texas Standards (TEKS) for English Language Arts, there are standards for comprehension of informational text for culture and history, expository text, persuasive text, and procedural texts. There are separate standards for comprehension of literary texts that are considered literary nonfiction which include memoirs, personal narratives and autobiography. The standard for interpreting maps, charts, illustrations, graphs, timelines, tables, and diagrams is under the section on procedural texts. The standard for understanding informational text structures such as problem-and-solution is under expository text. Comprehension of words, images, graphics, and sounds together is under a different standard for media literacy (Texas Education Agency).

In the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), reading is divided into literature and informational text. In this case, informational text is defined as literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts which “[i]ncludes biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics.” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 31). As teachers and administrators search to provide students with the best education while also complying with local and state standards and expectations, this variety of interpretations of nonfiction text can be challenging.

Moving Towards Disciplinary Literacy

Besides a stronger emphasis on informational texts, teachers are also tasked with focusing on literacy instruction within the content areas, including a shift towards disciplinary literacy. Disciplinary literacy moves beyond expecting all teachers to teach generalized literacy skills within their content areas. Instead, the focus of disciplinary literacy lies in teaching the advanced, specialized ways that members of specific disciplines interact with texts (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; 2014). In other words, students need to learn how to read, think, and write like members of each discipline. In science classes, students must extract information and use it to form hypotheses and interpretations. Math problems must be read with a critical stance to break down the text in a way that allows students to reason and verify their solutions (Hillman, 2014). Students need to read like historians in history class, critically examining both primary and secondary documents. Often, historical documents differ from other content area texts, as they are written in chronological order. Historians read the “story” of an event to understand cause and effect relationships.

With the current educational climate placing an emphasis on both nonfiction and the more narrowly defined informational text, we focus this article on research-based strategies that teachers can use to expose students to and engage them with a variety of texts. According to Maloch and Bomer (2013a):

Perhaps the lesson to carry away is not a definitive final word on what texts are in or out, but rather an understanding that students can be engaged in an interesting and perpetually uncompleted inquiry process into the different types of text that exist in the world. That can happen if teachers open the textual world in their classrooms to a wider array of text types, making sure to offer texts that explain, inform, and argue in a range of ways. (p. 209)

Thus, we argue that the implementation of the strategies discussed below would benefit students whether the text is defined as a nonfiction, informational, or expository.

Exposure to Various Texts

In order for teachers to meet the nonfiction/informational text state standards and address disciplinary literacy, they must consider how to expose students to a variety of text types. Below, we outline three practices teachers might use as they integrate nonfiction text types into their classroom. These strategies include read-alouds, teaching text structure, and close reading.

Read-Alouds

Students, left to their own text choices, gravitate to genres that interest them most. Researchers and teachers support allowing students a choice in their reading (Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Miller, 2009). The implication for teachers, then, is that they must ensure these same students are exposed to an expanded variety of texts. One strategy that teachers can use to expose students to a wider range of text types is through read-alouds. As Steven Layne (2015) wrote, “I’ve always been a big advocate for student choice when it comes to reading; however, when it comes to my read-aloud plan - it’s *my* plan” (p. 68).

Read-alouds allow teachers to expand the range of text types that students are exposed to (Strachan, 2014). Read-alouds are appropriate at any grade level, with nonfiction as well as fictional stories, and can expose students to texts they would normally not read themselves (Layne, 2015). When teachers use informational text from content areas as read-aloud material, students learn vocabulary (Wright, 2013), text structures (Read, Reutzel, & Fawson, 2008), and make text-to-text connections. However, the types of text that teachers read aloud to students often favor narrative and science themed informational texts. For example, Yopp and Yopp (2006)

found that primary students are exposed to more narrative texts than informational texts through read-alouds. These researchers further examined the selection of books that were read aloud to preschool through third grade students, noting that of the 120 informational text read-alouds that were documented, 85 percent of these books addressed science topics (Yopp & Yopp, 2012). Further, three quarters of these science themed texts included life science books, with substantially fewer texts that related to earth, space, engineering, and technology fields and no references to physical science.

Consequently, teachers must be cognizant of the types of text they are exposing students to in order to ensure a variety of text types. Specifically, Yopp and Yopp (2012) recommended teachers count the informational texts in their classrooms and classify for genre awareness, keep a log documenting the title, genre, and topic of all read-alouds, and provide supplemental resources (websites or videos) if there are less texts on specific topics. Teachers can create text sets on common topics in order for students to make connections and can also collaborate with grade-level colleagues and school librarians to locate appropriate texts (Strachan, 2014).

The National Science Teachers Association publishes a list of Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12 (<http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/>). Looking at the 2016 online list, which includes books that were published in 2015, we found science texts that addressed various topics and fell into the domains of science Yopp and Yopp (2012) referenced. Along with the traditional informational texts, some of the books included on the 2016 list use historical elements and are written in narrative form. For instance, *Space* (Smithsonian Knowledge Encyclopedia, 2015) is considered an informational text with text features such as a table of contents, glossary, index, and captions explaining the pictures. In contrast, *The Fantastic Ferris Wheel* (Kraft, 2015) is a nonfiction text that tells the story of the inventor of the Ferris wheel, George Ferris. The inclusion of both informational text and other types of nonfiction highlights the range of text types that teachers may choose to use to address science topics and disciplinary literacy.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children (<http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispictus>) includes lists of texts that might be used to expose students to biographies, history, science, and the arts. While all of these books are considered nonfiction texts, they do not all fit the criteria of informational text. Nonetheless, these nonfiction books provide readers with factual information and tell the story of individuals and events. In this way, students are recognizing that texts may address more than one content area or be written in

different formats. For example, *Terrible Typhoid Mary: A True Story of the Deadliest Cook in America* (Bartoletti, 2015) is written as a nonfiction text, including both historical and scientific information. Brown's (2015) *Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina & New Orleans* is a graphic novel, exposing students to not only the events of Hurricane Katrina, but also the graphic novel format.

Teaching Text Structure

It is not enough to simply expose students to a range of expository/informational text types. Teachers must also provide explicit instruction on how to read informational text, as these texts have unique structures that differ from narrative text. For instance, expository texts often contain specialized vocabulary, topics in which students have little to no background knowledge, and numerous structures (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). While vocabulary lessons and building schema are typically included in fiction and nonfiction instruction, the informational text structures differ drastically from narrative and fictional prose. Thus, this section will focus on the unique text structures of informational text that students need to become familiar with in order to successfully engage with and comprehend this genre.

Informational text features may differ from other nonfiction (e.g. biographies) features because the texts have different purposes and unique text features. Both text types offer factual information, but biographies focus on a single individual/event at specific points in time while informational text discusses "whole classes of things and in a timeless way" (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003, p. 17). Text features offer readers a way to locate information in the text (Akhondi, Malayeri, & Samad, 2011). Headings, bold words, labels, captions, charts, and timelines are features that may be found inside the text to draw readers' attention to important information or an organizational theme. Outside the text, features such as the table of contents, glossary, and index can help readers locate information and support comprehension (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010).

Text structures within expository texts are used by authors to organize and connect ideas (Akhondi et al., 2011). Five text structures, or ways the author organizes the information, have been identified within the content of expository text (Meyer, 1985). These five structures include description, sequence, compare/contrast, cause/effect, and problem/solution. Authentic learning opportunities for teaching text features and text structure should include opportunities for students to apply their learning of these skills and strategies through practice with the texts themselves and not taught in isolation (Maloch & Bomer, 2013b).

As students learn to interact with informational text, we ask two underlying questions that teachers may continually address to increase text comprehension. First, what is the purpose of the text? Second, how is the information organized? Teachers and students may engage in an interactive read-aloud to explore informational text features and structures in an authentic manner. The interactive element of the read-aloud allows students “to verbally interact with the text, their peers, and the teacher as they work to construct meaning with a shared text” (Maloch & Bomer, 2013b, p. 444). This exposure to the unique elements of informational text is important before, during, and after reading. Before reading, teachers and students examine text for features, structure, and language. During reading, teachers should listen to students’ comments, model good reading strategies, and comment on new words. After reading, discussion ought to include the content of the text as well as the structure and features noted (Yopp & Yopp, 2012).

Teach Reading Strategies Such as Close Reading

An important point in the incorporation of more informational text in the classroom is the attention that teachers must pay to the differences between reading informational and narrative texts (Maloch & Bomer, 2013b). This requires explicit teaching of reading strategies for both types of text. Close reading has become a highly recommended strategy for comprehension of text. In close reading, students read a short piece of text without pre-teaching by the teacher. The purpose of a close reading session is to help students learn independent reading strategies to help them comprehend text that is more complex through more of a back-filling process (Lapp, Grant, Moss, & Johnson, 2013). According to Lapp et al., in this type of reading activity, the teacher helps students during the reading of the text rather than before to accelerate students’ knowledge of analytical reading skills and strategies.

Close reading of text is similar for fiction and informational text. A short text is selected that can be read and re-read (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012). The text is read for a purpose that should be explicitly explained to students such as determining the gist of the reading, noting key distinctive language, identifying key ideas, noting inferences, identifying author’s craft and intention, analyzing text structures and organization, or arguing a position. Students should need to read the text multiple times in order to achieve their purposes. Often the text is prepared in advance by numbering lines and paragraphs or stanzas and incorporating annotations if children cannot. Lessons on how to annotate might be included in the close reading procedures. Often teachers write text dependent questions and prompts that necessitate students returning back into the text for deeper analysis – questions should come from close examination of the text rather than from outside the text (Coleman & Pimentel,

2012). Teachers might incorporate dialogue and charting as part of the process (Lapp et al., 2013). Scaffolds are gradually removed as students gain the skill of closely reading and students are allowed to challenge themselves as they determine meaning and learn from the text (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012). This “builds capacity to approach challenging texts with a steadfast, determined attitude and develop the capability to find meaning from challenging texts” (Lapp et al., 2013, p. 118). Teaching close reading of informational texts provides students opportunities to delve into the various complexities inherent in the myriad types of nonfiction text.

For close reading of informational text in primary grades, the initial read is typically completed by the teacher rather than the student (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Annotations might be made using sticky notes rather than writing directly on the text. Also, teachers in primary grades sometimes annotate with and for students rather than expecting independent work. This can increase students’ knowledge of the annotation process, such as “underlining central, key or main ideas, circling words and phrases that are confusing or unclear, writing margin notes in their own words” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 224) and continuing to annotate during rereading. Repeated reading in primary grades may or may not be done independently. Upper grade students might reread alone or reread to small groups or the teacher can still reread aloud if appropriate. The text-based discussion is facilitated by the teacher. The questions vary from literal (what does the text say?) to structural meaning of the text (How does the text work?) to determination of meaning and logical inferences (What does the text mean?). Also, in primary grades, responding to the text might include drawing and/or writing collaboratively and independently with adult support and guidance, although less in upper grades. “Close reading is a time when teachers can stretch students’ listening and reading comprehension” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 226).

Conclusions

As educators, we need to ensure that students are exposed to text from fiction to nonfiction in all its variety and realize that often the lines of genre are blurred. Table 1 includes a sampling of texts we have used in our classrooms from elementary through to undergraduate and graduate-level courses. It serves as a baseline from which to consider texts for teaching a multitude of texts structures.

Whether text is identified and labeled as expository, nonfiction, informational, persuasive, procedural, or something else, our goal should be to expose students to as broad a range as possible. Meeting state standards is important, but students need to understand that real-world text is written for different purposes and that often genres are mixed based on those

purposes. Students also need to understand how to read and comprehend all types of text in all disciplines. Exposing them to a variety of nonfiction text through read-alouds, explicitly teaching nonfiction text structures, and providing instruction on strategies for understanding nonfiction text enables our students to be better prepared to read and understand their world. By going beyond

basic text features in nonfiction and informational text, we allow our students authentic opportunities to engage with the texts and comprehend the material. Teaching students about informational and nonfiction texts includes more than pointing out a table of contents and an index.

Table 1
Selected Texts Recommended for Teachers/Students

Types of Text	Titles
Biography	Bragg, G. (2012). <i>How they croaked: The awful ends of the awfully famous</i> . Bloombury Publishing. Bragg, G. (2014). <i>How they choked: Failures, flops, and flaws of the awfully famous</i> . Bloombury Publishing. Who Was/Who Is series (Grosset & Dunlap)
Magazines	National Geographic Kids (National Geographic) Scholastic News (Scholastic) ZooBooks (Wildlife Education Ltd.) Ranger Rick (National Wildlife Federation) Time for Kids (TI Media Solutions)
Graphic Novels	Brown, D. (2013). <i>The Great American Dust Bowl</i> . Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales (Amulet Books)
Digital	Newsela (www.newsela.com) Buzzfeed (www.buzzfeed.com)
Hybrid	Magic School Bus series (Scholastic) Magic Tree House series (Random House)
Specific text structures	I Wonder Why series such as <i>I Wonder Why Stars Twinkle and Other Questions About Space</i> (Kingfisher) <i>Guinness World Records 2016</i> (Bantam Books)

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~CHAPTER 7~

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR LITERACY ENVIRONMENT IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Carol W. Feters, Ph.D.

Innovations with Solutions Consulting, LLC

Earl H. Cheek, Jr., Ph.D.

Louisiana State University

Abstract

Literacy leadership in an elementary school is contextualized by the current realities of high-stakes testing, accountability measures, teacher development and evaluation initiatives, data-driven literacy programs for K-12 students, alignment to state standards, and a shifting landscape regarding teacher evaluation procedures. Effective literacy leadership is enhanced with a vision for the climate and culture of a school, effective communication strategies across and among the culture of the campus, a vision for shared instructional leadership, and organizing and managing effective literacy instruction. Therefore, this paper addresses the importance of leadership for an effective literacy instructional setting.

Keywords: literacy leadership, reading educators, literacy instruction

Effective leadership is crucial to the implementation of an effective literacy instructional setting in an elementary school. In order to implement a highly effective literacy program in schools, some components are essential. Research emphasizes the relationship between the climate and culture of the school and student learning. Reeves (2005) explains that the key to improved achievement are the “professional practices of teachers and leaders” (p. 374). In many school settings there is a disconnect between having the knowledge to implement an effective literacy program and the ability to actually implement effective instruction. This is due primarily to the lack of one or all of the components essential to providing an effective learning environment. In recent years, following the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Put Reading First legislation and coupled with the current emphasis on 21st Century skills and Common Core State Standards, there has been an increasing demand from various constituents such as parents, state and federal agencies, business interests, and in particular, state legislatures, to improve the literacy performance of students. A significant effort has been made toward achieving rigorous standards; however, there is much work left to be done at the school level. In considering ways we can improve the probability of more schools implementing effective literacy programs, it

behooves us to examine the qualities necessary for the implementation of an effective literacy program.

First, school leaders must conceptualize a vision for their school. In *The Reading Specialist: Leadership and Coaching for the Classroom, School, and Community* (2015), Bean emphasizes that principals are responsible for setting the tone and establishing a safe and secure climate that provides opportunities for school personnel to collaborate and make their concerns known and listened to with respect. Since the principal is the key to an effective school setting, it is crucial that this individual have a vision for success and communicates this vision to the teachers and staff. It is the responsibility of the principal to present a vision to the teachers that will instill confidence, and the desire to implement that vision. As schools shift from teacher isolation to collaborative teaming, job embedded professional development moves toward a team approach on a school site (DuFour 2001). Furthermore, DuFour’s and Fullan’s (2013) continued research indicates that a highly effective principal will look for ways to align the process to a culture of collective responsibility for learner-focused outcomes. An inclusive vision will go a long way in motivating the teachers and staff to accept the need for a plan that will increase the likelihood of a successful literacy environment. This adoption of a strong vision will

enhance the school environment, and begin to impact the culture of the school to the extent that both teachers and students want to participate in the development of a more effective literacy learning environment. As the culture of the school becomes more focused on improving literacy in the school, the school environment will become more positive. A positive school environment is crucial to the success of an effective literacy setting. As teachers and students enjoy success, a greater feeling of community, and the belief that they can be successful, they may become more confident that they can have an effective literacy environment.

The International Literacy Association's Revised Standards (2010), Standard 5, emphasizes that reading educators need to create a literate environment that fosters reading and writing by integrating foundational knowledge, instructional practices, approaches and methods, curriculum materials, and the appropriate use of assessments. In order to maintain a vision of an effective literacy environment in an elementary school environment, educators must create a positive literate learning environment that meets the needs of diverse students and facilitate connections across all content areas as well as the world outside of school. In order to create a positive literacy environment that facilitates effective literacy instruction, the home and school must be connected through effective means of communication between the home and the school, as well as communication between faculty members, students, and the literacy leadership team that plans the overall instructional structure. Henderson & Berla (1995) and Morrison, Bachman, & Connor (2005) agree that when there is parental support and involvement, students have a better chance for succeeding in school. Effective communication with parents will help build success with a positive literacy environment.

Communication

The development of an effective literacy program in any elementary school is contingent on the communication between the principal, teachers, paraprofessionals, and the reading specialist. All of these individuals are part of the school's leadership, but it is especially vital that the principal and the reading specialist work closely together to provide the necessary leadership for a successful literacy environment in the elementary school. The principal and reading specialist should work as a team to enhance the literacy program and ensure that communication is continuous between faculty members about student data and parent communication regarding student growth and achievement.

An effective communication technique that can be very effective as noted by Collins and Cheek (1999)

involves periodic informal interaction with teachers in their classrooms which provides opportunities for the principal to observe and to provide feedback to the teachers. The feedback from these interactions is essential in order for teachers to consider changes in their literacy instruction, if needed, and can be as simple as a brief conversation, a quick e-mail, or a note left in the teacher's mailbox.

Instructional Leadership

The principal and reading specialist should work as a team to share the responsibility of the literacy program. Typically, classroom teachers have students in their classes who have diverse ranges of reading abilities, and it is necessary that the needs of each student be met. Matching text that is appropriate to the instructional reading level of each student is a challenge. Therefore, leadership provided by the principal and the reading specialist along with other teacher leaders in the school becomes crucial to providing a successful literacy program. Booth and Rowsell (2002) described three facets of the role of the principal as literacy leader: an instructional leader, a supporter of the teachers' needs, and the willingness to share leadership. They considered shared leadership as the most important facet since it results in significant changes in both teacher and student performance.

Walmsley and Allington's work in *No Quick Fix* (1995) emphasized that where no instructional support exists in schools, there is often over-referral and inappropriate placement of students who have reading problems into special education classes. A reading specialist can provide teachers with instructional support for the diverse level of students' reading abilities within the regular classroom. In an article about Response to Intervention (RTI), Bean (2012) cites collaboration between reading specialists and literacy coaches as critical. Specialists often serve with coaches on the literacy leadership teams and this specialist-coach collaboration also resulted in a team approach to literacy coaching, which is a current instructional approach in an effort to eliminate an overabundance of referrals to the special education program.

The Response to Intervention (RTI) model is an approach that establishes a prevention model rather than the "wait to fail" model and is outlined for students who need specific and intensive intervention to determine to the extent needed for progress. Increasing layers, or tiers, of instruction, as cited in Haager, Klinger and Vaughn's 2007 research, are recommended as a means of identifying and providing support for students with reading and learning difficulties. RTI is an option for any student who shows signs of falling significantly

behind his peers, and helps identify learners who may become proficient readers if they are given appropriate timely reading intervention.

Utilizing individual student assessment data serves as evidence of planning for various levels of student intervention, so the principal and the reading specialist should work with the literacy team to include research based interventions that meet the needs of children who struggle with reading, English Language Learners (ELLs), and general education students who need additional instruction. Literacy assessment data varies from state to state; however, the focus of gathering all data concerning reading scores should be considered along with attitudes and interests of the student, and should be discussed with the collaborative teaching teams.

Testing students at various grade levels has been prevalent for many years; however, periodically, events occur that cause the nation to pause, and consider where the United States stands in such areas as math, reading, and science. Launching of Sputnik by the USSR in the late 1950's, and the publication, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* in 1985 (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson), are two significant events that caused the nation to reevaluate the effectiveness of our schools. An even more recent event that resulted in another reevaluation of literacy instruction in our country was the publication of the National Reading Panel Report in 2001. Also notable is the Program of International Assessment (PISA 2013) that compared the United States' students with other countries, as well as the more recent changes in the national push toward common state standards since the United States has different standards from state to state. Consequences of high stakes testing are being experienced by classroom teachers and reading specialists alike, both of whom are engaged in the daily realities of literacy instruction, and assume the heaviest burdens of the testing pressures (Smith & Fey, 2000). Pennington's 2004 research indicates that during the past several years, in an effort to raise students' test scores, some teachers are responding by using more systematic, low-level, drill-and skill building instruction in place of an integrated, meaning-based approach to literacy instruction using continuous assessment. However, Shaw (2013) argues that the skill and drill instruction is not as effective as increasing motivation, engagement, and comprehension of struggling readers by using strategies based on authentic, integrated instruction that are supported by brain research to increase reading comprehension.

Assessment involves observation of students' language behaviors when reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as a review of student work, reviews with teacher teams, and discussions with students, and is supplemented with both formal and informal reading assessments (Collins & Cheek, 1999). The reading

specialist works collaboratively with the literacy team to plan and guide instruction for the diverse needs of the students. An understanding of the reading process is necessary in guiding and assessing reading instruction, both faculty and administrative commitment are required in organizing managing instruction in a positive literacy environment.

Organizing and Managing Instruction

Roles in guiding and assessing reading instruction are integral and necessitate teamwork. The entire staff continuously shares their observations, and collaborates in curriculum decisions that will enhance student learning. Bean (2012) agrees that reading specialists are often involved in informal coaching. Bean noted that Special educators noted differences in how reading specialists functioned, requiring them to have a deeper understanding of the core curriculum with an ability to instruct students other than those identified as eligible for special education. The leadership of the principal and collaboration of the faculty are all parts of a complex puzzle that, when put together, will create a program that produces students who can read and who enjoy reading (Collins & Cheek, 1999). As assessment data is gathered, the literacy team needs to organize the data, interpret and analyze the data, provide instructional recommendations, and summarize the findings. Background factors, including family history, interest and attitude surveys and inventories, provide illuminating information to complement the assessment data when determining appropriate instructional strategies for individual students. When organizing for instruction, teachers have many options for implementing effective literacy programs in their classrooms. Some of these are whole class instruction, flexible grouping, and intensive individual instruction. Collins and Cheek (1999) noted that in homogeneous settings, whole class instruction can be effective, but the classroom teacher must be cognizant of each student's progress, and provide appropriate individual instruction when necessary. Flexible grouping strategies provide opportunities for students who demonstrate progress to move at an appropriate pace. This arrangement provides teachers with more flexibility to accommodate each student's needs within a group setting that varies with the pace and the needs of the students. Individual instruction, of course, is the most desirable type of instruction, but is mitigated by the demands each student's needs place on the classroom teacher. Using a combination of frequent and informal assessment strategies that match the instructional reading level of the student is most effective since teachers can exercise their judgment in selecting the most appropriate strategy at the appropriate time to meet the needs of their students.

Effective Literacy Instruction

Effective literacy instruction is integral and necessitates teamwork, so the entire school staff continuously shares their observations, collaborates in curriculum decisions that enhance student learning, and complements the assessment data to ensure appropriate instruction using research based strategies when planning instruction for diverse students' needs. Building foundational knowledge is one of the roles of a literacy leader. Bean (2015) cites literacy leadership as an essential aspect for all reading specialists. Bean's research also states that the skills competencies are described fully in the revised Standards for Reading Professionals (IRA, 2010) as well as the draft of the new Standards for Reading Professionals by the International Literacy Association (ILA) which will be completed in 2017; therefore, there is more emphasis on the literacy leadership role which calls for shared leadership or distributed leadership in schools as documented by Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton (2010) and Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2001). The need for shared literacy leadership has increased accountability to identify and support struggling readers for those populations of students in the early elementary grades.

Effective literacy instruction involves using a cycle that includes planning, observing, analyzing and reflecting on student data, and conferring and offering research based interventions and strategies to reflect upon the needs of the students. A continuous cycle of formative and summative assessment plays an important role in the individual needs of the students. According to Bean and Dagen (2012), the natural result of assessing students and discovering that students have different needs is teaching students in small groups. Several groups of reading researchers like Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, Moody and Shumm (2000) and Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson (2000) have shown that effective school literature supports data-based flexible grouping. Effective schools thoughtfully utilize student data to efficiently teach small groups of students with similar instructional needs. These schools utilize procedures to reanalyze data and carefully coordinate small-group content.

An effective literacy environment in an elementary setting ensures that reading assessments are

closely matched to the creation of small groups for instruction. Clear routines, procedures and strategies are in place to guide both teachers and students as they work in small groups, or independently. Independent activities are purposefully planned and require minimal teacher intervention. Bean and Dagen (2012) also emphasize that whatever the approach is used to deliver instruction, organizational models are essential in order to support differentiated instruction in the elementary classroom.

Steps for differentiating instruction according to Bean and Dagen (2012) and Collins and Cheek (1999) include planning for instruction, assessing and reassessing, analyzing the data, record keeping and forming groups/reforming groups, and teach/reteach using a differentiation model. Effective literacy instruction includes planning for student engagement, peer interaction during instruction, and continuous changes and innovation that meets the needs of the students. Other criteria to be considered for effective literacy instruction is time on task, positive reinforcement for accomplishments and tasks, and providing appropriate and effective research based literacy instruction that is based on research based strategies.

In examining the importance of effective leadership within an elementary school setting, it is important to note that everyone on campus has a role to play in the implementation of a successful literacy environment. Teachers and staff are required to work collaboratively with others—not only their grade-level colleagues, but also specialized personnel (Bean, 2012). They shared responsibility for all students and used data to make instructional decisions. Although the principal is the key to success, each teacher, and the reading specialist are critical elements in the formula for success. The principal conceptualizes the vision, provides leadership by empowering the teachers and the reading specialist to become decision makers related to the appropriate type of instruction to implement in their classrooms, and then is responsible for including everyone as an equal partner. This sense of community should pervade a successful school setting, and should include involving the students as active participants in the process of creating a successful literacy learning environment.

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~CHAPTER 8~

USING PORTFOLIOS AND STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES TO INCREASE STUDENT MOTIVATION AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Wolfram Verlaan, Ph.D.

University of Alabama in Huntsville, AL

Melissa Shull, M.Ed.

Huntsville City Schools

Meredith Mims, M. Ed.

Huntsville City Schools

Georgina Nelson, Ph.D.

University of Alabama in Huntsville, AL

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the implementation of student-led parent conferences (SLPCs) using portfolios for the subject and parent involvement, student motivation, and student achievement. The study was conducted in a 5th grade classroom at a Title I school with 90% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch; 40 students participated in the study and 29 students were used as a control group. Measures included parent contact logs maintained by the school and classroom teacher, student and parent surveys, and scores from Renaissance Learning's Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR). SLPCs were found to be related to increases in parent involvement, aspects of student motivation, and improvements in reading achievement. The researchers discuss ways in which SLPCs contributed to these observed increases.

Keywords: *student-led conferences, portfolios, student motivation*

The most recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) designate that over 60% of students in fourth grade are reading below a level deemed proficient (NCES, 2015). These same results indicate that the situation is even worse for students from minority and lower-SES backgrounds, with approximately 80% of Black and Hispanic students and those who qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) scoring below the proficient level. Furthermore, little to no progress has been made in the last decade in narrowing the achievement gap in average reading scores between students from minority/lower-SES backgrounds and their non-minority/higher-SES peers (NCES, 2015). One of the factors in this achievement gap is a phenomenon

termed the “fourth-grade slump,” in which the reading development of students from lower-SES backgrounds does not keep up with that of their higher-SES counterparts as students reach the upper elementary grades (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Although the reduced oral language skills that students from minority/lower-SES backgrounds tend to have at school entry in comparison to their higher-SES counterparts are a significant contributor to this phenomenon (Chall, et. al, 1990; Durham, Farkas, Hammer, Tomblin, & Catts, 2007; Flanagan & McPhee, 2009; Hart & Risley, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Spira, Bracken, & Fischel 2005; Storch & Whitehurst 2002), student motivation is also an important component of academic achievement,

especially in areas such as literacy (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie, et al., 2007; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Marinak & Gambrell, 2010).

Because many students from lower-SES/minority backgrounds tend to have reduced levels of motivation towards academic endeavors (Heckman, 2011; Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011) and lower reading achievement when compared with their higher-SES counterparts, it is important to understand / identify factors that can influence student motivation, especially as students enter the upper elementary school grades. Indeed, over 75% of respondents to the most recent *What's Hot in 2016* reading survey (Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Ortlieb, 2015) indicated that both "Motivation and Engagement" and "Struggling Readers" (grade 4 and above) were topics that should be "hot" or important to the reading community. Therefore, the present study focused on one method of increasing student motivation and literacy achievement in lower-SES and minority upper elementary school students – Student-led Parent Conferences (SLPCs).

Factors Affecting Student Motivation and Achievement

Parental involvement is a significant factor in student motivation and achievement. Jaynes' (2007; 2005) meta-analysis of 77 studies investigating the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement indicated that parental involvement and student achievement are positively associated for a number of different measures, such as grades, standardized test scores, and teacher evaluations of students. Unfortunately, many students coming from lower-SES/minority backgrounds tend to have lower levels of parental involvement than their higher-SES peers (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Hong & Ho, 2005; Lareau, 2000). Some of the reasons for this reduced parental involvement are that lower-income parents: (a) might not feel that education is a priority or they may not know how to help their students; (b) might have to work several jobs and have limited time; and/or (c) are intimidated by a school environment because they might not have liked school themselves and/or have predetermined conceptions regarding school (Hong & Ho, 2005).

Because greater parental involvement can lead to improved motivation for students (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005), a number of studies have examined ways to increase the involvement of parents in their students' education (e.g., see Jaynes, 2012). Furthermore, the relationship between the teachers and the parents of low-income and minority students has been shown to be particularly important, with research

indicating that a teacher's invitation to parents to take part in their students' education can have a significant effect on increasing parent participation (Maríñez-Lora, & Quintana, 2009). Student-led parent conferences (SLPCs) are one way not only to allow teachers to reach out to parents, but also to invite parents to participate in their students' education (Goodman, 2008). In addition, SLPCs have been shown to have a number of positive effects for both students and parents including increased student achievement, greater student involvement in and responsibility for their own learning, increased parent conference participation, and improved relationships between parents and schools (Borba & Olvera, 2001; Conderman, Ikan, & Hatcher, 2000; Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2004).

Although there are several areas that can serve as a focus for SLPCs, student work in the form of a portfolio can be a particularly effective subject for the conference (Benson & Barnett, 2005). Student portfolios have been used for several decades in the English/Language Arts curriculum (Wyatt & Looper, 1999), and they can provide a more complete and authentic picture of students' development over time than traditional summative assessments (Barrett, 2007; Smith & Tillema, 2003). In addition, portfolio use has been shown to increase not only reading and writing proficiency (Meyer, Abrami, Wade, Aslan, & Deault, 2010; Reidel, Tomaszewski, & Weaver, 2003), but also engagement and motivation by providing students a greater autonomy over and responsibility for their work products (Hilyer & Ley, 1996; Wade, Abrami, & Sclater, 2005).

Thus, the present study was conducted to determine if SLPCs that used student portfolios as a focus of the conference could help improve parental participation and student motivation and achievement in a school whose students come from predominantly minority and lower-SES home environments. Because many students from lower-SES environments tend to experience a decline in academic achievement at the later elementary school grades due to the effects of the "fourth-grade slump" (Chall, et al., 1990), the researchers decided to conduct the present study in an upper-elementary school classroom (grade 5). The present study sought to investigate the relationship between implementing SLPCs and: (a) parental involvement, (b) student motivation, and (c) student achievement.

Methodology

Participants

Participants for this study were enrolled in a public elementary school in a medium-sized city in the Southeast US. The school qualifies for Title I funding with over 90% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. School demographic data indicate that

approximately 70% of the students are Black, 15% are Hispanic, 8% are white, 6% are mixed-race, and 1% are Asian or Pacific Islander. Fifth-grade instruction at this school is semi-departmentalized, and the participants were drawn from two ELA/Social Studies classes during the 2015/2016 school year for which one of the researchers was the teacher of record. A total of 40 fifth-grade students (19 females and 21 males) participated in the study. Students from the same school who were enrolled in the same teacher's ELA/Social Studies classes the previous year (2014/2015) served as a control group; the control group consisted of 29 students (12 females and 17 males) who neither created student-portfolios nor participated in SLPCs.

Measurement Instruments

Student literacy achievement over the course of the 2015/2016 school year was measured using the results of Renaissance Learning's (2010) Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR). The STAR is a nationally normed computer-adaptive reading test that uses multiple choice questions to assess both vocabulary knowledge and short passage comprehension. The STAR provides several comprehension measures including a scale-score, a percentile rank, and a grade equivalency. The STAR is administered at elementary and middle schools throughout the school district in which the present study was conducted, and all students take the assessment

at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

Student motivation was measured using researcher-created surveys which were administered to both students and parents/guardians. The student survey consisted of nine statements designed to gauge students' perceptions regarding their motivation toward school (see Figure 1). Students were asked to respond to these statements using a 5-point Likert Scale, with 1 corresponding to "not at all" and 5 corresponding to "always." Each statement was followed by an open-ended question to allow students to elaborate on their Likert Scale response. The open-ended questions allowed researchers to gain more insight into whether students' attitudes were changing in a positive or negative direction. In order to determine the extent to which parents' perceptions regarding their students' motivation toward school was similar to or different from that of their students, parents/guardians received a nearly identical survey; however, the subjects of the statements (see Figure 1) were changed from "I" to "My student," and the open-ended questions following the statements were changed in a similar fashion, e.g., "Do you feel *your student* has been more or less positive?". Parental involvement was measured using parent conference attendance records and contact logs that are maintained by the school and the classroom teachers. Contacts that were recorded included scheduled conferences, phone conferences, impromptu conferences, IEP meetings, and student-led parent conferences.

Procedures

Per school district guidelines, all participants were administered the STAR at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Following the beginning of the year STAR test, surveys were administered to students and parents/guardians. Student portfolios were developed over the course of the school year and included student-selected work samples such as student writing, book reports, pictorial representations of learning, and/or results from district benchmark assessments measuring progress towards the fifth grade standards established by the state; students were allowed and encouraged to collect samples of their learning of which they were most proud. The classroom teacher also provided input and guidance to the students regarding work that could/should be included in their portfolios. In addition, work in the portfolio was linked to goals that students set for themselves in areas such as reading and writing.

SLPCs were held from mid-November to mid-December. To make it as convenient as possible for parents/guardians to attend the SLPCs, the teacher provided them with a wide range of times during which their students could be available for the conference. For students whose parents/guardians were unable to attend a conference, the teacher, another faculty member, or a staff member in the building made time to provide each of these students an adult with whom to conference about their work. Prior to the start of the SLPCs, students were instructed in how to conduct the conference. Procedures that students were to follow during the conference were posted in the room as a reminder and/or guide to help the students; these procedures included: (a) introduce the teacher to the parent/guardian (visitor); (b) thank the visitor for being there; (c) discuss what you have been

doing in school, what you've enjoyed, what you like to learn about; (d) show the visitor samples of your writing progress, the goal sheet you made for writing, what you can do to reach that goal, and how they can help you; (e) show the visitor your STAR reading progress, the goal sheet you made for reading, what you can do to reach that goal, and how they can help you; and (f) discuss personal goals for the future including career and academic goals. During the last two weeks of the school year, surveys were administered again to students and parents/guardians, and parents/guardians were invited to attend end-of-the-year activities at the school.

Data Analysis and Findings

To investigate changes in student achievement, the researchers conducted a one-way repeated measures ANOVA to analyze mean STAR scores for the beginning, middle, and end of the school year (Table 1). Results for the study's participants (2015/2016) indicated a significant difference between mean STAR scores, $F(2, 38) = 37.22$, $p < .001$. Post hoc analyses using paired-sample t -tests indicated significant increases between the August and January scores, $t(39) = 5.34$, $p < .001$, $d = .84$, the January and May scores, $t(39) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, $d = .69$, and the August and May scores, $t(39) = 8.74$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.38$. Results for the previous year's students (2014/2015), whose scores were used as a control, also indicated a significant difference between mean STAR scores, $F(2, 27) = 6.68$, $p < .05$. Post hoc analyses using paired-sample t -tests indicated a significant increase between the August and January scores, $t(28) = 3.65$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.05$, but no difference between the January and May scores, $t(28) = .50$, $p > .5$; a significant increase was found between the August and May scores, $t(28) = 2.43$, $p < .05$, $d = .70$.

Table 1
Mean STAR Reading Scores for the Intervention ('15/'16) and Control ('14/'15) Groups.

Group	N	Aug. STAR	Jan. STAR	May STAR	t (Aug./May)	d (Aug./May)
'15/'16	40	352.48	416.18	456.85	8.74**	1.38
'14/'15	29	425.33	499.67	486.75	2.43*	.70

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

To investigate changes in student motivation, researchers examined the results of the surveys issued to students and parents. Paired sample t -tests were used to analyze Likert-scale data (Table 2). Results from the student surveys indicated a significant increase in mean item response scores for item 4 (homework habits), $t(36) = 2.35$, $p < .05$, $d = .39$, but a significant decrease for item 6 (excitement about school), $t(36) = 3.24$, $p < .01$, $d = .53$.

Results from the parent surveys indicated a significant increase for item 1 (organizational habits), $t(20) = 2.25$, $p < .05$, $d = .49$, and item 4 (homework habits), $t(20) = 2.77$, $p < .05$, $d = .60$. In addition, parent contact logs maintained by the teacher and school indicated an increase in overall parent contacts for the present study's participants (93 conferences documented) when compared with the previous year's cohort (16 conferences).

Table 2.

Mean Item Response Scores for Beginning (Beg) and End-of-year (End) Surveys Administered to Students (Stu) and Parents (Par).

N	Group	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Item7	Item8	Item9
37	StuBeg	3.58	3.24	3.97	3.68*	4.16	3.62**	3.76	3.76	4.00
	StuEnd	3.59	3.11	4.05	4.11*	4.08	2.95**	3.35	3.57	3.68
21	ParBeg	3.33*	3.57	4.19	3.29*	3.81	4.48	4.05	4.24	4.43
	ParEnd	3.81*	3.86	4.38	4.05*	4.29	3.86	3.90	4.05	4.29

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Discussion

The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between SLPCs using student portfolios and levels of parental involvement, student motivation, and student achievement. A cohort from the previous year (2014/2015) in the same teacher's classes at the same school and grade-level provided control data for parental involvement and student achievement. Student motivation was investigated using data from only the present study's participants (2015/2016). We examined more closely the student achievement and parental involvement measures, which indicated an increase for the present study's participants when compared with the previous year's cohort, as well as the results of the measures of motivation for the present study's participants, which were more mixed.

Data from the STAR indicated that both groups' mean comprehension scores increased significantly between August and January. However, the current study's participants' scores continued to increase significantly between January and May, while the previous year's cohort's scores remained stagnant during this time period, even falling slightly though not significantly (see Table 1). In fact, although mean STAR scores indicated that the current study's participants started the year well behind the previous year's cohort, $t(67) = 2.05$, $p < .05$, $d = .50$, by May, they had nearly equaled the previous year's cohort's May scores, with mean STAR scores being statistically equivalent between the two groups, $t(67) = .50$, $p > .05$. We believe the present study's participants' increase in reading achievement throughout the school year is important to note, especially in light of research that suggests students from lower-SES and minority backgrounds tend to suffer more from the "fourth-grade slump" than their higher-SES counterparts (Chall, et al., 1990). The researchers believe that the continued increase in the present study's participants' reading achievement could be attributed to not only the goals that students set for themselves based on the work in their portfolios, but also the sharing of these goals with a parent or responsible

adult during the SLPCs (e.g., see Locke & Latham, 2002). Indeed, the classroom teacher observed that sharing the portfolios with an adult allowed students to better see the progress they were making towards the goals they had set for themselves, which appeared to give them greater motivation to reach those goals.

Parent contact logs also indicated an increase in parent contacts for the present study's participants (93 contacts) when compared with the students from the previous year's cohort (16 contacts). Some portion of this increase might be explained by the greater number of students in the present study (40) than the number of students in the previous year's cohort (29). In addition, although SLPCs likely contributed to some of this increase, only 25 students had parents who attended SLPCs. Thus, it would appear that the larger number of students in the present study and SLPC attendance do not by themselves account for the overall increase in parent contacts. The researchers believe that some of the increase in parent contacts can be credited to using SLPCs to reach out to parents and invite them to participate in their children's education, which created (a) a greater sense of excitement about school among the students causing them to talk more at home about their school work and the upcoming conferences, and (b) a more open and inviting school environment for parents that seemed to make them feel more comfortable in initiating contact with the classroom teacher.

Results from the motivation surveys, which were administered to only the present study's participants and their parents, were somewhat mixed. Although significant increases between the beginning and end-of-year ratings were found for only two items in the parent surveys and one item in the student surveys, these items seemed indicative of noticeable behavior changes over the course of the year: both students and parents seemed to feel that students had become more responsible for their homework (Item 4), and parents seemed to feel that students had become more organized during the year (Item 1). However, student responses indicated a significant

decrease in the response item ratings regarding excitement about school (Item 6). We believe that several factors contributed to these mixed results. First, the researcher-created survey had not been validated prior to its use which makes it difficult to meaningfully interpret the results. Second, student perceptions of the statements' meanings likely changed over the course of the year. For example, one student who had marked a "5" for the organization item (Item 1) at the start of the year marked a "3" for this item at the end of the year, even though her answer to the question accompanying this statement on the end-of-year survey indicated that she believed she had become *more* organized over the course of the year. Finally the wording of some of the items might also have led to some of our mixed results, such as in the case of Item 6: "I wake up excited to go to school." A statement like this would likely receive a more positive response at the beginning of the year when students are generally excited about the start of school than at the end of the year, when many students are ready for summer vacation to begin. Thus, it is difficult to make firm conclusions regarding the relationship between the implementation of SLPCs and student motivation based solely on our survey results. Nonetheless, the classroom teacher observed that the SLPCs and student portfolios seemed to make students more motivated to achieve the goals they had set for themselves and shared with others, and she noted in May of 2016, "The class feels different this year than last year – overall, the students seem much more focused because they want to achieve the goals they have set for themselves."

Limitations and Recommendations

The present study had several limitations that are important to address. First, the study had a relatively small sample size and used convenience samples for both the participants and the control group instead of random selection/assignment. In addition, although the teacher's previous year's class was used for a control group in order to minimize the effects that can be introduced by comparing classes with different teachers, using students from a different school year to serve as a control could present challenges in interpreting some of the comparison measures. Furthermore, a change in classroom practice in a particular teacher's classroom from one year to the next can also present the possibility of introducing teacher-bias. Second, the researcher-created motivation survey instrument was not validated, which made its results more difficult to analyze. Third, observations of students taking the STAR indicated that many of them do not take it as seriously as other high-stakes assessments due to the

frequency with which it is given and the less-controlled testing environment in which it is often administered (e.g. a computer lab in a classroom or library with little control over the testing conditions). Therefore, the STAR probably does not present as accurate a measurement of student reading achievement as might be obtained in a more formal assessment environment using a more comprehensive reading assessment. Finally, the number of parent contacts was probably not the best measure of parent involvement, because this number does not reflect the amount of parent involvement in the students' education that might have taken place at home, which is also quite important.

Based on the present study's results, we recommend three ways to help refine future studies investigating the impact of SLPCs on factors relating to student achievement. First, we suggest that future studies employ larger sample sizes by implementing SLPC's more widely throughout a particular school or grade level while using random selection/assignment for the intervention and control groups. Second, we recommend using validated survey instruments so that more reliable measures are returned for the particular domains that researchers are attempting to investigate in relation to SLPCs, including parents' perceptions of their involvement at home and students' perceptions about specific elements of the portfolio. Third, we recommend employing valid and reliable instruments to measure a wider range of student literacy achievement so that a more complete picture can emerge of the relative effects that SLPCs using portfolios might have on different areas of literacy development.

Although little progress has been made in recent years in narrowing the academic achievement gap between lower-SES/minority students and their higher-SES counterparts, the present study's results are promising. By implementing SLPCs using student portfolios, we observed an apparent increase in parent participation at school which appeared to have some relationship to students being more determined to achieve their academic goals. This increased determination in the students to achieve their goals likely led to a continuous improvement in their reading achievement throughout the school year. Because motivation is an important factor in student achievement, and parent participation in a student's academics has a strong relationship to student motivation, we believe that implementing and studying the effects of initiatives such as SLPCs can help us better understand how to increase the chances of academic success for all of our students.

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A SCALE TO MEASURE TEXT COMPLEXITY IN NONFICTION AND INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Sherrye Dee Garrett, Ed.D.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Jeannette Garza Gomez, M.S.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Rosalynn Rowan Christensen, M.S.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Abstract

This paper reports on the Complexity Scale for Information Texts (Scale), a tool to evaluate nonfiction and informational texts. The Scale is based on Frey, Fisher, and Lapp's Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric (Rubric). The authors received permission from the Rubric authors to create the Scale for informational texts. The authors developed the Scale because they found areas of the Rubric were not appropriate for nonfiction texts after applying it to a variety of newspaper texts. The Scale was tested with 24 nonfiction trade books and received positive comments from examiners.

Keywords: nonfiction, informational text, text complexity

After years of holding down the backbench, nonfiction is receiving the attention it deserves. It was Nell Duke's pivotal research in 2000 that brought nonfiction to the front of the class (Duke, 2000). Her study demonstrated that first-grade students were exposed to nonfiction only 3.6 minutes a day; the classroom libraries of those students were only 9.8% nonfiction. More studies followed, demonstrating the need for instruction in nonfiction and informational texts (Bradley & Donovan, 2010; Donovan & Smolkin, 2011; Farris et.al, 2009; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2005; Palmer & Stewart, 2005).

Nonfiction has received prominence due, in part, to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The Common Core State Standards expect students to read closely to draw evidence and knowledge from text. This requires students to read a wide range of text in varying complexities (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012). This shift in focus, which requires students to read and write more informational texts, is applied to students in the 45 states who have adopted the CCSS. However, these students are not alone as other states, specifically Texas, have developed new standards rooted in college readiness which balance the reading scale with a greater emphasis on

expository and nonfiction text in reading and writing (Maloch & Bomer, 2013). The National Assessment of Educational Progress has long included informational texts in its reading selections; however informational text moved into greater prominence with the 2009 and 2013 Reading Frameworks (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008, 2012). The ratio of literary to informational texts changes with the grade levels of the NAEP: in fourth grade, the ratio is 50% literary to 50% informational; in eighth grade, 45% to 55%; and in eleventh grade, 30% to 70%.

The directives to engage students with nonfiction and informational texts have presented a challenge to classroom teachers who spend most of their time with fiction and narrative texts. Teachers are faced with two challenges: to learn more about nonfiction texts and to find a way to evaluate nonfiction and informational texts for their classrooms. Nonfiction texts are more than just content that is true. There are content related and structural characteristics that are not found in fiction. Students may benefit if the various characteristics were taught directly, and if they were able to experience examples of good nonfiction.

The Nature of Nonfiction and Informational Texts

It is important for teachers to be familiar with the facets of nonfiction and informational texts. Complex text structures and non-text visual elements are characteristics of many nonfiction texts. A basic view of nonfiction texts is that they present accurate information about any subject matter (Andler, 2014; Galda, Cullinan, & Sipe, 2010; Kristo & Bamford, 2004; Moline, 1995). Non-fiction texts include certain text features—photographs, illustrations, maps, tables, graphs, and glossaries—and are written with more complex text structures such as cause/effect, compare/contrast, and problem/solution (Andler, 2014). Many nonfiction texts, especially trade books that focus on a single topic, have a clear explicit meaning. More complex texts may include more nuanced information about topic and related issues. In general, nonfiction texts do not employ the wide range of figurative language found in fiction. Similes and analogies are often used to help readers make connections between their prior knowledge and new information. In texts for younger children, animals, and even elements of the physical world, may be anthropomorphized to make it easier for the reader to relate to the topic. Barbara Moss (2005) has called nonfiction the “literature of fact.” Nonfiction may provide information, explain, argue, or demonstrate. Readers generally expect nonfiction to be true and accurate. Many readers have a general understanding that nonfiction is either biography or autobiography, or it’s generally all about “real” things

Evaluating Texts with the Qualitative Measures of Complexity Rubric

As nonfiction texts increased in classrooms, teachers had to make decisions about which texts to include. They needed a tool to evaluate nonfiction texts. The “Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric,” an instrument developed by Fisher, Frey, and Lapp’s and published in their *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading* (2012) offered teacher’s a ray of hope. The rubric consisted of thirteen elements in four areas of analysis: levels of meaning and purpose, structure, language conventionally and clarity, and knowledge demands. The rubric included a three-point scale for the analysis: three points (Stretch), two points (Grade Level), and one point (Comfortable). The original rubric is shown in Figure 1.

Applying the Rubric

Two of the authors embarked on an exploratory trip to evaluate the effectiveness of the new rubric. They recruited a group of education master’s level students, all of which were inservice teachers, and one-doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction, who was a teaching assistant, to apply the rubric to the ultimate nonfiction text: the newspaper. Classroom teachers were the intended audience of the scale evaluations. The research sample consisted of twelve newspaper texts, all published on the

same day, selected from three newspapers: *The New York Times*, *Caller Times* (Corpus Christi, Texas), and *Intelligencer Journal-Lancaster New Era* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania). The sample included a page one news story, a feature story, a sports story, and an editorial from each newspaper. The page one news stories reflected dense expository writing; the feature stories offered a more casual writing style. The sports stories reflected shorter sentences and more figurative language. The editorials combined objective information with persuasive language. Readability levels, as measured by Flesch-Kincaid, ranged from 6.0 to 12.0 for the news stories, 4.2 to 6.1 for the feature stories, 4.1 to 11.0 for the sports stories, and 5.3 to 11.3 for the editorials. The national newspaper, the *New York Times* had the lowest readability on three of the four texts, and the local newspaper, the *Caller Times*, had the highest readability on all four texts. The four newspaper selections provided a range of texts that would address the four levels of the rubric in unique ways.

The newspaper examiners found that a three-point rubric was appropriate for their analysis. They found some elements of the rubric easy to apply; other elements did not seem to align with the nonfiction text of the newspaper content. An analysis was conducted: which elements could be used to evaluate both fiction and nonfiction texts, which elements were better suited for fiction, and which were better for nonfiction? The results of the analysis indicated that the rubric was not entirely suited for analysis of nonfiction and informational text. The element, *Organization*, for example, did not fit nonfiction/informational texts. Only one of the 12 newspaper texts scored a 2.0 on the three-point Rubric; the other 11 scored from 1.0 to 1.4. The low scores were attributed to the descriptors for the Rubric: level 2 on the Rubric states that the text “digresses” to “shift the reader’s focus” to other times, places, and events before “returning to the main point,” and level 3 states that the text “distorts time or sequence in a deliberate effort to delay reader’s full understanding of the plot.” A major purpose of nonfiction is to inform; it is not to mislead the reader for aesthetic or dramatic purposes. Therefore, the upper levels of the *Organization* element was targeted for revision. Similarly, the *Narration* element was determined to be more appropriate for fiction than nonfiction. The *Narration* scoring for the 12 newspaper texts ranged from 1.0 to 1.6. Level 3 descriptors of the *Narration* element include an “unreliable narrator” who “provides a distorted or limited view to the reader” or “shifting points of view” that “keep the reader guessing.” The upper *Narration* descriptors are appropriate for literary texts; they generally are not found in good nonfiction and expository writing. As the rubric was not well-suited on all elements for analysis of nonfiction texts, the authors developed the Complexity Scale for Information Texts. The Scale was developed with the knowledge and permission of the authors of the Rubric. The revised Scale is shown in Figure 2.

Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric			
Source	3 points (Stretch): Texts That Would Stretch a Reader and/or Require Instruction	2-points (Grade Level) Texts that require grade-appropriate skills	1-point (Stretch) Texts That Are Comfortable and/or Build Background, Fluency, and Skills
Levels of Meaning and Purpose			
Density and complexity	Significant density and complexity, with multiple levels of meaning; meanings may be more ambiguous	Single but more complex or abstract level of meaning; some meanings are stated, whereas others are left to the reader to identify	Single and literal levels of meaning; meaning is explicitly stated
Figurative language	Plays a significant role in identifying the meaning of the text; more sophisticated figurative language used (e.g. irony and satire, allusions, archaic or less familiar symbolism); reader left to interpret these meanings	Imagery, metaphors, symbolism, personification, and so forth used to make connections within the text to more explicit information; readers supported in understanding these language devices through examples and explanations	Limited use of symbolism, metaphors, and poetic language that allude to unstated concepts; language explicit and relies on literal interpretations.
Purpose	Deliberately withheld from the reader, who must use other interpretative skills to identify it	Implied by easily identified based on the title or context	Directly and explicitly stated at the beginning of the reading
Structure			
Genre	Unfamiliar or bends and expands the rules for the genre	Unfamiliar but is a reasonable example of the genre <i>or</i> familiarly bends and expands the rules for the genre	Familiar and text consistent with the elements of the genre
Organization	Distorts time or sequence in a deliberate effort to delay the reader's full understanding of the plot, process, or set of concepts; may include significant flashbacks, foreshadowing, or shifting perspectives	Adheres to most conventions but digresses on occasion to temporarily shift the reader's focus to another point of view, event, time, or place before returning to the main idea or topic	Conventional, sequential, or chronological, with clear signals and transitions to lead the reader through a story, process or set of concepts
Narration	Unreliable narrator provides a distorted or limited view to the reader; the reader must use other clues to deduce the truth; multiple narrators provide conflicting information; shifting points of view keep the reader guessing	Third-person limited or first person narration provides accurate but limited perspectives or viewpoints	Third-person omniscient narration or an authoritative and credible voice provides an appropriate level of detail and keeps little hidden from the view of the reader
Text features and graphics	Limited use to organize information and guide the reader; information in the graphics not repeated in the main part of the text but essential for understanding the text	Wider array that competes for the reader's attention (e.g. margin notes, diagrams, graphs, font changes); graphics and visuals used to augment and illustration information in the main part of the text	Organize information explicitly and guide the reader (e.g. bold and italicized words, headings and subheading); maybe graphics or illustrations present, but not necessary to understand the main part of the text
Language Conventionality and Clarity			
Standard English and variations	Includes significant and multiple styles of English and its variations, which are unfamiliar to the reader	Some distance between the reader's linguistic base and the language conventions used in the text; vernacular unfamiliar to the reader	Closely adheres to the reader's linguistic base
Register	Archaic, formal, domain-specific, or scholarly	Consultative or formal, and may be academic but acknowledges the developmental level of the reader	Casual and familiar
Knowledge Demands			
Background knowledge	Demands on the reader that extend far beyond one's experiences; provides little in the way of explanation of these divergent experiences	Distance between the reader's experiences and those in the text, but acknowledgement of these divergent experiences and sufficient explanation to bridge these gaps	Content that closely matches the reader's life experiences
Prior knowledge	Needed to understand text that is familiar and draws on a solid foundation of practical, general, and academic learning.	Subject-specific knowledge is required but is augmented with review or summary of information.	Specialized or technical content knowledge is presumed; little review or explanation of these concepts is present in the text.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary demand is extensive, domain-specific, and representative of complex ideas; little offered in the way of context clues.	Vocabulary draws on domain-specific, general academic, and multiple meaning words, with text supports to guide the reader's correct interpretations of their meanings; represents familiar concepts and ideas.	Controlled and uses the most commonly held meanings; multiple meaning words used in a limited fashion.

Figure 1. Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric. Source: Frey, N., Fisher, D. & Lapp, D. (2012). *Text complexity: Raising rigor in reading* (pp. 47-48). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Complexity Scale for Informational Texts

Source	1 –point (Comfortable) Texts that are comfortable and/or build background, fluency, and skills	2-points (Grade-level) Texts that require grade-appropriate skills	3-points (Stretch) Texts that would stretch a read and/or require instruction
Levels of Meaning and Purpose			
Density and complexity	Single and literal levels of meaning are present; meaning is explicitly stated.	Multiple layers of specific content are present. Some information must be inferred or integrated with previous content.	Significant density and complexity, with multiple layers of content topics present. Reader is expected to critique or evaluate information.
Figurative language	There is limited use of figurative language. Language relies on literal interpretations.	Figurative language and analogies are used to help reader make connections between text and the reader's knowledge.	Metaphors and analogies used are more abstract and require sophistication and depth of knowledge from the reader.
Purpose	Purpose is directly and explicitly stated at the beginning of the text and is in evidence throughout the text.	Text serves both explicit and implicit purposes.	Text may involve multiple purposes, some of which may be implicit; text requires the reader to critically analyze text content.
Structure			
Genre	Text exemplifies conventional characteristics of one familiar genre.	Text exemplifies one genre, but deviates from typical characteristics of that genre.	Text is presented as a specific genre, but includes other embedded genres.
Organization	One conventional organizational pattern predominates throughout the text. Organization aids such as table of contents, headings and subheadings are provided. Signal words are overt.	More than one conventional organization pattern is included in the text. Signal words are present.	Text may include a variety of conventional organizational patterns, which are dictated by text content, with little notification or guidance to the reader.
Text Features	Text contains familiar access features such as table of contents, headings/subheadings, glossary, and index.	Text contains conventional access features, but also includes detailed information in sidebars, insets, bulleted information.	Text contains access features that require the reader to integrate extra-textual information, such as preface/prologue, afterword/epilogue, and author/illustrator notes.
Graphic elements	Text contains familiar graphic elements such as simple diagrams, maps, timelines, photographs and illustrations with captions. Graphic elements repeat information in the text.	Text contains graphic elements that require interpretation, such as graphs and tables, scale diagrams, and webs. Graphic elements have additional information that supplements the text.	Text contains graphic elements less familiar to students and which require interpretation, such as cross sections, cutaways, and range and flow maps. Graphic elements have information that complements and is integrated with text.
Language Conventionality and Clarity			
Language level	Language used is appropriate to the developmental and experiential level of the student.	There is some distance between the text language and the developmental and experiential language level of the student.	Text language uses language conventions and structures unfamiliar to the student, especially those that reflect voices found in specific content areas.
Register	Register is casual and familiar. Humorous language may be used in the text title and/or headings and subheadings.	Register is consultative or formal, and may be academic, but acknowledges the developmental level of the reader. Humorous language may be used in titles and headings/subheadings.	Register is domain-specific, formal, and/or scholarly. Humorous language is not used.
Voice	Information in the text is presented in a straightforward way. Text may use second person language and a personal tone to draw reader into the text.	Vocabulary and diction invite the reader's curiosity about the text content while presenting information with an authoritative tone.	Strong authoritative voice dominates text. Text language is used to impart knowledge to the reader and makes little effort to engage the reader on a personal level.
Knowledge Demands			
Background knowledge	Content closely matches the readers' primary lived experiences and secondary experiences gained through other media.	Content represents a distance between the readers' primary and secondary experiences, but text provides explanations to bridge the gap between what is known and unknown.	Content demands specialized knowledge beyond the primary and secondary experiences of the reader and provides no bridge or scaffolding between known and unknown.
Prior knowledge	Prior knowledge is needed to understand text that is familiar and draws on a solid foundation of practical, general, and academic learning.	Subject-specific knowledge is required but is augmented with review or summary of information.	Specialized or technical content knowledge is presumed; little review or explanation of these concepts is present in the text.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is controlled and uses the most commonly held meanings; multiple meaning words used in a limited fashion.	Vocabulary draws on domain-specific, general academic, and multiple-meaning words, with text supports to guide the reader's correct interpretations of their meanings; represents familiar concepts and ideas.	Vocabulary demand is extensive, domain-specific, and representative of complex ideas; little offered in the way of context clues.

Figure 2. Complexity Scale for Informational Texts. Source: Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2015). Teacher modeling using complex informational texts. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(1), 63-39..

Rubric and Scale: A Comparison of Elements

The development of the Complexity Scale for Informational Texts (Scale) used the Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric (Rubric) as its major foundational text. The Scale differed from the Rubric in several ways: structure and content elements. First, the authors of the Scale preferred the term *scale* to *rubric*. A major difference between the Rubric and the Scale lies in the underlying purpose and structure of the two assessments. A *rubric* is generally seen as a type of grading tool: the highest number reflects excellence and the declining numbers reflect poorer performance. *Rubrics* are often presented with the highest number in the left hand column; lower scores diminish as the columns move to the right. A three-point rubric would indicate *best-better-good*. The Rubric for text complexity presents its scoring key in a most-dense to least-dense sequence; this follows the “most points” to “least points” sequence of a conventional rubric. It is a pattern with which teachers are familiar. A *scale*, on the other hand, represents a

continuum: the lowest value on the *scale* begins at the left and increasing values move to the right. A *scale* describes a range of characteristics and places text in a specific position in that range, similar to Moh’s hardness scale where talc is a *1* and diamond is a *10*. The Scale for text complexity presents scores in a less-dense to more-dense sequence, following the pattern of low-to-high scales. A *rubric* generally represents a value judgment; a *scale* reports a situational placement.

In terms of the content of the instruments, 11 of the Rubric’s 13 elements were retained, several with some modification. In the Scale, one of the Rubric’s elements was dropped: *Narration*. One was split into two elements: *Text Features and Graphics* was rewritten as *Text Features* and *Graphic Elements*. One was replaced: *Standard English and variations* was replaced with *Language level*. The Scale added the element of *Voice*. Table 1 presents an overview of the degree of adaptation represented by the Scale.

Table 1

Overview of Modifications Made to Original Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity Rubric.

Rubric Element	Decision
Density and complexity	Minor adaptation
Figurative language	Moderate adaptation
Purpose	Moderate adaptation
Genre	Moderate adaptation
Organization	Major adaptation
Narration	Eliminated
Text features and graphics	Divided into two separate elements: Text features and Graphic elements
Standard English and variations	Replaced with Language level
Register	Minor adaptation
Background knowledge	Minor adaptation
Prior knowledge	Retained
Cultural knowledge	Retained
Vocabulary	Retained
Added element	Voice

The decisions made in the modification of the original Rubric were based on the characteristics of nonfiction texts based on the work of Moline (1995), Kristo and Bamford (2004), Galda Cullinan, and Sipe (2010), and Andler (2014) and the alignment of those characteristics with the elements of the Rubric. The Scale is an attempt to provide a more effective instrument to evaluate nonfiction and informational texts.

Elements Retained

Most of the elements from the original Rubric were retained in the Scale. However, descriptors were changed to reflect the characteristics of nonfiction and

informational texts. Some of the descriptors required few changes; major changes were made in others. Little change was made in the descriptors of density and complexity, genre, register, figurative language, purpose, organization background knowledge, prior knowledge, and vocabulary. For example, density and complexity underwent little change as different levels of density are found in both fiction and nonfiction texts. Higher density is reflected in multiple layers of meaning. The *genre* descriptor varies little between fiction and nonfiction and, therefore, underwent little change. The Rubric works well with fictional texts in that a complex genre “bends and expands the rules for the genre.” The Scale suggests that

more complex texts may embed different subgenres in the main genre. The descriptors in *register* are similar in the Rubric and the Scale and also experience little change. Both indicate that register can move from casual to formal or scholarly. The Scale suggests that nonfiction may have mixed registers, with humorous titles, heads and subheads, but formal internal text

There were qualitative differences in the *figurative language* element. The Rubric includes increasingly complex literary concepts such as irony, satire, allusions, and archaic symbolism. In general, nonfiction texts do not employ the same wide range of figurative language. Similes and analogies are often used to help readers make connections between prior knowledge and new information. The Scale asks the evaluator to consider the level of sophistication and depth of knowledge of the reader. Additionally, there are qualitative differences in the *purpose* of text in fiction and nonfiction. Fiction often expects more interpretation from the reader. The Rubric's highest level of purpose indicates that purpose is "deliberately withheld from the reader, who must use other interpretative skills to identify it." Nonfiction is fairly direct; its purpose is to provide information. There may be persuasive elements as well in nonfiction. Furthermore, there are important differences between the *organization* of fiction and nonfiction. In the highest density, the Rubric describes text that "distorts time or sequence in a deliberate effort to delay the reader's full understanding of the *plot* ...and may include significant *flashbacks, foreshadowing, or shifting perspectives*" [emphasis added]. These are common elements of literature, but not of informational texts. The Scale's highest density descriptor says that the text includes several internal organizational patterns without guidance, such as signal words, to the reader.

The Rubric and the Scale both describe *background knowledge* that ranges from the reader's life experiences to unfamiliar experiences. The Scale suggests that secondary experiences gained through other media, specifically visual media, can support the reader's life experiences. The *prior knowledge* element is virtually the same in the Rubric and the Scale. Both refer to knowledge gained in practical, general, and academic vocabulary. Finally, the vocabulary element is the same in the Rubric and the Scale.

Elements Changed

The following elements in the scale were changed for clarity or ease of usage: text features and graphics, and Standard English and variations. Text features and graphics was changed to *Text features* and *Graphic elements*. Fiction often contains few visual elements of information. In nonfiction and informational text, there is a wide range of structural and visual features to support the reader (Moline, 1995; Kristo & Bamford, 2004; Andler,

2014). The Rubric put text and graphic features together in one element. The authors of the Scale determined that it was inappropriate to score a text on the combined elements: the range of structural elements and the type and complexity of visual elements is such that there should be two separate components to determine complexity of a text. The Scale specifically lists a number of graphic elements one might find in a nonfiction text.

Standard English and variations was replaced by Language level. The Rubric defines *Standard English and variations* as language relative to the reader's linguistic base. The highest complexity described in the Rubric includes "multiple styles of English and its variations, which are unfamiliar to the reader." One can experience a variety of language styles and dialects in fiction. In fact, a character's language often defines him or her. One generally does not encounter as much dialogue and language variation in nonfiction; therefore, the authors chose to use the term *Language level*. The descriptors reflect language appropriate to the developmental and experiential level of the reader. Carroll (2007) describes language levels related to socio-economic standing, saying that middle income students use more topic-centered language and lower income students use more topic-associating language. The teacher evaluating nonfiction texts must consider her students' experiences and language abilities in applying the Scale. The Scale does include language conventions that may be unfamiliar to the reader in the highest level.

Element Added

The authors decided to include *Voice* as an element in the evaluation of informational text. The descriptors reflect the use of second person and a personal tone to draw the reader into the text. Beck, McKeown and Worthy (1995) discuss the importance of the way text represents "communication from one person to another" (p. 224) in their research on voice in textbooks. Wall (1991) called voice the communication between "addressor and addressee (p. 3)." She said that voice could communicate the "face behind the page. (p. 6)" Gibson (1966) refers to voice as the "personality" of text (p. 18). He also describes the author's "persona" as the "mask" or "voice" of a text (1969, p. 4). That persona could take a very authoritarian tone or a more personal tone. Some nonfiction trade books retain a more conventional authoritative voice. Others reflect what Beck, McKeown and Worthy (1991) term *orality*, the conversational tone of oral language. The Scale places a personal tone at level 1; at the highest complexity level, the voice is authoritative and makes little effort to engage the reader on a personal level.

Element Deleted

The only Rubric element completely deleted was *Narration*. The Rubric included some descriptors found in

the Scale's *Voice*, but generally, its emphasis was on the speaker of the text, including third person omniscient or authoritative narration. The highest complexity descriptors included "unreliable narrator provides a distorted or limited view to the reader," and "multiple narrators provide conflicting information; shifting points of view keep the reader guessing." These are terms one uses in describing literature. The goal of nonfiction is to inform, educate, or persuade. It is not to "keep the reader guessing." Nonfiction writers are not "unreliable" narrators; they are assumed to be presenting valid information. The descriptors in the Rubric, thus, did not seem to fit the very nature of nonfiction or informational text, so it was not included in the Scale.

Applying the Scale

The authors evaluated the Complexity Scale for Informational Texts with 24 nonfiction trade books ranging from primary to secondary level. Four pairs of masters and doctoral students applied the Scale to a set of six books each. The trade books were selected from a university library of nonfiction and informational texts by a senior faculty member and a doctoral student in literacy studies. The books were grouped into three categories: primary/elementary, upper elementary/middle school, and secondary. Assignment to the categories was based on publisher recommendations and on readability levels as determined by the Flesch-Kincaid scale. Each trade book was evaluated separately by two examiners. Examiners' scores were averaged to establish a single score for each trade book on each characteristic. The examiners were asked to determine if the Scale was relatively easy to use and if it addressed appropriately the characteristics of nonfiction texts.

The examiners reported no difficulty using the Scale; they said that the three-point scale seemed appropriate. The assessment of the trade books took 10 to 20 minutes. A text's scores on the Scale can give the teacher a good overview of that text. The examiners of the trade books found that scores may vary widely among the sections. A text might be straightforward in its organization and its purpose may be very clear, but the knowledge demands made on the reader could be intense. The following summary explains how the individual sections of the Scale results might be interpreted.

- Low numbers in the *Levels of Meaning and Purpose* section indicate that the purpose of the text is clear, there is little figurative language, and its meaning is stated explicitly. High numbers in the section let the teacher know that the text may have many layers of meaning, metaphors and analogies are used, and the purpose may be implicit.
- Low scores in *Structure* indicate that the text exemplifies characteristics of a particular genre and will probably be familiar to the reader. High scores suggest there is not much scaffolding in the text to support the reader. The reading task will demand more from the student.
- Low scores in *Language Conventionality and Clarity* indicate that the language of the text will be similar to that of the student and the author has made an attempt to engage the reader with a personal tone. High scores indicate that the language is more scholarly and authoritative; again, more is demanded of the reader.
- Low scores in the *Knowledge Demands* section indicate the content of the text may be familiar to the reader or within the reader's own experiences. High scores indicate that the content extends beyond the reader's experiences and requires a more sophisticated knowledge of concepts and vocabulary.

Teachers can use the Scale to guide their matching of texts to students, keeping an individual student's ability and background in mind when doing so. Further, the Scale is designed to assist teachers in differentiating instruction in the classroom

Rubric or Scale?

Many of the elements in the Rubric seem well suited for fiction and narrative texts. Indeed, at a recent state conference, presenters discussed their use of just such an instrument. The same presenters, however, said that their instrument was just not as effective for evaluating nonfiction texts. It is the goal of the authors to provide an additional tool for teachers to evaluate texts. In some cases, the Rubric may be the appropriate tool to evaluate texts. In other cases, the Scale may be the better choice. Teachers now have two different instruments in their arsenal to assist in making a match between the text and the student a more appropriate one.

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EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND FOSTERING CRITICAL LITERACY THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TEXT SETS

Amie Sarker, Ph.D.
University of Dallas

Carmen Newstreet, Ph.D.
University of Dallas

Abstract

Text sets of children's literature can be powerful and engaging tools for developing students' critical literacy and content area literacy skills as students explore multiple perspectives, deepen their global understanding, and increase their ability to understand and empathize with unfamiliar others. Multi-modal response activities associated with such text sets provide opportunities for intertextuality and comprehension skill development while being especially supportive for ELLs and struggling readers. This article presents a specific children's literature text set with an historical World War II setting, including both fictional and informational selections, along with associated response activities to develop essential literacy and life skills.

Keywords: *text sets, children's literature, English language learners, critical literacy, content area literacy, comprehension*

Children's literature appeals to students of all ages and may be especially beneficial for English language learners (ELLs) and struggling readers. While the use of children's literature and global education did not make the *hot list* for 2016, we advocate the use of children's books to help elementary and secondary students successfully develop critical literacy and content area literacy skills in social studies, two items which are on the *hot list* (Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Ortlieb, 2015). The challenge for teachers is to provide readers with texts which will help to deepen global understanding and thereby increase student ability to understand and empathize with unfamiliar others (Martens, et al., 2015). The United States student population is becoming more ethnically diverse (Department of Education, 2015), while the teacher population remains predominantly Caucasian (Department of Education, 2012), further emphasizing the need for accessible multicultural and international fiction and nonfiction (informational) literature in the classroom. This article addresses specific text sets in children's literature, featuring an historical World War II setting, and the teacher's role in utilizing such children's literature to develop essential literacy and life skills.

Teachers can help students develop an understanding of multiple perspectives by exploring and responding to children's literature text sets. Text sets, as a curricular strategy, involve compiling a set of related books that students will read and discuss, promoting intertextual connections (Rosenblatt, 1978) which enable readers to utilize a particular text to better understand other books and issues (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). Children's literature is not only engaging, but provides scaffolding of comprehension through images that accompany the written text, especially for struggling readers and ELLs (Gibbons, 2002; Hadaway & Mundy, 1999). Such text sets provide rich resources for exploring multiple perspectives and developing critical literacy skills, as students are able examine complex problems within our global society through a variety of lenses and consider implications and possible social action (Freire, 1998; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004).

Background

The ability to understand and navigate multiple perspectives reflects important skills in this era of globalization where the next generation will increase their interactions with diverse people from across the globe.

For today's youth to successfully compete globally they will need "global competence with diversity" and "global citizenship" skills (Herrera, 2012) in addition to rigorous content knowledge. Luke (2003) asserts that, "Our students need a literacy education that provides critical engagements with globalized flows of information, image, text, and discourse" (p. 20). One way to promote the understanding of multiple perspectives in the classroom may be to incorporate opportunities for efferent and aesthetic responses to literature as students explore, compare, and contrast these perspectives through engaging fictional and informational texts. Efferent and aesthetic reader responses (Rosenblatt, 1978) to children's literature text sets with settings in historical and international contexts allow readers to recognize both their own, and others' values, beliefs, and traditions at home and abroad (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Freeman, Lehman, & Scharer, 2010). Immersion in literature that presents multiple perspectives provides teachers and students opportunities to actively develop their natural curiosity as they explore and strengthen critical literacy skills needed to conduct research and inquiry in learning (Harste, Leland, & Lewison, 2008). The goals are that as students read and learn more about these contexts and perspectives, their depth and complexity of understanding will grow along cognitive, historical, parallel emotional, reactive emotional, and cross-cultural empathy (Louie, 2005) and commitment to advocacy for social justice causes.

Text Sets Defined

The text selections and associated multi-modal literature response activities presented in this article aim to strengthen critical literacy skills (Freire, 1998; Harste, Leland, & Lewison, 2008; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004), foster democratic relationship development and commitment (Heilman, 2008), develop life-long learning practices (Campoy & Flor Ada, 2004; Lepman, 2002), and deepen content area literacy knowledge and skills. Students develop conceptual understandings of social studies by investigating multicultural perspectives through literature, food, music, and art and by virtually connecting with same age peers in different sociocultural settings as pen pals (Dewey, 1956; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2014). As Banks (2007) advocates a multifaceted approach to multicultural education, exploring such text sets allows readers to peel back the layers of an issue or culture, going beyond the external or more visible features and digging deeper to better understand worldviews and values of "others" in their local or global community.

Children's literature text sets, extension activities, and literature response projects are tools teachers can use to promote curiosity and understanding about historical and current events, in addition to teaching

reading and writing skills, such as those included in the next section. Text sets provide opportunities to stimulate readers' thinking as they compare/contrast, analyze, draw conclusions, evaluate, and predict outcomes. Students may also become more globally aware and empathetic in their responses to people and events (Noddings, 1995). Text sets and associated learning activities motivate children as they encounter both "windows" and "mirrors" in the experiences of the characters, reflecting on and learning more about themselves and the world around them (Glazier & Seo, 2005). As children learn people share more similarities than differences, the potential for discrimination decreases.

The Annenberg Foundation (2016) defines text sets as resources teachers compile of different genres, media, and reading levels that offer multiple perspectives on a chosen social studies theme. By collecting materials that may range from fiction, nonfiction, and poetry to charts, historical documents, maps, paintings, photographs, and songs, teachers add voices and perspectives to the study of complex global and/or historical issues. Putting together a text set provides all students, regardless of reading level or learning style, access to a topic. Even competent readers seek out easy explanations on Google and Wikipedia to learn about a new or complex topic; providing children's books and picture books in a text set gives all students a means of connecting to or understanding some aspect of a larger subject. Additionally, the condensed nature of children's literature effectively presents important content in a short period of time.

Teachers may introduce a topic with text sets or utilize them later in a unit of study, perhaps as an extension to the traditional classroom textbook. Reading aloud quality theme-based children's literature selections provides rich opportunities for a variety of literacy mini-lessons and integration of social studies content. Text sets are also well utilized when teachers provide time for the students to choose and read their books, then process what they have read in small groups, in writing, or with the class. The students should not merely summarize, but should make connections between books and find patterns (Annenberg, 2016; Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988).

There are multiple benefits to utilizing classroom text sets. These include, but are not limited to, the multiple perspectives supplied for complex issues. Students learn that there are different sides to every story, and the importance of questioning dominant interpretations, thereby forming the basis for inquiry based instruction and critical literacy. A text set can enrich the curriculum beyond the classroom textbook or novel set, and help to develop students' ability to read, synthesize, and critically evaluate multiple forms of texts and images. Multiple selections in text sets provide an

opportunity for intertextuality as readers connect texts to their lives, other texts, and the world around them. Students are called upon to see relationships between historical figures or groups, conflicts, settings, and more, reflecting on texts previously encountered (including movies, music, and television), and constructing new knowledge through shared discourse (Annenberg, 2016). A critical component of the multicultural and international text set strategy includes meaningful discussion, as readers negotiate meaning and teachers help to clarify and extend student learning (Dressel, 2005).

Classroom management tips for the use of text sets involve consideration of storage areas and resources. Students can easily access text sets when they are stored in containers where the front covers of books and other materials face forward and are easily seen. Plastic crates or mid-size corrugated cardboard boxes can be used to house text sets, sorted and labeled by theme. A text set need not be exhaustive, rather a growing collection of texts in a classroom library. A picture dictionary or printed dictionary page may be appropriate text set additions to supplement for English learners or special education students (National Council for Teachers of English/International Reading Association, 2004).

Introducing the History Text Set

When the topic of World War II is taught in the United States, there can be a tendency to portray a dichotomous Allied “us” versus Axis “them” mentality, grouping all members of a nation or people together as seemingly united behind their leaders. However, the complexities of human experiences in a conflict such as World War II can be minimized or overlooked altogether if classroom supplemental resources beyond the textbook are limited. For example, *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* (Mochizuki and Lee, 2003) shares a poignant vignette in the World War II story, highlighting the struggle of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat stationed in Lithuania in 1940. Contrary to his government’s orders, he issued thousands of visas to Polish Jews fleeing for their lives. Such true stories stimulate discussion of not only key issues and events of the war, but exploration of themes such as courage, compassion, selflessness, and life-altering decisions. Discrimination was not limited to the Jews of Europe, for example, and the perspectives of those in the Japanese internment camps of the United States are masterfully told in books such as *The Bracelet* (Uchida, 1996), *A Place Where Sunflowers Grow* (Lee-Tai & Hoshino, 2006), and *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki & Lee, 1993).

Several other children’s literature texts help to shed light on less emphasized experiences of German and Japanese people during World War II. In the Newbery

Honor Book, *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow* (Bartoletti, 2005), Bartoletti records chilling accounts (sourced from interviews and photographs) of the roles millions of youth unwittingly played as their innocence and enthusiasm was harnessed by the Third Reich, only to leave the young people later experiencing doubt and disillusionment. *Hiroshima No Pika* by Japanese author and illustrator Toshi Maruki (1980), is based on the true events of those who experienced the atomic bomb. In *Faithful Elephants: A True Story of People, Animals, and War* (Tsuchiya & Lewin, 1988) the zookeeper shares how potentially dangerous animals in Tokyo’s Ueno Zoo were one by one killed off in anticipation of the bombing of the city. The zookeepers, to their own horror and dismay, were ordered to let three elephants starve to death, even while the gentle animals attempted to perform tricks for food.

Certainly genocide such as the Holocaust is an important component in understanding this conflict, and several excellent children’s literature selections have been written to present this difficult and horrific event in a manner appropriate for grade school children and older students, as well. For example, *Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust* (Adler & Ritz, 1994) tells of two Jewish children killed by Nazis during this period, 18-year-old Hilde Rosenzweig and nine-year-old Eli Lax. *The Harmonica* (Johnston & Mazellan, 2004) is based on a true survivor story of a Polish Jewish child who survives in a concentration camp because of his ability to play Schubert on his harmonica for the Nazi commander. The classic *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, 1993), and well-documented *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary: A Photographic Remembrance* (Van der Rol and Verhoeven, 1993) share Anne’s harrowing memoir for older elementary and adolescent children.

The perspective of those helping holocaust victims through resistance efforts is represented through engaging and inspiring stories told for the child and young adult audience as well. Set in France, *The Butterfly* (Polacco, 2009) is based on the actual experiences of Polacco’s great aunt and relates the family’s courageous efforts hiding, and then helping to smuggle, a Jewish family to safety, emphasizing themes of friendship and quiet heroism. The Danes’ resistance efforts of smuggling thousands of Jewish citizens to safety via fishing boats to neutral Sweden as seen through the eyes of a ten year old is expertly depicted in the Newbery Award winning *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1990). While historically undocumented, *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark* (Deedy & Sorenson, 2000) is a rousing tale of courage in which King Christian X, who sought to keep all Danes, including Jews, safe when the Nazis invaded, wore the Jewish star and inspired others to do likewise. *The Cats in Krasinski Square* (Hesse & Watson, 2004), also based on

true events, tells of a Jewish girl's bravery in resistance efforts to help those in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Response and Extension Activities

Predicting from Photographs

Introduce the unit by presenting photographs or paintings depicting different perspectives and experiences of people during World War II. Facilitate discussion and introduce key vocabulary as students explore observations regarding setting and symbols (e.g., yellow star, swastika), feelings of the people depicted, predictions about events, etc. Familiarize students with key geographic locations on a map and a general idea of the historical timeline (e.g., what was happening in the years leading up to World War II). Encourage inquiry and record student questions to be explored during the unit through strategies like DR-TA (Directed Reading – Thinking Activity, Stauffer, 1969) or K-W-L charts (Know-Want to Know-Learned, Ogle, 1986).

Jot Chart of Key Ideas

As the teacher reads aloud different books to the class, or as students explore the texts in small groups, the class can create a chart of key ideas related to various

texts, as in the example below. This can be a springboard into other response activities and provide a scaffold for struggling readers and ELLs to refer to in remembering key vocabulary and ideas. Alternatively, create a semantic feature analysis grid (Figure 1) where certain characteristics are noted across the top and characters or texts either relate to (record a “+”) that feature or characteristic, or they do not (record “-” or leave blank) (Richardson, Morgan, & Fleener, 2012).

Diorama

Students can create a diorama of a poignant scene from the historical figure / character's life, including key setting features and symbols, etc., as appropriate (Mangal & Mangal, 2008). Students must include a written reflection of why this was an important or meaningful scene from the book and what the student learned about the subject matter (e.g., World War II or a more specific focus) through reading, just as Jacobs (2002) discusses the value of integrating reading and writing activities to assist students in moving from knowing to understanding content.

Historical Figure or Character and Text Selection	Setting / Geographical Location	Character traits, including ethnic or religious heritage	Significance to WW 2 events / Character's Experiences with Discrimination	Others who helped the character / historical figure	Themes	Text Connections (Text-self, text-text, text-world)
Chiune Sugihara in <i>Passage to Freedom</i>						
Anne Frank in <i>Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl</i>						
Annemarie in <i>Number the Stars</i>						
Emi in <i>The Bracelet</i>						

Figure 1. Semantic feature analysis grid.

Write a Letter from a Different Perspective

After students have read two or more books depicting a particular experience or perspective, and perhaps after some additional independent inquiry, have them write a letter from the perspective of one of the characters or historical figures they read about. Encourage students to include details specific to the struggles that individuals would have faced in this historical context. For example, a student might pen a letter as a young girl in a Japanese internment camp writing to a friend she left behind in her California hometown. Alternatively, a student might compose a note portraying a young Danish man helping to hide a family of Jews who must deliver an important

message to those who will receive the family next, but he must write in a way that Nazis will not understand the details of the letter if intercepted.

Two Voice Poems

Have students construct and then read a two-voice poem written from varied perspectives of World War II participants. Text on the same line (and with the same words) would be voiced concurrently by the two readers; the other text would be voiced only by the reader of that column. Again, this activity requires students to think critically and creatively while applying conceptual knowledge and vocabulary they have learned.

Reader 1	Reader 2
I was sent to	I was sent to
An internment camp	
	A concentration camp
In California	
	In Poland
I was born in this country	I was born in this country
A Japanese-American	
	A Polish Jew
I don't understand...	I don't understand...

Figure 2. Two voice poem example.

Character Concept Map

Students can work together to create a character concept map. They identify key traits as supported by the readings. Different types of graphic organizers could be used, including an outline of the character's face or body with words or descriptive phrases inside.

Odd Word Out

Odd word out is a strategy that allows students to consider the similarities and differences among concepts and vocabulary terms as students negotiate meaning to determine which word or phrase in the set does not belong and why. Students are given sets of four words or phrases that include vocabulary encountered in their reading. They must discuss which word or phrase should be categorized differently from the others and provide justification for their reasoning. In the process, students carefully consider various attributes, associated meanings, and related historical contexts and events. ELLs gain practice in elaborating and clarifying their utterances, while being scaffolded by peers. Critical thinking is required, as there is not just one right answer, so long as there is a logical basis for the conclusion. For example, "Sugihara, Anne Frank, Hitler, and King Christian X of Denmark." Perhaps Anne was excluded, being the only Jew who experienced the Holocaust, or Hitler for being the only one not eventually involved in a resistance movement, etc. Students can also construct their own sets

of words to share and discuss with the class (strategy adapted from Richardson, Morgan, & Fleener, 2012).

Applying Learning to Modern Day Social Issues

Students may continue to learn more about the modern day life of the people, groups, and geographic locations that students learned about through the text set and historical study. Where appropriate, classes might establish pen pal or video relationships with a similarly aged class in Germany or Japan, for example. Teachers can help students connect with modern day conflicts and compare and contrast discrimination and other issues faced by those involved. They can facilitate discussion of root causes and possible social action to help those who may be suffering.

Closing Thoughts

Children's text sets and literature response activities, such as these explored with this World War II theme, are tools that teachers can use to promote reading and writing in the social studies across grade levels. Text sets are versatile and can be built in genres and include texts appropriate for students of various reading abilities, ages, and interests. As educators become more familiar with and utilize children's literature as a way to promote reading and writing, consideration should be given to the choice of literature that can help students develop critical

literacy and content area literacy skills in social studies. Struggling readers and ELLs may find success with children's literature because of shorter reading passages, interesting illustrations, and high interest. However, children's literature can be used in all K-12 classrooms. Text sets and response activities provide opportunities for readers to develop a variety of comprehension and vocabulary skills. Importantly, students may become

more globally aware and empathetic in their responses to people and events outside their day-to-day experiences. Teacher use of children's literature text sets to initiate and supplement instruction motivates students as readers who can make choices about their own learning, and opens opportunities for students to explore and enjoy learning about themselves and the world around them.

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~CHAPTER 11~

PRESERVICE SECONDARY TEACHERS' TEXT SETS: CONSTRUCTING PATHWAYS INTO DISCIPLINARY LITERACY FOR ADOLESCENTS

Annamary L. Consalvo, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Tyler

Abstract

This article explores ways in which preservice secondary teachers of a southern state university, in a required disciplinary literacy course, constructed text sets to provide engaging, multimodal entry points to disciplinary topics for their future middle and high school students. Seven preservice teachers' text sets were analyzed using comparative case study to assess the degree to which their authors designed their text sets as multimodal engagements. Results suggest that preservice teachers need sustained instructional support in order to conceive of their discipline's texts as multimodal. Examples are drawn from five text sets representing four disciplines.

Keywords: *disciplinary literacy, text sets*

The teaching of disciplinary literacy has been foregrounded by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. The key differences between content area literacy and that of disciplinary literacy is that the first is about school curriculum and general reading skills, while the focus of the second is what actual experts in those particular disciplines do with regard to reading, writing, speaking, and approaching their specializations in order “to understand what the purposes of those disciplines are and how they advance” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2015, p. 10).

Secondary teachers are often passionate about their disciplines and possess a degree of expertise in their respective teaching areas. Their adolescent students, however, may not share their enthusiasm. In fact, they may be among the many youth who are bored by traditional school reading and assignments (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). Lacking interest in school subjects and topics, teens may need to be actively and creatively invited into developmentally appropriate engagements with these academic disciplines (Lapp, Fisher, & Grant, 2008). To accept disengagement as a fact of middle and high school classrooms, puts students' academic futures at risk, “More students than ever are taking the SAT and the ACT, yet recent reports on performance for the class of 2015 suggest that most of them are ill-prepared for the academic rigor of college” (Adams, 2015, p. 6). What this

disturbing trend points to is that adolescent students need opportunities to better grasp, engage with, and successfully manage challenging academic problems within and across disciplines.

Perspectives

Grounded in a view of literacy learning as socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978), this inquiry seeks to consider various modalities of disciplinary text use inside of school contexts. The linguistic mode (e.g. alphabetic text, mostly in print) has been the dominant mode of text use in schools, eclipsing other, relevant, multimodal texts. In fact, Kress (2000) notes a “revolution” and argues that the time has come for educators to more fully incorporate multimodal texts into teaching and learning contexts:

The effect of this revolution has been to dislodge written language from the centrality which it has held, or which has been ascribed to it, in public communication. Perhaps the most obvious example is the increasing prominence—dominance even of the visual in many areas of public communication as well. While this is obvious, the implications of that shift have not in any sense begun to be drawn out or assessed in any coherent, overt, fully conscious, and consistent fashion. (Kress, 2000, p. 179)

This research takes up a “multimodal social semiotic approach” as one that values images, props and tools,

film, audio, the body's gestures, the voice, and different inscription systems like music and math notation the combination of which "focuses on meaning-making" (Bezemer, Diamantopoulous, Jewitt, Kress, & Mavers, 2012, p. 1). That educators systematically arrange the texts (broadly defined) of their disciplines in such a way as to invite curiosity, inquiry, and sustained critical thinking with students is vital. Jewett (2008) claims that it is nothing short of essential, "My claim here is that how knowledge is represented, as well as the mode and media chosen, is a crucial aspect of knowledge construction, making the form of representation integral to meaning and learning more generally" (p. 241).

The text set is a collection of thematically linked texts, often selected by a teacher, through which students may explore and inquire about a topic. Traditional definitions of a text set include that they are "a collection of books" (Bersh, 2013, p. 48) and, according to Georgis and Johnson (2002), that collection should have between five and ten volumes. Still others advocate for multimodal text sets (Elish-Piper, Wold, & Schwingendorf, 2014) that include audial, visual, and digital texts and images. There is a dearth of research literature that reports on the use of text sets in secondary settings. Those few include studies about text set use in science (Ebberts, 2002), social studies (Bersh, 2013), and in English (Elish-Piper et al., 2014; Tatum, Wold, & Elish-Piper, 2009). A search in Academic Search Complete turned up no studies centering on secondary text set use for physical education, music education, or mathematics education. With heavy national and state emphasis in college and career ready standards in the CCSS and in Texas' TEKS, and in those, a call to all disciplines to foster the kinds of literacy practices that build students' abilities to think and act critically, there is a present need to teach preservice teachers about the possibilities that multimodalities hold. Text sets are one way that meaningful incorporation of discipline-specific multimodal texts can serve as valuable introductions to disciplinary topics, and, text sets may be useful as efficacious in teaching the literacies of a particular discipline. In teacher education programs, it is increasingly important to move away from general literacy strategies and toward those that will better support adolescents in acquiring specialized knowledge: "[A]s students move through school, reading and writing instruction should become increasingly disciplinary, reinforcing and supporting student performance with the kinds of texts and interpretive standards that are needed in the various disciplines or subjects" (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, p. 57). The need exists for both professional development and teacher preparation programs to help teachers to become familiar with and cognizant of the need that rests upon them to effectively educate their diverse students to meet career and college ready standards.

The text sets that are the focus of this article were selected from English, physical education, music education, and mathematics education. Of those disciplines, only English is traditionally centered on the use of alphabetic texts. Physical education, musical education, and mathematics, as disciplines, tend toward multimodal texts (Jewitt, 2008; Jewitt & Kress, 2003). In physical education, for example, the body of the teacher can act as a textbook; playing fields are encountered as texts to be read and acted upon; and athletic performances are treated as text to be reviewed, analyzed, and reflected upon. In music education, audio and video recordings are treated as texts to be deeply considered, the physical demonstration of correct instrument placement use is used as text, non-alphabetic musical notation, and live and recorded performances (including rehearsals) are considered as texts. As well, mathematics relies heavily on Arabic numeric notation as well as algebraic and other forms of symbolic inscription that are central to its disciplinary literacy. All of these fields use combinations of modalities of texts that include voice, demonstration, print, audio recordings, video recordings, digital notation to supplement these other, more central texts. The question this research seeks to address is: In what ways do preservice teachers take up the invitation to create text sets that use multimodalities to teach the disciplinary literacy practices of their fields and to invite future students into those practices?

Methodology

In this qualitative research, comparative case study was employed because it "offer[ed] a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41) of how disciplinary experts (the preservice teachers) conceive of, select, and use the texts in their text sets. This research was conducted at a mid-size, regional, public university in the south central United States. Students who are seeking secondary teacher licensure are required to take a disciplinary literacy course often referred to as content literacy. Typically, students take the course in their semester prior to student teaching. Participants include seven of eleven students who gave informed consent (63.6% of the class). All names of people and places are pseudonyms. The primary data sources for this inquiry are seven students' text sets collected during one semester (see Table 1). The instructions for these relatively short text sets directed students to create a three- to five-day plan that used texts that included at least one alphabetic text, as well as a mix of video, audial, image, and props. The texts needed to be brief enough for in-class reading, and used creatively and strategically across consecutive days to introduce and build a particular knowledge set.

Table 1
Participants, Discipline, and Text Set Topics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Discipline	Text Set Title/Theme
Carver, Hannah	English	Holocaust ELA Text Set
Donaldson, Aliah	English	Gatsby ELA Text Set
James, Charles	Music	Compound Meter Text Set
Smith, Arnold	Music	Shakers – Music and Culture Text Set
Kinder, Maureen	Mathematics	Place Value Text Set
Ryder, Susan	Physical Education	Line Dancing Text Set
Smith, Donna	Physical Education	Softball Text Set

Text sets from all members of the class were posted to the course website where other students were asked to comment upon them in a collegial way by citing strengths and offering extensions and points for future consideration. Supplemental data include other course materials such as the text sets' assessments by the instructor, peer comments, class field notes, and analytic memos. The text sets were examined repeatedly and annotated as a means of coding. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to identify themes and hypotheses within and across preservice teachers' text sets and responses to peer comments. While all the text sets in Table 1 were analyzed, for this article, only those that best explained the three themes discussed here are referenced.

Results: Three Themes

Theme One: Assumptions about Literacies

Preservice teachers came into the class laboring under the assumption that the literacies of their own disciplines, with the exception of English, somehow did not "count" as texts; they needed support in designing elements of their text sets to be genuinely useful to their teaching practices and motivating for their students. This is particularly true for physical education preservice teachers who traditionally relied upon demonstration and explanation as classroom texts. Conversely, English preservice teachers needed support in imagining and taking up film, images, bodies, sound, and props as texts. From the earliest days of the class, these students kept a literacy diary that included multimodal elements, "read"

weekly class texts that included professional videos and TED Talks, and were continually and progressively challenged to redefine what counts as literacy, students were pushed to expand their repertoires of what counts as text for selection in designing a lesson. In the excerpts that follow, selections from Donna, Hannah, and Aliah's text sets are used as illustrations of their taking up this idea of multimodal texts beginning to "count" as legitimate disciplinary and academic texts.

Donna, a preservice physical education teacher created a five-day text set designed to teach female students in grades 9-12 an introduction to softball. Donna assigned an alphabetic plain-language history and basic rules of softball (Kiernan, 2010) in a pdf form that students could access on their phones. She then made a series of short videos, posted to YouTube, of herself: 1) fielding a groundball; 2) swinging a bat correctly; 3) catching a pop fly; and 4) doing a crow hop. Her last text was another print-language text, a guide to planning a softball practice (iSport Softball, 2015). Her plan for the videos was twofold: one, they became a permanent text to which her students could refer at any time; two, they stood in for the in-person demonstration that she, as a PE teacher routinely used as a disciplinary text. Moreover, within the context of the first day's reading and subsequent days' demonstrations and practice, Donna would introduce the discipline-specific vocabulary to her students (e.g. groundball, pop fly, crow hop, etc.). Her day-by-day plan shows attention to use of multimodal texts, strategic teaching, and safety (see Figure 1).

I will use text 3 for Wednesday's lesson. The class will get into a group around me to where they can all see my motions. I will demonstrate the correct way to swing a bat. Once they have seen the example they will break into partners and get a soft bat to share. Students work on technique while swing and taking turns with their partner. Once I feel like students have successfully mastered a proper swing we will add in a T. This piece of equipment will hold a ball in place while students work on their swing while hitting a standing ball into a net. I will walk the gym to make sure all students understand the process and answer any questions they may have.

(Artifact, Donna Smith, October 12, 2015)

Figure 1. Donna Smith's day three plan for use of text set. This figure illustrates the progressive, multimodal nature of the teaching plan.

Hannah, a preservice English teacher, designed a seven-day engagement with materials from Holocaust literature. Her texts included pictures of concentration camps and prisoners, excerpts taken from the graphic novel, *Maus* by Spiegelman (1986), the poem, “Tale of a Sprinter, In the Winter of 1938” by Pagedar (nd), and excerpts from *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1993). She thoughtfully incorporated activities such as discussions and reflections, as well as enough time and a

reading-of-images guide geared to help her students thoughtfully consider the difficult scenes portrayed in the photographs. As well, she used props in a creative way by demanding that students hand over increasingly valuable objects like their notebooks, then keys or cell phones, then backpacks, that she would give back, first without explanation, later with clarification about abuse of power (see Figure 2).

Today when students enter the classroom I will take the two items as before, but I will also ask them to remove their shoes and set them at the front of the classroom. From here students will each be given a notecard with either a question or statement written on it. Students will then be given 5 minutes to find pair up a question card with the proper answer statement regarding the previous day’s reading of *Maus*. Once everyone has paired up each group will tack their cards to the dry erase board so that the class can see and check for accuracy. Once everyone has agreed that the answers are correct, I will then ask students to get back with their partner and create their own question and answer statement card about the text. I will give students 10 minutes for this and then we will play the game again, with their own questions. At the end of class, I will ask students to complete a 3-2-1 activity. They will write 3 big ideas taken from *Maus*, 2 words to sum up the passage, and then 1 question they still have or something they are confused about. This will be their exit ticket for the day.

(Artifact: Hannah Carver, October 12, 2015)

Figure 2. Day 4’s invitation from Hannah Carver’s text set. This figure points to the lesson plan’s connections between emotive, material, and academic components.

Attempting to situate study of *Gatsby* within a historical context, Aliah, another preservice English teacher, focused her text set on fashion development through the first two decades of the 20th century and offered students a three-day exploration of the history and culture of that time period. Sticking close to a traditional analytic approach in her teaching, she did incorporate images from historical sources. An example are historic images from *Gatsby*’s text set which illustrate the lesson use of visual text to stimulate conjecture. Additionally, a video excerpt of the party scene from Lurhmann’s (2013) version of the film can be incorporated to show flapper fashion. While not as evocative of critical thinking as a whole, this preservice teacher’s use of multimodal texts was a step toward creating more motivating introductions for her future middle and high school students.

Theme Two: Math Teachers may be Multimodally Inclined

Preservice teachers of mathematics may be inclined toward multimodal texts as math as a discipline uses numeric and symbolic notation, images of shapes, graphs, and objects. Such texts are frequently used in the problem-solving activities of their discipline. Maureen selected for her text set one alphabetic text, several numeric tables, and images of 3-D props (math manipulatives) to represent the actual blocks she would use with students when deploying her text set. Her goal was to use her collection of texts to function as motivating and engaging invitations that could help her students build toward place-value learning. Maureen’s introduction (see Figure 3) pointed to her well-developed understandings of diverse learners and the invitations they might need to engage meaningfully with mathematics.

This is a 3 day text set about place value in a fourth grade classroom. The objective of whole number place value in the fourth grade is to the thousands place, but this set of texts can be modified to include higher values. Another TEKS in the fourth grade talks about decimal place value to the tenths place, and these texts and activities could be modified to fit that objective as well. My texts consist of a K-N-L chart, a flipped video, a fictional book, a place value poster, base ten blocks, and a battle ship game. These combined texts will help the students better understand the concept of place value. There are also several different texts that will apply to different learning styles. The video attends to both visual and auditory learners, the poster helps visual learners, and the battle ship game and base ten blocks help kinesthetic learners. There are also group activities and individual activities. Some students learn better when they can bounce ideas and thoughts off of other students, and some work better alone. This set of different texts and activities, provides opportunities for both. Although these are not all traditional texts, they are all different ways to help get kids involved and excited about the topic at hand.

(Artifact: Maureen Kinder, October 12, 2015)

Figure 3. Maureen Kinder’s introduction to her place-value math text set. This figure shows how this text set was designed as a multimodal experience for each learner that also attends to differentiation of instruction.

Theme Three: Music Education Teachers may be more Multimodally Inclined than Other Discipline's Preservice Teachers

Preservice music teachers negotiated video, audio, and alphabetic texts as well as props and demonstration in greater proportions than those in other disciplines despite having large (50+) groups of students at one time. Charles created a text set to introduce and teach compound meter. His is one of the most complex sets with nine different texts studied over five days. He used music from a well-known video game as his first

text, other popular tunes, several explanatory videos about compound meter that students could watch both in class and at home, and culminated his unit with Sousa's (1889) "Washington Post March" with the sheet music attached as a disciplinary text. His lessons show a well-grounded understanding of music, teaching, and leadership. In particular, his sequencing of day two's texts and activities show an attunement to both his own disciplinary texts as multimodal, and as a way to engage students in meaningful learning experiences (see Figure 4).

On the second day, as the students are filing in, "Somebody to Love" by queen [*sic* Freddie Mercury] will be playing. As the class gets situated, I will ask the class to clap along with the beat. This song is a good choice for the exercise because it is popular enough that a good portion of the class should have heard it, and it is slow enough to clap all the beats. Clapping will allow the class to engage with the music. Then I will stop them and ask them to clap the 8th note. Some of the students will get it correctly, but most will attempt to clap in a duple meter. After the class has attempted to clap the 8th note, I will stop and ask "Why is it difficult to clap the 8th note?" After I have gotten a few answers from the class, I will show them by clapping myself, and grouping my claps into groups of 3 instead of 2. We will then watch the video "Understanding 6/8 time", and have a short teacher lead class discussion about the idea, and places we might have heard it being used. At this point I will pass out "Clap and Count in 6/8" and explain how the rhythms are counted and played. We will then count through the exercise verbally together, then clap through the exercise together. After this we will move on to normal rehearsal. Because this lesson introduces completely new material, it is by far the longest mini-lesson.

(Artifact: Charles James, October 12, 2015)

Figure 4. Charles James' day two lesson from compound meter text set. This figure shows a lesson that engages students both auditorily and physically.

Discussion and Implications

Results showed that, with support, preservice teachers more readily than not, embraced the notion of their discipline's texts as multimodal. In doing so, they were able to link their developing pedagogical knowledge with an expanded repertoire of objects in the world that could legitimately count as texts. In creating disciplinary literacy texts sets, these preservice teachers showed elements of the cultural nature of each of the disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The stakes are high: If preservice teachers can carry into the field the confidence and ability to use engaging text sets routinely, research points to text sets as holding promise for helping adolescents better grasp and be able to effectively use disciplinary vocabulary and concepts in their talking, thinking, writings, and other disciplinary performances (Lapp et al., 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Future research could include longitudinal research of teachers into their student teaching and early years as inservice teachers. Moreover, such research could conduct class observations and conduct interviews with both these maturing teachers and their students to better understand the incremental nature of disciplinary knowledge building and a simultaneous expansion of what counts as texts and why. Collection and analysis of assessment data of students whose teachers take a multimodal approach to inviting students into their disciplinary literacies could be revealing as well.

By providing highly engaging, multimodal invitations into disciplinary literacies, teachers can more effectively help students to begin understand how to think, read, write and speak as do mathematicians, athletes, musicians, scientists, authors/critics, and historians. Texts sets are one kind of disciplinary invitation that teachers can use to activate and build knowledge.

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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AUGMENTED REALITY

Cheryl Lisa McNair, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Marybeth Green, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Abstract

Numerous studies have documented declining rates in reading for fun by children with a sharp drop off as children reach the tween years. At the same time, the amount of time children spend on digital devices and other electronic media is steadily rising. One way publishers have begun to address the diverse literacy needs and to engage digital students in today's classrooms is to publish books with augmented reality elements for the K-12 market. The focus of this research was to examine the perceived effects of augmented reality books on K-6 students in rural school districts in South Texas. This research study used qualitative methodology in order to explore student teachers' perspectives of the impacts of augmented reality books with the K-6 students in their classrooms. This research found that student teachers reported that the books were highly motivating and engaging, encouraged children to question leading to their delving back into the texts, but also held some constraints and challenges.

Keywords: *augmented reality, new literacies*

In order for the educational system to address the “sophisticated twenty-first century skills and knowledge” needed by today’s students, there needs to be a paradigm shift in pedagogy and curriculum (Dede, 2010). One way publishers have begun address the diverse literacy needs and to engage digital students in today’s classrooms is to publish books with augmented reality elements for the K-12 market. According to Dede (2010), Augmented Reality (AR) is “a simulated experience created by interweaving real and digital people, places, and objects” (p. 158). Using AR, students may have the ability to go places and participate in experiences without leaving the classroom; the real world meets the virtual world (Yuen, Yaoyuneyong, & Johnson, 2011).

The digital divide between this real world and virtual world, and the unique literacy aspects that each world entails, is humorously illustrated in *It's a Book* (Smith, 2010). The two characters in the book both read, but one is a ‘traditional’ reader, and the other character is more of a digital reader: each type of reading has its own set of specialized skills and strategies in order to successfully navigate and comprehend traditional or digital reading. Preservice teachers are taught how to address the literacy needs of traditional readers, but as our

ever changing technology continues to advance, are future teachers being prepared to address the literacy demands for the 21st technologies that our elementary and secondary students encounter on a daily basis?

The purpose of this article is to present findings from a systematic, analytical evaluation of potential augmented reality (AR) books by preservice teachers. While many K-12 students may struggle with the traditional literacy expectations found in many schools, many of these same students appear to be comfortably ensconced in technology with its own unique literacy demands. AR may be one way to address the diverse literacy needs of students while simultaneously preparing them for 21st century technological needs.

Review of the Literature

“That children’s literature is on the digital move is a given, and many of the new technologies are eye-popping in terms of the aesthetic qualities” (Wolf, 2014, p.416). There is a plethora of literature extolling the virtue of using technology to enhance reading (i.e. Barone & Wright, 2008; Larson, 2012) and its impact on student engagement and motivation to ‘read’. According to

Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2011), one of 10 evidence-based best practices identified for comprehensive literacy instruction includes student opportunity to use technology that connects to and expands concepts.

Augmented Reality Books

AR allows computer-generated virtual imagery information to be overlaid onto a live direct or indirect real-world environment in real time (Azuma, 1997, Kipper & Rampolla, 2012). Using a tablet or smartphone, augmented reality software creates a layer of information that is superimposed on a real environment. Using digital devices, AR enhances the user's information about the world and enables the ability to interact with “different times, spaces, characters, and possibilities” (Sheehy, Ferguson, Clough, 2013, p. 1). AR books have embedded tools which create visual, haptic and auditory experiences with virtual content that the reader is able to view by downloading an app and focusing their smartphone or tablet on the specially designed pages.

The ultimate goal for students' reading is to understand and draw meaning from what they have read. AR books create a new paradigm and offer even greater opportunities for understanding through 3D visualizations which are instantly available in books. Mayer's (2009) research on multimedia has long established that students learn better with words and pictures than words alone, but manipulative 3D animations enable students to see structures that cannot easily be observed in 2D (Hegarty, 2014). Further, three-dimensional augmented reality visualizations affords the learner multiple advantages including the ability to see the model from multiple viewpoints, the ability to see how features of the model relate to one another, to experience dynamic processes through animations, and to build a more complete mental model (Billinghurst & Dunser, 2012; Jochim, 2011).

Unlike print texts, the multimedia components in AR books also have the capacity to address multiple learning styles. Keefe (1979) defines learning styles as “cognitive, affective and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to their learning environments.” (p.4). Modern classrooms are challenged to address students' learning styles by varying their teaching approaches and differentiating instruction within three main learning styles: (a) visual, (b) auditory and (c) kinesthetic. AR book publishers are including a variety of embedded tools that enable a multisensory experience for students (Yusoff, Dahlan, & Abdullah, 2014). In augmented reality books, visual learners learning preferences are addressed through 3D models, movies, pictures, and other visual representations. Auditory learners can hear sounds (either background music or sounds related to what is seen such as storm noises in a

book about weather) as well as text read aloud. Kinesthetic learners can benefit from a more haptic experience through using or manipulating a mobile device, interacting with or manipulating objects by zooming in and out, or rotating objects (Grasset, Dünser, & Billinghurst, 2008). These multisensory tools create an immersive learning environment that enables learners to become actively involved and is far different from static print text.

Reading Motivation and Engagement

Reading motivation, defined as “the likelihood of engaging in reading or choosing to read” (Gambrell, 2011, p. 172), has long been recognized as a key component in reading performance (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012; Park, 2011). Motivated students are likely to spend more time reading and show greater comprehension of what is read (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2008; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Digital texts are showing great promise in their ability to engage and motivate students (Picton, 2014). Grimshaw, Dungworth, McKnight and Morris (2007) contend that the embedded features in digital texts contribute to the greater enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading.

The concept of engagement has received increasing attention from theorists and educators interested in improving school performance. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) proposed a multidimensional construct of school engagement consisting of three elements: emotional, behavioral and cognitive. Emotional engagement encompasses affective reactions to learning both positive and negative. Behavioral engagement is grounded in participation and is gauged through direct involvement in activities. Cognitive engagement is determined through the level of effort invested in learning and the willingness to understand and master complex ideas.

Sustained engagement in reading is important to children's reading development and ultimately to their success as learners and can be examined by adapting Fredricks et al's (2004) framework to reading. Unrau and Quirk (2014) maintain that “Engagement involves behavior and emotion. Engagement behavior could be manifested as effort, persistence, intensity, absorption, and involvement, while emotion would manifest as enthusiasm, interest, enjoyment, and vitality” (p. 267). Guthrie, Lutz-Klauda, and Ho (2013) examined behavioral reading engagement stipulating that highly engaged readers manifest behaviors “consisting of actions and intentions to interact with text for the purposes of understanding and learning” (p. 10). Cognitive reading engagement has been studied by Blumenfeld and Meece (1988) who determined that students who are cognitively engaged are using strategies

for understanding and employing self-regulation and monitoring strategies.

Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative research employs a phenomenological research design where the researchers are attempting to understand the shared experiences of individuals undergoing the same or similar phenomenon (Cresswell, 2012). The goal of this type of research is to describe, explore, and explain participants' reactions and explanations of the phenomena being studied. Once the phenomenon for study is established, data are collected through interviews, focus groups, observations, or artifacts. In this study, the phenomenon under examination was student teachers' perceptions of how augmented reality books motivate and engage students, and support student learning. This study involved focus groups discussions with K-6 student teachers placed in rural schools in South Texas. Focus groups were deemed the most appropriate method of data collection because "they allow researchers to examine "the stories, experiences, points of view, beliefs, needs and concerns

of individuals" (Kitzinger 2005, p. 57). Further, focus groups allow the participants to take control of the interaction rather than the researcher giving greater prominence to the points of view of the respondents (Liamputtong, 2011).

Context

This study took place at a regional university in South Texas. This Hispanic serving institution has approximately 9,000 students, many of whom are first generation college students. Student teachers were placed in small, rural school districts surrounding the university.

Participants

Two focus groups were convened, one at the end of the Spring 2015 semester (n=8) and one at the end of the Fall 2015 semester (n=7). All of the participants were female and ranged in age from their mid-twenties to their mid-thirties. All of the participants had successfully completed their student teaching experience and would graduate at the end of the semester. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of their grade level student teaching assignments.

Table 1.
Grade distribution of participating student teachers

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5
#	1	3	3	4	1	2	1

Procedure

Through a small grant, the researchers were able to purchase a large collection of augmented reality books and several iPads. All student teachers were invited to participate in the study during the course of their one semester student teaching course. Each group was invited to participate in an initial class where the augmented reality books were presented and demonstrated. Then, student teachers were encouraged to play with the books. At the conclusion of the class, each student teacher who chose to participate further was loaned an iPad and whatever books she felt would be appropriate to her classroom. Each student teacher was directed to use the books in her classroom in whatever manner was appropriate to her teaching environment. At the end of the semester, the student teachers were invited back to the university for a pizza lunch and debrief session.

Focus Group Protocol

To learn about participants' perceptions of how augmented reality books motivate and engage students and support student learning, a semi-structured focus group process was employed. A list of primary questions was created relating to student teachers' experiences in incorporating the augmented reality books into their instruction (see Figure 1). Both researchers took turns leading the focus group, and, when necessary, offered questions probing beyond the primary questions. Each of the focus groups lasted around 45 minutes after which the focus group conversation was transcribed and a transcript of the conversations provided to each researcher.

Focus Group Questions

1. How could Augmented Reality enhance student learning?
2. Several of you had scientific books. How do you think Augmented Reality supports children learning science?
3. Tell me about how the Augmented Reality supported learning in Reading.
4. How could we have prepared you better to use these in the classroom?
5. Did you have any hesitancy with your own technology skills? Were there any technology issues?
6. In your opinion, did AR support diverse learners?
7. What were some of the challenges of incorporating Augmented Reality books?
8. What were some of the positives of incorporating Augmented Reality books?
9. What would you want to tell the publishers?

Figure 1. Focus group questions to determine student teachers' experiences in incorporating augmented reality books into instruction.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis, using the focus group as the unit of analysis, was used to identify the student teachers' perceptions of the capacity for augmented reality books to stimulate motivation and engagement and to support their students' learning. After conducting several close readings of the transcripts, each researcher coded the statements independently and then met to derive a consensus set of codes. Codes were closely examined by the researchers for possible subthemes and further organized into themes. Three themes emerged including motivational effects, impacts on learning and constraints and challenges in using AR books.

Results

Motivational Effects

According to our student teachers, AR books certainly leveraged their students' motivation to read. This was clearly evidenced by the student teachers who reported that their students became frustrated while waiting their turn. One student teacher mimicked her student's whining saying, "Miss, it's my turn! She's already read 3 books." On another level, student teachers reported that AR books were alluring to their students due to their interesting texts, resources, and stimulating tasks. In our discussions, student teachers shared that students were excited by the books because of their 3D visuals, movies, and games. As one student teacher stated, "It incentivizes them. It excites them to learn." Another said, "They love that it is 3D. They say that everything comes to life."

Student teachers also described how AR books had a positive impact on their students' engagement with literacy tasks. Emotional engagement or showing interest or enthusiasm for reading was repeatedly recounted by our student teachers sharing comments such as one student teacher describing a book about dinosaurs,

Their favorite was the T-Rex right here. Why does the T-Rex have short arms? They read about it and then they saw it. They found all these cool things

about it. It was like, okay! They loved reading about the short arms.

Behavioral engagement was reflected in their comments about the physical manipulation of the books as this student teacher described her students' use of a book on the solar system, "They loved moving around in the solar system and [controlling] one of the Mars' Rovers. The robot [Rover], it was like a remote control. She continued, "Because of that, they were actually clicking on reading the actual book. Reading it and learning about 'Ohhhhhh, that's why it's there and stuff."

Cognitive engagement can be found in comments such as this student teachers' account, "My real, real, real, low end kid, he was just glued to the screen. He was figuring out how to do it. He never gets the opportunity to just figure out something." Similarly, another student teacher described her student's questioning of the text in another dinosaur book saying, "Some of the dinosaurs did really run slower and like a T-Rex would run faster than something else Then, they would be like, well why does it do that? How come it is taking so long?"

Impact on Learning

In this study, the student teachers did not measure learning from the AR books, but observed their students use of AR books for evidence of how AR books supported learning. When student teachers reflected on how students learned through these AR experiences, their comments centered around two concepts, 1) how the combination of 3D visuals embedded in the AR books contributed to understanding and 2) how the AR books organically supported a variety of learning styles. In thinking about how the 3D visuals contributed to meaning-making, one student teacher wistfully shared,

I wish I had these books with me when I was teaching the Solar System. There was one certain topic that I had; it was the dark side of the moon. I could not get my students to understand the dark side of the moon. So, I would do hand gestures and pictures, and still nothing. Until I got this book

[referring to a solar system AR book] and I went through and said, there's the dark side of the moon! I showed it to them and they said, Oh, that's what you were talking about.

Another student teacher theorized how the 3D visualizations helped students develop schemas and mental models:

It creates foundations. In 6th grade when they were learning about bugs they would remember, 'Oh yeah! I saw that bug on that iPad with that crazy teacher and boy was she crazy. But, I remember seeing on the iPad that's my connection.' They will be able to immediately connect back to it.

As student teachers begin their careers in teaching, they are suddenly well-aware that "students learn differently" and that to be successful they must be able to address a variety of learning styles. The student teachers strongly felt that the visualizations and video were unmistakably appealing to the visual learners and that the audio components such as sounds or voices reading the text had appeal for auditory learners. They addressed these ideas in comments such as "It gives you the chance to take it into your hands literally and literally look at it, listen to it, act with all of your senses and learn from the technology." Notable, however, was their perception of how they felt that the books supported kinesthetic learners. In this vein they shared thoughts such as how their students loved "moving it, zooming in and out" or "moving it up and down." They also reported that their students' were particularly fond of one dinosaur book which allowed the student to "walk around the room with the dinosaur."

No project is without challenges, and student teachers discussed some of the constraints which troubled them. Three constraints were identified in the coding process including: 1) negativity with teachers and administrators in their placement school; 2) lack of alignment with Texas school standards; 3) and the digital divide. Several student teachers shared that their cooperating teacher did not appreciate the AR books and were reluctant to embrace their use in the classroom. As one student teacher shared, "I talked to my mentor and she wasn't eager about it at all. When I showed it to her, she said that's good for you, but we are not going to use it." Another student reported, "You had to take it upon yourself to get the students to do it which is not a comfortable feeling at all."

Finding materials which aligned with Texas state standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, was another challenge for student teachers. The books were largely children's trade books and were never intended for use exclusively in the classroom. While the collection covered many popular topics, there were many less popular topics for which there were no books. Student

teachers wished for more books on more topics as this student teacher says, "I think it would have been cool if it coincided with our TEKS."

Student teachers also alluded to the propensity for play inherent in these books. As one student teacher said, "All they wanted to do was take pictures" referring to the ability to use the iPad camera tool to take pictures of the augmented reality elements in the books. Another said, "Because they're like click, click, click, click, click, click." referring to her students' behavior when using the books. Although several of the teachers said that the key to using them was setting "expectations" for use, they were not clear on what those expectations should be or how their students should approach the text.

Finally, through this project, student teachers confronted the realities of the digital divide. Several teachers recognized that many of their low socioeconomic students have little access to this level of technology outside the classroom. Although higher socioeconomic students had little difficulty in manipulating the iPad, the lower socioeconomic students were somewhat stymied. One student teacher described the difficulties one of her students had saying, "

He sat there a good amount of time and he finally told me, "It's not working." He was so frustrated. He was on the wrong app. He was in the dinosaur app and he was looking at construction machines. I told him, "If you are having that much trouble, you have to talk." It was getting used to the technology itself.

Students also found that the rural districts where they did their student teaching face challenges with funding and administrators were reluctant to embrace a new and, as yet, unproven technology. One student teacher summed up this perspective by saying, "So, I was sitting there and I had a group of children that was using it and she [the principal] was watching and she was really interested. Then, later during the week on she was like, "We don't really have the money. I don't think this is a good idea."

Discussion

Clearly, the pre service teachers perceived the AR books as having value in motivating, engaging and promoting learning for their students. This is consistent with their status as digital natives (Prensky, 2001) who have less fear for new technologies. From the moment the student teachers were first invited to play with the AR books, they loved them and even peppered the researchers with questions about purchasing them. Their enthusiasm may also be attributed to their perception of their students as digital enthusiasts who, for the most part, have scarcely known life without tablets and smartphones. Perhaps most importantly, the student teachers saw the value in the embedded tools as they opened new opportunities for

learning through their scaffolding of the students' learning process, and they realize how the use and incorporation of these non traditional literacy experiences can positively impact student learning (Casey, 2015; Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006).

In this study, AR books promoted engagement consistent with Fredricks et al (2004) framework of emotional, behavioral and cognitive engagement. This may be attributed to Hegarty's (2014) thesis that 3D manipulative animations affords learners, especially learners with low prior knowledge, or low spatial ability, a "type of cognitive prosthetic" which enables them to create a more complete and more accurate mental model (p.688). Thus, unlike static 2D diagrams or pictures which require considerable cognitive resources to mentally animate or rotate, these tools support learners in their knowledge construction. Further, AR tools provide students with an experiential learning environment that supports multiple learning styles benefitting students with a variety of learning modalities also contributing to learner engagement.

Emerging technologies and the changing nature of text outside the classroom (i.e. Ebooks and now, AR books) are contributing to the evolving definition of reading comprehension and bringing new challenges for teachers (Guernsey & Levine, 2015). Now, in addition to teaching traditional strategies of decoding text, teachers must incorporate instruction on new literacies of decoding multimodal texts. This is a job for which most teachers, including our cooperating teachers, are unprepared. While teachers believe that integrating technology into their curriculum is important, literacy educators tend to perceive technology as not relevant to literacy development except for Internet research (Hutchinson & Reinking, 2011). Further, while our student teachers had great enthusiasm for the books, they were unsure of themselves in translating the books from a novelty to an actual instructional tool. As Schugar, Smith, and Schugar (2013) suggest, teachers will need to model strategies to enable students to transfer reading skills from print materials to augmented reality texts. However, teachers should not let strong personal preferences interfere with their willingness to provide students with both new and traditional literacy experiences (Larson, 2012, p. 290).

Traditionally, reading has been defined as the process of making meaning from text by connecting the ideas in the text with the reader's prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences (Moreillon, 2007). Twenty-first century readers, however, are negotiating meaning from a variety of digital tools embedded in text that can support and enhance traditional definitions of reading comprehension. Some students, though, are probably like a few students in our student teachers' classrooms who were hyperstimulated by the AR elements. We have come to view this as the "Wow Factor." In order for students to gain greater benefit from AR books, readers need to learn metacognitive strategies which enable them to differentiate when and how to integrate multimedia tools into the meaning-making process (Leander, 2009; McGowan-Koyzis & Koyzis, 2012). As Van den Broek, Kendeou, and White (2009) contend, it is not the multimedia alone that creates comprehension, but rather "it is the strategic use of the various media in such a way that the comprehending child engages in relevant processes in which he or she otherwise would not engage" (p. 69). As students become more skilled at applying metacognitive strategies, they will be better able to choose how and when to engage the AR elements to improve their comprehension.

Conclusions

New technologies are constantly emerging in the quest to support 21st century learners. This study examined student teachers' perceptions of the impacts of augmented reality books on student motivation, engagement and learning. While student teachers found the books highly motivational and engaging, they had difficulty in implementing them in their classrooms due to various constraints such as teacher and/or negativity, failure of materials to align with state standards, or the lack of resources. This study was limited by the size of the student teacher population and the location of the cooperating districts. Future studies may want to examine these same concepts in more urban settings with larger numbers of student teachers. Further, future studies may also want to research metacognitive strategies that young readers may use to engage with augmented reality books.

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DIGITAL MINDS: WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WHO HATE WRITING

Dr. Kamshia Childs
San Jacinto College

Abstract

Many students "hate" writing for a number of reasons. It is important that literacy educators find the reasons of hate and displeasure that pertain to their students, and find ways to become more innovative at addressing these issues. This discussion began as a presentation, shared at the Literacy Summit in 2016. Alternative ways to teach "traditional" writing, essay, and journal tasks are needed in order to improve students' interest in writing, while building confidence. The gateway to do so is by providing tasks that can enhance the writing process, and responses to literature using technology and other multimedia (exploring digital literacies). Students should know how writing fits into their lives (and future careers), and that the skills they learn are needed across all subjects in education. This article gives suggestions on ways educators should seek to inspire, challenge, and put passion and versatility into their writing instruction practices.

Keywords: digital literacy, writing instruction

The foundation of a student's literacy journey begins before they ever set foot in a classroom, and essentially the manner in which it builds depends on a number of factors. The love of literacy must be fostered in a manner that is engaging, as well as challenging enough for a student to build stronger skills. In the past, students were taught to fall in love with books and were asked read in order to become efficient writers. However, the foundations of literacy that were once taught using basic elementary grammar skills and principles, and reading "the classics" in the upper grades, call for some modifications for students in the digital age. In fact, about 24% percent of teens go online "almost constantly" due the wide range usage of smartphones (Lenhart, 2015). Going online is a daily habit for 92% of the students, and 56% of students aged 13-17 are online at least twice per day (Lenhart, 2015). Social media is the main reason students log on; with females dominating social media, and males preferring to use video games (Lenhart, 2015; Gee, 2003). This is powerful information to consider when educating students of today. Writing instruction for students should be relevant and integrated into the social culture of the students (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1990; Street, 2003). The language skills in which the students use to communicate digitally on a daily basis, should be acknowledged and applied into daily writing instruction.

The concept of digital literacies has been a "hot" issue within the last couple of years. This is a means to integrate or merge traditional literacy skills using current technology tools and platforms available to share with others. Digital literacy grew due to the "growing availability of personal and portable technologies through the 1990s and early 2000s" causing a "social turn in literacy studies" (Vasudevan, 2010, p. 63). There is an abundance of articles, and talks on digital literacies, however, is the effort being made to *implement* digital literacy into instructional practice? Or has the effort only consisted of discussion and research (not yet in practice)? When discussing reading, Gee (2010) states, "...a child's oral language development is key to a successful trajectory approach to reading, that is, an approach that seeks to make a long-term school-based reader of academic content" (p. 15) and Gee further suggests it will even ease the number of cases of the 4th grade slump (Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1990). Oral language and written language are now being taught to students not only through their school and home environment, but students are now influenced through phone and tablet applications (known as "apps"). This technology and learning gold is in the students' fingertips at an earlier age, yet when students enter classrooms they are often asked to leave their technology at the door. This article primarily focuses on engaging students in writing using technology by addressing the development of a classroom

culture of digital literacy to potentially change classrooms and improve student writing and literacy overall.

A balance of using traditional writing approaches with a digital edge must be achieved in curriculum in order to actively engage students. When discussing using technology as a tool for writing, students have traditionally been taught to use word processing software on a basic functioning level. The practice of learning these programs is usually required for the student to type research assignments and essays. This is often fulfilled as an educational requirement in middle school and high school. Skills such as learning to type on the keyboard, and creating types of files are assessed. Students that use and have access to technology usually fare very well in these types of courses. Ahn (2011) states, “socialization in families may be a significant factor in children’s access to computers and comfort with using technology” (p.151). If a student is comfortable with using technology for literacy purposes, they have probably encountered a parent or a relative using the same software or technology for their jobs or school. However, due to budget cuts, and other technological methods and devices being used, courses of this type have been fading, and students are entering secondary education and college lacking the skills to needed to succeed. This in turn, puts interest in writing at a low, and students do not often see the value of being a clear and concise writer. In many cases, at some point (some at younger ages, others a bit older) students lose confidence and begin to hate formalized writing altogether.

Relevancy and Removing the “Hate”

Many students hate to write, because they do not see the relevance of learning to write for “academic” purposes. They are made to disassociate with the informal language that they are comfortable with. Sarah, an interviewed student in Amicucci’s article, mentions freewriting as a potential outlet for students to express non-academic writing. Amicucci uses Sarah’s account of her writing experiences to suggest ways that writing can become more comfortable for students. The student shares that a good way to take ownership in their writing is to have students use the genre of creative writing, and be allowed to use slang, or language often used when sending text messages. Amicucci goes on to highlight Sarah’s feeling of writing in the traditional sense, and she feels that it making students feel as if they have to pretend to be “...somebody that I am not” (Amicucci, 2014, p.489). As educators, a major part of the job is to find varying ways to help your students to be successful. Sarah was a perfect example of demonstrating that teaching should be a reciprocal process.

Writing benefits both the student and the instructor because the tasks express the cognitive process

of a student, and for instructional purposes, it provides an opportunity to later look back and see progression. There is an influx of students who are entering college not prepared to write a simple essay, and other tasks that require an English Language Arts background; hence, the growth of college preparatory courses and programs across the country (Allensworth, E., Nomi, T., Montgomery, N., & Lee, V.E., 2009). From that group, many only see writing as a means to fulfill a prerequisite for their general education studies. From an early age, educators must move their students beyond stressing writing as a “skill” needed solely in academia, and share with them the importance and relevance of writing in our lives. Today’s students need to be prepared for college, and many in high school graduating classes are being systematically labeled as not “college ready.” A major area in which these students fall short is writing. In many cases, students are not seeing the connection of who they are, and what they are being asked to demonstrate. With focuses on other subject areas (such as math and science), students see writing only when it is offered as a requirement to pass an exam, or a general education prerequisite before they can complete their major degree requirements. Today’s students entering college for the first time, have often been subjected to many years of standardized testing, and been required to meet “progress” or achieve certain learning goals. These assessment goals were meant to measure student mastery; however, many students are not sure how to *apply* the skills. Many of the required writing skills that are taught to students are basic writing skills, which they learned earlier in their education. As a result, some of these skills are forgotten, and some are never learned. Students are expected to retain those skills until they are asked to put together the bits and pieces of what they have learned over the years. Writing only becomes necessary for students when it is time for end of course exams in high school (taken in many states), for college applications, or in their freshman college English courses.

Students often struggle to become fluid “traditional” writers due to a lack of interest, and also the lack of background knowledge and strategies needed in order to organize ideas and expressions in a clear and concise manner. Students often complain of a disconnect in class, or lack of foundation. In their courses (particularly writing), they have no outlet if they are struggling to master the concepts other than to drop out of a course, which usually is not an option for those looking to complete high school or a program of study. In their personal lives, using digital resources and social media they have other options and purposes. Some students use Twitter because they have more of an intimate and personal audience. Others use sites like Tumblr and Flickr, as they might want to express their ideas through micro-blogging with graphics and words. They understand what audience they are writing for and sharing

information with. It must get to the point that this can be taught to students in the classroom as well. In order to be relevant and to empower students to become more effective in writing and language arts, it is necessary to meet them half-way with technology, and blend in the skills that they need to master. Do not throw out traditional skills and lessons completely—but in order to develop “traditional” skills, educators must use some non-traditional methods. The missing connection, is that many writing instructors are not meeting students where they are, and showing students the uses of writing within their environments-socially, academically, and later professionally. However, the delivery methods in which writing instruction is provided is where the “disconnect” and “hate” of the writing process lies.

Changing the Language of Literacy Learning

A recent study (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013), suggests that writing be taught using several processes: daily writing practice, strategy instruction, self-regulation and meta-cognitive reflection, peer collaboration, and regular feedback through formative assessment. These are a few best practices for teaching writing, and, with proper training, these processes could serve to enhance writing curriculum. Educators can revamp their curriculum by changing the language in which they use when teaching skills that commonly are considered difficult or challenging. Instead teaching writing skills in isolation, they must integrate the language and use examples of quality writing, and teach with platforms

which the students are using familiar with using. Connecting technology to instruction unlocks the minds of students who would otherwise be hesitant about writing, and builds upon their skills that many are unaware that they already possess, and are already using on many popular social media networks. With “more than nine out of ten teenagers having a social media account” (Benmar, 2015, p. 22), the most logical method of drawing connections to events in students’ lives would be to use social media.

Changing the language and the mindset toward English writing skills is not an impossible task. In order to change the language of what would normally be used in “traditional” writing instruction, it is necessary to know which pieces of technology students use and what skills are required to be covered; whether it be local, state, or national teaching and learning standards. There are many writing skills which educators find challenging to keep students engaged, however, just mentioning any of the social media or technology platforms will gain attention. For example (see *Figure 1*), in a classroom of students who frequently use Twitter, one could explain concepts of summary as being similar to a “tweet”, as you are limited to 140 characters. Twitter could also be used to explain the concept of how to paraphrase. Once students have a grasp of the concept, and how it parallels a skill they already use on social media, it can then be incorporated into “traditional” writing, such as paraphrasing research articles, quotes, and ideas.

Writing for the “Social Media Generation” Changing the Language Chart

Students need to know that they practice writing and writing strategies on a frequent basis (often daily). Use this chart to begin to “translate” and implement the language in a manner that our students will understand and be relevant to their experiences.

<i>Social Media / Technology Platform</i>	<i>Main Purpose</i>	<i>Writing Skills Used</i>
Facebook	Status Updates	Summary, Mood, Tone
Twitter	Tweets	Summary, Paraphrasing, and Question: MUST BE CONCISE, only 140 Characters to use
Tumblr	Microblog	Journaling, Visuals/Imagery, Captioning
Snapchat	Snap	Summary, Mini Presentations, Visualization, Text Captions
Instagram	Photo Application	Summary, Captions, Hashtags-classification/categorization
Texting	Alt to phone call	Summary, acronyms
Emails	Electronic Mail	Summary, Letter Writing

Activity: Regarding your instruction, how would you use this information to implement these skills and concepts that students demonstrate on social media into your “traditional” writing lessons?

Figure 1. Changing the Language Chart

Writing is a form of communication. E-mails and text messages are forms of communication that are often rushed, but they still give daily repetition and practice with writing, no matter how many errors or typos. Researcher, Verheijen (2013) reviewed various empirical studies dating as far back as ten years, and found that a majority of the studies had a positive correlation between text messaging and its effect on literacy. Text messaging offers the creation of plethora ever-changing acronyms, and also one must understand the concept of tone when sending and receiving a text. Students upload pictures on Instagram from their Smartphone, and commonly write a comment related to the uploaded picture. What they do not realize, is that they are *summarizing*, drawing a *conclusion* or *concluding thought*, *classifying* (by using hashtags), and creating a *caption* (all of which are academic vocabulary that they might not normally use). The teachable moment is where students can be shown these same elements in writing and literature, and how they function to create quality writing. The questioning, and cognitive skills that are passively used online daily, by a large majority of the younger generation are undeniably the key to seeing improvements in writing instruction.

Conclusions

Laud (2013) states, "Just as students first learn to read, then read to learn, students must first learn to write and then use writing as a vehicle to support the deepening of their learning" (Writing to Learn section, para. 2). Not only will students become comfortable and confident with learning writing skills, styles, and elements of writing using technology, but they will also realize that the skills which they are learning have meaning, and a place in their lives. Relevancy in academic writing must not only be addressed on a subject/topic basis, but also should be addressed on a social level. What are the social needs of the students? Could obtaining writing or literacy skills be impacted and influenced through students' personal experiences? Writing should be presented as more than a skill that is "taught." Writing and literacy affect students in many aspects of life, and it is the foundation for almost every subject taught, therefore, teaching practices should be continually be adapted and integrated. The hate and disapproval of formal writing and literacy learning will achieve genuine student success when practice can reflect the digital minds of students, and mesh it with traditional academic writing concepts.

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~CHAPTER 14~

TEXT COMPLEXITY: A STUDY OF STAAR READABILITY

Michael Lopez, Graduate Student
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Jodi Pilgrim, Ph.D.
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Abstract

A critical component of English Language Arts and Reading standards includes the student's ability to comprehend increasingly more complex text by applying a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills. This study examined the text complexity of reading passages on the 2013-2015 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) materials for grades 3–5. Readability formulas were used to determine the reading levels of selected passages and to analyze text complexity as it relates to the state reading tests. Findings indicated that high levels of readability found in materials may be problematic for teaching and learning and as a result, teachers must differentiate texts used in their curriculum and instruction to optimize the learning environment.

Keywords: text complexity, readability, STAAR

Incorporated among the strands for the 2016 Literacy Summit was *Implementing Texas State Standards/Close Reading and Text Complexity*. High stakes assessments, including the Common Core (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012) and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, have placed much attention on text complexity, which has been associated with raising the rigor in reading achievement. Proponents of increasing the rigor of texts argue a gap exists between texts read in school versus texts required for success in college and careers (Fisher, et al., 2012). In an effort to examine the text complexity of Texas's state assessment, the study described in this paper examined the readability of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) released reading passages for grades 3-5.

What is text complexity? The topic itself is quite sophisticated, or *complex*. According to the Texas Education Association (TEA) (2013), text complexity increases from grade to grade. Texts reflect increasingly complex reading for a variety of reasons:

(1) vocabulary/use of language may be more varied and challenging because it is nonliteral/figurative, abstract, or academic/technical; (2) sentence structures may be more varied, dense, and sophisticated; (3) the author's use of literary elements/devices, rhetorical strategies, organizational patterns, and text features may be more nuanced or sophisticated; (4) the topic/content may be less familiar or more cognitively demanding; and (5) relationships among ideas may be less explicit and require more interpretation, reasoning, and inferential thinking to understand the subtlety, nuances, and depth of ideas. (TEA, 2013, p. 1)

Fisher et al. (2012) defined three components of text complexity, which include qualitative dimensions, quantitative dimensions, and reader and task considerations. This paper focuses on the quantitative dimensions of text complexity. Quantitative dimensions incorporate ways to equate text with readability, or a grade level (difficulty level) with which texts are written, using various formulas relying on factors such as word length, sentence

length, and frequency of words used in the English language. In this study, the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness was examined using readability formulas in order to further understand the difficulty levels of the STAAR.

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness – STAAR

In 2012, Texas students began taking the new statewide standardized test called the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness, or the STAAR, which was the successor to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Significant differences marked the transition from one test to the other, and increased rigor is among one of the differences. The conversion from one test to the other began in 2007, when the Texas Legislature ordered the switch from TAKS to end of course tests for high school students, starting with ninth-graders in 2012. Two years later, the legislature mandated the test changes for grades three through eight. The new tests were supposed to be harder, implemented a four-hour time limit, and focused on one year's academic content (Weiss, 2012). In addition, STAAR was supposed to better assess the national phenomenon of progress toward postsecondary readiness at every grade level. Increased rigor with the STAAR included lengthier tests at most grades and subjects, more rigorous test items, and the assessment of skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity.

The state assessments and accountability system have caused much controversy in Texas. For example, parents, teachers, and 23 school districts in Texas are in the midst of protesting current testing

and moving ahead with plans to create a new accountability system that doesn't depend on standardized tests (Stanford, 2014). Stanford (2013), who blogs about standardized testing, also claims that "nowhere is the movement against high-stakes testing as strong as it is in Texas where all this started" (para. 4). The blog states that 86% of Texas school boards have adopted resolutions which oppose high-stakes testing. It appears that not only is over-reliance on testing an issue, the current rigor of the test has frustrated both teachers and students.

According to TEA's (2013) website, "if we want students to do on-grade level work, we must teach them how to 'tackle' increasingly complex texts each year" (slide 10). The STAAR addresses Readiness and Supporting standards in order to support the state's goal to become one of the top 10 states for producing college and career ready (CCR) students with its 2020 graduating class (TEA, 2013). Texas performance standards include Level I, which reflects unsatisfactory performance, Level II, which reflects satisfactory academic performance, and Level III, which reflects Advanced Academic Performance. The performance standards for STAAR Reading test are relevant to this study, as the criteria to meet these standards indicates a potential problem with test rigor. This study specifically addresses the rigor of the STAAR Reading tests for elementary aged students (Grades 3-5). Our concern is that the reading level of the tests may be at the frustration level for many students. Therefore, the rigor of these tests was examined in depth. Level II attainment, or passing, requires students to answer only half or a little more than half of the rigorous test questions correctly. Table 1 presents data which exemplifies the pass rates for students since 2012.

Table 1

Raw Score Conversion Data for the STAAR Reading for Level II Attainment

Year/Grade	Raw Score	Converted Percentage
2012/Grade 3	20/40	50%
2012/Grade 4	23/44	52%
2012/Grade 5	25/46	54%
2013/Grade 3	20/40	50%
2013/Grade 4	24/44	55%
2013/Grade 5	26/46	57%
2014/Grade 3	21/40	53%
2014/Grade 4	23/42	55%
2014/Grade 5	25/46	54%
2015/Grade 3	20/40	50%
2015/Grade 4	23/44	52%
2015/Grade 5	25/46	54%

Source: TEA STAAR Raw Score Conversion Tables, 2011-2015

TEA initially planned to “phase-in” higher standards/expectations for these levels. In other words, with changes in phases, an increased score for the levels would be required. However, level II attainment, or passing, was initially set very low and the state has been in Phase I of the plan for the past four years. TEA recently announced that performance standards have been scheduled to move to phase-in 2 passing standards this year, but instead of the rigorous advances in standards every few years, the new proposed progression includes smaller, predictable increases every year through the 2021-2022 school year (TEA, 2015). As presented in Table 1, student pass rates do reflect the rigor of the test. A test that requires a pass rate equivalent to a 50% may be too difficult for Texas students. The present study developed from the work of Szabo and Sinclair (2012), who analyzed the Texas Education Agency’s sample pilot test questions released prior to the spring of 2012. Szabo and Sinclair (2012) used readability formulas and determined the passages to be written at a level too high for the tested grade levels. The purpose of this present study was to further investigate the readability of the tests and student performance on the tests to determine text complexity and reading levels.

Readability Formulas

Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) argue that readability impacts text complexity. During the 1920s, it was discovered that there was a way to use the difficulty of a word and the length of the sentence to estimate the difficulty level of the text. By the 1950s, Rudolf Flesch, Edgar Dale, and Jeanne Chall brought their readability formulas into general usage. By the 1980s, there were 200 formulas and over a thousand published studies on readability formulas (DuBay, 2004). The formulas that were chosen for the present study to determine the grade level of the STAAR reading passages are described below.

Lexile Measure

A Lexile measure for a text is the analysis of the word level difficulty and the complexity of the sentence. The measure is a numerical value from 200L to 1700L. The lower the number, the easier the text is for readers. The Lexile measure was developed in 1989 and is currently used across the United States, including Texas. Lexile is part of the Common Core Standards as well as a measure for Career and College Readiness (CCR).

Flesch-Kincaid Readability

The formula is based upon Flesch’s reading ease formula that was developed in 1943. J. Peter Kincaid, in 1975 while under contract with the US Navy, expanded upon Flesch’s original work. The formula uses the word and sentence length per 100 words to calculate a United States grade level (Kincaid, Fishbone, Rogers & Chisom, 1975). The formula can now be found within many popular word processing software programs, including Microsoft Word.

SMOG Readability

Developed by Dr. McLaughlin in 1969, the SMOG grade is obtained by counting the first 10 consecutive sentences near the beginning of a text, ten in the middle and ten near the end. Within those thirty sentences, count only the polysyllable words and round up to the nearest square root number then add three to determine the number of years of education a reader would need in order to fully comprehend the text (McLaughlin, 1969).

Gunning Fog Readability

In 1952, Robert Gunning was an American businessman when he developed the Fog index. The index is an estimation on the number of formal education years a reader needs to have in order to comprehend a text during the initial reading. He helped editors and writers of newspapers and popular magazine write for their audience by eliminating the “fog” (DuBay, 2004).

Fry Readability

Edward Fry developed the Fry graph, while working to help educators in Uganda teach English as a second language (DuBay, 2004). He would later expand the graph to include primary and college grade levels. The reader selects a 100 word passage and calculates the average number of sentences and plots the number on the y axis. The average number of syllables in the 100 word sample is placed on the x axis. The intersection of the two axis provides an estimate of the grade level.

Raygor Readability

Alton Raygor readability index was designed to be easier to use than Fry’s readability. The measure is calculated by looking at three 100 word passages from the beginning, middle and end of the text. The number of sentences and all the words

with six or more letters are counted and averaged for the three samples. The results are then plotted onto the Raygor graph (Szabo & Sinclair, 2012).

Methodology

The readability formulas used in this study included the Lexile, Flesch Kincaid, SMOG, Gunning Fog, Fry, and Raygor. These were the formulas used by Szabo and Sinclair (2012), with the addition of the Lexile formula. The inclusion of the Lexile measure enabled the comparison of the student's current grade level with their Lexile range measure as well as the Lexile measures which have grade level ranges aligned with college and career readiness expectations (Daggett & Pedinotti, 2014; Williamson, 2004).

Online readability calculators were used in this process. Each digital (state released) reading passage found on TEA's website was copied and pasted into a word document. The passages were checked for word spacing, spelling, and removal of non-ASCII characters (ie., quotes, ellipses, em-and en-dashes). Each passage was calculated using readability formulas from four different free, online websites: www.lexile.com, www.webpagefx.com/tools/read-able/, https://readability-score.com, www.readabilityformulas.com. The formula average is the grade level average of the FleschKincaid, SMOG, Gunning Fog, Fry, and Raygor readability results. (NOTE: Due to copyright the 2014, 4th Grade reading passage 1 was not published with the released assessment. The lexile measure was obtained by using the author and title of the reading passage).

Findings

Since 2012, approximately 25 percent of elementary school students assessed in reading have failed to meet satisfactory achievement (TEA, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Study of the 2015 STAAR Grades 3 – 5 reading passages reveals a high readability for those grade levels. Overall, for each grade level, the reading passages were one to three grade levels above the students' current grade level. Of the nine STAAR reading assessments analyzed, only the 2015 5th grade reading assessment was at the students' current grade level. Findings are presented in Table 2, and the overall average represents the average of the reading passages for the specified year and grade level of the assessment. (NOTE: The 2014, 4th grade reading assessment was averaged based on five passages).

The students in the 3rd grade have been assessed at least two to three grade levels higher than their current grade. Over the past three years, the Lexile measure has ranged from 380L to 980L which places them in the upper band of the 5th grade to low range of 6th grade. The 4th grade students have been assessed two grades above their current grade, however in 2015 it was reduced to one grade level above their current grade. Overall, their Lexile measure has ranged from 380L to 1050L, which puts the text at the upper band of the 8th grade to low range of 9th grade band. The 5th grade student has been assessed one grade level above their current grade in two of the three years. As mentioned previously, in 2015 the students were assessed at a passage average of the 5th grade. The Lexile measure over the past three years has ranged from 350L to 1050L which, like the 4th grade student, is located at the upper band for 8th grade and beginning band for the 9th grade. The quantitative analysis of each grade level can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Readability of STAAR Passages

3 rd Grade 2011 (SAMPLE)			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	650	3	5
2 nd Passage	840	6	

2013			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	830	6	5
2 nd Passage	380	2	
3 rd Passage	910	7	
4 th Passage	520	3	
5 th Passage	680	5	

2014			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	830	6	5
2 nd Passage	470	3	
3 rd Passage	850	7	
4 th Passage	700	4	
5 th Passage	950	7	

2015			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	840	7	6
2 nd Passage	900	6	
3 rd Passage	980	4	
4 th Passage	560	4	
5 th Passage	940	7	

4 th Grade 2011 (SAMPLE)			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	890	7	5
2 nd Passage	300	2	
3 rd Passage	880	7	

2013			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	1000	7	6
2 nd Passage	580	5	
3 rd Passage	380	3	
4 th Passage	1050	8	
5 th Passage	950	9	
6 th Passage	420	3	

2014			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	430		6
2 nd Passage	900	7	
3 rd Passage	440	2	
4 th Passage	1040	8	
5 th Passage	930	7	
6 th Passage	640	4	

2015			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	340	3	5
2 nd Passage	950	8	
3 rd Passage	850	5	
4 th Passage	790	4	
5 th Passage	930	6	
6 th Passage	920	7	

5 th Grade 2011 (SAMPLE)			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	680	4	7
2 nd Passage	1060	9	

2013			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	520	3	6
2 nd Passage	990	8	
3 rd Passage	350	2	
4 th Passage	930	7	
5 th Passage	660	5	
6 th Passage	1050	9	

2014			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	810	7	6
2 nd Passage	680	5	
3 rd Passage	660	4	
4 th Passage	890	7	
5 th Passage	990	7	
6 th Passage	910	8	

2015			
	Lexile	Formula Avg	Overall Avg
1 st Passage	470	3	5
2 nd Passage	880	6	
3 rd Passage	790	5	
4 th Passage	730	4	
5 th Passage	990	7	
6 th Passage	510	2	

Conclusions and Implications

One goal of this study was to help state educators with a projection of the text complexity their students encounter when completing the STAAR reading assessment. The difficult texts contribute to the controversy of the current state testing. While increasing rigor in reading is important, educators should consider when the use of these texts is appropriate. Perhaps a testing situation is not the time to use texts above students' grade level. Fisher et al. (2012) assert that "more difficult texts with scaffolded instruction should become part of the classroom equation" (p. 5). These authors advocate for students to receive opportunities to struggle. As current teachers, we are concerned that Texas students are not only provided opportunities to struggle but too many opportunities to fail. With the current pass rate of 50% for third graders, reading passages may be too difficult to assess the skills learned throughout the school year. Historically, there are three levels of texts used in the classroom: independent, instructional, and frustration (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burke, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2012). Text written at a student's independent level is text students can read on their own, without help. Text written at a student's instructional level is text used for teaching them in a way to improve their reading skills. Text written at a student's frustration level should be avoided, as it is so difficult it may discourage a child from reading (Vacca et al., 2012). Teachers have been taught to avoid frustration level material, yet we are testing students at a level above many students' reading level. For instance, data indicated the 2015 third grade STAAR test was written on average on a sixth grade reading level, which would fall within a frustration level for most of the assessed third graders; hence the need for a 50 percent pass rate on the test. If the STAAR passages were written on a third or fourth grade level, they could still contain rigorous informational text, yet the pass rate would not need to reflect such low standards.

Determining readability may provide educators with a starting point for readers. The background knowledge of the readers, their interests, the purpose of the reading and the desired goal from the reading are all important factors in the readers being able to comprehend the reading passage. This study focused on text complexity of an assessment. When measuring our

students reading skills, educators should continue assessing proficiency at a level which fairly and accurately evaluates a student's ability to comprehend on-level texts. However, teachers may scaffold literacy skills during class time with a variety of texts on a variety of levels. Shanahan, Fisher, and Frey (2012) promote the use of challenging texts to foster motivation and improve persistence, as students work toward understanding difficult text. They state, "the problem is, easier work is less likely to make readers stronger" (p. 61). There is a time and a place for the use of challenging text in the classroom—a statewide assessment may not be the time or place.

Other factors related to text complexity need to be examined in future research. For example, passages for each grade level included narrative and expository texts, as well as poetry. Even though the data for the various passages is not segregated for the purpose of this study, it seemed poetry, with its structure and vocabulary, was often written at a higher readability. This may contribute to the quantitative data. Further study related to the impact of the various genres in the passages in this area would be beneficial.

In the meantime, educators should continue work in the classroom to expose students to complex texts. In the instances where a text does not match all students, and differentiation is required, websites and apps such as Newsela (Newsela.com) provide teachers with articles written at various Lexiles. Therefore, a teacher can utilize expository text in the classroom, differentiating the various levels of student achievement. A variety of text genres should be used for instruction. However, we caution against daily STAAR practice which many teachers at a recent literacy summit agreed has become a practice in classrooms across Texas due to the pressures associated with accountability. Students should not come to associate reading STAAR passages and answering sample questions as "reading time" in school. This practice is not "reading instruction." This is test preparation. Reading time in schools should incorporate opportunities for students to read literature and challenging authentic texts during read alouds but also in sustained silent reading (Shanahan, 2015). Testing will unlikely go away. Teachers need to be smart about classroom instruction. Our students need good classroom instruction, not continuous test preparation.

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THE EFFECTS OF PRE-KINDERGARTEN READING SKILLS ON FIRST GRADE READING ACHIEVEMENT

Christy Gammon, M.Ed.
Putnam City Public Schools

Julie Collins, Ph.D.
University of Central Oklahoma

Abstract

Many children struggle to decode and understand words while reading. With the number of children struggling to read on grade level in third grade, a focus has developed on early intervention. The goal of this study was to determine how literacy skills learned in pre-kindergarten affect first grade reading achievement. Data were collected from pre-kindergarten (if the student attended), kindergarten, and first-grade school records as well as from parent surveys about home literacy practices. Data were analyzed for descriptive statistics and correlations. Results of the data are discussed.

Keywords: pre-kindergarten, reading comprehension, early intervention, literacy skills

The focus of reading instruction in the United States is currently on students who struggle to learn to read and the effectiveness of interventions. Concern for the many children who struggle to decode words and understand texts has led to a push for appropriate interventions. One intervention could take the form of attending a public pre-kindergarten program. Students who attend pre-kindergarten are given additional instructional time to develop prerequisite skills necessary for becoming good readers. The research question addressed in this study is: How do literacy skills learned in pre-kindergarten affect first grade reading achievement?

Literature Review

In an effort to prepare children for the increasingly rigorous demands of kindergarten, Oklahoma has provided universal, public preschool for over ten years. Many children in poverty begin kindergarten 18 months behind the average child (Poppe & Clothier, 2005). However, attending a high-quality pre-kindergarten allows children in poverty to enter kindergarten with reading and social skills required to be successful (Williams, Landry, Anthony, Swank, & Crawford, 2012).

Children from low-income families and those learning the English language are not the only children who can benefit from public pre-kindergarten. According to current brain research, children benefit from early instruction, with ninety-percent of a child's brain growth occurring before the age of five (Poppe & Clothier, 2005). All children can benefit from instruction in phonemic awareness, as this attention to sounds in spoken words improves their success in learning to read (Shaywitz, 2008; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Children who have less letter knowledge, phonological awareness and oral language ability than their peers are more likely to have difficulty learning to read (Snow et al., 1998). Children who attend pre-kindergarten know more letters, more letter-sound associations and are more familiar with words and book concepts than their peers who do not attend such a program (Barnett, Larny & Jung, 2005).

Phonemic awareness, the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words, is considered one of the better predictors of the ability to read words accurately and quickly (Shaywitz, 2008). Phonemic awareness can be taught to children who lack these skills. Explicit, systematic training helps students in phoneme manipulation tasks, leading to easier decoding of words (Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 1995). Explicit instruction in phoneme segmentation along with an emphasis on the

letter-sound relationships can be more effective in producing larger gains in phonemic awareness than instruction emphasizing rhyming or vocabulary (Yeh & Connell, 2008). Although one result of specifically focused instruction in phoneme segmentation has been an improvement in the development of rhyme, syllabic segmentation and rhyme are generally skills that have developed prior to formal schooling making it unclear whether intervention instruction in these phonological skills is beneficial in improving first grade reading achievement (Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 1995). Instruction in rhyming should not be neglected, as the mastery of this skill has been shown to produce a positive effect on successful spelling in the second year of formal reading instruction in school (Muter, Hulme, & Snowling, 1997).

With reading being defined as the ability to make meaning out of print, the goal of reading is to comprehend (Eunice Kennedy Shriver NICHD, 2000). Although a child's receptive vocabulary influences first grade reading comprehension, there are other foundational skills linked to reading comprehension (Davison, Hammer, & Lawrence, 2011; Verhoeven & Van Leeuwe, 2008). Phonological awareness, particularly initial phoneme isolation and sound deletion, is one foundational skill that can predict first grade reading comprehension success (Kozminsky & Kozminsky, 1995). Furthermore, mastering the skill of rhyming, another phonological awareness skill, helps promote decoding as readers begin to recognize syllable units in words (Muter et al., 1997). Efficient decoding of words is necessary for reading comprehension in all grades (Verhoeven & Van Leeuwe, 2008). In order for phonemic awareness to be most effective in promoting reading comprehension through increased speed and automaticity of word decoding, instruction needs to relate segmentation of phonemes to letter names or sounds and the grapheme-phoneme relationship (Muter et al., 1997; Nation & Hulme, 1997; Verhoeven & Van Leeuwe, 2008).

Young children are influenced by early home literacy experiences. A child's receptive vocabulary is developed through parent-child reading (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008). Although parents' levels of education has been associated with home literacy experiences in the number of books available in the home and the frequency in which parents engage in reading with their preschool child, home literacy teaching experiences are more important than just story book reading in developing emerging literacy skills (Frolland, Powell, Diamond, & Son, 2013; Hood et al., 2008). Parents should be encouraged to practice literacy teaching activities since children as young as four years old can be taught to isolate phonemes as well as learn letter-sound relationships (Yeh & Connell, 2008).

Four-year-olds benefit from quality pre-kindergarten programs. Characteristics of a quality pre-kindergarten program include intellectually stimulating curriculum and highly qualified teachers (Ackerman & Barnett, 2006). Curriculum should include training in the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, and expanded vocabulary (Barnett & Frede, 2010). To help expand children's vocabulary, teacher-child interactions should include rare-vocabulary and explanations (Williams, et al., 2012). Highly qualified teachers should be skilled at engaging children, eliciting their ideas and monitoring their progress. Teachers' belief systems should be founded in providing developmentally appropriate experiences for children (Ackerman & Barnett, 2006). Thus, the research question guiding this study was: How do literacy skills learned in pre-kindergarten affect first grade reading achievement?

Methodology

Participants

Eight schools in a suburban district in the middle of the United States participated in this study. The investigators visited the first grade classes in each of the participating schools. Parent recruitment letters and consent forms were sent home with the students. The parents who signed the consent forms also agreed to complete a parent survey. Students who returned the signed consent forms were given a bookmark. The parent survey contained nine questions related to the child's early childhood literacy experiences, both informal and formal. A survey link was e-mailed to the parents. Parents who did not have access to a computer were given a hard copy of the survey to fill out and return. The survey was available in both English and Spanish.

Data Collection and Analysis

Reading skill mastery data were collected from each student's literacy continuum card and their prekindergarten and kindergarten report cards. Mastery data of individual skills were collected from the Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST) (Zgonc, 2000). This test includes subtests of six items each for individual phonological awareness skills such as rhyme recognition and production, concept of spoken word and phoneme blending, segmenting, and deletion. Phonics skills such as recognizing letters by name, matching letters to sounds and blending consonants and vowels into CVC words were assessed on a district created assessment used in the primary grades. First grade text levels were recorded from results on the Benchmark Assessment System, (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). Data were coded to report when skills were mastered by semester during the period from Pre-kindergarten through the first semester of 1st grade. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21 for descriptive statistics and Spearman's Non Parametric Correlations.

Findings

While 132 students had permission to participate, we had access to data for both the parent survey and the reading data for only sixty-four participants. This was due to the fact that some first grade students had moved to the school after pre-kindergarten and kindergarten attendance, as well as the fact that the district was in the process of changing the assessments that were used in the early grades, which created some holes in the available student records. Survey data used mothers' and fathers' highest degree earned as a proxy for socio-economic level, recognizing that potential earning capability increases with higher education levels (see Table 1).

The majority of the participating families (fifty-two) spoke English at home, while eleven spoke Spanish, and one spoke another language. Eighteen of the children did not attend a prekindergarten program while forty-six of the students did; although it may not have been the pre-kindergarten program at the same school the student currently attended. Skills considered pre-requisites for decoding were marked according to the semester in which they were mastered between pre-kindergarten and first grade (see Table 2).

With the complexity of the reading process, it is challenging to isolate variables that affect first grade reading comprehension scores; however, many

correlations were found between specific components (see Table 3). Home literacy activities and specific components of reading were correlated using Spearman's Non Parametric Correlations.

Several phonological awareness and phonics skills were correlated with first grade reading text level. Phoneme Blending, consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word blending and phoneme segmentation were moderately correlated with first grade reading text levels ($p < .01$). Consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word blending was shown to be significantly correlated with first grade January text levels ($p < .01$). Long vowel sounds were not as strongly correlated with January text levels, but correlations were still found to be significant ($p < .05$). This study found that the majority of students mastered these skills in kindergarten rather than in pre-kindergarten. Of those mastering skills in pre-K, only one was reading below level in first grade as measured by the Benchmark Assessment System, with four reading above grade level, and one being found to read on level. Several phonological awareness and phonics skills were highly correlated with phoneme blending: phoneme segmentation, CVC word blending, letter sounds, and long vowel sounds ($p < .01$). Consonant letter sounds and long vowel sounds were generally mastered before phoneme blending. Phoneme Blending was generally mastered before phoneme segmentation and CVC word blending. None of the home literacy activities were significantly correlated with first grade text levels.

Table 1
Parents' Education Level

Parents' Education Level	Mothers	Fathers
High School Diploma	35	47
College-Bachelor's Degree	20	12
Graduate School-Master's Degree	5	4
Graduate School-Doctoral Degree	3	0

Table 2
Students and Mastery Time of Prerequisite Reading Skills
 N=64

Variables	Semester of Mastery				
	1 Fall of PreK	2 Spring of PreK	3 Fall of Kdg	4 Spring of Kdg	5 Fall of 1 st gr
1. Phoneme blending	.0	0	4	2	31
2. Phoneme segmentation	.0	0	4	2	31
3. CVC word blending	0	0	3	3	37
4. Consonant sounds	1	4	7	34	3
5. Long vowel sounds	1	0	9	33	3
6. Short vowel sounds	1	2	10	33	3

Table 3
Correlations of Reading Skills
 N=64

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Text level correlations	--						
Phoneme blending	.456**	--					
Phoneme segmentation	.274**	.576**	--				
CVC word blending	.312**	.326**	.576**	--			
Consonant sounds	.096	.395**	.222	.306*	--		
Long vowel sounds	.226*	.005	.695	.534**	.525**	--	
Short vowel sounds	.139	.195	.102	.354**	.712**	--	
	p< .001**	p<.005*					

Discussion

We tracked early phonological awareness and phonics skills to examine the effects of the mastery of those skills on first grade reading comprehension. Reading achievement was reflected in the first grade text level. Phonological awareness skills of rhyme recognition, rhyme production, phoneme blending, and phoneme segmentation were assessed. Phonics skills of letter naming, consonant letter sounds, short and long vowel sounds and blending CVC words were assessed.

Phonological awareness skills are important for decoding words. Phoneme blending and phoneme segmentation were moderately correlated with first grade reading text levels. Although learning consonant and vowel letter sounds were not correlated with first grade reading text level, they were moderately correlated with phoneme blending and phoneme segmentation, which are significantly correlated with reading text level.

Phonics skills, such as letter knowledge, are important for efficient decoding of words, necessary for comprehension. Developing letter knowledge, letter

names and letter sounds, is an important factor in the development of phonemic awareness (Carroll, 2004). Although letter names and letter sounds were not significantly correlated with reading text level, they were moderately correlated with blending CVC words, which was moderately correlated with first grade text level. Learning letter names and sounds teaches children the alphabetic principle. When children know sounds, they can mentally search to see if a heard sound is associated with a letter sound the child knows (Carroll, 2004). While the data showed that the majority of students mastered these prerequisite reading skills during the kindergarten or first grade years, this study was not designed to measure whether the additional instructional time provided a stronger foundation for the learning which would result in the later mastery. It should not be inferred that the additional instructional pre-kindergarten time was not important to the development of these skills. While this research did not find a relationship between the home literacy activities included in the parent survey and the first grade text level of the students, parent involvement in literacy activities continues to be important for school districts to consider when planning curriculum and instructional time for early childhood students.

Conclusions

The literacy skills assessed in this study focused on phonics and phonological awareness skills and whether mastery affects reading achievement in first grade. This study confirmed previous research suggesting that these early literacy skills are vital for later reading success (Shaywitz, 2008; Snow et al., 1998). It is important for this knowledge to be confirmed, especially within the confines of varied educational settings.

Due to time and data limitations, we were not able to study all aspects of literacy which might be important to a child's later reading success. A research study of this type would be best conducted as a longitudinal study, but due to time constraints within a graduate program and an on-campus grant program it was not possible to set it up in that manner. These limitations were magnified by the fact that the suburban school district where the data was collected was in the process of changing from one assessment process to another. As a result, the assessment results for the time period being examined were not all complete and readily available. This lack of records eliminated potential data from being included in the analysis. Additionally, the research would be strengthened by being able to collect the data during the study, rather than collecting existing data. If this

study were to be duplicated as a longitudinal study it would be more effective for collecting complete data sets. A longitudinal study would also help to track students from pre-kindergarten through their primary grades enabling the connection between attending pre-kindergarten and later reading performance to be highlighted.

Components which should be addressed in future research include oral language, both expressive and receptive, and vocabulary, as well as instructional research as to whether explicit or implicit instruction for some of these components would be most effective, and how these components fit into a developmentally appropriate environment for early education. Additionally, many other factors may affect the outcomes found in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes. Class size, small group intervention in or out of the classroom and extended school time may all be important factors in determining the best outcomes for students. Further research will be needed to determine how these components relate to one another.

This project is based on work supported by a Research, Creative, and Scholarly Activities (RCSA) grant from the Office of High-Impact Practices, University of Central Oklahoma.

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~CHAPTER 16~

LITERACIES IN PRACTICE THROUGH LITERATURE: TEACHING WITH GUADALUPE GARCIA MCCALL'S *UNDER THE MESQUITE* AND *SUMMER OF THE MARIPOSAS*

Rodrigo Joseph Rodríguez, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at El Paso

Sandra Murillo-Sutterby, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University–San Antonio

Amy Cummins, Ph.D.
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Abstract

Three university professors acquainted pre-service teachers with young adult novels written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall: Under the Mesquite and Summer of the Mariposas. Through participation in literacy activities using these works in a university course, pre-service teachers gained exposure not only to activities that were applicable to secondary school classrooms, but also to culturally relevant texts. These activities included an author study and literature circles, which contribute to the development of adolescent literacy, readers' connections with fiction, and student identities as writers and readers. An annotated bibliography is included with recommended mentor texts and text sets for the teaching of young adult literature that also address concepts and themes in Garcia McCall's fiction.

Keywords: adolescent literacy, culturally responsive pedagogy, mentor texts, Texas authors.

"Books are blessings, *bendiciones*, because they have a way of linking us again...Books are blessings because they find us wherever we are in life and bring us back home." Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2012, p. 15).

Readers of all ages and backgrounds reveal much about their reading interests as well as reservations when asked (Layne, 2009). Often, their aversion to reading may reveal that books do not speak to their everyday experiences. Guadalupe Garcia McCall's perspective on "books as blessings" can set the stage for teaching her work. By extension, the work of teaching literature calls for educators to rethink and reignite their approaches to revive literacies in the lives of young people. The possibility of young people becoming "wild readers" with reading time, as advanced by Donalyn Miller and Susan Kelley (2014), is a home run for literacy learning and understanding (p. 15). In this article, we feature teaching approaches for reading fiction and developing a writer

identity through the novel-in-verse *Under the Mesquite* (2011) and Odyssean novel *Summer of the Mariposas* (2013). Research-based methods are considered to promote the teaching of the traditional classics with contemporary literature. Discussion and writing prompts are provided along with an annotated bibliography to support adolescent literacy and academic writing.

About the Novelist

Guadalupe Garcia McCall was born in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, México, a setting that appears prominently in her poetry and novels (Rodríguez and Hinton, 2014). When she turned six, she immigrated with her family to the United States and grew up in Eagle Pass, Texas, the neighbor city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila. Both the states of Texas and Coahuila are prominent settings for her two novels and many of her poems. Garcia McCall pursued her studies in theatre arts and

English at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. Currently, she is a high school English language arts teacher near San Antonio.

Garcia McCall, a keynote speaker at the 2016 Literacy Summit, is the author of the novel-in-verse *Under the Mesquite* (2011), which received numerous honors and awards that include the Pura Belpré Author Award for Narrative, the Tomás Rivera Children's Book Award, and *The Kirkus Review's* Best Teen Books of 2011. In *Under the Mesquite*, readers meet Lupita and her younger siblings who take on numerous responsibilities while their mother battles cancer. We witness Lupita grow up as a reader, a thinker, and a writer, who later pursues higher education.

Summer of the Mariposas (2012) takes readers on a magical retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey* in the borderlands. *Summer of the Mariposas* received numerous honors and awards that include the Westchester Young Adult Fiction Award, the Texas Lone Star Reading List, and the *School Library Journal's* Best Books of the Year for 2012. Odilia and her four sisters travel a long journey with many trials and tribulations—far from the Peloponnese and Ithaca—into the Texas-México borderlands. In the "Author's Note," Garcia McCall reveals:

I have always been fascinated by the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors, the *Aztecas*. Their culture, their scientific observations, their religion, their architecture, their language, their myths and legends—everything about them is extraordinary. I wanted to write a story that brought all the magic and wonder of my ancestors to my readers. I wrote *Summer of the Mariposas* with the intention of showcasing both our modern and ancient *mitos y leyendas* by juxtaposing them against one of the greatest stories ever told, *The Odyssey*. (p. 335)

Garcia McCall's sense of purpose as a writer can be a guide for the teaching of her works to reimagine the role of literature today and find ways to activate literacies in the lives of adolescents. An author study is an opportunity for young readers and writers to meet a novelist who works across all genres.

Approach: Author Studies and Ethnic Studies

Educators look for creative ways to motivate students to engage in reading for recreational and instructional purposes. Students' interest in reading can be piqued when they know about the person who wrote or illustrated the books they will be reading. Fostering these connections is particularly urgent in a state that has not adequately included Mexican American heritage in

curricula although over half of Texas K-12 students are Latinx and deserve exposure to accomplishments and literary works by Latinx people. As Garcia McCall (2016b) has written: "To be able to write the Latino cultural experience is very rewarding because it allows me to showcase the beauty of our traditions, illustrate what is in our hearts, give us voice, express our concerns, illustrate our struggles and fears, and highlight our hopes and dreams" (p. 30).

In September 2015, the 20th anniversary of the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award was celebrated at Texas State University and recognized authors and illustrators of literature that depict the Mexican American experience. Literacy and performing arts led by children were enacted via dances, drama, and art work created to bring to life various author's literary works. The children and teachers made their joy of reading visible through their efforts and creativity. While engaged in author inquiries, the children became aware of the people engaged in the making of books as well as the celebrated authors. In the following section, the author study approach is introduced with award programs for literary works, ways of integrating one of Garcia McCall's novels as an instructional project, and promoting elements of literacy among preservice teachers for their future students' reading lives.

An author's study is a unit that gives children the opportunity to explore deeply into the life of an author and their body of works. The author and poet Alma Flor Ada describes her author visits as extraordinarily amazing moments, which are "touched by the ingenuity of the teachers and the imagination of the children" (2003, p. 150). Reputable educational websites with teacher voices such as *ReadWriteThink* and *Reading Rockets*, also known as *¡Colorín Colorado!* in the Spanish-language version, strongly advocate for author studies (*ReadWriteThink*, 2011). Author studies are literature-based and are widely used by educators, because the format integrates the curriculum various elements of literacy while boosting their literacy skills and building a community of readers. Overall, author studies motivate children to learn.

Conducting an author unit introduces culturally relevant books to young readers who are learning to speak a second language in a dual language or bilingual education classroom. For instance, Ada (2003) reminds us that children can find world cultures both engaging and fascinating, and they can learn about human cultures and their global neighbors through books. When children make cultural connections to authors and their artistic and literary works, it encourages them to write and publish their own stories. In two distinct reading courses, the teacher educators used Garcia McCall's novel-in-verse

Under the Mesquite as a tool for literacy learning and instruction.

Author Studies, Literacy Projects, and Literary Awards

As a major project for bilingual teacher candidates at Central University (pseudonym), preservice teachers must complete an author study in a university course, which is designed for dual language and bilingual education classrooms and taught wholly in the Spanish language. The instructional project introduces elements of literacy and promotes culturally relevant teaching and literature about Latino-origin people among preservice teachers who will be teaching second language learners. The goal is for preservice teachers seeking bilingual certification to meet the Bilingual Educational Standards outlined in the domains, competencies, and standards of the Texas Education Agency (2016).

Before starting a unit, the university students are provided background knowledge and discuss their own prior knowledge. As the beginning of each semester in the literacy course, the instructor reads several picture books aloud and briefly discusses the content, authors, and illustrators. In addition, students examine and discuss book reviews and evaluate the critical commentary. After a few instructional lessons based on the books under study, the students develop a knowledge base of children's and young adult literatures and are ready to scaffold concepts and content into an author study of their own.

The pre-service teachers are introduced to three Latinx-themed book awards to further emphasize the focus in book selections for the project. The goal is to expose bilingual teacher candidates to literature written by and about Latinas and Latinos in the United States. The three Latino awards are as follows: (1) Américas Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature, (2) Pura Belpré Award, and (3) Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award.

The Américas Book Award

As an international award, the Américas Book Award is introduced first, since it encompasses a more hemispheric interpretation of authors across world borders, geographies, and languages. Created by the National Consortium of Latin American Studies Program (CLASP) in 1993, the honored Américas Award is awarded to authors of literary works published in the U.S. and written in Spanish, English, Portuguese, or any world language indigenous to the hemispheric Américas (CLASP, 2016). Additionally, the literary work must have classroom use in the primary or secondary school levels. Recipients of the Américas Award authentically represent "quality children's and young adult books that

portray Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States" (CLASP, 2016, p. 1).

The Pura Belpré Award

Created in 1996 through the Association for Library Service for Children (ALSC), the Pura Belpré Award recognizes books written in either the Spanish and/or English language or are exclusively published in the United States. Named after the first Latina librarian of Puerto Rican descent who worked in the New York Public Library, the award is bestowed annually to an author and illustrator for outstanding children's and youth literature. The Pura Belpré Award recognizes quality literature written by or about Latinos that best portray, affirm, and celebrate the Latino cultural experience (ALSC, 2016).

The Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award

Created in 1995 by Texas State University (TSU) to honor the alumnus and educator Tomás Rivera, the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award is the only prize awarded annually to honor the most distinguished author or illustrator of children's and young adult literature who specifically depicts the Mexican American experience (Rivera Award, 2016; Valadez, Rodriguez, & Donaldson, 2013).

Studying *Under the Mesquite*

Invariably, pre-service teachers selected the author Guadalupe Garcia McCall for their author study. Following a visual presentation, students wrote reflections using a list of questions from Ada's (2003) *A Magical Encounter* as a guide. Some of the questions and responses regarding Garcia McCall's books *Under the Mesquite* and *Summer of the Mariposas* guide the literary study, with some preservice teachers' responses noted below.

Questions and Responses

1. What was the most important thing you learned?

One student responded that the most important thing she learned was how authors are able to write about personal experiences and are not always driven to write fiction to make the stories interesting and engaging for readers.

2. How is what you learned important to you?

Responses communicated the importance of conducting these types of literacy-based projects such as author studies, since preservice teachers' students learn so much about the authors, their lives, and writing purposes. Some students added that without this project they would have never learned that the author Garcia McCall lives near San Antonio, teaches secondary school, and grew up bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate.

3. How do you feel about the project you just completed?

Preservice teachers stated that they felt proud to have read both novels. They enjoyed the narratives and liked that they were based on true events in McCall's life. Gaining a sense of pride was another reason for their interest, because Garcia McCall is an author and Latina who lives in San Antonio like most of the students. Most importantly, they explained that Garcia McCall and her novels echo much of the students' lives and resonate with their own coming of age as young people. Writing about *la Llorona*, a legendary figure, supports a culturally relevant perspective to the community and validates the students' ethos as readers and thinkers.

During the oral presentations, some pre-service teachers shared that they cried while reading *Under the Mesquite*. With compassion and tears, one student recalled her aunt who passed away like Lupita's mother. She experienced how literature can connect readers and experience across time and cultures through a reading life. Indeed, culturally relevant stories are imperative for becoming human by engaging students to make a leap and bond with literature and the characters they meet. The preservice teachers communicated how Garcia McCall's novels led to their connecting with the characters, because they saw significant aspects of their lives reflected on the pages.

Mentor Texts with *Under the Mesquite*

In another reading course designed for literacy instruction for preservice teachers seeking the generalist 4–8 Texas teacher certification, books by three multiethnic authors were selected to appeal to the diversity of the student population. Students read *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry, *We've Got a Job* (2012) by Cynthia Levinson, and *Under the Mesquite* (2011) by García McCall. The course demonstrates reading as a literate act with attention to developmental writing as a connected part of the reading process and enacts methods for the construction of meaning from and through text. The preservice teachers read *Under the Mesquite* and participated in literacy activities to demonstrate the reading and writing connection.

Many of the preservice teachers who read Garcia McCall's *Under the Mesquite* communicated that it was a unique, memorable, and engaging experience for them. Although a few knew about the author, most were not familiar with her body of work. To further advance the literacy project, literature circles were assigned to complement the readings and discussion along with and reading response logs to promote reflective responses and discussions. Daniels' (2002) approach in *Literature Circles* was adopted with the use of Post-it Notes as a way for readers to capture their thinking. By

implementing this strategy, the preservice teachers discussed the chapters they read in smaller groups and then followed by a whole-group discussion. Furthermore, inspired by *Under the Mesquite*, students wrote a personal narrative to share and post on the course blog. The writing process was integrated as part of the literacy project and provided a venue for students to communicate their voices and perspectives.

One personal narrative, authored by Nora (pseudonym), is shared with permission here to illustrate the connections among the following: (1) text and reader; (2) reader and life; and (3) student (reader) and teacher (author and medium). She shared the following reflection on her schooling:

Ms. Garcia McCall was my eighth grade English language arts teacher, and one of the few who believed in me. I believed it was because she knew how much I carried on my plate. I was a twelve-year-old girl trying to learn a new language and to adapt to a new lifestyle. Life had not been easy on my family during those years. My "baby" brother, Juan, had been diagnosed with Leukemia years back. It returned even stronger in the fall of 2002. Homework always loaded on me. I was constantly having to take care of my younger siblings, while my father worked two jobs. My mother stayed at the hospital with Juan. Therefore, I had no time to dedicate to school. As the first-born, it was a heavy load those years, when making the soccer team should [have] been the only thing that worried me. Instead, I was worried about my father always being tired and worried for my brother, about cooking dinner for my siblings, about my mother's health and not [being] able to see her, but most of all I was worried for my brother's health. Chemotherapy sure was a "magic" word in our home. I was always able to confide in Ms. Garcia McCall. She always found the words that encouraged me the most. She signed me up for a city-wide Spanish-language Spelling Bee and all she said to me was, "You're going to win, and this will be yours," while pointing to a ring. The day of the contest came, and just like she had predicted, I won. Also, Juan had been declared cancer free! I was joyful. Needless to say, I kept the ring, but she never mentioned how her mother had passed, not the similarities in our lives. That explains why she always had the words[.]

Nora, who revealed to her fellow preservice teachers that she had been a student of Garcia McCall's, described her as a tough teacher with a heart of gold. Nora was in Garcia McCall's eighth-grade, English language arts class during the time Garcia McCall was writing *Under the Mesquite*. Loosely based on the author's experiences, the main protagonist named Lupita is a semi-autobiographical portrait of Garcia McCall. Nora's life as an eighth-grader also resembled Garcia McCall's life.

The narratives inspired by *Under the Mesquite* revealed the preservice teachers' testimonies, struggles, and triumphs through a classroom literacy blog. Students wrote about their children, their parents, their spouses, travels, and hardships. Garcia McCall's novel was the medium to gain more insights about the preservice teachers' literacies of learning, resilience, and understanding to begin a teaching life. Moreover, the novel was a link to their lived lives and the lives of many diverse students they will meet in their own classrooms as the teachers of record.

Literary Analysis Approach: More Discussion Prompts and Directions

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English language arts and reading for all secondary grades require students to comprehend literary terminology with poetry and to explain how figurative language contributes to meaning (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Discussion of personification, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, paradox, and other terms works best when studied in the context of a memorable work of literature. In a university course on children's and adolescent literature, pre-service teachers worked in groups to identify and analyze figurative language selected from *Under the Mesquite*. Garcia McCall was declared "the queen of similes" due to her masterful comparisons of dissimilar things in lines such as "*Como bandidas*, we rifle through / her makeup case" (p. 53) and "It feels as big as / one of those hot-air balloon characters" (p. 67). Illustrations of figurative language drawn on the whiteboard provided visualizations. Pre-service teachers learned about free verse or open form by writing poetry of their own, using chapters from *Under the Mesquite* as mentor texts.

Garcia McCall's poems served as exemplars of the free-verse format as the pre-service teachers wrote about a personal experience. The pre-service teachers wrote autobiographical prose poetry that they shared with each other in multiple stages of the writing process. The final draft was accompanied by a self-analysis that described the influences on the composition of the poem and reflected on how genre affected what they expressed. Presenting the poetry aloud echoes Lupita's own University Interscholastic League (UIL) experiences that appear in the novel. This permits students to experience literacies in practice.

Pre-service teachers reading *Summer of the Mariposas* were struck by its parallels with *The Odyssey*, supportive of curricular inclusion. Connections include the quest motif, magical gifts, obstacles, helpers, and

thematic concerns such as the importance of proper burial and the emphasis on going home and finding out what "home" means. The juxtaposition of cultures with rich mythical histories further suggests possible similarities in cultures assumed to have very different beliefs and shows that quests are both universal and particular.

The mother-daughter bond was a prominent theme for pre-service teachers' reading of *Under the Mesquite* and *Summer of the Mariposas*. The author's note at the end of *Summer of the Mariposas* could equally apply to the previous novel; one reason she wrote this book was "to celebrate the extraordinary bond between children and their mamás" (2013, p. 337). Maternal figures abound in *Summer of the Mariposas*, including Mamá Rosalinda, Odilia, the *Llorona*, Inés Pérdido, Cecilia, and Abuelita Remedios. Like other Chicana authors do, Garcia McCall reclaims the *Llorona* story to be positive and sympathetic rather than terrifying, remaking this legend to narrate family suffering, loss, and support (Cummins and Cano, 2014). Such parental roles appear in many novels that can guide discussion and writing for the expository and literary analysis essays in secondary TEKS. Students engage with literary characters and make connections across literatures ranging from the classics and mythical figures to contemporary classics and characters.

Conclusion: Books as Blessings

"There is no Frigate like a Book / to take us Lands away," writes Emily Dickinson in acknowledgement of human imagination to either discover far-off places or escape from everyday life through reading. Likewise, Garcia McCall invites us to consider books for a journey that can be both inward and outward as we read on and bring our experience to the worlds that join reader, writer, and society. Such reading calls for facing the joys, trials, and tribulations that appear in the voyage made possible through literacies. In the acceptance speech titled "Books as Blessings" for the Belpré Author Award, Garcia McCall emphasizes, "I want young people to read [*Under the Mesquite*] anywhere and everywhere, and not be afraid to bless it with the stains of their everyday lives. Because to love it, they must live with it, and that is what reading is all about" (p. 16).

Literacies in practice through literature must include the self and the trials and triumphs that identify with the adolescent readers and thinkers in and out of our classrooms. Thus, the voyage becomes engaging, relatable, and alive for the reader who can continue, grow, and prevail in the journey through books.

Annotated Bibliography

This bibliography provides a brief listing and description of literary texts that can be used as paired texts with the novels. The recommended books include a short list of classics and contemporary classics to increase the literacy interest and rigor among our students. Students benefit from choice in reading selections and also projects that are problem-based to guide their reading, questioning, deliberations, and interpretations. We recommend reading the young adult books listed before decision-making about instruction.

Literacy Connections with *Under the Mesquite*

Herrera, J. F. (1999). *CrashBoomLove: A novel in verse*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

In Juan Felipe Herrera's novel in verse, sixteen-year-old César García lives with his mother and struggles through the painful experiences of growing up as high school student. César longs to be himself at an age that requires many responsibilities. *CrashBoomLove* offers lenses into more worlds and time periods that can be paired with *Under the Mesquite*.

Mora, P. (2000). *My own true name: New and selected poems for young adults, 1984–1999*. Houston: Arte Público Press.

Pat Mora's poems (not a novel-in-verse genre) in this volume are in three sections, as in the metaphoric cactus plant: blooms, thorns, roots. Like in *Under the Mesquite*, each section is strengthened by poems that address cultural and ethnic identity development as well as self-affirmation and defining oneself. The poems introduce various speakers and their conflicts, which include migration, immigration, languages, and family heritage. The book title, which is from Mora's poem "Tigua Elder," refers to an elder's lament about the loss of a Native American tribe's storytelling and heritage in the lives of adolescents. This volume of poetry can be paired with *Under the Mesquite* for conversations on voice in poetry and narrative points of view.

Nelson, M. (2016). *American ace*. New York: Dial Books.

In Marilyn Nelson's novel-in-verse, we meet sixteen-year-old Connor who learns about the complexities of American history, race, and identity. The tight-knit, Italian-American family is woven with the story of the Tuskegee airmen when the interconnectedness of family and American histories is revealed and becomes relevant to *Under the Mesquite*.

Woodson, J. (2003). *Locomotion*. New York: Penguin.

In Jacqueline Woodson's novel-in-verse, eleven-year-old Lonnie writes about his life after the death of his parents. He is separated from his younger sister and lives in a foster home. Like Lupita in *Under the Mesquite*, Lonnie finds his poetic voice at school. Pairing Garcia McCall's novel with Woodson's provides more lenses into boyhood and girlhood worlds and young people's language use.

Woodson, J. (2014). *Brown girl dreaming*. New York: Penguin.

The memoir-in-verse *Brown Girl Dreaming* offers multiple perspectives about growing up that can be paired with *Under the Mesquite*. Woodson offers glimpses into her coming of age as a young African American in the 1960s and 1970s in South Carolina and New York. Her search for a reading and writing life is revealing with discovery, sorrow, and victory. The full memoir or excerpts are fitting alongside *Under the Mesquite* and can contribute to conversations about coming of age as well as the world of fiction and nonfiction.

The following novels can accompany *Under the Mesquite*

Arnold, D. (1995). *Mosquitoland*. New York: Viking Books for Young Readers.

Frost, H. (2009). *Crossing stones*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books for Young Readers.

Guadalupe Martínez, C. (2014). *Pig park*. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press.

Smith, B. (2006). *A tree grows in Brooklyn*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics. (Original work published 1943).

Literacy Connections with *Summer of the Mariposas*

Johnson, A. D. (2013). *The summer prince*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.

Set in a futuristic Brazil in the new founded city of Palmares Tres, Alaya Dawn Johnson's dystopia with a love triangle presents Gil, June, and Enki who find themselves having to tread carefully as they work out their own answers to questions about love, art, technology, tradition, and sexuality.

Bowles, D. (2015). *The smoking mirror*. Melbourne, Aus.: IFWG Publishing.

Twin protagonists in this quest fantasy by David Bowles discover they have inherited shapeshifting abilities and must learn how to wield their powers to rescue their mother. A Belpre Honor Book in 2016, the first book in The Garza Twins series takes place primarily in the Mesoamerican underworld.

Lake, N. (2012). *In darkness*. London: Bloomsbury.

"I am the voice in the dark, calling out for your help. I am the quiet voice that you hope will not turn to silence, the voice you want to keep hearing cos [sic] it means someone is still alive" (1). These two sentences are the opening of Nick Lake's novel *In Darkness*, set in Haiti. Shorty, fifteen years old, is in a Haitian hospital when the walls fall down during an earthquake in 2010.

Saldaña, Jr., R. (2010). *A good long way*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.

Beto's decision to drop out of school is told and analyzed from four different points of view—and all within a day. The lives of Beto, Roelito and Jessy, come through in short, poignant scenes. René Saldaña, Jr. chronicles adolescent life in the Rio Grande Valley on the south Texas–México border.

Whaley, J. C. (2012). *Where things come back*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Reader.

Cullen, who is seventeen, spends the summer in Lily, Arkansas. His life is marked by his cousin's death by overdose and an alleged spotting of a woodpecker thought to be extinct. A sudden disappearance of Cullen's brother sets much of John Corey Whaley's narrative into motion.

Additional Works

The following classic novels can accompany *Summer of the Mariposas* through thematic interpretations and questioning across time with layers of realism and/or myths and fantasy:

Anaya, R. (1994). *Bless me, Última*. New York: Warner Books. (Original work published 1972).

Dahl, R. (2007). *Charlie and the chocolate factory*. New York: Puffin Books. (Original work published 1964).

Fitzhugh, L. (2001). *Harriet the spy*. New York: Yearling. (Original work published 1972).

Hamilton, V. (2006). *House of Dies Drear*. New York: Aladdin. (Original work published 1968).

Lowry, Lois. (2014). *The Giver*. Boston: HMH Books for Young Readers. (Original work published 1993).

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AUGMENTING THE READING OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT WITH AUGMENTED REALITY

Kaye Robinson, Doctoral Student
University of the Incarnate Word

Abstract

Augmented reality can be described as a combination of virtual reality and animated visuals. When employed as an instructional technology strategy, augmented reality successfully improves comprehension for learners in scientific, mathematical, and historical content areas. However, augmented reality has not been thoroughly investigated in literacy. The strategy seems to be a strong fit for use with reading informational texts, a genre in which students struggle. This is a theoretical paper suggesting an application of an augmented reality tool called Aurasma, for use with reading informational texts, in which the best practices of teacher modeling are superimposed upon independent student reading.

Keywords: *augmented reality, Aurasma, informational text, reading instruction*

Informational text is a specific genre of passages in which the author's purpose is to convey new information or clarify previously-held understandings of students (Hedin & Conderman, 2010). The ability of a student to read and comprehend informational text is increasingly emphasized, as the Common Core State Standards are developed to foster comprehension of texts with complexity commensurate to the demands of global citizenship, colleges, and careers in the last several decades (CCSSI, 2012). Such expectations are also demanded by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness, in which text complexity is expected to increase from grade to grade for a variety of reasons, but primarily through the use of text with more academic and technical language (TEA, 2013). At least half the reading stimulus materials offered to students in the United States on K12 standardized tests are informational texts (CCSSI, 2012; NAGB, 2015; TEA, 2013). Currently, the standards seek to balance literary and informational text instruction with a gradual shift from 50% informational text in fourth grade to 70% informational text in 12th grade (CCSSI, 2012; McCown & Thomason, 2014; NAGB, 2015).

When compared to literary texts, several factors make informational text more difficult for students to comprehend. There is a difference in the characteristics of the reader when engaging in informational text as opposed to literary text (McTavish, 2008). This factor is

most likely due to the difference in structure of informational text as opposed to literary texts, of which students are not always familiar and which should be explicitly taught (Read, Reutzel, & Fawson, 2008). To build upon the best practices for modeling with complex informational texts (Fisher & Frey, 2015), the use of augmented reality may provide a strategy to pair the aspects of modeling digitally and allowing students opportunity for guided, yet independent, practice. In this theoretical paper, an application of augmented reality using Aurasma, will be described for its potential to help students with reading informational texts.

Current Best Practices for Informational Text

Since the disparate amount of time spent on informational text in lower elementary grades K-3 as compared to literary text was identified (Duke, 2000), teachers have attacked this issue through strategies of the affective domain (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Informational text exposure in classrooms included read alouds, pairing the text with a narrative text, planned cross-curricular studies in which the informational text was paralleled in other content areas, and an increased presence within the classroom library (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). These affective strategies increase instructional time with informational text, as well as improve the comfortable familiarity within the genre. However, it is the difference in structure of informational texts that these affective strategies alone

will not address; explicit instruction is recommended (Fisher & Frey, 2015; Read, Reutzel, & Fawson, 2008).

Yopp and Yopp (2000) remind us that narrative texts are largely goal based and chronologically organized, but informational texts may use compare/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution, or even other structures. Furthermore, Yopp and Yopp (2000) describe six text features of informational text, as follows:

Informational text often makes use of many of the following features (Duke & Kays, 1998): (a) timeless verb constructions (e.g., “The lifecycle of every butterfly begins with an egg” in *The Butterfly Alphabet Book* by Brian Cassie and Jerry Pallotta, 1995); (b) generic noun constructions (e.g., “Batik designers create a picture in wax on a piece of cloth” in *A Is for Asia* by Cynthia Chin-Lee, 1997); (c) relational/existential verbs, that is, forms of to have and to be (e.g., “Indigo is a blue powder made from the indigo plant” in *K Is for Kwanzaa* by Juwanda G. Ford, 1997); (d) general statements at the opening and closing; (e) use of technical vocabulary; and (f) repetition of the topical theme. These different text structures and features place different demands on the reader (p. 410).

Fisher and Frey (2015) offer best practices for modeling complex informational text through the four most effective aspects of modeling: factors of complexity, disciplinary thinking, word solving, and comprehension. First, teacher modeling based on the factors of complexity of informational text is a high-yield strategy because text complexity can be caused by one or a combination of several factors, such as the purpose, the structure, the language, or the content knowledge required of the text (Fisher & Frey, 2015). To model appropriately, teachers must first read and analyze the text, making some decisions regarding the factors of complexity, and then model the lesson thoughtfully, centering on the descriptive, sequence, compare or contrast, or cause and effect structures being utilized (Clark et al., 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2015).

Next, teacher modeling within the strategy of disciplinary thinking provides context to students, facilitating access to prior knowledge by activating what is known about one who studies a specific discipline. Fisher and Frey (2015) suggest, as an example, accessing scientific informational text through the lens of a scientist, as though it were an investigation. Similarly, teachers model accessing historical informational text through the lens of a historian, focusing on the sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating metacognitive questioning. By assuming the role of a practitioner within a particular discipline as a reader, informational text within the discipline is more readily understood by students.

Another best practice for teacher modeling is through the strategy of word solving. A feature of effective vocabulary instruction is explicit teacher modeling (Cuticelli et al., 2015). Fisher and Frey (2015) describe this strategy as word solving, in which the context clues and word roots are used by students to figure out the meanings of terms used in informational text.

Finally, teacher modeling best practice should include the strategy of comprehension modeling. Comprehension modeling engages readers in the habits of mind during the various stages of reading. Comprehension modeling first helps readers make predictions when reading. Comprehension modeling also helps readers make connections and visualize information to make meaning (Fisher & Frey, 2015; Wangsgard, 2010).

The field of education utilizes instructional technology because it increases both student engagement and learning outcomes (Radu, 2012). This article explores the use of instructional technology toward student improvement in engagement and comprehension of informational texts. Specifically, to accomplish this increased student engagement and comprehension, the instructional technology strategy of augmented reality is proposed.

The Instructional Technology Strategy of Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is a constructivist cognitive tool (Dunleavy, 2014) that allows real world objects to coexist with virtual objects as superimposed information (Azuma, 1997; Azuma, Bailiot, Behringer, Feiner, Julier, & MacIntyre, 2001). Instances of research regarding augmented reality show an increased investigation of the tool from 2004 through 2014 (Bacca et al., 2014), though with only initial stage usage in the field of education. Trends indicated a definite migration from augmented reality to mobile augmented reality in education, due to the proliferation of personal mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, carried by both students and teachers. A review of the literature reveals that the use of augmented reality has not been extensively studied for applications of literacy. Most common uses to date that have been documented include scientific inquiry, mathematical reasoning especially in geometry, and historical context using “sense of place” theory (Chang, Hou, Pan, Sung, & Chang, 2015).

Bacca, Baldiris, Fabregat, Graf, and Kinshuk (2014) assert that even in its early uses, the positive impact documented for the use of augmented reality in education include increased content understanding, spatial structures, language association, long-term memory

retention, collaboration and engagement, and motivation from a review of 58 studies on the topic of augmented reality in education. Despite the content focus area, there are three general advantages to the employment of the strategy of augmented reality: real world annotation, contextual visualization, and vision-haptic visualization (Santos et al., 2014). Because of the breadth of topics and structures that may be found in informational texts, augmented reality seems to be the strategy to best address this variety with facility.

Supporting Independent Practice with Augmented Reality

Once complex informational texts have been modeled for students through their classroom instruction, the use of augmented reality provides a scaffold within the opportunity to engage in independent practice with informational text. The advantage of augmented reality tools is the ability to superimpose virtual resources such as visual images, models, animations, short videos, and additional prompts in context and, as encountered by the reader, transform static text into a comprehensive virtual environment. To access the virtual content, the reader would use the scanning function of a mobile device with a trigger purposefully embedded in the text.

To achieve virtual modeling through the use of augmented reality, teachers need only select the text and analyze the piece for features they would normally model during class instruction. At the points in the text where the teacher would normally stop during guided instruction, a simple trigger, such as an image, symbol, or picture, is imbedded. The trigger signals the reader to utilize his mobile device to scan the image. Linked to the image would be the cues, imbedded virtually, and designed to assist the reader with deeper access to the content. The virtual resources that could be imbedded are limitless, from audio files to text files, to images, videos, or animations. Even digital checks for understanding, prompting and accepting student response can be linked to the triggers, allowing teachers to obtain feedback from the students toward the effectiveness of their reading comprehension.

Using Aurasma to Create the Augmented Reality Experience

Aurasma is an augmented reality application available on both Android and Apple platforms (<https://www.aurasma.com/>). This app enables users to create and share “auras.” These digital auras can be used as an instructional scaffold to reinforce the skills readers have gained about informational text. In other words, a teacher can create an augmented reality experience and model skills required for the reading of informational text. When a student encounters an “aura,” the aura is scanned

so that the reader can watch or listen to the embedded content.

The Aurasma application allows for easy archiving of content through the creation of channels, which can be used to group similar content by theme or by topic. Aurasma also features content sharing with other users, expanding the access to previously-created content. In addition, a significant feature of Aurasma is the versatility in what the application accepts as triggers upon which content can be linked. Aurasma accepts almost a limitless array of images, from logos to graphics to physical objects. This allows teachers to even utilize the trigger images purposefully, perhaps using a certain kind of symbol when linked to a particular modeling strategy. This would help students begin to recognize patterns in texts, making reading practice more effective. A limitless array of images can be used as triggers that make Aurasma a versatile and useful tool for teachers modeling the reading of informational text. As long as the trigger has enough depth to be uniquely recognized in the viewfinder of the application, then the trigger is acceptable. Text, pictures, logos, or combinations of such images can all be used as triggers.

The content that can be linked to the triggers when using Aurasma is equally as versatile. Video files, audio files, images, holograms, animations, web-based user input surveys, and even additional text can all be associated with a trigger, creating differentiated and uniquely personalized learning materials. With the flexibility of uses available with Aurasma, a teacher can potentially individualize instruction for the reading of informational text through purposefully designed, yet digitally embedded, cues modeling the four best practices of teacher modeling and other metacognitive strategies to help develop effective characteristics of the reader within this genre.

Finally, whether using the tool as a teacher who is designing instructional content or as a student who is accessing virtual instruction, Aurasma is an application that is easy to use. To get started, a teacher need only download the free app and create a free account. Then, virtual content can be saved within the account, organized by channel, and linked to any trigger the teacher selects within the informational text. Cues and instructions within the app regarding uploading content, saving as channels, and linking to triggers are intuitive, but detailed, clear, and easy-to-follow instructions are also available. Students, then, must also download the free app and subscribe to his teacher’s channel to access the purposefully-designed instructional materials for the selection of informational text. Accessing the augmented reality content occurs automatically once the student launches the app and points the device at the trigger image.

Conclusions

Augmented reality is a strategy to make informational texts more accessible to students because it enables pairing of instructor-led modeling with independent reading. The strategy uses digital literacy skills to engage the 21st century learner in reading. It also helps students manage complex text features within the structure of informational texts independently, building

their ability to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school (CCSSI, 2012). When married to the four best practices for modeling informational text, the use of augmented reality potentially presents an appropriate scaffold in the reading comprehension of informational text as compared to more familiar genres. The technology may uniquely allow for the support of effective teacher modeling practices within the gradual release to more independent reading.

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EXPLORING PRESERVICE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' LITERACY PRACTICES AROUND HEALTH AND FITNESS

Ann D. David, Ph.D.

University of the Incarnate Word

Abstract

Disciplinary literacy within physical education (PE) is poorly understood. Interviews with preservice PE teachers regarding their use of reading and writing to stay fit and healthy revealed a range of literacy practices not yet identified in the research or professional literature. This article reports on a qualitative, interview-based study exploring preservice PE teachers' literacy practices as part of their health and fitness routines. Six of the seven preservice PE teachers used reading of traditional print materials, four of the seven used writing, and all but one used digital technologies across a range of platforms and for a range of reading and writing purposes.

Keywords: *disciplinary literacy, preservice teachers, health and fitness*

The typical physical education (PE) class in a high school is likely focused on learning and playing a range of sports or, perhaps, exercising by running or lifting weights. Students in a PE class expect to exercise or play sports, and their teachers expect to lead students in these activities. Neither teachers nor students expect, and might actively resist, an assignment to read a novel or write a research paper. Unfortunately, moves to infuse literacy across the curriculum, including in PE (Ballinger & Deeney, 2006), often result in reading and writing tasks only slightly modified from their English language arts roots. This mismatch in literacy practices and domains exists because there is little in the professional literature identifying literacies authentic to the discipline of physical education, health, or fitness, or how to integrate those literacy practices into PE. Teachers are put in the position, then, of implementing policies requiring literacy in their courses with few resources to do it with any fidelity to their discipline. Both students and teachers, understandably, become disenchanted with literacy, and maybe even PE. PE, and physical activity generally, are seen as essential to a good school, and necessary given the skyrocketing obesity rates among children and young adults (White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, 2010). Physical activity during school is correlated with increased test scores and better attendance rates. So work to improve the teaching and learning that happen in a PE classroom can have consequences that last long after any particular gym class is over (Alliance for a Healthier

Generation; Partnership for a Healthier America; President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition, and SHAPE America, 2016).

This article extends a conversation around disciplinary literacy in the PE classroom through reporting on qualitative, interview-based study into the literacy practices that preservice PE teachers engage in around their personal health and fitness. The following research question guided the inquiry: How do preservice teachers use literacy, broadly defined, in their health and fitness practice? By developing a richer understanding of disciplinary literacy in PE, this project lays the groundwork for research that can explore questions of how to prepare preservice PE teachers to apply theoretical understandings of disciplinary literacy to their planning and instruction, and whether or not integrating literacy into the PE classroom improves students' health and fitness.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Disciplinary literacy (Shanahan, Shanahan, & Misischia, 2011; Draper, Broomhead, Jensen, Nokes, & Seibert, 2010) points toward teaching the literacies authentic to a particular discipline, not generalized academic reading or writing strategies. Teaching these disciplinary literacies is necessary because "literacy avoidance in content area classes is at odds with student

learning needs and the reality of the subject matter” (Shanahan, et al., 2011, p. 395). In PE class, research points to literacy living somewhere between nonexistent and traditional academic literacies mapped onto PE instruction. Three examples of those traditional academic literacies used in a PE classroom include graphic organizers (Buell and Whittaker, 2001), reading poems (Marlett & Gordon, 2004), and practicing sight words (Solomon and Murata, 2008). While some initial work has been done around adapting different genres (Ballenger & Deane, 2006), like expressive writing (Wentzell, 1989) or journaling, to the PE classroom, the impact of these findings has not been measured. On the other hand, research indicates that literate tasks like reading alphabetic or numerical texts, journaling (Behrman, 2004; Kent, 2012; 2014), making charts or diagrams, or motif writing (Venable, 1998) are already a part of team sports, individual sports, and personal health and fitness practices, though not the PE classroom. With no research reporting on the extent of disciplinary literacy practices in PE classrooms, and my own anecdotal experience observing in multiple PE classrooms in a variety of communities, it seems as though few of these authentic literacy practices have found wide-spread implementation in PE classrooms in schools. Further, professional articles linking literacy and PE rarely weave in existing research on disciplinary literacy from the field of literacy, continuing to focus on content literacy strategies that may not support content learning in PE.

Further complicating the relationship between PE and literacy is preservice PE teachers’ lack of experience with authentic literacy practices. Research has repeatedly shown that preservice teachers’ beliefs about literacy instruction, level of preparation in literacy practices, and understanding of how literacy functions in their discipline influence how they teach literacy (O’Brien & Stewart, 1990). Many content teachers feel that:

Strategies offered by content literacy researchers are not particularly efficient for the kinds of classes they teach and for the demands they face as purveyors of content... [they] reject the idea that they are the best people to teach the conventions of literacy in their disciplines (Moje, 2008, p. 98)

By reporting on the literacy practices the participants are already using for their own health and fitness, this article acknowledges one way toward integrating literacy into PE in an authentic way.

Methodology

This article reports on a qualitative study that focused on identifying the literacy practices preservice teachers utilize to maintain their own health and fitness.

The project seeks, ultimately, to improve preservice PE teacher education as it relates to disciplinary literacy because preservice teacher education coursework has the potential to change preservice teachers’ practices and beliefs about teaching (Britzman, 2003; Grossman, 1990), particularly around literacy (Morgan & Pytash, 2014). But, first, a more complete accounting of preservice PE teachers’ literacy practices is necessary to understand what authentic disciplinary literacy practices are within PE.

Participants

Seven preservice PE teachers (Table 1) at a private university in Texas, with an undergraduate student body of 4600, participated in interviews. Approximately 40 percent of the all-level teacher certification program (approximately 46 students) at the university are kinesiology majors minoring in education. All are required to take a course focused on disciplinary literacy as part of their education minor before becoming a teacher candidate. Disciplinary literacy is also an element of the two pedagogy courses required of teacher candidates.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews (Merriman, 2001) focused on the preservice PE teachers’ literacy practices surrounding health and fitness were used as the primary data collection tool (Figure 1). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, two participants shared documents and artifacts that they used to track their own health and fitness. Documents and artifacts were photographed.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis I employed followed a constant-comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriman, 2001). Each transcript was read multiple times and themes within the data emerged, which I noted in analytic memos. Initial themes included caring, identity, community, influences, and future classrooms. The iterative coding process followed, continually moving through the entire data corpus of interview transcripts, notes, memos, and documents, highlighting key excerpts that fit the themes that had emerged within the memos. As those themes were refined, I identified codes, including genre, process, purpose, community, identity, competition, and influence. This article reports the findings from the codes: genres, purposes, and processes. In focusing on these codes, the variety of literacy practices and the range of ways in which those practices fit into preservice PE teachers’ health and fitness routines became clear.

Table 1
Study Participants

Name (pseudonyms) and level	Interview date	Phase in teacher certification program during first interview	Relevant demographic details
Anna Graduate/MAT	October 23, 2015	Teacher candidate	Mid-20s, Latina
Caleb Graduate/MAT	September 14, 2015	Student teacher	Army officer, mid-30s, white male
Barbara Undergraduate	August 28, 2015	Teacher candidate	Traditional undergraduate, early-20s, white female
John Undergraduate	December 17, 2015	Student teacher	College athlete, mid-20s, white male
Kevin Undergraduate	September 24, 2015	Declared minor	Army veteran, mid-50s, African American male
Miguel Undergraduate	September 3, 2015	Teacher candidate	Traditional undergraduate, early-20s, Latino
Steven Undergraduate	August 28, 2015	Teacher candidate	Army veteran, mid-30s, Latino

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Describe the ways you use reading in your health and fitness routines, this could include personal routines or routines for a sports team.
 - a. Do you read tutorials online, subscribe to fitness magazines, read something you wrote?
2. How did you learn to use reading in these ways?
 - a. Did a coach show you? Family member? Did you just figure it out? At what age?
3. Describe the ways you use writing in your health and fitness routines.
 - a. Do you keep a fitness journal? Do you track your workouts?
4. How did you learn to use writing in these ways?
 - a. Did a coach show you? Family member? Did you just figure it out? At what age?
5. How regularly do you use reading or writing in your health and fitness routines?
 - a. Once a week, all the time, etc?
6. What habits or routines support you in using reading and writing in your health and fitness routines?
 - a. Do you write things down immediately after your workout? Doing it a long time?
7. How much (daily, weekly, sometimes) do you use digital technology in your health and fitness routine?
 - a. Apps, GPS trackers, FitBits, etc.
8. How do you use the data these technologies collect?
9. What habits or routines prevent you from using reading and writing in your health and fitness routines?
 - a. Why don't you use these things? How do to know you're doing what you should be?
10. How do you envision using for reading and writing in your future PE class?
11. How is that vision influenced by your experiences in PE classes?
12. How is that vision influenced by your field experiences (if you have had them)?
13. How is that vision influenced by your experiences outside of formal PE class?

Stimulated Recall Protocol

1. Describe the purpose and audience for this document.
2. Who wrote this document?
3. How do you use the document?
4. Are there other documents like it that you've written/used to accomplish your goals?
5. Is this a document you might use with your future students/athletes?

Figure 1. Semi-structured interview protocol

Findings

The following sections report on preservice teachers’ literacy practices across reading, writing, and digital domains. Briefly, six of the seven preservice PE teachers drew on a range of literacy tools and practices to engage in their health and fitness routines. Six of the seven used reading of traditional print materials to gather information, expand their knowledge, and support the development of personal fitness plans and routines. Four of the seven also used writing, specifically logs and notes

to aid memory. Lastly, all but one used digital technologies across a range of platforms and for a range of reading and writing purposes. In choosing to present the findings organized in this way, I highlight the range of literacy practices these preservice teachers are engaging in, not the ways in which particular individuals enacted their constellation of literacy practices (Table 2). Also, in focusing on the literacy practices, I can discuss the link between the reported practices and more generalized literacy skills often valued in school settings.

Table 2
Overview of Findings

Participant	Reading	Writing	Digital
Anna	✓	✓	✓
Caleb	✓	✓	✓
Barbara	✓	✓	✓
John	✓		✓
Kevin	✓		✓
Miguel			
Steven	✓	✓	✓

Reading: Gathering Information

Traditional print materials, specifically books and magazines, were key tools that several participants relied on for keeping up with sports teams, developing their health and fitness, and developing their coaching and training abilities. Books were important to Caleb, Steven, and Kevin, who all cited them as reputable sources of information. Steven and Kevin both read books by or about famous athletes or fitness figures. Steven claimed a library of fitness books, including Arnold Schwarzenegger’s biography and encyclopedia of body building. Kevin’s reading list included Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, and Wilt Chamberlain. Kevin said that reading books like these “gave me a lot of insight on how athletes think,” while also helping him consider how to support his students to “be the best they can and prosper in health and in their life.” Lastly, Kevin and Caleb both used books on training and coaching that were recommended to them as part of their work in the military.

Barbara and Steven both mentioned magazines, specifically *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN Magazine*, as places to keep up with sports teams. Further, popular health magazines include “workout tips or workout plans” that Barbara and Anna both use to improve their exercise routines. Anna reads both men’s and women’s health magazines, and peer reviewed journals, looking for nutritional information. She examines multiple sources because “I feel like if you read the same thing from a lot of different sources, I feel like it [the idea] is backed up.” Important to note is that not all the preservice PE teachers

take this approach. John rejected magazines as a source of nutritional information. In high school, he used to go “article by article about how you are going to keep up your diet,” gaining information about particular “strict diets,” supplements, and how to count calories. But in college those literacy practices did not serve him in the same way they did in high school and he left them behind, “honestly, I think all that stuff is bogus.” He acknowledged, though, that “If you are a college athlete...you know your body so well at that point. You know what works for you and what doesn’t.” So while John rejected magazines for himself, he saw that others may reading as a resource to learn.

These preservice PE teachers, then, are all reading as part of their health and fitness practices. Anna’s looking across multiple sources for confirmation, while being attentive to the source of the information, is a traditional academic literacy practice usually associated with research papers. Even Barbara and Steven reading up on a sports team is reading for a specific purpose that the preservice PE teachers identified themselves. Further, identifying reliable sources of information, including books, magazines, and journals, is a key skill for a reader. And, finally, reading books recommended by experts, to gain information or new perspectives, are also literacy practices schools expect students to engage in.

Writing: Logging and Recalling

Preservice PE teachers generally used writing to log workouts or food, or to jog their memories. Caleb

said it best, when asked about the logging or tracking of information:

I think that is absolutely essential... You have to be able to track your progress and that's the whole thing with fitness. If you just go to the gym and throw some weights around and then the next day you throw the weights around... What you are doing?

Other preservice teachers articulated the same key concepts around their use of activity logs, regardless of the type of log they used. Barbara admitted that she was most likely to use her log "When I feel really good. When I feel like there was a productive work out, I'm more prone to write right it down afterwards or during, actually." Steven approached keeping a log from the opposite perspective. He "yo-yoed" in and out of fitness and "if I know that I am coming back, then I don't keep the journal right away, but eventually what I will do is I will keep track of things." Anna's claim that her journal is "not as detailed, though, as I like it to be" was a common theme among the preservice teachers who use paper journals to log their health and fitness.

While logging is a form of memory aid in the process of completing of a long term goal, two of the participants used writing to aid recall. In the first example, Barbara took a dry erase marker to the gym and reported that "I write on the mirror what I am doing, so I kind of remember. Just as like a note to myself." Barbara also talked about seeing other people in the gym looking at her notes and copying her routine, or copying her practice of writing on the mirrors. A very different practice, though still focused on recall, was Caleb's use of a notebook to support his work as a trainer. During our interview, he was teaching weightlifting at a nearby military base, and he reported that "my notebook from that course [is] in the front seat of my car right now. I was reading that the other day... I still look at my notes... on the fundamentals, again, to make sure that I have that down."

While Barbara's was an ephemeral recall aid, and Caleb's for long-term use, both practices served their purposes well and were appropriate to the individual's health and fitness routine. In both examples, though, the preservice PE teachers are demonstrating traditional academic literacies of list making and note taking. Further, the logging or tracking of fitness and nutrition information was another constant. These logs are part of the same tradition of writer's notebooks (Bomer, 2011) or science notebooks (Huerta, Tong, Irby, and Lara-Alecio, 2016), but they are an expression of the literacy practices appropriate for PE, for health and fitness.

Interacting with the Digital

For six of the seven preservice teachers, digital technologies were a component of their literacy practices around their health and fitness routines. They read

articles or blog posts, watched fitness or motivational videos, gathered information across a range of contexts, and logged or tracked health and fitness information. John's purpose-driven approach to online material echoed that of most of the preservice teachers. "If I have a question on something, I will go on a blog and read." Similarly, Caleb, Steven, and Anna looked for videos to improve their workouts, either from YouTube or Instagram. Anna also used Instagram to read inspirational quotes and Steven watched motivational videos by fitness gurus. This gathering of information was by far the most common practice using digital technologies reported by these preservice PE teachers.

Reliability of online materials was as important as it was for printed material. Steven alone named specific fitness experts as online sources of information. Anna, instead, discussed curating her Facebook friends, focusing on athletic trainers or personal trainers who she knew to be reputable through a personal relationship or connections through mutual friends. Barbara deployed her literacy skills when having to research information about coaching track. Her ability to narrate her process demonstrates a level of attention to the literate practice of research.

I bought online journals and some online work out plans from other cross-country coaches, like there is, like, cross-country.org... national cross-country associations... I prefer not to use, like, "How do I run" forums, Blogspot. I prefer not because I feel like if you rely on those you're gonna get injuries...

Barbara's seeking out of answers to her coaching questions, and Steven's and Anna's reliance on known experts, were much more attentive to where their information originated than the process John or Caleb reported for online reading. Neither included a discussion of how they vetted sources and Caleb went so far as to say "just google CrossFit" as a key strategy he implemented for finding information.

Various apps for the use of tracking steps or calories did not factor as heavily into the preservice teachers' processes as might be assumed from their age or experience. Kevin, John, nor Miguel used tracking of any kind. Steven used to use a Nike Plus, but it broke several years ago and he never replaced it. Barbara came to Map My Run only after tiring of driving her running routes to measure the distance. Anna uses Run Keeper to track her workouts. Caleb, with the most extensive tracking process, uses a FitBit, a tracker app, and an app for his gym. He also downloads his FitBit data and runs separate analyses on it in Excel. Notably, none of the preservice teachers were currently using an app to track their food intake, though all spoke of experiences with those apps, usually tied to a kinesiology course. So despite the availability of both free apps, high-quality wearable technology, and experience with tracking apps of various

kinds, most of these preservice PE teachers did not use, or were not deeply connected to, these kinds of digital technology practices.

Lastly, two preservice teachers used a logging or tracking system that was dictated by their participation in an organized sport. As a competitive bowler, Kevin had his statistics, such as high and low games, kept for him by a league secretary. Those stats were then uploaded into a database, where anyone who was registered could see his stats. The public nature of the information ensured that Kevin was in a league commensurate with his skill. And while other bowlers Kevin knew kept their own journals or apps, he relied on these official stats for his own tracking. In another example, as a Division I football player, John's strength and conditioning coach gave him an Excel spreadsheet, "it's kind of fancy", for his off-season training. This spreadsheet included complicated formulas designed by the coach that were triggered when John entered his "maxes", the most he could lift for a particular muscle group or the fastest he could run a particular distance. After every phase of the year, new maxes would be entered and John would do the exercises and durations or repetitions dictated. John's ability to read and enter information into the complicated Excel spreadsheet stands as a key disciplinary literacy practice within collegiate football. He needed to be able to do this literacy work because otherwise his coaches "could tell if you didn't" do the exercises. John would print out the workout page and take it with him to the gym every time, moving methodically through the routine.

This range of digital practices is more varied, and less aligned with academic literacies, than the reading and writing sections reported above. Being able to follow the kinds of strict directions necessary to participate in the world of a competitive sport required a particular set of abilities that Kevin and John cultivated. But not all of the participants needed these kinds of practices. And the fact that only two preservice PE teachers reliably used digital logging raises the question of whether or not to teach these practices as part of the disciplinary literacy practices within PE. Whereas, attention to reliability of sources is a very common academic literacy, and for these preservice teachers, it is a key component of their online information gathering.

Discussion and Implications

The practices identified by the preservice teachers as ones they use regularly can support PE programs in building standards-based curriculum. The national standards outlined by the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America), while broad, are focused on supporting students in life-long health and fitness, embodied by these future PE teachers.

Standard 1 - The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.

Standard 2 - The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.

Standard 3 - The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

Standard 4 - The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.

Standard 5 - The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction. ("National PE Standards," 2013)

All of the standards have space for the types of literacy practices described in this article. Individuals watching Instagram and YouTube videos demonstrating various exercises are working on Standards 1 and 2. Someone who tracks their fitness with a journal or an app is embodying Standards 3. Joining a gym and participating in the community's social media is embodying Standard 5.

And while the TEKS for PE do not specifically mention literacy practices, several standards align with the literacy work these preservice teachers were doing:

- 4(G): design and implement a personal fitness program
- 4(H): evaluate consumer issues related to physical fitness such as marketing claims promoting fitness products and services
- 5(D): analyze the relationship between sound nutritional practices and physical activity
- 5(F): analyze methods of weight control such as diet, exercise, or combination of both

So with evidence of literacy practices within health and fitness that align with both state and national curriculum standards, the next phase of research can follow two complimentary paths, both focused on the teacher preparation coursework the preservice PE teachers complete.

Given these preservice PE teachers' responses to questions about their literacy practices around health and fitness, there are authentic literacy practices within PE. Reading magazine articles and watching Instagram videos to improve their workout routines, tracking their workouts with journals and apps, or writing workout plans on the gym mirrors with markers; these are the practices that these preservice teachers are using most often. These tools and practices serve the purposes that these individuals need in the midst of staying healthy, working out, and coaching. Their practices are not the content area reading practices of T-charts and graphic organizers

(Buell & Whittaker, 2001), reading poems (Marlett & Gordon, 2004), or spelling (Solomon & Murata, 2008). In fact, the practices they discussed using most often are those that rarely show up in the literature on literacy in a PE context. This disconnect between the literacies preservice PE teachers are using and the practices suggested by their professional texts is a central challenge in their preservice teacher education. Aligning preservice PE teacher preparation with the literacies practices they use in health and fitness, and then following how this alignment informs their teaching is one possible direction for future research.

In asking preservice PE teachers how they use reading and writing—whether on paper, mirrors, or screens—to get and stay fit, they revealed a range of literacy practices not yet identified in the research or professional literature. There is no need to assign poems or graphic organizers in the hope of putting literacy in a PE class. Instead, learning how to teach the practices discussed here, grounded in the work of staying fit and healthy, can infuse authentic literacies into the PE classroom. That way, students are playing sports and exercising, while also watching videos, evaluating online information, and logging their workouts, not reading novels or doing research papers. And the teachers, instead of assigning novels or research papers, are teaching students the practices necessary to be healthy across a lifetime.

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MASTERING THE DANCE: A LITERACY COACH CONSIDERS HER ROLE DURING COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Bethanie C. Pletcher, Ed.D.

Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Abstract

Literacy coaches are expected to work closely with teachers to examine classroom literacy practices. The purpose of this descriptive case study was to identify the ways one new literacy coach scaffolded teachers' learning during these conversations. The literacy coach recorded several one-to-one coaching conversations with two teachers in her school, viewed these videos, and debriefed them with her former literacy coach, the author of this paper. Themes that emerged were the coach's use of questions, how she supported teachers' problem solving, and her use of wait time and silence. Through self-examination of her coaching practices, Melinda (pseudonym) made goals for the future, such as engaging in more coaching conversations with teachers, working with a variety of teachers, videotaping her coaching conversations, and viewing them critically through several lenses in order to refine her craft.

Keywords: literacy coaching, coaching conversations, literacy leadership, reflection

Melinda leans into her webcam and holds up a piece of paper where she has taken notes. In large letters, she has written, "BE QUIET!" She has viewed the video of her recent coaching conversation with a teacher, on which we are about to virtually debrief, and she shares this poignant observation about her fear of silences during coaching conversations. This paper details the work Melinda (all names are pseudonyms) and I did together during her first year of coaching. I first explain the process that we used to examine her coaching. Next, I discuss what we found regarding her role as a coach, how she began to look at individual coaching conversations as genuine problem-solving sessions (Stover, Kissel, Haag et al., 2011), and how she realized the importance of silence and wait time. Lastly, I report Melinda's goals that emerged from our work together.

Theoretical Framework

The framework supporting this study is Vygotsky's (1978) *Social Constructivist* perspective, including the social spaces of learning and the notion of the "zone of proximal development (ZPD)." This theory, often used in discussions of children's literacy development, also applies to literacy coaching, as coaching is a social activity between the coach and teacher whereby the coach finds the teacher's ZPD in the

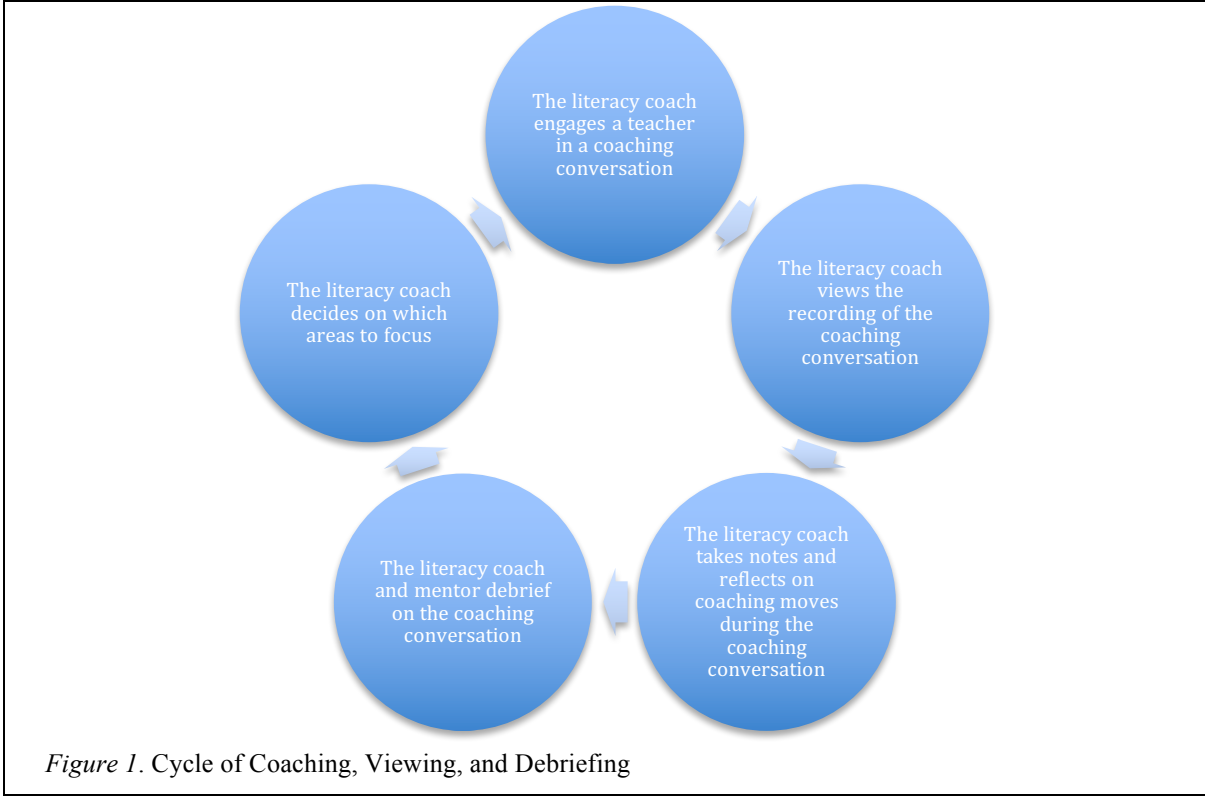
topic of discussion and uses questioning, paraphrasing, and other prompts to lift the teacher's level of understanding on that topic. The premise of literacy coaching is to allow teachers to construct knowledge on an area of instruction, and this involves allowing them to formulate ideas and strategies without telling them exactly what to do. The former act defines coaching; the latter defines consulting.

The Cycle of Coaching, Viewing, and Debriefing

Melinda and I embarked on a journey of exploration of her coaching conversations with two teachers over the course of a semester. Despite living in different states, I purposefully chose Melinda because I had served as her literacy coach when she was a classroom teacher a few years before. When we worked together in this capacity, I saw a blossoming young teacher who wanted to learn all she could about teaching emerging readers and writers. The current project was a natural evolution in our professional relationship. I employed the descriptive case study approach to conduct this research (Merriam, 1998). Using this method allowed me to spend a considerable amount of time conversing with and observing one literacy coach in order to focus on the work she is doing with teachers in her school.

Unable to be in her school in person, I used Zoom, an online meeting tool, to interview her, observe and record her coaching conversations, and debrief with her after the conversations. Melinda and I systematically collected data that would help her explore and refine her coaching conversations and help me coach her in these endeavors (Figure 1). First, I interviewed Melinda at the beginning of the study using a semi-structured interview protocol (Figure 2). The interview lasted about one hour

and was video- and audio-recorded. I asked her to choose teachers with whom she worked on a regular basis, as Ross (1992) stated that coaches are “more likely to be motivated by high-efficacy teachers who believe instructional improvement is worthwhile” (p. 52). She chose two teachers to coach, Becky, a kindergarten teacher; and Laurie, a second grade teacher, both female first year teachers who had also requested to work closely with Melinda (all names are pseudonyms).



She then engaged one of the teachers in a coaching conversation based on what they had been working on in that teacher’s classroom. Melinda promptly viewed the recording and took notes without direction from me, allowing her to determine the focal points for our subsequent debriefing session. I did the same, in addition to transcribing her conversation. She and I then debriefed (Figure 3), discussing her notes as well as mine, and she decided what she might work on during her next coaching conversation. We repeated this same process three more times, once more with the first teacher and twice with the other teacher. I interviewed Melinda again at the conclusion of the project (Figure 2). In Melinda’s words, I was “helping [her] explore and develop as a literacy coach” (interview, 06/12/2015).

I began the data analysis process by conducting an initial open coding of a hard copy transcript of each of the four coaching conversations, using the research questions as a guide. I also referenced the videos for

participants’ body language during the conversations. Three broad categories were then discovered through focused coding, and each was color-coded. Here, pieces of the conversations that related to one of the broad categories were extracted from the original transcript and reassembled in a new document for the next steps of analysis (Saldaña, 2013). In this new document, I added observational notes to each set of dialogue that attempted to explain the literacy coach’s actions, as well as the rationale for each category. At this point, I assigned a name to each category that described coaching moves. I then analyzed each debriefing session and interview transcript by coding for the categories already named, and again extracting pieces from the original transcript and pasting them into the document containing the coded data. It was from this set of analyzed data that I was able to gather and explain the findings as related to the original research questions.

Before Coaching

- How often do you currently meet for formal one-to-one coaching conversations with teachers on your campus?
- Where do these conversations typically occur?
- What are some recent topics you have discussed with teachers during these conversations?
- How long do those conversations last?
- Does your schedule allow you enough time to meet with teachers for individual coaching conversations?
- So far this year, how many teachers have you had at least one coaching conversation with?
- How do you feel teachers respond to these conversations?
- What kinds of goals have you set for yourself regarding how often you would like to meet with teachers for individual coaching conversations?
- Who usually initiates these conversations – you or the teacher, etc?
- Who usually does the most talking during these conversations?
- Do you take notes during these conversations?
- What else would you like to work on regarding conversations?
- What do you do well during these conversations?

After Coaching

- Since we began our study, how often have you met for formal one-to-one coaching conversations with teachers on your campus?
- What are some recent topics you have discussed with teachers during these conversations?
- Has your schedule allowed you enough time to meet with teachers for individual coaching conversations since our study began?
- How do you feel teachers have responded to these conversations since our study began?
- What kinds of goals have you set for yourself for next year regarding coaching conversations?
- In what ways has reviewing videos and transcripts of your coaching conversations helped you in moving teachers forward in their professional development?
- In what ways has reviewing videos and transcripts of your coaching conversations improved classroom instruction?

Figure 2. Interview Protocols for Literacy Coach

- How do you feel about this conversation?
 - Here, the literacy coach will review videos and video transcripts of her coaching conversations thus far.
- How do you feel the teacher responded to this conversation?
- Let's view the videos of the conversations and review the transcripts.
 - What kinds of questions did you ask?
 - What kinds of statements did you make?
 - How do you feel about these?
 - How do you think the teacher felt about these?
- What differences did you see between the first conversation with this teacher and the second one?

Figure 3. Debriefing Session with Literacy Coach Protocol

Findings

Melinda and I critically viewed and subsequently discussed each of her transactions with her teachers, identifying three salient areas on which she would later choose to focus during the second year of her role as literacy coach. These areas consistently emerged across all coaching conversations, debriefing sessions, and interviews. Discovering her role as a literacy coach, having genuine conversations with teachers, and using silence and wait time are explained further in the next sections.

Melinda's Role

During Melinda's first year as a literacy coach, she struggled to find her niche in the school. Having been a reading teacher at the same school the year before had both positive and negative impacts on this transition. Melinda knew the teachers, students, administrators, and culture of the school, smoothing her transition into her new role; however, being a literacy coach meant working more directly with teachers, rather than students, which was an adjustment for her and several of her colleagues. She now started to consider where she fit in the personnel of the school, what her duties were as a coach, and how to navigate "new" relationships with her teachers, and as she said, "I feel like some of this year [her first year as a coach], was just defining my role, you know because they hadn't really had a coach" (interview, 6/12/2015). Each of these considerations affected how she held individual coaching conversations with teachers, as she was beginning to learn when to position herself as an expert, a co-learner, or a consultant (Dozier, 2006).

In the beginning weeks of the school year, Melinda sensed the uneasiness of several of the teachers in her school building. She heard that some of them were worried about her presence in their classrooms because they thought she would report everything to the school's administrators. In one of her interviews, Melinda stated,

I want teachers to see me as an ally and resource, not administration...some of it was just feeling me out.

Was I a tattle? Was I going to go back to administration and say they're not doing what they're supposed to do? Am I gonna come in and just totally change their schedules? And tell them they're doing everything wrong? (interview, 6/12/2015).

Here, Melinda expressed the teachers' apprehensiveness about her presence in their classrooms and understood that they may be confused about her job duties. Melinda's concerns about the teachers' questions of trust are valid, because in order to gain and maintain trust, there must be confidentiality (Bean & DeFord, 2007; Ertmer, Richardson, & Cramer, 2005; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). After spending time at the beginning of the school year building relationships with teachers, she decided that she would build trust by reassuring the teachers that she was there to help, not to

"fix them" (interview, 6/12/2015). Melinda's plan began with meeting individually with teachers and explaining her role, as well as negotiating with each teacher what that role would look like. Indeed, "literacy coaches are not quite administrators and not quite teachers...[but] constitute another layer" (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu et al., 2010, p. 264).

Genuine Conversations

Melinda was also trying to find her role during her coaching conversations with teachers and discussed this frequently as we debriefed. She indicated that her goal when meeting with teachers was to work in tandem. She wanted teachers to see her as "an extension of each grade level," not someone who only provides resources and shows them how they are implemented. She decided that, through regular, carefully crafted conversations, she could shift their thinking to a more flexible mindset, thinking about new strategies and acting as equal colleagues who learn alongside one another (Ertmer, Richardson, & Cramer, 2005). In studies of coaches' conversations with teachers across a few months, Collet (2012), Peterson, Taylor, Burnham et al. (2009), and Stover, Kissel, and Haag (2011) noticed that coaches did just this—provided less direct support and created space for the teacher to problem-solve.

Inherent in this process was learning how to negotiate conversations with each of her teachers because of the ranges in teaching experiences and personalities. "It's like I'm a chameleon," said Melinda (debriefing session, 3/25/2015). For example, the two teachers with whom she worked during this project were quite different, as was Melinda's relationship with each: Becky was "reluctant" to make decisions and needed more guidance than Laurie. During the recordings of her conversations with Becky, Melinda frequently provided suggestions, as in this conversation (3/3/2015).

Coach: What about for writer's workshop – you want to do more individual conferencing? Do they all have to sit at the table?

Becky: No.

Coach: What do you think about that?

Becky: I have some. We can try...

Coach: (*interrupts*) I had a lot of kids – they really did enjoy sitting on the carpet...(continues to explain what she did as a teacher in this situation).

She acted as the problem-solver and expert in this case, as Edwards and Green (1999) noted coaches often do.

Melinda's interactions with Laurie were the opposite, as is evident in Melinda's posture when conversing with her. She commented in her debriefing after a conversation with Laurie, "[The teacher] came in [the room] and I was half laid back in the chair, very comfortable, very casual" (3/25/2015). Melinda's physical stance is just as important as what she says

during conversations (Toll, 2005). It was obvious that these two were friends outside of school, as evidenced by their body language and how their conversation was easygoing and full of laughter. Melinda said Laurie was more “open to suggestions and help” (debriefing session, 3/25/2015), and therefore she was able to use techniques such as questioning and paraphrasing to guide her to solve problems, rather than solve problems for her.

Coach: So far what is the guided reading book study lesson? What does it look like?

Laurie: Well, I have, um, post-it notes that as they’re reading, they could have questions or they come to a word that they either don’t know what the word is or what it means, they mark it with post-it notes. Then when we meet, I ask them if there are any parts you do see that you can understand and so on. So we talk about those and then I usually have a few questions to ask them.

Coach: Alright. So, when they use the post-it notes, they’re using them when they’re reading independently? (4/23/2015)

This is an example of how Melinda scaffolded within the coaching conversation (Cazden, 2001; Edwards & Green; 1999; Heineke, 2010). She listened to the teacher’s explanation of an instructional strategy she was using and then asked the teacher a question to encourage her to talk through the process, rather than give her immediate suggestions.

Silence and Wait Time

Let us return to the vignette at the beginning of this article. Before Melinda could think about how she would scaffold teachers’ thinking during coaching conversations, she had to work on the aspect of her coaching that stood out to her the most while watching herself on video – her use of silence and wait time. Interestingly, Melinda had studied this in depth during her years working one-on-one with first graders as a Reading Recovery® teacher. Yet she struggled with this technique in her work with teachers. On several occasions during our debriefings, she indicated that long silences caused her discomfort and that they are often “awkward.” Although long silences may cause some discomfort during coaching conversations, teachers and coaches will eventually grow accustomed to them. The use of silence shows that coaches are listening and are thoughtful in their responses. She and I both observed that she had a routine of asking questions in quick succession without waiting for the teacher’s response. As she indicated in our debriefing of this conversation, she was already thinking of what she wanted to say next rather than really listening to the teacher, as in this exchange (3/11/2015):

Coach: Alright, so...we’re gonna work on narratives. What’s something else that you would like?

Becky: Talk about topics that you can write about.

Coach: (interrupts) Ok. How would you do that? How would you introduce that?

Bean and DeFord (2007), Calo, Sturtevant, and Kopfman (2014), and Heineke (2010) have written about the importance of coaches giving teachers time to process and talk during meetings. Coaches who wait show that they are listening and that “they value teachers’ thoughts and opinions” (Bean & DeFord, p. 2). Even though this seems simple, sometimes, as in the conversation above, the teacher is reserved, possibly even intimidated to share ideas. It may be tempting for coaches to think about what they will say next rather than really listen what the teacher is saying. Avoiding this habit takes practice.

As Melinda continued to work with these teachers individually, she became more aware of her tendency to fill silences and rush to solutions. In the following exchange with Becky (3/11/2015), she resisted the urge to talk and instead nodded her head in understanding and wrote down any questions she had, so as not to interrupt the teacher.

Coach: How would you introduce that [topic]? What would you do?

Becky: Well, in first grade, we made a big chart...

Coach: (nods head and writes)

Becky: ...with chart paper and they had a little book that they kept all the different things listed in there...

Melinda’s Goals

Melinda, in her last interview, said, “I’ve gotten a little bit more comfortable with these [coaching conversations] over the last half of the year” (6/12/2015). The cycle of coach, view, reflect, and debrief (see Figure 1) provides her many opportunities to practice the skills that she learned with me and other literacy coaches at nearby schools. Bean, Kern, Goatley et al. (2015) noted that some literacy coaches refrain from holding individual meetings with teachers because they are uncertain of what to say. For Melinda, this experience increased her confidence so that she could help teachers study their daily work with children. She decided that her first goal was to schedule more meetings with teachers so that these coaching opportunities happen frequently, and she has committed to doing so. She chose this goal because she knew that her school district would require more coaching during the next school year. She also chose to work toward this goal because she realized, through her self-studies and debriefings with me, that she made strides in her coaching over a few months and had discovered what she wanted to work on as well.

Her next goal, again one that she determined after the positive experiences she had here, is to continue to videotape herself and view these videos several times, each time through a different lens. She wants to ensure that her conversations are genuine and that she and the teachers are mutual problem-solvers. She will look at her use of wait time as well as the balance of the

conversation. She plans to watch her coaching videos to collect counts of how many seconds she waits after asking a question and how many seconds she waits after the teacher speaks. She also wants to transcribe a couple of sessions and tally the words spoken by both her and the teachers to determine the amount of talking by each. Perkins (1998) found that some coaches are unaware that they struggle with communication skills, so Melinda's desire to videotape and watch herself, however uncomfortable it may be, is a brave step in the right direction of developing herself professionally. Others (Casey, 2006; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham et al., 2009) agree.

Melinda's third goal, which we developed together, is to use these coaching conversations to build trust with teachers. She told me that, since this study was exploratory in nature, she asked two teachers to participate who she knew would be receptive to coaching. Her next step then, at my prompting, was to work with teachers who may pose more of a challenge, as they may be hesitant to engage in intimate teaching conversations. She understands the importance of spending quality time with teachers, even if meetings are brief. Melinda spent her first year coaching new teachers, whom she found easier to work with. Now she is optimistic about her

future as a coach and is ready to move on to working with other teachers who, as she described them, were "less likely to welcome [her] in their rooms" (interview, 6/12/2015). Calo, Sturtevant, and Kopfman (2014) echoed this in their work when they said that the majority of coaches feel most prepared to work with new teachers and least prepared to work with experienced teachers.

Conclusion

Rivers (1989) called the coaching conversation a "subtle art" (p. 22). Melinda discovered this to be true as she spent part of a school year dissecting some of these conversations. She entered into this project unsure of what she would learn about herself as a literacy coach and left it with a very clear goal of sharing in the problem-solving with teachers and some strategies for doing so. In Melinda's words, this experience was "eye-opening" because she noticed a mismatch between what she thought she was doing during conversations and what she was actually doing. As we wrapped up her last interview (6/12/2015), she looked upon the eminent school year with "Hopefully next year will be easier since we've done the dance and we can move on."

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