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TEXAS
ASSOCIATION
for **LITERACY**
EDUCATION

A circular graphic of the Texas state flag, featuring a white star on a blue field, a white horizontal stripe, and a red horizontal stripe.

TALE *YEARBOOK*

LITERACY ALIVE AND WELL!
SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE LITERACY
INSTRUCTION FOR ALL LEARNERS

Volume 4: October 2017

Managing Editor: Jodi Pilgrim, Ph. D.
Associate Editors: Laurie A. Sharp, Ed. D. & Elaine Hendrix, Ed. D.

TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR LITERACY EDUCATION YEARBOOK

Volume 4: Literacy Alive and Well! Supporting Effective Literacy Instruction for All Learners

Editors

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

Laurie A. Sharp, Ed.D.
West Texas A&M University
Canyon, TX

Elaine Hendrix, Ed.D.
University of Houston - Clear Lake
Houston, TX

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University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
ATTN: Jodi Pilgrim
900 College Street, Box 8017
Belton, TX 76513
taleyearbook@gmail.com

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Jodi Pilgrim, Ph.D. is an associate professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas. She received her doctorate in Reading Education at the University of North Texas and currently teaches literacy courses for preservice teachers. 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 Reading Association and the Texas Association of Literacy Education. She has served as editor for various TALE publications over the past five years. Jodi's personal research interests include digital literacy and teacher preparation.



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 for 2017-2018.



Elaine E. Hendrix, Ed.D. is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Literacy, Language, and Library Science (LLLS) program at the University of Houston - Clear Lake. She received her B.S., M. Ed., and Ed.D. from the University of Houston Main Campus. She has accumulated over 30 years of teaching and administrative experience, including K-12 public and private schools, with the majority of her time devoted to teacher preparation in undergraduate and graduate Literacy Education courses at various universities with a focus on field-based learning experiences. She has authored numerous online and face-to-face courses, teaching in online, blended, and classroom-based learning environments. She is an active member of local, state, and national professional organizations, currently serving a 3-year position on the TALE Yearbook Editorial Board. Her areas of interest include effective uses of technology across the curriculum, content integration among methods courses, identifying relevant, evidence-based classroom practices, and providing meaningful field-based and clinical experiences.



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Preface

Literacy Alive and Well!

On February 10-11, 2017, the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) held its fifth annual conference. The conference was hosted by Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, and over 330 literacy professionals came together for an amazing professional learning event. The conference theme was: “Literacy, Alive and Well! Supporting Effective Literacy Instruction for All Learners.” The conference included over 100 presentations—research posters, sessions, roundtable presentations, facilitated interactive discussions, and workshops—that provided attendees with research-based best practices to support effective literacy instruction among all learners.

The 2017 TALE Conference was supported by a number of conference sponsors:

Gold Level: Children’s Learning Institute, Express Booksellers, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, McGraw Hill Education, Pearson, and QEP Books

Silver Level: Aztec Software

Friend Level: Crayola, Heifer International, Learning Explosion, Texas Woman’s University, Dr. Michele Wages at Southeastern University

We appreciate the support of our conference sponsors and appreciate their generosity!

On February 11, the conference program included an amazing keynote speaker, Emily Smith-Buster, who is an innovative educator in Austin, Texas. Emily was the 2015 recipient of NCTE’s Donald Graves Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Writing and advocated for ways in which educators may explore literature through critical thinking and socially-relevant texts. Other amazing authors and speakers who were invited to speak at the conference included:

Melissa Leach
Teri Lesesne, Ph.D.
Karin Perry, Ph.D.
Van G. Garrett
Diana López
Terry Thompson

Jeff Anderson
Anne Bustard
Kathi Appelt
Larry Dane Bimner
Cynthia Levinson
David Rice

The following previous Past-Presidents of TALE were also invited presenters:

Sharon O’Neal, Ph.D. (TALE President 2013-2014)
Patricia Durham, Ph.D. (TALE President 2014-2015)
Roberta D. Raymond, Ed.D. (TALE President 2015-2016)

The 2017 TALE Conference was a spectacular event, and this Yearbook showcases many of these presentations that informed and inspired others. We encourage you to read, share, and discuss the manuscripts that were selected for publication in Volume 4 of the TALE Yearbook. We are thankful for your support of TALE and hope you are able to join us during the next annual conference!

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Sharp, Ed.D.
TALE President, 2017-2018

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Professional Learning & Literacy Leadership: Insights from Preservice Literacy Professionals

Laurie A. Sharp, Ed.D.
West Texas A&M University

Alexis Armstrong
West Texas A&M University

Kyla Matthews
West Texas A&M University

Abstract

TALE President Laurie Sharp and her undergraduate students reflected on last year's conference. Through conference participation, preservice teachers gain both pedagogical knowledge as well as knowledge related to trends in issues in education. This invited piece provides evidence regarding ways conference participation can benefit both inservice and preservice teachers.

Introduction

As society changes, so does the concept of literacy and what it means to be a literate individual (International Literacy Association [ILA], 2015; National Council of Teachers of English, [NCTE], 2013). Thus, literacy professionals must engage in ongoing professional development activities that develop their “knowledge of language and cognition, understanding of individual differences, and ability to implement effective practices” (Moats, 2014, p. 88). Through participation in quality professional development activities, literacy professionals enhance their instruction among learners at all levels and within all contexts (Arnold & Sableski, 2016; Petty & Thomas, 2014; Putman, Smith, & Cassidy, 2009; Reed,

2009; Taylor & Gunter, 2009). Literacy professionals who are “professionally developed throughout their careers” have the potential to make a significant impact on the literacy achievement of their learners (ILA, 2016, p. 4).

Similar to other state education agencies, state-certified literacy professionals in Texas are required to earn a specified number of continuing professional education (CPE) hours every five years (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2017). Literacy professionals may earn CPE hours through participation in a variety of professional development activities, such as attendance at professional conferences. Engagement with continuous professional development is vital for literacy professionals and promotes their professional growth as

literacy leaders (ILA, 2010; Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011). Developing a commitment to professional learning and literacy leadership should also be cultivated among preservice literacy professionals (Bond, 2011). By doing so, preservice literacy professionals begin to recognize the importance of professional learning and its connection to improved literacy practices prior to entering the profession.

Each year, the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) coordinates a statewide literacy conference that offers quality professional learning for literacy professionals who serve learners of all age levels (TALE, 2016). TALE's annual conference provides a forum for literacy professionals to share ideas, learn new approaches and strategies, discuss topics of concern, and build their professional networks. The conference format is interactive and motivates literacy professionals to participate in a variety of enriching learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful. Currently, the TALE conference is held for 1 ½ days (i.e., Friday afternoon and all day Saturday) and offers attendees a variety of professional learning events, including workshops, sessions, facilitated interactive discussions, research posters, roundtable presentations, and author panels.

TALE recognizes the importance of supporting preservice literacy professionals and offers a discounted rate for current undergraduate and graduate students. This level of support offered through TALE permits preservice literacy professionals to engage in professional learning alongside practicing literacy professionals. This intermingling empowers both the novice and veteran literacy leaders to facilitate each other's growth (Ziegler, 2012). Practicing literacy professionals offer expertise and experience-driven insights, while preservice literacy professionals bring fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, and positivity. In reflecting on last year's conference, I share the following insights to reveal ways that support preservice teacher participation at professional conference venues. My hope is that TALE members will continue to promote our annual

conference in ways that benefit both inservice and preservice teachers.

2017 TALE Conference

As President-elect of TALE last year, one of my responsibilities was to coordinate the annual TALE conference. The conference planning committee and conference co-chair Robin Johnson, discussed the importance of including preservice literacy professionals at our conference. Dr. Johnson and I agreed that TALE's annual conferences were an excellent way to instill the importance of quality professional learning and literacy leadership among preservice teachers. Therefore, we identified ways to provide access to the 2017 TALE Conference and encourage preservice literacy professionals to participate.

One way to promote participation is through supportive funding. Professionally, I am a faculty member who serves as the Dr. John G. O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. In thinking of ways to promote conference participation at my university, I immediately knew that associated costs would be a deterrent, particularly with respect to travel. Many of the students at my university are from first-generation and/or low-income households and do not have access to additional funds with which to take advantage of opportunities beyond their program requirements. However, I identified two available funding streams at West Texas A&M University that would support the participation of two undergraduate students who were education majors and interested in literacy: the Dr. John G. O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education and the West Texas A&M University Foundation.

After securing funding sources, an application process was organized and opened to undergraduate students interested in attending the 2017 TALE Conference. This process led to selection of Alexis Armstrong and Kyla Matthews, who were both senior-level undergraduate students completing their last semester of required university coursework prior

to their semester-long clinical teaching experience. Alexis's program of study was preparing her for teacher certification at the Early Childhood – Grade 6 level, whereas Kyla's program of study was preparing her for teacher certification in English at the Grades 9-12 level. For Alexis and Kyla, a professional conference was a new and exciting opportunity. After the conference, I had an opportunity to visit with each of them separately to obtain their insights regarding their experience at TALE's 2017 conference.

Insights from Alexis and Kyla: Two Preservice Teachers

Alexis

Why were you interested in attending the 2017 TALE Conference?

I want to teach at the elementary grade level and was so excited to attend my first literacy conference! I didn't know what to expect at first, but I could tell from the conference program that there was so much opportunity to learn at the conference. Plus, I already know that I am interested in going further with my education and want to earn a master's degree and possibly a doctorate one day. So, I knew that being around literacy professionals who attended and presented at the conference would be a great way to learn a lot and make connections.

How did you engage in professional learning throughout the conference?

As my first conference, I was overwhelmed – in a good way – with the available choices during each breakout session! Before arriving at the conference, I printed the conference program and circled the presentations that I had an interest in attending. I'm seeking elementary certification, but I don't have a specific grade level that I want to teach, so I made sure to select presentations for all elementary grade levels.

At the conference, I was so impressed with the presenters and each presentation I attended. I

loved how each session was interactive and provided time for us to ask questions and engage with hands-on activities. For example, I attended a presentation entitled "Induction Programs: A Positive Influence for Beginning Teachers." I was the only preservice teacher at this presentation; all of the other attendees were faculty members at different universities. I chose this presentation because I wanted to learn how new teachers were being supported since I will be a new teacher in less than a year. During this presentation, there was a lot of time dedicated to sharing ideas and discussion about what the presenters shared. Since everyone at this presentation knew that I was a preservice teacher, they asked me a lot of questions and seemed really interested in what I thought. I learned so much from listening to them talk about what they do to support their students as they become new teachers. I am definitely sharing some of these discussion points with some of my professors!

Another presentation that really stood out to me was "Becoming a Word Nerd: Vocabulary Development in the Primary Grades (K-2)." I loved this presentation because it connected to content that I have encountered in several of my reading courses. I already knew how important vocabulary is in a classroom because it is a great indicator of verbal ability. Also, vocabulary development in the early elementary grades is a strong predictor for reading comprehension in the middle and secondary grades. During this presentation, the presenters shared tons of ideas on how to incorporate vocabulary in the lower grades meaningfully. For example, I learned in one of my university courses that a great classroom management strategy is to create class roles and assign them to different students each week. The presenters also talked about class roles and suggested that they could be titled in ways to grow students' vocabulary. For example, the "line leader" can be referred to as the "conductor," or the student responsible for turning the classroom lights on and off can be the "electrician" or "mechanical engineer." This is just one of the many ideas that I got from this presentation.

How did this experience promote literacy leadership?

Before attending this conference, I probably would not have considered myself a literacy leader. However, after attending this conference, I realize that all literacy teachers have to be literacy leaders. In my university courses, my professors have really emphasized the importance of using research, and they require us to cite appropriate research in our assignments. As a university student, I kind of viewed this expectation as something that you do as a student, but I never thought about how it applies to the world outside of the university. I guess because during my field experiences, I really don't hear teachers talk about research specifically or explain how they use research in their classrooms.

However, every presentation I attended referred to research that was connected to their topic. For example, one presenter talked about Carol Dweck and growth versus fixed mindsets, and another presenter talked about research on fluency and how it connects to use of reader's theater in the classroom. Plus, when I interacted with people outside of presentations or overheard other conference attendees talking, several of them were making connections between research and conference topics in their conversations. This has made me realize that a literacy teacher who is informed by research and stays informed is a literacy leader. I also think that a true literacy leader is a teacher who talks about research at conferences, as well as when they are not at conferences. In all of my field experiences, I have only been around one teacher who has done this.

Kyla

Why were you interested in attending the 2017 TALE Conference?

I wanted to attend the conference for the opportunity to learn more about literacy in the classroom. I also wanted to learn how to incorporate what I have been learning in my coursework and field experiences into my future

classroom. Because of my interest in teaching English, I feel as though literacy, no matter what age or grade, should be something that is strongly focused on in any classroom. Not every student comes into a classroom with the same experiences with literacy. As a future teacher of literacy, I want to be prepared to help all students improve their literacy skills in my classroom, as well as beyond my classroom. No student should be left behind due to a lack of literacy.

How did you engage in professional learning throughout the conference?

I attended so many different learning events during the conference! I really liked having choices throughout the day because I was able to select presentations that were focused on the content and grade levels I plan to teach. I want to teach English in high school, and I've already heard from a lot of teachers that they need more resources for students who are below grade level. In knowing this, I attended a presentation called "Vocabulary from the Roots Up." This presentation broke down vocabulary and made it apparent that even high school students don't always have a vocabulary that matches their level. The presenters created vocabulary books with activities that were engaging, interactive, and developed critical thinking skills. The activities in the books can also be easily modified to match students' different levels. During the presentation, I learned how to use activities, websites, and games that the presenters shared to help students increase their vocabulary growth. I can't wait to implement these ideas in my own classroom!

Another presentation that I really enjoyed was "Universal Design for Learning." Universal Design for Learning is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible. I really liked what this presenter had to say because it makes sense to design a lesson that addresses all students. This means that teachers need to design lessons plans with students who have special needs in mind. Literacy instruction should not be "a one-size-

fits-all” approach. Instead, literacy instruction requires differentiation. I like the idea that if I can design lessons to meet the needs of students who have special needs, then the lesson is accessible to everyone.

How did this experience promote literacy leadership?

I attended one presentation, “Creating Elementary Agents of Change,” which focused on how to teach subjects that are culturally, politically, or religiously sensitive in an educational way that promotes peace and civility. The presenter called this “teaching tolerance,” which provides a space for teachers to know who they are and create assignments where students question their own social situations based on race, ethnicity, or religion. Teaching tolerance really requires a literacy teacher to be a literacy leader. They allow for readings that address inequality, empower students to question, and engage students in conversations related to current events and other works of literature. They also select questions and prompts that will help students to think critically.

I loved this presentation because it addresses some of the questions and topics that teachers are often times afraid to get into. We tend to shy away because we don’t know what’s offensive. But this presentation really emphasized how to be a literacy leader and design literacy instruction that allows students to question their own situations, ask questions in general, and come to their own conclusions. Teachers who are literacy leaders are able to get deep into the hard, controversial topics and questions without having a huge dispute in the classroom.

Final Thoughts

Literacy education is extremely fluid, and literacy professionals must engage with continuous professional development in order to be effective practitioners who are literacy leaders (ILA, 2010; Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011). Similarly, educator preparation programs (EPPs) must cultivate professional learning and literacy

leadership among preservice literacy professionals in order to prepare them for the expectations and responsibilities of literacy professionals (Bond, 2011). As future literacy professionals, preservice teachers must understand the importance of professional learning and literacy leadership. However, my interactions with school districts and experiences as a former classroom teacher have made me aware that resources for professional development are extremely limited, especially among preservice literacy professionals (ILA, 2016).

Alexis’s and Kyla’s insights provide some considerations for both preservice and practicing literacy professionals. First, EPPs must identify ways to develop professional learning and literacy leadership among their preservice literacy professionals. By doing so, EPPs prepare preservice literacy professionals for the expectations and responsibilities of the profession while they are still shaping their professional identities (Bond, 2011). There are a multitude of opportunities that EPPs may integrate into their programs that co-mingle preservice and practicing literacy professionals, such as requiring membership and active participation in professional organizations, organizing book study groups with professional texts, and encouraging participation in literacy groups via social media outlets.

Alexis’s and Kyla’s insights also revealed the significant impact that attending a professional learning event had on their professional learning and literacy leadership development. With respect to professional learning, Alexis and Kyla noticed several connections between content in the presentations and content addressed in their university coursework. Additionally, Alexis and Kyla emphasized that the presentations they attended provided wonderful ideas about effective literacy instruction. With respect to literacy leadership, Kyla recognized that literacy professionals should design instruction with teaching tolerance in mind, rather than circumvent addressing hot topics that may be uncomfortable. Furthermore, Alexis observed

how references to research made by practicing literacy professionals demonstrated a desired level of literacy leadership. Therefore, EPPs should identify professional learning events that are being held in their geographic area and seek ways to provide these opportunities to preservice literacy professionals. In addition to statewide conferences organized by professional organizations, there may be professional trainings offered at regional education service centers, school districts, school campuses, and other community agencies, such as community colleges, cultural and arts organizations, and area universities.

My hope is that TALE, EPPs, and other organizations will continue to support professional learning and literacy leadership among both preservice and practicing literacy professionals. Ensuring that learners of all ages have access to the highest quality literacy professionals is of utmost importance. As we move forward and encounter new initiatives and changes within the world of literacy, we must strive to make a significant impact on the literacy achievement of all learners individually and collectively.

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Navigating the Layers of Text Complexity to Identify Embedded Text Supports for Beginning Readers

Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Ph.D.
University of the Incarnate Word

Abstract

This discussion focused on navigating the layers of text complexity to determine the embedded text supports provided by authors. Quantitative dimensions of the texts were examined, such as word count, number of sentences, sentence length, unique words, most used words and phrases, sentence variety, Flesch-Kincaid grade levels, and Flesch-Kincaid reading ease. Also examined were qualitative dimensions, including text structure, text arrangement, clarity, and levels of meaning. Findings concluded that authors may intentionally or unintentionally assist young readers by embedding the following into their texts: repeated words and phrases, simplified syntax, dialogue boxes, embedded definitions, special fonts, and predictable text structures. Selected children's literature featured on the International Literacy Association's 2015 and 2016 Children's Choice and Teachers' Choice reading lists were provided to illustrate the identified embedded text supports. Lastly, semantic gradients were described as one research-based activity that can bridge the gap between the author's embedded supports and the complex texts students will encounter in later years.

Keywords: *beginning readers, literacy activities, text complexity, text supports, semantic gradients*

Text complexity has erupted in “hotness” in recent years (Cassidy, Grote-Garcia, & Orlieb, 2015). This surge of interest followed seven decades in which text complexity received only moderate attention (Allington, McCuiston, & Billen, 2015). Mistakenly, these seven decades of little attention followed by the recent surge of interest has created a false sense that text complexity is a new concept related only to the Common Core State Standards (National Governors

Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) & Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2010). In reality, text complexity is not new to the field of literacy, and it impacts many literacy topics outside of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (e.g., guided reading, literature circles, and read alouds).

Much of the recent emphasis placed on text complexity has been a result of the increased “push for college-ready individuals”

(Allington et al., 2015, p. 491). Acknowledging that Texas public schools share this same expectation (see Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board & Texas Education Agency, 2009), Cassidy, Ortlieb, and Grote-Garcia (2016) declared that text complexity should be considered “very hot” in the Lone Star State. In other words, Texas educators should be talking about text complexity because students need to leave high school prepared for the complex readings they will encounter in college or a career. Overall, regardless of which state standards are being used, college and career readiness is dependent upon learning to read complex texts. Therefore, text complexity is an important topic for all K-12 classrooms.

The majority of recent publications addressing text complexity seem to target Grades 3 and above. Perhaps this is because the greatest increase in text complexity occurs for Grades 2 through 5 (Hiebert & Mesmer, 2013), or that students are expected to transition into fluent readers while in the third grade (National Reading Panel, 2000). The limited information for teachers of Grades K-2 may leave educators wondering how text complexity impacts their beginning readers. Teachers of Grades K-2

might also wonder how they can better prepare their beginning readers for encountering complex text.

This chapter focused on navigating the layers of text complexity to identify the embedded text supports provided by authors. Selected children's literature featured on the International Literacy Association's (ILA) 2015 and 2016 *Children's Choice* and *Teachers' Choice* reading lists were included to illustrate the embedded text supports (ILA, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b). Following this discussion, semantic gradients were described as one research-based activity that K-2 educators can use to bridge the gap between the authors' embedded supports and the complex texts students encounter.

Identifying Embedded Text Supports

Text complexity is defined by the three-part model described in Appendix A of the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 4). This model was used as the structural framework guiding the current investigation of embedded text supports. Table 1 describes the three parts of the model.

Table 1

NGA Center & CCSSO's Three-Part Model for Text Complexity

Dimension of Model	Description
Quantitative	Aspects of text complexity, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion, that are difficult if not impossible for a human reader to evaluate efficiently, especially in long texts, and are thus typically measured by computer software.
Qualitative	Aspects of text complexity are best measured or only measurable by an attentive human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands.
Reader and Task	Variables specific to particular readers (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and to particular tasks (such as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed).

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Methods

The current research has been built upon the idea that authors of books for beginning readers may intentionally or unintentionally embed text supports to guide readers in gaining and practicing early literacy skills. The methods for identifying these embedded supports involved a three-step process. First, each book from ILA's 2015 and 2016 *Children's Choice* and *Teachers' Choice* reading lists ($n = 80$) were located and read by two readers (ILA, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b). It was decided to use books featured on these lists because children and teachers have identified them as books they enjoy reading.

Second, the two readers individually identified the specific quantitative and qualitative features of each text. For quantitative features, Google Documents was used, along with two Google Document add-ons (i.e., Speech Recognition SoundWriter and ProWriting Aid). Individually, the two readers first read a text aloud while Speech Recognition SoundWriter typed the text into a Google Document. Next, the researchers used ProWriting Aid to identify the following quantitative data: (a) word count, (b) number of sentences, (c) sentence length, (d) unique words, (e) most used words and phrases, (f) sentence variety, (g) Flesch-Kincaid grade levels, and (h) Flesch-Kincaid reading ease. The researchers also noted the following qualitative features: (a) text structure, (b) text arrangement, (c) clarity, and (d) levels of meaning. After reading and analyzing the texts individually, the two readers then discussed their analyses until they reached 100% consensus and reported their findings in a spreadsheet. It is noteworthy to mention that the Reader and Task dimension was not analyzed because the majority of that data were not represented within the text itself.

The final step involved coding the data. The researcher, who also served as one of the readers, returned to the spreadsheet and read each qualitative and quantitative feature listed. The researcher highlighted data that was

supportive in nature (e.g., repeated words and short sentences) and identified these excerpts as embedded text supports. In the sections that follow, a description of identified embedded supports is provided, along with lists of associated children's books and a suggested activity that gradually prepares beginning readers for more complex texts.

Findings

Text Supports for Quantitative Dimensions

Quantitative dimensions included countable items, such as the number of words in a sentence (see Table 2). In addition to this data, ProWriting Aid also identified word repetition, repeated phrases, phrases, Flesch-Kincaid reading ease, and Flesch-Kincaid grade-level. All 80 books that were included in the analyses had a Flesch Reading Ease score between 86 and 110. ProWriting Aid (2016) explained that the Flesch-Kincaid reading ease score is calculated with the total number of words in each sentence and the total number of syllables in each word. After this calculation, a score between 1 and 120 is assigned (the higher the number, the more readable the text). With Flesch-Kincaid reading ease scores ranging between 86 and 110, the analyzed books can be described as highly readable texts. All books included in analyses were also assigned a Flesch-Kincaid grade level score of 3.5 or lower, thus suggesting that all books were appropriate for beginning readers.

Findings also revealed two quantitative embedded supports. First, some authors used fewer unique words (i.e., the difference between total number of words and word repetitions). Rasinski (2003) identified high exposure to repeated words and phrases within text as an effective way to increase word accuracy, which in return, increases reading fluency. *I Will Take a Nap* by Mo Willems (2015b) is a good example of such a text. Findings showed that 33.19% of the words were unique, leaving the rest of the text to feature repeated words. Willems repeated the words "nap" ($n = 15$), "snore" ($n = 14$), "cranky" ($n = 8$), "turnip" ($n = 7$), and "floating" ($n = 6$).

Table 2

Quantitative Dimensions Identified in Book Analyses

Book	Total Word Count	Average Sentence Length	Number of Sentences	Percentage of Unique Words
<i>Pete the Cat and the Bedtime Blues</i> by Dean and Dean	355	6.6	54	36.90%
<i>Pete the Cat and the New Guy</i> by Dean and Dean	428	10	43	36.92%
<i>Charlie Plays Ball</i> by deGroat	348	4.8	73	54.89%
<i>Must. Push. Buttons!</i> by Good	305	6.5	47	43.28%
<i>Cats Are Cats</i> by Gorbachev	159	6.4	25	41.51%
<i>The Runaway Tortilla</i> by Kimmel	1,268	6.7	139	26.66%
<i>The Nuts: Sing and Dance in Your Polka-Dot Pants</i> by Litwin	336	5.2	62	36.01%
<i>Max the Brave</i> by Vere	363	8.1	45	37.74%
<i>I Really Like Slop</i> by Willems	188	4.2	45	46.28%
<i>I Will Take a Nap</i> by Willems	238	4.3	55	33.19%

Some authors use fewer unique words by repeating phrases to support readers. Such texts, also known as repetitious patterned books, allow readers to predict subsequent words or phrases in the text, thus leading them toward greater reading accuracy, increased speed, and ultimately greater comprehension (Zipprich, Grace, & Grote-Garcia, 2009). Kimmel (2015) used this technique in *The Runaway Tortilla*, a story in which a tortilla is running to escape his demise. Throughout his adventure, the tortilla repeated a rhythmic message to those chasing him. With the highest word count of 1,268

words, *The Runaway Tortilla* also featured the highest percentage of repeated words (73.34%). Other authors used repeated phrases that resembled the chorus of a song. Examples included *Pete the Cat and the New Guy* (Dean & Dean, 2014), *Pete the Cat and the Bedtime Blues* (Dean & Dean, 2015), and *The Nuts: Sing and Dance in Your Polka-Dot Pants* (Litwin, 2015).

The second quantitative embedded support was simplified syntax, or shorter sentences. Alvermann et al. (2013) advised that because of the increased syntactic complexity

presented by lengthier sentences, they are often, but not always, considered harder to read when compared to shorter sentences. Authors who embedded this support were deGroat (2015) in *Charlie Plays Ball* (Average Sentence Length = 4.8 words) and Willems (2015a, 2015b) in both *I Like Slop* (Average Sentence Length = 4.2 words) and *I Will Take A Nap* (Average Sentence Length = 4.3 words).

Text Supports for Qualitative Dimensions

Qualitative dimensions included aspects of text complexity that were best measured by an attentive human reader. Included dimensions were levels of meaning or purpose, the structure of the text, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands (see Table 3).

Table 3

Embedded Supports for Qualitative Dimensions Identified in Book Analyses

Embedded Support	Featured Literature
Dialogue Boxes	<i>My Teacher is a Monster! No, I am Not</i> by Brown <i>Sick Simon</i> by Krall <i>Fright Club</i> by Long <i>This is a Moose</i> by Morris
Embedded Definitions	<i>Fancy Nancy and the Wedding of the Century</i> by O'Connor
Special Font	<i>Because I Stubbed my Toe</i> by Byous
Predictable Text Structures	<i>Ten Pigs: An Epic Bath Adventure</i> by Anderson <i>My Teacher is a Monster! No, I am Not</i> by Brown

As listed in Table 3, there were four types of embedded supports found within the analyzed books. Authors may provide embedded supports that present implied knowledge in a more direct manner, such as story dialogue. A way that authors can scaffold a reader's understanding of who is talking is by providing text within dialogue boxes. This technique was used in *My Teacher is a Monster!* (Brown, 2014), *Sick Simon* (Krall, 2015), *Fright Club* (Long, 2015), and *This is a Moose* (Morris, 2014).

A second way that authors may support beginning readers is by embedding definitions of words. For example, O'Connor (2014) used this embedded support in *Fancy Nancy and the Wedding of the Century* by stating, "Weddings

are always such glorious occasions. (Occasion is a fancy word for special event.)" (p. 1). Embedded definitions of words, not only assist the reader in understanding individual words, but they can also help the reader with building meaning of the overall text. Documentation of the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension date back to the early 20th century (Thorndike, 1917). In his research, Thorndike analyzed readers "mistakes" to comprehension questions and concluded that vocabulary knowledge was a prerequisite, but not necessarily sufficient, for readers to understand the overall passages. Since the early work of Thorndike, several additional studies have also documented the impact that vocabulary knowledge has on reading comprehension (Ash & Baumann, 2017;

Goodwin & Ahn, 2013; Hairrell, Rupley, & Simmons, 2011).

Authors may also emphasize specific words by changing the font or using boldface type. In the text, *Because I Stubbed My Toe*, Byous (2014) brought attention to the verbs within each phrase by placing them in boldface print – “this morning I **stubbed** my toe. And that **shook** the chair” (p. 1 & 2). By doing so, Byous emphasized the selected vocabulary and drew the reader’s attention to the structure. This is significant in *Because I Stubbed My Toe* because the verbs represented the main events of the story, which unfold in a cause and effect pattern. In other words, with each boldface word, Byous appears to tell readers, “Pay attention to this word. It is a main event that will cause the next main event to happen.”

Finally, authors may arrange texts into familiar or predictable structures to guide the reader. Such actions are supported with research from the last forty years that suggests comprehension is enhanced when texts are organized into well-developed structures (Kintsch, Mandel, & Kozminsky, 1977; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977). Two books that were arranged as circular stories were *Ten Pigs: An Epic Bath Adventure* (Anderson, 2015) and *My Teacher is a Monster! No, I Am Not* (Brown, 2014). Both of these stories terminated back at the starting point of the story.

Closing the Gap Between Embedded Supports and Complex Text

How can teachers bridge the gap between the embedded supports provided by the author, and complex texts students encounter? The two quantitative supports (i.e., repeated words/phrases and simplified syntax) and the four qualitative supports (i.e., dialogue boxes, embedded definitions, special fonts, and predictable text structures) provided unique opportunities to study the choices that authors make while crafting a story. For example, an author who controls vocabulary through repetitive words and phrases presents an opportunity to examine word choice.

Word choice matters. An individual word can change the interaction that takes place between the author and the reader. For example, imagine a fictional character named Sonja who leaves her burning house and the author wrote, “Sonja limped away from the burning house.” The word “limped” may cause a reader to infer that Sonja was injured in the fire and to question how the injury occurred. In other words, word choice may prompt a reader to question previous story events. Consider instead that the author wrote, “Sonja sprinted away from the burning house.” The word “sprinted” may not only cause a reader to infer that Sonja is in good health, but it may also influence the reader’s idea of Sonja’s age. In other words, readers may make inferences about character traits from one word.

An activity that can build readers’ awareness of word choice is semantic gradients. Described by Greenwood and Flanigan (2007) as “an array of related words placed along a continuum” (p. 25), semantic gradients assist students with discerning shades of meaning. An example of a semantic gradient has been provided in Figure 1 with the word “slow” on one end and word “fast” on the other. For this activity, the teacher provides students with different post-it notes that contain the following words: “crawl,” “limp,” “stroll,” “walk,” “jog,” and “sprint.” The teacher would then ask students to arrange the post-it notes to reflect the continuum of speed from slow to fast. Uses of these continuums have been identified as theoretically sound (Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007) because they are helpful tools to reinforce the teaching of words in interrelated groups (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

Closing Thoughts

Text complexity has certainly seen a surge of interest in recent years (Cassidy et al., 2015), likely as a result of an emphasis on college and career readiness (Allington et al., 2015). Text complexity should not be thought of as difficult skill to master. Rather, text complexity should be viewed as a spectrum stretching from a highly scaffolded process to

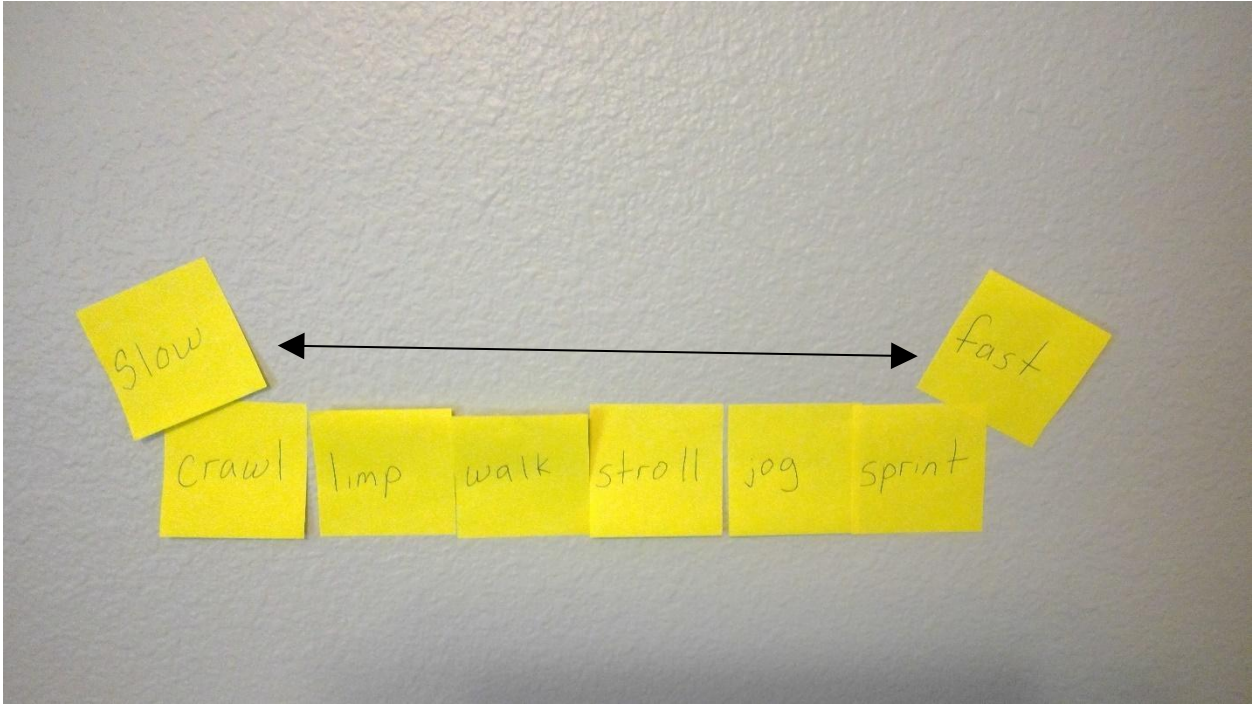


Figure 1. An example of a semantic gradient. Words are arranged to reflect the continuum of speed from slow to fast.

one that is more demanding of reading skills and prior knowledge.

This chapter focused on the highly scaffolded side of the spectrum. The underpinning idea presented is that authors embed text supports (i.e., repeated words/phrases, simplified syntax, dialogue boxes, embedded definitions, special fonts, and

predictable text structures) to scaffold early reading. By understanding these embedded supports and adding gradual complexity, teachers can prepare beginning readers to engage with more complex texts. Through this approach, a new relationship exists, one in which the author, illustrator, educator, and the student work together to travel the spectrum of text complexity together.

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Fan Fiction to Support Struggling Writers

Kelli Bippert, Ph.D.

Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

Abstract

Traditional literacies centering on effective reading and writing remain a focus in Texas schools. However, students come to our classrooms with a variety of experiences in new literacies, particularly those based on students' interests in popular media. In an effort to bridge students' digital media experiences with in-school literacies, teachers can provide support through student-created fan fiction. By allowing students to use their existing knowledge of popular characters and settings to generate new narratives, struggling readers can transfer their understandings of literacy concepts and skills to traditional, in-school literacies.

Keywords: *fan fiction, new literacies, struggling writers*

Traditional literacies have historically focused on the ability to read and write effectively. Typically, these literacies focused on written communication, either by receiving or generating new information and ideas via traditional print modes. It can be argued that adolescents participate in literate behaviors, often through digital means. The PEW Internet and American Life Project found that 95% of adolescents had Internet access, 74% of whom use cell phones as a means (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). Additionally, 57% of adolescents reported using the Internet for sharing and creating content (Lenhart, Arafeh, & Smith, 2008). While 85% of adolescents reported to engage in some form of technology for communication purposes, 60% of these adolescents did not consider these authentic forms of writing (Lenhart et al., 2008). Many of these adolescents engage in literacy in the following ways:

1. Effective communication using media like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook;
2. New information acquisition by means of online internet searches, online news sources, and fan pages; and
3. Generating new information and ideas, through fan fiction sites, Youtube video demonstrations, live streaming, online blogs, and wikis.

How can we use these new literacies as a bridge to guide students toward improving students' in-school literacy expectations? Specifically, how can the use of fan fiction help tap into students' interests, while supporting students' development of in-school literacies? What happens when struggling writers use a multiliteracy approach to writing instruction by creating fan fiction?

New Literacies

The increase in digital communication has resulted in the development of literacy skills that greatly differ from those of many classroom teachers may have experienced during their adolescence. New literacies refer to new ways in which people read, communicate, and express ideas in the digital world (New London Group, 1996). Mass media has created a world in which information is transmitted in more ways than through traditional written text alone; children today are bombarded by information in various modes through entertainment, advertising, and social media. This information comes at children and adults using visual, audio, spatial, and gestural modes. The new literacies, while not limited to specific types of technology, are often associated with digital texts, media, and multimodal digital literacies (Buckingham, 2000; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014).

Although new literacies help to describe communication and meaning-making practices that are more and more commonly mediated by new technologies, technology does not necessarily encompass all of what we consider new literacies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). New literacies not only focus on the use of media and other forms of multimodal texts, but in ways that critically analyze texts (Kellner, 2001; Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013). Therefore, students are in need not only of the skills and knowledge behind the technical use of computers and other forms of technology, but also an understanding of the culture that goes hand in hand with these technologies (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Kellner, 2001). Students should be prepared to participate in a future that will require them to become literate in many different types of texts and modalities (Gee, 2004; Jenkins, 2008).

Many adolescents have active online identities, and communicate and express themselves using multimodal digital literacies regularly (Gee, 2004; Jenkins, 2008). Schools need to acknowledge the social nature of reading and writing, and the various forms of multiliteracies that exist. Just as teachers and

schools do not recognize or value these forms of literacy, adolescents often do not see the potential link between their identities as members of online communities and literacy within schools. As literacy instruction changes, the classroom can become more interdisciplinary and democratic, where students become the apprentices to teachers, gaining more control over their own learning (Kist, 2005).

Websites for entertainment and communication have become major rallying points for teens and young adults interested in video games, music, and other forms of popular media (Lam, 2006). Many students who are disengaged in academic reading and writing are already participants in communication using online and other digital tools. Rather than view these digital multimodal literacies as a diversion from traditional literacy instruction (Black, 2009), teachers should take advantage of their students' prior knowledge to help build both social and academic vocabulary.

Students already identify with reading and writing within digital spaces. These students have formed identities as readers and writers through their interactions on the Internet and through the use of other technology tools. These students need to see themselves as members of a community of writers in a much broader sense, beyond their identity within their online communities (Gee, 2000), one that will help develop writing skills that can be bridged to help with the ways in which public education measures student literacy. The purpose of this study is to find ways in which those existing identities and the discourses associated with them can be bridged to academic reading and writing. One way in which this can happen is for teachers and schools to value students' existing skills in reading, writing, and creating.

Supporting Struggling Readers & Writers

Language Support

Integration of technology tools within classroom instruction has the potential to improve student language acquisition and development. In fact, many teens are already

actively creating new digital online content (Jenkins, 2008). The multiliteracy activities that students are engaged in at home can be used to build vocabulary and language skills important for academic success.

One way that students use multiliteracies is through online chat or message boards. These online tools allow students to communicate their ideas and thoughts with an online community on common interests. Many of these online groups create their own unique language, which aids in creating a community “culture” (Lam, 2004). Based on a collection of case studies, Lam found that while connecting with these online cultures, students, particularly English language learners, feel the freedom to engage others in newly acquired language skills. Otherwise shy and timid students were more comfortable in these online chat environments while experimenting with their new language. Allowing students time to access and use online chat with classmates, or between different classes, would create a space to allow growth in students’ confidence in language use.

Another form of multimodal digital literacy can support language acquisition is the use of email communication. This tool can aid struggling writers by enabling them to practice using written language in an authentic environment. Struggling writers have the opportunity to maintain and improve their language skills as they write and interact with friends and family. English language learners are able to maintain ties with family and friends in their home countries, thereby helping to maintain their native language (Lam, 2006; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). Educators can bring this technology to the classroom, thereby giving students another tool for creating authentic written language.

Concept Construction

Struggling adolescent readers and writers can develop the ability to effectively use new concept learning obtained through digital multimodal literacies to address traditional written texts. For example, Kist (2005) describes a Canadian teacher who used video

clips effectively to teach literary devices to his struggling high school readers and writers. These students had become skilled at identifying and analyzing plot elements and author’s craft in ways much like one would with traditional written texts. One student even reported to have an easier time when reading novels, and compared his interaction with the written text with how he approached his interactions with the film clips in class.

Through participation in fan fiction sites, adolescents have also been shown to develop and reinforce literacy skills important for in-school literacies. Curwood’s study of adolescents participating in a *Hunger Games* fan site showed that adolescents were able to make personal connections and critically evaluate events and characters from the trilogy (Curwood, 2013). The nature of the online platform, along with adolescents’ participation within the fan community, allowed for increased opportunities for students to practice these important literacy skills.

Popular media can be a powerful tool for teaching literary elements concepts, plot, and character traits in the language arts classroom. Short video clips can quickly illustrate different concepts taught within the English language art and reading curriculum. By viewing short animated videos, students can apply knowledge of literary concepts based on the plot elements and character development presented in the clip. Over the course of a school year, students can effectively defend their responses to literary skills questions when presented with traditional narrative texts.

Motivation

According to Alvermann (2002), in order to affect adolescents’ achievement with literacy, educators need to take certain factors into consideration. Students come to the classroom with various degrees of strengths in regards to traditional text-based literacy. Therefore, we need to capture the students’ strengths through their existing background knowledge, motivation, and interests. Their goals for reading and writing may not be directly

connected with school achievement, so educators need to tap into these existing skills in order to make literacy meaningful to the students.

Teachers often struggle finding ways to motivate and engage struggling students. However, it has been found that engaging students in media-based activities aimed at problem solving increases student motivation and enjoyment. In a study conducted by Liu, Horton, Olmanson, and Toprac (2011) with sixth grade students using a problem-based website designed to teach students concepts, students showed an increase in motivation and science knowledge based on pre- and post-test data. This positive correlation was found between the students' science achievement and student motivation when using the website with instruction. In an ethnographic study of adolescents engaged in Sims Writer's Hangout, one writer expressed an increase in confidence in their ability to create stories, despite her being identified as having dyslexia (Curwood, Magnifico, & Lammers, 2013). This motivated her to continue writing through the encouragement of the online fan community.

Online texts also have the potential for increasing student motivation and interest. The increase in motivation due to technology can possibly be attributed to various factors, such as the increase in control and creativity and easier readability of these texts (Leu, 2002). For example, Curwood et al.'s (2013) study of the *Neopian Times* fan site found that students were motivated by the "instant feedback" that writers received, often along with rewards provided by the fan site (p. 682).

This increase in motivation shows the potential that lies in digital literacies, especially if teachers receive training needed in order to help students improve their skills in multiliteracies, and can bridge these skills to aid in comprehending and analyzing traditional texts necessary for our current high-stakes testing environment. Although the use of technology is shown to increase student motivation, we need to be careful to not focus too much on the

technology tools to drive instruction (Kist, 2005). Instead, educators should keep in mind that although technology can be a motivator for students, keeping student interest and background knowledge in mind should guide a teacher's decision for using technology.

Transferability of Skills

Transferability of skills learned and applied using digital multimodal literacies to more traditional, in-school literacies has been documented by researchers looking into the use of multiliteracies inside and outside of the classroom. As previously described, Kist (2005) conducted a study of new literacies in a high school classroom in Canada designed for at-risk students. These students learned literacy skills by viewing and analyzing film clips, and would respond to various questions addressing the mood, genre, and author's craft. Students related events in these films to more contemporary issues, connecting the stories with the world outside of the classroom. The teacher realized that his students were in fact "reading" the films, much like one would read a book or short story. These students even created videos using text features common in story lines found in traditional narrative stories. One particular student realized that as he became more used to reading films, the skills were transferring over to reading traditional texts. This student had found that reading books became easier, and that he used similar literacy skills with books that he had with film clips in his high school class.

The crossover in literary text features and elements used by adolescent during their free time shows the potential that exists in increasing student achievement in traditional writing tasks. In an online ethnographic study conducted by Black (2008), the author participated in an online fan fiction site, fanfiction.net. The author kept detailed field notes during her participation, and had conducted interviews and exchanged emails with focal participants on the fan fiction web page as well. She discovered that participants in the online fan fiction site used narrative structures similarly found in fairy tales, action films, and popular writing, with common character traits

found within these genres (Black, 2010). In a survey conducted by Thomas (2006), participants in an online fan fiction world described ways in which they interacted and created stories as teams. These participants developed their characters by fusing fantasy elements with their own personal identities. These adolescents were able to effectively use literary allusions and personal experiences to create new narrative stories through the use of digital media. Intertextual connections between in-school and out-of-school literacies occur, as one adolescent participating in a *Hunger Games* fan site had found between the concept of “tribute” from the popular trilogy and within her American history class, ultimately sharing this connection on Twitter (Curwood et al., 2013). Through their participation in fan sites, adolescents have the ability to make connections and support in-school literacies.

Multimodal Flexibility

Recent ethnographic studies provide insight in how the multimodal flexibility provided by fan fiction sites were found to be beneficial to adolescents. Curwood’s (2013) ethnographic study of adolescents participating in a fan fiction site related to the *Hunger Games* trilogy highlights how the fan site allowed students various ways to express themselves, using various fan-created texts and paratexts as stories, artwork, and videos. Similarly, Lammers’ (2016) ethnographic study focused on Sims Writer’s Hangout found that participants who initially engaged in one particular mode of fan-created expression, such as creating architectural renderings of buildings and homes using the Sims computer game, could be inspired by the fan community to begin creating stories, videos, and still images (Curwood et al., 2013). Participants were free to create their stories either online or offline, requesting feedback from the fan community (Lammers, 2016). Participants in the Sims Writer’s Hangout could weave text with images, created within the video game, to express the stories that were inspired by the game.

Bridging Digital Multimodal Literacies with Traditional Literacies

In a typical secondary classroom, students struggle with writing for a variety of reasons. These students’ difficulties can arise due to proficiency in English, a specific learning disability, or simply a lack of motivation and engagement in school. By drawing on students’ existing knowledge and skills with multiliteracies, teachers can offer struggling students opportunities to communicate ideas using various modes. However, how can we use students’ literacies to support traditional in-school literacies? According to Black (2009), accessing students’ digital multimodal literacies can be seen not only as a “leisure-time pursuit,” but as a valuable tool to help students become more successful with written language and technology skills (p. 79).

Many students who have a keen interest in film, book, or even video game characters and their related story lines have become involved in creating their own fan fiction. Fan fiction is the creation of stories based on popular media figures from film, books, or video games. Fans use existing characters, plots, and themes to create new adventures (Black, 2009). These writers are self-motivated and highly engaged in the worlds that they become a part of creating. Teachers can take advantage of students’ interest in popular culture, and encourage other students to create original stories that branch from the students’ own personal interests.

Although some adults worry that adolescents who create fan fiction are not actually creating any original writing, and are in actuality stealing their ideas from other sources, Jenkins (2006) likens these participants to the ways in which artists historically learned their craft. Novice artists would create their own art based on that of a master. Similarly, these novice writers are borrowing basic materials from other artists in order to “focus their energies elsewhere, mastering their craft, perfecting their skills, and communicating their ideas” (p. 182).

Creating new stories based on fan fiction allows freedom of expression; participants are not limited to the plotline and character traits presented in the original works. Students are also free to pull their own personal experiences and struggles into the storylines, such as the problems of bullying and substance abuse. Participants also have the freedom to become involved in storylines where they may otherwise be marginalized (Thomas, 2006). For instance, many female participants in fan fiction pages write female characters into storylines that traditionally may have very limited female roles. Participation in fan fiction lends itself to various forms of student self-expression, and allows for additional creativity in writing.

One way for students creating new narratives to share their work is via podcast or online fan communities. Students can also share their work on a smaller, yet still authentic scale, through a class blog or webpage accessible by invitation only. Students who struggle with language, such as English language learners and students identified with a specific learning disability, find motivation and confidence in their language skills when they create products that are shared with a wider audience. They often feel success with language when they become active participants of a community of writers, getting feedback and suggestions from peers helps them feel success with new literacy skills.

Student motivation, confidence with language, and the ability to authentically contribute to a broad audience were found to benefit students who initially struggled with written language, such as English language learners. For example, immigrant students' need to become active members of American society may begin with an interest in popular culture (Black, 2009). Helping students create narrative fiction that can be shared with the class or online also makes learning authentic and helps develop the student's identity as a part of a social, online community.

Students can create video narratives, which can be shared with the class and/or

broadcast over the Internet to a wider audience. Youtube has become a great resource for helping students tell video stories and create video blogs, making their writing an authentic means of communication and entertainment. Students create transcripts that can be a collaborative, social learning experience, helping struggling writers, such as English language learners, practice written and oral language skills (Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). Working collaboratively, students revise and edit their narratives to reach their target audiences. The authenticity of the video narrative increases student motivation to create interesting, accurately written texts for broadcast. Encouraging students to create original narratives based on personal interests and popular media is a great way to pull students in to using literacy in a new and genuine way. The creation of these narratives can help struggling students build accuracy in their written language and language fluency, as well as confidence in their own personal writing ability.

Student-Created Fan Fiction

Here is one way that teachers can create a space for producing fan fiction in the middle or high-school classroom. The following is a two-week writing project that I used with my seventh graders.

Step 1: What Do You Know?

Have students individually brainstorm their own ideas based on what they know and identify with (see Appendix). These ideas can come from, but are not limited to:

- Television
- Film
- Video games
- Books
- Viral Videos
- Song lyrics

Allow time for students to share their lists in a group and with the class. Encourage students to add to their list of ideas during this time.

Step 2: Topic Selection

Students can identify their top three choices, and then decide which topic would be best for creating their fan fiction. Encourage students with shared interests to work in pairs or groups. This support can encourage reluctant writers to engage in creating new stories alongside more confident peers. Students who prefer to work alone should be provided that opportunity; some students are most comfortable working independently.

Step 3: Storyboarding

Have groups and individuals create a storyboard to help them plan and create their new narrative. This will also allow the teacher to check the student's narrative for appropriateness and plot development. A variety of storyboard formats can be used. A few examples are found at: storyboardthat.com, www.boords.com, pixton.com, or kedt.pbslearningmedia.org/tools/storyboard.

Step 4: Mode or Media Choice

Allow students to choose how they wish to present their narrative. This helps not only develop their narrative writing skills, but honors a wider range of modalities in which students can create and present their new stories. Some popular choices are:

- Comic strips

- Screenplay and skits
- Puppet show
- Written narrative

Students can then use their storyboards to help create their stories (see Figure 1). It is helpful to allow students the freedom to use technology to develop their plot, characters, or clarify questions they have about their chosen writing topic (see Figure 2).

Step 5: Presentation and Publishing

At the end of the unit, allow students to present their new narratives to the class. Figure 3 illustrates an excerpt from one group's comic strip based on the popular animated series *Adventure Time*. This particular comic strip contained seven full pages of comic strip cells. Students collaborated on the comic strip during class time, and even chose to work on pieces of their project at outside of class. They then shared their final project with the class.

Figure 4 presents an excerpt of one student's written narrative based on her favorite book series. This particular student chose to work independently, and at the end of two weeks completed five single-spaced typed pages of her draft.

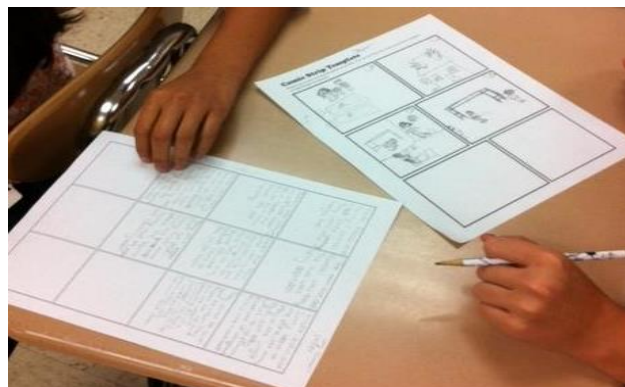


Figure 1. Comic strip development



Figure 2. Technology support

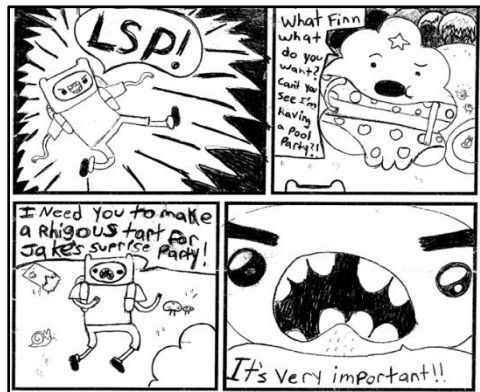


Figure 3. Comic strip excerpt.

The Winter Night Gala

The bellows rang throughout the 18th century style Birmingham, England. It was December 1st and all of the shop keepers, paupers, and welders were setting up concession stands hoping to sell all of their glorious and or delicious products. Inside a small shop was a girl watching all of the commotion in little interest, her name was Eliza Maddington, she lives with her aunt and uncle, both of which ignore her.

"Hey you ignorant girl," says her not so kind aunt Launda, "hurry and finish cleaning, we're opening shop soon and I don't wish the costumers to be leaving because of the mess." Eliza just nodded and started sweeping just as a man with a fancy suit and tie walked in. Eliza quickly got behind the counter. "What may I do for you sir?" Eliza asked, all the man did was smile and pull out an official looking envelope from his coat pocket. "Well young miss," the man started "I've come on official business, you see I've been investigating a disappearance that's been going on for at least 16 years." 16 thought Eliza who was the exact same age. "Well what is it sir?" she asked. The man smiled and handed Eliza the envelope. Eliza opened it and began to read what was written "Dear Eliza Maddinton, it appears you are the lost princess of the kingdom. We have sent a messenger to tell you this, we hope to see you soon. Signed, King George."

Figure 4. Narrative example.

To provide even more of an authentic audience, allow students to publish their work on a class or school webpage, or encourage students to find a broader audience through one of the many online sites targeted for fan fiction. Some popular fan fiction sites are Fan Fiction (<http://fanfiction.net>), Quote TV (<https://www.quotev.com/fanfic>), and Wattpad (<https://www.wattpad.com/stories/fanfiction>). Other sites that provide an outlet for publishing and sharing fan fiction include Goodreads (<https://www.goodreads.com/story/tag/fanfiction>) and Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/fanfic>).

Conclusion

Students interact with language in vastly different ways compared to twenty years ago. Through students' interactions with social networking, online communication, fan fiction, video editing, music, and art, students are quite capable of interacting with language in very sophisticated ways. Teachers need to tap into these skills so that struggling readers can develop identities as successful writers.

The fan fiction project described above took place at the end of the academic year, after the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading and writing assessments were complete. While this time of the school year teachers may find it difficult to encourage students to engage in reading or writing, student excitement for writing during this end-of-year time was high. Students entered the classroom eager to write, and excitedly asked if they would get to work on their projects. Even students who had struggled or were reluctant to engage in writing, such as the student who wrote the five-page narrative above, created written narratives that contradicted their earlier resistance to writing.

Teachers strive to help struggling students reach their potential. We need to use innovative methods in order to reach out to these students, whose true strengths are often not acknowledged or utilized by school. Educators can provide a bridge that can link those literacy skills that the students often use on a daily basis and help them gain success in the classroom.

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Appendix

List Your Favorites

Movies:	TV:
Books:	Video Games:
Cartoons/ animation:	Other:

The Role of Literacy Tutoring as a Method for Improving Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions of Preservice Teachers

Peggy S. Lisenbee, Ph.D.
Texas Woman's University

Abstract

Preservice teachers participate in a variety of field experiences before student teaching. Tutoring field experiences offer a framework for preservice teachers to focus on teaching and assessing literacy skills needed to be an effective reading teacher. A small-scale research study focused on gathering qualitative data as preservice teachers tutored struggling second-grade readers. Observations of preservice teachers' learning environment, reflections following tutoring lessons and pre and post-concept maps offer data on preservice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Conclusions about the critical role of field experiences, specifically tutoring, is an effective method for improving preservice teachers' preparedness to teach.

Keywords: *preservice teachers, literacy, tutoring, field experiences, pedagogy*

Preservice teachers construct a deeper and richer understanding of pedagogical content knowledge through their participation in a variety of field experiences associated with undergraduate academic coursework in teacher preparation programs. Moore (2003) shared "...that although preservice teachers learn a great many strategies and methods for teaching, often they 'do not learn how to discover in the specific situations occurring in everyday teaching, which methods and strategies to use'" (p. 32). Field experiences play a vital role in teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers for classroom situations (Al

Otaiba, Lake, Greulich, Folsom, & Guidry, 2012; Burant, & Kirby, 2002; Moore, 2003).

Self-efficacy is a necessary disposition for teachers defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011) explained the link between self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness as "an important motivational construct" leading to resiliency for teachers in the profession and in their ability to motivate all students to learn (p. 46). Field experiences embedded in methods and professional education coursework prior to

student teaching create feelings of self-efficacy and preparedness by developing stronger connections to content knowledge, theory, skills, and effective pedagogy (Al Otaiba, et al., 2012; Burant, & Kirby, 2002; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2016; Haverback & Parault, 2008; Haverback & Parault, 2011; Moore, 2003; Pendergast, et al., 2011; Wee, Weber, & Park, 2014).

In 2010, the International Reading Association (IRA) revised their standards, which guide evaluation of effective teaching criteria for literacy professionals. The six standards are foundational knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity, literate environment, and professional learning and leadership (IRA, 2010). In 2017, the re-named International Literacy Association (ILA), added a new standard during discussion and revision of their 2010 standards to include addressing clinical and field experiences for literacy professionals (ILA, 2017). Hoffman et al. (2005) shared the importance of quality field experiences for preservice teachers to learn how to teach reading. Research focused on the effectiveness of field experiences to support knowledge and skills related to teaching reading made connections between quality field experiences and preservice teachers' construction of pedagogical content knowledge (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Tutoring field experiences prepare preservice teachers to complete literacy assessments and improve feelings of self-efficacy regarding their ability to provide specific reading skill intervention for struggling readers. Haverback and Parault (2008) suggested a lack of research regarding the relationship of self-efficacy to tutoring field experiences prior to conducting their research. Haverback and Parault (2008) found that "...tutoring field experiences, in particular, have been found to have a positive impact on preservice teachers' abilities to teach a particular content (e.g., reading) to the individual student and to put theory into practice" (p. 237). Leko

and Mundy's (2011) research on preservice teachers' beliefs found that preservice teachers' adapted their reading instruction more often following participation in multiple field experiences. This finding suggests an increase in preservice teachers' feelings of self-efficacy as they gain more confidence through practice during tutoring field experiences. Tutoring field experiences embedded in reading method courses for preservice teachers support a deeper construction and application of pedagogical knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy.

Using concept maps to organize knowledge about overarching concepts provides a graphic method to represent understanding. A core concept is arranged hierarchically with key elements connected to the core concept and subordinate elements connected to the key elements. The key elements connected to the core concept are analyzed as a stem. Subordinate elements connected to key elements are analyzed as a sub-stem. Concept maps analyzed in this manner offer evaluation tools measuring "the growth of and assessing student learning" (Inspiration Software, Inc., 2017, para. 8). The use of concept maps to review preservice teachers' growth in knowledge provides a source of data for research.

This research study represents a small-scale effort to qualitatively document elements of engaged teaching which motivate tutees to participate in the tutoring learning environment, construct adjustments in pedagogical knowledge and skills while increasing preservice teachers' self-efficacy during tutoring field experiences. The research design began with research questions created to identify themes analyzed from observing tutoring field experiences, preservice teachers' reflections of their tutoring experiences, and pre and post-tests of preservice teachers' understanding of reading method concepts. Analysis will provide changes in preservice teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skills, and feelings of self-efficacy. Implications about the role of tutoring field experiences to prepare preservice teachers are discussed.

Theoretical Framework and Objectives

A constructivist theoretical framework is "... based on the assumption that people create knowledge as a result of interaction between existing knowledge or beliefs and new knowledge" (Rakes, Flowers, Casey, & Santana, 1999, p.3). Constructivism is based on creating, not transmitting, knowledge through the processes of assimilation and accommodation during authentic experiences (Branscombe, Burcham, Castle, & Surbeck, 2014; Grace, 1999; Moore, 2003; Nanjappa & Grant, 2003; Rakes, Flowers, Casey, & Santana, 1999). Teacher preparation programs offer opportunities for preservice teachers to implement constructivist teaching and learning practices allowing them to actively construct an understanding of knowledge and skills through field experiences.

Research on constructivist pedagogy and teacher effectiveness supports embedding field experiences in reading method courses to assist preservice teachers in applying course concepts expressed through student learning objectives and aligned with ILA standards. Student learning objectives create a qualitative framework to assess before, during, and after field experiences to analyze preservice teachers' constructions of knowledge, skills, and feelings of self-efficacy.

This research study focused on observations of preservice teachers' representations of course requirements in an undergraduate literacy assessment and intervention course. Preservice teachers were required to complete literacy assessments to inform their tutoring lesson plans. Each tutoring lesson plan was required to include a read aloud, instructional books, word study, interactive literacy games, a writing activity, and reading goals. Three reflection questions were required each week to share information about tutoring strengths and weaknesses to continuing construction of effective methods for tutoring.

The overall research goals of this study were to examine the role of tutoring as a method to improve each of the following: (a) preservice teachers' pedagogical knowledge, (b) preservice teachers' teaching skills, and (c) preservice teachers' self-efficacy during field experiences embedded in a reading methods course. Preservice teachers' practice teaching one-on-one with struggling readers was analyzed by gathering data from open-ended observation notes written by the university supervisor during tutoring experiences, preservice teachers' reflections submitted after each tutoring field experience, and pre and post concept maps. The three research questions were:

1. What demonstrations of pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills were observed during tutoring? What elements were used by preservice teachers to increase tutees' motivation and feelings of community?
2. What adjustments in pedagogy and feelings of self-efficacy were reported by preservice teachers in their tutoring reflections?
3. What conceptual changes were reported by preservice teachers from their active construction of knowledge and skills after ten weeks of tutoring?

Methodology

Participants

Preservice teachers enrolled in an undergraduate, junior-level literacy assessment and intervention course were informed of the embedded field experience required in the course. Participants were 10 female, elementary education teacher candidates, referred to as tutors throughout this research, between the ages of 19 to 21. The tutors' demographics were more similar than diverse: one tutor was Hispanic, one tutor was Native American, and the other eight were Caucasian. All tutors were enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a private, research university surrounded by a large urban school district in a midwestern city.

The urban school district is the second largest in the state serving approximately 42,000 K-12 students.

An elementary school located on the north side of the university campus was chosen for tutoring since it housed a diverse population of students: 62% Hispanic, 18% Caucasian, 9% African American and 11% a mixture of Asian, American Indian and other ethnicities. Ninety percent of the students attending this elementary school were on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, 40% were English language learners and during the previous year, 60% of third-graders were not able to read at grade level.

The second grade team leader for all three second-grade classrooms at the urban elementary school near the university conferred with her team to choose 10 second-grade tutees for this research. The team leader was informed that any second-grade student identified as reading below grade level was eligible for this research study. The 10 tutees ranged in age from six to eight. Seven tutees were female, six tutees were English language learners, and ten tutees were on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. All 10 tutees were representative of the schools' overall demographics: six tutees were Hispanic, two tutees were Caucasian, one tutee was African American, and one tutee was Native American.

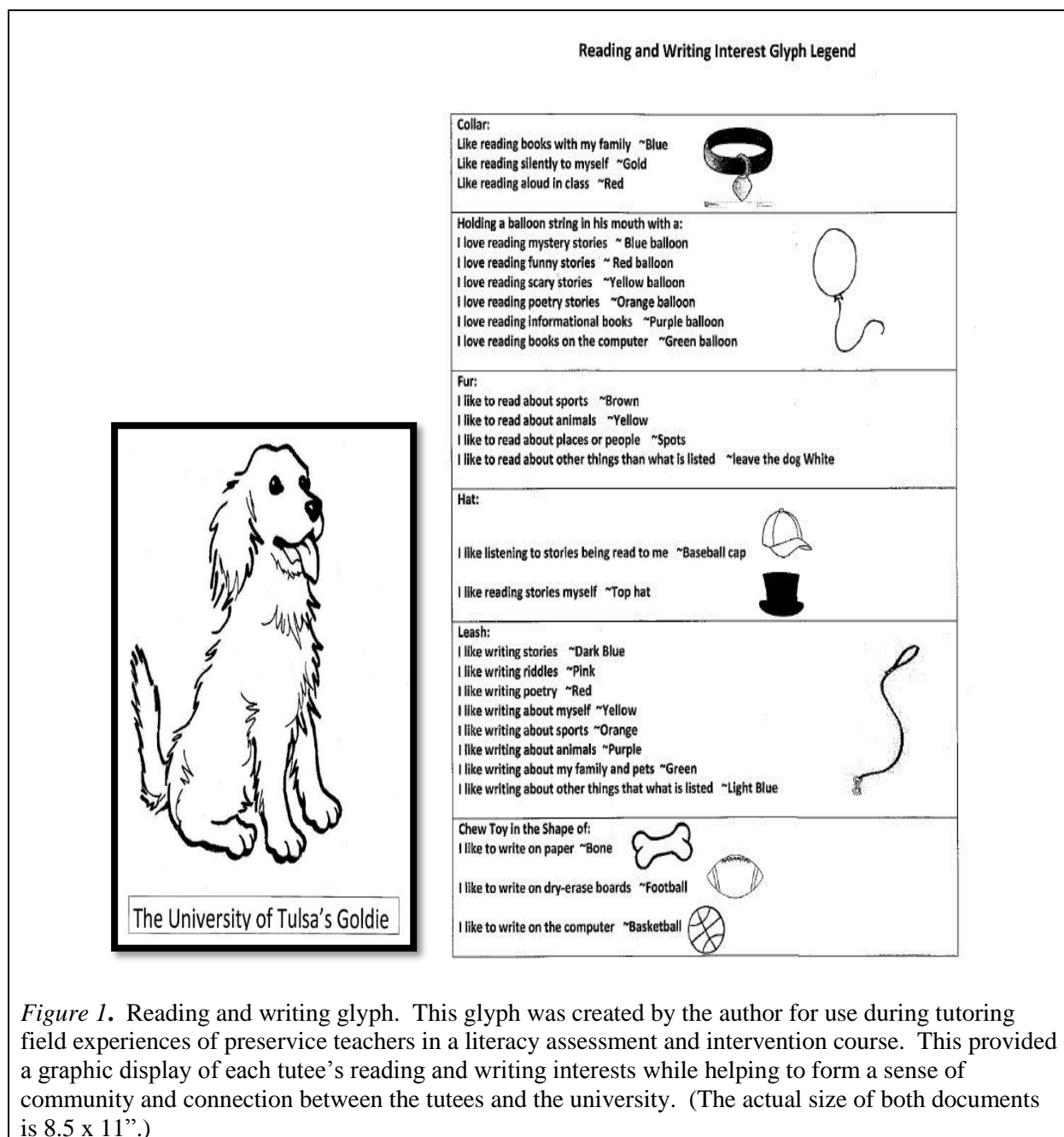
Data Sources

The 10 weeks of tutoring was conducted in the elementary school library for an hour each morning one day each week. The university faculty assigned to teach the literacy assessment and intervention course supervised all tutoring field experiences at the elementary school taking open-ended notes on two of the 10 tutor/tutee pairs each week. This observation schedule created one observation per tutor/tutee pair in the first five weeks and during the last five weeks. The university faculty copied all of the required literacy assessment documents for the tutor and tutee, a tutoring lesson plan template, the three reflection questions tutors need to

submit each week after tutoring, and a summary sheet to list the tutees' assessment data. The tutors were asked to place these documents inside of three-ring binders to create a tutoring notebook to use during the 10 weeks of tutoring.

Preservice teachers completed a pre-assessment of pedagogical knowledge and skills by filling out a concept map on "Reading Methods." This same concept map was completed at the end of the semester as a post-assessment to assess changes in knowledge and skills after 10 weeks of tutoring. Before the first tutoring session, the tutors met with the second-grade team leader from the elementary school to gather baseline reading skill data from previously completed literacy assessments, reading and writing interests, and behavioral information on each tutee. During the first two weeks of tutoring, preservice teachers used their tutoring notebooks to complete multiple literacy assessments to confirm the reading skills shared by the second-grade lead teacher. The assessments ranged from Graded Word Lists and Graded Passages from the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI), an Elementary Spelling Inventory from Words Their Way (WTW), multiple interest inventories from a Beverly DeVries textbook, and a reading and writing interest glyph using the university mascot (Bear, Invernizzi, & Templeton, 2015; DeVries, 2011; Johns, 2012).

Glyphs are used in classrooms to help create a feeling of community since students can visually see similarities and differences between them and their classmates. Glyphs are visual representations of information. The university mascot glyph used in the tutoring notebook was created by the university faculty to engage the tutees with the university as they illustrated their reading and writing interests. The completed glyphs were displayed on a tri-fold board, which was placed at the front of the library on tutoring days to welcome the tutees to their tutoring field experience (see Figure 1). Each glyph was posted on the tri-fold board next to a photo of



each tutor/tutee pair. (A photo was also given to each tutee to take home.) Figure 1 provides an illustration of the university mascot glyph created for students to use to display their reading and writing interests. The third to tenth

weeks of tutoring focused on each tutor planning individualized lesson plans concentrating on the specific phonological skills each tutee needed to practice. The required elements of each tutoring lesson plan included: rereading an easy book,

guided reading of an on-level book, word study games, instructional reading, a read aloud of a book above each student's instructional level by their tutor, and a writing activity. For closure of each tutoring session, tutors were required to write out a sentence strip of words for tutees to take home and review the goals for the tutoring lesson with the tutee to give to their second-grade teacher. The sentence strip and goals sheets were methods to include and keep the tutees' parents and teachers informed of the focus of each tutoring session.

Tutors were required to submit reflections based on assimilations and accommodations of pedagogical knowledge and skills made during each week of tutoring. These changes to their understanding resulted from experiencing one-on-one tutoring and then reflecting on their successes and difficulties each week. Reflection questions were written to provide an opportunity for tutors to focus on constructing their understanding while it provides an avenue for university faculty to provide constructive feedback. Tutors were required to reflect on these three statements each week:

1. Reflect on your accuracy in preparing your lesson for your tutee's reading skills this week. Explain your feelings of confidence in tutoring.
2. Share your strengths and weaknesses associated with your teaching this week using specific strategies related to reading/literacy. Explain a different strategy suggested by a peer/university faculty/ 50 Research-Based Strategies textbook (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2011) to use next week to support your tutee for any identified area of weakness.
3. Upon reflection, describe your reading/literacy goal for next week including evidence for why you chose this goal?

These reflections provide a lens for viewing the pedagogy employed by the tutors to create a positive, successful reading experience motivating each second-grade student to practice their reading skills.

Concept maps used at the beginning and end of a course provide a visual representation of elements related to a core concept. The 10 preservice teachers in this research study were asked to complete concept maps about "Reading Methods" on the first day of class in their literacy assessment and evaluation course. No information was given to the preservice teachers beyond asking them to add elements using circles and lines to show hierarchical relationships between and among elements associated with "Reading Methods." The difference between a preservice teachers' pre-concept map and their post-concept map offers a suggestion of growth between and among theoretical and pedagogical key and subordinate elements related to the "Reading Methods."

Analysis of Tutoring Field Experiences

When teacher education programs include field experiences within methods and professional education courses, there is potential to add valuable experience for preservice teachers to merge theory into practice before their student teaching semester. Anecdotal notes gathered during observations of tutoring field experiences, preservice teacher reflections of tutoring and pre and post-concept maps provided data about the role of literacy tutoring as a method to improve preservice teachers' knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy.

Observations

Observations of tutoring field experiences offered a glimpse into the learning environment tutors created for the tutees. A tri-fold board placed at the entrance to the library greeted tutees each week. The tri-fold board included photos of each tutor-tutee pair next to each tutee's completed mascot glyph. The visual representations of each tutees' reading

and writing interests illustrated by the mascot glyphs were posted to encourage a sense of community among the tutees since the tutoring sessions only met once a week. Tutors used the information gained from the mascot glyphs to motivate tutees by locating books of interest and providing writing prompts on topics of interest to each tutee.

Tutors brought small snacks each week for their tutee since it was mid-morning when they met for tutoring. The option for a snack alleviated any hunger issues which might interfere with the tutees' ability to focus on improving their reading skills. Tutors were tasked with bringing a bag of items to care for and extend the tutoring session such as Kleenex, hand sanitizer, iPad minis, small whiteboards with expo markers, sentence strips, a sharpie, extra file folder games, and a goals sheet. Each week, a sentence strip with words for the tutee to practice reading and a goals sheet were sent back to the classroom to inform the teacher and home to share with parents. Tutors were required to create individualized file folder games for their tutees so the tutees could practice specific reading skills. Tutors were allowed to use literacy apps for reading and writing in addition to file folder games for their tutees. Finally, tutors were observed locating the section in the elementary school library associated with books of interest for each of their tutees to encourage their interest in reading.

A tutoring extension which supported the sense of community during the tutoring experience was observed when the tutors created a whole-group, physical activity to practice a reading skill outside on the playground. An example of one physical literacy activity was when tutors placed cardboard tents with letters on them on the ground then asked tutees to kick balls in the direction of the correct cardboard tent after hearing a tutor utter a phoneme. Another physical activity observed was when tutors wrote sight words in a hopscotch grid then had tutees read the sight words as they played hopscotch. The engagement observed between

the tutors and tutees when they were outside practicing reading skills was significantly different than when the tutees were in the library.

The last week of tutoring provided an observation of tutors making a final connection with each other. The university faculty purchased a university t-shirt and a paperback book for each tutee to take home. The tutors gave each child a stamped envelope, pre-addressed to the university faculty so any tutee could practice their writing and remain in touch with their tutor over the summer. One child used the pre-addressed, stamped envelope in the next week to remain in touch with their tutor supporting the sense of community created during this field experience.

Reflections on Tutoring

Preservice teachers' reflections on their weekly tutoring experiences demonstrated an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as a tutor. The required reflection questions focused preservice teachers' thoughts on their knowledge, skills, and feelings of self-efficacy as they assessed and taught children to read. Expressions of content were analyzed to determine common threads in each reflection and then sorted into three categories: knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy. Tutors' reflections were reduced to common themes identified from content analysis (see Table 1).

Content analysis provided a knowledge of the ability of preservice teachers to make accommodations in their understanding and construct a more effective method for their tutee to improve his or her reading skills. Reflections are best expressed using the voices of tutors, but identifying common themes provides a more concise method for sharing similar growth and experiences. During this research a tutor reflected, "I learned that it is important to have a contingency plan. It was so hard for me to think on the fly and determine what aspects of the lesson were less important and could be scrapped in favor of time."

Table 1

Content Analysis of Tutoring Reflections

Reflections about Knowledge	N	Reflections about Skills	N	Reflections About Feelings of Self-Efficacy	N
I like to offer a variety of interactive activities.	19	I can explain phonics to students better.	22	Confidence engaging with reading content.	34
I can select books and activities at instructional/independent reading levels.	15	I like to use literacy apps for iPads with tutees.	20	Tutoring is fun.	17
I understand the need to use multiple literacy assessments, multiple times, to provide valuable information on tutees reading skills.	14	I have learned to balance letting students struggle and offering scaffolding.	20	Feeling as if I am learning how to teach.	12
I understand phonics --vowels, CVC, digraphs, diphthongs, etc.	14	I am able to correct student's errors more effectively.	5	Having respect for others.	7
I like to teach reading strategies.	10	I like to include spelling activities with tutoring.	4	I am getting better at self-correcting issues while tutoring.	7
I am able to identify sounds in words to teach decoding strategies.	9	I can model the writing process for tutees.	4	Not easily frustrated while tutoring.	6
I understand the need to have students re-read books.	9	I enjoy modeling reading.	4	Good attitude about becoming a teacher.	5
I understand the importance of offering choices in books.	7	I like to use word sorts or file folder games to offer hands on activities.	4	Flexibility is important.	5
I am able to identify miscues during tutoring.	7	I can model the writing process for tutees.	3	I enjoy offering positive encouragement.	4
I understand I need to bring extra literacy activities in case I have to make adjustments during tutoring.	7			Modeling reading strategies.	3
I understand students may have other reasons for not passing assessments such as being hungry or angry.	3				

This quote was analyzed as an expression of knowledge and a common theme with 10 other comments similar to "I like to offer a variety of interactive activities." Another tutor stated, "My goal for this coming session is to keep him more on task and find a good way to challenge him with games I utilize for reading practice on the iPad. I felt like the games I

chose for him were too simple, so I am going to play some more reading apps before next week to find some apps where I feel he is learning more on his level." This quote was analyzed as an expression of skill and a common theme with eight other comments similar to "I like to use literacy apps for iPads with tutees." Another tutor commented, "I enjoyed tutoring because I

was able to point out strengths, like expressive and accurate reading, and by doing that she felt more successful and capable of being a great reader.” This quote was analyzed as an expression of self-efficacy and a common theme with nine other comments similar to “Confidence engaging with reading content.”

Table 1 offers a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of expressions of knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy submitted by 10 tutors over the span of 10 weeks for a total of 100 reflections.

Concept Maps

Analysis of concept maps completed by preservice teachers before tutoring had an average of 2.3 stems and 2.1 sub-stems. Concept maps completed by preservice teachers after tutoring had an average of 6.3 stems and

14.4 sub-stems. The change between the pre and post-concept map assessments and knowledge of “Reading Methods” is noteworthy since there was a 37% increase in stems and 146% increase in sub-stems from pre to post assessments.

Overall, the concepts listed on the post-assessment concept maps included detailed vocabulary and multiple connections between and among elements related to reading methods. The distinctive change in preservice teachers’ concept maps after tutoring suggest the field experience allowed active construction of their understanding of theoretical and pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy. Figure 2 provides an example of one of the 10 preservice teachers’ completed pre and post-concept maps.

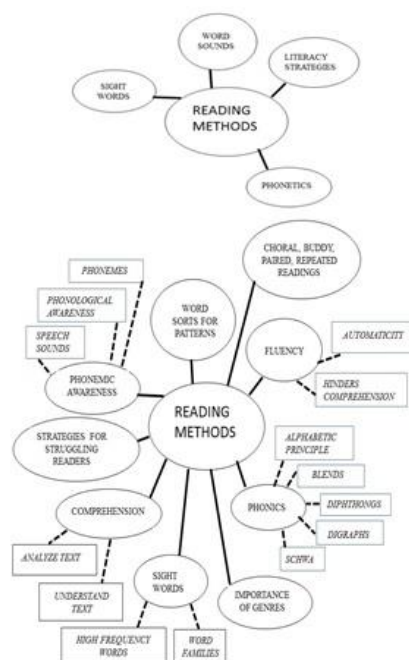


Figure 2. One tutor’s pre and post-concept map completed before the first day of tutoring and after ten weeks of tutoring. The circular shapes list key concepts stemming from the primary concept, Reading Methods, connected by solid lines. The square and rectangle shapes illustrate subordinate concepts associated with key concept connected by dashed lines.

Conclusions and Implications

Tutoring experiences in this research study began with observations of tutors creating a learning environment promoting motivation and a sense of community. The tutors developed a relationship with the tutees personally and professionally. Content analysis of reflections after tutoring each week identified tutors' focus on making improvements in their knowledge of effective tutoring practices. This analysis allowed identification of their strengths and weaknesses in tutoring skills and the types of character traits which will help them motivate students. Pendergast et al. (2011) completed research on motivation, teaching effectiveness, and self-efficacy, which supports these conclusions.

The most remarkable finding of this research study was the vast increase in knowledge shared by preservice teachers through their pre and post-concept maps. The growth in accurate information stemming from the concept "Reading Methods" was important since preservice teachers need to be able to practice using academic vocabulary when instructing students. Tutors' constructions of knowledge based on field experiences have a positive impact on their self-efficacy (Haverback & Parault, 2008).

Field experiences are an integral part of the foundation in teacher preparation programs. They allow new teachers to become effective professional educators and develop self-efficacy. However, from conversations with other teacher preparation program faculty, most teacher education programs embed the majority of field experiences for preservice teachers during the student teaching semester. Based on the data from this research study and support from the literature (Al Otaiba, et al., 2012; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2016; Haverback & Parault, 2008; Moore, 2003),

teacher education programs might consider embedding more field experiences in methods and professional education coursework. Tutoring experience is invaluable in building self-efficacy for preservice teachers before graduating and teaching in their own classrooms.

This research study has some limitations to consider. This tutoring research was conducted as a one-on-one tutoring experience with a small sample of preservice teachers and second-grade students making the results ungeneralizable. The content analysis of tutors' reflections might be considered subjective since it is qualitative data. Also, the university faculty observations were completed using open-ended notes. A template of expected behaviors might be a better method for collecting observational data during tutoring field experiences.

The concepts, results, and reflections on the role of tutoring to improve preservice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy are valid for this research study. Further research is suggested on tutoring field experiences and changes in preservice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy related to the opportunity to participate in focused field experiences.

Preservice teachers' application of concepts discussed in university classrooms enhances during participation in additional field experiences before student teaching. Moore (2003) agrees that a focus on increasing field experiences before the student teaching semester offers opportunities to integrate theory into practice for preservice teachers. A shift towards the inclusion of specific field experiences embedded in methods and professional education courses is encouraged since it would offer authentic opportunities to construct an understanding of pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy.

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Caring Across Communities: Strategies to Meet the Academic and Cultural Needs of Refugee Language Learners

Sekineh Nasiri

Sam Houston State University

Geraldine Marquez Santiago

Sam Houston State University

Abstract

In recent years, the number of refugee English language learners (ELLs) in the United States has increased exponentially (Edwards, 2016). Yet, many schools are unprepared to meet the cultural and academic needs of these learners. Recent research on this topic has indicated that a number of strategies can be used to prepare refugee ELLs in the acquisition of linguistic proficiency, literacy skills, and content knowledge in their second language while ensuring that these students meet the same academic achievement standards as non-ELL students. In this chapter, we discuss the use of mini-lessons as a strategy that can aid English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and promote reflexive and collaborative classroom environments.

Keywords: *refugee, English language learners, mini-lessons, strategies*

A refugee is a person who is forced to leave his/her national country because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (The United Nations Refugee Agency [U.N. Refugee Agency], 2017). Refugees come to the United States to escape persecution or dangerous situations, such as war in their own country (Zong & Batalova, 2015). They often leave their homes quickly, possibly fleeing danger.

Refugees rarely have time to make arrangements, gather important documents, or say good-bye to loved ones. In fact, depending on the situation, refugees may leave their home and not know about the well-being of their family members, which could cause internal turmoil. These individuals often live in refugee camps in neighboring countries while waiting for their applications for resettlement to be processed. In contrast, an immigrant is someone who has moved from their country of origin to

another country for specific reasons. For example, they may move to become a citizen of the new country, to pursue a better education, to find a better job, or to experience a new life. Individuals who visit a country, even to work for a few months, are not considered immigrants. Immigrants are people who live permanently somewhere other than their homeland (The U.N. Refugee Agency, 2017).

By the end of 2015, as wars, conflict, and persecution worldwide continued to unfold, the number of people displaced within their country or having fled internationally reached 65.3 million (Edwards, 2016). The number of refugee children, as a percentage of all refugees resettling in the U.S., has increased over the past decade. Currently, the U.S. is the country with the highest refugee resettlement in the world (Zong & Batalova, 2015). In 2016, approximately 7,000 refugees relocated to Texas (Fernandez, 2016). The large numbers of refugee ELLs in public school settings create challenges for educators and teachers who must determine the best linguistic and cultural strategies to meet student needs successfully (Prior & Niesz, 2013).

Upon displacement, refugee students and parents face a variety of challenges, including psychological needs, limited formal education, lack of documentation, limited time to study, and lack of parental educational information. In addition, schools and agencies working with refugee ELLs typically face challenges in accommodating this population. All too often, schools solve problems in isolation, despite the existence of resources and models developed by other districts or states with similar problems. This “solitary solution” may be due to a lack of time to research best practices or a lack of knowledge about how to access relevant information.

In order to meet the cultural and emotional needs of refugee and immigrant ELLs, teachers, administrators, and policy makers should be aware of the misconceptions

and barriers associated with these populations of students. Some of the common misconceptions among mainstream and ESL teachers are that parents of ELLs do not care about the academic success of their children, first language usage in classroom hinders second language learning, it is difficult to communicate with ELLs and their parents, and it is appropriate to assign English names to ELLs for easy pronunciation (Ates & Grigsby, 2016). These misconceptions are addressed in the next section.

Misconceptions about ELLs

Some educators assume that ELLs usually come from poor countries, have poor academic skills, and need “survival skills” rather than academic curriculum (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Kramer, & Parr, 2009). However, the reality is that refugee parents might be from a variety of social classes and backgrounds, as some are highly educated and some are barely literate. Whether refugee students are educated or uneducated, literate in English or not literate in English, the U.S. educational system may be challenging for them (Petron & Ates, 2016). Most refugee and immigrant parents are terrified to attend and participate in school meetings regularly because they cannot communicate and understand the English language (Shim, 2013). Additionally, language barriers and the burden of multiple jobs are the two important reasons that parents cannot help their children academically. In these circumstances, teachers must strive to understand the diversity of students’ backgrounds, including life conditions, issues, strengths, and weaknesses (Petron & Ates, 2016). For example, if immigrant and refugee ELLs cannot communicate verbally, greet them with a smile and attempt to integrate interpersonal communication vocabulary words in their language (Hiatt-Michael, 2007). Also, teachers are the first line of defense for refugee and immigrant children and parents in both schools and society. As a result, school administrators can provide translators or interpreters in parent-teacher conferences,

meetings, and events to encourage parents to participate, cooperate, and feel secure.

Additionally, some teachers, especially monolingual teachers, find it challenging to work with newcomers who do not understand the English language. To solve the problem of communication barriers, teachers should familiarize themselves with Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages methodologies, learn differentiated instruction and strategies, and acquire knowledge about second language development (Ates & Grigsby, 2013). Additionally, teachers must acknowledge ELLs first language (L1) and must be aware that strategic use of L1 is a normal process of language acquisition and a sign that new language growth is occurring. One of the challenging assignments for ELLs is responding to writing prompts. To help ELLs understand, teachers should allow students to write their ideas in L1, and then translate that information into the second language (L2) with the whole class when opportunities arise. In addition, teachers should create an environment where students who share the same language or have related languages work collaboratively. Collaboration is a research-based, best practice to help ELLs strengthen second language learning (Ates & Grisby, 2013; Petron & Ates, 2016).

Lastly, teachers who change immigrants or refugee ELLs' names to pronounce them easily should realize that names are vital to the students' identities, heritages, and cultures (Ates & Grisby, 2013). Some ELLs, especially adult learners, might like to change their names or would like to have nicknames in classrooms, but teachers should give them the choice to choose names rather than assigning names. Teachers must have clear ideas, knowledge, and attitudes towards immigrant and refugee ELLs to meet their linguistic and cultural needs. In the following section, we offer some strategies to meet the academic needs of English language learners within a mini-lesson setting.

What are Mini-Lessons?

One strategy that can help to meet the academic needs of ELLs is the mini-lesson. Mini-lessons are short, focused, teacher directed activities to deliver explicit instruction (Daniels & Steinke, 2004). Mini-lessons can be used at the beginning, middle, or at the end of the instructional time based on students' needs and teachers' preferences while teachers need ongoing, systematic structure for shaping, refining, and extending during training time. Mini-lessons can be used in all classrooms at all grade levels to create collaborative learning environments and thoughtful students. Additionally, mini-lessons provide ELLs with strategies to read challenging texts and to help them understand and remember the textbook material (Daniels & Steinke, 2004).

Before introducing a new mini-lesson to language learners, teachers should try to make connections by linking new material to their previous knowledge. To make connections, teachers should attempt to teach simply, clearly, and explicitly. Also, teachers should help students become more cognitively aware of teaching points. For instance, teachers can explain, "Today, I am going to teach you how to make a prediction . . ." When teaching mini lessons, teachers should attempt to: (a) provide an explanation, which is describing the work that they want students to learn, (b) use multiple examples, which refers to providing sample texts where students can retrieve information about using activities and strategies to comprehend the text, and (c) demonstrate activities, which refers to modeling the skills and strategies that language learners need to learn. Demonstrations help students explain the thinking that is going on inside their head as they complete their work. The last factor is linking, which is reiterating teaching points and directing the students to the work they will be doing during work time. Mini-lessons that can be used by ESL teachers include: (a) Dealing with a First Chapter, (b) The Envelope Please, (c) Move your Body, Remember the Words, (d) Event Connection,

and (e) What do you Write. In the next section, we will discuss each of these types of mini-lessons, which can be helpful for ELLs to become successful academically (Daniels & Steinke, 2004).

Types of Mini-Lessons

Dealing with the First Chapter

Immigrants and refugee language learners usually have different academic backgrounds, which makes learning processes in a new country challenging. Primarily, these groups of students are not familiar with close reading, strategies for comprehending, and starting a new novel. Consequently, teachers should guide all students in an informal discussion about the first chapter or the first section of a book that students are required to read. Teachers can provide students a few minutes to look at the book, its pictures, and italicized words. Then, teachers can ask students to create a two-column chart in their journals to write down predictions in the first column and reasons in the second column. Students can talk about their predictions and thought processes with partners and then discuss the information with the class. Also, teachers can encourage students to write some follow-up questions to help them engage in thoughtful discussions, which will enhance comprehension.

The Envelope, Please

To get the most from text, teachers might ask students to predict the end of the story, article, or chapter. After finishing half of the book, ask students to predict the ending of the book. Ask students to complete the task individually with guidance from the teacher. Then, ask students to keep their prediction in an envelope that will be collected. When the book is completed, teachers will redistribute the envelopes to students and ask them to share their predictions with the class. Encourage students to ask each other questions about the reasons for their predictions and what made them think that way (Daniels & Steinke, 2004).

Move your Body, Remember the Words

This hands-on strategy is beneficial for emergent readers and English language learners at the beginning level. During read-aloud time, teachers should encourage students to listen carefully and mimic the teachers' gestures or create their own gesture. Also, students can practice this strategy while reading independently or reading with a shoulder partner or a group (Serravallo, 2015). Gesturing and moving bodies provide opportunities for language learners to remember and memorize the new vocabulary words.

Event Connection

Event Connection is a strategy that can be used with intermediate and advanced ELLs in narrative and nonfiction texts to understand cause and effect as well as sequencing and summarizing. Historical texts with large amounts of information are difficult for ELLs to track and understand. To help students overcome this type of reading task, teachers should encourage the students to create a flow chart to use with the text. Students may jot down key words, make connections with the text, and show relationships between events, using arrows to represent the flow of the text (Serravallo, 2015). This strategy provides simplified opportunities for students to remember the important events and relationships between them.

Why Do You Write?

Writing is a challenging skill for ELLs who need focused attention. Usually the heart of the issue is that students write because they are required or invited to write by their teacher. To promote stronger skills, teachers may encourage students to think about why they are writing. This exercise may help to make the writing process more meaningful. Teachers can foster student self-talk, which allows them to think about the purpose of their writing, what they want to express between the lines, and what readers need to hear (Serravallo, 2015). To enhance the process and the product, teachers should encourage students to think about why

they are writing, what they care about most, and what speaks to them and that topic.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed barriers that refugee ELLs and their parents encounter when migrating to a new country. To address the academic barriers of refugee learners, we suggested the use of mini-lessons such as Dealing with a First Chapter, The Envelope

Please, Move your Body, Remember the Words, Event Connection, and What do you Write. Each of these strategies can help refugee ELLs read and comprehend difficult texts by creating connections between new textual information and students' prior knowledge. As the number of refugee ELLs continues to increase, it will be vital that both mainstream and ESL teachers create equitable learning environments for all students.

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Creating Elementary-Aged Agents of Change: The Impact of Civil Rights-Themed Literature

Rebekah E. Piper, Ph.D.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio

Summer Garrison

Texas A&M University - San Antonio

Lauren Morgan

Texas A&M University - San Antonio

Abstract

This chapter focused on the notion of implementing Civil Rights-themed literature with elementary-aged students through interactive read alouds. With traditional pre-packaged scripted curriculum programs, teachers are challenged with implementing additional literature and utilizing resources to promote an expansive variety of learning experiences. Sample texts and interactive activities were addressed and provided for teachers to use as an initial starting point for introducing Civil Rights-themed literature in their classrooms. Lastly, implications for teacher professional development were addressed in an effort to provide teachers and teacher candidates with a space to explore a variety of authentic multicultural children's literature.

Keywords: *multicultural children's literature, Civil Rights Movement, interactive read alouds*

Literature in the Classroom

The term “children’s literature” is used to describe a group of children and young adult texts produced to inform and entertain within many genres. In addition to the different genres, such as fantasy, historical fiction, biography, poetry, and multicultural literature, there are also subgroups that fall under each genre. Teachers and students may select from the large quantities

and various genres of quality children’s literature that are available to them. It is important that teachers introduce specific, culturally relevant literature pieces during classroom instruction. For the purpose of this work, a specific selection of multicultural children’s literature that focuses on historically underrepresented people of color and their experiences during the Civil Rights Movement in American history was reviewed. This review

was conducted in an effort to encourage teachers to implement literature in their classrooms and approach critical conversations with students moving towards creating agents of change in elementary classrooms. This group of literature has been coined as *Movement-Oriented Civil Rights-Themed Multicultural Children's Literature* (MO-CRiTlit).

Children's literature is an essential resource for classroom teachers to use not only to introduce different genres to students, but also to facilitate learning through interactive read alouds. The incorporation of a variety of children's literature enables children to learn about themselves as well as others. Too often, teachers use children's literature as a platform to simply celebrate holidays. Introducing literature during certain holidays can add value to a child's education; however, it does not fully encompass the totality of learning about the holiday or tradition without the cultural teachings and understanding (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). Understanding the benefits of interactive read alouds helps teachers as they plan themes around the topics and class content.

Teachers may be asked to use prepackaged or scripted curricula. Scripted curriculum rarely interests children, especially diverse students who may not relate to literature read in the classroom, and must be supplemented with authentic texts. A lack of relevance often leads to a lack of motivation to learn from this type of curriculum (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004). However, when children read books that are selected based on their interests and that are developmentally appropriate, there is a greater chance that they will build motivation to read and continue to develop their literacy skills. For example, issues of race, class, and language, among other social justice concerns, have been and continue to be prevalent in the lives of students of color in U.S. schools (Horsford, 2011, 2014; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Palos, 2011).

With these issues in mind, teacher educators have developed repertoires of practice to support pre-service teachers' engagement in critical literacy pedagogical practices in teaching about social justice concerns (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Adams et al., 2010; Milner, 2010). Given this research behind the use of children's literature and the need for further implementation in schools, this chapter seeks to provide teacher educators, in-service teachers, and teacher candidates recommended texts and activities that can be used to help prepare teachers to implement Civil Rights-themed literature, or MO-CRiTlit, in elementary classrooms to promote social action with young children. When literature is introduced in the classroom setting, it provides opportunity for culturally responsive pedagogy, such that the children develop a connection to literature and increase their motivation to read. The connection to literature and motivation can benefit the teacher, the classroom culture, and the student's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Civil Rights-Themed Literature

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2014), the American Civil Rights Movement is the least taught topic in American history. Moreover, many states view the teaching of the Civil Rights Movement as a regional matter or only for children of color. As a result, the Civil Rights Movement is typically not central to mainstream PK-12 history curriculum.

Additionally, popular narratives used to teach about the Civil Rights Movement and leaders in traditional schooling illustrate a small group of leaders as being the activists (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014). However, this does not represent the entire truth; there were many other people who advocated for civil rights and equality. It is crucial that there is a space for teachers and teacher candidates to learn about authentic Civil Rights-themed literature and recognize the "how to" when it comes to implementing supplemental literature.

In the last twenty years, there has been an increase in the availability of multicultural children's literature that meets the definition of Civil Rights-themed multicultural literature. This increase in availability has provided teachers with a pool of literature from which to select for use in classrooms. It is vital that teachers are mindful in the selection of multicultural children's literature and ensure that its content is (a) factually and otherwise accurate, and (b) does not promote stereotypes or superficial representations of historically underrepresented people of color (Kohl, 1993). For example, consider the historical teaching of civil rights activist Rosa Parks, a woman known by children learning about the Civil Rights movement. The story of Rosa Parks has suggested that by refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man, she instigated the boycott of the Montgomery Bus Line. However, organizing in advance for social justice is what led to the historical events. Civil Rights-themed children's literature portrays two different accounts to this event: (1) Rosa as being a tired elderly woman with a desire to be seated, and (2) Rosa as an activist who demanded a seat on the bus for equal rights.

With this in mind, teaching through a critical literacy lens increases awareness and acknowledges the structures of power relations in society. Freire and Macedo (1987) argued that true literacy is reflected in the ability to read "the word *and* the world" (p. 8). From this idea, the notion of *critical* literacy emerges. A critical literacy framework encourages teachers to reconsider literacy instruction as "problem posing" education, where the relationships of hegemony, power, and literacy are questioned at the same time that literacy skills are taught and learned (Freire, 1973).

When children engage with this type of literature, they see how groups of people organized and came together to create change. This idea of social action is important for young people today to gain a better understanding as

they, too, can be agents of change through social action. Ultimately, teaching through a critical literacy framework will empower children to bring about transformational change.

Examples and Implementation

Access to Civil Rights-themed children's literature has increased in the last twenty years (Menkart, Murray, & View, 2004). With the increased access and opportunity to explore children's literature, it is vital that teachers offer a variety of literature. Through interactive read alouds, teachers can facilitate learning and critical conversations that will increase student knowledge while also making connections to the text. The following texts are examples of Civil Rights-themed literature and interactive activities designed to be used with students to introduce topics that are generally not found in the prepackaged scripted curriculum (see Table 1).

Wangari's Trees of Peace (Winter, 2008). Growing up in Kenya, Wangari enjoyed the many trees that made her home beautiful. However, after being away for a period of time and returning home, she found forests of trees destroyed and cut down. Wangari was determined to make a change and do something to help her country, so she started by planting nine seedlings in her backyard. Before she knew it, Wangari had big plans as her project grew and grew. A true story, this is an example of a young woman who was passionate, committed, and determined to create change. There are other texts that share the story and work of Wangari Maathai, including *Seeds of Change* (Johnson, 2010) and *Mama Miti* (Napoli, 2010).

Teachers can use the texts independently or as a unit when working with students. Additionally, interactive activities include having students identify how they can make a change in their community. This activity could be approached from different aspects. For example, students could create a collage of item

Table 1

Examples of Civil Rights-Themed Literature

Title	Author	Themes
<i>The Story of Ruby Bridges</i>	Robert Coles	Set in the 1960s, the true story of a young Black girl attending an all-White school.
<i>Talkin' About Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman</i>	Nikki Grimes	Set in the early 1900s, this story shows the obstacles Elizabeth Coleman faced to become the first female African American pilot.
<i>Seeds of Change: Wangari's Gift to the World</i>	Jen Cullerton Johnson	Set in Kenya, the story follows a young girl who, educated in America, went back to Kenya to help save the land, one tree at a time.
<i>Giant Steps to Change the World</i>	Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee	This story follows examples of people in history who have taken big steps of activism.
<i>Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya</i>	Donna Jo Napoli	Set in 1977, the story follows Mama Miti who founded the Green Belt Movement to fight environmental degradation.
<i>Separate is never equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation</i>	Duncan Tonatiuh	Set in 1944, this story shows the struggle of a Mexican born family for equality in California.
<i>Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa</i>	Jeanette Winter	Set in Kenya, the story follows Wangari and her decision to try to save the trees.

that they find in print to identify their own vision board of things they would like to change. Students could also create a letter to a local politician describing an idea that would make their community a better place to live. Throughout the year, teachers should also guide students in making connections between life events and finding ways to change through discussions and sharing ideas. Working through interactive activities such as these provides students with opportunities to see how they have the ability to advocate for and create change.

Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation (Tonatiuh, 2014). The story of Sylvia Mendez and her family moving to California during the 1940's proved to be a difficult transition for her as she learned that her neighborhood was not the most welcoming place. Sylvia and her brother had to attend the "Mexican" school, which was a run down, dirty place where not even the teachers wanted to be. Other children got to attend the other school, where the White children learn. The Mendez

family did not approve of the segregation and filed a lawsuit to desegregate schools in California. This text uses actual legal terms, which are explained for young children to understand the context of the story.

The text *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 2010) tells a similar story of a young Ruby Bridges who was the first African American child to attend a New Orleans elementary school. Ruby Bridges went to school every day surrounded by marshals who kept her from the mob of angry White protestors. Ruby often sat in a classroom alone because the community did not want their children attending a desegregated school. The text demonstrates Ruby's courage in facing a difficult situation and her tenacity to look for the positive of the situation.

Although these two stories took place in two different geographic locations and different time periods, both texts provide readers with a context of school segregation. Interactive activities for these two texts could include writing about a time when someone had to take a stand for what was right or writing a letter to Sylvia or Ruby that addresses their bravery as young children. Activities such as these will help students gain a better perspective of social action and affirm their own actions of having the ability to take a stand.

Talkin' About Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman (Grimes, 2002). Affectionately known in the story as Bessie, Elizabeth Coleman grew up being told what she could and could not do as a young girl. At the age of 11, Bessie was determined to become the first African American female pilot. Through a strong faith and determination, Bessie overcame many obstacles and accomplished her goal. This text speaks to issues of gender discrimination, poverty, and racism.

Another similar text is *Giant Steps to Change the World* (Lee & Lee, 2011). Lee and Lee introduced a variety of people who created

change by taking steps to overcome slights and make a difference. The book uses examples from attempting to change the poverty in a neighborhood to working to make change by becoming President. The topics apply to society today and offer significant insights into today's modern day civil rights issues.

Media influences children and their understanding of what society believes to be acceptable. Teachers are faced with students questioning topics, such as gender equality. An interactive activity associated with these two texts include having students work in pairs to create a Venn diagram that represents their individual unique characteristics and attributes that are similar between the two of them. This type of activity helps students appreciate one another and establishes a connection between students, the text, and the societal norms. Through this connection, young children become informed of societal and cultural differences and have the ability to make their own decisions and understanding of the world around them.

Conclusion

Creating a welcoming and safe space for learning is a major component of multicultural education. Supplementing the curriculum in schools can be difficult in the beginning because of the demands set by school leaders. However, it is imperative that teachers create spaces for children to engage with Civil Rights-themed literature. By doing so, teachers build classroom cultures that support student achievement and influence their motivation to read, think, and act. Introducing these topics provides a multicultural perspective across traditional schooling practices and ensures a more equitable education for all children, including those who face institutionalized racial stigmas (Piper, 2017). This approach openly addresses issues of power structures and racism in schools and helps ensure that all students receive an equitable education.

In closing, teachers and teacher candidates must prepare for possible questions and critical conversations around topics introduced in children's literature. Professional development to assist teachers with designing assignments where students begin to question their own social settings, facilitating discussions to push understanding, and exploring a variety of literature that address inequality (e.g., race, gender, class) will help teachers gain the confidence needed to address difficult topics.

While the standards-based curriculum is often the foundation for literacy education in

traditional public schools, children's literature must be used to connect students to historical and real-world events. By employing pedagogical practices that promote interactions with literature, teachers can increase students' awareness and appreciation for literature, motivation to read, and agency. When students relate their own experiences to the experiences of others and reflect, plan, and act in ways that can change through social action, they have a greater potential to perform better socially and academically (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Nieto, 2010a, 2010b).

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Writing Activities to Conceptualize Math Concepts

Teri Bingham, Ed.D.
West Texas A&M University

Abstract

Students often express frustrations and negative feelings about math (Ruffins, 2007). The purpose of this chapter was to describe several writing activities that can be used during math instruction to help students gain a greater understanding of mathematical concepts. By doing so, students will recognize how math is all around them, and they will learn how to use their new skills authentically. The strategies in this chapter draw upon constructivist pedagogical understandings and describe three specific write-to-learn exercises for math concepts taught at the middle school level. These strategies also provide a model for teachers and preservice teachers regarding effective ways to enhance literacy by integrating brief writing experiences into math instruction.

Keywords: writing, mathematics, middle schools, writing-to-learn

Teaching students to make meaning from the processes associated with mathematics can be challenging for even the best teachers. One effective strategy to help students increase their conceptual understandings and make math more meaningful is the use of write-to-learn activities designed to help students focus on what they have learned (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005; Bryant, Lape, & Schaefer, 2014, Zinsser, 1988). Writing activities help students reflect on the purpose of each step in solving a problem, deepen their understanding (Borasi & Rose, 1989; Boscolo & Mason, 2001; Newell, 2006), and gain greater meaning (McCormick, 2010). Zinsser (1988) explained that citizenship involves being an effective writer. In order to reach this outcome, all teachers, not just English teachers, should be responsible for teaching students to write.

In a concentrated effort to improve mathematics instruction, The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000) provided guidance via a published document entitled *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*. This document outlined college and career readiness standards and corresponding critical elements of an effective PreK-12th grade mathematics program. NCTM also identified five content standards and five process standards for creating a high-quality math program. Communication is one of the essential process standards and elaborates on the need for students to gain the ability to write coherent mathematical explanations. Students are empowered when they articulate how they arrived at a mathematical answer and discover questions that arise during the thinking process.

According to Burns (2004), teachers have the responsibility of providing

opportunities for students to engage in problem solving and reflect on critical thinking processes (Brown, 2016; McCormick, 2010). In addition, engaging ESL learners in writing activities to process mathematics improves their literacy overall (Spack, 1988). Quality literacy instruction transcends all academic content and enhances the lives of all citizens.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe writing strategies intended to increase students' conceptual understanding of math and promote literacy in mathematics education. Skills and knowledge are the building blocks of mathematics. However, through writing, students have the ability to demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge so they can be productive in the workplace and further their education. Furthermore, by using student-writing samples as formative assessments, teachers can ascertain the degree of mastery each student has attained.

Writing Activities in Mathematics

Activity #1- Triangles: The Angles Sum It Up

Objective: The learner will prove the sum of the angles of a triangle by forming a straight line.

Materials:

- paper triangles
- scissors
- scotch tape
- blank paper

Directions: Have the students follow along as the teacher demonstrates step-by-step how to cut off the three vertices of the triangle and tape the vertices near the top of the blank paper. All of the vertices should touch tips at the same point with the sides of the former triangle touching one another. Notice arrangement of the vertices touching each other at a single point, with adjacent sides touching, forms a straight line (see Figure 1).

Student Writing Prompt: Below the figure, draw an illustration and explain how the sum of the angles (vertices) of a triangle forms a straight line. Remember that a straight line measures 180 degrees.

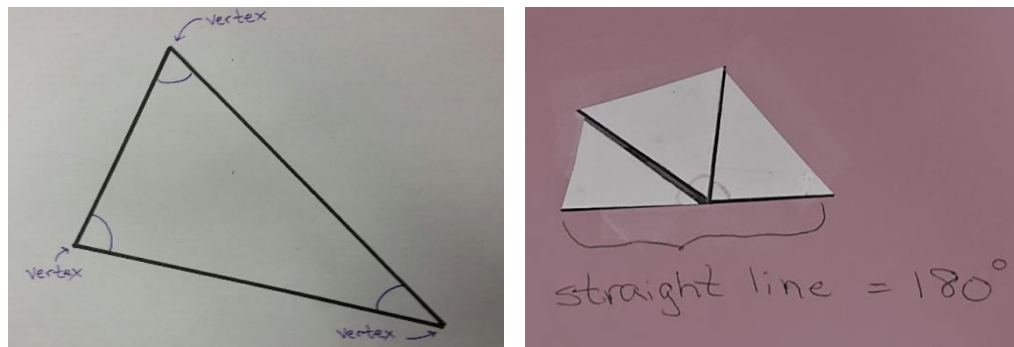


Figure 1. This student work sample illustrates how to cut off the vertices and place them adjacent to one another to form a straight line demonstrating the sum of the vertices is 180 degrees.

Activity #2 - Who Knew There was So Much to a Cube

Objective: The learner will make a foldable defining the positions and parts of a cube.

Materials:

- cube nets
- scissors
- scotch tape
- blank sheet of paper

Directions: Each student cuts the cube net along the solid lines and folds each square inwards along the dotted lines (see Figure 2). Next, tape the touching sides to form a paper cube. After students construct their paper cubes, identify the three-dimensional geometric shape as a cube and explains its parts: face, edge, and vertex. In small

groups, have students discuss where they see or experience cubes in their environment. Students may also discuss the importance of having a common vocabulary to communicate effectively.

Student Writing Activity: Students will create a foldable for vocabulary words relevant to a cube: cube, face, edge, and vertex. Each student holds their paper portrait-style and folds their paper in half vertically (see Figure 3). While the holding their folded paper, students make four horizontal cuts on the top flap of their paper to create four equally-sized sections. Starting from the top flap, students label their foldable with one vocabulary word per flap (i.e., cube, face, edge, and vertex). Using their three-dimensional paper cube as a visual aid, students explain in writing the position and respective vocabulary word on the inside of the labeled flap.

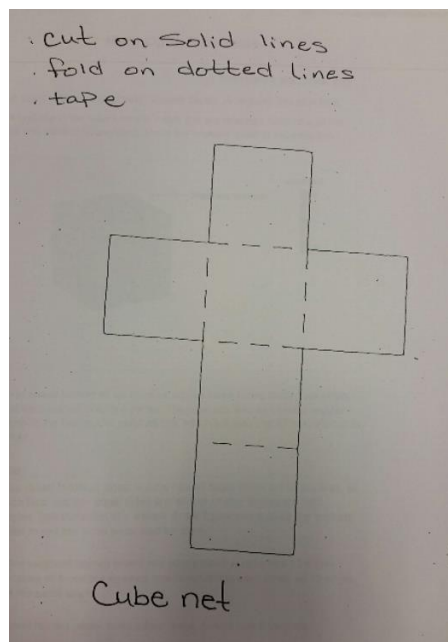


Figure 2. This student work sample shows the original cube net and the final paper cube.

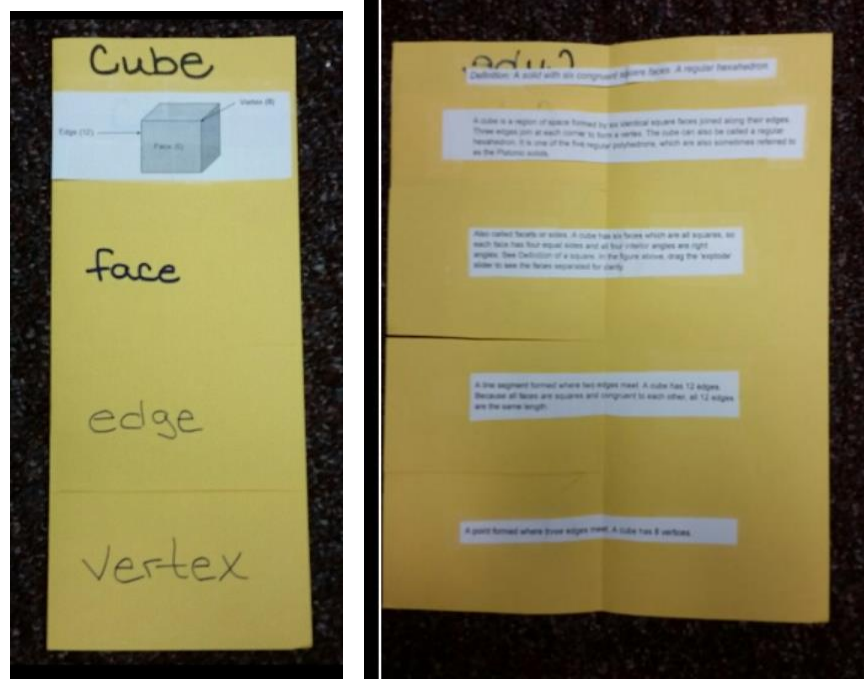


Figure 3. This foldable is a sample of the outside and inside of a student's finished product.

This writing activity is designed to have students reflect on what they have learned about cubes. Each student's foldable also provides the teacher with an informal, formative assessment to ascertain what knowledge the student retained and the complexity of student thinking. Furthermore, the vocabulary transfers to other three-dimensional geometric shapes, which accelerates future learning.

Activity #3 - Secret Agent Spy Notes

Objective: The learner will investigate how to move an index card the greatest distance using only a drinking straw.

Materials:

- 3" by 5" index cards
- scotch tape
- drinking straws

Directions: Tell students to pretend they are secret agents. As secret agents, they need to discretely pass a secret message to another agent using only a straw. Have students first write a secret message on an index card using a pen or pencil. Then, give each student one straw and instruct them to use only the straw to deliver their secret message to another agent. Provide students with sufficient time to explore a variety of ways to move the index card the furthest distance using only their straw. Expect a wide variety of imaginative, resourceful ideas. While circulating the room and monitoring students, promote effort, persistence, and creativity. Avoid too many tips or hints in order to encourage student exploration and problem-solving, as well as their development of tenacity and grit.

Student Writing Prompt: On an index card, explain in writing what you learned during this activity. Describe what you would do differently if you completed this activity again.

Writing Prompts for Mathematics

Write-to-learn opportunities increase comprehension and application abilities in the content areas (Zinsner, 1988). During the writing process, students reflect on what they learned, make connections to their life experiences, and recognize how they increased their understanding of new skills or knowledge (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2016). Different prompts encourage different types of thinking and responses.

The prompts for the write-to-learn exercises described in this chapter are for impromptu in-class writing activities. Although these write-to-learn exercises were intended for middle school students, they may be modified for students at any level. These writing prompts should engage students for approximately five minutes and solicit thinking directly after a lesson or learning activity.

While writing, students use a variety of cognitive processes to demonstrate their understandings. Teachers may use written responses to gain feedback about their learning, including difficulties, connections, reflections, feelings, or thoughts about the material. Teachers can also solicit written responses regarding the instructional methodology employed during the lesson.

Below are a variety of writing prompts that foster students' metacognition of new material, their learning, and insights about class activities. Some of the prompts require students to identify their emotional response towards a

new concept or identify something they learning that they did not previously know. Other prompts assist students with internalizing the lesson's learning objective; reflect on new material, instruction, or struggles; make connections to prior knowledge or everyday life; and describe what they liked, found interesting, or questions they have about the lesson. This list is not exhaustive but provides ways teachers and preservice teachers may "prime the pump" for student learning.

Writing Prompts

1. What is one thing you learned today that you did not know before?
2. If you were to explain this concept to a friend, what would you say?
3. What was the muddiest point of today's work?
4. In your journal, write an entry explaining...
5. What connections did you make between today's math work and your community?
6. How can you use what you learned today in your daily activities?
7. What did you like most about what you learned today?
8. How has writing in your math journal helped you have a greater understanding of the math you are learning?
9. What questions do you still have after today's lesson or as a result of what you learned?
10. If someone asked you what you learned in math today, how would you answer?
11. Reflecting on what we learned in class today, what would you like to know more about?
12. What surprised you about the math we learned today in class?
13. Explain the meaning today's concept (e.g. finding the average, reading a bar graph, counting the value of coins).

14. What do you like most about our math class?
15. What would you like improved about our math class?

Conclusion

Students may view mathematics as a set of rules, formulas, and magic tricks dispensed by the teacher. However, teachers must move students towards becoming critical thinkers who use higher-order thinking to solve problems. One way that teachers make this shift is through the use of write-to-learn activities. Through

writing, math instruction becomes more than predetermined calculations that converge into a right answer; it becomes authentic. In order for students to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of mathematics, teachers need to incorporate writing activities as an integral part of a math class. Writing facilitates students' thinking processes and cultivates better communication skills. Paving the road and removing roadblocks to math involves linking write-to-learn experiences with mathematics among all learners.

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The Making of the Minute Masters: Pre-service Teachers' First Steps to Become Novice Conference Presenters and Leaders of Literacy

Lisa Colvin, Ed.D.
Tarleton State University

Anna Fox, Ed.D.
Tarleton State University

Jeremy Adler
Waco Independent School District

Jodi Brown
Tarleton State University

Evelyn Steffek
Great Hearts Maryvale Prep Academy, Phoenix, AZ

Abstract

As previous Texas Association for Literacy Education presenters and university instructors of literacy, the professors highlighted in this chapter knew the value of presenting at the annual conference and wanted to extend that opportunity to their students, challenging them to not only attend a state literacy conference but to also collaborate and participate as co-presenters. Three pre-service teachers embraced this opportunity and were involved in all phases of conference presentation planning. Design and delivery focused on early childhood literacy, specifically the Big 5 components of early reading success identified by The National Reading Panel (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, and how teachers can utilize spare minutes and transition times during the day to teach and reinforce these critical concepts. The pre-service teachers researched and planned their portions of the session, presented their literacy activities at the conference with participants in a station teaching format, and then reflected on the experience.

Keywords: emergent literacy, Big 5, National Reading Panel, pre-service teacher, leadership, collaboration, co-teaching, clinical teaching, student teaching, self-efficacy

Introduction

When teaching undergraduate pre-service teachers, the goal is not only to develop teachers, but also to cultivate teacher leaders. Encouraging pre-service teachers to participate in activities that can lead to a better understanding of pedagogy of literacy acquisition and development can promote growth within the individual. The purposeful inclusion of an undergraduate pre-service teacher served to provide the student with exposure to and experiences with professional conferences. The pre-service teachers were responsible for developing, planning, and implementing the literacy workshop alongside university professors. In retrospect, the learning opportunities for these students continue to be a positive experience for these three students and the faculty as well. Kouzes and Posner (2010), when writing about learning through experiences, stated:

Learning is the master skill. When you fully engage in learning - when you throw yourself wholeheartedly into the experimenting, reflecting, or getting coaching, you are going to experience the thrill of importance and the taste of success. More is more when it comes to learning. (p. 122)

Theoretical Perspectives

Allowing students to have experiences to increase their knowledge can be based on the concepts and theories of social constructionism and social cognitive theory. Learning theorists Albert Bandura (1986) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) theorized the importance of the social connection in learning and the experiences one has with others. Purzer (2011) explained the difference in the two perspectives:

A key difference between the two is that while social constructivist theory focuses on the cognitive theory scaffolding, the learner receives from interactions with others, social cognitive theory is more concerned

about the learner's internalization of the messages gained through interactions. (p. 657)

Thompson (2015) stated that social cognition theory, combined with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, explains "how reality is socially constructed and that all learning occurs within the frame of this constructed reality" (para. 1). When pre-service teachers receive the support of the *more knowledgeable peer* (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), learning occurs. Bennett (2012), when referring to the preservice teacher's experience, stated that individuals "progressively transform from experiences, and their understandings do not occur in one instance or during one-semester long course but gradually over time" (p. 381).

Minute Masters Presentation Background

This TALE presentation focused on utilizing spare minutes throughout the school day in order to teach and reinforce foundational literacy skills outlined by the National Reading Panel Report (2000) of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary (The Big Five). The idea emerged from a conversation between one professor and a former public school educator and colleague who was now teaching young learners at a childcare facility. While working at the center, she noticed there was 1) wasted time when learning could have occurred, 2) culture of low expectations, 3) lack of knowledge about what literacy skills children need to have when entering kindergarten, and 4) limited academic achievement. That conversation sparked the initial idea that grew into the TALE presentation entitled *Minute Masters: Making the Most of Your Time with Young Learners and Literacy Development*. The professors stepped into the shoes of early childhood teachers and decided to design the presentation targeting the issue of wasted time and critical emergent literacy skills. They researched developmentally appropriate activities that could reinforce phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension,

and vocabulary skills in an engaging way during spare minutes and transition times. In *Reading Essentials*, Regie Routman (2003) urged teachers to make every minute count at school and stated that using transitional times as teaching times is ideal to teach and reinforce literacy subskills more deliberately than incidentally. With the content of the presentation selected, the professors decided to go beyond just inviting students to attend the TALE conference and asked them to consider serving as co-presenters. Three pre-service teachers responded enthusiastically to the call.

Each presenter chose a Big 5 area of focus and selected ten activities to introduce to conference presentation participants. The professors served as guides and mentors through the process of presentation design and found that a review of the Big 5 was needed to ensure that activities were appropriate. Leland (2013) found that a majority of university students who had completed an emergent-literacy course believed learning the importance of the Big 5 was one of the most valuable aspects along with the instructor's enthusiasm for the literacy content. The presenters wanted the session to be hands-on and active just as early childhood classrooms would be. They also wanted to utilize the co-teaching strategy of station teaching to deliver the session content. In this education program, clinical teachers and their mentor teachers are trained to use the seven co-teaching strategies created by Bacharach and Heck at St. Cloud State University (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlburg, 2010). The station-teaching model is a focus strategy even at the university classroom level, and designing the TALE presentation using this format seemed appropriate in that there would be much hands-on content to deliver in a short amount of time. Having five smaller groups of learners rather than one large group is much more manageable for those providing instruction as well as the participants.

Planning the Conference Presentation Session

The three pre-service teachers who chose to participate as co-presenters were embarking on their clinical teaching semester when the planning of the presentation began. Co-presenters met as a group face-to-face twice, once to initially share information about the conference and presenting, to clarify the process and brainstorm, and then again the following month at their field site school to think aloud, share ideas, and hash out the timeline and specifics of the presentation. A collaborative Google Doc served as the space for the five presenters to deposit activity ideas for each of the five literacy components addressed during the presentation. This format served as a template for consistency in the documentation of the activities. The pre-service teachers followed the model that the professors established by including ten activities, each described with a title, when it can be used with children, materials needed, description of the activity, and resources for citation if necessary. This organization allowed each presenter to contribute to a document for use during the presentation and to share with participants after the conference.

Because the pre-service teachers were first-time conference presenters, they naturally experienced feelings of nervousness and anxiety. To give them practice with sharing their activities beforehand, they agreed to a trial run during one of the professor's undergraduate reading acquisition and development classes a week before the conference. The class was divided into three groups that rotated every ten minutes to three stations where the pre-service teachers delivered instruction about activities related to their chosen Big 5 component. The three final semester senior-level students conducted their stations with a class of first semester junior-level students as learners. The two professors monitored the groups, served as timekeepers for rotations, and took notes to share following the experience. The participating pre-service teachers had the

opportunity to share their station material three times with peers by the end of the thirty-minute station rotation experience. They learned from the class participants how that experience was valuable to their own understanding of the literacy concepts and how they could use them in their current early field placement. After this feedback session and a debrief with the professors, the pre-service teachers learned that they would need to have more hands-on demonstrations and activities, be clear and concise with explanations, be more mindful of time management, and be personable and professional. Jeremy, one of the pre-service teacher co-presenters, reflected that “after student attendees had several meetings with the professors to prepare for our session, I felt an increased responsibility to perform at a professional standard. It taught me teamwork and authentic co-teaching strategies.”

Implementation of the TALE 2017 Minute Masters Presentation

This TALE session was scheduled for mid-morning on the second day of the conference, and the pre-service teachers were anxious but prepared and confident. The format for the hour was divided into seven-minute increments for each of the five station rotations, with the professors taking the components of phonemic awareness and fluency to round out the Big 5. The professors and pre-service teachers each chose an area of the room to set up their stations, and session participants rotated through the five stations to learn how to use the selected activities and the value of doing so with young children.

Student Reflections

This authentic experience of planning and conducting a presentation at a state literacy conference co-presenters contributed to the pre-service teachers’ sense of professionalism, sense of leadership, and self-efficacy as instructors of literacy and presenters. This reflection sums up

the experience for Jodi, one of the pre-service students:

It was so much fun to be able to share my ideas, and it was a nice feeling to have them say that they loved the ideas and wanted to use some of them in their own classrooms. I also loved hearing some of their ideas as well. It was a very productive session because I felt that we could all bounce ideas off of each other. I learned that I do not have to be a veteran teacher to feel like I could contribute something meaningful. It was intimidating to share ideas with people who had already been teaching for a long time, but I had a blast doing it!

Each pre-service teacher co-presenter elaborated specifically how this experience impacted them personally and professionally.

Jeremy’s Reflection

As an undergraduate student, it is important to take any opportunity to learn outside of a traditional classroom setting. What purpose does theory serve without testing it? Incorporating classroom theory with practicum is my way of modeling my determination to advance my knowledge with higher-level thinking, just as I expect for my students.

To prepare for my station, I spoke to a retired teacher who gave me some great ideas for teaching comprehension with young learners and also referenced several textbooks I used during my university courses. The practice session at the university was greatly appreciated as I needed the practice to ensure proper timing. I also gained confidence in my ability to present information at the conference. I strongly suggest having a mock exercise to anyone who is planning a presentation either as a novice or with a new delivery strategy.

Presenting at the conference was the first time I had collaborated with teachers, instructors, and other professionals in the education field. I felt humbled and welcomed by everyone. My mentor teacher suggested that I “don’t chat, but interact.” In other words, I

offered my suggestions on activities I shared before opening the floor for modifications or additional ideas. Part of being a leader is understanding other individual's ideas.

I found that I became better at presenting during each of the five mini-sessions during our presentation. Instead of just telling them information about comprehension with young learners, I started to provide examples and even incorporate participant ideas and passing them on with each of the five rotations.

As a student, it was a relief to be in such a warm and welcoming environment where I was treated as another professional. The participants in our session were non-judgmental and supportive. I could see it in their eyes when I felt nervous to speak in front of the whole group, and because of the comfort I felt, I overcame my fear and was able to speak and develop my confidence.

Learning to adapt was something I took away from this experience. We did not know how many participants we would have, who would be in the audience, or what our presentation room would be like. Within minutes, with the help of our professors, we set the room up and made a plan for how our session would run. I just cannot say enough about how much they guided us during this experience. I am so humbled to have been a part of it and did not even feel at the time that I deserved to take part since I was a student amongst so many professional educators. I learned so much from them and the other participants and other presenters I got to see. I am now less hesitant to seek out options for professional development and have the courage to take risks and step out of my comfort zone. I would highly encourage other students to take any similar opportunity offered by their professors so they can guide them in developing their leadership skills. I feel grateful for the opportunity, and it will positively impact my career as a professional educator.

Jodi's Reflection

I chose to participate because I knew that the experience would be a chance for me to learn about myself and my profession. I was apprehensive because I was not sure what I was going to be able to share with experienced teachers. I felt that, if anything, I should be attending every TALE session I could, trying to get as much information about literacy instruction as I could. If I have learned anything from my professors, it is to never be afraid to try something new and be confident in my knowledge and abilities. I embraced the opportunity to share my ideas with others and learn along the way. I was motivated by my feeling that literacy is one of the most important skills that a human being can possess. I am motivated to learn as much as I can about teaching literacy so that I can be an effective teacher for my students, giving them the tools they need to be successful throughout their lives.

My first step in preparing my station was to think about my clinical teaching classroom. I considered the extra time during the day that could be better used, the skills that the first and second graders were learning, and the types of activities that would be effective for this age group. My next step was to look at the phonics standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills that PK-2 students are expected to master. This helped me to get a better idea of the focus of my chosen activities. I then researched to find activities that I could use or modify to fit my focus and compiled a list examining each activity closely to make sure that it focused on phonics and then selected my favorite activities to include in the presentation.

Presenting at TALE gave me a feeling of confidence that I wasn't expecting. I discovered that even as a new teacher, I had a lot to contribute. I heard comments such as "I never thought of that before" and "that's a great idea" from many of the teachers participating in my station. Hearing that allowed me to see that my ideas can help others and that I should never be afraid to speak up and share my thoughts.

The experience gave me the determination to continue to learn and share my ideas throughout my career. The presentation experience showed me that I already know a lot about literacy and am capable of using that knowledge in the classroom. It also opened my eyes to the importance of continuing to learn about literacy throughout a teaching career. By continuing to be a learner, I am giving my students the best opportunity to learn. I also felt that I have a duty to share my knowledge with others in the world of literacy. As we continue to learn more about effective literacy practices, it is important that we discuss and share ideas with others. This presentation experience gave me the confidence to know that I can be a leader and a voice in literacy instruction. I was initially terrified to present in front of people at the conference, but now I am more confident in my ability to share my ideas with others in such a setting. It was a wonderful feeling to be among people who shared the same passion and desire that I have. We all had the opportunity to learn from each other as we strive to be more effective in our teaching. The presentation experience gave me the confidence to know that I can take what I have learned, by myself and from others, and share it in a meaningful way.

One of the things that I enjoyed the most about the presentation experience was being part of the team that put it together. I enjoyed discussing ideas with my professors and classmates. I look forward to being able to do this with members of my team throughout my career. There is so much to be learned and shared when talking to other professionals. After this experience, I know that I want to be a member of professional organizations and attend conferences. Having two professors whom I admired and trusted by my side made this experience very worthwhile and fulfilling. I had the support that I needed to succeed and now know that I am capable of being a presenter. The experience further reinforced my desire to continue learning throughout my career. I enjoyed the entire experience so much

and truly felt that it helped me to grow in all aspects.

Evelyn's Reflection

I chose to participate because I wanted to reach and achieve something higher...something extra. I thought this would be good for me personally and professionally. I also decided to be a presenter because when I considered myself struggling with my part of the presentation, I remembered I had assured guidance from my professors and support from my peers who were presenting as well.

Before I started planning, I reviewed and refreshed myself on current vocabulary practices. This allowed me to renew my foundation and build strategies on what educators are already doing in their classrooms. In choosing the strategies I presented, I researched vocabulary methods and collaborated with my professors and peers for starter ideas. I took these ideas and added in my own creativity, turning some into games and other engaging activities. I stretched these ideas as much as I could to squeeze every ounce of vocabulary exposure out of them.

When we practiced at the university, I learned to show confidence outwardly even when I did not have it inwardly. I also learned the importance of rehearsing, how to speak and introduce my strategies more clearly, and how to engage a higher percentage of listeners by using my own tone and rate of speech as well as my own excitement.

This experience of presenting at TALE shaped my self-confidence and leadership. It was a rewarding feeling to grow professionally by having experienced being a conference presenter as an undergraduate student. Taking this extra step forward toward my goals allowed me to create newer and even higher educational goals. I found that my self-efficacy with presenting and with literacy content grew as I taught my vocabulary strategies to other educators, educators who have been in

classrooms longer than I have and have an even more developed educational background. I took delight in seeing them taking notes on things I had to say. When they spoke of how they liked the ideas I had developed or when I could see their excitement that came from learning from me, I was honored and felt elevated in my knowledge as an educator.

I know that after having worked on this presentation, my work ethic has increased and my motivation to go above and beyond the standard has increased exponentially. I can see how this will benefit any team I work with because of my newfound confidence to research and share my ideas. My leadership and motivation may impact the people, teams, and communities I will work with in the future, but I think the greatest impact will be on my future classes. This eagerness to learn will continue to fuel my passion to teach them new strategies and methods in literacy. Above all this, I hope that this enthusiasm to learn will be adopted by my future students.

Professor Reflections

We began this journey with no experience working with students as conference co-presenters, and we learned that students who are enthusiastic and motivated are highly capable when equipped with the tools for success. We found that including them from the beginning stages of conference preparation as co-planners and co-constructors of knowledge, being clear with the vision and outcomes for the presentation, and allowing for choice all contributed to pre-service teachers' general sense of autonomy and responsibility and overall success of the experience. Blanchard (2007) discussed how to approach working with the beginner who "is enthusiastic and ready to learn, despite his lack of skills" and is "curious, hopeful, optimistic, and excited" with the directing leadership style as they require a step-by-step guide for self-development (p. 90-91). Blanchard (2007) further explained that for enthusiastic beginners to experience success

when they have very limited knowledge in particular context is to teach and show them what experienced people do in such situations and then let them practice with supervision and support. Vygotsky (1978) would call this working with a "more knowledgeable peer" (p. 86) in the Zone of Proximal Development. Framing ourselves as learners and leaders of literacy and extending that framework to our students created a shared space to work on this project as collaborators. Instead of seeing us as merely professors who hold the power and knowledge, through this experience, the students viewed us as more experienced colleagues who would help them navigate the path towards the collective destination.

While the initial thoughts about including students as co-presenters were limited in impact potential, we found that this opportunity gave these three students an area of growth that other students in their peer group did not have during their teacher preparation. Pomerantz and Condie (2017) studied pre-service teachers' lessons and how they melded knowledge and practices learned in the university classroom with real-world school curriculum. They determined that the ability to transfer knowledge and practice resulted in categories on a continuum of knowledge transfer with expert transformation as the highest level. This level is described as the ability to transform knowledge to meet student needs in planning and enactment. We see these three pre-service teachers as moving toward that expert transfer level on the continuum as this experience has added another layer to the many other experiences they have had that contribute to the scope of their preparation. They researched their specific literacy topic, selected activities based on criteria, and taught them to groups of participants at a professional conference making in-the-moment decisions depending on the needs of each group about delivery during each of the five station segments.

Additionally, we see ourselves on a continuum of learning as well. We are

beginners in our understanding for how to elevate the university classroom experience to include other experiences for pre-service teachers that will deepen and broaden their knowledge, practice, self-efficacy, and leadership. In *Learning as a Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water*, Vaill (1996) discussed qualities of the reflective novice who thinks and reflects to improve his or her ability to be a beginner over time. Modeling this risk-taking for our students helps them see that professional educators should always be open-minded, lifelong learners who are on a quest for being beginners in many areas, pushing the boundaries of what is and what was, and finding new areas of growth and leadership.

During the closure portion of the Minute Masters presentation, session participants, who primarily included pre-service teachers, professors, and early childhood teachers, commented how much they appreciated learning from these three pre-service teacher presenters. Some participants were in their junior year of their education preparation programs; they expressed gratitude and admiration for our students' initiative in taking on this challenge and sharing their learning by applying it in a format such as a professional state literacy conference. They modeled for other students and professors the possibilities for student leadership in this area.

Conclusion

We embarked on this first-time experience of including students as co-presenters with an open mind and high hopes that pre-service teachers would want to participate and embrace the opportunity wholeheartedly. Their participation surpassed all expectations, which is not surprising considering their caliber and strength of character. Instructors have noted the commitment of these students to their education and personal professional development demonstrated during their time at the university. As we move forward as university professors having lived this experience with much initial success, we are encouraged that we can replicate this practice with future students and for future conferences. Feedback from all sources was entirely positive, so even though it takes much work, planning, and guidance, the results are worth the extra energy expended. Students' contributions to the planning and implementation of the presentation added dimensions and depth beyond what we could have done on our own. Our advice to professors who are accustomed to presenting but have not considered including students is to step out of the box and grab their hands. Despite challenges, the process of contributing to our own leadership and students' self-efficacy as leaders of literacy is really what it is all about.

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Supporting Effective Guided Reading Instruction for All Students

Alida K. Hudson, M.Ed.

Tomball Independent School District

Melissa Walker

Tomball Independent School District

Abstract

Fountas and Pinnell (2012) warn that guided reading is not always synonymous with small-group instruction. While it may appear simple, much thought goes into a guided reading lesson. This chapter details the steps for teachers to follow in order to develop more effective guided reading and small group instruction for all students by identifying specific goals in the areas of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension at each instructional reading level. Through the chapter, teachers will be exposed to valuable resources that will aid in creating effective guided reading lessons for all students.

Keywords: *guided reading, accuracy, fluency, comprehension*

Introduction

Guided reading has been a long-standing practice in the field of literacy. Small groups of children gathered around a table reading with their teacher is not a novel idea and can most likely be seen in thousands of elementary school classrooms on any given day. However, Fountas and Pinnell (2012) warned that guided reading is not always synonymous with small-group instruction, and while it may appear simple, much thought goes into a guided reading lesson. In any given classroom, an instructor can have students reading at a wide array of instructional levels as well as varying needs within each of those levels. This can often make it seem difficult to adequately meet the needs of all students in a classroom. This chapter will detail

how educators can develop more effective guided reading and small group instruction for all students by identifying specific goals in the areas of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension at each instructional reading level.

The Basics of Guided Reading

Fountas and Pinnell (2017a) defined guided reading as “a small-group instructional context in which a teacher supports each reader’s development of systems of strategic actions for processing new texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty” (p. 12). While highly effective, guided reading alone is not enough to fully develop students’ literacy abilities. It is a piece of the literacy framework that also includes practices such as read-aloud,

shared reading, independent writing, and writing conferences (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a).

Guided reading has a few essential characteristics that distinguish it from other types of small-group instruction. First, students are grouped by similar instructional reading levels so that the same text can be read appropriately by all students in the group. Secondly, each student in the group reads the whole text or a designated portion of the text to themselves quietly. Guided reading does not include any type of round robin reading or popcorn reading methods which has the teacher call on one student to read at a time while the other students listen in and follow along. It is important to note that there is no research supporting the use of round robin reading as an effective means of developing a student's reading abilities. Rather, Hilden and Jones (2012) listed several drawbacks of this method including slower reading rates, lower quantity of words read by a student, an increase in off-task behaviors, problems with comprehension, and an abatement of self-efficacy and motivation. Another characteristic of guided reading is that the instructor provides just enough support before, during, and after reading for students to gain the skills needed to read increasingly challenging texts over time. Finally, guided reading groups are not permanent. Children are grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessment.

Guided reading seeks to develop a system of strategic actions for students to be able to process and understand written text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a). This is pertinent since comprehension, understanding the written text which one reads, is the ultimate goal of reading (Rasinski, 2017). Due to these facts, teachers should strive to meet with each group of readers several times per week with the lowest achieving readers being seen as frequently as possible (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a).

Planning for All Students

Knowing your readers is at the heart of all guided reading lessons. Being able to identify students' strengths and weaknesses is pivotal when planning for a given group's guided reading lessons. This is because "everything you do in the guided reading lesson works toward the goal of students' development of a reading process- one that expands and grows more efficient with use, and one that assures efficient use of information in the text, fluency and phrasing, and a high level of reading comprehension" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a). It is important to remember that guided reading seeks to teach the reader, not the book. Thus, the majority of planning for guided reading happens before the book is even selected. The following sections describe the process of effectively planning guided reading so that every student can be successful.

Step One: Gathering Data

Prior to beginning guided reading instruction, a teacher must determine his or her students' instructional and independent reading levels. A student's instructional reading level is found using an individually administered reading evaluation such as the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) or Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In these formal assessments, a teacher conducts a running record on a student by listening to them read aloud orally from one of the fiction or nonfiction books provided by the evaluation and documents the student's reading behaviors for analysis. After the student finishes the provided reading selection, the educator conducts a comprehension conversation about the text and records the student's answers. Based on this one-on-one assessment, the teacher will be able to determine a student's instructional and independent reading level utilizing the guidelines for scoring. Once these levels are found, a teacher can begin planning for guided reading instruction.

Step Two: Using the Data to Select a Goal with *The Literacy Continuum*

After this initial assessment, the educator must analyze the data collected from the running records to answer the following questions suggested by Fountas and Pinnell (2011):

- 1) What does the reader already know how to do?
- 2) What does the reader need to learn how to do or do more consistently?

When answering these questions, instructors need to be cognizant of a student's performance in the areas of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

After a teacher determines a student's strengths and weaknesses, *The Literacy Continuum* is a crucial tool in selecting teaching points that will help push readers forward (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b). *The Literacy Continuum* provides educators with an in-depth look at learning across eight curricular areas from prekindergarten through grade eight. The eight curricular areas include interactive read-aloud and literature discussion; shared and performance reading; writing about reading; writing; oral and visual communication; technological communication; phonics, spelling, and word study; and guided reading. While each section is highly informative and useful, this chapter specifically focuses on the guided reading section of *The Literacy Continuum*. The section on guided reading is organized by level, A to Z, and, in addition to providing ideas for word work at a given level, it describes explicit behaviors expected of readers when thinking about the text, within the text, and beyond the text at that level. In order to help educators select appropriate goals for instruction, *The Literacy Continuum* further divides the behaviors expected of readers at a given level into categories that relate to the areas of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension within that level. Bullet points listed under the

categories of Searching For and Using Information, Monitoring and Self-Correcting, as well as Solving Words can generally be thought of as accuracy goals. Similarly, items found under Maintaining Fluency or Adjusting can be viewed as fluency goals and behaviors listed under Summarizing, Predicting, Making Connections, Synthesizing, Inferring, Analyzing, and Critiquing can be regarded as comprehension goals for the given reading level. These detailed goals allow teachers to be conscious of the specific behaviors to notice, teach, and support at any given level. Furthermore, it is beneficial to notice literacy development from one level to the next because it helps instructors determine what new skills students will need to acquire across the varying text levels.

Determining which goal or goals to select for a student will depend on the behaviors noticed during the student's individual running records (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b). The teacher will look for areas in which the reader needs to learn how to do something or needs to learn to do something more consistently. During this process, it is essential to consider not only accuracy, but also fluency and comprehension. Once an area of weakness is identified, the teacher can look in the specific sections of *The Literacy Continuum* mentioned previously to determine appropriate goals for the student. For example, if a student was weak in the area of fluency, a goal for that student would most likely come from the sections on Maintaining Fluency or Adjusting for his or her instructional reading level.

A teacher may go through the following process when selecting a goal for Michael (all names are pseudonyms). Michael is reading independently at a Level F and instructionally at a Level G. On Michael's instructional running record, he made many visual errors that involved the correct beginning sound, but incorrect word; however, the substitutions made sense most of the time. Michael read the text with satisfactory fluency and comprehension; therefore,

Michael's area of weakness would be accuracy. When looking within the sections related to accuracy (Searching For and Using Information, Monitoring and Self-Correcting, and Solving Words) in *The Literacy Continuum* at a Level F, there are several goals, which the instructor could select to help develop Michael's reading processes (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b). For instance, "say a word slowly to identify sounds in the word (beginning, middle, and end)" from the section on Solving Words or "use visual features of words to self-monitor and self-correct" (p. 442) from the section on Monitoring and Self-Correcting would be appropriate goals to help move Michael forward as a reader.

Step Three: Teaching Points and Prompts

Once a goal from those listed in *The Literacy Continuum* has been identified, the educator can now plan for a guided reading lesson that teaches to that specific goal (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b). The goal turns into a teaching point when the instructor changes it into kid-friendly language that explains and models the steps to achieve the goal. A teaching point is explicitly communicated and modeled for the students before they start reading. For example, the goal stated above for Michael, "say a word slowly to identify sounds in the word (beginning, middle, and end)," (p. 442) can be turned into an effective teaching point by saying "Readers can say a word slowly part by part to read tricky words. You can look at the first part, then the next part, then the end in order to read the word."

Literacy consultant Melissa Leach of Leach's Literacy Training stressed the importance of ensuring that every guided reading lesson has a teaching point. She believes that without an explicit, stated teaching point we are just listening to children read and allowing them to practice the things that they already know how to do, rather than helping to develop children's reading processes (personal communication, September 7, 2016). Additionally, it is important to make sure that during a guided reading lesson, the focus is on

one goal at a time. Fountas and Pinnell (2017a) warned that addressing too many teaching points during one lesson will distract the students and often disrupt their comprehension of the text.

Educators must also realize the difference between a teaching point and a prompt. Both are highly effective teaching tools but significantly different. Each serves a purpose during a guided reading lesson and, if used correctly, helps move students forward as readers. Teaching points use a step-by-step process to explicitly demonstrate for the reader how to problem solve while reading, and prompts are simply reminders about a teaching point that the student has previously learned. Prompts are delivered at the point of error when the student has already tried independently and is struggling to get through a part of the text. For example, a prompt that would support the teaching point described above for Michael may be "Say it slowly part by part from beginning to end" (p. 442). *The Fountas and Pinnell Prompting Guide* is a very useful resource teacher can use for matching teaching points with prompts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Step Four: Book Choice and Planning for Comprehension

Book choice is a very important step in planning for a guided reading lesson because guided reading seeks to teach the reader, not the book. Teachers should analyze guided reading texts to select a book that aligns with the goals and teaching points that have been identified for a given group of readers. For example, if the goal is for students to work on cross-checking, it is important to select a book where the words often match the pictures so that students have an opportunity to practice the teaching point.

Every time a guided reading lesson is taught, a comprehension discussion should take place, regardless of the reading level. At higher levels, students may not read the entire book during one guided reading lesson, but the teacher can still conduct a comprehension conversation about the portion of the text that

was read and make predictions about what may be read next. These comprehension conversations are crucial because the purpose of reading is to understand, thus making comprehension the most important piece of reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Pre-planning the comprehension questions that will facilitate the discussion with students is beneficial. Degener and Berne (2017) pointed out that when planning for comprehension conversations, educators must include not only knowledge-level questions in their discussion with students but also questions that will encourage deeper understanding of texts. Once again, *The Literacy Continuum* can aid educators in preparing for both literal and higher-order comprehension questions that target the demands of specific levels of text and readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b).

Conclusion

Literacy consultant Enid Martinez stated in one of her trainings that “it is not about teaching kids a level; it’s about teaching kids the process of reading. In guided reading, we are not trying to get them to the next level; rather, we are trying to build up a reading process” (personal communication, November 18, 2016). The method described in this chapter aligns with this belief and will help teachers plan effective guided reading instruction for all students, regardless of their reading level. Through analyzing running records, selecting goals for instruction, and developing quality teaching points supported by prompts, guided reading instruction becomes a highly effective and purposeful practice within the classroom. While this type of lesson planning requires time, it will ensure that all students are provided with opportunities to grow in their reading proficiency.

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The Impact of Experiential Learning in Literacy and Teacher Efficacy: A Study of SA Reads

Theresa Garfield, Ed.D.

Texas A&M University – San Antonio

Ramona T. Pittman, Ph.D.

Texas A&M University – San Antonio

Abstract

This study examines the impact of an experiential learning course work component on teacher candidates' perception of literacy knowledge, their perspective of a community-based literacy partnership, and their self-reported sense of general and personal teaching efficacy. Initial findings reveal there is growth in all areas of perception of literacy knowledge, with knowing how to assist a struggling reader with fluency and vocabulary skills being the greatest areas of gain. Findings indicate there is minimal change in the participants' perspectives of the community-based literacy partnership. Finally, participants gained in the areas of general and teaching efficacy. Extant literature will be reviewed and implications for future practice will be explored.

Keywords: preservice teachers, experiential learning, teacher efficacy

Introduction

Teachers are the cornerstone of the classroom environment. The teacher must exhibit confidence in teaching literacy concepts and skills to students to yield positive student outcomes and produce readers. Yet, evidence supports the premise that teachers are not prepared to teach literacy skills to students (Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004; Joshi et al., 2009), especially those who struggle to understand the basic components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

vocabulary, and comprehension. There are ways to ameliorate the “misteaching” of literacy skills. One way is to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to master the art of teaching literacy prior to induction into teaching. An effective method to provide candidates the experiences of “doing literacy” rather than “learning literacy” is through experiential learning.

Experiential and hands-on practice in literacy instruction increases teacher efficacy, which positively impacts student outcomes.

Increased student outcomes will yield better readers. One way to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to experience authentic practice is through participation in *SA Reads*, a community-based literacy outreach program.

Literature Review

Teaching Efficacy

Bandura (1977) defined efficacy as the belief in one's ability to be successful on a given task. Efficacy is critical for success in any given area (Zeldin, Britner, & Pajares, 2008). This statement is especially true in the teaching profession. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) examined the impact of efficacy as two constructs: general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) explained general teaching efficacy is the belief in one's ability to reach children with difficulties in the classroom, or to teach efficacy in the face of external forces beyond the teachers' control; personal teaching efficacy is the belief in one's personal capability to provide instruction. Both constructs affect students.

A teacher's sense of efficacy can greatly impact student outcomes (Goddard & Goddard, 2001). Teachers with high reports of self-efficacy, coupled with competence in professional knowledge, are less likely to report burnout (Durr, Chang, & Carson, 2014). Burnout can be deleterious to student learning (Lauermann and König, 2016). Increasing efficacy can reduce burnout and, in turn, increase student acquisition of knowledge.

As a teacher, it is imperative that one's sense of efficacy, especially in core subject areas, remain high enough to impact student outcomes. Literacy is a critical core area that is impacted by a teacher's sense of efficacy. When teaching literacy skills to emerging and beginning readers, efficacious teachers will yield better readers (Guo, Piasta, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010).

Preparation for Literacy Instruction

Literacy knowledge and pedagogy are both necessary for teachers to be comfortable implementing and demonstrating to learners. One way to increase teachers' sense of comfort with these factors is through quality teacher preparation programs of study. Regardless of the critical need for knowledge and pedagogy, Greenberg, Walsh, and McKee (2014) found that only 17% of teacher preparation programs prepare elementary and special education teachers in the five components of literacy.

There are several ways to increase one's efficacy in literacy knowledge and effective pedagogy. The National Reading Panel's (2000) five essential components for reading instruction can aid current and future educators in implementing the science of teaching reading. The candidates' self-efficacy impacts the acquisition of the understanding of the science of teaching reading.

Bandura (1977) posited there are major influences on self-efficacy beliefs, which are vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological arousal, and mastery experiences. Based on these influences, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) examined four models of professional development for literacy teachers. Results indicated that mastery experiences impact teachers of literacy in a powerful way (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Mastery experiences are those "hands-on" experiences that allow teachers the ability to practice their teaching and experience positive student outcomes. Similarly, Johnson (2010) found that teacher educators who modeled literacy instruction to teacher candidates positively influenced their candidates' sense of efficacy. Experiential learning is one way to increase a candidate's skillset in literacy.

Experiential Learning

Goodlad (1984) asserted that experience is the best teacher. Thusly, teacher candidates need to develop their literacy skillset and expertise in varied contexts (Pradhan, 2011),

providing them the option to put theory into practice. Since teacher preparation programs want to produce competent teachers, program faculty must give teacher candidates ample opportunities and experiences with school-aged students (Pittman & Dorel, 2014). Teacher candidates exhibit positive pedagogical gains when experiential learning contexts allow them to work with students in their targeted age groups (Wilson, Bradbury, & McGlasson, 2015).

Borgerding and Caniglia (2017) examined the effect of service learning on teacher candidate perspectives. The candidates in their study reported that participating in these experiential learning opportunities provided them exposure to high needs contexts and opportunities to practice their pedagogical skills. The candidates also felt more comfortable teaching and had an increased sense of confidence. This improved confidence led to increased self-efficacy (Bernadowski, Perry, & Del Greco, 2013; Cartwright, 2012).

Similarly, Hildenbrand and Schultz (2015) found that 93% of the teacher candidates they studied agreed that the service learning experiences added value to their courses. These experiences helped them to gain and reinforce knowledge and skills; and they helped them understand concepts related to authentic experiences. As rich as experiential learning practices can be, they are only as high quality as the community partnerships that support them.

Community Partnership with SA Reads

San Antonio Reads (SA Reads) is a community-based organization established to meet the charge that every student in San Antonio should read on grade level by 2020 (www.sa2020.org). The focus of SA Reads is to help develop the literacy skills of readers who fall below grade level. SA Reads is a project of Literacy San Antonio, Inc. (LSA) whose mission is to increase literacy and educational attainment

in Bexar County, a large county in southcentral Texas (<http://www.literacysanantonio.com/>).

Approximately 120 teacher candidates per 16-week semester tutor for nine consecutive weeks as part of their academic service learning component in the required course. Tutoring sessions are one hour each week, broken into two sessions with two different struggling readers for 30 minutes each. The teacher candidates use curriculum provided by the SA Reads organization, which includes the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) (www.fcrr.org) Student Center Activities. The curriculum aids teacher candidates in providing scientifically based reading instruction in word analysis and decoding skills to the students. In addition, the teacher candidates use Scholastic Readers with guide cards. These materials afford teacher candidates opportunities to incorporate vocabulary and comprehension tasks, as well as a chance to model and listen to students read. Furthermore, SA Reads provides background checks, professional development for the tutors, and ongoing feedback sessions for the teacher candidates. SA Reads matches each teacher candidate with two identified struggling readers. Throughout the semester, SA Reads monitors the progress of the tutors through observations at each school. They provide support by offering feedback and focus group sessions for the teacher candidates.

Methodology

The struggling readers are chosen to participate in SA Reads based on their Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) scores or by teacher nomination. Students are identified as being at-risk for reading difficulties. Through a community partnership between the university and SA Reads, the researchers examined the impact of an experiential learning course work component on teacher candidates' perception of literacy knowledge, their perspective of a community-based literacy partnership, and their self-reported sense of general and personal teaching efficacy.

Research Design

Pre-and post- surveys were administered to the candidates at the beginning and end of the semester. The survey measured knowledge and perceptions of various literacy skills and consisted of 17 Likert scale items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Ten additional questions (the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale-Short Form) were included to measure teacher efficacy, along with several open-ended questions to gauge participant reflections regarding the SA Reads process. Data were collected and analyzed using Excel and SPSS.

Participants

Teacher candidates who were enrolled in a Foundations of Literacy (EDRG 3314) course at a major university in south central Texas are expected to participate in the SA Reads learning project. This yielded a convenience sample of participants. Candidates were directed to complete the survey but had the option to opt out if they did not want to participate. In this study, 65 candidates completed the pre-survey and 179 completed the post-survey.

Seventy-three percent of the participants who completed the pre-survey identified as Hispanic, while 70% of participants in the post survey did. Twenty-seven percent of participants identified as Caucasian in the pre-survey, and 26% of the participants in the post survey did. These percentages are representative of the student population of the participating university. Additionally, participants were 95/93% (pre and post-survey) female and 5/7% male. The percentage of participants who

identified themselves as being 25 years or younger were 66% (pre-survey) and 55% (post-survey).

Findings

Data supported the fact that participants gained knowledge in literacy strategies (see Table 1). The finding with the greatest impact was that participants overwhelmingly felt they knew how to assist a struggling reader; there was a 56% increase in participants who agreed or strongly agreed. There were similar gains in vocabulary assistance (42%) and comprehension (39%). Overall, there were positive improvements in all areas of knowledge related to assisting struggling readers.

Data did not reveal any significant gains in how participants felt about the SA reads organization (see Table 2). It is important to note that most participants felt positively about the experience and community partner before the beginning of the implementation period. The major difference seen through this questioning was the increase in the belief that SA Reads helped the student.

Efficacy data (see Table 3) revealed that participants gained an average of 22 points or an average 35% difference in personal teaching efficacy. For general teaching efficacy, the scores are reversed so a negative difference was an increase. Therefore, there was an improvement of 10.4 points, yielding an average of a 28% difference between the beginning sense of general teaching efficacy. The overall total efficacy scores increased by 29%.

Table 1

Percentage of Participants' Knowledge of Literacy Strategies

Item	Pre %	Post %	Gain	Difference %
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader who doesn't have phonological awareness	49	62	13	21
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader who doesn't have alphabetic knowledge	46	66	20	31
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader with word recognition (decoding)	45	66	21	32
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader with fluency	40	91	51	56
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader with vocabulary skills.	43	74	31	42
Agree or strongly agree they know how to assist a struggling reader with comprehension	45	73	28	39
Agree or strongly agree they know how to help a struggling reader learn how to read	48	73	25	34
Agree or strongly agree they know various strategies to assist a student in learning to read	40	69	28	42
Candidates were glad they gained knowledge and experience working with a struggling reader	82	84	2	3

Table 2

Percentage of Participants' Views of SA Reads

Item	Pre %	Post %	Gain	Difference %
Agree or strongly agree tutoring the SA Reads helped the student in the affective domain (motivation)	70	76	6	8
Agree or strongly agree tutoring in SA Reads built confidence in the student's reading ability	79	77	-2	-.08
Agree or strongly agree SA Reads made a positive impact on the student's overall reading ability	79	78	-1	-.09
Agree or strongly agree serving as an SA Reads tutor had a positive impact on their life [personally]	79	83	4	5
Agree or strongly agree serving as an SA Reads tutor had a positive impact on their life [professionally]	82	85	3	4
Agree or strongly agree serving as an SA Reads tutor had a positive impact on their life [academically]	80	81	1	1
Agree or strongly agree the experience with SA Reads reinforced content in EDRG 3314	77	77	0	0
Agree or strongly agree the SA Reads curriculum matched what was covered in EDRG 3314.	74	80	6	7

Table 3

Percentage Participants' Sense of Efficacy

Item	Pre %	Post %	Gain	Difference %
Personal Teaching Efficacy				
Candidates believe or strongly believe when they really try, they can get through to the most difficult students	56	77	21	27
Candidates believes or strongly believe if a student didn't remember information they gave in a previous lesson, they would know how to increase his/her retention in the next	40	64	24	37
Candidates believe or strongly believe if a student in their class became disruptive and noisy, they would know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly	56	75	19	25
Candidates believe or strongly believe if one of their students couldn't do a class assignment, they would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct difficulty level	51	68	17	25
Candidates believe if they try really hard, they can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	50	77	22	35
General Teaching Efficacy * (Reverse Coding)				
Candidates believe or strongly believe the amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background	31	41	10	-24
Candidates believe or strongly believe if students are disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline	28	47	19	-40
Candidates believe or strongly believe a teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement	32	40	8	-20
Candidates believe or strongly believe if parents would do more for their children, they could do more	34	42	8	-19
Candidates believe a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his/her home environment	18	25	7	-28
Total Efficacy	396	556	160	29

Discussion

The results of the pre and post-surveys reveal that experiential learning has a positive impact on teacher candidates' confidence to teach struggling readers. The goal of the experiential learning assignment was twofold: 1) to increase the teacher candidate's literacy knowledge and self-efficacy; and 2) to assist in improving the literacy confidence for struggling readers. The data suggests that the teacher candidates overwhelmingly perceived themselves as knowing how to teach targeted literacy skills to struggling readers, as evidenced by Table 1. It appears that only minor gains (3%) were made when students responded to the question, "Candidates were glad they gained knowledge and experience working with a struggling reader." However, as stated, the students' pre-survey ratings were high allowing only slight gains to be made from pre-survey to post-survey.

Equally important, the participants rated their initial views of SA Reads highly. The results from Table 2 show that a small percentage of participants from pre-survey to post-survey formed a different view. In contrast, results indicate that the participants considered SA Reads as having little impact on building confident readers and increasing the students' overall reading ability. It is important to note that these percentages are very small and the sample size doubled from pre-survey to post-survey. The students were struggling readers who were reading one or more grade levels behind in reading. The teacher candidates were only able to tutor each student 30 minutes per week. Perhaps, many of the students needed additional minutes of intensive instruction in word analysis, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension per week.

Moreover, the teacher candidates' efficacy increased exponentially as depicted in Table 3. Although the questions were not content specific, SA Reads helped build confidence in teacher candidates that will impact

their overall teaching regardless of which academic discipline they choose. Efficacy is important because it allows the teacher candidates to believe that they can accomplish tasks such as motivating students and reaching the most difficult students. Although the focus of this assignment was to increase teachers' knowledge and efficacy and to help children improve their reading skills, an additional variable was developed through the experience itself. The teacher candidates were able to increase their pedagogical knowledge.

The benefits of providing teacher candidates experiential learning opportunities are critically important in increasing their assurance in becoming a teacher. This type of experiential learning gives teacher candidates robust opportunities to work with struggling readers. Conversely, in a similar study, Pittman and Dorel (2014) found 82% of preservice students felt they gained experience in reading instruction after SA Reads, 95% of tutors would recommend other aspiring teachers to participate in SA Reads, and 95% of tutors believe they would make a positive impact on their students' lives after participating in SA Reads.

Impact on Practice

The results from this study suggest that teacher candidates compellingly agreed or strongly agreed that the SA Reads opportunity was impactful to their learning and teaching efficacy. The data highlight the importance of incorporating experiential learning into literacy-related courses. Often, the content knowledge (teaching a student to read) can be difficult to understand because teacher candidates, themselves, may have forgotten how they learned to read. The knowledge (content and pedagogical) will assist them in being more confident teachers. A framework, such as this, allows teacher candidates to connect theory to practice. Many times, textbooks, lectures, and classroom assignments focus on the struggling reader; SA Reads provide opportunities for teacher candidates to assist struggling readers weekly. It is the hope of this study that teacher

candidates will take this new knowledge into their classrooms upon graduating and receiving teaching licensure. In doing so, the experiential learning experience will have a longitudinal impact on the teacher candidates' teaching career.

Suggestions for Implementation

Implementing experiential learning into a course provides opportunities for teacher candidates to receive practical application of content-related skills. It can, however, be an appalling task if the course instructor does not have clearly stated learning goals; there must also be opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect upon their experience via critical analyses, such as classroom discussions and directed writing (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). Once the goal of the experiential learning experience has been defined, the instructor can partner with a local organization. It is important to inform the potential partner of the benefit the establishment will receive from the partnership. Key thoughts are, "How will teacher candidates benefit from this partnership?" and "How will the organization benefit from the partnership?"

For a list of potential partners, see organizations such as the Association of Experiential Education, National Society for Experiential Learning, and Campus Compact. These groups provide resources to implement experiential learning into curriculum.

In conclusion, experiential learning opportunities, such as SA Reads, are a necessity to increase content knowledge and teaching efficacy for teacher candidates. In this study, pedagogical knowledge was a by-product of the experiential learning experience. Further research should focus on the longitudinal impact of experiential learning on teacher candidates (i.e., once teacher candidates become licensed). The results of this study provide potentially positive affirmations for any instructor wanting to implement experiential learning into his or her course. The limitations of this study included a smaller sample size for the pre-survey versus the post-survey, which could have impacted the accuracy of results. All in all, however, this study indicates that experiential learning has positive implications.

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Bringing Vocabulary to Life

Brandy N. Pearson
Gilmer Independent School District

Abstract

Vocabulary instruction is an important part of every classroom. Teachers and administrators continually seek effective instructional approaches to help students increase vocabulary knowledge. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the author used daily vocabulary journal activities with a class of 2nd grade students. This chapter first presents the process used for students to create their own vocabulary journal. Next, the authors describe a three-part instructional framework used to target vocabulary development using journals within a ten-minute lesson.

Keywords: *vocabulary, journals, elementary instruction*

Vocabulary directly impacts student comprehension and should be a focus of every classroom. Teachers and administrators continually seek effective instructional approaches to help students acquire new vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary journals promote exposure to new words in a fun and meaningful way. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the author used daily vocabulary journal activities with a class of 2nd grade students. This chapter presents a way to use journals in a three-part instructional framework for vocabulary instruction. The three sections included in vocabulary journals are word wall vocabulary, fluency phrases, and vocabulary meaning. Structuring vocabulary journals with these three components in mind crafted a spiraling effect for the development of specific skills associated with teaching words and their meanings. The vocabulary journal activities, using high frequency words, fluency practice, and new vocabulary words, were implemented during a 10 minute instructional time-frame. In

addition, the interactive journal activities were repeated every day and involved all learners. Each student experienced success, learned new words, and practiced reading during the process. During vocabulary journal activities, the second grade classroom was an active learning space where students were engaged and motivated learners.

Rationale

Why is vocabulary important? To understand why classrooms need vocabulary journals, it is important to first understand the significance of vocabulary knowledge and concepts. Consider the relationship between the words “needle,” “scorpion,” “scale,” and “liberty.” The connection may be vague initially. However, knowing that these words are common references for body positions in cheerleading may clarify their relationship. Fisher, Frey, and Hattie (2016) stated that “learning new words is not done with just

exposure, but with repetition, contextualization, and authentic uses of the words in discussion, reading and writing” (p. 49). By teaching word relationships such as these, students use contextual information to make meaning. For the classroom teacher, this means that students need repeated exposure to new words, as well as knowledge in how to use them in real-world contexts.

Students benefit from explicit and intentional vocabulary instruction. All too often, teachers set too little time aside to focus on vocabulary. Fisher et al. (2016) stated, “Unfortunately, too many children and adolescents experience vocabulary instruction as making a passing acquaintances with a wide range of words” (p.49). When a teacher sets a time aside each day to address vocabulary learning in a direct and explicit manner, there are great dividends for learning. An intentional, daily approach enables the teacher to become strategic in supporting student learning with new vocabulary and possibly front-load specific words for upcoming instruction. Time devoted to explicit and intentional vocabulary instruction may also be used to reteach vocabulary that was lacking from a previous lesson.

Daily vocabulary instruction requires teachers to analyze specific vocabulary needs among students. For example, many students in my second grade class struggled with inferencing in relation to the traits and feelings of characters in a text at one point during the school year. I knew these students were able to infer, but they lacked the vocabulary needed to identify a specific character trait or to describe how a character was feeling. I knew my second graders would face standardized testing the following school year, and I wanted to ensure that all of my students had a firm grasp of character traits and feelings beyond simple words such as “sad,” “mad,” and “happy.” In order to address this instructional need, I began using vocabulary journals coupled with daily vocabulary instruction. By implementing a direct instructional approach (Anderson & Nagy,

1991), students benefited from repeated exposure to vocabulary words in varied contexts (Stahl, 2005), which led to enhanced language abilities (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) and deeper understandings of words (Stahl & Kapinus, 2001).

Instructional Framework

How do I set up my vocabulary time? In order to ensure vocabulary learning is optimal, students need to know exactly what is expected of them (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005). With this in mind, I needed to first establish the importance of vocabulary words with my students. To do this, I created a lesson to illustrate how students use specific vocabulary in their everyday lives. I began the lesson by showing students a brown paper bag with an object hidden inside of it. I slowly pulled out the object – which was my dad’s biker vest - and began talking about the vest and how my dad learned new words as a biker. I emphasized some of these words, such as “hog,” “cut,” “colors,” “kickstands up,” and “tail gunner.” At first, students were confused as to how these words related to motorcycles. Thus, my vocabulary instruction became more direct as I further explained the “biker” vocabulary:

- A “hog” was a motorcycle.
- “Cut” referred to the vest.
- “Colors” indicated the motorcycle group you belong to by the colors on your vest.
- “Kickstands up” and “tail gunner” were associated with actual bike rides. “Kickstands up” refers to when a biker is pulling out, and the “tail gunner” is the biker who is at the end.

After implementing this instructional approach, students were able to connect these new vocabulary words to my dad’s vest. My goal was not to make sure that students used the new words, but rather to demonstrate that there was a specialized vocabulary for bikers. I reinforced this concept by subsequently facilitating group work among students. Within

each group, I provided a topic, such as “baseball,” “cheerleading,” and “technology.” Students then worked collaboratively in their groups to write down all of the words they knew that were associated with their topic. During this group activity, students were amazed to see all of the words that they knew.

Next, I distributed new composition books to each student and explained that we were creating vocabulary journals that consisted of three different sections. I led this process with my students as follows:

- Students created a personalized title page.
- Students wrote the phrase “Word Wall” on the next page and counted out 26 pages for this section. On the top of each page, students wrote each letter of the alphabet.
- Students wrote the word “Phrases” on the following page and counted out 10 pages for this section.
- Students labeled the final section as “Vocabulary.”

Word Wall Section

The Word Wall section is used most frequently during vocabulary instruction. During this time, new vocabulary words were introduced using multiple modalities to enhance understandings related to each word (Gilakjani, 2012). Multiple modalities were addressed in the following manner:

- Visual: Students saw the word.
- Auditory: Students heard the spelling of the word.
- Kinesthetic: Students spelled the word in word wall section of their vocabulary journals on the corresponding letter page (e.g., “Erosion” would be written on the page labeled with an “E.”).

The following description further illustrates an example of how I addressed the Word Wall component of the journals during instruction. Prior to each daily lesson, I selected three

vocabulary words to focus upon: two words directly related to the concept under study and one word that I noticed students struggled with in their writing. I began instruction by writing one word at a time on the board. After I wrote a word, students found the correct letter in the Word Wall section of their vocabulary journals and wrote the word on the corresponding page. Together, we would then spell it aloud. Next, students stood up, and I facilitated an interactive spelling activity, such as a chant with body movements. Interactive spelling activities entailed saying each letter of the word using body movements that mimicked well-known motions, such as sports actions or dance moves, followed by saying the entire word with a different and related body movement. For example, if I used the basketball chant to spell the word “you,” I would pretend I was dribbling a basketball for each letter of the word (i.e., “y,” “o,” “u”) and then say the word “you” while pretending to shoot the ball.

Phrases Section

After addressing the Word Wall section, I moved on to the Phrases section to focus on developing fluency with vocabulary words that students already know. For each word wall word, I created quick little phrases, such as the word “play” had the corresponding phrase “play in the yard.” As I introduced new phrases, students wrote them down in the Phrases section of their vocabulary journals in a list format. While the list of phrases was manageable, we read the phrases aloud together in different voices, such as a monster voice, opera voice, or whisper voice. As the list of phrases grew longer, I implemented games, such as the one-minute game to facilitate these repeated readings. With the one-minute game, students read the list of phrases in the Phrases section of their vocabulary journal as fast as they can and as many times as they can in one minute. For accountability purposes, students were required to hold their hand in the air and create a zero with their fingers before the timer was set to sixty seconds. Once the timer started, students read the list to themselves and changed their

fingers to show each time they completed a reading of the list. When the timer sounded, students shared with a peer the number of times that they read through the entire list of phrases.

Vocabulary Section

The final piece of vocabulary instruction utilized the Vocabulary section in their vocabulary journals. This aspect of instruction focused on specific skills that were areas requiring improvement. The description below is an example from a lesson that focused upon a skill that I had previously identified as a problem area among my students: inferencing in relation to the traits and feelings of characters in a text.

I began this part of the lesson by writing a character trait, such as “shy,” on the board. Students wrote this word in the Vocabulary section of their vocabulary journals. I then asked students to talk with a peer for a few minutes about the meaning of this word. After this brief exchange, I shared a text with students that exemplified the word “shy” through a bashful character. Next, I facilitated a group discussion where students identified excerpts from the text that provided clues for the word “shy” and how the character exhibited this emotion through their dialogue, actions, and thoughts. As a class, we then created our own definition for “shy,” along with a matching emoji. Students included this class-created

definition and emoji next to the word in their vocabulary journals.

Conclusion

This purpose of this chapter was to describe vocabulary journal activities used with 2nd grade students. The described approach, which was grounded in literature for best practices with vocabulary instruction (i.e., Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Beck et al., 2002; Gilakjani, 2012; Kamil & Hiebert, 2005; Stahl, 2005; Stahl & Kapinus, 2001), took approximately ten minutes per day and aligned with multiple state standards. Additionally, I noticed increased student motivation about vocabulary learning among my students.

Anecdotally, the vocabulary journal activities appear to have a positive impact on my students’ reading performance. In addition to noted improvement with reading fluency during small group instruction, I also noted improvements with reading fluency on numeric measures, such as with iStation data. For example, after one month of using this approach, iStation data revealed that the number of students who were reading fluently on grade levels increased by 41 percent. I look forward to continuing implementing vocabulary journal activities in my classroom in order to promote success with vocabulary instruction.

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Which Books Are Best Suited for Use in a First Grade Classroom?

Dr. Rosalynn Rowan Christensen
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Dr. Corinne Valadez
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Abstract

Primary teachers often struggle to find high quality literature for use with their first-grade students. Therefore, a list of award winning books was evaluated for characteristics that lend themselves to teaching reading comprehension strategies and literary elements. The Golden Kite Award, an annual award which provides a grant to the winning author and illustrator, was used for this study. The Golden Kite Award reflects five categories, including young reader and middle grade fiction, young adult fiction nonfiction, picture book text, and picture book illustration. Literature in the picture-book text category was evaluated for reading level and possible comprehension strategy use in a first grade classroom. Books best suited for use with first grade comprehension instruction are described in this chapter.

Keywords: *Golden Kite award, early literacy, literature connections*

Introduction

Good quality literature is an important element in early childhood classrooms. Books that have interesting storylines and vivid pictures provide opportunities for engagement and reading motivation in young readers (Snow, 2002). However, many basal readers and traditional reading instruction books lack engaging plots and limit the reading comprehension strategies a teacher can practice with his/her students. In addition, many basal readers contain poor quality pictures which make it difficult to capture the attention and engagement of a young reader. Many trade

books, though interesting reading, are missing the text and storylines that support student learning of literary elements. Teachers wanting to connect literature to skills required of young readers often search extensively to locate materials which reflect necessary literary elements for instructional use with children.

Young readers in elementary schools are introduced to the idea of literary elements in books at an early age. The literary elements of character, setting, problem, and solution are taught explicitly and then students practice identifying these elements in books. The problem is that most books designed for early

readers focus on decoding skills and not on plot or story elements. It is important for a child to learn to decode the words in a story but equally important for the child to enjoy the story he or she is reading. Some of the literary skills that students in a first-grade class are required to learn include the identification of common story elements, the big idea of a folktale or fable; the retelling of a main event, and character traits, including reasons for character actions (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 2010). Teachers may have a difficult time locating the books with necessary elements to teach to state or Common Core Standards, as most basal readers do not have the essential elements required to teach these lessons. It is important to use quality books when teaching literary elements; however, in order to teach reading comprehension strategies, good quality literature is necessary. In order to alleviate some of the difficult issues with finding appropriate literature to use with students, books that were awarded for quality in pictures and text were examined for characteristics that would lend themselves to teaching reading comprehension strategies and literacy elements.

Background

Teachers often model reading comprehension strategies and provide text for students to practice the reading strategy independently. However, many recently published and interesting books lack the components needed for teachers to model strategies and for students to practice strategies. A goal for this study was to develop a list of quality children's books to use when introducing a new reading comprehension concept or literary element.

Though providing good quality literature is an essential element for reading instruction (Snow, 2002), this characteristic alone is not enough. Research indicates that some teachers limit explicit instruction because they assume reading comprehension develops naturally, without the need for direct teaching of

comprehension (Denton & Fletcher, 2003). Systematic and explicit instruction has been reported to produce greater gains than other forms of instruction (Swanson & Vaughn, 2011). In other words, teachers need to provide good literature and need to devote time every day to explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to students. Of the five pillars of reading instruction, vocabulary and comprehension reflect the "keystones of reading" (Cassidy, Valadez, & Garrett, 2010). This chapter reviews ways to teach reading comprehension more effectively with specific books and reading strategies, which can be taught in small or whole groups.

There are many reading strategies that teachers can use with their students. One of them a teacher can choose from is reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). This tactic is actually a group of four strategies that can be used by students to better understand what they are reading. The four strategies that compose reciprocal teaching include questioning, predicting, summarizing, and clarifying (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Through asking questions about the text, such as "Who is the character in the story?" or "What is the setting in the book?" students develop an understanding of what they have read (Trinkle, 2009). The ability to predict events in a story and summarize what has been read are valuable skills in understanding what has happened in story. In addition, the ability to clarify what is read is helpful when understanding new and unfamiliar text. Interesting stories are critical when teaching reading comprehension skills and literary elements; good books are also valuable as they encourage students to read for pleasure. The reciprocal teaching strategies effectively supports students by demonstrating ways to monitor reading.

Through providing and reading exciting and interesting literature, teachers are giving students the opportunity to develop the intrinsic motivation to read. Without the intrinsic motivation to read, students may never reach

their full potential as literacy learners (Marinak & Gabrell, 2008). One of the primary goals of a first-grade teacher is not only to teach his or her students to read, but to instill the love of reading. Reading may be the fundamental achievement each of us accomplishes in a lifetime (Leu, 2000). If we are teaching children to read with poor quality books and basal readers, will they learn to love or loathe reading?

Golden Kite Award

For this literature analysis, the researcher developed a way to identify which books would lend themselves to teaching literary elements and comprehension strategies to young readers in a first grade classroom. The initial step was to locate a list of books that were written for early readers. The Golden Kite Award, an annual award, which provides a grant to the winning author and illustrator, was used to locate books for this study.

The Golden Kite Award is an award given by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. The award was created in 1973 and is the only children's literary award judged by a jury of peers. The jury consists of both writers and illustrators. Books can be submitted by individuals or publishers for award consideration (Society of Children's Book Authors and Illustrators, 2010). The Golden Kite Award is presented to authors and illustrators in five categories, including young reader and middle grade fiction, young adult fiction, nonfiction, picture book text, and picture book illustration. The award, hosted by The Society of Children's Book Authors and Illustrators, is given annually and is accompanied by a grant.

Literature awarded in the area of picture book text was selected for this review, since the goal was to connect literature to literary elements and reading comprehension skills. Other criteria for books included text which would best align with first-grade curriculum and text which would align with literary elements,

specifically the elements of character, setting, problem, and resolution.

Literary Analysis

In order to analyze picture book text, the researchers used six categories of narrative text, proposed by Propp (1984). This theorist studied Russian folktales and developed Propp's Functions of Folktales, but the "formula" derived from his work can be applied to narrative texts as well. The six categories for narrative stories include preparation, complications, transference, struggle, return, and recognition. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) found that a number of the six categories appear in children's literature. However, the complete six steps are not apparent in all works of children's fiction. This framework is best applied to using quality literature in a first grade classroom as it directly addresses struggle (problem) and return and recognition (resolution). A collection of ten Golden Kite Award Winning books for picture book texts between the years 1998 and 2010 was checked out from a public library (see Table 1). The 2002, 2001, and 1999 Golden Kite books were not available in the library and were not reviewed.

The content of the books was read, and a conceptual analysis was conducted. The books were analyzed for the existence of common themes and concepts (Krippendorff, 2004). These common themes and concepts were analyzed for applicability of use with teaching reading comprehension strategies. If Propp's Functions of a Folktale (1984) specified sequence of storyline used in fairy tales existed within the book, then the storyline of the book was analyzed. Propp's Functions (1984) include six groups or categories that appear in sequence in narrative stories, which were also analyzed. These six categories have some replication in the concepts of problem (struggle) and solution (return) and text to self (transference).

Table 1

List of Golden Kite Books Reviewed

Book Title	Author	Publishing Date
<i>Big Red Lollipop</i>	Rukhsana Khan	2010
<i>The Longest Night</i>	Marion Dane Bauer	2009
<i>A Visitor for Bear</i>	Bonny Becker	2008
<i>Pierre in Love</i>	Sara Pennypacker	2007
<i>Jazz</i>	Walter Dean Myers	2006
<i>Dona Flor</i>	Pat Mora	2005
<i>Apples to Oregon</i>	Deborah Hopkinson	2004
<i>The Dirty Cowboy</i>	Amy Timberlake	2003
<i>River Friendly, River Wild</i>	Jane Kurtz	2000
<i>Old Elm Speaks: Tree Poems</i>	Kristine O'Connell George	1998

In order to analyze the content, an *a priori* checklist (see Table 2) was created to collect information. The instrument was developed using common literary elements of character, setting, problem, and solution found in most fiction texts. The content analysis checklist included the same literary elements listed above. The reading level of the books, taken from Follet.com, is also included for convenience and ease of use. The checklist was reviewed by four peers and revised, as suggested by the peer group, to ensure validity of the instrument. The content analysis was used to

record the presence or absence of literary elements in the books reviewed.

The type of character was noted within the checklist (see Table 2) including male, female, or animal. The setting is specified when possible. If a problem and resolution were apparent in the context of the book, then the checklist identified such with a *yes*. When the books did not contain the elements of character, setting, problem, or resolution, the word *no* is under that element.

Table 2

Literary Elements of Golden Kite Books

Books	Character	Setting	Problem	Resolution	Reading Level
<i>The Big Red Lollipop</i>	Female	House	Yes	Yes	1.6
<i>The Longest Night</i>	Animal	Forest	Yes	Yes	1.7
<i>A Visitor for Bear</i>	Animal	House	Yes	Yes	2.0
<i>Pierre in Love</i>	Animal	Varied	Yes	Yes	4.3
<i>Jazz</i>	No	No	No	No	Undetermined
<i>Dona Flor</i>	Female	Village	Yes	Yes	3.9
<i>Apples to Oregon</i>	Female	Country	Yes	Yes	4.1
<i>The Dirty Cowboy</i>	Male	New Mexico	Yes	Yes	4.7
<i>River Friendly, River Wild</i>	Female	North Dakota	Yes	Yes	2.0
<i>Old Elm Speaks: Tree Poems</i>	No	No	No	No	2.8

Findings

Of the ten books reviewed (refer to Table 2), only eight books were found to have the necessary elements of character, setting, problem, and resolution. The books that were most appropriate for first grade were *Big Red Lollipop*, *The Longest Night*, *A Visitor for Bear*, and *River Friendly, River Wild*. Four of the ten books reviewed were on a first grade or beginning of second grade reading level varying from 1.6-2.0 specifically. The books that were on a first grade reading level were *Big Red Lollipop*, *The Longest Night*, *A Visitor for Bear*,

and *River Friendly, River Wild*. All of the books on a first grade reading level would be appropriate for independent reading practice of the literary elements listed above.

The books reviewed that were on an advanced reading level of third grade up to fourth grade, 3.9-4.7, were *Pierre in Love*, *Dona Flor*, *Apples to Oregon*, and *The Dirty Cowboy*. These books would be appropriate for modeling and explicit teaching of the literary elements. The advanced books would also be ideal for independent practice of literary elements in

older grade levels or by independent readers on higher reading levels than their peers.

The two books that were missing the necessary literary elements of character, setting, problem and resolution were *Jazz* and *Old Elm Speaks: Tree Poems*. Further, no one resource had the same reading levels listed for *Jazz*, therefore, the reading level of this book was undetermined (see Table 1).

Limitations

The limitations of this study include that only 10 of the Golden Kite Award books were reviewed. The books were initially reviewed only by one person for inclusion or exclusion of the literary elements mentioned throughout. However, the books and checklist were then peer-reviewed for accuracy. Different books by the same author were not reviewed in this summary. All of the most recent Golden Kite Award Winning books for picture book text were not reviewed. Three of the most recent books *George Hogglesberry: Grade School Alien* (Wilson, 2002) and *The Shoe Tree of Chagrin* (Lewis, 2001) and *A Band of Angels* (Hopkinson, 1999), were not available in the local public library and were, consequently, not reviewed. A future review of all of the other award winning books for their inclusion of literary elements should take place.

Discussion

The evaluation established that eight of the ten books reviewed did contain the elements required for explicit teaching of literary elements and reading comprehension strategies. Most of the books reviewed exemplify Propp's Functions of a fairy tale, which is a structuralist theory (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). The structuralist theory proposes that some elements are common to all fiction stories and focus can be made on the relations of elements of text. The six categories included in this theory are preparation, complications, transference, struggle, return, and recognition. This theory simply proposes that all fiction stories have a

hero and that the hero in the story experiences these six elements and that all of the elements occur in order. The books that did contain all of the structuralist theory elements were: *The Big Red Lollipop*, *A Visitor for Bear*, *Pierre in Love*, *Dona Flor*, *The Dirty Cowboy*, and *River Friendly*, *River Wild*. However, this researcher would argue that not all of the elements were present in the literature reviewed and the elements that did appear in the texts *did not adhere to a strict order*, as previously believed to be true of works of fiction. One example of the books reviewed that does not have all of the six steps would be *The Longest Night*. This book began with the struggle step as the animals were all trying to bring the sun back to the sky. Therefore, this book skipped the preparation phase. Further, it did not include the return or recognition of a hero as the little chick-a-dee remained in her element after singing the sun back into the sky. Of the ten books, two of the books, *Jazz* and *Old Elm Speaks*, did not have any structuralist elements. This was because the books were works of poetry and fiction elements did not transfer to the works of poetry. It is advisable to use books with all of the elements when explicitly teaching them. It is also necessary to have books with these elements available for students as they practice identifying them in literature.

Conclusion

The best Golden Kite Award winning books for picture book text to use in a first grade classroom for explicit teaching of literary elements and reading comprehension strategies were: *Pierre in Love*, *Dona Flor*, *Apples to Oregon*, and *The Dirty Cowboy*. These books were on a much higher reading level than a first grade student would be reading, but were interesting stories with vivid pictures. The interest level should engage the students as the teacher reads the higher level stories and has the class help identify the literary elements in guided practice. The best Golden Kite Award winning books for picture book text to include for independent practice of literary elements in a

first grade classroom were: *The Big Red Lollipop*, *The Longest Night*, *A Visitor for Bear*, and *River Friendly*, *River Wild*. All four books contained the literary elements of character, setting, problem and resolution; and all of the books were on a first grade or beginning of

second grade reading level. This should make them easier for a young reader to understand and enable identification of literary elements. The reader should also be able to better apply what they have learned about comprehension strategies to the book.

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Teaching Students to LOVE Literacy

Kamshia Childs, Ed.D.
Texas Southern University

Abstract

Literacy skills are a crucial part of any students' education and determine success in various core subject areas. The goal is for students to be fully literate, and to do this, they must have the ability to communicate and acquire new knowledge. Teachers often fail to use the knowledge and interests that students bring with them to the classroom. After their primary years, students often struggle with motivation in the area of literacy. This chapter explores the merging of academic language and literacy with social and environmental language and digital resources. The ability to motivate students and address the current disconnect of developing and enhancing basic literacy skills are cleverly shared through the acronym "LOVE" (Learning, Opportunity, Value, Enhancement), based on the Teaching Students to L.O.V.E. Literacy presentation and book, 29 Days to L.O.V.E. Literacy (2016).

Keywords: motivation, literacy,

Introduction

The weak connection between the literacy skills that are taught in school and those which students use within their everyday culture (consisting of interaction with friends face-to-face, texting, and social media) is the reason why many of our students lack the required skills necessary for academic success. When discussing the connection that teachers should make with students in academic language development, Himmele and Himmele (2009) noted, "For teachers to increase exposure to academic language, it's important that they develop a mind-set in which they see almost any verbal interaction as an opportunity for developing academic language" (para. 2). There can be a huge disconnect when formal academic language and literacy is taught to a student population whose daily conversations consist of acronyms such as "lol," "idk," and "ily" to define thoughts, emotions, and actions.

However, students explore language everyday—teachers must make them aware of it and show them that knowledge and informal language is not too distant from the formal academic knowledge required in today's classrooms.

Motivating with L.O.V.E.

Parents are often overwhelmed with determining the best methods to teach their child to read and write, and in many cases educators face the daunting task of "teaching to the test." Students can experience disconnect, and therefore lack the relevance of the material in which they are learning. To promote student engagement with reading and literacy and to build positive attitudes toward literacy learning, teachers must understand student needs. Motivation to build upon and learn new skills is critical. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) shared that motivation for reading (literacy) should contain three elements: (1) interest (2) dedication, and

(3) confidence (p. 16). “Teaching Students to L.O.V.E Literacy” was designed to provide a framework for strategies that foster a love for learning the required academic literacy skills by empowering parents and teachers to “think outside the box” on ways to connect real-world skills with literacy tasks. “L.O.V.E. Literacy” began as a daily Twitter feed to share simple techniques with teachers and parents that could be implemented swiftly into a curriculum, as well as daily routines and practice at home. Whether in the classroom or at home, students need activities that are focused on L.O.V.E (Learning, Opportunities, Value, and Enhancement). This chapter provides details on how to achieve “L.O.V.E.” in literacy learning for students while maintaining the development of traditional literacy skills.

Learning

Many parents lack knowledge in the academic skills required of today’s students as it relates to literacy. Educators often teach skills in isolation or at a surface level. Parents and teachers frequently try to spark the passion of literacy learning too late for some students. Literacy learning should involve motivation, repetition (multiple and varied exposure to assignments and lessons), and innovation. Literacy learning should provide “opportunities to explore concepts,” familiar and unfamiliar (Childs, 2016, p. 3). The literacy journey should be exploratory and prescriptive on a case-by-case basis, as “it is much easier for a child to become an early reader if he has enjoyed being an emerging one and feels confident with his growing skills” (Almon & Miller, 2009, p. 34).

Opportunity

A strong literacy foundation promotes exposure to additional opportunities in education. A literate child is given the opportunity to explore creative works and can produce and use their skill set to work with many different subjects and tasks. The learning of literacy skills allows a student the opportunity to “transcend and explore the world and their surroundings” (Childs, 2016, p. 3). Literacy

learning is a complex process that is often complicated further by misconceptions. There is often the mindset that literacy learning must be a formal process, but listening, speaking, reading, and writing opportunities are everywhere. Improving student literacy and the process of “why” we read, write, and communicate is a learning opportunity, and the “whys” provide teachable moments that are often missed. It is important to note that as educators and parents, it is necessary to find ways to bridge academic literacy and social literacy skills. Literacy is foundational to all academic content areas, and because of this, there is a wide range and means to reach and to develop literate emergence and eventually fluency in students. A focus on literacy builds a foundation in all areas of content knowledge.

Value

Comprehension of text, including inferencing skills and drawing conclusions, should not be limited to a reading passage or a standardized test. Literature connections across all content areas should be weaved into curriculum. In addition, the promotion of parent interaction and support during reading is important. Literacy should be a valued stepping stone to a vast field of knowledge.

Students retain information that is appreciated and applicable. They also learn by using their knowledge repeatedly in their own unique environmental settings. Acquiring literacy skills is a process in which students should have ownership. Students need opportunities that provide “continuity between the rich contexts of home and school literacy practices,” (Neuman & Roskos, 1997, p. 31) which would enhance their “multiple literacy capabilities” (p. 31). Students must see the value of skills they are learning in school. For example, grammar and writing instruction must be relevant and reflect the importance of clear and concise communication in academia, the workplace, and in everyday life. Providing value requires teaching students beyond basic skills. Students should see literacy as a tool to

communicate-- there are few careers and situations in their lives in which weak communication skills are acceptable.

Enhancement

Literacy learning in the early stages of development is full of exciting, well-planned lessons and resources for young, eager learners. However, due to rigorous curriculum requirements, a lack of resources, as well as demographic and environmental factors, we often let students slip through the cracks. Children who are poor readers at the end of first grade will most likely be poor readers at the end of fourth grade (Juel, 1988; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000). Students often get to what they “feel” is a fluent stage in reading and fail to develop further. Continual efforts must be made to understand students’ habits and enhance their prior knowledge, by building upon their schema—otherwise, students will continue to suffer.

Literacy learning should be an experience that builds and enhances a student’s natural abilities. Writing, reading, speaking, and listening are skills that can be forever fine-tuned (and students must be aware of this). Once literacy skills are fluent (usually happens around 4th grade), students often hit a “slump” (Chall, 1983, 1996), as they are expecting to be able to access information independently for learning purposes. Students could avoid this slump with instruction that incorporates technology, builds an extensive vocabulary, and personalizes instruction to enhance learning. Lastly, to enhance lessons and learning, the skills students are taught should not be isolated, but instruction should reflect a clear, guided, and integrated approach that provides motivation and challenges.

Activities

Teaching Students to L.O.V.E Literacy was created to empower parents and educators to rethink the way literacy skills and lessons are presented to students. Through an interactive

session format, five activities were shared with conference attendees that focused on learning, opportunities, value, and enhancement (L.O.V.E). Each participant that attended the session was given the opportunity to collaborate with a partner or group of educators that teach or work in a similar educational background, and they were challenged to adapt or create a new activity inspired by the ideas in the book, *29 Days to L.O.V.E. Literacy* (Childs, 2016).

Hearing It (Learning and Opportunity)

Close reading has been a very “hot” topic in recent years. To provide better interest and to create fun while reading aloud, attendees were challenged to have their child/student put a spin on close reading with digital tools. Instead of simply re-reading for understanding, have students use a tool such as the Adobe Spark application (available on smartphones, desktops, and tablets) to record and work through the purpose of the reading, the arrangement of the text, and specific vocabulary words. Using the application, students can record their voice to provide narration, text, pictures, or illustrations. As a bonus, the Adobe Spark website (<https://spark.adobe.com/>) and application have recently been upgraded with a function that allows the user to create web stories, which could be turned into blogs (Childs, 2016, p. 12).

Exploring Lyrics (Value)

Move beyond using music to get learners to memorize facts or concepts. Songs may extend beyond therapeutic and catchy; they can also be used to develop literacy skills. From modern day pop, to classic rock, to “doo wop,” the lyrics of a song can be used to learn concepts such as tone, mood, vocabulary, theme, and comprehension. For example, a student could write a critical analysis of a song’s lyrics and then share and compare their perspective with another person or even an audience. For younger students, use lyrics or specific songs to teach emotions or adjectives that are newly introduced in a piece of text (Childs, 2016, p. 14).

Career-Related Literacy Skills (Value)

Explore which literacy skills are required for certain careers. Students often do not see how their learning transcends past the classroom. Educators and parents should share the influence of literacy skills and how it will become a part of daily life once formal schooling has ended. Help your child/student to gain an understanding that literacy not only affects them in the classroom, but also in their future career and employment settings. Even those entering basic entry-level job positions require strong literacy skills such as reading, writing, and communicating directions to customers and clients.

When working with students on career ties to literacy skills, begin by having your child/student brainstorm a list of jobs and career settings on a piece of paper. On the opposite side, have them write down specific literacy skills needed for each job. This activity could be done with younger children or second language learners by illustrating a predetermined list of literacy tasks that are used in specific jobs. If done in a classroom, this task could be charted and used as a comparison between different careers. There are websites for kids (grades K-8) out there to help search career-related information (Childs, 2016, p. 18).

Poetry and Lyrics (Enhance)

Share with students the connection of the genre of poetry and how it relates to music. Teach students/children to L.O.V.E. Literacy by having them write a poem or song lyric. Have your child/student write a poem about love. Students often get confused and frustrated with the poetry genre. It does not have to be about “romantic” love, but love in a caring and endearing manner. Poems used with students could be as simple as writing an acrostic or a haiku, or a couplet—whatever allows them to explore language, vocabulary, and communication. If you choose to use song lyrics instead of poetry, use lyrics (pre-screened) that have already been developed, and use them to teach specific elements such as mood, word

choice, adjectives, patterns and sentence structure. (Childs, 2016, p. 24)

Journals and Blogs, Oh My! (Enhance)

Students blog or vlog daily via social media using apps such as Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Tumblr (www.Tumblr.com). Show students the connection between what they write and academic writing used in school settings. Getting students to understand writing structure begins with having them write about topics that they know well and topics they enjoy discussing.

Familiarity rules—students like writing about what is familiar. Family, friends and their environment are what they know about the most. Invite your child or student to write at least once per week about topics related to their experiences in their family and friendships. This writing exercise could be compiled in a journal, or you could create a personal blog of some sort (check privacy settings). When in a classroom setting (with parent permission), feature the stories of students in an area where others can view them (be mindful not to share confidential information). For teachers, there are children’s social networking sites such as Edmodo (www.edmodo.com) that can assist with classroom blogging and building online classroom communities (Childs, 2016, p. 26).

Conclusion

The literacy skills that students learn is groundwork for everything else they will encounter in school and life. Although literacy has its traditional academic definitions and functions, ways in which we build and reach students in literacy education needs some work. Reading and writing are used to increase knowledge and to communicate.

With 92 percent of students reporting “daily” online activities and 24 percent of students saying they are online “almost constantly” (Pew Research Center, 2015), literacy has taken on new shapes and forms as each day passes. “As more educators

incorporate social media in the classroom, they have needed to seek out new— and old— teaching and learning theories for incorporating the technology in pedagogically meaningful ways” (Blaschke, 2014). The need to reach students with technology may increase student engagement and abilities.

Educators and all stakeholders must understand the need to focus on continual development of literacy and its importance to vast functions in life. We must move beyond the process of sharing with students “how to

read” (although very important), and share the value of “why to read.” Students are comfortable with using technology (for socialization and entertainment) but have not yet mastered the art of merging technology with gaining academic knowledge in the area of literacy. The hope in creating and sharing the “L.O.V.E Literacy” message, presentation, and activities is to continue to build a world of readers, writers, and thinkers who appreciate literacy in all forms and respect the importance of such a valuable skill.

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Drama-Based Pedagogy: New Ways of Incorporating Drama into the Secondary Classroom

Sara DuBose Ranzau, Ed.D.
Kerrville Independent School District

Rosalind Horowitz, Ph.D.
University of Texas - San Antonio

Abstract

This chapter presents drama-based pedagogy as an instructional strategy to increase comprehension of a novel or informational text in a content area, to encourage collaborative discussions about a text, and to help students apply knowledge acquired from a text to one's own life and world. This essay proceeds with a brief discussion of relevant theory and research. It introduces principles that were presented during a workshop held at the Texas Association of Literacy Educators (TALE) 2017 Conference that was designed to introduce teachers to drama-based pedagogy. This chapter also provides educators guidelines for implementing this type of drama-based activity in secondary content classes.

Keywords: *drama-based pedagogy, drama pedagogy, secondary students, reading comprehension, discussion, student talk*

Imagine a classroom where students are positioned around the entire space, sitting on the floor, standing in an aisle with arms spread wide or draped across two desks. Now imagine another student being led, with eyes closed, through the obstacle course of these randomly arranged bodies. The student moves on when the student-leader says, "Move!" If the student with the closed eyes bumps into one of the other students sitting around the room, an "explosion" occurs, and then the game starts again with someone new traversing the classroom space.

These students are playing *Minefield*, a game designed by author Sara DuBose Ranzau specifically to let students feel what it is like to

navigate a world where they have no control. The above game has been used to introduce the novel *Anthem* by Ayn Rand (1961). Once the game concludes, the students can talk about what they think the novel might be about and how it felt to have no control over where they went or what happened to them in the classroom.

The game *Minefield* is a way to easily introduce drama-based pedagogy to students, as well as to increase their interest in a novel. When students are asked, and encouraged, to participate in a drama-based activity, they not only accept the risk involved in stepping out of their desks, they are also acknowledging a level of trust in the teacher and the potential learning

opportunities being offered to them. Students are ready to learn in a different way with their peers in any given classroom

A Brief History of Drama-Based Pedagogy

Today, teachers throughout the world are beginning to learn about and explore the use of drama-based pedagogy (Ranzau, 2016). Drama-based pedagogy is an umbrella term that covers a variety of drama activities: role-play, writing-in-role, improvisation, reader's theatre, creative drama, process drama, and tableau. More specifically, according to Dawson and Lee (2017), drama-based pedagogy consists of drama activities and techniques in classrooms across the curriculum that are designed *to teach*; it is not focused on the *product of a performance*. When students and teachers engage in drama-based pedagogy in the secondary content classrooms, the learning becomes more active than in traditional routines of reading, discussing, and quizzing over a novel (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003; Burke, 2013; Dawson & Lee, 2017; Ranzau, 2016; Wagner, 1999).

As early as the 1800s, when public schools were still young in America, reformers suggested using drama in classrooms to help students become more active and engaged citizens in their communities and world (Goldstein, 2014). During the early 20th century, educators in England and America were experimenting with processes of drama activities to help students better understand historical events, engage in classroom activities like public speaking and leadership roles, and remember the key elements of a lesson (Cook, 1919; Wagner, 1999; Ward, 1957).

In the 1950s, Dorothy Heathcote developed a program to train teachers and students of all ages how to use drama-based pedagogy activities in classrooms in England. She called her program and design "drama in education" (Wagner, 1999). She led workshops all over England and around the world, teaching

educators how to transform learning. For instance, a classroom was turned into the throne room of Henry the 8th or into a secret underground lair where a spy was interrogated about the building of the atomic bomb. Another lesson included recreating an experience for students to learn about a voyage across the sea to the New World in a hurricane. Heathcote helped students and educators experience those moments, develop empathy for people in time periods they could only imagine, and become engrossed in the learning experience (Heathcote, 1985). Her work was the beginning of what many researchers now call drama-based pedagogy or drama pedagogy (Wagner, 1999).

Heathcote's work also stressed the importance of the teacher's role in drama-based pedagogy activities. Without the participation, openness to authenticity, and facilitation of the teacher, the activities would lack a sense of safety and few students would fully allow themselves to participate, enjoy, or learn from the experience (Dewey, 1938; Heathcote, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). She understood that for drama-based activities to work in the content classroom (e.g., science, history, or English language arts), the activities had to be well planned. Heathcote also argued that teachers must build a "full picture" plan before embarking on any lessons incorporating tableau (see end of chapter for a definition), writing-in-role, improvisation, or process drama (Heathcote, 1985).

Gavin Bolton provided similar insight as Heathcote (Burke, 2013). Bolton believed that the success of a drama-based activity is more than just a reenactment. Bolton considered play in the classroom an important part of learning; however, play without purpose creates a lesson that students may see as pointless and therefore not fully engage. Like Heathcote, Bolton understood that student engagement increased when students experienced a different reality from their own while in a safe space. A good example of drama-based pedagogical play in a classroom would be an activity where students

could explore racial segregation in a Depression Era town in Alabama while reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960). Another example would be a writing-in-role activity explaining what it might have felt like being alone on an island full of boys with no supervision and lust for blood when reading *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954). Finding ways for students to see themselves and others in a new way is part of the importance and increased engagement possibilities when using drama pedagogy (Burke, 2013, Ranzau 2016). Ultimately, learning becomes more intrinsic when connections to reality can be made (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978).

The Importance of Talk in the Classroom

Theoreticians of discourse regard variations of talk as central to learning and particularly literacy development in schools. Most attention, however, has been given to dialogic communication—interaction between two or more individuals (usually teacher and students or between students) which functions much like an informal, natural dialogue (Cazden, 2001). Halliday (1987) has emphasized play as a vehicle for practicing oral language and dialogic communication during the early childhood years, but the method is also relevant for youth in secondary education. Jerome Bruner (1991) characterized childhood talk as a vehicle for understanding the mental operations of a child who will later be able to read, write, and engage in advanced-critical thinking. This talk was viewed as central to creativity and the construction of meaning. The activity of telling a story, recalling an event, rehearsing a song remains significant in language and cognitive development, which lays the groundwork for advancement in school reading and writing. Particularly, Lev Vygotsky (1986) viewed oral language production as a social activity that influenced thinking and meaning-making in context-specific situations vital for literacy development (Horowitz, 2015).

First, secondary students can benefit substantially from orally expressing observations and questions in the English classroom, as well as other content area classrooms. Speech is a highly creative force, and dialogue stimulates students to think-up ideas that will strengthen text comprehension and interpretation. Drama-based pedagogy is one form of speaking that allows the creative juices to flow and invigorates students as they analyze and interpret texts. This creative force is vital to propelling learning in all disciplines offered in secondary schooling.

Second, through oral interaction with peers, an audience is created. Now, this concrete audience helps the speaker formulate ideas and direct what is said so that the information is communicative and influences the listener. Speaking to a definite audience also stimulates the speaker to rethink what is being expressed (Horowitz, 2007). Finally, listening and hearing content aloud adds reinforcement of what is being learned and confirms what a student may be thinking. The speaker can determine whether the ideas were clear or if more clarity and direction are needed.

Halliday (1987) referred to the spoken and written language as distinctly different modes of meaning-making. Thus, drama-based pedagogy offers another mode of expression--and concurrently consciousness and meaning that adolescents can process. Prosodic features, such as pitch, rhythm, pauses, and other dimensions of voice, are hard to decipher in reading a written text. We do know, from a young age, learners acquire perception of acoustic patterns in speech and eventually learn to translate these speech patterns to reading and writing (Schreiber, 2007; Wingfield & Klein, 1971).

Drama-Based Pedagogy in the Classroom versus Theatrical Drama

For many of us, the drama activities we participated in while in middle and high school

consisted of reading a play like *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1597) or *The Crucible* (Miller, 1952). Students in secondary classes today still read plays aloud in class, and some even have the opportunity to write parts of scripts or rework novels into scripts. However, in most secondary classrooms, these two activities represent the only drama-type activities experienced (Ranzau, 2016). Reading a play and writing in script form are not the only ways for students to experience drama type activities while learning. One might consider role-play or process drama, where students are given the opportunity to reenact a scene from the novel or perhaps create a conversation between characters after a major event. Students not only need to understand the characters and events in the text, but they also need to employ critical thinking to role-play the characters and build a meaningful conversation (Cawthon, Dawson, & Ihorn, 2011; Ranzau, 2016). Additionally, students need the opportunity to use authentic talk to work through their understanding of events within the text. Without talk, students will often just accept what the teacher has said to be true and *not* feel confident in questioning the text (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

In a world where students are more in tune to social media profiles and less likely to speak to one another face-to-face, it is important that teachers find ways to help students a) engage with the text, and b) interact with each other in meaningful, strategic ways (Nguyen-Jahiel, Anderson, Hom, Waggonner, & Rowell, 2007). Using drama-based pedagogy in the secondary classroom, students can learn to talk to one another as well as about potentially difficult situations in a safe and supportive atmosphere (Gallagher & Ntelioglou, 2011; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1995). Our world requires communication, cooperation, and compromise, which are skills that require repeated practice. When students use authentic talk and participate in drama-based pedagogy activities in the classroom, they better learn how to communicate, cooperate, and compromise to establish personal understandings, build group

dynamics, challenge traditional ideas about texts, and pose questions (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003; Beck & McKeown, 2006; Heathcote, 1985).

When students and teachers begin to incorporate drama-based pedagogy activities into their secondary classrooms, discussions can be energized, produced with more fervor and intentionality. These conversational activities may help shy students feel more confident about their contributions to the classroom dynamic (Cawthon et al., 2011; Ranzau, 2016; Rothwell, 2011). Students who are shy often lack confidence about their thoughts and perceptions of content in a text. Drama-based pedagogy can help those students support their thoughts, clarify their own thinking, and gain confidence in speaking with their classroom peers (Cawthon et al., 2011; Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek, & Singer, 2006; Ranzau, 2016).

Although drama-based pedagogy is still a young field of study, especially with the secondary grades, there are many easy ways to begin using the strategies in almost any classroom. Teachers who are ready to increase the level of engagement in their classrooms can use drama-based pedagogy to shake up their lessons and get more students involved as vocal, engaged participants in the day-to-day community of the classroom (Bruner, 1983; Cawthon et al., 2011; Lindgren, 1959; Ranzau, 2016; Wolf, 1994).

Drama-based activities have been used in classrooms since at least the early 1900s. Research in drama-based pedagogy has given credence to the use of drama in the classroom as a learning strategy. Researchers at The University of Texas at Austin studied the perceptions of teachers who used drama-based pedagogy lessons in their classrooms. The participants reported that students positively benefitted from drama-based pedagogy both emotionally and educationally (Cawthon et al., 2011). The students studied were more willing to participate in class, began to speak up more

often during classroom discussions, and believed they were in a safe space where they could be “wrong” and still explore their own learning.

Parameters for Successful Drama-Based Pedagogy Implementation

Before implementing drama-based pedagogy activities for literacy and cognitive development or socialization, teachers should consider the following: First, it is important to know the ultimate outcome of the unit and lesson activities. If the goal or purpose is unclear, then the activities will simply seem like a bit of play that has been tossed into the day. For most secondary students, it is important to know the purpose of the activities they are being asked to participate in, especially if there is risk involved. Research has shown that adolescents often have specific expectations for classroom and written activities. The approach here, while potentially out of the ordinary, needs to be introduced with care and enthusiasm that convinces the students of the merits possible (Horowitz, 1994). To determine the goal, teachers need to fully understand the text they are working with and must have considered the overall outcome hoped to achieve through specific types of drama-based activities (Burke, 2013).

Secondly, teachers must be tolerant of ambiguity and the unpredictable and thus willing to accept that in most cases they will not have any idea what students may say in the moments of the activity (Ranzau, 2016). It is important to recognize how students feel about the activity and accept those reactions and feelings as valid. By allowing students the freedom to embrace the “mantle-of-the expert” (Wagner, 1999) or live in the moment, they can learn authentically, make inferences, and deepen their comprehension of the text (Epstein, 2004; Kelly, 2006; Winters, Rogers, & Schofield, 2006). This tolerance for ambiguity (vital to successful teaching through drama-based pedagogy and quality teaching at-large) creates space for student imagination. If teachers are comfortable with a wide range of

possible outcomes within a drama-based activity, students will feel free to imagine and fully engage in the activity (Ranzau, 2016).

Finally, something all teachers need to remember is that to incorporate drama-pedagogy into a secondary classroom effectively, teachers must be organized and have strong classroom management. Since there is risk involved in using drama-based pedagogy, teachers must be able and willing to clearly set limits for students (e.g., a word to stop all activity if something becomes overly uncomfortable or unsafe), and have the ability to play with students. Most students feel safe and more willing to participate in activities away from their desks when the teacher is involved and playing as well (Bruner 1977; Bruner, 1983; Heathcote, 1985; Golinkoff et al., 2006; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006). This approach requires the use of language and honesty that indicates to students an openness and trust towards trial and error in playfulness and outcome.

Activities for the Classroom

All teachers need to embrace many different strategies to serve the needs of the diverse classrooms in today’s schools (Robinson, 2015). Drama-based pedagogy is one technique that can get students out of their desks, thinking from the perspective of a character unlike them or taking a risk to write about unknown situations.

The activity examples below are based on lessons Sara, an English and theatre teacher, has used and developed in her classroom. The activities have been proven effective for generating interest and motivation for text interpretation, comprehension, and inferencing. She has also seen success in helping shy students become more outgoing and striving readers, feeling more confident in their ability to understand a text.

Writing-in-role

Writing-in-role is an easy and fairly risk-free way to introduce students to drama-

based pedagogy activities. Many secondary ELA teachers are already doing some form of this activity when teaching students to write from different perspectives. Actors often create diaries or journals for the characters they are playing to help them feel like a more complete version of the character.

Writing-in-role can be accomplished successfully in several ways. Students can be given a picture with people or things labeled with numbers and then asked to write the inner monologue for the number they choose (see Figure 1). Students can write from the perspective of a character who should be in the novel but does not have a main part (see Figure 2). Each activity can introduce a unit, determine students understanding of the events of the novel, or see what students have learned. The activities and photographs below are authentic representations of drama-pedagogy from a secondary classroom. Each photo has a description of the learning experience for which

it was used. With approval from students and parents, they are presented to illustrate drama-pedagogy outcomes.

Imagine introducing students to a lesson about travel or Peru using the image below. Inner monologues written before the lesson as the women, baby, or alpaca lead to discussion could be used to determine what students may already believe or know about travel to a foreign country - specifically South America. There is no right or wrong way to write an inner monologue. Ask students to write what they believe their chosen character may be thinking.

After reading a novel with the class, writing-in-role is one way to check for understanding and comprehension, as well as determine how deeply the students have thought about the text. It is best to ask students to write from the perspective of a novel character that did not have an actual role in the story



Inner Monologue for #3: "I thought I was the cute one! Now even the alpaca has a hat on and everyone wants to hold him! I'm not getting paid enough for this."

Inner Monologue for #1: "I am thankful the tourists want these photos. Life is very hard at the top of the world and their willingness to pay for pictures with one of my baby alpaca makes it a bit easier. Some people may think we are like beggars, but we are not. For some of us women, this is the only way we can make any money. Besides, look how happy this woman is. How is it we are doing something wrong?"

Figure 1. Woman in Peru with baby alpaca and locals with sample inner monologues.

“The Jews marched on, some barely standing and others falling to the ground. It’s hot out today making me sweat under my heavy uniform as we continue and also making the Jews’ fatigue worse. We are having to march right through the city of Munich to get to Dachau, meaning another parade of Jews. It’s not necessarily a real parade, just the citizens of whatever town we happen to be walking through who come out and watch us pass. Sometimes it’s irksome because, even though it’s my duty, I don’t like seeing these people suffer, it’s inhumane even if they are a threat to our race. I do not see why the Fuhrer can’t just ship them away to another land and avoid a war along with the slaughter of others.”

*Figure 2. Writing-in-role by a student after reading *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (2006, pp. 389-393) of the thoughts of a Nazi soldier guarding Jews as they march to a death camp through the local town.*

Improvised interview or hot-seating

Improvisation is a form of drama used in theatre programs and acting classes to help actors “think on their feet,” make inferences about the situation, and learn to listen to each other. In a classroom, improvised interviews are ways students can question the text or the author. The strategy can be used with any text. Often times, students are afraid of questioning a text or the author. With improvised interviews or hot-seating, students have opportunities to ask questions and get answers from the characters (see Figure 3).

There are some options when having students participate in improvised interview, and it is important to make sure teachers are comfortable with not knowing what students may say. It is also important that the person interviewed is someone who understands the text and is comfortable answering questions from students who may not fully understand it. If the student is not ready for the challenge, the teacher may play the role of interviewee. Additionally, the first few times students participate in improvised interview, they may not be prepared to come up with questions

quickly. It is perfectly acceptable to give them a few minutes to discuss and come up with questions to ask. It is recommended to have a moderator guide the interview. That way if the teacher is in the role being interviewed, someone else can keep the questions moving. An example of an improvised interview follows, along with additional drama-pedagogical activities.

Tableau

Tableau is a drama-based activity where participants use their bodies to create a picture. There are no words spoken during a tableau, just body language and placement. There are several ways to create a tableau in a classroom. It could be used as the start-and-stop pose for a possible interaction from a photo (see Figure 4) or to tell the primary events of a text (see Figure 5). This activity is also a way for students to develop empathy toward characters in the text (see Figure 6). An adapted tableau is where a character is learning about something that has been happening and that character is not frozen or silent (see Figure 7). Tableau can also be a way to determine the power shifts within a text similar to Augusto Boal’s social positioning

activities (Boal, 1993). In whatever way it is used, it must be discussed after the fact and students must have a chance to practice their

tableau scenes or “shots” before presenting them.

Activity Description:

After reading about Huck’s encounter with Pap, have students participate in an improvised interview. One student, or the teacher, should role-play the part of Pap. The rest of the class will interview him about his plans and choices.

Goals of the Activity:

Pap has reappeared in Huck’s life unexpectedly, no one but Huck seems to be concerned. Pap is not willing to admit anything he plans to do, nor does he feel it is inappropriate for the societal norms. By doing an improvised interview with Pap, students should be able to begin making predictions about what will happen next for Huck. It may also help students continue to build an understanding of Huck’s motivations.

Rationale:

Struggling readers often miss important details and foreshadowing elements that a character can present to them. In the case of Pap, students may not be able to see how he affects Huck beyond the fear he induces. By interviewing Pap, students may be able to think past the words he says in the text and begin to see his importance in the story, thus making inferences.

Activity Rules/Guidelines:

1. Either a student volunteer, or the teacher, will play the role of Pap.
2. Have a student volunteer act as the interview mediator.
3. Ask Pap to step outside with the mediator. While Pap is outside have the rest of the class brainstorm some questions to ask him.
4. Send Pap to the front of the room.
5. The interview mediator will then ask the other students for questions they have for Pap.
6. If Pap is being played by a student, the teacher will only interfere if the questioning goes off course.

Figure 3. Instructions for improvised interview in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Twain, 1885).

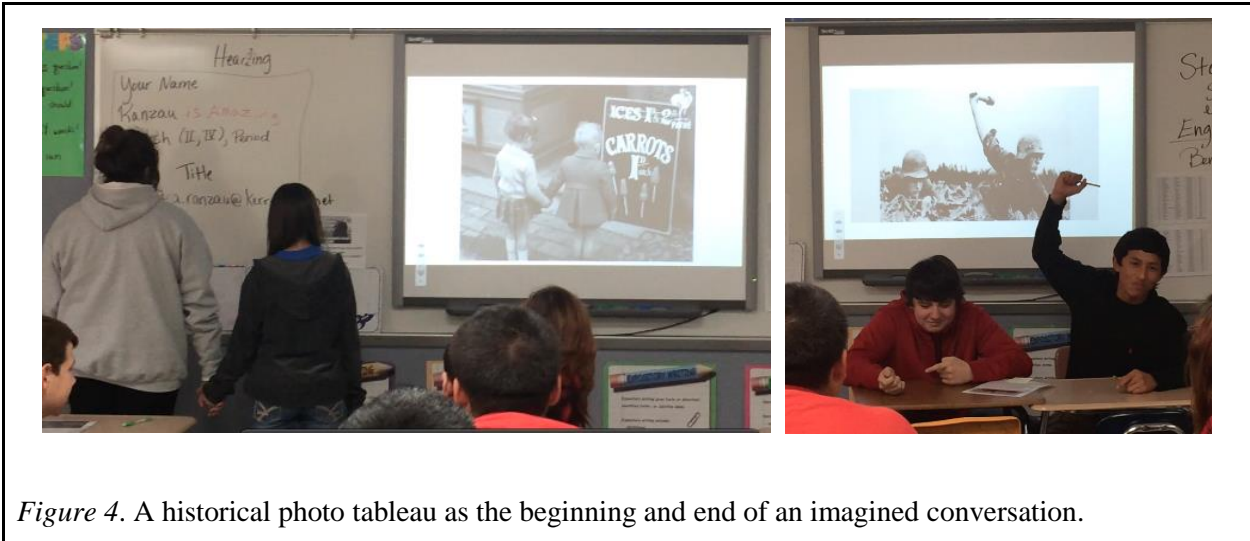




Figure 6. Tableau “shots” of creating the crash landing at the beginning of *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954).

Activity Description:

One student, or the teacher, will take on the role of Huck. The rest of the class will form small groups of town members. Each group will create a tableau of their towns people talking about the threat from the gang and Jim’s escape. As Huck walks slowly by each group, they will come to life and share their gossip. Once he is past them, they will return to their tableau.

Goals of the Activity:

Students will work to create gossip resulting from the tricks played by Tom and Huck. The gossip from each community member has added to what actually happened during the escape. As Huck learned of the gossip, it would have helped him make a plan for what to do next. This activity can help students see how easily stories and gossip could have spread during the period, and help Huck see how his tricks affected the town.

Rationale:

Like today, gossip can change the course of a person’s life and their actions. By creating the gossip surrounding Jim’s escape and the threat of the Indians, students should be able to see how it affects Huck.

Activity Rules/Guidelines:

1. Have a volunteer act as Huck, or the teacher can do it
2. Have students break into groups of three or four
3. Ask each group to choose one fact about the escape that they know to be true
4. Instruct them to surround that fact with gossip about what happened
5. Have them spread around the room and create their tableau, then have Huck slowly stroll through the room and listen to the gossip

Figure 7. Adapted tableau from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

Conclusion

Drama-based pedagogy can be used to increase comprehension, cooperation, and energy in the classroom (Cawthorn, Dawson, & Ihorn, 2011; Ranzau, 2016; Tanner, 2012; Winters et al., 2006). Drama-based pedagogy may be a valuable way to motivate students with engaging lessons. It may be a solution for hesitant students encouraging them to be actively engaged in learning due to the lesson's increased levels of risk and excitement. Students exposed to drama-based activities often develop empathy toward the characters in the text and build skills related to complex inferring and critical thinking about interactions.

Teachers recognize that students experience higher-order thinking (interpretation, criticism, analyses, and real-life issues) with lessons designed using drama-based pedagogy (Dawson & Lee, 2017; Ranzau, 2016). Students begin to think about solutions to problematic situations in new ways based on their own motivations and curiosities. Student learning becomes more intrinsic, thus adding to the joy and reward in learning interactions with peers. It increases through communication, cooperation, and compromise. It is our hope that research on secondary school drama-pedagogy is pursued and adds to our knowledge of teaching and learning.

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Empowering Preservice Teachers through Adolescent Literature: Fostering Empathy for Students Impacted by Disabilities

L. Karen Estes-Sykes, Ed.D.
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Abstract

Research suggests developmental bibliotherapy has a transformative effect on participants (Adams & Pitre, 2000). Specifically, bibliotherapy has been shown to develop a reader's empathy towards others (Comer-Kidd & Castano, 2013) and positively influence a reader's attitude towards individual differences (Routel, 2009; Gavigan & Kurtts, 2010). Through the constructs of developmental bibliotherapy and literature circles, the use of adolescent literature enhances preservice teachers' attitudes toward students impacted by disabilities. Preservice teachers in a required literacy course within an educator preparation program participated in literature circles and read young adolescent literature with protagonists impacted by disabilities. This chapter presents ways literature circles impacted preservice teachers.

Keywords: *developmental bibliotherapy, adolescent literature, literature circles, disabilities, preservice teachers*

Plato is often misattributed with writing “books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything;” however the sentiment holds true. Reading is a dynamic process. The reader is an active participant and personal experiences become lenses through which text is viewed (Rosenblatt, 1978). Making connections to the events within a narrative, as well as identifying with the protagonist, provides an opportunity for the reader to experience a variety of situations from a distinctive viewpoint. This vantage holds promise to transform the reader.

In educator preparation programs, curriculum course design specifically aligns to the competencies required to practice professionally in the teaching field. Empathy,

along with knowledge and a good skill set, increases a teacher's effectiveness. Teachers must be able to empathize with and have a positive attitude toward students with different needs. Using the constructs of developmental bibliotherapy and thematic literature circles, adolescent literature can foster growth in preservice teachers' mindsets and empathy for students affected by disabilities. The purpose of this chapter is to describe a practice of integrating developmental bibliotherapy and literature circles into literacy courses for preservice teachers.

Developmental Bibliotherapy

Prescriptive approaches to reading within a clinical setting with the intent of positively influencing the reader is known as

bibliotherapy (Dali, 2014). Technically, bibliotherapy is a type of “psychotherapy which relies on books to improve a person's mental and physical well-being” (p. 1). Bibliotherapy can be an effective tool for fostering interpersonal and intrapersonal growth and development. More commonly practiced in K-12 schools, developmental bibliotherapy is the practice of reading and discussing literature to help reconcile dilemmas and difficulties found in everyday circumstances.

Developmental bibliotherapy is often used by educators to help students cope with real-world situations using literature read in the classroom. Research suggests developmental bibliotherapy has a transformative effect on participants (Adams & Pitre, 2000), including empathy building, (Comer-Kidd & Castano, 2013), which led to positive changes in the reader's attitude towards individual differences (Gavigan & Kurtts, 2010; Routel, 2009). Wilson and Thornton (2006) found the following stages occur during developmental bibliotherapy: 1) the reader identifies and relates to the protagonist, 2) the reader becomes emotionally involved in the narrative, and 3) the reader learns through the experiences of the characters and becomes aware of how given problems might be addressed or solved.

The practice of developmental bibliotherapy has meaningful application beyond the K-12 classroom. Used in appropriate contexts within preservice education, the practice can be a powerful reflective tool. Preservice teachers, when provided a construct for reflecting on and reconstructing their understanding through developmental bibliotherapy, can experience positive change in their empathy for and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Typically, preservice teachers who have first-hand experience with individuals affected by disabilities represent a small percentage of those preparing to teach. However, in today's inclusive environments, all classroom teachers will encounter diversity, including students with

disabilities. Existing adolescent literature may help others better empathize with those affected by disabilities.

Literature Circles

Harvey Daniels (2002) described literature circles as “small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book” (p. 13). Literature circles, also described as classroom book clubs, comprise independent reading and collaborative learning. Gaining popularity over the past two decades in public schools, the method remains a common practice in today's classrooms (Daniels, 2006). Modeling literature circles in preservice teacher classrooms provides experiences relevant for future literacy teachers.

Moving the popular book club to the classroom required translation for didactic purposes. In essence, small groups of peers choose to read and discuss the same book, poem, story, article, or other text. The reading is apportioned and assigned to be read either in-class or outside-of-class. Group members are encouraged to take notes while reading to contribute meaningfully during discussions. Expectations for the assignment include that all group members share during these meetings. Using a schedule for reading and meeting provides a predictable structure throughout the literature circle. In more traditional literature circles, roles are given to each group member to foster a sense of purpose for the assigned readings (Daniels, 2002).

Using this framework, various models exist for implementing literature circles in the classroom. Researchers proposed that effective literature circles involve intentional connections between what has been read, a strong sense of inquiry in the discourse that follows reading, and follow-up activities such as writing (Mills & Jennings, 2011; Wilson & Thornton, 2006). Mills and Jennings (2011) found literature circles most effective when:

discourse of inquiry was attentive, probing, and thoughtful as they carefully observed, interpreted, and sought deeper understandings of literature, the world, and their own communities. Students were asked to critically observe their world to build academic knowledge, and they were expected to observe and support each other as learners. They learned to pay attention to and contribute to their own learning community, marking this discourse of inquiry as relational and compassionate. (p. 591)

As a result of strategic activities following discourse, research indicates participants were better able “to develop self-awareness, an enhanced self-concept and improved personal and social judgment” (Wilson & Thornton, 2006, p. 37). Journal writing as a form of reflection remains a common and popular activity following reading and group discourse in the practice of literature circles.

Developmental Bibliotherapy and Thematic Literature Circles with Preservice Teachers

Preservice teachers enrolled in a children’s literature course participated in literature circles. The texts selected for the circles reflected characters with various disabilities. One of the literature circles was thematic. The professor of the course selected three books written from the first-person perspective of an adolescent affected by disabilities (either the protagonist has a disability or is the sibling of one with a disability). The books included *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio (2012), *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper (2010), or *Rules* by Cynthia Lord (2006). Preservice teachers selected one of the three books to read.

***Wonder* by R.J. Palacio (2012)**

August “Auggie” Pullman suffers from a severe craniofacial abnormality that has required multiple surgeries and interventions

throughout his life. Home-schooled as a 1st-4th grader, Auggie’s first outside school experience begins as a 5th grader at Beecher Preparatory School. An exceptionally bright and gifted young man, Auggie’s shocking appearance makes it particularly unnerving for others to get to know him. Through his journey during his fifth-grade year, Auggie and the people he encounters are transformed. Palacio uses multiple first-person accounts to tell this inspiring story of what it really means to belong.

***Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper (2010)**

Ten-year-old Melody Brooks has cerebral palsy. As a result, she cannot speak, is confined to a wheelchair, and is dependent on others. Unknown to those within her world, Melody has a photographic memory and can read, in spite of being placed in a special education class for the severely disabled at her public school. When Melody gets a new personal assistant at school and an augmentative communication device, things begin to change for Melody. With change, comes promise and hope. Draper’s sensitive approach to tell the story of Melody’s struggles and triumphs throughout these changes is compelling.

***Rules* by Cynthia Lord (2006)**

Catherine is a twelve-year-old girl whose younger brother, David, is autistic. In an effort to give structure to the complicated world seven-year-old David must negotiate, and Catherine establishes rules for David to follow, such as “keep your pants on in public.” Catherine struggles between caring for her younger brother and finding her own way as a preteen in a family centered around David’s disability. Lord delightfully details this coming-of-age tale.

Approach: Literature Circle with Preservice Teachers

Preservice teachers were allowed to choose the book they wanted to read from the titles described above. Literature circles were comprised of students who had selected the

same books—the goal was for each circle to reflect groups of 3 or four circle members. After literature circles were formed, preservice teachers completed weekly assignments using the book, which typically involved reading 3-6 chapters outside of class time. At the beginning of each week’s class time, literature circles met.

The literature circle members did not perform assigned roles during the weekly meeting, which differs from the typical literature circle. Rather, group discussions were monitored by the professor to determine each student’s level of participation and compliance with the reading assignment. This practice is in keeping with Daniels’ (2006) comments that assigning roles has been overused among those who utilize literature circles. The use of roles was intended to provide structure for novices during early experiences with literature circles. During the literature circles in this practice, the professor facilitated discussion with prompts and probing questions, as needed.

During weekly literature circles, each group discussed the assigned reading and individually generated notes about character development. With a focus on analysis of the protagonist in each book, group members documented physical, social, and emotional characteristics found in the assigned weekly readings during these group discussions, as well as any changes in these characteristics as the story progressed. Preservice teachers wrote individual character analysis papers at the end of the semester as a reflective assignment for submission to the professor.

Preservice Teacher Outcomes

Preservice teachers who participated in the integration of developmental bibliotherapy and thematic literature circles valued three particular aspects of the practice. Participants valued the social component of literature circles, gained authentic experiences, and increased empathy for individuals affected by disabilities.

A common theme among literature circle participants was the value of the social component within literature circles. Participants were consistently prepared for each meeting. Several reported a desire to be able to authentically interact with their classmates during literature circles, which led to increased motivation to read each week. Additionally, participants reported gaining skills in negotiating the construct of a team through group discussions. Several participants reported greater enjoyment of reading for pleasure as a result of this practice.

Given authentic experience with literature circles in this course, participants reflected they were more likely to implement literature circles in their future classrooms. Participants reported that they had never participated in literature circles prior to this course. The multitude of benefits experienced was a motivating factor for participants to ask questions about various approaches to using literature circles and to collect information about literature circles from sources outside of this course, such as mentor teachers and research.

As was intended by integrating developmental bibliotherapy and literature circles, preservice teachers reported an increase in appreciation for the difficulties faced by children affected by a disability. During literature circle meetings, participants expressed empathy for the difficulties faced by the protagonist in their selected book. Additionally, participants commented about the aspects of dealing with disability that had never occurred to them prior to reading the selected book.

As a literacy professor, it is rewarding to hear from former students, now teachers in the “real” work. Notes, comments on social media, and face-to-face conversations initiated by in-service teachers who formerly participated in this course have consistently reinforced ways literature circle participants were impacted by literature. For example, former participants have shared ways they are using these books to

help their students better understand those affected by disabilities and how reading the book from the perspective of one affected with disabilities has helped them better understand and empathize with students in the schools and classrooms. One participant even shared excitement about one of the books, *Wonder*, which is currently being released in movie form. Relationships and connections are built through literature and in-depth discussions about literature. The connections built through literature circles have impacted preservice teachers in this literacy course.

Summary

Plato's misattributed quote "books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything" is of

particular relevance in light of the approach discussed in this chapter. The dynamic process of reading can be transformative. When utilizing the techniques of developmental bibliotherapy and thematic literature circles as aspects of course design within an educator preparation program, reading can transform the thinking of preservice teachers. Literature circles as the structure for this approach within a literacy-based course provided multiple opportunities for growth related to empathy and the development of teacher competencies. In particular, preservice teachers reported they valued the social component of literature circles, found the authentic experience motivated them to utilize literature circles in their future classrooms, and gained empathy for the challenges faced by students impacted by disability.

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Quick Guide for Selecting Informational Texts for Upper Elementary and Middle School Students

Kathy E. Stephens, Ed.D.
LeTourneau University

Abstract

Information-based books are available in abundance and popular with students enrolled in the upper elementary and middle school grades. With a growing emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), teachers are including informational texts in the classroom. Preteens are expected to think critically, read more complex texts, and build stronger vocabularies; information-based texts can help students in all these areas. Effective resources are needed as teachers select nonfiction and informational literature. By using the short checklist based on specific characteristics, teachers can assess texts, completing the selection process with confidence and ease.

Keywords: *informational text, STEM, checklist*

In the world of children's and adolescent's literature, the information-based genres have become tremendously popular with students, teachers, and parents. Recent reports from publishers of popular children's and adolescent literature have indicated significant growth in the nonfiction market (Rosen, 2015). With an increased emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) along with a renewed focus on the national and state instructional standards to emphasize nonfiction and informational texts, educators are including more nonfiction in their classrooms. Effective resources are needed to help teachers select appropriate nonfiction and informational literature. Checklists that are based on specific characteristics can be practical tools to assist teachers in choosing quality nonfiction and informational books for elementary and middle school students.

Why Informational Texts?

Reading experts and researchers frequently debate the labels, nonfiction and informational texts (Barnatt, 2010; Smith & Robertson, 2016). According to one resource in children's literature, "Nonfiction books are classified as biography and informational...and informational books are called nonfiction in adult publishing" (Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016, p. 65). However, they also noted that while genre organization and labels are important, none of the divisions are "watertight" and do not particularly matter to children as readers. Various state standards refer to the genres with both nonfiction and informational designations (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010; Texas Education Agency, 2016). Rather than engaging in the label debate, informational texts will be used here to discuss

all nonfiction and information-based literature for children and adolescents.

According to Duke (2010), an expert in the field of informational text literature, teachers can improve reading engagement and comprehension success by including a wide variety of genres, especially with a significant number of informational texts. Studies have also shown that students' vocabulary knowledge can be strengthened by consistently including informational texts as a component of the reading routine (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2008). When students' reading instruction is augmented consistently with informational passages focused on high-interest topics (i.e., weather, sports, animals), vocabulary knowledge improves (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Stephens, 2007).

Students in the upper elementary and middle school grades are expected to read more complex texts to build stronger vocabularies and to learn to think critically. School media centers and classroom libraries are typically the most widely used resources for providing students with informational materials. Shanahan (2016) created a mnemonic device, "Fabulous Libraries Can Give Satisfaction," (para. 7) to promote successful engagement and reading comprehension with informational passages. The mnemonic device emphasized key aspects of informational texts, such as differences in narrative and informational texts, locating facts within a passage, comprehension strategies, use of graphic elements, and the importance of connecting reading and writing of informational passages.

Teacher-friendly Informational Text Checklist

With the rising popularity of informational trade books, teachers search for effective instructional tools to aid in the selection process. Although teachers have long recognized the importance of incorporating informational texts to support instruction,

choosing higher quality, engaging passages can be perplexing. The quantity and availability of these books make it critical to possess resources for evaluating and choosing the best books. Teachers benefit from organizational tools such as evaluative checklists to examine characteristics of high-quality informational books and expedite book selection with confidence. Checklists may also strengthen other areas of the curriculum, including STEM-based lessons.

Informational text checklists assist both preservice and veteran teachers in selecting the books needed for daily instructional encounters. One checklist example provides teachers and parents with guidelines for choosing informational texts for younger children (Stephens, 2008). The checklist, presented in Figure 1, is designed to help educators select informational texts for elementary and middle school students and examines the elements included in books with higher reading levels. Informational texts for older students are written with more complex topics and vocabulary, making the selection process even more critical. The checklist focuses on five key elements: content accuracy, topic relevance, organization, photographs and illustrations, and graphic data. Each survey element includes questions related to that element.

The Checklist Elements

Content Accuracy

Facts supported with valid sources.

Informational texts written for older students should be based on dependable sources and clearly cited. While some readers may enjoy these texts for pleasure reading, other students access them as part of inquiry projects and research assignments. Resources should be reliable and valid. Bias and didacticism should be minimal or avoided in informational texts written for children and adolescents. Examples of informational texts with sufficient citations and accurate sources include *The Usborne Introduction to Genes and DNA* (Claybourne,

2015). This internet-linked text has numerous sources all cited in the Acknowledgements. It also includes a table of contents, index, glossary, and plenty of illustrations. *Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans* (Brown,

2015) is another excellent book on this topic and age level. The book is written using a modified graphic novel approach, increasing the curiosity factor for the reader. Numerous sources were utilized and noted.

Selecting Informational Texts for Older Children and Adolescents

_____ **Content Accuracy**

Did the author support the facts with ample sources? Are the sources current and acknowledged within the text?

_____ **Topic relevance**

Does the main topic easily attract the reader's attention? Is the content written in a way that is interesting and relevant to the age of the reader?

_____ **Organization**

Is the book logically organized? Is the important information easy to find? Are the organizational elements obvious within the text (i.e. table of contents, index, headings, key words)? Does the author effectively guide the reader's attention with headings and subheadings?

_____ **Photographs and Illustrations**

Are the facts clearly supported with attractive photographs or illustrations? Is there an adequate number of photographs or illustrations to hold the reader's attention?

_____ **Graphic data and presentation**

Does the graphic data connect directly to the topic? Is the graphic information easy to follow and comprehend? Do the labels and captions direct the reader's attention and clarify the information?

Figure 1: Checklist for Selecting Informational Texts for Older Children and Adolescents

Topic Relevance

Engaging, relevant topics. The topics addressed in informational texts should be engaging and include facts that are intriguing to the reader such as *First Flight: The Story of the Wright brothers* (Jenner, 2003). The content should also invite the reader to think critically and delve into the topic as in books like *Witches: The Absolutely True Story of Witches in Salem* (Schanzer, 2011). Well-written informational

texts address issues that raise the curiosity of readers or cause students to ask questions. Informational texts with exciting topics include *Design & Fly Paper Airplanes* (Top That! Team, 2003) and *Creating the X-Men* (Buckley, 2000).

Organization

Logical, simple organization. Reading the text should be almost effortless regarding the

organization of the material presented. When reading or skimming the book, the important information should be easy to locate. Readers should find answers to questions related to the main topic as the facts are presented within the text. One example of an informational text with a strong organizational structure is *100 Inventions that Made History* (DK Publishing, 2014). When examining the book with the checklist, it satisfies all the categories. This book includes a table of contents, index, many captions, and sidebars. Besides the organizational strengths, it connects to preteens with topics and trivia of interest to them.

The organizational elements (i.e. table of contents, index, headings, key words) of the informational text should be obvious to the reader. The author should guide the reader's attention with headings and subheadings. The series, *National Geographic Kids 125 True Stories of Amazing Animals* (National Geographic Kids, n.d.) is an outstanding example of informational texts with excellent organizational elements. This series also provides the reader with numerous topics, real-life illustrations, photographs, and intriguing facts. National Geographic is known for its reputation as a powerful resource in the STEM areas.

Photographs and Illustrations

Adequate number of attractive, interesting illustrations. Photographs provide the richest evidence of credible, authentic information to the reader. When examining informational texts, the facts should be clearly supported with attractive photographs or illustrations. The photographs should be clear, large enough, and not overcrowded or busy. Captions and labels should be included to enunciate details of the photographs. There should be an adequate number of photographs or illustrations to hold the reader's attention. Photographs play the role of providing visual support of the facts; they should describe or reinforce the content. Seymour Simon is an expert in the genre of photographic

informational literature for children and adolescents, primarily in science. He has authored more than 200 texts dedicated to causing children to get interested and excited about topics related to the field of science. His book title topics include meteorology (weather, storms, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes); the human body (heart, brain, lungs); animals (wolves, sharks, gorillas, penguins); transportation (trucks, trains) and the universe, to name a few. Simon's lengthy list of publications and awards for writing demonstrate his lifetime passion for his work. Students, educators, and parents have recognized Simon as being consistently known for his powerfully captivating and high-quality publications.

Graphic Data and Presentation

Easy to follow graphic information directly linked to the topic. Charts and figures add value to the presentation of facts but must be thorough and well-defined. They should supplement the text while elaborating significant details. Labels and captions, critical links between content and graphics, must direct the reader's attention and clarify the information. One example of an informational text with strong graphic data includes *They Changed the World: Bell, Edison and Tesla: Campfire Graphic Novels* (Helfand, 2014). This novel, focused on three important inventors, is written in the graphic novel subgenre, making it very attractive to preteens. Embedded in the novel the reader will also encounter how-to instructions for experiments and other data presented graphically. *Animals by the Numbers: A Book of Infographics* (Jenkins, 2016) is written entirely using graphs and charts. This informational book, designed primarily for older elementary and early middle school students is filled with trivia and facts.

Making a Case for Biographies

In the world of children's and adolescent literature, the informational text genre does not always include the sub-genre of biographies (Tunnel et al., 2016). However, for older elementary and middle school readers, the

case can be made easily to include them. School curricula often focus on important people such as world leaders, inventors, problem solvers, and historical figures. Students at this age also enjoy reading about sports figures, musicians, celebrities, and heroes. Biographies today are generally written to provide students with interesting facts and trivia. One series of biographies, *Who Was* (Penguin Random House, n.d.) has gained popularity in recent years. With more than 120 titles in the series, such as *Who Was Amelia Earhart* (Jerome, 2002), students have a multitude of choices. This series has found its way into numerous schools and classrooms as supplements to social studies and science instruction. Several other single titles including, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, 1993); *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood up for Education and Got Shot by the Taliban* (Yousafzai, 2013); *Steve Jobs: The Man*

Who Thought Different (Blumenthal, 2012); and *Woodson* (Paulsen, 2007) are a few favorite biographies.

Informational texts are critical tools for educators of elementary and middle school students. The publishing industry is expanding in this literary genre. With so many more choices, this checklist simplifies the process and increases teachers' confidence in the selection process. After examining the five primary characteristics of content accuracy, topic relevance, organization, photographs and illustrations, and graphic data and presentation, teachers and even older elementary and middle school students can make more informed book choices. Good informational texts may not include all five characteristics, but the selection process can be improved by using the checklist.

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What Do I Teach Tomorrow? Using Literacy Data to Make Informed Teaching Decisions

Jolene B. Reed

Sam Houston State University

Marcia L. Kellum

Denton Independent School District

Abstract

Running records are not regularly utilized to their full potential by classroom teachers. Often, teachers use running records only to determine an instructional text level for an individual student and then to place students into reading groups for instructional purposes based on student reading levels. When more thoroughly analyzed, running records can aid teachers in making informed instructional decisions based on student needs. Instruction becomes more beneficial with a focus on the development of strategic processing of individual students.

Keywords: *emerging literacy learners, running records, teaching decisions*

Running records are an important part of assessment. In order for running records to be of use in classroom instruction, the classroom teacher must be able to analyze and interpret information from running records to make informed teaching decisions. This chapter will provide teachers with a way to use running records to determine strategic behaviors supportive of emerging literacy learners as they progress in literacy acquisition. The presented information about running records will extend beyond obtaining an accuracy level and analyzing sources of information children use. The purpose of this chapter is to examine evidence of student reading behaviors and to aid

teachers in using these behaviors to make informed instructional decisions.

Running Records

Purpose of a Running Record

A running record is a tool for recording and identifying patterns based on what a child says and does as he is reading a text. As the child reads, the teacher captures all they do as they read. A record includes not only data about accurate reading, but also student attempts at unknown words, re-readings in order to either confirm or correct previous attempts, and appeals made to the teacher by the child for additional help when they are unable to help themselves. Marie Clay, the developer of

running records, states that, “If running records are taken in a systematic way they provide evidence of how well children are learning to direct their knowledge of letters, sounds and words to understanding the messages in the text” (Clay, 2005, p. 51). Running records provide insight into children’s literacy development.

Running records can provide three important assessment opportunities for the classroom teacher. First, running records can be used to guide teaching decisions. The running record captures what the reader says and does while reading continuous text. It allows the teacher to immediately review what happened during the reading and enables the teacher to implement strategic instruction after the reading occurs or as plans are made for the next day’s lesson. The teacher can judge what the student already knows, what they are attending to, and what the child has overlooked. For example, a running record may demonstrate a pattern of student substitutions that make sense within the context of the written material but show that the child neglects information regarding letters and sounds. An example of this is when the student substitutes the word “bunny” for “rabbit” in the sentence, “I see a rabbit.” Following this type of error, the teacher would emphasize looking at the letters and may ask the child, “What would make sense but look like this word?” In another example, a student might substitute a word in a sentence that looks similar to the word in the text but does not maintain the meaning of the written text. An example of this is when a child substitutes the word “barn” for “baby” in the sentence, “The baby is crawling.” In this instance, the teacher’s emphasis would be on helping the child understand that reading must make sense. It is the teacher’s job to help the child understand that when reading, if something does not make sense, the child has more work that needs to be done. This ability to analyze the sources of information that the child is both using and neglecting allows the teacher to prompt, support, and challenge the individual learner.

Additionally the running record enables the teacher to assess the difficulty of the text that the child is reading. The teacher uses this information to make sure the students are working on material that is neither too difficult nor too easy. The student is being asked to problem-solve on that “just right” text which allows them to problem solve within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Another purpose of the running record is to capture the progress the student makes on their reading ability over a period of time. Not only can the teacher plot the student’s progress over time as they read text of increasing levels of difficulty and complexity, but the analysis of reading behaviors also allows the teacher to note changes in the way that the student problem solves at a point of difficulty. For example, the teacher can show parents how the child has moved from reading at a level three text on a reading assessment such as Heinemann’s *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)* at the beginning of their first-grade year of school to a level six by the end of the first grading period. Additionally, the teacher can cite evidence from the running record to show that whereas at the beginning of the school year, the student’s only problem-solving strategy at a point of difficulty was to appeal to the teacher, by the end of the first grading period the student’s running record showed evidence that the student was learning to incorporate additional reading behaviors to help in their problem-solving process. Such reading behaviors might include rereading to aid in the search for additional information or substituting a word that made sense and then cross-checking that meaningful substitution with the visual information of the print to see if what they had spoken looked like the printed word in the text.

Analysis of Running Records

A part-to-whole approach to teaching reading assumes that when a child reads, they are recalling known words and attacking unknown words. Some prominent reading researchers (Adams, 1990; Ehri, 1994; Samuels,

1994) assert that learning to read reflects a linear process, beginning first with the development of phonemic awareness, learning letters and sounds, blending those sounds into words, and finally using words as they read longer text. In contrast to this linear view of learning to read, other researchers favor a multi-faceted and complex view of reading (Clay, 2016; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017), where the emerging literacy learner is using information of various kinds to make a choice among possible responses. The child is trying to get the best fit with the limited knowledge they have. The multitude of information that the reader must attend to during the reading process is described in depth by Jones (1997).

At any moment, a reader of any level of proficiency must keep in mind story meaning, sentence meaning, sentence syntax, and some metacognitive awareness of fit, while simultaneously perceiving and identifying words, word-parts, and punctuation marks . . . for the reader they [these processes] operate so automatically that they continue without conscious control and often appear effortless (p. 175).

It is this comprehensive approach to teaching reading that will guide the discussion in this section.

When examining a running record, it is important to analyze each individual error and not pick and choose among the errors, deciding to analyze some and neglect others. To analyze only selected errors might allow the teacher's preconceived notions of what is happening with a particular child to overshadow that which the teacher does not realize is happening. For every error, teachers must wonder, "What lead the child to do (or say) that? As part of this wondering process, the teachers must ask themselves at least three questions:

1. Did the meaning or the messages of the text influence the error? If the child's

substituted word for a printed word is meaningful in the text, we say that the child was searching with meaning.

2. Did the structure (syntax) of the sentence up to the error influence the response? If the child's substituted word followed the structure or syntax of the English language, then we can argue that the child is searching with structure or syntax.
3. Did visual information from the print influence any part of the error? If any part of the child's substituted word is visually similar to the word printed in the text, we say that the child was searching with visual information.

The accuracy rate at which a child reads can be determined with a simple mathematical formula. Take the total number of words that the child read, subtract the number of errors, and then divide that difference by the total number of words read. The result is the percentage of words read accurately. Let's do a simple example. Assume that a child reads a story that is 100 words in length and makes five errors. Using the above formula results in the following calculation: 100 (the total words read) minus 5 (the number of errors) equals 95. Dividing 95 by 100 (the total number of words read) equals 0.95 or 95%.

Fountas and Pinnell (2017) stated that when a child is reading from 95%-100%, the text is considered to be easy. The instructional range for reading instruction is recognized as being in the range of 90%-94% accuracy. Anything read at an accuracy rate of 89% or below is considered to be hard for the child and is probably causing the child to become frustrated as they read

Knowing the number of words read by the child, as well as the number of errors and self-corrections made by the child, also allows teachers to make some other useful calculations. The child's error rate is calculated by dividing the total number of words read by the number of

errors made. Using the above example, this same child's error rate is calculated by dividing 100 (the number of words read) by 5 (the number of errors made), giving us an answer of 20. The answer is stated as a ratio with the first number of the ratio always being a 1. In this example, the error ratio is 1:20. This means that for every 20 words the child read, he made one error.

Another helpful calculation for teachers to know is the self-correction rate. The self-correction rate is calculated by adding the number of errors made by the child to the number of self-corrections that the child made. Consider the above example again, but with one additional piece of information. Suppose the child read a text that consisted of 100 words, made 5 errors, and in addition to those

uncorrected errors, also self-corrected himself 3 times. If we add 5 (the number of uncorrected errors) to 3 (the number of self-corrected errors), we get 8. We then divide this total by 3 (the number of self-corrections), resulting in an answer of 1.6. For the sake of simplicity, we will round this number up to 2. Like the error rate, the self-correction rate is always stated as a ratio with the first number being a 1. This gives us a ratio of 1:2. This means that for every 2 errors the child made, they self-corrected once.

The following running records of Child 1 and Child 2 illustrate how and why this information is important. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the running record and analysis of each child as they read identical text. The text read is Joy Cowley's *Bread* (n.d.).

Running Record				
Name: Child 1		Accuracy Rate = 94%		
Title: <i>Bread</i> Word Count: 69	E	SC	Information Used Errors	Information Used Self- Corrections
Mom said to the twins, "Go and get the bread."				
<u>twin</u> The twins got the bread.	1		M S Y	
They saw a hungry <u>brown</u> dog.	1		M S V	M S Y
"Have some bread," they said.				
They saw some <u>hungry</u> ducks.	1		M S V	
"Have some bread," they said.				
They saw <u>a</u> hungry rooster.	1		M S V	
"Have some bread," they said.				
They saw a hungry <u>goose</u> goat.	1		M S Y	
"Have some bread," they said.				
Mom said, What <u>is</u> the rest of the bread?"	1		M S Y	M S V
Dad said, Here it is!"				
	4	2	5 5 2	1 1 1

Figure 1. Child one running record data

Running Record					
Name: Child 2			Accuracy = 94%		
Title: <i>Bread</i> Word Count: 69	E	SC	Information Used Errors	Information Used Self- Corrections	
<u>kids</u> SC Mom said to the twins,		1	M S V	M S Y	
"Go and get the bread."					
The twins got the bread.					
They saw a hungry T dog.	1		M S V		
"Have some bread," they said.					
They saw some hungry ducks.	1		M S V		
"Have some bread," they said.					
They saw a hungry rooster.	1		M S V		
<u>rolls</u> SC "Have some bread," they said.		1	M S V	M S Y	
They saw a hungry goat.					
"Have some bread," they said.					
Mom said,					
"Where T is the rest of the bread?"	1		M S V		
Dad said, "Here it is!"					
	4	2	2 2 0	0 0 2	

Figure 2. Child two running record data

For the purpose of discussion, we will divide the analysis of running records into three levels. The first level of analysis is to look at the accuracy rate, the error rate, and the self-correction rate of the child's reading. This level of analysis is entirely about the mathematical calculations described previously. It does not look at the quality of the errors or the reading behaviors of the student. This is a baseline level

of information, and is often used by the classroom teacher to group students into ability level reading groups. When examining the first level of analysis for Child 1 and Child 2 (see Table 1), both students appear to be identical in reading ability and should, therefore, be grouped together because their instructional needs are identical.

Table 1

First Level of Analysis

	Child 1	Child 2
Words Read	69	69
Errors	4	4
Self-Corrections	2	2
Accuracy Rate	94%	94%
Self-Correction Rate	1:3	1:3

The second level of analysis looks at sources of information (meaning, syntax, and visual) searched by the student (see Table 2). Although there is generally a greater use of these sources of information by Child 1, the profiles for each student remain similar. Both children tend to search meaning and syntactical information when their errors occur. They also both tend to neglect visual information contained in the text. If this is where the

teacher's analysis ends, the two children are again characterized in a similar way and the instruction needed for both children is assumed to be similar. It is not until we get into the third level of analysis that the differences in the reading behaviors of the two students become clear. Here, the analysis becomes important in differentiating between the reading behaviors and consequent instruction needed for the two students.

Table 2

Second Level of Analysis

	Errors			Self-Corrections		
	M	S	V	M	S	V
Child 1	5	5	2	1	1	1
Child 2	2	2	0	0	0	2

In the third level of analysis, it becomes obvious that the two students, who looked very similar in levels one and two of the analysis, are exhibiting quite different reading behaviors. Consequently, the two children need instruction specific to their individual needs. These children

need to be treated differently when we think in terms of learning needs and how the classroom teacher will structure their instruction. These two children are driving two different processing systems as they exhibit their different reading behaviors (see Table 3).

Table 3

Third Level of Analysis

Child 1	Child 2
Rereads at the point of error	Doesn't reread at point of error
Rereads after being told a word	Doesn't reread after being told a word
Nearly always predicts when unsure	Doesn't often predict when unsure
Seeks help when necessary	Doesn't seek help when necessary

Child 1 exhibits reading behaviors that describe an active strategic processing system as they read text. When a point of difficulty in the text is encountered, this student deliberately applies problem-solving skills to help decode and bring meaning to the unknown text. This child rereads at the point of difficulty in order to search for additional information within the printed text and the meaning of the story. Child1 also repeats a word after they are told that word by the teacher. This behavior helps the student maintain the meaning of the text in their mind as the reading occurs. Also, Child 1 nearly always makes a prediction of an unknown word when they are unsure of a written word. The substituted words always make sense and preserve the storyline. In addition to maintaining the meaning of the story, the substitutions are nearly always visually similar

to the unknown word. This shows that the child is cross-checking one source of information (meaning) with another source of information (visual) within the context of the story. Lastly, Child 1 understands that, at times, it is necessary to ask for the help of the teacher. However, asking to be told an unknown word is not the most common "go to" behavior for this student. This student understands that reading is a problem-solving process and that the person primarily responsible for performing that problem-solving activity is the student.

An analysis of the reading of Child 1 reveals that this child experiences difficulty with final visual information. Substitutions made by the child begin with the same initial letter, but the visual information at the end of the word in the text does not look like the word substituted by the child. Instruction needed for Child 1

involves helping the child check on the final visual information of printed words.

While Child 2 is beginning to implement some of the problem-solving activities exhibited by Child 1, Child 2 is not as independent at initiating solutions to problems arising when reading unknown text. Child 2 did, on two occasions, monitor and self-correct their reading based on the first letter of an unknown word. However, what is glaringly evident in the running record of Child 2 is that this child does not generally incorporate problem-solving activities at points of difficulty. At no time does Child 2 reread to search for any additional information in the text. It is, in fact, rare for Child 2 to make a prediction based on the meaning of the story at a point of difficulty. This child's primary method of problem solving unknown text is to stop at the point of difficulty and wait for the teacher to tell them the unknown word. It is important to note that when this child encounters an unknown word, no visible effort is put forth. Things not happening include sounding the first letter to help them think of what would make sense in the storyline or repeating the word after being told the word by the teacher. This child's approach to unknown text is one of passivity, merely waiting for the teacher to tell them the word.

The next step for Child 2's instruction needs to be helping them to become more active in their problem-solving activity. Child 2 must learn that primary responsibility for initiating problem solving activity belongs to them. The teacher can facilitate the child in this knowledge by helping them to understand that it is the child's responsibility to do something at the point of difficulty. The child can make a prediction at the point of difficulty that makes sense within the text and eventually learn to check that prediction with the visual information of the printed word. Another possibility is for the child to sound the first letter of the unknown word and then think of a word that makes sense within the text and begins with that sound, eventually learning to check the remainder of the

unknown word visually to confirm their response. As time passes, the child will learn to check larger parts of the unknown word (onset/rime, syllables, etc.) to help in their problem solving.

It is important to note that, in spite of identical scores at the level 1 analysis, identical instruction for the two students would not be beneficial. Trying to have Child 2 focus on word endings at this point in their reading progress would be ineffective. Child 2 cannot focus on checking word endings because they are not yet making predictions that can be checked. This focus of instruction would be meaningless to Child 2. Focusing on initiating reading activity at a point of difficulty would not benefit Child 1. This student is already doing this extremely well. This point of instruction would not lift this child's level of reading activity to help them to become a more proficient reader.

Teachers of emergent literacy learners use their observations of children's reading behaviors to make decisions that affect the learning of each individual student. The ongoing process of teaching and learning leads to shifts in both the ways teachers teach and in what the students are learning as time progresses. Estice (1998) describes the cycle of the teacher and learner as they both go through the process of the teacher observing the individual student to make decisions regarding what needs to come next in the student's reading instruction. As the teacher observes the student, the teacher records reading behaviors of the student. This recording is accomplished both through the use of running records and anecdotal notes of observations made. The teacher then uses those notes to make informed and prioritized teaching decisions regarding the student's next steps for instruction. As the teaching occurs, the student responds to the instruction and incorporates new understandings about how print works into their reading behaviors. The student may, at first, be inconsistent in the application of the new

learning. However, given more opportunities for further instruction and practice, new problem-solving behavior appears and the child becomes independent in the use of a particular reading behavior. The process then begins again as the teacher again observes, records, and prioritizes further instruction and the child then practices and becomes independent on the additional learning. While the above description is simplistic in nature, it does describe the cyclic nature of reading instruction. The ongoing process that leads to shifts in both teaching and learning over time might be viewed as the teacher observes, records, and teaches the child. As this is happening, the child is learning new things and independently problem-solving.

All emerging literacy learners exhibit both strengths and weaknesses as they progress in their learning. Running records provide evidence of the reader's strong points as well as what is yet to be learned through instruction. The challenge for the classroom teacher is two-fold. First, the teacher must learn to recognize and articulate both what students do well and what they have yet to learn. Secondly, the teacher must use this information to decide on what needs to be the next step in the child's learning. To emphasize this point, we will use the running records of two students we call Daniel and Lauren. First, we will consider Daniel as he reads *Speedy Bee* (see Figures 4 and 5).

<i>Speedy Bee</i>	
Page 3	Speedy Bee said, "The baby bees are hungry."
5	"I will go and look for flowers," said Speedy Bee.
7	Speedy bee looked for flowers up in the trees. "No flowers here," she said, and she went on.
9	Speedy Bee looked for flowers down in the grass. "No flowers here," she said, and she went on.
10	Speedy Bee went on . . .
11	and on . . . and on.
12	Speedy Bee came to a big garden.
14	Speedy Bee went into the flowers to look for food.
16	Speedy Bee went home with food for the baby bees.

Figure 4. Text of *Speedy Bee* (Giles, 2000)

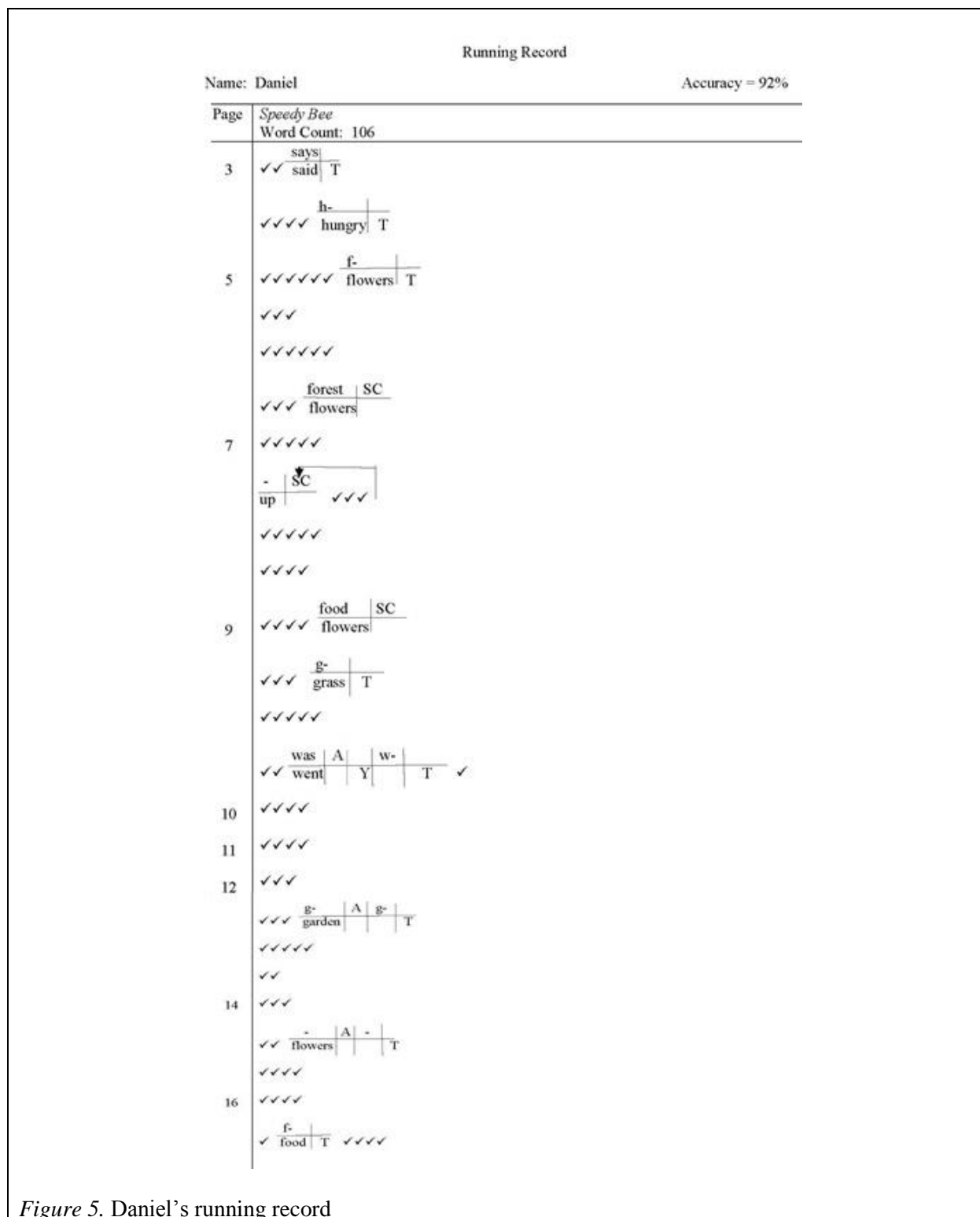


Figure 5. Daniel's running record

An analysis of Daniel's reading reveals that Daniel can sometimes integrate all sources of information (meaning, syntax, and visual) as he reads. This is evidenced on page three as he read "says" for "said" and again on page five as he read "forest" for "flowers." The substituted word in both examples made sense in the text at the point which they were substituted. In addition, both substitutions were visually similar to the word printed in the text. At times, Daniel searched for further visual information to self-correct after using some visual information in his first attempt. This is exemplified on page five when he read "forest" for "flowers" and immediately corrected his reading. He also did this on page nine when he read "food" for "flowers," once again self-correcting immediately at the point of the error. Daniel monitors his reading and ensures that his reading of the text makes sense. Also, at the point of difficulty, Daniel often sounds the first letter of the unknown word in an attempt at reading the unknown word.

While sounding the first letter of the unknown word can be a strength, it also provides information to the teacher regarding the next step needed for his instruction. Close analysis of Daniel's reading reveals that his sounding of the first letter of the unknown word does not lead to his successful problem solving of unknown words. Based on his running record, Daniel appears to be thinking, "I'll just try the first letter and then the teacher will help me." Therefore, Daniel needs instruction on self-initiating a search beyond the initial letter of unknown words. Instruction can support Daniel by guiding him to notice larger, more meaningful sections of the unknown word (onset/rime, syllables, etc.). The teacher's job becomes one of explicitly demonstrating how to look for and use these larger chunks of unknown words and then scaffolding that instruction until Daniel is capable of doing so independently. The teacher might say, "Every time you get stuck, don't just sit and wait. Go back to the

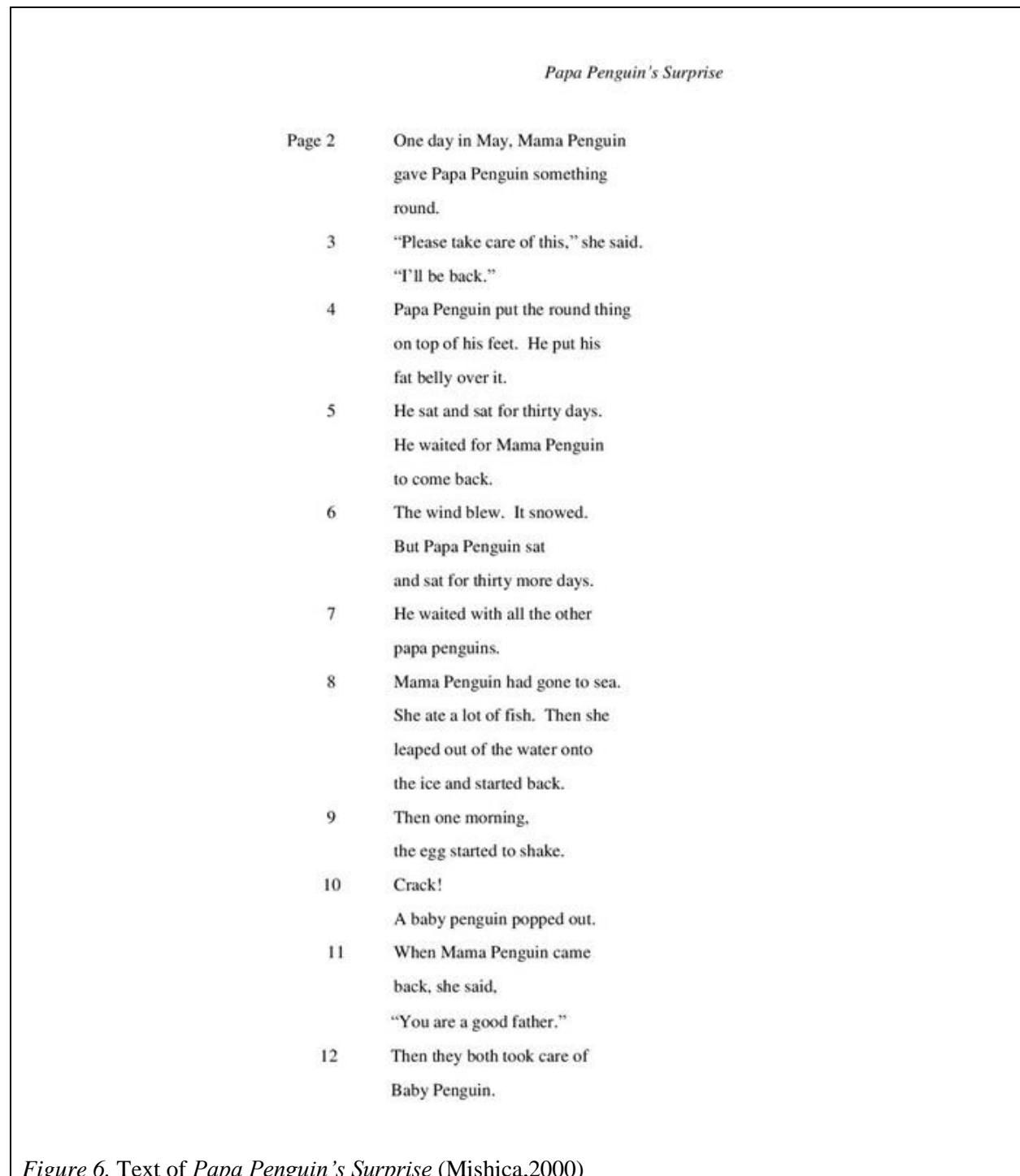
beginning, reread and think about the story. When you get to the tricky part, look for a bigger part of the word that might help you." Rereading helps the student regain the meaning of the text. Therefore, this prompt encourages Daniel to integrate multiple sources of information into his problem solving rather than just relying on attending to the first letter in the word.

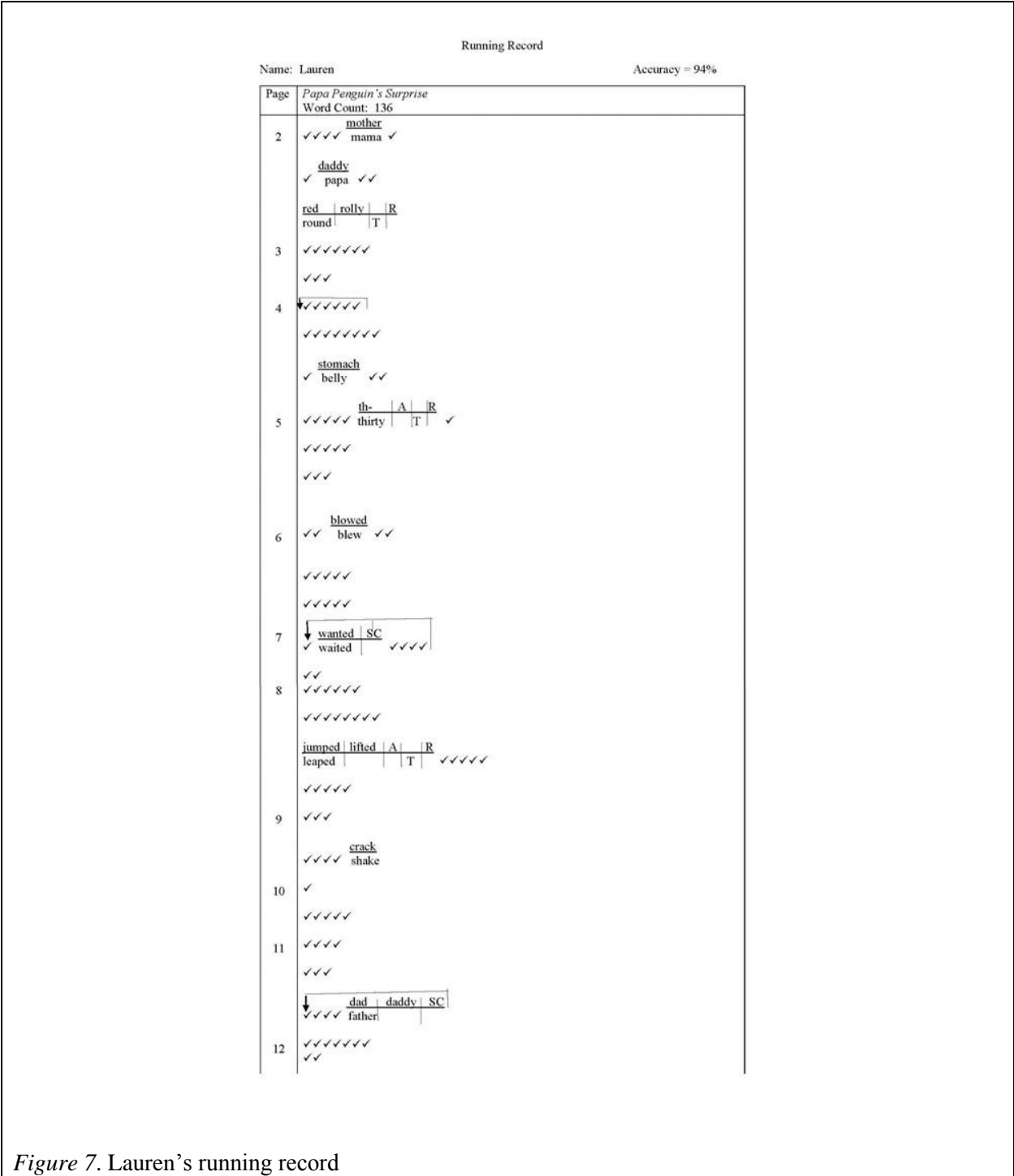
Our final running record example is that of Lauren as she reads Mishica's *Papa Penguin's Surprise* (see Figures 6 and 7). Lauren exhibits many strengths as a reader. These include rereading the text at points of difficulty. She rereads both to search for additional information in order to initiate a self-correction and to confirm what she has read. Additionally, she rereads after she has been told a word by her teacher. This helps her to confirm what she has been told as well as to re-establish the meaning of the text. Lauren is beginning to make multiple different attempts at a point of difficulty. This is an extremely important action for a young reader. Lauren understands that if her first attempt is not correct, she needs to try something different in her effort to achieve accurate reading.

Lauren needs to learn to monitor errors where a visual discrepancy occurs with either the medial or final letters of the word. After the reading, the teacher might return to a page where Lauren neglected medial or final letters and state, "You said, . . . (repeating what she said). Are you right?" Such a question would cause Lauren to look more closely at the text in an effort to check her response. Another teacher response might be, "Something on this page was not quite right, can you find it?" Again, this guides the child to check more closely on their reading. Additionally, the teacher could return to page two where the child attempted "red" and "rolly" for "round." Praise needs to be given for the child's multiple different attempts. This is true even if the child's attempts do not result in

correct reading. This praise reinforces to the child that they are doing something right and

encourages them to continue the desired behavior. The teacher can then guide the child





in problem-solving on the unknown word. It is the child's higher level of processing that we want to reinforce, not just the act of accurate reading. That higher level of processing will lead to more of the same type of problem solving on other words on other days and in different books.

In conclusion, running records are a valuable tool for classroom teachers to use in making informed teaching decisions regarding the next step for students' instruction. In order to make the best use of this tool, however, the teacher cannot stop the analysis after completing the mathematical formulas to determine if a text is at a student's instructional level. The classroom teacher must continue to the second and third level of analysis, looking at the child's specific reading behavior so that the next step needed in the child's reading instruction can be determined. This allows the teacher to

determine the best instruction for the individual needs of students.

Teachers who are not used to analyzing running records taken in the classroom this deeply may initially feel overwhelmed with the task. However, by initially selecting a small number of students to target (perhaps initially targeting one or two students who are struggling), the task will become easier and more automatic over time. With hard work and experience, it is amazing how quickly teachers can select teaching points which reflect the students' processing problems. When analyzing running records, think about the pattern of responding, where in the text you might go to reinforce your teaching point, and what prompts you might use with the student to lift their processing system. This way rationales can be developed and, consequently, future teaching points will become easier and more focused the student's processing process.

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