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Discover the Heart of Literacy

On February 28 to March 2, 2019, over 800 literacy professionals gathered in Waco, Texas for the Texas Association for Literacy Education's (TALE) seventh annual conference. Hosted by Baylor University, this amazing professional learning event was themed: "Discovering the Heart of Literacy."

The conference opened with exciting pre-conference workshops in which participants got to join the Mayborn Museum's Makey-Makey team for a hands-on learning experience or tour the Dr. Pepper Museum & Free Enterprise Institute in order to explore how marketing and advertising can be used as a form of persuasive writing within the classroom.

These exciting workshops were followed by two days of nationally known speakers and over 125 peer-reviewed presentations delivered by expert teachers and researchers to captive attendees. Keynote speakers included Stephanie Harvey, Ernest Morrell, Tanny McGregor, Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris, Gretchen Bernabei, Debbie Diller, and Richard Gentry. From engaging research posters shared at the TALE social on Friday evening to informative sessions and workshops on both Friday and Saturday, participants at this year's conference were provided with a multitude of literacy practices to support effective instruction for all levels of learners. This yearbook is a compilation of some of those presentations and it is our hope that you read, share, and discuss the manuscripts that were selected for publication.

A variety of vendors provided additional support including: Benchmark Education, Empowering Writers, Heinemann, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, McGraw Hill, Pearson, QEP Books, Scholastic, Stenhouse, Zaner-Bloser, and more!

Another exciting highlight from the 2019 TALE conference was the merger of the Texas Association for the Improvement of Reading (TAIR) and TALE. TALE is honored to have this long-standing Texas literacy organization join us in our mission to promote literacy leadership. TAIR looks forward to engaging with the public as a committee within TALE focused on developing literacy leadership through grants and awards.

Additionally, the TALE book drive, organized by the Community Involvement Committee (directors Matt Panozzo and Brandy Alexander), raised over \$500 and 200 books for the Baylor Center for Developmental Disabilities. This far exceeded their goal and we appreciate all those who supported these efforts!

As highlighted by this Yearbook, the 2019 TALE Conference was an unforgettable event from beginning to end. We are thankful for your support of TALE and hope you are able to join us during the next annual conference!

Sincerely,

Alida Hudson

TALE Chair, 2019

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Understanding Fractions Begins with Literacy

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Abstract

Transitioning from teaching whole number operations to teaching fraction operations can prove difficult, even for the seasoned mathematics teacher. However, with effective literacy practices, teachers can seamlessly shift their students to learning the rules for fractions. The implications can be a mastery of mathematical language used to describe fraction operations and a deeper understanding of the concepts involved with solving fraction equations. The purposes of this paper were to emphasize the importance of learning math vocabulary and offer ideas for literacy activities that integrate fraction concepts with reading and writing.

Keywords: *fractions, write-to-learn, literacy, math*

Literacy strategies can feel out of place in a math classroom because they seem irrelevant to teaching mathematical operations (Brozo & Crain, 2018), and mathematics teachers may initially resist the integration of literacy instruction into their content area (Hall, 2005; Siebert & Draper, 2008). However, a disciplinary literacy approach, in which the literacy skills used to engage in a specific content area are developed, students can learn to unpack the complex meanings in math problems (Kester Phillips, Bardsley, Bach, & Gibb-Brown, 2009). Fractions are a particularly difficult concept for students to master, but infusing disciplinary literacy into math instruction can help students develop the skills necessary to work through fraction problems.

Teaching fractions is inherently challenging because the operations are counterintuitive to what students already know about whole numbers (Ni & Zhou, 2005). Without a strong foundation in what fractions are and how they operate, as many as 50% of students will continue to struggle with fractions throughout middle and high school (NMAP, 2008). In Misquitta's (2011) meta-analysis over interventions for re-teaching fractions, he found methods such as graduated sequence, direct instruction, and strategy instruction are highly effective tools for clarifying misconceptions about fractions. He also highlights the National Mathematics Advisory Panel's (NMAP) emphasis on developing conceptual knowledge of fractions and the need for educators to develop that conceptual knowledge at the same time they are forming students' knowledge of

fraction operations. In this article, we outline strategies for helping students advance their conceptual knowledge of fractions by utilizing two sound literacy practices, vocabulary development (Bay-Williams & Livers, 2009) and write-to-learn strategies (Burns, 2004).

Vocabulary Strategy

There are numerous new terms and concepts for students to grasp as they learn about fractions and their operations. Although these unfamiliar terms are frequently used in context during classroom instruction, and some teachers may even provide a brief definition, students struggle to comprehend the strange and unique language. It is not uncommon for students to regurgitate the definition of a few terms, but lack a true understanding of what those terms represent. For example, a student may know that the numerator is the number above the fraction bar but not understand that it identifies the number of pieces out of the whole or group. Without a deep understanding of the vocabulary, students have difficulty learning about fractions because of the strangeness of the terms. This is especially true when the unusual terms are taught using just a definition and without being integrated into the context of fractions. When students have not internalized the language of fractions and are expected to make computations using fractions they resort to simply memorizing a series of steps or arbitrarily guessing at what they are supposed to do.

Vocabulary Strategy for the Unit Fraction

A rich academic vocabulary helps students assimilate new terms into their existing knowledge base and empowers students to effectively communicate both inside and outside

of the classroom. Learners who are provided with a vocabulary-rich setting experience greater learning in the classroom and increased connections to new contexts outside of the classroom (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). It is critical for students to fluently use appropriate academic vocabulary in their daily communication. To develop students' mathematical vocabulary teachers need to provide intentional and explicit instruction. This instruction goes beyond simply providing students with textbook definitions; it saturates students' experiences with frequent repetition in a variety of contexts with the intent for students to learn, retain, and rehearse the language in everyday life.

In English Language Arts, a common phrase used when teachers want students to convey an image is, "paint a picture." Numerator and denominator do not provide the student with any sort of visual. They are completely foreign words with no connection to concepts previously taught when learning number recognition, counting, and whole number operations. Unit Fraction, however, paints a picture for the math student. Simply by using these two words, the student can now see we are going to be dealing with a part of a whole, we're going to fracture a unit, or split a whole into parts. Our choice of words can make a difference in a student's understanding of abstract concepts. We recommend introducing fractions by first teaching the students the definitions of the key terms whole, unit, equal, part, and unit fraction. Conducting activities such as a pictorial word match (see Figure 1), where the students match the word or definition to a picture that represents that word, can help them learn how to use the terms in context before they start performing complex operations of fractions.

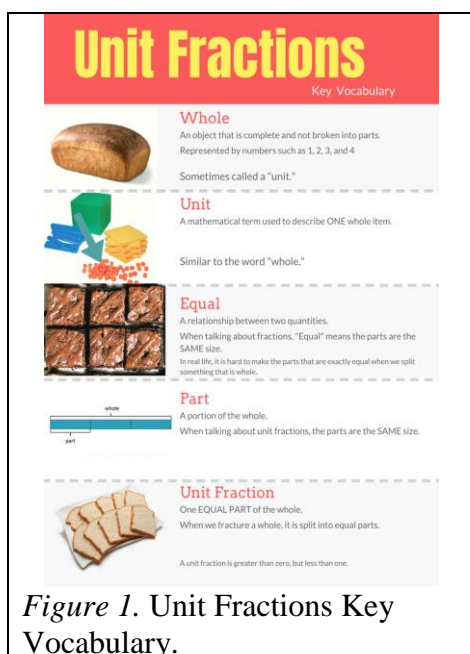


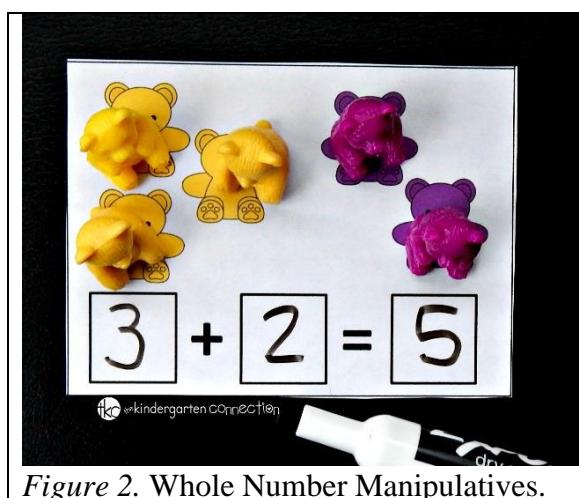
Figure 1. Unit Fractions Key Vocabulary.

Anticipating Misconceptions

In addition to strange vocabulary, students enter their math education with many misconceptions about what fractions mean. These misconceptions begin long before a child is introduced to the concept in school. Take, for example, a parent who buys a single Kit Kat Bar for her two children. She instructs the older child to split the candy bar in half so both children can have their equal share. The older child breaks the Kit Kat bar between the 3rd and 4th stick and claims the larger portion for himself while passing the smaller portion to his younger brother. Thus, one-half takes on the

erroneous meaning of two parts, regardless of the comparable size. This reinforces the faulty belief that parts making up the whole unit do not have to be equal sizes. This flawed idea is further magnified by comments such as, "the bigger half" or the "smaller half" when by the definition of a fraction, the pieces must be the same size. In respect to fractions, because the whole unit is fractured into equal size pieces resulting in parts, there cannot be a bigger or smaller section. But life experiences teach that when a whole unit is separated into parts it often results in different size pieces. For example, seldom is a pizza cut into precisely equal size slices. This reinforces a spurious understanding of fractions and results in the idea that fractions are identified simply by the number of pieces it takes to make the whole unit, not considering that the parts must be equivalent.

Another misconception about fractions is caused by the inability to transfer whole number concepts to fractions. When a child enters Kindergarten and learns number recognition, they then learn how to count by whole numbers. Each item they count represents a single number and the higher the student counts, the larger the quantity. As a student begins to learn whole number operations, the rules are relatively straightforward and can easily be demonstrated with visuals and manipulatives. If I have three bears and add two bears to the group, I will have a total of five bears (Figure 2). Teachers then scaffold the student to subtract, multiply, and divide, building on prior knowledge as each new operation is taught.



Tapping into a students' prior knowledge is an efficient method for scaffolding and accelerating math concepts. However, when educators begin teaching fractions, they have to disconnect students from their prior knowledge about operations and whole numbers because fractions have their own set of rules that are completely separate from whole number operations (See Table 1). When using fractions all four basic operations are illogical from whole numbers.

Students cannot apply prior knowledge when transferring from whole number operations to fraction operations. Take, for instance, the operation of addition. When adding whole numbers, the sum is a larger quantity than either of the addends (parts). When you compute 2×3 , it results in a larger product than either of the factors. Multiplication makes numbers larger, faster than addition. When multiplying a fraction, such as $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{8}$ you get a product smaller than either of the factors. Based on previous understanding of multiplication, you would assume multiplying fractions produces a number larger than either of the factors. However, because you are taking a fraction of a fraction the product is a smaller number. This results in the operations on fractions being contradictory. In other words, fractions operate counter to prior knowledge and instincts. To be understood, fractions must be taught conceptually using hands-on physical manipulatives that are familiar to children. If math manipulatives, such as fraction tiles, fraction circles, and pattern blocks are being used, teachers must explicitly connect the concept to the students' environment.

Operation	Example	Concept	Confusion
Add Whole Number	$2+2=4$	Part plus part=whole	
Add Fraction	$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} = \frac{3}{4}$	Each part needs to have same size pieces in relation to the whole (common denominator)	Addition operation doesn't transfer Fraction pieces must first be standardized
Subtract Whole Numbers	$7-3=4$	Whole, take away a part = part	
Subtract Fractions	$\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{4}$	Each part needs to have same size pieces in relation to the whole (common denominator)	Subtraction operation doesn't transfer Fraction pieces must first be standardized
Multiply	$3 \times 4=12$	Three groups of four	

Multiply Fractions	$\frac{2}{3} \times \frac{3}{5}$	Part of a part, or fraction of a fraction	Part of a part results in a smaller part
Divide	$12/4 = 3$	Fair share- fair share 12 units among 4 entities results in each entity receiving 3 units Or grouping-how many groups of 4 units are in 12 units?	
Divide Fractions	$\frac{7}{8} / \frac{1}{2}$	Fair share doesn't work here, however, the grouping concept does and the question is how many $\frac{1}{2}$'s are in $\frac{7}{8}$'s. To compute this, you must multiply the first fraction by the reciprocal of the second fraction	When you divide fractions the quotient is larger than both fractions and to compute you must change the operation from division to multiplication and invert the second fraction

Table 1. Confusing concepts when moving from whole number operations to fraction operations

In order to transition students from fluently moving through whole number operations to learning the concepts behind fraction operations, we propose the teacher should 1) introduce the concept of a unit fraction using vocabulary strategies; 2) provide multiple opportunities for students to work with authentic manipulatives (items that are found in everyday life, rather than created solely for classroom use); and 3) use write-to-learn strategies to help solidify the concept of unit fractions.

Introducing Manipulatives

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has touted the benefits and encouraged the use of math manipulatives to increase students' conceptual understanding of mathematics. For the purpose of this article, the researchers used Hynes' definition of manipulatives as "concrete models that incorporate mathematical concepts, appeal to several senses and can be touched and moved around by students" (Hynes, 1986, p. 11).

Learners benefit by using hands-on math manipulatives as demonstrated by increased achievement (Moch, 2002; Boggan, Harper & Whitmire, 2010; Perry & Howard, 1997, p. 27). Math manipulatives increase student learning and enhance the feeling tone of the learning environment by reducing math anxiety (Cain-Caston, 1996; Heuser, 2000). Karp and Voltz (2000, 212) encourage teachers to reflect on their instruction using manipulatives to increase student achievement.

Magnetic Apple Fractions

Once students are familiar with the key vocabulary words for unit fractions, use manipulatives to model how those words interact with each other. Magnetic Apple Fractions from Learning Resources (see Figure 3) allow students to visualize how the whole can be split into parts in three different ways, while the teacher explains how to use the words to describe what is happening to the apples (see Figure 4).



Figure 3. Magnetic Apple Fractions (available through Learning Resources)

Teacher: *(Holds up whole apple)* What term would I use to describe this apple?

Student: A whole.

Teacher: That's correct. Why would you say it's a whole and not a part?

Student: Because it's one. It's not split up.

Teacher: *(Holds up $\frac{1}{2}$ apple and pulls apart the pieces.)* If this whole unit is cut into two equal size parts, how many parts does it take to make the whole?

Students: Two?

Teacher: Yes. It takes two equal size parts to make the whole unit. *(Puts the $\frac{1}{2}$ size pieces back together to make the apple whole again.)* If it takes two equal size parts to make the whole unit then the whole unit consists of how many parts? *(Takes the $\frac{1}{2}$ size pieces apart again.)*

Students: Two.

Teacher: That's right. We would write 1 over 2 ($\frac{1}{2}$) to numerically represent one of the two equal size pieces. Which of our vocabulary words would we call this numerical representation? This is a unit fraction.

Let's talk about what each component of the number represents. The number on the bottom is how many EQUAL parts the whole was split into. The one on top represents how many parts I have. I also know...

- The unit fraction is $\frac{1}{2}$.
- The whole is fractured into two equal size pieces.
- Two pieces make the whole unit.

(Repeat the same dialogue with the $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ apples, gradually releasing the responsibility of describing the apple and its parts to the students.)

Figure 4. Teacher – Student Conversation to Explain Fractions

Write-to-Learn Strategies

Write-to-learn strategies can facilitate the acquisition of students' mathematical language. As stated by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics (1989) educators are encouraged to incorporate writing opportunities in the math class. By doing so, students can benefit in a variety of ways including growth in achievement (Kostos and Shin, 2010), increased conceptual comprehension (Wood, 1992), decreased math anxiety (Stix, 1994), better attitudes about math (Jurdal and Abu Zein, 1998), increased participation, the ability to communicate about mathematics (Baxter, Woodward and Olson, 2005), and improved metacognition through reflection (Pugalee, 2001). By combining vocabulary strategies with write-to-learn methodology, educators can help primary students build a strong foundation for fraction concepts and operations.

Sentence Stems

To expand on how to use fraction terms teachers can allow students to independently practice

with modeling compound and sentence stems. By writing out the following sentence stems for students on a dry erase board or slips of paper, the teacher can model how to use vocabulary words and manipulatives together (see Figure 5).

The teacher can then shift the responsibility of describing unit fractions to the students by providing each student with a container of modeling compound and facilitating a discussion about sharing the modeling compound between two people. By specifying the need to fair share, teachers can reinforce the conditional statements discussed above and have students determine the unit fraction as $\frac{1}{2}$. Having the students repeat the experience using four people and then eight people to fair share the modeling compound allows the students to practice filling in the blanks in the sentence stem (see Figure 5). By elaborating on student discoveries and using the term 'unit fraction' repeatedly, teachers can help solidify the concept of unit fractions before transitioning into fraction operations. Provide opportunities for the children to explain how they fair-shared, and encourage them to use their new vocabulary word 'unit fraction'.



Figure 5. Sentence Stems for Unit Fractions

Quickwrites

Once students have mastered the vocabulary using sentence stems and manipulatives, they can move on to other write-to-learn strategies, such as answering quickwrites. Green, Smith, and Brown (2007) define a quickwrite as, "...a brief written response to a question or probe requiring students to explain a principle or phenomenon. Quickwrites can eliminate the frustration that frequently accompanies traditional testing methods by providing students more flexibility of response" (p. 39). By having students answer questions, such as, "How would you describe a whole?" and "What does fair share mean?" educators can discover how students are processing the concepts and vocabulary. Younger writers who are still in the early stages of spelling development can even use pictures with labels to explain their understanding of mathematical concepts (Saundry & Nicole, 2006). Students' mathematical understanding develops when they are provided with opportunities to use their

mathematical language in a variety of settings, both academic and authentic.

Conclusion

Learning a new concept can be difficult when new content is in direct opposition to what we already know. In the case of fractions, teaching students to understand the vocabulary associated with fraction operations and teaching them to use that vocabulary in a variety of contexts can help educators scaffold instruction for students, so the "hows" and "whys" of performing fraction operations becomes clear. Providing a literacy-rich experience into math education by incorporating reading and writing strategies during instruction helps students cognitively process difficult math concepts and develop a deeper understanding. With the integration of literacy strategies into mathematics, teachers can improve learning outcomes regarding math standards, while at the same time practicing and improving literacy skills.

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Project-Oriented Learning & Teaching: Expectations vs. Reality

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Abstract

An elementary-level content area reading course was redesigned using a project-based learning (PBL) model to improve undergraduate pre-service teacher course content instruction. The research question was, “What are college/ university students’ perceptions of a project-oriented undergraduate course?” Six university pre-service teachers, enrolled in one of two courses, completed open-ended end-of-class questions over the eight-week study. Qualitative case study analysis revealed that while most students perceived the online content and project to be engaging and beneficial to content learning and application, students responded negatively to assignments and grade frequency. The findings of this study informed the instructors to adjust the course assignments in subsequent semesters to address students’ concerns.

Keywords: *project-based learning, teacher education, perceptions, cultural models*

Introduction

In the spring semester of 2017, an elementary-level content area reading course was redesigned in an effort to improve undergraduate pre-service teacher course content instruction. This course redesign provided an opportunity to offer practical instruction and application of instructional methods that pre-service teachers could implement in their future classrooms. The redesign also provided the authors the chance to explore and study the perceptions that undergraduate students had of this newly redesigned course. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of students

enrolled in a college course using a project-based learning model.

The teacher education course was designed to focus on a culminating end-of-course project using a project-based learning and teaching model. This case study focuses on the question: What are college/ university students’ perceptions of a project-oriented undergraduate course?

Theoretical Frame: Cultural Models

Cultural models are defined as the every-day, commonly held beliefs of a particular social group (Quinn & Holland, 1987). Cultural

models can be expressed not only by what an individual says, but the actions observed by these individuals. Cultural models are a simplified way of viewing the world through an individual's experiences (Gee, 2008) and are internalized, and shapes the individual's sense of reality. These models are shared across specific cultural groups and are constantly changing over the course of time (Gee & Green, 1998), and shape how individuals identify themselves and others in particular contexts.

Review of the Literature

Project-based learning (PBL) is derived from a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Thomas (2000) defines PBLs as instruction that incorporates

complex tasks ... that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations (p. 1).

There are five criteria for PBLs: project-centered, focused on questions or problems, constructive inquiries, student-driven, and authentic. New learning is constructed via student-created projects, addressing questions and problems through real world applications.

The Buck Institute for Education (BIE) describes PBL as an instructional model that includes a focus on knowledge and skills, the identification of a problem or question for exploration, self-selected and focused inquiry, individual choice, peer- and self-critique and evaluation, and an authentic product that can be made available to an audience outside of the classroom setting (Buck Institute for Education, 2018). The new course design for this elementary content literacy course integrated these elements in an effort to support undergraduate student learning, and model ways that these future teachers can integrate PBL in their future classrooms.

PBL has been shown to support student learning in a variety of ways. Some benefits of PBL include an increase in student motivation (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Ravitz & Mergendoller, 2005; Slåttsveen, Steinert, & Aasland, 2016; Verma, Dickerson, & McKinney, 2011), increase in students' ability to retain and apply new learning (Finkelstein, Hanson, Huang, Hirshman, & Huang, 2010; Strobel & van Barneveld, 2009), and help develop skills that support independent, out-of-school learning (Arbolea & Las-Heras, 2014; Strobel & van Barneveld, 2009). For these reasons, the lead instructor felt that redesigning the course using a PBL model of instruction would benefit pre-service teachers not only as learners, but as future K-12 classroom teachers.

Undergraduate students enter the college classroom with experiences and pre-conceived attitudes about what it means to be a college student and what it means to participate and learn in a college course. To learn these perceptions the lead instructor investigated students' beliefs in an effort to inform her instruction in later semesters. This study focused on pre-service students' perceptions of PBL as it applied to this redesigned undergraduate course in elementary content area reading.

The Study

Throughout the course of the Spring 2017 semester, data was collected from participating students enrolled in two university content area reading classrooms. Both classrooms received literacy instruction using the PBL oriented model as opposed to the traditional instructional model. For the purpose of this study, the traditional instructional model would have included text-based quizzes, a mid-term exam, and a final exam.

A case study designed was used for this study. Case study methodology provides detailed descriptions and allows the researcher to closely examine and describe the culture of common groups in a specific educational context (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Participants

The participants in this study were six undergraduate students enrolled in the newly redesigned elementary content area reading courses during the spring 2017 semester, both of which were taught by the lead researcher. These undergraduate students were juniors and seniors enrolled in the elementary teacher education program. Three participants were randomly selected from each of the two classes. Students in both classes received the same instruction, assignments, and class-to-computer lab time ratio.

The PBL Oriented Course

The overall objective of the elementary content literacy course is to teach pre-service teachers in the teacher education program how to utilize a variety of texts to support content learning in content area classrooms. For the purpose of this course, “text” is broadly defined and can include traditional, digital, visual, and auditory modalities. These content areas include such disciplines as mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts. The course was redesigned around a final project that would be the culmination of the students’ application of content area reading and literacy strategies throughout the course of the semester. Students identified a content area for the focus of their projects: mathematics, science, social studies, or art. They would then choose a grade level, or grade range, along with a specific topic within their chosen content area.

The students’ projects were completed using Google Sites (sites.google.com), and students had in-class time each week to explore content and build webpages for their end-of-semester project. Each class meeting was a total of two and a half hours in duration. Before each class, students were assigned chapters from the course

textbook, and new course content was covered during the first ninety minutes of class time. The remainder of class time was spent in the computer lab, where students would then explore texts and instructional content based on their project’s topic, create content area activities using authentic text resources, and be allowed time to work on their own individual Google Sites webpage.

This course focuses on utilizing content literacy strategies within content area elementary classes, primarily mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, health, and the arts. As such, students learned literacy strategies that integrated the use of a variety of texts, vocabulary instruction and support, and supporting the literacy needs of a diverse study body. The culminating project was a student-created webpage that showcased the student’s authentic application of strategies and content learned during the course of the semester. Each online content literacy project consisted of the following pages: Home page, Anchor Text, Nonfiction Text Feature, Text Set, Digital Text Features, Text Scaffolding Plan, and Inquiry Questions.

Home Page. The Home Page was an important page for this online project, as it provided the reader the purpose of the content literacy webpage project. On this page, the undergraduate student also explained in his or her own words why teachers should support content learning by utilizing content area strategies, as well as the importance of using a variety of texts in different modalities. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of a student Home Page. This student wrote about her project topic, the solar system. She provided a creative introduction to engage her elementary students. Students were encouraged to personalize their home pages to generate excitement and interest in the chosen topic.

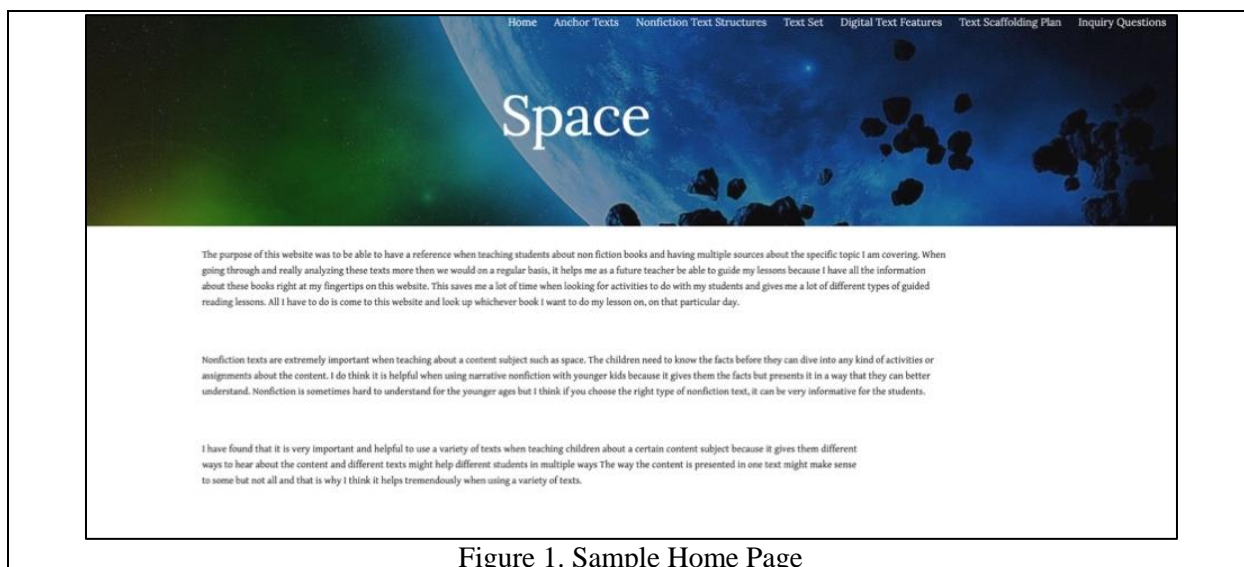


Figure 1. Sample Home Page

Anchor Text Page. Each undergraduate student was required to identify a specific focal topic for their project, along with one text that they felt would be a good introduction to the topic. This text was referred to as an “anchor text” since this text was meant to be the introductory text that would familiarize students with the unit’s topic. This anchor text was a focal text, read and referred to often throughout the duration of the student’s content area project. This anchor text

was intended to not only generate interest in the chosen topic, but also served as a model for teaching a variety of reading skills and strategies. On the Anchor Text page (figure 2), the student provided information such as a short summary, the focal grade level or range for the text, a rationale for the use of the book as their anchor text, an evaluation as a high-quality nonfiction text, and one before reading strategy.



Figure 2. Sample Anchor Text Page

Nonfiction Access Features Page. To help illustrate the importance of supporting students' understanding of nonfiction access features, students created a page listing and describing these features present in their anchor text (figure 3). After covering nonfiction text structures in the first part of the elementary content reading class, the undergraduate students applied these

content literacy understandings to their anchor texts. Students not only described the features present in their anchor text, but also considered and addressed the access features in their text that they felt might require direct instruction and guidance with students in their chosen grade level orange.

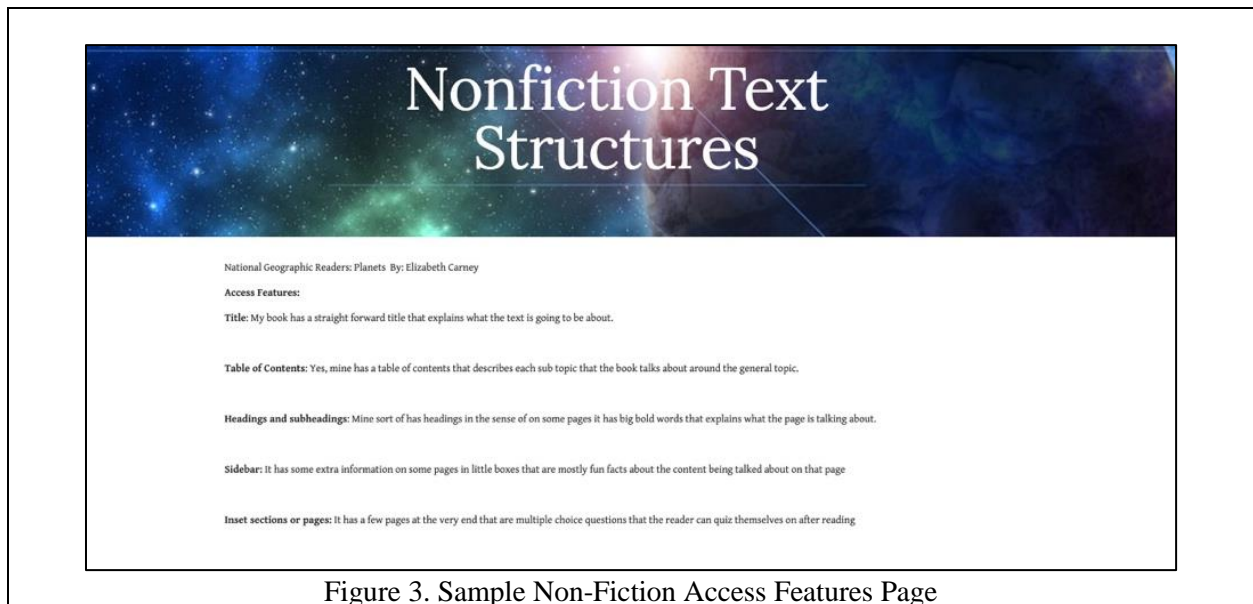


Figure 3. Sample Non-Fiction Access Features Page

Text Set Page. Students also created a set of texts to support their focus topics. Students were encouraged to provide resources and materials from a wide array of genre, media, and levels of reading difficulty. Students assembled materials including fiction, nonfiction, videos, maps, charts, articles, historical documents, photographs, songs, and paintings. Teachers were given the flexibility to add depth, voice, and perspective to the study of any concept, topic, or complex issue. On this page, students were required to select a minimum of ten sources. Students were required to include five traditional texts, with the remaining five chosen across media such as digital texts and other multimodal sources.

Each text on the text set page included the text's title, a short summary consisting of five or more sentences, and the source referenced in APA

format to allow the reader to locate the text if they chose. While this page had the potential for being perceived as dull and uninviting, the students were free to organize and structure their Text Set pages however they felt best fit their needs or style.

Digital Text Features Page. Text features are parts of text that draw your attention to important information within a text. Text features in a traditional text may include titles, tables of content, headings, subtitles, bold print, glossaries, pictures, maps or diagrams, bibliographies, and appendices. Similarly, you may see these types of text features in digital text, which we referred to as digital access features. The Digital Text Features page could include such access features as hyperlinks, sidebars, pop-ups, drop-down menus, audio, video, interactive images, interactive questions,

comments, notes, definitions, and links to external resources.

As with the Nonfiction Access Features page, students listed and described the features present

on a digital text from their text set and identified one digital text feature that they felt may require explicit instruction for the students in their target grade level. Figure 4 shows a screenshot of one student's digital text features page.

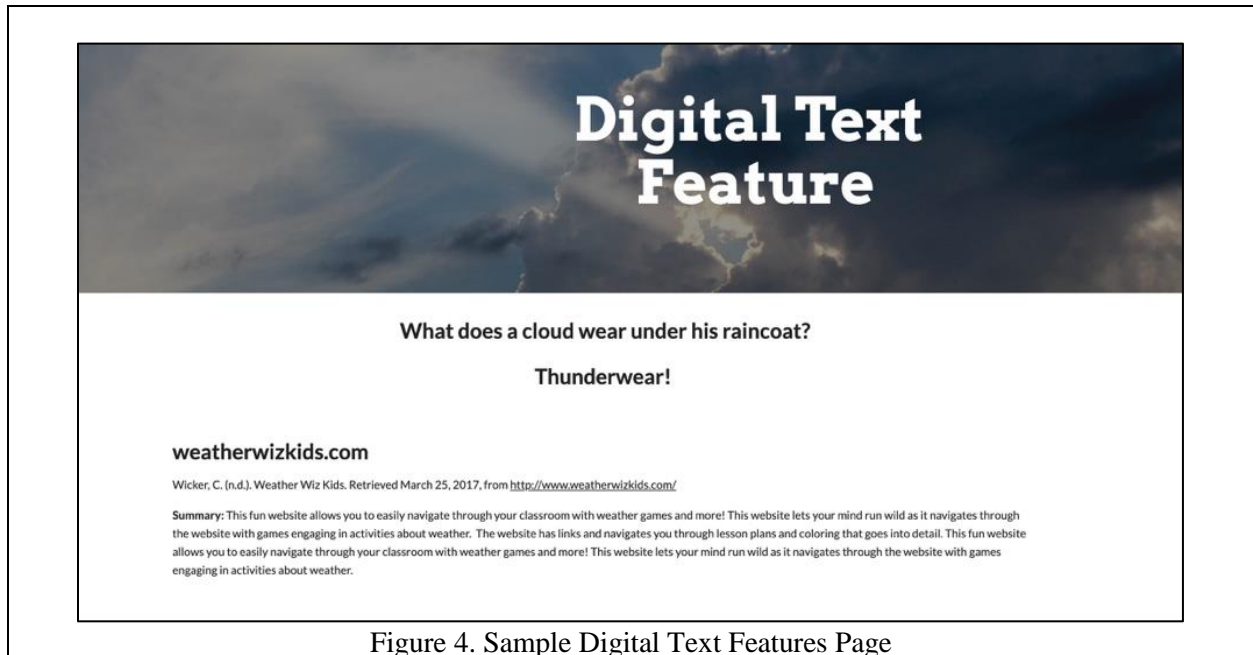


Figure 4. Sample Digital Text Features Page

Text Scaffolding Plan. Providing text support is important at any grade level. The pre-service teachers in this undergraduate class learned a variety of strategies to help support and scaffold instruction in the content area classroom. On the Text Scaffolding page of the student project, students provided one content area reading strategy for each text from their text set, a

rationale for the appropriateness of the strategy, a visual or sample of the strategy or activity if applicable, and a list of instructional steps for the strategy or activity. In this way, students flexibly applied instructional strategies related to an authentic text to support student learning. Figure 5 illustrates a sample of student work from the Text Scaffolding page.



Figure 5. Sample Text Scaffolding Page

Inquiry Questions. Inquiry-based learning is an approach to learning whereby students locate sources of information to increase their understanding of a problem, topic, or issue. Students are more involved in the construction of knowledge through active engagement and inquiry. The more interested and engaged students are by a subject or project, the easier it will be for them to construct in-depth knowledge of it. For the last page of the student's online project, students were asked to create ten inquiry questions, also referred as Higher Order Thinking (HOT) questions, for their content area. This page allowed the undergraduate students to demonstrate their understanding of the types of questions that elementary students

may ask and could possibly be answered through exploring the texts in the unit's text set.

Higher order questioning is often difficult to teach undergraduate students to generate but can be of the great value for students once this skill is mastered. Encouraging students to think and ask deep questions becomes easier when higher order thinking (HOT) questions and activities are incorporated into a lesson or topic.

Students generated ten HOT questions, using Blooms Taxonomy as their guide, and based on the topic of their online project. Figure 6 shows an example of the Inquiry Questions page for the solar system example.



Figure 6. Sample Inquiry Questions Page.

At the end of the semester, students submitted and presented their online projects to their classes. The lead instructor provided the class with a web link that listed additional hyperlinks to each of the student's project webpages. This was intended to provide the class with a collection of resources for teaching content area literacy at a variety of levels, in a variety of disciplines.

Data Collection & Analysis

In an effort to collect genuine responses and ensure confidentiality and anonymity of responses from study participants, all students in both elementary content-area classrooms received open-ended questions in the form of exit tickets at the end of each class. These responses were left by students as they exited the classroom room at the end of each class meeting, which were collected by the lead instructor. The six participant students were directed to mark their exit tickets by checking a box located at the top left-hand corner of the exit ticket to indicate that their exit tickets be pulled aside for analysis. No additional identifiers were provided by participants on the exit tickets. The exit ticket questions were designed to elicit responses that would provide data reflecting the students' perceptions and attitudes toward the

redesigned content are literacy course. The weekly exit tickets consisted of at least one of the following questions:

- What did you find interesting about this week's class?
- What did you find challenging about this week's class?
- If I could change one thing, I would change...
- Did anything surprise you about this week's class?
- What did you find confusing or difficult?

Participant's exit ticket responses were collected throughout the semester and transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Responses that indicated no code-able response, such as "no response" or "N/A" were eliminated. This resulted in a total of fifty codable responses. Values coding was used to "reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131). The codes were then merged into three overarching themes relating to students' perceptions: technology and online project, course organization, and course assignments and grades.

Findings

Based on the data collected from student feedback, student perceptions of the course centered on three major themes: attitudes toward

technology or online project, attitudes toward the course organization, and attitudes toward course assignments. See table 1 for an overall summary of the findings.

	Positive perception	Negative perception
Technology & Online Project	88%	12%
Course Organization	65%	35%
Course Assignments	28.5%	71.5%

Table 1. Summary of student perceptions

Technology and Online Project

Sixteen of the fifty responses focused on technology or the online project. Overall responses to the technology and online project reflected positive perceptions. While fourteen of the sixteen coded data indicated positive attitudes, two responses showed negative attitudes toward the technology and/or project. Some students remarked that they “loved working on the website,” and that it was “fun” and helped them “understand the topics.” However, two participant responses indicated that they believed that the projects were “long and boring,” and requested that we “not do that project again.” While most participants found value in creating a webpage based on their application of concepts learned in the course, this was not universal.

Course Organization

Of the fifty responses, twenty centered on the course’s organization; classroom versus computer lab time, face-to-face classroom time, online opportunities, and general course structure issues were some of the topics discussed in these responses. Attitudes toward the course’s organization were mixed. Thirteen of twenty participant responses reflected positive reactions to the course organization. Comments related to student’s positive responses to “hands on projects and lessons,” and how these helped students “understand the topics that we were covering” contradicted the seven negative

responses, such as the “lack of organization” of the course,” and that the class lacked structure. While approximately two-thirds of student responses indicated positive attitudes toward the course organization, the remaining responses revealed decidedly negative perceptions.

Course Assignments

Of the fourteen codes related to course assignments and grades, only four of the coded responses reflected positive perceptions; ten participant responses indicated negative attitudes toward course assignments. While the positive responses about the course assignments reflected on the perceived usefulness of authentic application teaching strategies and techniques, as well as feeling that assignment instructions were straightforward and easy to follow, many more of responses expressed concerns for the limited number of grading opportunities and uncertainty of their progress throughout the semester. This signified an ongoing concern among some students; the expectations of receiving incremental assignment grades may not have been met due to the fact that a major percentage of the redesigned course was based on an end-of-semester online project.

Conclusions

Illustrating a cultural model that would describe the beliefs and attitudes that exist among students at this particular institution, it was difficult to identify specific patterns across the

participants. The strongest pattern existed when students described their perceptions of the use of technology and online project. However, students' perceptions of course assignments were more strongly negative (71% negative), perceptions were not as clearly positive or negative in regard to course organization (65% positive). This case study analysis provides a limited picture of how college students perceive a PBL course. With these students, there was much variability in perceptions of what satisfies their expectations for technology use, course organization, assignments, and grades. More research on the topic of cultural models and PBL is needed, along with a larger participant group.

Based on the data collected in this study, students perceived that one benefit of the PBL designed course provide students with opportunities to apply new concepts and learning to real-world contexts. Participant responses support overall positive attitudes toward the online projects. Students found the course to be not only highly enjoyable, but also aided them in understanding and applying content materials in authentic contexts.

Challenges attributed to the course centered on the students' discomfort with fewer grade opportunities across the semester, as well as the perception that the course seemed in their view as unorganized and unstructured. As much of the time during the second half of each class was spent independently working on the students'

individual projects, the lack of direct instruction and specific guidelines for which texts and content to integrate into the students' websites may have conflicted with their existing cultural models surrounding classroom teaching and learning.

Implications for Instruction

Conclusions from this study informed the lead instructor to make changes to the course assignments and grading in subsequent semesters. While students still created end-of-semester online projects, students also receive individual grades throughout the semester based on individual project website pages, such as the Anchor Text page, along with bi-weekly quizzes to provide students with additional grade opportunities. Additionally, students presented major portions of their projects to the class at mid-term to allow the instructor to provide feedback on the student's progress.

PBL gives students the chance to engage with content area strategies, and creatively integrate content area reading activities into a final product that can potentially be utilized in the student's future classrooms. By considering students' perceptions, and meeting some of their expectations and needs, teacher educators can still model innovative instructional models that students will be better prepared to integrate into their own classrooms.

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Addressing the Adolescent Literacy Crisis: From District Design to Campus Implementation

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Abstract

Our district reading data at the secondary level has remained stagnant over the last decade with respect to grade-level reading ability. We knew we wanted to find a way to engage students in reading and strengthen their literacy skills. In response to this, we sought to examine if we were hindering literacy development through our instructional practices, as well as what literacy elements were missing in the English and reading classrooms on our secondary campuses. Through a year-long book study, all English and reading teachers, university student teachers, campus leaders and university supervisors read the book, met during PLCs to discuss the book, and agreed upon implementation of best practices from the book so that all were working towards the same goal, with the same approach. Recognizing the power behind reflective practices through the reading of a research-based literacy approach gave teachers a unified desire to change what needed to change and to teach in a way that promoted student thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing across our secondary campuses.

Keywords: *adolescent literacy, secondary reading, best practice, professional learning communities*

Introduction

Working in any school district at the secondary level, teaching and learning can easily shift into a gradual state of isolation in content areas or individual classrooms. Plaut (2009) states that “secondary teachers, typically more than their counterparts in elementary schools, tend to be intensely dedicated to helping students master content” (p. 4). Secondary schools often have teachers who focus only on content and not on developing a set of skills that transcend across

all classes. When that is the case, a student could experience a school career filled with coursework learned for a specific time, but an underdeveloped set of literacy skills that are needed to transfer content learning to a student’s life (Plaut, 2009, p. 4).

In our school district, we have annual state assessment results that are above the state average. However, we have recognized that even with those remarkable results, we wanted to dig deeply into our instructional practices to

ensure that our students are exiting our school system reading at a level necessary for college and career readiness.

We began by assessing where we were compared to the state and the country. The national average for fourth grade students reading at a proficient level in 2017 was 35%. For Texas, only 29% of fourth grade students were reading at a proficient level (NAEP Reading Report Card, 2017). Data from NAEP for eighth grade was similar, with a national average showing 35% of students at the proficient level and 28% of students in Texas at a proficient level in reading (NAEP Reading Report Card, 2017). When analyzing our school district data on reading ability in the secondary grade levels, we are significantly above the national average.

We knew we wanted to work diligently and relentlessly against a silo approach across our secondary English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) classrooms. Teacher autonomy was very important to us, but we still knew that there had to be some agreed-upon approaches that would reach the heart of literacy. For us, that meant ensuring our students continue to hone and strengthen their listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking skills. “We know we are not moving students through books or units, but rather moving students toward greater independence and control of their decisions and experiences as readers and writers” (Kittle & Gallagher, 2018, p. 44). We were not satisfied with the idea that we could graduate students who were not reading and writing on grade level, nor who had the skill set to think critically about themselves and the world around them.

A District Unified

We began with a unified approach across our district during the 2017-2018 school year. A few teachers had begun incorporating the work of Kylene Beers and Bob Probst, from their book, *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. The Beers and Probst (2013) focus on

six signposts for fiction text and five signposts for nonfiction text. These eleven signposts support the reader in being attentive to reading the text closely. The signposts also include an anchor question to enhance critical reading of the text. Therefore, the idea of implementing signposts across all secondary ELAR classrooms was presented to the district vertical team during the 2017-2018 school year by the Coordinator of Secondary English Language Arts and Reading for our schools. That team consisted of ELAR teachers from fifth through twelfth grade, as well as special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Those teachers worked with the coordinator to develop a plan for implementation.

Ensuring that every teacher understood the literacy crisis, as well as the need for something that would address the crisis, was the first step. In order to address this, all English and reading teachers participated in a book study of *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. The district coordinator created a detailed schedule to have the English and reading teachers work through the book in professional learning communities (PLC). The plan also included student teachers from the local university so they could learn alongside the teachers and understand the district expectation for every student. In addition, all campus leaders and college supervisors of the student teachers were made aware of the expectations for the English and reading classrooms at our secondary campuses.

District and Campus-Level Support

The district coordinator divided the book into sections that the teachers read and discussed in PLCs each month. Teachers discussed the sections and determined how to implement the literacy signposts into upcoming lessons. Between PLC discussions involving the book study, the district coordinator and campus specialists checked for implementation of the literacy signposts during classroom walkthroughs and team discussions. Throughout

the year, each PLC included a reflective conversation regarding how the implementation of literacy signposts had progressed from the time of the last book study conversation. PLC book study conversations also addressed how the reflective conversation could potentially impact or change instructional approaches moving forward. Teachers, student teachers, campus and district leaders, and university supervisors all participated in conversations and in making suggestions to improve implementation.

Visible Student Change in the Classroom

As implementation of the literacy signposts improved, teachers began to take notice of how student thinking was changing in their classrooms. The English and reading teachers discussed frequently how planning for thinking in lessons was critical. They discussed how we knew we wanted our classrooms to be more about building literate human beings and less about distribution of grades. We agreed with Beers and Probst (2017) that, “in too many places, we ask kids to read (and write) so we can give them a grade that shows they’ve learned some skills someone has decided they need to learn” (p. 20). Our teachers also knew that the literacy signposts were designed to draw thinking from students, knowing that the point of the signposts was not to search for one right answer. The ongoing discussion in the district English and reading classrooms was to move from telling students what to think (as students are conditioned to expect) and to plan lessons that engage their thinking. “When we tell our students what to think, we inadvertently teach them that thinking is not important. We take shortcuts to knowledge at the expense of understanding” (Plaut, 2009, p. 16).

The Use of PLCs and Campus Personnel for District-Wide Implementation

The goal was not only to study the book, but to ensure a unified implementation of the core beliefs and use of the signposts in classrooms

across the district. At some schools instructional specialist helped to guide the progress by exploring each signpost with teachers through various methods. Through PLCs teachers would examine children’s literature for examples of signposts. They would then share their findings with each other to learn and model the depth of discussion that can arise when readers discuss literature. The instructional specialist sought out books that could illustrate and expand teacher knowledge of each signpost before using them with students’ classroom literature. The following is a sampling of the children’s books and the signposts that were discovered and discussed in the middle school’s PLC as teachers learned together.

- *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson – Aha Moment
- *When We Were Alone* by David A. Robertson – Memory Moment
- *Giraffes Can’t Dance* by Giles Andrede – Words of the Wiser
- *The Hat* by Jan Brett – Again and Again
- *Finding Joy* by Marion Coste – Tough Questions
- *Mr. Tiger Goes Wild* by Peter Brown – Contrasts and Contradictions

In addition, the instructional specialist supported the initial execution of lesson plans as teachers examined the choices of literature in PLCs prior to classroom use for the possible implementation of signposts that the students might employ.

Support and scaffolding for the students helped promote the daily use of signposts. For example, bookmarks displaying the signposts were utilized for quick reminders and references. Students picked up a bookmark on the way into the classroom each day to use whether reading independently in a book of choice or reading literature assigned to the class. Large posters detailing the signposts and their corresponding questions also lined the walls to enhance student use and afforded the teachers an immediate reference during lessons. On a campus where

these aids were used, a ninth grade English teacher revealed that she saw students arriving to high school ready to engage with difficult text by adding the signposts to their annotations for greater understanding (K. Bachert, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The results of intense focus and preparation led to results beyond teacher expectations. The depth of our students' reading and thinking about text was exhilarating when the students' personal interchanges with the text led them to explore aspects we had not anticipated in our PLC discussions. We practiced the rigor that "lies in the transaction between the reader and the text and then among readers. The essence of rigor is engagement and commitment" (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 23).

Building classrooms to develop the literate learners and thinkers we desired meant promoting student ownership for reading and critical thinking. We knew we must change the classrooms to encourage discussions that could spring from the students' thinking rather than the teachers' leading questions. The teacher could no longer be center stage with the answer. The environment of the classroom demanded a shift from the students' search for the teachers' answers to the search for meaning in the literature that is "created not purely and simply from the words on the page, but from the transaction with those words that takes place in the reader's mind" (Beers & Probst, 2013, p. 34-35). We understood and began to exercise the knowledge described by a sixth-grade reading teacher in our district, "Notice and Note has completely transformed the way that I teach and the [way] students think critically about text" (K. Talbert, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The teachers grew comfortable and even delighted when they saw students use signposts to talk about literature in ways we had not

expected. The redesign of classrooms required teachers to be comfortable with discussion groups, student talk, and even at times a heated debate over insights into literature.

The Challenge of Change Leads to Student Success

The synergy created across the district was evident in the synergy happening within each classroom. At the heart of our desired literacy improvements, we wanted an engaged reading, writing, thinking, and responsive students. A middle school seventh-grade teacher reported the organic development of "annotation groups" gathering around a text without teacher direction or instruction. These spontaneous groups used signposts as they would read together, annotate, discover, and discuss the impact of the literature through the author's purpose. Signposts also supported our endeavor to see reading and writing skills support each other. In an eighth grade Pre-AP English class, a student asked if she could try her hand at the signpost Again and Again in her writing because she had seen this enhance the meaning in various authors' writing.

Clinging to the purpose of fostering students that are ready for college and beyond meant letting the students discover themselves in the literature and in their writing. "The reader is not asked to ignore himself in a sterile exercise of extracting data from the text. Instead, he is encouraged to look at himself, and at his own responses, without losing sight of the text" (Beers and Probst, 2017, p. 153). This district-wide approach was able to take down the walls of an isolated, silo-teaching approach and build a connected focus that traveled from fifth to twelfth grade. This commitment has promoted critical thinking skills and enhanced literacy in our students. We look forward to the continuous impact this approach makes in the lives of our students.

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The New ELAR TEKS: Highlighting the Independent Reading Student Expectation

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Abstract

The new ELAR TEKS includes a new standard that requires students to “self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time” (19 TAC Chapter 110). Though independent reading has been a literacy practice across the state, the state standards has only recently included it as a student expectation. Literacy leaders include independent reading as a must-have element of a well-balanced literacy classroom. This article will demonstrate the value of independent reading, breakdown the SE into instructional parts, and highlight two SEs that require integration. This SE provides teachers the direction needed to include independent reading into the classroom as part of a balanced literacy instructional experience for Texas students.

Keywords: *TEKS, independent reading, self-selected texts*

Approved in 2017 by the State Board of Education, the kindergarten through eighth grade TEKS were implemented this fall, and the ninth through 12th-grade TEKS will be implemented next fall. In these new standards, a student expectation (SE) has been included for independent reading: “self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time” (19 TAC Chapter 110). This article will demonstrate the value of independent reading, breakdown the SE into instructional parts, and highlight two SEs that require integration. The focus of this article is the Independent Reading SE. However, the strands of the new TEKS should not be taught in isolation. The strands, as explained in the introduction, are to be integrated across literacy instruction (19 TAC Chapter 110).

Research demonstrates a relationship between independent reading and an increase in vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, language acquisition, writing ability, and general academic performance (Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson, 1988, Guthrie, 2007, International Reading Association, 2014, Krashen, 2011, National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). The International Literacy Association, in a shared position statement with the Canadian Children’s Book Centre and the National Council of Teachers of English, call on leadership to promote daily independent reading (2014), and on literacy instructors to include independent reading as a must-have element of a well-balanced literacy classroom (Morell, 2019, Calkins, 2013, Atwell, 2016, Gallagher, 2003, Kittle, 2012).

Five Skills Embedded in the Independent Reading Student Expectation (SE)

The state does not dictate how teachers teach the standards found in the TEKS, so the Independent Reading SE was created with a focus on the skills included in text selection and independent reading. The SE reads: The student is expected to “self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time” (19 TAC Chapter 110). There are five student skills embedded into this standard: recognizing reading ability, choosing reading interests, locating texts, reading independently, and sustaining engagement with a single text.

Recognizing Reading Ability

Walking into the library to choose a book can be a daunting task. Without guidance or a plan, students may choose books that are inaccessible to them based on their reading abilities. “Self-selected” moves beyond students randomly choosing books in the library. To be able to “self-select” a text, students need to learn to recognize which texts they can successfully read in addition to choosing what they might enjoy. To accomplish this, experienced readers scan and maybe read the first few pages to determine how well they comprehend the text before settling on a book. For students new to self-selection, matching themselves to a text may require teacher or librarian guidance and perhaps the use of some strategies to scaffold their decisions until they are proficient at choosing books they feel confident reading.

For self-selected reading, requiring students to read from a leveled text and reducing their choices to their reading level are a misuse of leveled texts (Parrott, 2017). When educators label books and limit ranges, they not only limit student choice and expose students’ academic levels to peers, but they are also denying students the opportunity to learn how to self-identify their own reading level. Instead, students need to be able to self-select a text without the support of leveling systems, so they

can become fully independent in their book selections. Pernille Ripp shares several strategies that she has used to help students find “just right” texts both in her library classroom and at the library. She groups books together in bins by topic or genre, so students can flip through a set of interesting texts until they find one on their level. Also, she calls books selection “book shopping” and has turned it into a class social event where students look through the books and share their choices with each other, and she gives them time to shop without rushing them (2016).

Choosing Reading Interests

These same strategies will also support students who are developing reading interests. To assure our students have access to interesting books, libraries should contain diverse texts on a wide range of topics. Since 2014, We Need Diverse Books (weneeddiversebooks.org) has promoted the works of diverse authors and sought opportunities to increase their presence. Time in independent reading may be free choice for students to choose from diverse texts, or from a collection of texts in coordination with a unit or theme. For example, teachers may ask students to choose a non-fiction text based on a shared research topic or a fiction text when they are studying literary devices. Some teachers may ask students to keep at least one book for independent reading with a narrative structure to support class lessons. Students still choose freely, but a student freely choosing nonfiction may choose to keep two independent reading books pulling out the narrative text for classwork.

Locating Texts

To find interesting books, students may need to learn how to use the libraries’ catalogue systems, collaborate with teachers, librarians and peers, and keep lists of potential books for future selection. School librarians offer support to students through library catalogues and databases to sort books and then locate them in

the library. As students rely on each other and book lists collected from book talks and peer recommendations, a reminder to seek new texts in the library with the catalogue helps increase the students' abilities to locate texts independently. Though recommended books support text selection, students should also be able to choose based on their own understanding of how well they read and their personal interests.

Independent and Sustained

“Independently,” means that students read to themselves. Except for kindergarten through third grade, where the SEs include a qualifier allowing adult assistance, the expectation is that students read alone from a book that they chose. Students must practice reading independently to gain the academic benefits obtained by reading for pleasure in a text that is appropriate to their skill level.

The final words of the SE, “for a sustained amount of time”, is intentionally vague to accommodate the age of the child and school schedules. Our youngest students will grow to be able to read for longer periods, but for older students that are changing classes, they may need a block for independent reading. This wording gives teachers flexibility to build sustained reading into various schedules. Richard Allington recommends high volume reading, citing studies with thirty minutes of independent reading per day (2014), but just twenty-one minutes of independent reading per day can significantly improve the academic performance of students (Beers and Probst, 2017, 135; Scholastic, 2013). To assure students become good readers, they simply must spend time reading (Allington, 2014). Setting this time aside for our students will lead to better academic skills when paired with explicit instruction to support growing readers as they comprehend and analyze the texts they read. (Beers and Probst, 2017; Miller and Sharp, 2018; Goldberg and Houser, 2017).

Explicit Markers to Integrate Independent Reading in the TEKS

Markers can be defined as places in the new TEKS where direct references are made from one strand to another to encourage cross-strand integration. Though the introduction to the new standards clearly establishes the expectations for the integration of the strands during instruction, there are two places where “self-selected reading” was explicitly noted beyond the Independent Reading SE itself. These two places, where independent reading fits in especially well, the TEKS included markers to point them out to teachers new to the standards. The first is in the Comprehension strand and the second is in the Response strand.

Integrating Comprehension and Independent Reading

The first of these markers occurs in the second strand, Comprehension. The first SE in the Comprehension strand reads, “establish purpose for reading assigned and self-selected texts” (19 TAC Chapter 110). This same standard is present in every grade level with kindergarten through second grade adding the additional phrase “with adult assistance” (19 TAC Chapter 110) to the end of the student expectation. There are many ways to establish a purpose for reading, and many of these can be found in the Comprehension strand (19 TAC Chapter 110) developed based on Person’s (2002) research on reading comprehension:

- (B) generate questions about text before, during, and after reading
- (C) make, correct or confirm predictions using text features, characteristics of genre and structures
- (D) create mental images to deepen understanding
- (E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society;
- (F) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding;
- (G) evaluate details read to determine key ideas

(H) synthesize information to create new understanding; and

monitor comprehension and make adjustments such as re-reading, using background knowledge, asking questions, and annotating when understanding breaks down

Each of these student expectations from the Comprehension strand may be established as a purpose for reading that will in turn support student comprehension. These student expectations, when modeled by the teacher, provide students the skills to combat confusion when they are reading independently (Duke and Pearson, 2002). Teachers are expected to integrate comprehension skills with students as they read independently by setting a reading purpose.

Integrating Response and Independent Reading

The second independent reading marker that explicitly crosses over to independent reading is in the third strand, Response. The first SE in the Response strand, reads, “describe personal connections to a variety of sources, including self-selected texts” (19 TAC Chapter 110). Here the word choice of “including” means that it is required instead of “such as” which in a TEKS document would indicate that examples are provided but the teacher may choose something beyond the selection provided. (19 TAC Chapter 110). The SE indicates a “variety of sources,” followed by “including self-selected texts”. This juxtaposition of seemingly different text sources indicates that students should practice response skills with a range of texts, but they must also create responses to their self-selected texts.

Making personal responses moves beyond knowing what the text says and asking what the text says to them, the reader. As Kylene Beers and Robert Probst share in *Disrupting Thinking*:

It’s not enough to hold a reader’s interest and it’s not enough to solve our complex problems.

We need students who can do more than answer questions; today’s complex world requires that our next generation of leaders be able to raise questions. They need to be able to hold multiple ideas in their minds. They need to be able to see a situation from multiple perspectives (2017, p. 21).

This is supported by Victoria Young who in response to the new TEKS shared that each strand “must include thinking, since the development of literacy skills is dependent on students’ ability to think clearly, coherently, and flexibly about what they are reading...” (2018, p. 7). But to engage students in the deep thinking required by the new standards students need interesting texts to read and that matter to them as unique and diverse readers.

Texas schools have rich diversity, and it is often in self-selected independent reading that students make personal connections with books (Beers and Probst 2017, Miller and Sharp, 2018). Intentional student selection from a diverse library will help students make personal connections in the books they read. This is also a requirement of the TEKS where the multi-genre strand calls for “increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts,” (19 TAC Chapter 110).

With this in mind, teachers should support students as they include personal responses based on their lived experiences. Teachers may ask students how various texts express their culture within their communities, and how the reading of texts changes their perspectives (Anila, 2017). As an example, students may choose to respond to their independent reading by writing a letter to introduce themselves to a character.

These types of assignments provide students opportunities to leverage their growing literacy skills by connecting their personal experiences with texts that they self-selected based on their abilities and their authentic interests.

Conclusion

The new TEKS represents new opportunities to create lessons and curriculum that will increase the engagement and achievement of literacy skills for Texas students. With an independent reading SE, educators can integrate self-selected choice reading and encourage their students' unique interests across diverse texts. The repetition of this SE from K-12 demonstrates the need to promote students

reading independently early with ongoing, continual practice through every grade. Also important is the expectation that independent reading does not exist as an isolated activity apart from the regular skill building in lessons (19 TAC Chapter 110; Young, 2018). By integrating students' self-selected books across the strands, including Comprehension and Response, independent reading will become part of a balanced approach to literacy in Texas classrooms.

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Get Your Mind IN the Gutter: Inferencing with Graphic Novels

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Abstract

In this article, the authors encourage readers to get their minds IN the gutters—the literal gutters of graphic novels, that is. Gutters, one of many graphic novel text features, provide visual and metacognitive insight readers must use to make meaning as they read. Teachers must provide explicit instruction regarding these features and other characteristics of graphic novels to ensure student success with this popular literature format.

Keywords: *graphic novels, inferencing, text features, explicit instruction*

Introduction

The ability to infer can be difficult for many students (Reading Rockets, 2019; Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2015), so as teacher educators, we continually search for ways to help students with this important skill. When students infer they are analyzing text and images to break information into parts, draw comparisons between text and background knowledge, and make decisions about meaning. The task of analysis is considered a higher-order thinking skill (Tankersley, 2005). The multimodal nature of graphic novels (GNs) requires readers to use visual cues to analyze images, lines, color, and panel shapes along with text to infer meaning (Boerman-Cornell, 2016) and support the

development of students' multiliteracies that include print, photos, videos, or graphs (New London Group, 1996; Kress, 2010). Gavigan (2014) suggests that students are constantly building their knowledge and meaning from visual images.

Texas state standards were revised in 2017, and now include language related to the use of inferencing with multimodal text. The current English Language Arts and Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) require that students listen, speak, read, write, and think about author's purpose and craft using multiple texts. This skill is evident throughout the grade levels of the ELAR TEKS. An example from third grade TEKS follows

(<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/c1110a.html>):

The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors' choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts. The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances. The student is expected to: (C) explain the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes”

In addition to Texas state standards, the International Literacy Association (ILA) standards (2018) promote the use of texts in diverse formats and media (ILA, 2018). In 2019, the ILA began the “Children’s Rights to Read” campaign for teachers and literacy specialists which provides 10 essential rights of individuals to reach their full educational potential. Second in the list of ten includes this statement:

CULTIVATE a truly inclusive classroom library...Share a range of text types with students, including multimedia, visual, audio, and graphic novels. These student texts are a great place to start. Incorporate a wide variety of genres...

In this manuscript, authors discuss the importance of using graphic novels to promote inferencing, higher order thinking, and relationships to the TEKS and ILA initiatives. This manuscript focuses on GN popularity, specific terminology, inferencing that focuses on panels and gutters, and modeling of techniques for reading graphic novels in the classroom.

Graphic Novels and Inferencing

According to Oakhill, et al. (2015), there are three types of inferences. Local coherence inferences are moment-to-moment, word-to-word, and phrase-to-phrase connections made during the reading process. Local inferences help make the words within a sentence stick together to make sense. Global inferences occur

as readers link ideas across a text to build a mental model of the material at hand. This enables readers to build connections among ideas. Finally, elaborative, or gap-filling inferences occur when readers use background knowledge to make meaning. Oakhill et al. (2015) maintain that many students, especially weak readers, struggle with this ability. Sometimes, students struggle due to a lack of background knowledge. Others struggle because they do not know how to make these inferences. GNs may be a way to support struggling readers as they learn to infer, but it is necessary they understand ways GNs differ from other types of literature.

When working with students on inferencing skills, teachers instruct readers that text evidence plus prior knowledge equals inferencing. This strategy, referred to by Beers (2003) as "It says, I say, and so," helps students understand when information is implied, or not directly stated. According to Marzano (2010), an inference is a foundational skill required for higher order thinking. Traditionally, the ability to infer requires students go “beyond explicit details to make sense of text” (Oakhill, et al., 2015, p. 38). This is depicted in the old adage, “read the lines, read between the lines, and read beyond the lines.” How does this work with GNs? The concept is the same. Readers read the panels, read between the panels (the gutters), and beyond the panels (drawing conclusions). This may sound simple, but there are two concerns teachers must address. First of all, students need explicit instruction in the features of graphic novels. These features are described in the next section. Additionally, inferring with graphic novels must be modeled explicitly.

Text Features in Graphic Novels

Various modes of communicating work together in GNs, and readers must use visual features such as color, shading, panel and gutter layout, perspective, and lettering style to understand the author’s/illustrator’s meaning (Schwarz, 2006). GNs use pictures instead of exposition, or

descriptive language, to tell their stories, which often requires the reader to infer meaning from the visual (Watts, 2015). “The illustrators use features within the artwork that allow the readers to extrapolate meaning about the plot and characters” (Richardson, 2017, p. 24).

Although GNs may be intuitive reading material in some ways, they require a different type of reading (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014; Pagliaro, 2014) which involves a great deal of visual analysis and inferencing (Miller, 2017). Traditional books include pictures that support the text, but Pagliaro (2014) stated that pictures

in a GN “are the text” (p. 33). Terms associated with GNs, found in Table 1, may be of benefit when teaching GNs. Both teachers and students should be familiar with them to improve their understanding of GNs, as well as facilitate conversations in the classroom (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014). In addition to knowledge about GN terminology, teachers should understand the format of GNs, as it can vary, and young readers may become confused by the format when their primary reading experience has been with traditional book formats.

Term	Meaning
Panel	An individual frame of content that tells part of the story. A panel may contain images, text, or both.
Plot panel	A panel that sets up the main events (Monnin, 2013).
Character panel	A panel that focuses on the characters in the story (Monnin, 2013).
Setting panel	A panel that shows the time and location of the story (Monnin, 2013).
Conflict panel	A panel that shows the tension within the story (Monnin, 2013).
Rising action panel	A panel that develops the events that increase the conflict of the story and work towards the climax (Monnin, 2013)
Climax panel	A panel that brings the story to the point of greatest intensity (Monnin, 2013).
Resolution panel	A panel that resolves the tension in the story (Monnin, 2013).
Symbols panel	A panel that contains images or words or both that represent something larger than itself (Monnin, 2013).
Theme panel	A panel that focuses on a main idea or message from the story (Monnin, 2013).
Foreshadowing panel	A panel that hints at future happenings in the story (Monnin, 2013).
Combination story panel	A panel that combines two or more of the other panels (Monnin, 2013).
Gutter	The space between panels.

Dialogue balloon	A graphic tool depicting words spoken by a character (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014)
Thought balloon	A graphic tool depicting thoughts of a character (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014).
Story balloon	A non-dialogue text that narrates part of the story progression or timeline (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014).
Motion lines	Lines that depict movement in pictures (also called zip-ribbons) (McCloud, 1993, p. 110-111).
Icon	An image that represents a person, place, thing, or idea (McCloud, 1993, p. 27).
Frame	The border around a panel. (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014).
Bleed	Art that “runs off of the page instead of being contained by a border” (Brozo, Moorman, & Meyer, 2014, p. 15).
Hue	The shade (hue) of color to communicate meaning to the story.
Table 1 Common terms related to GNs	

Text

As we work with GN and inferring, it is important to understand that the text is minimal and must be read in combination with images to make meaning. The text found in GNs takes on several forms. Dialogue balloons, thought balloons, sound effect balloons, and story balloons are the most common. Variations in tone of voice, volume, and emotion are often indicated by varied font styles and text sizes. The color and hue are also used to portray mood, complexity, and emotion (McCloud, 1993). These variations allow the words to “have the power to completely describe the invisible realm of senses and emotions” (McCloud, 1993, p. 135). Three of the most common story balloons are setting balloons, plot balloons, and character balloons (Monnin, 2013). Setting balloons show details about the time and place. Plot balloons share information about the events of the story, and character balloons disclose details about

characters’ traits (Monnin, 2013). The examination of these text features supports student comprehension of GNs.

Panels

GN illustrators usually place art in panels, which are individual frames of content that tell part of the narrative. A panel may contain images, text, or a combination of both. Monnin (2013) defined a panel as a “visual boundary that contains an element of story” (p. 30) and categorized them into eleven types: plot panels, character panels, setting panels, conflict panels, climax panels, rising action panels, resolution panels, foreshadowing panels, theme panels, symbols panels, and combination story panels. Panel types reflect traditional story elements typically taught in language arts classrooms. The GN panels complement teaching of traditional elements of a story (Monnin, 2013). The labels Monnin (2013) used for the panels are self-explanatory as to what they portray. For

example, the plot panel “establishes the guiding force behind the story being told” (p. 32), and the character panel enables the reader to learn about the character(s)’ traits, habits, and evolution in the story. The combination panel combines two or more of the elements. The reader must determine how to read panels sequentially. Panels and text are usually read left to right, top to bottom. However, some illustrators arrange panels in creative ways that can confuse readers (McCloud, 1993); therefore, inferencing skills must often be applied in order to gain meaning from GN texts.

Gutters

Just as the gutters on a roof carry rainwater, the gutter in a GN carries meaning. A gutter is the blank space between panels. To understand the story, readers “infer what has happened during the transition from one panel to the next” (Watts, 2015, p. 39). This process is called closure (McCloud, 1993; Watts, 2015). McCloud (1993) reported that “panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged staccato rhythm of unconnected moments. But closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality” (p. 67). Monnin (2013) describes the gutter as a “reader-friendly space where human imagination takes over and transforms two or more ideas into one” (p. 45).

McCloud (1993) describes six types of gutters: moment-to-moment, scene-to-scene, subject-to-subject, action-to-action, aspect-to-aspect, and non-sequitur. The amount of closure needed depends on the gutter type. The moment-to-moment gutter in which readers witness panels portraying sequential moments require little closure. The other five types necessitate more inferencing to make sense of the story. McCloud reported that the majority of panel transitions involve action-to-action, subject-to-subject, and scene-to-scene. Students must link the panels constantly as they read a GN, connecting what they see with what they know and imagine. In order to implement GN instruction, teachers must be prepared to teach text features to

students so that readers can meaningfully use graphic novel texts (Jiménez, et al., 2017).

Gutter Reading: *El Deafo* (Bell, 2014).

How does gutter reading work? Figure 1 includes the word POP! in the gutter, between two panels. POP! is onomatopoeia that may be used to depict numerous scenarios. It could represent the sound of a balloon bursting, the sound of a firecracker exploding, or the sound of knuckles cracking. In Cece Bell’s Newbery Honor Award winning book *El Deafo* (2014), POP! does not depict an actual sound. Instead, it depicts the deflating of the main character’s self-esteem. In order to understand what happened between the panels, the reader must apply the words or images in the gutter to the events occurring in the panels to make sense of the story. In other words, one must “read between the lines,” which requires the application of skills described in this article.



Figure 1: Onomatopoeia between two panels (in the gutter)

To demonstrate the importance of gutter reading to make meaning, we elaborate using page 45 of *El Deafo*. This GN is a memoir in which the author chronicles her experiences with losing her hearing at age four. In the novel, the main

character, Cece, is portrayed as a rabbit who previously attended a school for the deaf. Cece's new "Phonic Ear," enables her to hear--she can hear her teacher and others, even if they are in the hallway or in the bathroom! Readers may be able to infer from the panels on page 45 that Cece feels like a superhero as she starts her day at school. Nowhere the page does the reader see the word superhero, but there is evidence in the images, which must be "read," that illustrate Cece's feelings. The illustrator uses only three sequential panels on page 45. In the first panel, Cece is wearing a cape, standing proudly, and thinking (depicted with a thought bubble), "I will amaze everyone." In panel two, Cece is still wearing the red superhero cape. Her hearing aid catches the attention of one of her new classmates, who approaches, and asks, "Hey! What are those things in your ears? Are you deaf?" Then POP! appears in the gutter between panel two and panel three, similar to the POP! in Figure 1. In the third and last panel, Cece no longer wears a cape, she looks upset, and the only text available to the reader is a dialogue bubble with the text, "Ummm." The reader then must infer, from just 16 words, that the phonic ear, or hearing aid, presents both benefits and challenges as Cece starts a new school. These challenges are not explicitly stated in the text, either, but must be inferred.

Several visual cues, especially those in the gutters, must be used in order for readers to understand what happened to Cece. First of all, readers must have attended to the visual features that help characterize Cece. Cece's superhero cape is key here. Her cape disappears in panel three. One must "read between the panels," literally, to understand that after receiving a question about her hearing aid, Cece's confidence bursts... with a "POP!" The use of onomatopoeia is common in GNs, and here it is used "in the gutters" to show an instant decrease in her self-confidence. Cece no longer feels like a superhero, and by examining her facial expressions, like her frown, the reader can infer that Cece now feels sad or uncertain. Perhaps

the hearing aid that enabled her to feel more normal will also cause her to feel more isolated.

Modeling

Even though GNs are difficult for some children, experts agree that using GNs with students reaps positive outcomes (Gavigan, 2014; Maughan, 2016). GNs are both engaging and motivational (Swhwarz, 2006; Yang, 2008), but teachers and students alike must understand how to read GNs, as text features in GNs vary from that of the traditional novel. Through modeling activities, teachers may demonstrate how to "read" GNs. Just as teachers carefully choose mentor texts for explicit teaching of print-based reading and writing (Dorfman & Cappellini, 2017), mentor texts for the reading of GNs are important. When teaching with GNs, teachers may consider explicit instruction related to the unique text features. Students need to understand how to make elaborative, or gap-filling, inferences using GNs.

In modeling with GNs, teachers may consider the use of visual thinking strategies (Yenawine, 2013). This discussion strategy focuses on a visual as a conversation starter. When using a page from a graphic novel, students could be asked the following three questions in reference to the image: What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find? Instruction includes prompting so that students make observations, provide explanations, and interpret the image. In modeling with *El Deafo* (Figure 2), the teacher may project the scene just described for analysis. Through modeling and think alouds, teachers may demonstrate ways to infer using visual cues in the panels, between the panels (the gutters), and beyond the panels.

Conclusion

GNs have proven to be motivational to students and solid literature choices for learning (Swhwarz, 2006; Yang, 2008; Gavigan, 2014; Maughan, 2016). Teachers should include a

variety of literature forms and genres in their instruction. GNs provide a “different and useful format” (p. 77) as well as an option for differentiation (Boerman-Cornell, 2016). We posit teachers should take advantage of this popular format that offers rich educational benefits. Becoming more acquainted with GNs and preparing students to effectively read them is necessary for educators as they bring the graphic world into their classrooms. First, teachers need to read GNs to experience this format themselves (Jimenez, Robers, Brugar, Meyer, & Waito, 2017). Teachers do not need to become experts on GNs (Boerman-Cornell,

2016). However, they should become familiar with popular student choices and develop a general knowledge of the features used in a GN to tell the story. The approach to teaching GNs is similar to using traditional books (Watts, 2015). However, teachers need to recognize the differences related to the text and image presentation, and how those differences affect comprehension (Watts, 2015). GNs require students to read the panels, read between the panels (the gutters), and read beyond the panels. Explicit instruction using the features of GN is required, so that readers become experts at getting their minds IN the gutters.

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An Investigation of Teacher Candidates’ Professionalism and the Effectiveness of Direct Instruction

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Abstract

The most recent generation of graduates, known as millennials – those born between the years of 1981 and 1996 – are entering the workforce and the teaching profession. A recent publication indicated that millennials now comprise approximately 50% of the workforce, and they will make up 75% by the year 2030 (Emmons, 2018). As millennials enter the work force, there have been conflicts due to generational differences and a lack of professionalism in the workplace (Pew Research Center, 2015). Because teachers interact with students, parents, colleagues and administrators on a daily basis, they must act in a professional manner at all times. Educator Preparation Programs have become aware of the conflicts between generations, particularly in regard to the lack of professionalism, and have implemented professional standards for their candidates to uphold while in the program and out in the field (CCSSO, 2013). The main purpose of this study was to collect data to review the impact that specific courses geared toward professionalism in the workplace had on teacher candidates in an educator preparation program. As such, data was collected through candidate self-evaluation and instructor input.

Keywords: literacy, technology, social media, popular culture, student engagement, professionalism

Introduction

The generation currently identified as ‘millennials’ – those individuals born from 1981-1996 (Pew Research Center, 2007 & 2015) are now entering the teaching profession. This group has been characterized as special, sheltered, confident, conventional, team-oriented, achieving and pressured (Howe & Strauss, 2000; De Bard, 2004). In fact, according

to their older coworkers, millennials are viewed as “having a lessened work ethic, a sense of entitlement, and not conducting themselves as professionals, all of which clash with the values of former generations of workers” (Pew Research Center, 2015). Research by Howe and Strauss (2000) reveals that millennials have been “regarded as special since birth and have been more obsessed-over than Xers” (p. 13). In a

presentation by Mosier (2001), the job assets of millennials include the following: prone to collective action, optimistic, a sense of tenacity, heroic spirit, multi-tasking abilities, and technology savvy. However, he also stated that liabilities exist, as well. These liabilities include the need for supervision and structure, inexperience in dealing with people and difficult situations, and an expectation that effort is equated with quality. Many careers have adapted to meet the needs of this generation's cultural traits, but have also found it necessary to take additional measures to specifically teach about professionalism in the work place. The topic of professionalism in the workplace has been at the forefront of discussion in human resource departments across the workplace.

Students between the ages of 22 to 37 fall into this category known as millennials. This demographic may be currently teaching or entering the field of education. Once in the field, they will affect hundreds of students during their professional career. Because of this, educator preparation programs (EPP's) are responsible for ensuring that teacher candidates are prepared to enter the teaching field with ethical and professional dispositions. In the past, educator preparation programs were primarily responsible for preparing candidates in the areas of content and pedagogy. Due to the increase in social media use of millennials and reports of inappropriate postings or interactions with minors based on the professional code of ethics (TEA, 2016), EPP's have taken additional measures to remedy this type of behavior. Thus, EPP's now also carry the additional responsibility for developing teacher candidates who are professional, ethical and prepared to work with other generations in the workforce (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Teachers in the past were very limited in terms of what was acceptable both in and out of schools (Sadker and Zittleman, 2010). For example, in the 1920's, teachers were not allowed to marry, wear makeup, smoke, or drink. While times have changed significantly, acting in a professional manner is still very important. Texas EPP's are obligated to review,

address, and implement teaching practices regarding professionalism in its courses for candidates when there have been reports of infractions and/or violations of the Texas Code of Ethics, (TEA, 2016). Professionalism becomes of utmost importance when violations include inappropriate relationships between teachers and students, drug distribution, and social media misuse (SBEC, 2015). These infractions have become more prevalent in recent years, partially due to the ongoing growth and popularity of social media (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). An article by Wise (1989) describes professional teachers as those who are responsible, able to analyze what their students need, provide that help, and know the standards for their profession.

As cited in Tichenor and Tichenor (2004), Wong and Wong expanded on this notion, adding that, "A professional is defined not by the business a person is in but by the way that person does his or her business" (p. 293). The study conducted by Tichenor and Tichenor (2004) found that teachers are able to identify and articulate factors of professionalism, including aspects both in and out of the classroom. The aspect that was mentioned the most by participants in the study was character, and included "one who is resilient and keeps his/her composure at all times and under all circumstances; is caring, nurturing, friendly, patient with all, well-organized, flexible, and remembers that he/she is a role model to students" (p. 92). Additionally, Creasy (2015), noted that although the term "professionalism" is somewhat elusive, universally, professionals should have knowledge of their field and exhibit ethical sound behavior. For teacher candidates, this would include attendance, punctuality, following rules and procedures of the district, and adhering to the ethical codes of the state while on school campuses for field observations.

Statement of the Problem

According to reports from TEA and SBEC, there is a need for teacher candidates to exhibit professionalism in the field of teaching (TEA, 2019). Although some traits of

professionalism may be inherent for those entering the teaching field, that may not be the case for all candidates. For example, in studies conducted by Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007) and Creasy (2015), the researchers found that professionalism should be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced for teacher candidates so they can learn how to become effective professionals.

Armed with data from previous studies, researchers set out to determine how the implementation of professional dispositions in an educator preparation program in a rural mid-American setting affected instructor rating and candidate self-evaluations of professional preparedness. The implementation of the professional dispositions included modeling strategies aimed at teaching the dispositions explicitly. The researcher also provided opportunities for field-based learning, visits from area principals, lectures from other individuals in the field of education, and mock interviews. The Career Services Office also provided their expertise to teach “the soft skills” such as communication, time management, preparedness, and a sense of strong work ethic that professionals require. These additional opportunities and trainings provided quality programs that focused on the following dispositions: demonstrating an expectation that all students can learn displaying sensitivity to students’ needs, working with colleagues to advance learning, modeling poise, maturity, and sound judgement, and engaging in continuous self-evaluation and improvement.

Expected Findings:

The researchers believed the additional opportunities, trainings from career services, and advice from experts in the education field would make a significant impact on the ethical and professional dispositions for participants at the end of the study. The researchers sought to investigate the impact that direct instruction of the college of education’s ethical and professional dispositions would have on teacher candidate’s knowledge of professionalism, the difference between pre and post candidate self-

evaluation form results after instruction, and if there would be a notable increase of candidate awareness for the need to become critically reflective of their actions regarding professionalism, and finally if candidates would have knowledge of how to model poise, maturity, and sound judgement with peers, clinical instructors, cooperating teachers and relevant stakeholders at the end of the course based upon qualitative data.

Methodology

Participants

Convenience sampling was utilized to select participants and included students who were enrolled in an educational psychology course. The course requirements included opportunities for field-based learning, visits from guest lecturers, explicit modeling and teaching of the dispositions, and mock. One of the researchers for this study was the instructor for the course and read the consent form to all students. Students were aware that not participating in the study was optional and would not affect their grade. Data for this study was collected only from participants with a signed consent form.

Procedures

At the beginning of the semester, all students in the course were required to complete a self-evaluation form (See Appendix A) that rated their knowledge and self-perceived competence in each of the professional dispositions. The self-evaluation form was a course assignment, but only students with signed consent forms had their self-evaluations analyzed for this study. The instructor also began a file for each student who agreed to become a participant for this study with the purpose of tracking the development and growth for each student, and compiling information regarding the level of new knowledge gained for each student in the study. This information was used as qualitative documentation to support the anticipated growth in professionalism over the course of the semester.

During the semester, the instructor introduced and purposefully and explicitly taught each disposition. This was a change from previous semesters since the dispositions were new to the EPP and newly introduced within the past year. Course requirements provided candidates with opportunities for students to visit area schools after the instructor explicitly reviewed the dispositions to cover professionalism before candidates entered classrooms. Reflecting on the classroom experiences allowed the instructor to pinpoint positive and negative behaviors and offer immediate feedback. Specifically, this included discussions on punctuality and attendance, interactions with teachers and students, and professional dress. This enabled students to practice and understand the implications of professionalism in the field. The researchers also scheduled a variety of guest speakers who could provide additional knowledge for professionalism in the workplace. These speakers included directors of local non-profits, business professionals, area veteran teachers, former public school administrators, and the Career Services Office who provided their own interpretation and information about professionalism and discussed their expectations for professional and ethical behavior for the field of education. This allowed the candidates the opportunity to ask questions they may have had about entering the teaching profession and allowed them to add new understanding to their own current knowledge of professionalism. Lastly, mock interviews were scheduled for all students before the end of the course. This allowed students to gain a better perspective of what to expect in an interview and how to put into practice what they learned in the course regarding professionalism. This experience provided the candidates the opportunity to dress professionally and communicate effectively in a professional manner.

The researchers kept documentation throughout the course of the semester, including samples of work from candidates with a signed consent. At the conclusion of the course, candidates were assigned a final self-evaluation, noting where

changes occurred in their thinking from the beginning of the semester and their thoughts about the implications of understanding the professional dispositions and the reason for implementation of them as they strived to become professionals in the field of education (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). Additionally, the instructor completed a rating of each participants' knowledge and competence for each disposition by analyzing pre- and post-candidate self-evaluations and instructor documentation, including samples of assignments and instructor notes of each participant's progress.

Findings and Discussion

At the end of the course, the researchers analyzed the candidates' pre and post self-evaluations and the instructor evaluations, which included notes from the instructor's perspective on each disposition. The researchers utilized axial coding, a qualitative method of line by line coding to determine patterns. The analysis yielded several interesting findings. Many of the findings supported the researchers' predetermined hypotheses, yet some new findings emerged that will lead to changes in the course and will warrant further research. The following six themes emerged from this study:

1. Pre-evaluations revealed that participants had a very limited understanding of what poise, maturity, and sound judgement meant at the beginning of the course.
2. Direct instruction of the dispositions increased candidates' knowledge of professionalism from generic to specific
3. Candidates reported an overall growth of knowledge and understanding of the dispositions at the end of the course
4. Candidates' knowledge of moral and ethical standards and the consequences for violations of ethical conduct increased
5. Candidates' awareness of the need for continuous self-reflection of what professionalism means had increased over the course of the semester.

Post-evaluations indicated the candidates' knowledge had increased based on analyses of the qualitative data from pre- and post-candidate self-evaluations, but there was a significant need indicated by candidates that more field experiences should be required to gain the needed confidence for professionalism in this area. It is important to add that while the candidates' moral and ethical knowledge increased with direct instruction, this knowledge did not increase substantially, and participants gave literal-level responses, simply "regurgitating" the rules and the consequences for violations. Although this is a good start, aspiring educators need to know more than the rules and consequences for inappropriate ethical behavior. Additionally, the researchers noted through discussions in class, that students were not able to articulate the reasoning behind the rules. The researchers found that learning was at a very literal level based on the post-evaluation self-reports by participants.

There are many possible reasons for these findings, including the possibility that the questions asked in the self-evaluation form completed by each participant may not have adequately addressed the actual knowledge of each participant based upon how the questions were worded on the self-evaluation form. The researchers also concluded that because field-based experiences were minimal, participants might not have been given enough time to put theory into practice. These findings have evidenced the need for an additional observation requirement of ten hours for this course in the future.

Further research is needed to determine if an increased amount of time in schools will

contribute to candidate development of the skills and confidence needed to understand the importance of not only the candidate ethical and professional dispositions, but also ultimately the need for professionalism as they enter the teaching profession. Additionally, further research is recommended to discover the best methods for teaching the theory of professionalism in an EPP classroom prior to participating in classroom experiences. Direct instruction was effective to a degree, but more in-depth coverage, along with the practical application of additional field experiences may be needed to fully develop professionalism in future teachers.

Conclusion

The American workforce has changed significantly within the past twenty years (Pew Research Center, 2016). What traditionally was unprofessional in past generations in the workplace has now become more acceptable due to the mindset of younger professionals entering the work force. With this change, most companies and corporations have adjusted. However, teaching is a field in which young minds are molded and students require role models that exhibit strong moral and ethical characteristics and conduct. Although the norm for morals and ethics can be different for each individual, there are certain standards that all educators must adhere to and abide by (SBEC, 2015). The new challenge for EPP's and faculty has shifted from teaching content and pedagogy to ensuring all candidates understand what professionalism entails. Teachers should hold themselves to the upmost moral and ethical standards and conduct themselves appropriately at all times.

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Phonemic Awareness: It's All in the Sounds of Language

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Abstract

Phonemic Awareness is the understanding that words are made up of individual sounds. These individual sounds are referred to as phonemes. Within the English language, there are about 44 sounds, and several of these are rather difficult for children to grasp. Mastery of phonemic awareness is a foundational skill for reading, yet is often skimmed over or not reinforced within today's classrooms. Perhaps this lies in a misunderstanding of the importance of phonemic awareness. This paper highlights several phonemic awareness activities that are immensely useful in building and reinforcing phonemic awareness – activities that not only focus on phonemic awareness, but incorporate music and movement which enhance student engagement and retention. Such activities provide concrete language support for ELLs.

Keywords: *phonemic awareness, phonemes, oral language, listening comprehension, active learning, English Language Learners (ELLs)*

Introduction

I recently observed one of my preservice teachers explaining phonemic awareness as the sounds of language while using words and letters for the entire explanation. This seems to be a frequent misconception of our undergraduate students as we have struggled to make sure they are prepared to understand the difference between phonemic awareness and phonics before becoming certified teachers. Preservice teachers have a difficult time thinking about a pre-reading skill not being a pencil and paper task or simply reading words or letters from a page. It is not about passing the

certification exam, although that is important, but rather about internalizing the difference between these two extremely important concepts to more accurately and effectively teach that content. So just what is phonemic awareness?

“First of all, phonemic awareness is not phonics. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds-phonemes-in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become more aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds, or phonemes (the smallest parts of sound in spoken word that make a difference

in the word's meaning)." (What is Phonemic Awareness p. 1)

Why Phonemic Awareness is Important

Phonemic awareness lays the foundation for future reading success. Basic skills in phonemic awareness range from word awareness to manipulation and deletion of sounds. Specifically, these skills include word comparison (long vs. short), rhyming (hear and produce rhymes), syllables (blend and segment), onset-rime blending and segmenting, blending and segmenting individual phonemes, and phoneme deletion and manipulation. All of these foundational skills are essential for the development of more complex reading skills, and if children experience difficulties with these basic skills, they will likely have difficulty with later reading experiences, possibly related to dyslexia or other similar processing challenges. Due to the growing numbers of dyslexia diagnoses and lack of familiarity with early literacy concepts, all kindergarten and first grade students in Texas will now be assessed in phonemic awareness skills. If the students have low scores, they will be screened further for potential dyslexia.

Activities to Teach Phonemic Awareness

Children learn these skills through a variety of contexts and no child will learn in the same mode as another. With that in mind, teachers need to provide multiple opportunities for children to discover phonemic awareness through engaging activities. Physical activity, music, poetry, and games are means by which to enlighten children's language skills and put them on the path to become independent readers. All these activities are used in our Reading Methods courses in which teacher candidates have deemed them effective to help understand and internalize the meaning of phonemic awareness. Due to the nature of the activities, all the presented tasks appear to work with English Language Learners (ELL) as well, as there were Korean student teachers visiting the classroom

the day the activities were implemented. They expressed gratitude for the chance to work on their English skills with fun learning tasks. Exposure to oral language skills with the usage of pictures and songs will increase ELL students' language development.

Activities such as those included within this article demonstrate teacher and student engagement/involvement, which reflect research-based practices for motivation and knowledge for teaching. Research by Skinner and Belmont (1993) revealed teacher involvement as central to children's engagement in classroom activities and subsequent positive effects on their learning. The knowledge of teaching refers to a teacher's knowledge of quality strategies and practices that clearly demonstrate not only content knowledge of curriculum, but how to apply/show children what to do to learn (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Physical movement:

These first activities promote physical movement while practicing phonemic awareness skills.

Syllable toss. This is a simple game that can be manipulated to fit any phonemic awareness skill. Place a poster board or flat surface on the wall that includes circles with numbers 1-5 written in the middle of the circles. Students pick up a picture card, say the word aloud, and toss the soft ball to the circle that matches the number of syllables they said are in the picture they selected. For example, they will pick up a picture of an umbrella and toss the ball into the circle with a number three because it has three syllables. ELL students may use their first language to determine the number of syllables. An example would be a picture of a cat, having one syllable in English. In Spanish gato has two syllables, producing a potentially incorrect answer for the child. As the teacher monitors the station, allowing a child to use their first language can help the teacher gauge the child's understanding of the skill being used. If this

child tosses the ball to the number two after seeing the picture of the cat, they have correctly identified the number of syllables. The teacher can reaffirm this and work with the child to also perform the same task while saying the English word for the picture.

Phoneme hop. This game can be modified to work with any segmentation of words or sounds. It requires placing five connected squares on the floor with painters' tape (any tape can be used, but this is removed easier without leaving residue). Students pick up a picture card or object and orally state what it is. They will then hop one square at a time to represent the number of phonemes in the picture/object they selected. For example, they would select a "pig," say the word, and hop three times since pig has three phonemes: /p/ /i/ /g/.

Phoneme ring toss. For this activity, five cones are labeled 1-5 and placed in a pattern a few feet away from where the children will stand. This area should be designated with a taped line on the ground. Students will select a picture card or object and orally state what it is. They will then segment the word into phonemes and toss a ring onto the cone that represents the number of phonemes in the picture/object they selected. For example, they would select a "fish," say the word, and toss the ring onto the cone labeled with a 3 since fish has three phonemes: /f /i/ /sh/.

Rhyming Kick. This game requires a larger area to set up the game. A child's play tunnel is preferred for this game to have a direct path for the ball; doing this also helps to keep the ball in a contained area. If a tunnel cannot be used, place painter's tape along the floor where the ball should be kicked or rolled. Students will select an object or picture card, say the name of the object/picture card, then kick the ball through the tunnel. As the ball rolls to the wall, the child will say rhyming words for the object/picture until the ball hits the wall.

Oral Language and Alliteration

Developing oral language competency enhances the ability to read. One excellent activity combining oral language and phonemic awareness is alliteration, which is the repetition of the initial sound in several words within phrases or sentences. For example, a familiar one is "Susie sells seashells by the seashore." A key strategy for teaching alliteration, particularly with younger children, is to begin by using their names. If my name is Mary, I might say "Mary munches on marshmallows" or "Mary marches with monsters." As the teacher, I would provide my example first, then ask my students to think of the beginning sound of their name, and devise an alliteration. After a few minutes, I would ask children to verbally share.

Music and Movement with Silly Songs

Most children, regardless of age, enjoy being silly. What better way to engage them in literacy activities than by using silly songs! When combining silly songs with movement, learning is enhanced and additional support is also provided to English Language Learners (ELLs). One favorite is "Knuckles and Knees" by Jim Gill (Gill, 1999). There are two key phonemic awareness aspects in the song – initial sounds and rhyming words. Listeners are told to "bend your fingers to show your knuckles." They then travel through the song tapping their knuckles on different body parts (knees, nose, tummy, toes, hair, hips, legs, lips). The song moves slowly at first with a four-beat pattern for each "tapping," then speeds up as the "refrain" reviews every body part. After the song (and the giggles settle down), the teacher leads a discussion about which words begin with the same sound (knuckles/knees/nose; tummy/toes; hair/hips; legs/lips) and which words rhyme (nose/toes; hips/lips).

Rhyming

As mentioned in the previous section (Music and Movement with Silly Songs), rhyming remains

an essential component of phonemic awareness. A variety of activities lend themselves to building a child's awareness of rhyming sounds -- words that end with the same "sound chunk" -- the simplest being just changing the initial sound (onset-rime) -- the onset is the initial sound, and the rime consists of the vowel and consonants that come after the initial sound. Examples: say pain -- change the initial sound to /r/ = rain. Remember -- we only ask the students to change "initial sound" and never use the term "letter." Expanding rhyming for increased vocabulary provides children a wider range of words -- using words such as herd/bird, drought/about -- they have the same "sound chunk" at the end. What seems to negatively affect our pre-service teachers is the sound chunks are not spelled the same -- and that should never come into discussion -- since we are focusing on sounds and not letters.

Some helpful activities involve sentences leaving one word blank. The teacher says, "Look at the fox in the ____." The children fill

in the blank with box. "I saw a giraffe who started to ____ (laugh)" (Zganc, 2010). In addition to traditional nursery rhymes, a vast assortment of poetry for children exists, in addition to many quality children's books that are filled with rhyming words. Through daily read alouds, the classroom teacher can reinforce children's awareness of rhyming words.

Closing

All of these activities can be modified to fit into any classroom that needs review or just some movement and singing about language. ELL students gain understanding of English while participating in the various risk-free tasks which focus on oral language, pictures, and movement. Children will learn the necessary skills through playing with language using the various modes mentioned in this article. We cannot jump ahead to letter recognition or reading if children do not understand how language works. Phonemic awareness is a vital component of the ability to read and should not be overlooked.

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Modeling Professional Use of Literacy-Focused Social Media for Preservice and Inservice Teachers: Growing, Connecting, and Learning Together, Online

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Abstract

This summary paper shares key ideas from a 2019 TALE Conference panel session that focused on how the authors infused social media into literacy and technology teacher education courses at two public universities. Four teacher-educators share ways of leveraging various platforms such as Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube to use as educational resources in higher education to, for example, save, search, and curate teacher resources, engage with educators around the world via educational chats, and provide instances of just-in-time learning for today's busy students. Judiciously assigned, well-structured opportunities to use social media as a learning tool can augment teacher education which has traditionally been confined to university classrooms and field placement sites. Here, we offer ways in which preservice and in-service teachers can engage intentionally and with specific outcomes with a wide range of like-minded professionals.

Keywords: *literacy, social media, teacher education, online learning, collaboration*

This summary paper shares key ideas on incorporating social media into our literacy and technology teacher education courses. All four university-based teacher educators offer courses in multiple formats including face-to-face, blended or hybrid, and entirely online and are

experienced in innovating with digital learning with preservice and in-service teachers. In addition, all of us use social media for our own professional growth, modeling the practice while learning alongside and with our students. Social media affords opportunities to engage students

with one another, to critically engage with other students and professionals around the U.S. and globally, and to expand their professional learning beyond traditional textbook materials, hence fostering a broader discourse community than the brick-and-mortar or virtual walls of the classroom (Delello, McWhorter, & Camp, 2015). Below, we share findings from each panelist. The first teacher educator, Dana, shares how she uses the visually focused Pinterest application, an online and shareable bulletin board generating program, to foster knowledge sharing and curation in her technology integration course. Second, Kathryn shares how she uses Twitter, an online microblogging platform, with undergraduate preservice secondary teachers from multiple disciplines to foster their development of professional learning networks. Third, Annamary adds to the Twitter conversation. Fourth, Peggy discusses how she uses YouTube, a web-based video creation and repository platform, to create content and playlists that enable students to revisit specific and sometimes overlapping concepts in literacy learning.

We encourage literacy teacher-educators to first consider expansion of their own professional learning networks (PLNs) via social media to best model these networked and social learning practices. Trust, Carpenter, and Krutka (2017) suggest higher education professionals can curate resources for students in this way and, at the same time, foster their own professional growth. Social media integration can work for PreK-12 educators, literacy professionals, and teacher educators. Furthermore, Trust, Carpenter, and Krutka (2017) note that not all faculty make use of these platforms, and suggest that, as a field, there is room for growth in considering integration of social media platforms with teaching. While this information is organized to present practical and concrete ideas for teacher-educators; however, ideas gleaned are of use to all educators at all levels of teaching. These ideas can serve to help teachers expand their notions of ways that Pre K-12 educators can conceptualize their own

professional development work outside of traditional approaches to learning and teaching knowledge development. Acknowledging that we are all at varied stages on the technology continuum, we present ideas for both the novice and the more tech-savvy educator,

Pinterest: Curating Content and Finding Teaching Resources

The educational technology course that Dana teaches is a requirement for undergraduate students seeking their bachelor's degrees and educational certification in order to prepare them to effectively and consistently integrate technology into their lessons for their teaching careers. While most students in the course are experienced in using social media for personal reasons, they lack experience in transferring these skills to unlock the rich educational resources that are easily obtainable online.

Graduate students who have not yet taught in their own classroom and lack teaching experience are in a similar situation as the undergraduates. Within Dana's classes, the students have widely varying abilities and comfort levels when it comes to technology. Some comfortably navigate multiple forms of social media and are on the expert end of the continuum, while others who are less savvy, use technologies such as E-mail and word processing only to meet course requirements.

These future teachers need a steady stream of teaching ideas as well as ample support in creating lesson plans that reflect positive, student-centered techniques of classroom management. The instructor finds and provides students with many online resources that are available free of charge. Students appear to willingly embrace these resources as they are introduced in the course. Furthermore, as they are taking courses, they are encouraged to start building their resources tool kits for their future classrooms.

Teaching students how to use these various resources begins with modeling. They are introduced to the resource, which in this case is Pinterest, located at <http://pinterest.com>. User-friendly and resource rich, Pinterest requires minimal instruction to use. Dana walks the students through setting up their own accounts and demonstrates how it is used, including searching techniques. Access to Dana's educational Pinterest boards provide students with easily available models in courses such as Digital Learning, Online Teaching, and Technology in the Classroom. Students are encouraged to follow Dana's account as well as those belonging to classmates. Some educational boards are recommended (such as x, y, z), but the students are able to make their own choices in creating their own boards and the ones they want to follow.

Curating resources is a much-needed skill for preservice and in-service teachers. They often will be drawn toward "pins" or, specific content on a Pinterest board that are visually appealing but may lack substance, or, the website to which these pins are linked may no longer be available. For this reason, learning to evaluate content is a key skill that students need for Pinterest and digital environments. Indeed, it is crucial that students be taught to both distinguish and choose quality educational content (Van Overbeke, Stefanick, Beach, & Christensen, 2015).

An excellent resource for using Pinterest in education called The Guide to Pinterest for Educators and is available at <https://rossieronline.usc.edu/pinterest-for-educators/>.

Twitter as Professional Development that Connects to Disciplinary Literacy Practices

Many teacher-educators have eagerly adopted Twitter as a way to support peer-to-peer learning, build community, and expand opportunities to connect to professionals (Amaro-Jimenez, Hungerford-Kresser, & Pole,

2016). Because so many teaching professionals use social media to connect with others in their disciplines, platforms such as Twitter offer teacher educators ways that help them connect their university students to more -- more than textbooks and classmates can provide.

Preservice teachers in Kathryn's disciplinary literacy course are junior and senior undergraduate non-education majors seeking to add teacher certification to their disciplinary degrees. Because they come from a wide range of disciplines (art, music, physical education, history, English, math, science, theater, etc.), the disciplinary literacies they need to learn to teach are broad and varied. Each semester, in the early days of class, students struggle to see the value of what they consider a one-size-fits-all framework and believe that they are being asked to become reading teachers. They also arrive in class generally unable to articulate the disciplinary literacies in their own fields -- defined as "the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines. Disciplinary literacy emphasizes the unique tools that the experts in a discipline use to engage in the work of that discipline, and the unique uses and implications of literacy use within the various disciplines." (Shanahan & Shanahan, YEAR, p. 8). To help preservice teachers see the kinds of disciplinary literacies professionals use in their work, they are required to set up Twitter accounts as a way to curate their own PLNs. In doing so, they connect to professional organizations, such as NCTE, NCTM, and Shape America, that host educational chats and "tweet" relevant content as well as to individual members of those organizations, as they expand their networks.

At the first class meeting, we spend time discussing the Twitter project, and students helped one another to create accounts. They were then asked to search for relevant Twitter hashtags. For example, #teaching, #teacher, and #learning are good ways to find general information on education. More specific

hashtags such as #kidlit, #mathed, #scied, #ESL, #historyteacher, and #PEgeeks all lead to more content-specific topics.

Many professional organizations have Twitter accounts and share information through them. We spend time in the early class periods working in small disciplinary-focused groups to find organizations and people to follow. In the early weeks of class, there are additional assignments, such as to “retweet” something related to disciplinary pedagogy, or to new research in their field. They also learn to search for Twitter chats.

As the preservice teachers read posts in Twitter, they reflect on how these organizations and professionals use social media to share disciplinary conceptual knowledge and share teaching ideas. The preservice teachers then began Tweeting their own ideas, which served as a way to induct them as professionals into their disciplinary teaching fields. By the end of the semester, the preservice teachers build PLNs that not only provide them with an expanded idea of disciplinary literacy, but also show them that through social media, teachers have the power and ability to direct their own professional development.

Future plans include expanding the network tools beyond Twitter, so that the preservice teachers can build their networks through a variety of social media formats. Doing so will make this assignment more multimodal and allow the preservice teachers to see how different disciplines use social media in different ways.

Similarly, Annamary’s students stepped into their own disciplinary networks by engaging in educational Twitter chats that occur synchronously at a regularly scheduled time. They reported learning about useful teaching tips and finding dynamic teacher-leaders to follow (Delello & Consalvo, 2019). Since many of her students will have teaching careers in rural areas, that they know about relevant PLNs

peopled by similarly committed disciplinary experts, in online, free, and moderated settings (such as educational Twitter chats) increases the likelihood that they will continue to seek professional development into their teaching careers. Future plans include designing longitudinal research that follows these students into the first few years of their careers to determine whether and how they continue to engage in self-chosen professional development opportunities.

Learning via YouTube: Microlearning-Style Media to Engage Specialized Literacy Professionals and Preservice Teachers

Multimodal approaches to learning via YouTube can be a creative way to engage literacy professionals and preservice teachers alike. Traditionally, YouTube has a vast array of videos for viewing. Preservice teachers can be encouraged to think of YouTube as a place to also post their own original video content. Another feature of YouTube is the ability to curate videos into playlists around themes on a variety of topics such as: content-focused videos, author videos of children’s and young adult authors, and videos that demonstrate a specific literacy pedagogical technique.

When looking at ways I have used videos with advanced practitioners—teachers seeking a master’s degree in literacy education—I think of the examples of professional development videos on literacy learning. These videos include short lecture-style videos (microlearning), video series such as mentoring for advanced literacy practitioners, podcasts, and dialogue-style videos with other literacy-focused experts and colleagues. I have been creating original YouTube videos to model teaching with digital content since 2010. The purpose of the creation of my own original YouTube content is to implement a type of ubiquitous learning (e.g., as described by Kalantzis & Cope, 2010) through which teachers can get a more personalized type of learning about complex literacy topics or on mentoring topics. Indeed, YouTube can be

accessible at anytime and anyplace as new media-based learning, and videos can even be created with something as simple as a mobile device such as a teacher's phone or tablet device. In both my preservice teacher education and master's level courses, I have created original videos and organize them in thematically focused playlists for students. The videos at the master's degree (advanced practitioner) level are organized in the following ways:

1. Motivation and Mentoring videos. This series aims to help students see themselves as literacy leaders, even informally. In the video "Sharing Knowledge with Other Teachers," I identify various traditional and non-traditional ways (e.g., social media) that literacy leaders can disseminate knowledge with others. These videos are more constructed as enrichment and add a "teacher presence" to the entirely online course.
2. Knowledge-based videos to build background knowledge. Video playlists help to build background knowledge for literacy educators who may need to build knowledge on a variety of literacy topics. Because I mainly teach elementary-literacy focused courses, I have been focusing on the technical topics of literacy learning such as beginning reading, and phonological and phonemic awareness. For instance, secondary-focused teachers and new teachers often need a stronger background in these areas.

In essence, the YouTube video series allows for building up of challenging areas such as phonics while also providing engagement with the instructor. Practicing teachers who are also working on graduate degrees benefit from these content-focused videos while also learning from the more advanced mentoring videos. Indeed, because the International Literacy Association (ILA) values leadership skills, it helps to model literacy leadership through videos. In ILA's Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017 (ILA, 2017), Standard 6

states, "Candidates recognize the importance of, participate in, and facilitate ongoing professional learning as part of career-long leadership roles and responsibilities."

YouTube videos are also used with undergraduates who are preservice teachers in an elementary literacy methods course. The videos that most benefit these students are focused on several types: 1) demonstration videos of literacy teaching 2) micro-lectures, which are short overview videos on a topic 3) long form webinar style videos on the basics of lesson planning and 4) dialogue videos where I discuss major literacy ideas with a more knowledgeable colleague. The dialogue videos serve to model the induction process whereby novice educators are learning how to have complex conversations with other educators about literacy topics. Thus, while learning content, teacher candidates are seeing an authentic dialogue. An additional type of video with preservice teachers is to record a panel of new teachers who are graduates of the program where they share advice on success with entering the teaching profession. This type of "group mentoring" video is supportive of beginning teachers in allaying fears as well as learning concrete ideas.

Future goals for developing YouTube include the following:

- Continue to make playlists of my own content. These lists can focus on a variety of literacy-focused topics and will also be shared via social media and in other open ways for a global reach to literacy educators.
- Building on ILA's standard focusing on lifelong learning and leadership (standard six), encourage students to curate their own YouTube content for current and future learning. An additional goal is to also have students consider creating their own videos where they summarize a literacy concept or demonstrate a teaching technique. This would be especially useful for preservice

teachers as they prepare for teaching certification exams.

- Curate quality content for teacher candidates and advanced literacy practitioners.
- Encourage other teacher educators and teachers to create and develop their own YouTube channel. Create resources to help educators get started with this video creation process.
- Conduct more research and scholarship on YouTube as a learning tool for literacy educators. Disseminate findings in open access journals for broader reach.

Discussion

This summary paper provides a brief overview of several technology-based tools, specifically Pinterest, YouTube, and Twitter, that have been used to expand learning for preservice and in-service teachers. Students, including those who are “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) need professional guidance, instruction and support to try out these digital tools and to engage with them in professional spaces. Therefore, clear instructions, modeling, examples, and a risk-free opportunity to practice can help students successfully engage with other professionals on social media as productive experiences (Delello & Consalvo, 2019). As literacy teacher educators who teach across a variety of learning platforms, we seek to engage our students with new media literacies, multimodal literacies, and a chance to expand their and our own professional learning networks. Using social media tools also allows users to learn the skills of both critical and media literacy. It provides opportunities to critique the authenticity and accuracy of information publicly available while offering opportunities to discuss concepts such as “fake news” and the crafting of headlines. We encourage fellow educators at all levels to

consider this dual mission of growing and learning in your own capacity as well as modeling and bringing resources to students while you encourage their own use of social media to expand their lifelong learning.

It is important to consider whether to begin with having students curate content, gather resources from social media (“read-only” mode), or to take the next step and have students be more interactive. If the interactive use of literacy-focused social media is the goal, consider having discussions about privacy, terms of use, digital citizenship (proper use of social media), and having options for students who don’t choose to participate.

We provide a few reflective questions to help you as you consider these techniques. The authors are all on Twitter and can be reached there, as well, to continue the conversation.

Reflection questions to consider:

- How have you seen social media used in literacy education with either pre-service teachers or practicing teachers?
- What are ways to get started, including taking baby steps, towards introducing these ideas?
- What do you see as the greatest value of using social media with pre-service teachers and what are challenges?
- If you currently use social media for your own professional networked learning and/or you use it with your teaching, what got you started using these tools?
- What is a social media tool you would still like to explore in the future or future goals? Is there anyone’s work you admire that you would like to incorporate into your own teaching?

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D.R.E.A.M. Literacy: Enhancing the Literacy Experience for Diverse Populations

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Abstract

“D.R.E.A.M. Literacy” represents several pieces necessary to address and provide quality learning experiences and equitable literacy instruction for all. The article delves into five sections that will provide examples of “D.R.E.A.M.” (Diversity, Relevance, Engagement, Access, Motivation) being implemented into instruction, and encourages support for using diverse texts, popular culture and technology, and multimodal resources. The article seeks to empower educators to reach out to parents, and address teaching literacy skills beyond the traditional literacy curriculums that are adopted in school districts across the country. As populations in classrooms continue to grow more diverse, this article embraces and supports the changing demographics by making literacy accessible and engaging.

Keywords: *literacy, diversity, accessibility, engagement, motivation, culturally responsive teaching*

“DREAM” represents several aspects (Diversity, Relevance, Engagement, Access, Motivation) necessary to address and provide quality and equitable literacy instruction for all. “Diversity” references a wide spectrum of issues that educators might face. Willingness to learn, acceptance, and application the culture (not just ethnicity or race) of students to instructional practice is key. Students also need to know how to apply the knowledge being taught, and how it applies to them. Engagement starts with learning the interests of students, merged with the academic knowledge needed. Ease of access to resources and parents’ insight on how to continue their child’s learning outside of the classroom doors is crucial. As for motivation, our role as educators is to grow our students’ skills and learn what makes them excited to learn—this is very important in a nation of students with unique needs that are changing daily.

Students need to feel like they are included and represented in the learning environment, as “...for most students in the United States, the literature they encounter in school consists mainly of White, middle class representation (Tschida, Ryan & Ticknor, 2014, p. 28).” Based on the texts that teachers use to instruct students about varied teaching and learning styles as well as the classroom environment, students become disengaged or unmotivated to succeed if they do not feel valued. Over the past few years, there have been some efforts to address cultural representation in children’s literature. According to a study by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2016), only 22% of their books were about people of color, and the books written or illustrated by authors of color made up about 12% of their inventory. These numbers are slowly changing, as twenty years ago only 9% of book selections represented or included students of color.

However, it has been a slow process, though the population of students in the United States is continually growing more diverse by the day. Literacy learning, and traditional academic English can be a subject area that is intimidating to students, and many students struggle with code switching or second language learning—yet they must build a literacy foundation, as it is essential for learning in all other academic subject areas. With the challenges that many students bring to the classroom, educators must be willing to embrace diversity, creativity, patience, improve access to resources, and spark engagement.

Diversity

Culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) practices are becoming more common in the nation's schools as classroom populations become more diverse. However, our students' socio-emotional learning needs are growing at a rate faster than our teaching and learning practices are developing. Our students need diverse perspectives presented to them, and the subject in which we can use to educate and appreciate what students bring to a classroom is English Language Arts.

Literacy in the traditional sense, is defined as the ability to read and write fluently. Students with learning gaps in their English skills- whether it be due to dialects or cultural aspects, or languages other than English being spoken in the home presents some challenges. To ensure that literacy learning can be better received from students, educators should provide a variety of materials when teaching, as well as provide an array of resources for students to read for leisure during independent reading time..

Students are often drawn to books that are familiar or look like their family situation. “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part”

(Bishop, 1990, p. 557). Imagine going to school and using resources that had nothing to do with who you are or what you represent in society. Our students need to be exposed to books and authors who present multicultural perspectives. Students need to not only see people like themselves in their learning settings, but also seeing authors who represent them might also one day encourage them to use their voice to read or write (Jones, 2013; Lazar & Offenber, 2011; Nathenson-Mejia & Escamilla, 2003; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2009; Tyson, 1999).

Ways in which diverse perspectives in literacy can be incorporated into the classroom are:

- Planning lessons so that take linguistic and English learning needs are taken into account. (Incorporate lessons that discuss cognates, language origins, and root words)
- Make it a point to use a different cultural group or underrepresented group when selecting texts during lesson planning. If you plan with a team, one (or more) members of the team should oversee and devote time to finding resources that highlight various cultural groups.
- Doing author studies or focuses (monthly, six or nine-weeks, semester) on authors of color.
- Having students bring (pre-screened/pre-approved) print resources from home
- Use books and resources that have a balance female and male protagonists
- Check selected award-winning book lists (Newbery Medal, Caldecott Medal, Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award, and Pura Belpré Illustrator Awards), as well as social media (<https://twitter.com/diversebooks>) for suggested book lists (as they

usually provide a variety of backgrounds and genres to use)

Educators ultimately need to understand that diversity is not always about race or color. Diversity is multifaceted, it is language, it is regions, it is gender, it is religion and customs, socioeconomic status and the prior knowledge and background that a student brings. Addressing diversity, as it relates to literacy learning is more than the selection of books and resources. It involves showing respect for the students an educator serves, as well as the students' families. Messages of inclusion are prevalent within many school systems, but to incorporate a classroom environment that truly reflects a changing society takes work on behalf of the educator. "Culturally responsive classrooms specifically acknowledge the presence of culturally diverse students and the need for these students to find relevant connections among themselves and with the subject matter and the tasks teachers ask them to perform" (Montgomery, 2001, p. 4). It involves removing and addressing biases, respect from all parties, and the building of trust. The educator must be passionate about including and introducing diverse perspectives into their classroom setting. They must also be able to show students the value of their voices, and the power of writing, literature, and reading.

Relevance

Students often perform better in the classroom and are willing to learn new or unfamiliar content if they feel a connection to what they are learning or are presented the option of applying their knowledge to real-world scenarios. Freire (1970) states that students should be "learning about the world in order to gain knowledge, by saying, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p.72). Reading fiction often becomes a way for students to escape their realities—possibly poverty, violence, abuse, lack

of resources, or various challenges that they inherit from birth. And reading non-fiction is often the way to show students a life other than their own, which can address truth in the world around us. Relevancy puts more wood on the fires that are often dying within students. The "fire" is sparked when students can connect the traditional literacy learning lessons and skills that educators teach to their everyday lives. Literacy is a form of communication, and so is social media, music, television, and electronic communication (texts, chats, blogging and vlogging, etc.). The lessons that are taught become relevant when students understand the purposes and the value of their tasks at hand as it relates to life outside of the classroom.

Examples of how to incorporate relevance into literacy instruction:

- Incorporate popular culture elements into lessons (songs, television, media, fashion, sports, current events, etc.)
- Have students share their perspectives in a project-based manner (writing, reading, speaking presentations)
- Give students the opportunity to hear stories that reflect their experiences (Compile a class wish-list on topics related to your students) Search the term "Own Voices" or #OwnVoices coined by Corinne Duyvis (@corinneduyvis) online. The term by Duyvis (2015) was created to "recommend kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group".

Engagement

Classrooms with diverse populations mean that there are a variety of needs that are to be met in the setting (and a variety of strengths from which to draw). Keeping all engaged in a classroom takes the ability to be observant of the

students, and the ability to connect with the students. This involves trust in what a teacher is presenting to them and being comfortable in receiving new or unfamiliar lessons and resources. Students need structure and consistency, however, when teaching a diverse group, a variety of learning styles and intelligences are present—therefore, it is the educator’s job to come with an assortment of strategies. Engagement starts with learning the interests of the students, and then merging those interests with the academic knowledge needed.

Examples of how to engage a diverse population of students with literacy instruction:

- Provide writing prompts, books or stories that address students’ life situations or cultural backgrounds. Sharing/providing engaging texts and unique prompts to write about (Ex. Student led or created prompts; reading non-traditional texts like news or media stories, magazines, almanacs, or e-books and online reading.
- Provide native language support and resources for English Language Learners
- Provide non-traditional, print rich, authentic, and practical materials for students to use as resources in class. Think beyond books and magazines— and bring in objects such as labels, advertisements, brochures/pamphlets, directions, etc.
- Focusing on engagement before, during, and after reading (Use strategies that are purposeful and relevant not. Avoid having students use strategies just for the sake of doing so.)

Access

Access to books and at-home literacy resources is an issue that is often out of the hands of the educator. However, educators can support their

students when they are away from the classroom—but they must be willing and know how to do so. Underserved and students in lower socio-economic backgrounds often are at a disadvantage, as their limited access to literacy resources becomes one of the main reasons for academic gaps. Liberiste-Osirus (2019) states, “Students everywhere have an inalienable right to quality education and literacy resources, but they are being denied this right because of systemic variables that are far too great to maneuver alone” (p. 38). Educators must know that students and their families do the best they can. However, their culture in their home might not include the use of books to educate or entertain. Books are valuable resources, but chances are students have other supplemental resources at home (or near) that may be beneficial. This is where the parent/guardian and teacher relationship work together to help our students.

Examples of how educators can improve access to literacy resources and involve parents in literacy learning:

- Make expectations clear as to how the educator and parent can work as partners. Build respect. Build a culture for learning.
- Establish a Communication Plan (social media, apps, share how and when parents can reach out/contact teachers)
- Provide clarity on student learning goals for the week, month, six-weeks, nine-weeks, or the year. (Be sure the plan contains language that is “parent friendly”)
- Meet with parents beyond required parent/teacher conferences, and provide them with resources that are practical and meaningful (Websites, Apps, exposing students to different genres, word study activities)

Access to literacy resources not only affects the disadvantaged, but it affects those afforded with

resources, as they can be misinformed and disadvantaged as well. Just because a child is in a school in which everyone looks like them, doesn't mean that work doesn't need to be done in their literacy setting. Not only should students who lack the resources be presented with options and ways to secure books and learning resources, but students in homogenous class settings should have access to and be presented in class with materials and resources reflective of ideas outside of their normal world. Ease of access to resources and informing parents on how to continue their child's learning outside of the classroom doors is crucial.

Motivation

Helping students to get motivated to read and use their literacy skills is often difficult as "Motivation may be thought of as a general characteristic of a person and, as such, becomes a difficult construct to precisely measure" (Varuzza, M., Sinatra, R., Eschenauer, R., & Blake, B. E., 2014, p. 108). An educator's role is to grow our students' skills and discover what makes them excited to learn. Not only does the problem with motivation lie with the ability to "measure" motivation, but also to determine how much intrinsic or extrinsic motivation a student needs. Students from diverse populations often struggle to "fit in" to the education system. They must understand the value of the content they are learning and feel valued and understood in their classroom setting. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) share that the purposes which students have for different tasks are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, valuing of achievements, goals for achievement, and the social aspects related to motivation. In order to have the desire to read or write, our students must have a personal stake in what we present them, as well as an understanding of how reading and writing affects them socially.

Examples of how to motivate students in relation to literacy learning:

- Class Discussions: Speaking is an important, and often forgotten element of literacy. Allow students the opportunity to vocalize their thoughts and feelings about the texts and resources that are presented to them.
- Choice: Allowing students choice in the type of texts they select to read, as well as exposing them to a variety of choices (genres) is necessary in motivating and engaging students' literacy abilities. Giving students the privilege of choice does not always mean that the educator should leave the entire decision-making process up to students. Educators should provide encouragement and model specific ways to preview texts.
- Value: Underrepresented populations, in most cases come to the classroom feeling excluded. Show them the value in what they are doing in the classroom. This is done by engaging in popular culture that interest the students, and interacting with key players in the students' learning community (parents and collaborating with other teachers). Show students the value in themselves and introduce them to literacy as a tool to empower themselves and the community around them. This is done by teaching real-world relevant lessons and exposing the students to literacy— beyond stories and beyond simply reading and writing, but as a powerful, form of communication that helps them to learn and understand the world around them.

Conclusion

Enhancing the literacy experience for diverse learners involves understanding who the

students currently are within the nation's classrooms. Their backgrounds are diverse, their needs are diverse, and their capabilities are unique. Addressing the needs of the ever-changing and diverse student populations in this country involves understanding of where students have come from, and where they are

capable of going. If educators can seek to eliminate biases, provide expertise to students and parents in order to gain access to quality learning materials, and learn how to engage and motivate students, then the "dream" of our most challenging students being fully literate and successfully is attainable.

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