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Volume 8:
Views from the Virtual Classroom
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Volume 8:
Views from the Virtual Classroom

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Heather Pule, Ed.D., is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Reading and Language Arts in the College of Literacy, Language Arts, and Literature Studies at the University of Houston Clear Lake. Heather received her B.S. in Journalism and M.Ed. in Secondary Education from Texas Tech University, and her Ed.D from the University of Houston. Prior to joining the faculty at UHCL, Heather worked as a Secondary English Language Arts Coordinator and taught middle and high school students, all of which ignited her passion for literacy. Heather's teaching and research interests include using middle grade and YA literature to teach reading authentically and ELAR and content area preservice teachers' literacy lives. She has published literature on both topics.

Katina L. Thomas, Ed.D., is an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education in the Whitlowe R. College of Education at Prairie View A&M University. Katina received her B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies from Prairie View A&M University, and while teaching and coaching in K-12 public education, her M.Ed. and Ed.D. from the University of Houston. Before joining the faculty at PVAMU, Katina worked as an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education and Director of Student Teaching and Field Experiences on campuses within the University of Houston System. Katina has always possessed a love for literacy, and she devotes her time to teaching, coaching, and mentoring pre-service and in-service educators in research-based literacy instruction, as well as in culturally relevant/responsive classroom practices. She has published literature that center on differentiated instructional practices in early literacy environments. Katina's research interests include culturally relevant and responsive literacy instruction for diverse learners, and teacher preparation for teacher candidates and beginning teachers.

Shelly Landreth, Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor of Literacy at the University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa. In her role at UTPB, she also serves as a US Prep Site Coordinator where she enjoys working closely with teacher residents in local school districts. Shelly earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and Reading, a Masters in Library Science, and a Doctorate in Literacy from Sam Houston State University. Prior to joining the faculty at UTPB in 2019, she spent 23 years in K-12 education serving as a secondary ELAR teacher, librarian, and curriculum director in Texas public schools. Shelly's professional interests include issues related to secondary reading, especially equipping secondary educators with the necessary tools to assist their struggling readers, connecting teens with books, and independent reading in secondary classrooms.

Amy Cummins, Ph.D., works as Professor of English in the Department of Literatures and Cultural Studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Dr. Cummins supports preservice teachers of English Language Arts and Reading. She also teaches the undergraduate course in children's and adolescent literature. Amy has been a member of TALE since the organization's first year. Amy served in the role of copyeditor for this 2021 TALE Yearbook. She appreciated reading the excellent articles and learning from Texas educators.

2021 Yearbook Review Board

Views from the Virtual Classroom

Since 2011, the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) has had a history of providing an engaging and high-quality professional conference each year as a major part of the support TALE provides for Texas educators. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 prohibited TALE from hosting what should have been our tenth annual literacy conference. However, like many educators around the country, TALE immediately shifted its focus to an online learning platform, thereby allowing TALE to continue bringing high-quality professional learning sessions to its members and the literacy community.

Beginning in September of 2020, TALE hosted a series of virtual professional learning events led by experts in the field. These sessions were open to all literacy educators. Dr. Benita Brooks, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) for the College of Education and an associate professor of literacy at Sam Houston State University, led the first session on Addressing Barriers to Equity in Literacy Education. Dr. Brooks reminded participants that it is important to get to know students' culture and history, even when it feels uncomfortable at first. Next, Dr. Elsa Cárdenas-Hagan, a bilingual speech and language pathologist, a certified teacher, dyslexia therapist, and certified academic language therapist, led TALE members through a presentation that described a comprehensive and evidence-based approach for teaching the foundational skills of literacy to English Learners. Dr. Chase Young from Sam Houston State University led a virtual session in which participants learned about the critical role of reading fluency as well as ways to effectively incorporate fluency instruction in the classroom in whole group, small group, and remote settings.

Dr. Bethanie Pletcher from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi started off the 2021 virtual sessions. In this session, Dr. Pletcher provided suggestions to those serving in literacy coaching roles for working with teachers in a virtual environment. Drs. Karen Harris and Steve Graham led the next session, which detailed evidence-based practices for developing young writers and examined teacher and student outcomes using Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) across grades 1 through 6. Dr. Emily Dean hosted the last virtual professional learning session of the 2020-2021 school year. Participants in this session learned about the ten most essential things classroom teachers need to know about students with dyslexia and how to accommodate dyslexic learners in the classroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic and shift to virtual instruction impacted how teachers provided instruction and supported students' literacy learning. Consequently, the 2021 TALE Yearbook extends TALE's work to provide professional learning to all literacy educators through articles discussing distance learning, virtual learning, online education, and methods that emerged due to teaching and learning during a pandemic.

TALE is thankful for your support, especially during these unprecedented times. We plan to be back together on March 4-5, 2022, in Plano, Texas, for our 10th annual TALE conference. We hope you all will join us as we celebrate TALE Turns Ten: A Decade of Literacy, Service, and Advocacy.

Sincerely,

Alida Hudson

TALE Chair, 2020-2021

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Magic Happens: Graphic Novel Book Club in the Time of COVID-19

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Abstract

What happened when a global pandemic shut down schools in March of 2020, causing an after-school graphic novel book club to be all but forgotten? Magic happened, when led by a determined instructional literacy coach and a local university professor. Undaunted, they decided to adapt the graphic novel book club into a synchronous virtual experience for third and fourth grade students. The lessons learned along the way about listening, connecting, technology, chance-taking, and superheroes proved to be helpful to their practices as they blazed new trails in delivering education virtually. The authors offer their story and reflections in the hopes to support other educators as they re-frame perspectives and revise curriculum.

Keywords: *Graphic Novels, Book Clubs, Virtual, Elementary, Reading*

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What do *Mighty Jack* (Hatke, 2016), *Zita the Space Girl* (Hatke, 2011), an instructional reading coach, a university professor, and 12 third and fourth graders have in common? A virtual graphic novel book club, magic, and loads of fun! We (Kellie and Mindy) met in a reading capstone course and soon discovered that we shared an interest in graphic novels. In fact, Kellie, the instructional reading coach, facilitated a successful graphic novel book club for second graders that was so popular, the students begged for another book club opportunity. Mindy, the university professor, proposed an after-school graphic novel book club at Kellie's school, where the two could conduct an inquiry into the effect the club would have on reading attitudes. Mindy was excited at the chance to participate in another book club; during her 20 years teaching elementary students and coaching K-5 teachers, facilitating lunchtime and after-school reading and writing clubs were favorite pastimes. Mindy's research interests are teachers' perceptions of popular culture texts (Butler, 2018), and she was eager to return to reading and writing graphic novels and comics with children.

Graphic Novel Book Clubs

Although there is little research about graphic novel book clubs in elementary schools, Boerman-Cornell (2016) investigated the implementation of elementary graphic novel book clubs, meeting with second through fourth graders in a voluntary, lunchtime book club.

Boerman-Cornell (2016) reported that elementary children used multimodal skills to comprehend texts and discussed text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections as they read their graphic novels. Smith (2017), when investigating the effectiveness of after-school book clubs in third grade as an alternative to traditional tutoring, reported that the children made reading gains.

Graphic Novel Book Club Begins

After our in-person book club was approved, we met with 12 third and fourth graders in the school library on Thursday afternoons. We structured the club like a reading/writing workshop (e.g., graphic novel read-aloud, mini-lessons, time for independent reading or writing, snacks, and sharing). Due to snowstorms, snow days, and rescheduled parent events, we met just once during the month of February. By the time of the second meeting in March of 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) was calling for social distancing and warning the public of the dangers of COVID-19. Three days later, all schools were closed, and the book club was forgotten in the midst of global worries.

Graphic Novel Book Club in the Time of COVID-19

Kellie's initial focus was figuring out ways to support striving readers and teachers at home. Her mind raced at night thinking about what else she could do to help. She started taping phonics lessons to support kindergarten and first grade students and recording read aloud/think aloud chapter books for the older students, demonstrating how to think and talk about a book's theme, but it never felt like she was doing enough. Mindy missed the book club, but she was busy converting her in-person classes to online synchronous learning.

Then one night, Kellie remembered the Graphic Novel Book Club. She reached out to the kids in the original club to check on their interest. They were thrilled and eager. Next, Kellie sent Mindy an email to check on her interest and availability to resume the club, and Mindy excitedly said, "Yes!" The club would be virtual and would still meet on Thursdays. An expanded membership was achieved by inviting all 60 third and fourth grade students to join the club. We were back in business.

Planning for a Virtual Graphic Novel Book Club

Our in-person plans for the club were not going to work online. Students did not have access to new graphic novels, paper, or pens. We planned and we wondered: Would instructional videos of making comics work? Would listening to a virtual read aloud be interesting enough? Would the children participate? What kind of guidelines should we provide? Relying on years of experience in the classroom and a desperation to reconnect with kids to save the day, we planned for a graphic novel read-aloud, time to talk, and time to create and share comics. We had no idea how many children would join our first meeting in April or what to expect, and we were excited at the prospect.

Virtual Book Club in the Time of COVID-19

The first thing that became obvious, as most of our original members appeared along with a few new faces, was that students were desperate to connect. These 25-plus students were relieved to see one another, and they needed to talk with their friends and just hear about what others were doing. We provided the first few minutes of that conversation to them, where they, without prompting, led their own discussion, simply and naturally with adequate airtime for all who wanted it.

Finally, we asked the students if they wanted Kellie to read a graphic novel. *Bird and Squirrel on the Run* (Burks, 2012) was suggested due to club status as a favorite. Conversation around the text was limited, but it was obvious that the students enjoyed revisiting an old friend. Reading was stopped halfway through the book to share the "Comic Creator," a comic creation application available on readwritethink.org, where students can create their own comic strips. We ended the meeting with a plan to meet the following week, hopeful that some students would create comics to share.

Whatever our expectations were for the next meeting, they were surpassed in every aspect. When the meeting began, we had more students curious and eager to check out the virtual book club. Once again, we began by letting everyone chat and share if they wanted; many had pets or new toys they wanted to discuss. It was clear our graphic novel club was far more than just an opportunity to talk about comics.

The remainder of our meetings that spring followed the same pattern. Children came and went as the semester continued. Some who had loved the in-person club stopped coming as the virtual version failed to meet their needs, while others eagerly joined the club and attended meetings consistently. As the weather warmed up in May, and outdoor time beckoned to their isolated bodies, even the regulars seemed to show up late and with less enthusiasm. We called an end to our experiment and announced that our last day would be in early June.

Unexpected Lessons

Listening Lessons

The first thing we learned, which should have been the most obvious, is that student and teacher connections are truly the most essential component in our education system. As an instructional coach, Kellie was producing asynchronous learning opportunities for students and staff each day. Her brand-new YouTube Channel, empty prior to the pandemic, expanded by four to five videos per day. Yet, none of it felt as important or essential as the meetings with students face-to-face via virtual applications.

Hearing students' voices and truly listening to them filled all the participants with hope for the future—hope which in April and May of 2020 was hard to find. Here was a glimpse into their immense capacity to learn despite a complete change of venue, content, and purpose. The students proved themselves to be more resourceful and resilient than previously imagined.

Lessons About Connecting

As we connected with students each week, it became clear the curriculum had changed. We became guides to learning how to participate in virtual meetings, how to create and present work virtually, how to practice truly listening to each other under the worst of circumstances, and most importantly, how to keep trying. By finding a way to have our meetings and being there every week, we modeled for these students how to carry on despite adversity. Mindy felt very fortunate to participate in the magic that Kellie created when she gathered the children in this after-school graphic novel book club. The fact that Kellie pulled off this magic act during a global pandemic and emergency teaching was phenomenal. Within this partnership with Kellie, Mindy learned the value of authentic, intentional listening and the value of reaching out to children who were in lockdown, to children who could not have their friends over to play, and who longed for connections with their friends and their teachers.

Technology Lessons

Next, we noted how technology could and should be used as a tool to connect students to each other and their teachers. Technology is a tool, like a pencil, which needs to be used not as a distraction to fill space and time, but instead taught properly and then placed into its rightful place in the communication toolbox of every child in the world. Students need us to prepare them for that world. They need to be connected to technology that asks them to do the creating and thinking, not just answering questions. It is essential that we incorporate the soft skills that will be necessary for success in the 21st century into our daily instruction.

Lessons About Chance Taking

Finally, in this new world for educators, we learned to take a chance. When the idea of meeting virtually was put in motion, it was unclear if our plans would work or meet students' needs. Plans were created, but they were sketchy and only fit for one week at a time. It was likely that some of the students were going to be more adept with the technology than their teachers. And that was more than okay,

because it offered students a real chance to experience adults taking risks at learning. For years, educators dramatically produced one act scenarios where we struggle to spell words or solve math problems, fooling no one. The pandemic made us co-equal learners with our students. We taught about perseverance as they watched us overcome real academic struggles.

Lessons About Superheroes

This remote book club, although not in our initial plans, was just the vehicle to keep these young readers and writers connected with each other, all through the magic of reading and writing graphic novels. Resilience, communication tools, time management, and added value on the soft skills and interpersonal connections between teachers and students seem like a lot to learn from a graphic novel book club that was supposed to last only six sessions. Then again, we were talking about superheroes right from the beginning, and who better to teach us a few super lessons about 21st century education?

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Reimagining Writing Instruction during Pandemic Times: A First Grade Teacher's Journey Creating a Digital Writing Workshop

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Abstract

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers to shift teaching and learning from face-to-face in brick-and-mortar classrooms to online learning platforms. For many teachers, this abrupt change was not an easy transition, particularly when working with students in early childhood who are reading and writing in the early years of literacy development. Yet, using digital tools during writing instruction was not an entirely new concept in education. This article describes a first grade teacher's journey teaching writing to culturally and linguistically diverse young writers through online instruction. Despite the challenges she faced in forging this new experience alone, her shift to online writing instruction demonstrates that a digital writing workshop is both possible and effective with young writers under some conditions. Implications from this study call for professional development that emphasizes process-oriented writing instruction in both face-to-face and online education across grade levels.

Keywords: *Writing Workshop, Emergent Literacy, Elementary, Virtual*

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In March 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers to switch teaching and learning from face-to-face classroom settings to online learning platforms. For many teachers, this abrupt change was not an easy transition, particularly when working with students in early childhood who are reading and writing at an early and emergent literacy level (Clay, 1991). Although using digital technology to facilitate writing instruction in secondary classrooms was already in place before the onset of the pandemic (Hicks, 2009), using digital tools in early elementary classrooms during writing instruction was more often used to enhance (Hower, 2016) rather than facilitate writing instruction. Nevertheless, teachers across the world found themselves teaching basic subjects, including writing and composition, to students of all ages from preschool children to adults through online learning platforms (Secoy & Sigler, 2019).

As literacy researchers who work with preservice and inservice teachers, we wanted to

know how teachers were making this transition to teaching writing online. This article describes one teacher's journey shifting her first grade classroom in a lower socioeconomic suburban school district to fully online instruction. We begin by discussing the context of digital writing instruction and effective writing workshop practices in elementary school. Then we present Sarah, who agreed to share her journey with us. She shared both successes and challenges that she experienced reimagining her writing workshop in a digital environment, including parents' expanded roles in her online classroom. Sarah's experience in implementing the writing workshop online revealed the juxtaposition of technology as a limiting, yet empowering tool for teaching young children.

The Digital Writing Workshop

In the wake of new understandings about reading and writing in the digital age, new definitions for literacy emerged, including new and multiple literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Internet-based technologies inspired teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching, particularly as Web 2.0 brought social networking to classroom literacy instruction across grade levels. At the secondary level, Hicks (2009) introduced the digital writing workshop which incorporates digital technology in a student-centered writing workshop approach. This framework encourages authentic and participatory writing experiences and includes choice, inquiry, conferring, author's craft, publishing, and assessment as pillars of the workshop approach.

Since then, elementary teachers with computers and Internet access in their classrooms have begun using digital tools and apps to enhance their writing instruction. For example, they may use digital apps and platforms, such as Haiku Deck (Haiku Deck, 2019), Buncee (Buncee, 2020), and Adobe Spark (Adobe, 2021), to encourage digital storytelling and Daisy the Dinosaur (Hopscotch Technologies, 2016) or

ScratchJr (Tufts University, 2014) to encourage multimodal compositions (Pytash et al., 2016). Technology-enhanced writing instruction has typically occurred in face-to-face, brick-and-mortar settings where access to computers in the classroom provides students with opportunities to publish their writing or to research their topics. However, according to the "Common Sense Census: Inside the 21st Century Classroom" (Vega & Robb, 2019), "Eight out of 10 U.S. K–12 teachers had either 1-to-1 access or shared computing devices in their classrooms (82 percent)" (p. 29). This suggests that nearly 20% of teachers did not have the technology necessary to teach writing or potentially any other subject in face-to-face classrooms. The onset of the pandemic amplified the digital divide as teachers were forced to teach all subjects through online learning platforms. In 2020, using technology to teach writing became an educational necessity (Downey, 2021).

When Hicks (2009) wrote *The Digital Writing Workshop*, the context for his book was face-to-face classroom instruction. The idea that a world health crisis would push reading and writing instruction to distance learning platforms was not anticipated. The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced digital writing instruction to evolve more rapidly, this time with digital apps and learning management systems as the medium of instruction. For many teachers, this rapid transition to remote and online schooling has been challenging; yet, some teachers aimed to replicate effective writing pedagogy based on the theoretical foundations of a student-centered, process-oriented writing workshop (Nunnery et al., 2021) which includes choice about writing topics, deep dives into craft lessons, writing conferences, and publishing in the culture of a rich literacy learning community. In fact, the writing workshop approach has been a foundational practice for teaching writing across many elementary writing classrooms, including those with students in early childhood for more than 30 years (Calkins, 1986; 1994; 2008; Graves, 1983; 1994).

Beginning Writers and the Writing Workshop

A young writer's journey begins when ideas are random marks or scribbles on a page (Ray & Glover, 2008). In school, these beginning writers become more aware of the purposes for writing, and through their teacher's influence they learn that they are in fact writers. Over time, they become skilled in both the writing process and writing conventions. Describing writing instruction and development, Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) propose that "writing is not just one skill, but a bundle of skills that includes sequencing, spelling, rereading, and supporting big ideas with examples" (p.1). In the writing workshop, young children learn to write about ordinary things, including their everyday lives (Graves, 1994) and exceptional moments. They learn to capture their ideas to make them both visible and permanent through drawing and writing, while cultivating an understanding of story. They learn how to organize and develop information gathered from personal experiences and learned facts. Working in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), children write "under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). For example, in the classroom, teachers model the writing process by writing in front of their students, demonstrating what it means to be a writer. Acting as guides, these teachers show children ways to transform their thinking into visual representations that others can listen to and read (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

In a writing workshop, teachers typically begin writing instruction with a mini-lesson to teach tools and strategies young writers can use in their writing (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Shubitz & Dorfman, 2019). Students are taught the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) while simultaneously learning to transform ideas and experiences into stories about themselves and other meaningful parts of their world. In the prewriting stage, beginning writers often plan their ideas by thinking aloud. Donald Graves (1983) refers to this process as rehearsal, as students explain their thinking aloud to an adult or a partner. Additionally, in order to develop their assigned or self-selected topics, teachers model brainstorming techniques for adding details to their stories. They teach students to use webbing, sketching, and listing to organize their ideas and make their thinking visible (Spandel, 2013). Teachers usher young writers through a process that is both sequential and recursive as they move from prewriting to drafting, through revising and editing, and toward publishing their unique masterpieces.

Under the watchful eye of their teacher, beginning writers create books and other developmentally appropriate and functional forms of writing before tackling traditional academic writing, such as essays and reports (Ray & Glover, 2008). They write letters to Santa, create menus, invitations, or recipes as well as create books about their personal experiences, imaginary characters, and topics of interest. Teachers monitor their development in small group and individual writing conferences.

During the writing workshop, teachers use conversation in the context of literature and authentic writing experiences to teach writing skills and model what it means to be a writer (Ray & Glover, 2008). They discuss literature, writing, and the work that writers do in small groups, orienting children to think and talk like members of the literacy club (Ray & Glover, 2008; Smith, 1988). In small group and individual writing conferences, teachers tailor suggestions about students' writing around their unique strengths and needs (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) to support them in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and to move them toward becoming independent and proficient writers.

The writing workshop ends with a time for sharing to celebrate the writers and showcase

their work. As these beginning authors grow within the context of writing in school and mature in age and skill, they learn to tell and compose more sophisticated stories. They learn how to present their messages in more conventional and more advanced ways. The writing workshop environment may vary slightly from classroom to classroom, but the essential aim of strategically scaffolding students' movement through the writing process is often the same. When integrating technology into the writing workshop, teachers use it to support writing instruction in a variety of ways (Lacina, 2003).

Technology and Traditional Writing Workshop with Beginning Writers

In the early grades, students often use technology as a tool to enhance their writing at various stages of the writing process and to produce writing in more creative formats (Hower, 2016). Students use technology to research and to represent their ideas with digital images and videos that support their thinking. Teachers also use technology to provide students with feedback using the comment capabilities within shared applications, such as Google Docs (Google, 2021) or Seesaw (Seesaw, 2021). Using technology with learners is not uncommon in districts equipped with computers in the classroom (Braverman, 2016); however, at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, many teachers were ill-equipped to transition from using technology as an enhancement tool to using it as the medium for delivering instruction (Schwartz, 2020). For many teachers already grappling with ways to use technology effectively in the face-to-face classroom, finding engaging ways to reach young learners in cyberspace (Schwartz, 2020; 2021) pushed them to become creative and resourceful. Some teachers, like the teacher in our study, even found themselves learning new strategies and tools to teach writing.

The Shift

With the abrupt transition to online literacy instruction, classroom walls suddenly changed, giving way to cyber walls across grade levels. As literacy researchers, we were curious about how teachers taught writing through distance learning. We wanted to know how teachers engaged students in the writing process remotely during the crisis of COVID-19. In addition, we wanted to know how teachers implemented the writing workshop with young writers in an online environment. We were also interested in finding ways to support teachers in their work to teach beginning writers online.

In October 2020, in our quest to understand and support elementary educators, we met Sarah, a first grade teacher who elected to teach online when no other first grade teachers at her school volunteered. As a teacher with six years of experience teaching fifth and first grades, Sarah accepted this challenge. She explained that she liked technology and wasn't afraid to try new things but felt somewhat alone in this journey to teach first grade completely online.

Sarah's online classroom of 25 students was similar to her previous face-to-face classroom where she maintained a routine in which all subjects were scheduled at specific times. During the six hour school-day, her self-contained online class met live through Google Meet (Google, 2017), a video-conferencing app, for whole group, small group, and individual instruction. Although Sarah's students had access to several digital tools at home that they learned to use with relative ease, including a camera and microphone, she required parents or guardians to be available to troubleshoot technology glitches.

Our conversation with Sarah provided insight into the ways teachers of young children are implementing writing instruction online. While Sarah's teaching practices may or may not reflect the practices of colleagues placed in a similar situation, Sarah's experience reminds us

of the thoughtful and intentional decisions that many teachers are making in an effort to create effective online literacy environments. As we listened to her describe her new instructional reality, we reimagined the writing workshop online as both possible and empowering despite certain limitations.

Reimagining the Writing Workshop in a Digital Environment

Sarah applied her prior knowledge about using a writing workshop approach in the face-to-face classroom to influence the type of writing environment she sought to create for her online setting. She told us that "It's different; however, we try to keep it very similar to my face-to-face classroom." She included whole group mini-lessons, small group guided instruction, and writing conferences to develop young writers through the stages of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

She began the school year similarly to her colleagues who were teaching in face-to-face classrooms by orienting students to the new writing environment. However, while her colleagues assigned students in-class writing folders to store their drafts, and taught them where to find the papers, pencils, and other tools needed for independence during the classroom workshop, Sarah supported her students' independence by teaching them to use digital tools such as the camera feature and other illustration tools embedded in the Seesaw (2021) digital platform. At the beginning of the school year, Sarah taught her students how to take pictures of their work. She found that "It was very easy for first graders to just click on that camera and take a picture of a paper." After taking pictures of their stories that they created on paper, they uploaded them into the learning management system and received her oral feedback.

Sarah set aside specific time in her schedule to focus on providing students with feedback on their writing. She explained that in her face-to-face classroom, "I can just do these conferences, while I'm walking around and I'm looking at the writing." However, in an online classroom, she would have to find larger chunks of time to conference with students. She said, "Here we have to make a whole day of it," because "timing is an issue and then not being able to see the students to provide immediate feedback, right, then and there; that's an issue."

Additionally, Sarah worked with students on their writing goals during individual writing conferences while the rest of the class worked on other assignments online at home, but still under Sarah's watchful gaze. When we asked her how she managed to conduct individual writing conferences while also supervising the whole class online, she explained the need for flexibility: "I don't do all the students all the time." Sometimes she conferred with students in small skill groups instead of individually. She added, "If I feel like five students are on punctuation, and they are not doing punctuation, then I would pull five of them, and I would meet with them, or I will just do it during guided reading time."

Effective management of any writing workshop, whether it is in a face-to-face classroom or an online environment, requires routine (Shubitz & Dorfman, 2019). We wondered what a writing workshop routine looked like in Sarah's online classroom and how she managed to engage first graders' attention online for an entire school day. She replied, "Oh, well, they have a schedule. So we have whole group meetings and then we have small group meetings." During the whole group meeting, Sara taught and demonstrated a skill using a digital whiteboard feature in Seesaw. Although writing workshop teachers already balance routine and flexibility, Sarah found that shifting her writing workshop online forced her to make more spontaneous decisions than normal so that she could meet the

needs of her students. She explained, "Just right now I'm doing whatever I feel like, whoever needs it." In both settings, she would hold writing conferences while students worked independently following a whole group skills lesson. She described the routine:

> In whole group, I would do a hook, model a little bit of guided [instruction], and then in small group I do the whole guided practice and their independent practice. Then they go to these journals and they work on them and submit them for assessment.

Because Sarah required her students to be visible on camera, she was able to monitor their independent activities while she worked with small groups of students. Instead of rotating through learning centers organized around the classroom, students would complete their independent writing and activities in subject specific digital journals found within the Seesaw platform.

Brainstorming

When we asked her how she facilitated the writing process online with emerging writers, she replied, "Now the students who I know are emerging writers or are unable to write at all, they create picture books on Book Creator." Sarah offered an example of how she facilitated brainstorming: "They come up with the topic and make a heart map or something to come up with various topics." Much like what happens in a face-to-face classroom, Sarah modeled brainstorming ideas for writing in front of the whole class and during writing conferences. She told us how she brainstormed with students when writing a "How To" piece:

> This week we did "How To"- explanatory text where they came up with what they knew how to teach. They came up with a bunch of topics. I talked to them about it. I conferenced with them. We discussed the topics, then they created the illustrations.

They did all of this on paper and took a picture on Seesaw.

Drafting and Conferring

Students in Sarah's first grade classroom were in various stages of writing development. Some students told stories by drawing, others were beginning to shape letters, and some were able to write complete words and sentences. As she did in a face-to-face context, when teaching online she also guided students through the drafting process by conferring with them one-on-one. She explained that the process of helping students communicate their stories in their first drafts online was much like what she would have done in her face-to-face classroom, with the exception of taking pictures to submit assignments. Sarah recounted, "Then they go on to writing the draft. They do the same thing, writing on paper, taking a picture, sending it in. Then I offer them some suggestions."

Sarah offered suggestions through oral feedback that she recorded for students to listen to during independent work time. She stated, "I can write comments and I can even record myself, giving them a comment on audio, so they can listen to the comments and know what to fix, what I like, and what they need to work on."

Editing and Revising

Sarah taught her students to revise and edit their writing during mini-lessons and in small group conferences which focused on letter formation, spelling, and conventions. She recognized that younger students working online needed to revise by using traditional paper and pencil methods rather than by typing or using a digital trackpad. She shared this example:

> I asked them to use color markers, crayons, just the way we do in the classroom. It's to just kind of show where they edited, what they did, how they revised; what they added. They use those paper strips. They staple

them together to show where they added a new sentence, take a picture on the Internet and then they type that on Book Creator.

Sarah recognized that many of her students were still developing fine motor skills, learning the alphabet, and basic sight words. Therefore, she also asked her students to use pencils and crayons to form letters and compose grammatical approximations, which she described as follows: "We're working on punctuation and uppercase letters right now. And depending on the writing, that's how I teach them." Thus, Sarah led her students through the editing and revising process according to their individual academic needs. She found teaching emergent writing skills online with digital tools challenging; therefore, she had to innovate. "We have to make everything ourselves and we need time," she explained when referring to the individual journals she created for students to use in SeeSaw. Although she knew that resources exist online, she didn't have enough time to research and develop them herself which is why she used traditional paper and pencil methods to teach editing and revising.

Essentially, Sarah blended technologies to teach editing and revising. She taught her students what it means to edit and revise by using the tactile tools offered by movable paper strips to move and add sentences in their writing. She could assess their process through the pictures her students submitted of their work, and then offered them the opportunity to publish their revised work digitally.

Publishing and Sharing

After conferring with students about their writing, Sarah helped her students navigate websites and other digital resources to publish their work. In particular, she used Book Creator (Tools for Schools, 2020), a social platform that stores student creations in a library and facilitates an online version of the author's chair (Graves & Hansen, 1983). Sarah pointed to a

Seesaw (2021) screen on her computer to show us where her students posted their final products, explaining that "They can do a lot of things. They can make comic books. They can add images there. They can make a nice book and then everyone in the classroom and whoever I've shared the library with can read those books." Then she described her Friday routine for celebrating her students across all stages of the writing process:

> On Fridays I have author's chair where I select random students and display their books on the screen where they read their books. Classmates offer their comments and feedback. Now the students who I know are emerging writers or [who] are unable to write at all create picture books on Book Creator. They just add pictures so that they're included as well.

Sarah used Class Dojo (Class Dojo, 2011) to randomly call on students to take turns reading their books aloud as if they were sitting in a traditional author's chair. The online peers were able to unmute themselves to provide oral feedback to the young author's digital creation. These weekly writing celebrations helped Sarah build the important aspect of community found in her class's "literacy club" (Ray & Glover, 2008; Smith, 1988). She wanted her students to be able to celebrate each other's accomplishments and demonstrate the respect endemic to a writing workshop which promotes sharing written and visual products in front of an audience and receiving peer feedback. Sarah had modeled this process during mini-lessons. She explained that "I have shown them books which are pictures. I talked about books that are out there, that authors write with just pictures, so that way they [students] feel included when they tell their story."

Both Sarah and her students overcame several challenges in this new environment. She blended technologies using traditional paper and pencil methods with digital tools to teach the writing

process, all the while recognizing the importance of teaching basic skills. To this end, parents became integral members of her classroom community, which she found beneficial yet sometimes challenging.

Developing Parent Partnerships: Balancing a Delicate Relationship

Sarah realized that parents were integral to student success in her classroom; yet sometimes their presence alongside students required delicate handling of parental involvement related to student privacy and reliable assessments. Still, Sarah needed parents to be on hand to manage potential technology issues.

Before beginning instruction, Sarah needed to make sure that parents understood the implications of having an online student who is just in first grade and still learning basic technology and literacy skills. In our interview, she explained, "So we have to really educate parents. That's what I did for the first two or three weeks of school." First grade students need assistance with basic computer skills such as powering on the computer, navigating to the correct site, creating timers for class times, as well as noting schedules for their special co-curricular classes. Additionally, Sarah had to anticipate technology problems her young students might encounter and not know how to resolve by themselves. For example, "What if the Internet's not working or they can't restart computers? They can't troubleshoot that kind of stuff." Therefore the beginning-of-the-year training for parents offered a step-by-step understanding of what the school day entails and where students might need the most support. She also had the adult family members sign a written agreement acknowledging their responsibility to be available at home to provide technology support for their students during the school day. Although she was often able to resolve technology problems directly with students, she said, "I have taught my students to go get their parents in case I need them."

Parental support influenced writing in the online classroom in both positive and negative ways. Sarah mentioned that it was helpful for parents to see how their students were doing independently and where they needed the most assistance. According to Vygotsky (1978), students perform better when they work in their zone of proximal development which usually requires the guidance of someone more capable to guide them during the learning process. In a face-to-face classroom, teachers often call students to the teacher's table to work with them directly and to assess their progress informally. To facilitate this online, Sarah was able to call the names of specific students to work with, while the rest of the class worked independently but still under her supervision. She found it easier to keep her young learners in one large room, rather than to move them into smaller breakout groups, so that she could monitor them working and call their names when she required their attention, just as she would in a face-to-face classroom. Essentially, her students became adept at knowing when to tune in to the teacher, and when to focus on their independent work.

The first grade students sometimes needed help at home to navigate the technology when problems arose. Therefore, Sarah depended on parental support to help resolve technology glitches in the event she could not. Parents adopted many roles in the online environment, including the roles of caregiver, tech help, mentor, and teacher at times. Indeed, parental assistance with technology was warranted; however, parental assistance with writing was seen as an obstacle to assessing a student's true writing ability. In our interview, Sarah described a situation where a parent provided too much support. She explained that it was obvious that the student's submitted writing was different from what she had previously produced, resulting in "an assessment that may not be reliable." During the interview, Sarah would refer to students who "can't write." Seeking clarification, we asked her to explain what she

meant. She replied, "Well, there's scribbles, but then that's the thing. I don't get those scribbles unless I'm in the small group...that's one issue with assessment because the parents would help the student." Sarah described the different styles of handwriting she had noticed on the student's spelling test which raised doubts about her true writing ability. Sarah confirmed this inconsistency later when working with the student in a small group. Sarah described the situation in this way:

> When I finally had her in a small group, all by herself, I asked her to write some words and she just scribbled on the paper and put it in front of the camera. I had a feeling she couldn't write. ...[T]he parents are probably making her copy.

Privacy concerns also surfaced as parents were able to observe Sarah teach and interact with students. They noticed when students responded or didn't respond. She described two of her concerns: "I don't really like other parents looking at a student who cannot answer questions and sometimes the parents ask a lot of questions and that interrupts learning." Therefore Sarah realized that she must find ways to minimize parental involvement in order to protect her students' privacy. Our interview with Sarah revealed the need to balance useful intervention and unwarranted interference from parents.

Experiencing the Juxtaposition of Technology: Limiting, Yet Empowering

Shifting her classroom to an online environment offered Sarah other affordances and limitations as well. Time constraints seemed persistent. She often wished for more time to work with students and find resources to more effectively work with students, stating that "The most important thing that we need right now is time - so, resources and time." Teaching online seems to take more time and energy than she might have expended to prepare for face-to-face

teaching. For example, checking-in or conferences take much longer online than in a face-to-face setting, requiring students to be strategically scheduled throughout the day. Nevertheless, digital tools give students more opportunities to be creative. Proudly showcasing her students' digital books, Sarah explained, "So she made this book. I think she's still working on it; so they can add a lot of graphics and things. They can make their cover." In the absence of paper, markers, and crayons, creative digital tools for publishing are required in Sarah's online classroom, whereas they may have been optional in the face-to-face classroom. She explained that "Now the students who I know are emerging writers or [who] are unable to write at all, they create picture books on Book Creator." Thus, students with writing challenges feel a part of the writing community because they are able to incorporate pictures to tell their stories. Digital tools support writers who are still developing the skills and strategies needed to produce text independently (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Self-Learning: Building a New Knowledge and Skill Set

Sarah's interview revealed a lack of district support and understanding of the complexity of her role as an online first grade teacher. She described many hours of self-learning in her journey to replicate and adapt what she knew to be useful and effective practices from her face-to-face classroom. For example, she created digital learning journals for each of her students, complete with subject-level tabs. Her district provides limited training for using many of these tools, so it was up to her to research ways to best serve her students. Because there was only one online teacher per grade level at her school, she did not have the benefit of collaborating with other team members who teach the same material. Like many teachers, Sarah entered a solo journey with little formal training but an abundance of determination.

Now What?

Thirteen years since Troy Hicks (2009) launched writing teachers on a path of digital writing instruction, writing teachers across grade levels have found technology to be an integral element of their teaching. Although teachers in the elementary grades may have begun using technology apps in additive ways to enhance writing (Hower, 2016) rather than as an integral parts of the writing process, Sarah's online classroom demonstrates the potential for using technology as a means (the writing process) to an end, rather than as the means to completing stages of writing. Sarah's prior experience teaching writing in a workshop approach and her affinity for technology allowed her to shift her writing workshop from a face-to-face classroom to an online setting. Although her journey has not been easy, she showed us that teaching writing online is possible. She ushered her students through the stages of the writing process, including brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. She remained more flexible, spontaneous, and creative than she may have anticipated, suggesting that teaching online may be more time-consuming than face-to-face teaching. Although her school district recommended using certain technology apps and platforms, she spent endless hours finding effective ways to implement them, discovering new tools to meet her students' needs, and training parents on technology and classroom expectations. Historical trends in educational technology suggest that digital technology will continue evolving (Howard & Mozejko, 2015), and the threat of the current surge in the Delta variant of the coronavirus tells us that the pandemic is not yet over (Medical Xpress, 2021). Although the need for schools to resume face-to-face teaching is great (Meckler et al., 2021), the fact that teachers have been able to conduct school online shows us that virtual learning is possible, albeit not ideal for all students (Povich, 2020).

Process Matters

Sarah's experience shifting her first grade writing workshop online shows us that the important thing about teaching writing is the process. Digital tools and apps may facilitate teaching the stages of the writing process. For example, a digital camera and microphone allow two-way communication between teachers and students in both synchronous and asynchronous time. Mini-lessons (i.e., brainstorming, revising, and editing) can be modeled in whole group sessions and reinforced in small group student-teacher conferences while other students work independently on assignments. Students then publish their work using digital tools. However, the essence of effective writing instruction is the ability to usher students through the critical thinking students need to work reflexively (Giles, 2010) through the stages of writing and composition. To this end, community and collaboration are crucial. Sarah collaborated with parents to make her online classroom viable. The strength of the writing workshop approach is that it encourages authentic and participatory writing experiences, including choice, inquiry, conferring, and deep content learning into the author's craft (Robertson et al., 2016). Because writing is complex, explicit attention to the writing process matters (Graves, 1983; Graves 1994). Digital tools may be useful for teaching students to apply the stages of the writing process to accomplish a goal and to document products created along the way; however, it is important to remember Donald Murray's (1972) timeless advice about writing instruction: "we are not teaching a product, we are teaching a process" (p. 1).

Virtual Academies and Professional Development

Today, students across grade levels compose text, revise, edit, and publish using classroom technology devices, including computers and tablets. Now that COVID-19 has pushed teachers and students of all ages online, we know that students, even first graders, can learn

to read and write through distance learning. Sarah's experience shows us that writing with digital tools has evolved from being an optional add-on in an early childhood writing workshop to becoming the necessary medium of instruction regardless of age or ability. Given the uncertain future of the pandemic, many school districts are opening virtual learning academies to accommodate students who cannot attend school in person (Paykamian, 2021), and we predict that many teachers will now incorporate more technology they may have learned to use during the pandemic into their teaching when they return to face-to-face classrooms (St. George et al., 2021). This has implications for professional development that should focus on the explicit teaching of strategies that train teachers to work within the parameters of evolving technology without losing sight of the literacy process involved in learning how to read and write.

To this end, Sarah's experience represents the beginning of the journey. In our continuing research, we plan to revisit with her as well as to hear the stories of other online writing teachers to learn more about their evolving experiences, including the achievements of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Social networks are abuzz with rhetoric about closing learning gaps for students, especially students of color, who have fallen behind from inconsistent learning experiences due to distance learning (Reilly, 2020). How can we help teachers adopt the attitude of moving forward instead of remediating potential learning losses from this past year of COVID-19 influenced writing instruction?

Lessons Learned: Move Forward; Don't Look Back

Sarah's experience has taught us that young children can indeed learn to write through online instruction. Regardless of the classroom structure, teachers must work with children in their zone of proximal development (Vygostky, 1978). For teachers who are returning to their traditional classroom settings, we urge them to look ahead and not backward. We know that writing is a developmental process for learners across grade levels. We challenge teachers to embrace the stories these young writers have to tell from learning in quarantine behind a computer screen. Although we have heard about children who never logged into their school platforms during the pandemic (Thomas, 2021), we anticipate that children working from home during the pandemic amassed other relevant lessons and stories to tell. Rather than focusing on potential learning loss (Goldstein, 2021; St. George et al., 2021), teachers should meet students returning to school from the pandemic with empathy and seek opportunities to move students forward from their lived experiences. We encourage teachers to tap into those experiences.

Maybe the pandemic has accelerated education which is often slow to shift paradigms in step with societal changes (Masters, 2020). Sarah's experience shows us that teaching young learners online is both possible and effective for students with support at home. Sarah also suggested that online learning may be better suited to students who require flexible learning environments, including the space to move around while working. Yet, not all students have the luxury of an attending adult to supervise and assist as needed during the school day. Thus, access to technology, professional development, and equity remain foreboding issues regardless of where school takes place.

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Let's Blog About It: Capturing Preservice Teachers' Thoughts About Literacy Education

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Abstract

During the COVID pandemic, faculty and staff working within educator preparation programs faced the challenge of having to get future educators the tools they needed to be successful in a "normal" setting while working to set up and create their own virtual environments. This article looks at the practice of structuring course assignments in a way that preservice teachers create reflective blogs to demonstrate their knowledge of concepts taught in their courses (in this case, a literacy course). The blog format used in the 2020-21 academic year supported preservice teachers in developing their teaching philosophies and professional identities. What started out as a new way and a challenge for preservice teachers ended up giving them an additional set of educational technology skills and a digital footprint of their journey to becoming an educator.

Keywords: *Preservice Teachers, Reflection, Blogs, Literacy, Virtual*

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In early 2020, a pandemic caused the world to shut down and become more innovative in the way in which everyone interacted. Whether personal or professional, decisions had to be made with physical distancing in mind. This included students of all ages and abilities using virtual classroom spaces. One key area that was impacted was the training of future educators. What was once a "hands on" process with several semesters of face-to-face learning in junior and senior level literacy courses, in which students learned about reading, writing, and assessment through project-based learning, became temporarily a virtual learning experience.

With a pandemic threatening the health and safety of students and educators, all educational systems had to revamp their curriculum, the delivery mode, and the ways students demonstrated their understanding. Colleges already had online teaching and learning structures in place, such as Learning Management Systems, and offered some form of courses online, but many of the major universities were not prepared for every course to be delivered completely online. And even if faculty were prepared, many students were not prepared for the shift in course delivery.

The stresses and uncertainty of the pandemic made it a tough task to motivate students and required innovation. This article's focus is on the use of blogs when preparing preservice teachers in a literacy course. Using blogs allowed teacher candidates to explore taking risks when planning instruction and exposed them to a new strategy that can also nurture and guide their future students' literacy identities. The goal should be to prepare children to be fully literate in all aspects, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Blogs allow practice

with all four skills. Before the pandemic, teacher candidates used essays to reflect upon "hot" literacy topics, and writing blogs allowed them to be more engaged, more reflective, and to learn a new skillset by synthesizing knowledge gained. Using blog posts allowed students to write in a more personal and reflective tone and customize their blogs to their individual style. The blog format further aided in crafting their teaching philosophies.

Reflective Blogs for Preservice Teachers

Engagement

Students benefit from having opportunities to learn in a variety of formats. Educators often must find a balance with tools that interest students and effective practices that allow students to fully demonstrate their knowledge. Donovan et al. (1999) stated that "instruction can be viewed as helping the students unravel individual strands of belief, label them, and then weave them into a fabric of more complete understanding" (p. 11). It is a complex task to provide engaging instruction and get students to "buy in" to new learning content, especially when the pandemic changed the landscape of our classrooms and school systems.

When working with preservice teachers, a great deal of time is spent teaching pedagogical practices and specific subject area content. Often, the focus within educator preparation programs is the content, and then preservice teachers finally can apply their knowledge in their later semesters, right before graduating. This issue often creates a disconnect among theory, process, and application. With blog posts, teacher candidates are allowed to express their opinions, ideas, and knowledge and work toward closing their disconnection.

Articulation of Knowledge and Application

Blogging is a practice that bridges the gap between the traditional classroom essay and academic writing and offers more of a personal approach. According to Tess (2013), "researchers found that blogs supported self-expression and self-reflection, as well as social interaction and reflective dialogue" (p. 64). Getting students to blog about course content throughout their semester and documenting their experiences in learning how to be a literacy educator not only allowed students to explore new topics, but it also allowed them to apply the literacy skills, standards, and strategies (writing, summarizing, forming opinions, etc.) that they would teach in their future classrooms.

When researching the effectiveness of using blogs with preservice teachers in China, Huang, et al. (2011) found that "The use of blogs encouraged students to strengthen their own skills with regards to easily sharing course key points and to fully express their thoughts in such an environment with less peer and time pressures" (p. 105). In addition to demonstrating learning of the current practices and philosophies, blog assignments allow preservice teachers to form their teaching "voice" through articulation of ideas and synthesizing the ideas of others. This low-stakes format can be used to provide insight as to whether students are grasping material, as well as it is opening the door for additional conversations (peer to peer and student to instructor) beyond content knowledge and standards.

A New Skillset

Educators in general might utilize or have some form of access to technology in the classroom, but through this quick shift to online learning, many discovered that they were not as prepared as they thought. The pandemic showed that teacher education programs need to work toward developing stronger curriculum that integrates technology so that their teacher candidates are ready when it comes time to put their skills to the test in the classroom (Alelaimat et al., 2020). By having students create blogs in their preservice junior level courses (specifically literacy courses), it allows room for developing more technology skills (formatting, use of

visuals, creating headers and themes, embedding videos, etc.). The more that education preparation programs can devote to developing new skillsets, the more prepared teacher candidates will be once they are in the field. Technology can be intimidating, but with opportunities for practice and more exposure and usage, the fears that develop with its instructional use lessen.

Getting Started with Blogging

Blogs may be new to some preservice teachers. When implementing something new, preservice teachers can benefit from "an example of how to locate and adapt digital resources effectively for use within a learning activity, as well as examine and evaluate critically" (Brush & Saye, 2009; Lee, 2008, p. 48). Prior to implementation, students should be presented with examples of quality education blogs (see figure 1) as well as scholarly work (peer reviewed academic articles and reports). For the blogs teacher candidates would create, it would be ideal for their work to fall somewhere in between these two formats: traditional blogging supported by scholarly resources.

Students also need clear expectations from the instructor. The following descriptors could be used to describe the expectation for blogs of good quality:

- Free of misinformation (material contradictory of the educator prep program and/or professional literacy standards)
- Inclusive of diverse perspectives and various teaching strategies/materials
- Well-organized
- Visually appealing
- Contains useful information for other educators

It is suggested that the instructor also take part in modeling prior to students beginning their own blogs. Sharing videos related to blogging and

creation of themes, titles, and other features would provide even more structure for students.

In the final step, before blogs were officially created, the students shared a discussion post detailing which blogging website they would be using for their own live blog and why they chose that platform (Google sites, Edublogs, WordPress, etc.). The choices varied each semester, and from student to student, but many candidates were comfortable with using Edublogs (Incsub, 2021) to create their blog site, as they felt that it had simple functionality, offered basic but meaningful features, and was easiest to navigate.

Literacy Blog Topics

The literacy course that utilized blogs also had built in outcomes related to reading, writing, lesson planning, and differentiation. Blog topics were chosen with intention and purpose. With what normally would have been a weekly reflection/discussion in a face-to-face class, the decision had to be made on how to continue to encourage and engage students in course learning objectives beyond utilizing a discussion board to write traditional reflection papers. The decision was made to personalize the learning experience; hence, four blog assignments were created and became a part of the course.

Through instructor-created prompts, the students wrote their blog posts based on the materials and resources shared by the professor of the course, as well as discussions that were conducted, and using resources they found through research. Below are examples of the topics that were used:

- The Beginning/Getting Started: This is the initial post in which the students introduce themselves, and they share why they are using the blog, and how they feel about creating a blog (see Figure 1).
- The Physical Literacy Environment: Students share key components of a

literacy rich classroom and share ideas for their own future classrooms.

- Literacy Lesson Planning: Students share their knowledge about literacy lesson planning and are also encouraged to share a memorable literacy lesson that they were a part of as a student in their K-12 years (see Figure 2).
- Diversity in Literacy: Students address diversity of resources in books and lesson materials— from a racial, social, and cultural perspective, as well as using a variety of materials to differentiate due to learning needs.

Other possible topics that could be explored include literacy assessment, differentiation, digital literacies, word study, motivation, writing, the science of teaching reading, or any topic that allows students to question and think through various philosophies and ideas.

Figure 1

Beginning Blog Post Example

Blog Post #1- The Beginning

Introduction (1 paragraph): Share how you are feeling about creating a blog related to literacy education.

Body (1-2 paragraphs): Share what you hope to learn before you begin teaching in your own classroom (whatever subject you will be teaching—math, science, social students, etc.)

Close it out (1 paragraph): WITHOUT surfing the internet to find the perfect answer… What do you think are three key elements that are needed to have an ideal and effective literacy classroom setting? (We will see how your thinking shifts throughout the semester)

Figure 2

Literacy Lesson Planning Blog Example

Blog Post #3- Literacy Lesson Planning

This blog post should be in two separate parts. The parts are described below.

Section I: Describe the most memorable ELAR/English/Literacy lesson that you have ever experienced (can be at any academic level). Discuss things such as the grade level, the experience in that class, the activity itself, and what made the activity special. (1-2 paragraphs)

Section II: Discuss 2-3 important tips that you feel people like yourself would benefit from in literacy lesson planning (Ex. Preservice teachers--those who are just beginning with writing lesson plans). You can use online resources to assist you, or any resources you have been provided with in the course. However, if you use words other than your own, PLEASE give credit and cite your sources at the end of your post. (1-2 paragraphs)

Preservice Teachers' Reactions

This process took place over two semesters, and each time there were students who were comfortable with the process and using technology, and others who had little knowledge of blogging. Some preservice teachers were very hesitant about taking on the assignments and sharing their knowledge and opinions with the world, but through discussions about the blogs, they shared that they were excited to be able to do something new, something they had not done in other courses before.

Some students' blogs were more elaborate (they contained photos, visuals/charts, and videos), while some only met the minimum requirements (answering the questions and length requirements on the prompts). There were even a couple of candidates who planned to use their blog long term. They pulled content from other courses and created a full site that featured reflections and resources from all their courses in the university's education program.

Future Application of Classroom Blogs for Preservice Teachers

Blogging in this course was curated with more intention than reflection and regurgitation of course content. The creation of a blog website for preservice teachers was something to which they can later refer when they are in service teachers, as well as continuing to add content to the blog website and using it as a digital portfolio. The format not only could be used in literacy courses but could span to other courses and subjects in the department or campus as well.

Reflecting on Blogs in a Literacy Course

Using blogs with teacher candidates proved to be rewarding, and it opened the door for more conversations about literacy and technology as

well as the process of teaching in general. Getting into the minds of preservice educators was exactly what was needed during such a turbulent time. It improved the rigor of the course, and it gave authentic insight to who the students were, where they want to be, and it allowed them to begin to close the gaps that preservice teachers often experience between theory and practice.

With the incorporation of blog posts as assignments, teacher candidates were engaged and actively formulating ideas about the process of literacy education. They used their own perspectives and materials presented to them from their professor to articulate topics that were challenging yet meaningful. They were also able to view their peers' blogs and have conversations peer to peer about concepts new to them. These are skills that will be valuable for an educator. Inservice teachers should be using research-based resources and strategies, as well as their own prior experiences with teaching and learning to improve and shape their classrooms. What started as a challenge due to the pandemic for students and their professor ended up giving them an additional set of educational technology skills and reflective documentation of their journey to become an educator.

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Teaching Toward the Construction of Literacy Identities: Transforming an Undergraduate Literacy Methods Course using Authentic Literacy Practices

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Abstract

The literacy classroom is a powerful context for students to learn about their own lives and the lives of others. By integrating lessons on identity and diversity in the literacy classroom, the learning experiences become more relevant and engaging. Not only is this the case for K-12 students, but also for the preservice teachers in teacher preparation programs. This article shares the transformation of one undergraduate literacy methods course in designing instruction focused on identity work in an online environment. Intentional pedagogical shifts put reading, writing, and talking about identity at the center of the literacy methods course in Spring 2021. Through reading diverse texts and using writing as a tool for self-discovery, one literacy professor shares potential for the future of literacy teacher education, whether taught in-person or online.

Keywords: *Identity, Diversity, Reading, Writing, Preservice Teachers*

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As an elementary school teacher, I often designed my writing instruction around organized units of study. Typically, these units focused on a single genre and progressed recursively through the writing process. This method of literacy instruction is grounded in the writing workshop framework as defined by Calkins (1994) and subsequent curricular resources developed with her colleagues at The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). In my later role as a literacy coach, I supported teachers in planning literacy instruction this way.

Now, as a teacher educator, I also teach through immersive experiences by incorporating reading and writing workshop into my class each week. Preservice teachers (PSTs) learn how to teach reading and writing by engaging in authentic acts of literacy and reflecting on the practices through the lens of a teacher and a student. Not only does this workshop process create more engaging learning experiences for the future teachers, but it also helps them internalize literacy practices by doing the work their future students will do and considering how the methods might look in their classroom one day.

During the Spring 2021 semester, I have grown in my understanding of what it means to teach reading and writing by moving away from only teaching genre-based units to situating literacy activities in the construction of PSTs' identity. Teaching through immersive and authentic literacy acts creates opportunities to read, write, and talk in ways that celebrate each other's differences and build a community of learners. These experiences cultivate an environment that

encourages PSTs to appreciate diverse perspectives and explore their own literacy identities through the intentional selection of inclusive literature and writing opportunities.

Identity is "composed of notions of who we are, who others say we are (in both positive and negative ways), and whom we desire to be" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 67). Because our identities are constantly being redefined both by ourselves and others (Muhammad, 2020), writing can serve as a tool for self-discovery while reading can provide truths about diverse groups of people. By integrating lessons on identity into literacy instruction, the learning experience for students is more relevant and engaging (Muhammad & Mosley, 2021).

McCarthey and Moje (2002) contend, "identity construction might be unconscious" because of the nature of forming identities as we interact within social, cultural, and political groups (p. 233). However, the way we represent our identity is more "conscious and strategic" because of how we choose to represent (or not represent) qualities of ourselves in a certain way (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 233). Therefore, the instruction inside of a literacy classroom, whether in a K-12 school or university, can be a way to help support and challenge the identities of learners. Most importantly, teaching literacy and providing a safe space for learners to explore their identity can be "stabilizing" for learners (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 333). Amidst a global pandemic, the possibility of stability is even more critical for young adult learners.

A focus on identity in a literacy classroom is not just about self-discovery, but also about nurturing an appreciation of diversity. Ahmed (2018) argues that we must explicitly teach and practice social comprehension so that our students are equipped with skills to both question and listen. Doing so will nurture empathetic students who are willing to be courageous in important conversations about vital issues (Ahmed, 2018).

Additionally, the texts used in a literacy classroom provide a strong foundation in developing an appreciation of diverse experiences. These texts should offer mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for students so that students not only see themselves represented, but also gain a deeper appreciation of diverse experiences (Bishop, 1990). As Bishop explained, "Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (1990, p. ix).

Drawing on the understanding that literacy identities are shaped by and shape the texts that individuals read, write, and talk about (Lewis & del Valle, 2009; McCarthey, 2001; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009), I created intentional pedagogical shifts that put reading, writing, and talking about identity at the center of my literacy methods course. When the COVID-19 pandemic required us all to quickly transform our in-person teaching to remote learning experiences, I was given the opportunity to restructure the activities in my literacy methods class. This article describes the process of not only shifting authentic literacy practices to an online platform, but also redesigning the course to align the reading and writing tasks of PSTs in ways that supported the construction of their own literacy identity.

This article is not grounded in the research of my PST's experiences but in the relevant literature that helped support the transformation in my university classroom. The pedagogical shifts described in this article captures only a small portion of the undergraduate course specific to the immersive literacy experiences of PSTs. I began this transformation by first reconsidering the content taught in my literacy methods course, then modifying my instructional approach to an online and digital context to enhance the redesign of the content.

Transformation in Content

At the end of each semester, I ask students to reflect on the experience of reading and writing in the university classroom, focusing on practices they intend to carry forward. Prior to this semester, the feedback for the writing experiences concerned me. While many PSTs raved about the experiences with reading throughout the semester, most did not echo this sentiment with writing. Reading and writing were inadvertently disconnected, and the PSTs each semester found the work they were doing as readers more engaging and relevant.

In revising the curriculum for teaching literacy methods online, I chose to spend more time on identity construction and representation (Lewis & del Valle, 2009; McCarthey, 2001; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009) by better aligning authentic reading and writing experiences for PSTs. Instead of rebuilding my entire course, I sifted through practices that already existed, such as read alouds and independent writing tasks, and strove to enhance those areas with identity in mind.

I drew on Muhammad's culturally and historically responsive literacy framework detailed in Cultivating Genius (2020), Ahmed's social comprehension strategies as described in Being the Change (2018), and Rief's quick write structure in The Quickwrite Handbook (2018) to design weekly reading and writing workshop tasks that exposed PSTs to diverse texts and offered opportunities to write in response to those texts.

Muhammad (2020) explained "it is important to note that before educators begin to teach students to know themselves and others, teachers must first do their own self-work" (p. 76). Thus, I designed activities where the PSTs could write about their own identities and histories before exploring their biases, assumptions, and tensions, as advised by Muhammad (2020). I began the semester first with opportunities for self-discovery before expanding into the broader topic of diversity and inclusion inside of the classroom.

Because writing can be a powerful tool for introspection, I shifted in my approach to teaching writing with the PSTs. Instead of beginning the semester through genre-based units that progressed through the writing process as I had done in the past, I designed open-ended writing tasks as a way for the PSTs to explore their own identity.

I intentionally selected diverse texts to incorporate through read alouds and author spotlights each week. Then, I created opportunities for PSTs to write about their identity after reading texts that offered mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). Through this intentional selection of diverse texts, the PSTs would see themselves represented (mirrors), gain perspective into a world that is different than their own (windows), and step into a world to share lived experiences (sliding glass doors). This inclusion of diverse literature made a difference to many of the PSTs. In a final reflection at the end of the semester, a student commented on her own literacy experiences in school and how she plans to change that for her future students:

> Diverse literature can open a lot of doors to the students, they will be able to feel like one of the characters in the book. I do not remember having a lot of diverse literature when I was in elementary, I plan on changing that for my students.

Knowing the need for deeper alignment between reading and writing, I explored ways to guide PSTs in teaching literacy methods to diverse populations of students while also supporting them as individuals navigating a global pandemic. A more intentional selection of read alouds and writing tasks supported this transformation in content. The table below details the progression of reading and writing tasks for the first eight weeks of my undergraduate literacy methods course.

Table 1

Reading and Writing Workshop Tasks

Week	Reading Workshop Read Aloud	Writing Workshop Task
1	*The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson	Identity Web (Ahmed, 2018)
2	*The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander	Six Word Memoir
3	*My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits *Your Name is a Song* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow	Name Stories (Muhammad, 2020)
4	*Where are You From* by Yamile Saied Mendez *Where I'm From* by George Ella Lyon	Where I'm From Poem (George Ella Lyon)
5	*Ish* by Peter Reynolds *How to Paint a Donkey* by Naomi Shihab Nye	Lift a Line (Rief, 2018)
6	*I am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry and Vashti Harrison	Social and Cultural Identities Quick Write
7	*The Hill We Climb* by Amanda Gorman	Personal Biases and Assumptions Quick Write
8	*Home* by Warsan Shire	Tensions with racism and oppression Quick Write

The first week of class, the PSTs listened to Jacqueline Woodson read her lyrical picture book titled *The Day You Begin* (2018). This text celebrates uniqueness and differences among individuals. The PSTs were asked the following guiding questions: What does identity mean? What makes up a person's identity? What identities are represented through the characters in the book? Then, the PSTs were asked to create Identity Webs, a social comprehension strategy presented by Ahmed (2018) to capture their own identity, coupled with a quick write about who they are. See Figure 1 as an example of my own identity web that was shared with students.

Figure 1

Identity Web Example
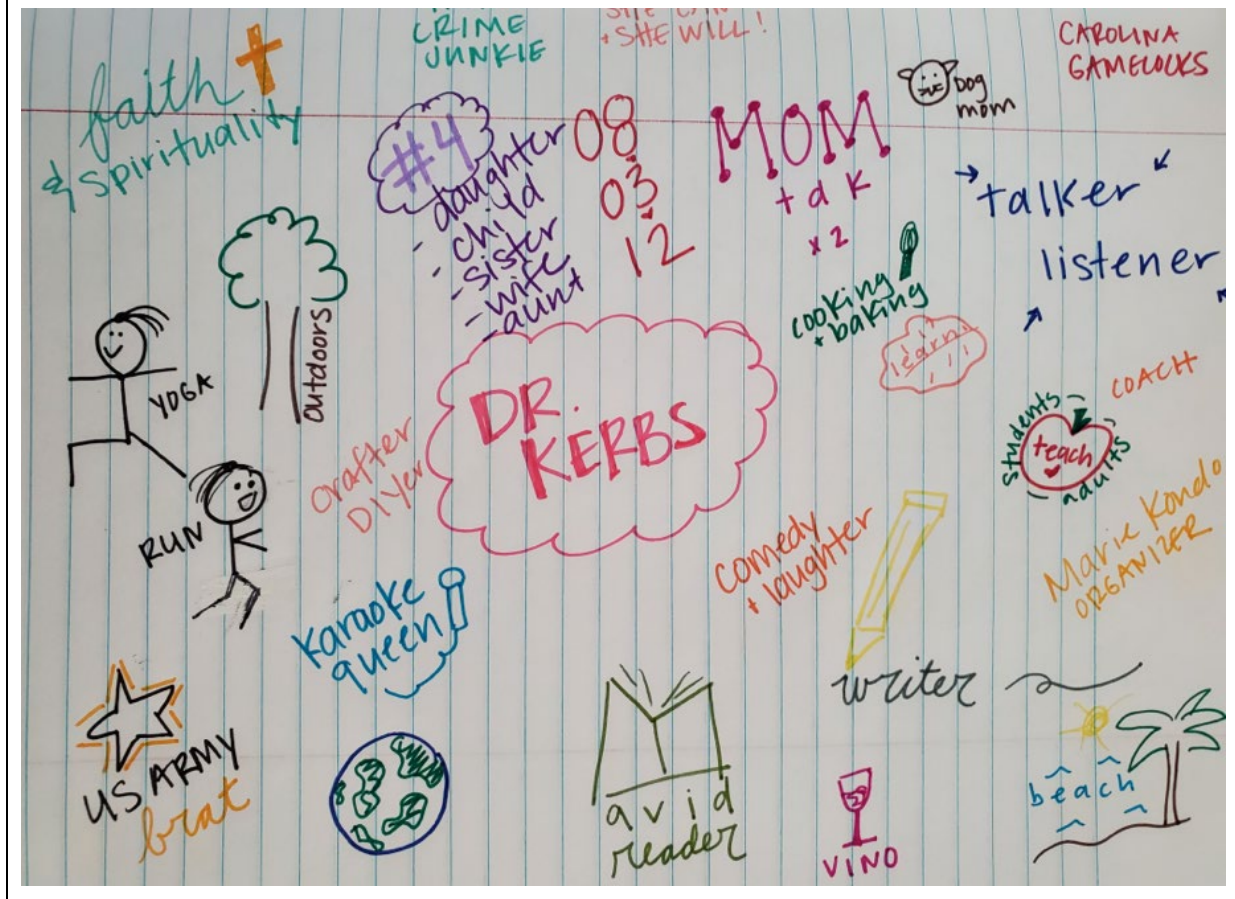
The second week, the PSTs listened to Kwame Alexander read his poetic picture book, *The Undefeated*. The PSTs were asked to reflect on the importance of texts that help us redefine ways we share about critical moments in history and create more inclusive classrooms that value and celebrate diversity. Then, they each worked through a process of writing six word memoirs to capture who they are as individuals.

The third week, we focused on our names. The PSTs listened to two beautifully diverse picture books: *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits and *Your Name is a Song* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow. Then, they wrote their own name stories in their journal. This task led to our

fourth week where we wrote our own Where I'm From poems after listening to the picture book *Where are You From* by Yamile Saied Mendez and the poem *Where I'm From* by George Ella Lyon.

The fifth week began with two read alouds: The picture book *Ish* by Peter Reynolds and the poem *How to Paint a Donkey* by Naomi Shihab Nye, which both highlight feelings of inadequacy and the beauty of imperfection. After listening to the texts read aloud, the PSTs completed a free write entry by lifting a line (Rief, 2018) from one of those texts. Due to the contextual setting of both texts, the literacy tasks helped move the work from who the PSTs were

as people and who they are as future literacy teachers.

The next three weeks focused on the PSTs social and cultural identity as they reflected on the following guiding questions: What is culture? How do I describe my cultural identity? How do my social identity factors shape my cultural identity? How does my cultural lens influence the way I will teach my students? During the sixth week, students listened to the picture books *I am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes and *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry and Vashti Harrison and completed a quick write entry about their own social and cultural identity.

The final two weeks concluded with two powerful poems, *The Hill We Climb* by Amanda Gorman and *Home* by Warsan Shire. Listening to these poems guided the examination of the PSTs personal biases and assumptions, as well as the exploration of tensions with racism and oppression. During those two weeks, the students completed quick writes reflecting on the ideas in the poems, then created a final product that captured their identity. The final products ranged in genre, structure, and language. Some PSTs wrote poems like Gorman and Shire, while others wrote personal essays.

The progression of activities across the semester allowed students to explore their own identities as individuals, readers, and writers, while also examining their personal biases and assumptions with critical social issues. In a final reflection on the writing tasks this semester, a student wrote:

> We got to explore who we were and where we were from in a new light. I appreciated that we were always given examples of other's stories, so we had a sort of guideline to follow if needed. It was nice writing about diverse topics and some that were uncomfortable at times.

Muhammad (2020) urged for the construction and protection of a student's identity because "if they don't know themselves, others will tell them who they are, in ways that may not be positive or accurate" (p. 70). From the beginning of the semester until the eighth week, the depth of writing increased as students read and wrote about critically important topics to construct their own identities as individuals and future literacy teachers.

Transformation of Context

After transforming the content for my literacy methods course, I considered the context in which literacy activities would occur. The online platform posed a unique challenge as the literature written for teaching with a focus on identity and diversity had been selected in the context of in-person instruction and relied heavily on interactions and dialogue around important topics. Because all instruction for my class was in an asynchronous online format, many of the strategies I used in previous semesters or read about in existing literature needed to be adapted to fit the new digital context while still upholding the integrity of the strategy itself.

The read aloud was the foundation of the curricular redesign of my course. Each week, I selected a text for the read aloud that featured diverse characters and was written by a diverse author as detailed in Table 1. Because the course took place online, I used videos of the authors reading the texts themselves, whenever possible. In a brief recorded video posted on the university Learning Management System (LMS), I discussed the rationale for selecting the text, expressed important information about the author, and provided a few guiding questions for PSTs to consider as they listened to the text read aloud. I also embedded links to the author's website and purchasing options to encourage building classroom libraries of diverse texts.

Knowing the role of social spaces on the construction of identity (Gee, 2017; Kohnen, 2019; Nasir & Cooks, 2009) and aiming to promote collaboration and dialogue among the PSTs, I organized the class into five small

groups. Each group met weekly to discuss the topic using video-conferencing apps, such as Zoom. The integration of virtual collaboration allowed students to have live interaction with others even though we were meeting asynchronously online. The PSTs also engaged in asynchronous discussion opportunities through Discussion Board on the LMS and other web-based discussion platforms, such as Padlet, Flipgrid, and Jamboard.

For writing, I designed tasks in response to the text selection for the week and in support of the construction and representation of their identities, as described in Table 1. Each week, I shared examples of my own writing, modeling writing possibilities and the construction of my own identity, while situating the authentic writing tasks in the real world. The figure below is an excerpt from the second week of class when we wrote six word memoirs. Building on the idea of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991), I made my writing process and thinking about my own identity clear and explicit using both video and written examples within the weekly online modules in our course LMS. I also embedded hyperlinks to additional real world examples of six word memoirs, like those captured by the *New York Times* during the pandemic.

Figure 2

Modeled Writing Example

Writing Workshop- Six Word Memoirs ◎ A✚

This week, we will be focusing on a creative writing piece that combines poetry with memoir, called Six Word Memoirs. You can read examples of six word memoirs here. You might also enjoy reading this opinion piece from the New York Times that captured six word memoirs about the pandemic here.

A six word memoir is only *six* words that capture who you are or what you believe. You can use the following steps below to create your own six word memoir. All of these steps should be kept in your writing journal.

Brainstorm:

Take a minute to think about who you are as a person. You might begin jotting down things that make you interesting or unique. You might write down moments when you were most proud of yourself. You might think list things that you enjoy doing or things that make you happy. This could be just a list of different words or phrases that describe you. Resist the temptation to cross out, edit, or revise- just write. The goal should be quantity, so write as much as you can for about *three* minutes.

Example: mother, sister, wife, nature, outdoors, yoga, swimming, wine, dogs, puppies...

Narrow Down:

Now that you have a long list, circle two or three words that really stand out to you. These are words that you could find yourself saying more about.

Example: mother, wine, dogs

Free Write:

Pick one item that you circled and begin free writing on that topic. The only rule is not not stop writing for at least *two* to *three* minutes. Write whatever comes to mind!

Example: Motherhood has been the hardest thing I've ever had to do but it's also the most rewarding. My day revolves around these little humans. I question ever decision I make, only wanting to do what is best for them. I constantly worry about the type of people they will become and the types of decisions they will make when I'm not around. My heart is filled by them. So much love that I never even knew was possible. How can something be so rewarding and so exhausting at the same time?...

Synthesize:

Now look back at your free write entry and think about the essence of your topic. Combine the ideas into one coherent whole about what that topic means to you.

Example: Motherhood is really hard but rewarding.

Revise into Six Words:

Now take that synthesis and revise it so it becomes six words. Think of this as a slogan of sorts. There is no right answer for this!

Example: So much love. So little sleep.

In connection to the weekly read aloud and guiding questions, the PSTs wrote in response to the specific writing task, uploading their writing in a digital journal on our course LMS. Students had the option of keeping a paper journal and uploading photos each week or typing directly into the journal. The journal was only visible to me and the student, and I read and gave

feedback on individual entries weekly. In a final reflection at the end of this semester, many students shared that the writing journal allowed them to take a break from academic writing and to begin to enjoy writing, especially because it was kept in a private online space. In fact, one student wrote:

> I realized I had not written for joy in a long time, I mainly wrote because I had to for assignments. Throughout the semester I found myself writing in a way I hadn't in a long time. When I was younger, we had a little more freedom with writing and now in college I find myself trying so hard to sound smart and to write the right thing. The writing journals helped me write freely again.

During the fifth and tenth week of the semester, the PSTs participated in a writing celebration on Flipgrid, an online video discussion platform (see Figure 3). I asked the PSTs to select a piece that carried gravity for them and read aloud the piece. The PSTs had the option of focusing the camera on the piece of writing or their face as they read. I also shared my writing aloud as I was writing alongside the PSTs each week

Figure 3

Flipgrid Writing Celebration Prompt

Week 5 Writing Celebration 🔊

22 responses • 204 views • 49 comments • 4.8 hours of engagement

Choose a writing piece that has carried gravity for you so far this semester. Take a deep breath and harness some courage and bravery. Sharing our writing out loud is deeply personal, but also very rewarding!

In two minutes or less, read your writing aloud to the group.

After you finish, celebrate your bravery, then, provide specific feedback to the other writer's in our class on their writing.

As a writing community, we took the time to listen to each other's writing and leave positive feedback. For example, in the first writing celebration, a student read her original "Where I'm From" poem, and her classmate commented, "I like how soothing your voice is when reading your poem." Then, in the second celebration, a student read her piece about her name, and many students commented praising her for being vulnerable in sharing her story. One student's comment said, "I love that your first, middle, and last name have an amazing story how you got them. Names are so special, thank you for sharing how you got your name!"

The writing celebrations allowed the PSTs to share more about themselves and their identity, which was even more important since we were not physically present in a classroom this semester. In each celebration, the PSTs would reveal intimate details about their lives in the

pieces they chose to read aloud. In the second celebration, a student commented on a video of an original poem being read aloud and said:

> Wow! I loved your poem! I love these writing celebrations because I feel like I get to know my classmates better. After hearing your poem, I feel like we have a common belief! Awesome poem, I could tell it was from the heart!"

In shifting my class online, I wanted to create a vibrant community that reflected qualities of good literacy instruction but also embraced digital platforms to enhance those experiences. In striving toward a focus of identity and representation, I incorporated read alouds, small group discussions, writing opportunities, and writing celebrations in an online context using a variety of digital tools and platforms.

Reflective Thoughts

After this semester, I have expanded my understanding of what is essential for teaching literacy, both with PSTs and elementary students. There is so much promise in the inclusion of read alouds and writing opportunities to explore our own identities and the cultures of others. The PSTs engaged in authentic literacy practices focused on identity and diversity, while also developing a repertoire of strategies to use in their future literacy classroom.

In speaking directly to literacy teacher educators, Spitler (2011) argued that we must look closely at our curriculum and teaching spaces because PSTs deserve "education programs that focus on the personal and professional identity development needed to consciously and confidently implement instruction that supports … literacy development" (p. 314). After a year of uncertainty, fear, and isolation from a global pandemic, literacy became a tool for my PSTs to process, discover, and explore.

Not only did the first eight weeks of the semester support the construction of identity and exploration of critical issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion, but this time also built momentum for literacy into the semester. There was an undeniable energy because the literacy work was deeply aligned to topics that mattered.

Through this redesign, I also learned much more about my students early in the semester from their writing because the focus on identity created an environment where PSTs could see themselves as members of a literacy community. Our relationship was forged from intimate details of who they were as people. Because I also shared my writing and was actively present throughout the semester, they knew me on an intimate level, too. Compared to my experience in previous semesters, the distance behind a screen worked in our favor; PSTs shared more and wrote more.

The transformation of this course and my own personal pedagogy provides promise beyond just the scope of online education. Not only are authentic literacy experiences possible in an online format, but they are even more meaningful when centered around identity construction and representation.

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Coaching Preservice Teachers in a Virtual Setting

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Abstract

The purpose of this self-study was to examine my coaching conversation skills in the context of individual coaching sessions held with undergraduate student tutors enrolled in my Reading Assessment and Intervention course in Fall 2020. Each tutor met with their tutee once per week for 30 minutes while their partner observed the lesson. Prior to coaching each tutor by videoconference, I viewed the guided reading portion of their lesson and used a note-taking guide to record observations and wonderings. I scripted their book introductions, prompts, and teaching points and wrote down suggestions for subsequent lessons. Each virtual coaching session was recorded and later transcribed for an initial coding based on the literature related to coaching conversations. The codes were then collapsed into the themes related to building rapport, reflection, consulting, and questioning. Analyzing my coaching language has given me the opportunity to grow my skills as a coach and will help me to encourage preservice teachers to be reflective and self-directed learners.

Keywords: *Preservice Teachers, Virtual Teaching, Coaching, Teacher Preparation, Literacy*

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Instructor: What are you thinking about for your next lesson with [your student]?

Tutor: I want to study the prompts so I have something to say instead of just making it up in the moment.

Instructor: That's ok. You waited until she was done and did say something. You weren't afraid to try something.

Tutor: Finding one thing to teach about and not being nervous about it – I have been nervous during the lesson, but I have my lesson right next to me so I don't get lost.

Instructor: And that is obvious. I can tell that you do for sure. I could not tell you were nervous, *and you kept the guided reading lesson going, and the level is spot on. She might be ready to move into something a little more difficult.*

Tutor: Yeah, I might try that.

In the exchange above, I, the instructor, began the last part of a coaching conversation with an undergraduate student tutor by asking an open-ended question in order to elicit reflection. The tutor responded with a statement related to something we had been studying in our class sessions, prompting children during their reading of a text. I then eased the student's fears by affirming that she did something positive by

trying a prompt even when she was nervous. This conversation was unique because not only were the tutor and I meeting in a virtual space (Zoom); but also, we were discussing her experience as a tutor working with an early reader in a virtual setting.

In this article, I share the results of a self-study on the virtual coaching of preservice teacher tutors I conducted during the Fall 2020 semester, in the middle of a pandemic that forced me to move our undergraduate reading clinic to a virtual setting. This situation, however, allowed me to utilize my training as a literacy coach, which is how I spent several years during my elementary school teaching career. I had the luxury to view recorded virtual tutoring sessions in full and meet with my students, also referred to as preservice teachers (PSTs) in this article, individually to discuss their instruction. The recordings and transcripts of these individual coaching sessions serve as the data sources for this study.

Preservice teachers need many integrated field experiences before they enter the last year of their educator preparation programs (AACTE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Koubek et al., 2021; Piro et al., 2015; Richards, 2006; Worthy & Patterson, 2001), which usually includes a field-based semester and a clinical teaching semester. These experiences, however, are not sufficient unless they are paired with coaching by an expert other, such as a university course instructor, field-based supervisor, or cooperating mentor teacher (AACTE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 2010; Land, 2018; Mosely Wetzel et al., 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). The move to emergency remote instruction had a detrimental effect on field-based experiences (Bacevich, 2021; Kidd & Murray, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020), as PSTs were not able to enter the schools physically to observe instruction and work with children. This created the need for virtual teaching opportunities, thus forcing instructors to provide virtual coaching.

The purpose of this self-study was to examine my coaching conversation skills in the context of individual coaching sessions held with

undergraduate students enrolled in my Reading Assessment and Intervention course. The question that guided this study was: In what ways did I utilize coaching and consulting to navigate coaching conversations with preservice teacher tutors?

Review of the Literature

In a national survey exploring the roles of specialized literacy professionals, one of the key findings of Bean and colleagues (2015) was that those who identified as literacy coaches had received little training in the area of coaching teachers. This is also an area where university instructors who work with PSTs may need more professional development (Wetzel et al., 2020). Adults learn differently from children (Knowles et al., 2005), and those who coach teachers, whether practicing or preservice, should respect these differences (i.e., adults have previous experiences and need a problem-centered focus). Topics central to this learning include acquiring a repertoire of questioning strategies, eliciting deep reflection from teachers by utilizing conversational strategies such as paraphrasing and wait time, finding a balance between consulting and collaboration, and, most relevant given the past year, engaging teachers in virtual coaching.

Questioning, Coaching Language, and Reflection

There must be space in coaching conversations for teachers to reflect and think out loud about the literacy instruction occurring in their classrooms. The regular school day does not leave much time for this process, so scheduling time for it is imperative (Armstrong, 2012). Literacy coaches can sometimes enter coaching conversations with their own plans; however, if they take time to listen to teachers, an organic, teacher-focused agenda might emerge. Research in this area has shown that when teachers are given the chance to reflect alongside a coach, they tend to adjust their instruction to better serve their students (Peterson et al., 2009). Preservice teachers should be afforded similar opportunities. Even though they are new

teachers, they have concerns and questions that should be heard and addressed by teacher educators.

During coaching conversations with teachers, coaches may utilize questions to begin and guide the conversation, gain clarification, dig deeper into the teacher's responses, and invite the teacher to reflect on instruction. These questions help the coach keep the conversation focused on the teacher, the classroom, and the students, rather than on the coach's agenda (Armstrong, 2012; Collet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wall & Palmer, 2015). The coach uses questioning strategies to invite the teacher to share theories and practices related to teaching and learning (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Wall and Palmer (2015) asserted that coaches should build a repertoire of possible questions to use during these conversations and that this takes time, planning, and a familiarity with the teachers with whom the coach is working.

Using Costa and Garmston's (1994) types of questions as a framework to analyze coaches' questions during coaching conversations, Hudson and Pletcher (2020) discovered that coaches typically begin conversations with open-ended questions in order to allow teachers to share their ideas and concerns. Some of the open-ended questions used in the spring, however, after considering the transcripts of their fall conversations, were more direct in order to elicit a focused response while still keeping possibilities open for the teacher. After reflecting on their conversations (Hudson & Pletcher, 2020), the coaches asked more questions that contained positive presuppositions (i.e., phrasing questions in a way that assumed the teacher was indeed engaging in a certain practice) and purposefully altered questions to include tentative key words (e.g., might, may, perhaps).

Videorecording and then viewing and transcribing coaching conversations can be a powerful strategy for coaches who want to analyze how they structure their questions. Roleplaying with other coaches is also beneficial as it allows coaches to enact on-the-run question

practice (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Hudson and Pletcher (2020) and others (see Engin, 2013; Mosley-Wetzel et al., 2017; Wall & Palmer, 2015) have included lists of possible questions and question-starters with which to experiment.

Consulting, Collaboration, and Balance

Armstrong (2012) used the term "coach-expert" to describe the role that a coach shifts into when giving advice or consulting. Researchers (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Hasbrouck, 2017; Lofthouse & Hall, 2014; Wall & Palmer, 2015) view consulting as when coaches position themselves as the keepers of knowledge and make decisions for the teacher, therefore taking power away from the teacher. In a study of literacy coaches who had not received much training in coaching, Pletcher and colleagues (2019) found that the consulting strategies came easier to the coaches than did coaching strategies such as asking questions, paraphrasing, and utilizing wait time. These coaches reported that they saw this as part of their role – to help teachers solve classroom problems by giving specific advice. This is not to say that coaches should never take a consulting stance. In fact, Ippolito (2010), Mangin & Dunsmore (2013), and Schachter and colleagues (2018) encourage it to some extent, as there are instances when it may be helpful and necessary.

Collaboration between the coach and the teacher occurs when the coach shifts from a role of consulting into a facilitative role. In this space, the coach and teacher can work together to find and solve problems and make plans to take action (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Wall & Palmer, 2015). In this situation, coaches use questioning strategies, discussed above, in order to elicit a more organic conversation (Collet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wall & Palmer, 2015; Wetzel et al., 2017). Armstrong (2012) posited that teachers can then be in control of making meaning, rather than solely listening to a coach give advice. Hudson and Pletcher (2019) found that one coach set the goal of working as a collaborator during coaching conversations with teachers and was able to help teachers form their own ideas and

come to their own conclusions, rather than follow the coach's agenda.

There is value in both coaching and consulting, depending on when each strategy is utilized during a coaching conversation. Through thoughtful reflection on coaching practices, coaches can begin to find this balance. Pletcher et al. (2019) reported that one of the coaches they worked with commented that reflecting upon her recorded coaching conversations was powerful because she realized how heavily she relied on consulting; thus, analyzing her recordings aided her in strengthening her coaching skills. In this same study, some coaches tended to exercise consulting strategies when working with newer teachers and coaching strategies when meeting with more experienced teachers. They discussed wanting to make a shift and having coaching conversations with teachers be as "natural" as possible. They also strove to create a healthy balance of coach-to-teacher talk, thereby enabling the teacher to engage as a full participant in the conversation in order to facilitate their own growth.

Coaching Preservice Teachers

Providing opportunities for PSTs to practice strategies they are studying in their courses is valuable; however, an instructor's feedback and coaching can have positive effects on novice teachers' skills (Cohen et al., 2020). Mosely Wetzel et al. (2017) advocate for a "more practice-based apprenticeship model of teacher preparation" (p. 535) as well. Education preparation faculty need not wait until the last year of students' certification programs to expose PSTs to authentic teaching platforms. Simulations and tutorial settings can be effective contexts for novice teachers to develop pedagogical skills and offer plenty of opportunities for coaching.

Utilizing video recordings of teaching and accompanying in-person or virtual coaching have been effective ways to implement practicums into educator preparation programs. Cohen et al. (2020) used "immersive virtual environments" (p. 225), while Husbye et al.

(2018) relied on recordings of PST lessons as impetuses for instructor feedback. Retrospective Video Analysis (RVA), developed by Mosely and colleagues (2017) has also been widely implemented as a means to produce "concrete data to utilize" (Land, 2018, p. 504). According to Mosely (2017), teacher educators use RVA to help PSTs fully grasp literacy instruction and reading processes through the components of the model, which are recording, viewing, and identifying strategies.

Coaching cycles are frequently reported in the literature regarding PSTs, as this is an effective coaching structure in the schools and one where each step in the cycle can occur virtually (Keefe, 2020). During a coaching cycle (Mosely Wetzel, 2019; Stahl et al., 2016), a more experienced other and the PST plan and discuss a lesson in a pre-conference. The coach observes the lesson; the PST reflects on the lesson. The coach then provides feedback during a post-conference.

The Coaching with CARE model (Mosely Wetzel et al., 2020) utilizes a coaching cycle that is Collaborative, Critical, Content-focused, Appreciative, Reflective, and Experiential. Similar to other coaching models, the discourse during coaching conversations is "grounded in day-to-day teaching" (Land, 2018, p. 504). The coach also intentionally plans an open-ended question with which to open the conversation and has a tentative plan for how the conversation might unfold (Mosely Wetzel, 2020). Cohen et al. (2020) asserted that these coaching sessions can be very effective in growing PSTs' skills, more so than solely requiring that PSTs engage in some kind of reflective practice.

Virtual Coaching

Viewing lessons and coaching teachers at a distance provides a high level of convenience that in-person observation and coaching might not. Coaches are not tied to a certain time to view lessons and can provide feedback at their convenience (McLeod et al., 2019). They can leave either voice-recorded or written feedback, or they can schedule coaching conferences with teachers at a time that works for both (Israel et

al., 2013), rather than being constrained to limited time slots and feeling rushed. Coaches are able to work with teachers at almost any location, which means less travel (Israel et al., 2013; McLeod et al., 2019) and the ability to work with teachers who perhaps teach in rural areas (Husbye et al., 2018).

Video-recording lessons, in either face-to-face or virtual settings, opens up possibilities for teachers and coaches to analyze lessons at a deeper level (Keefe, 2020) since they are able to concentrate on what both the teacher and the students are doing (Christ et al., 2012). Wetzel et al. (2017) calls this "slow[ing] down the moment" (p. 533). Being able to pause the lesson while viewing it helps the teacher and coach focus in on specific situations and more richly describe the teaching and learning that are occurring. This method makes it easier to give detailed, specific, and even time-stamped feedback. After reviewing the feedback, teachers can produce more specific goals related to pieces of the lesson that were analyzed (Christ et al., 2012).

Recording, viewing, and analyzing lessons allows teachers and coaches to utilize technology in perhaps different ways than they have before, especially when teaching virtually. By providing preservice teachers (PSTs) with opportunities to record their teaching, we are preparing them for what they will most likely be expected to do as inservice teachers (Christ et al., 2012). Many preservice teachers are required to participate in testing related to certification, such as the EdTPA (Education Teacher Performance Assessment), so being comfortable in front of a video camera is important (Wetzel et al., 2017). Keefe (2020) also asserted that PSTs should be supported to practice virtual teaching, even post-pandemic.

Methods

This qualitative self-study allowed me to take a closer look at the ways in which I navigated individual coaching sessions with teacher candidate tutors during a course I teach each fall, Reading Assessment and Intervention (until

recently known as Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Problems). Self-study has a "focus on practice," and "the action of self in relation to other(s) reveals the professional identity and knowledge of the researcher" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 21). Fall 2020 was the fifth time I have taught this course at my present institution; however, this was the first semester I was able to implement individual coaching sessions with tutors. I did not utilize a particular coaching model.

Setting

This study occurred at a regional midsized university in south Texas. Pre-pandemic, the tutorial sessions were held after a one-hour traditional class session in the library of the elementary school located on the university campus. Two graduate teaching assistants and I would circulate the room, observe parts of lessons, leave written feedback for tutors, and hold whole-group debriefing sessions afterwards.

Even though we were not able to host our usual face-to-face reading clinic during the fall of 2020, we still needed to provide PSTs with teaching experiences. We recruited second-grade children from a local Title I elementary school by requesting teachers to select children who needed supplemental reading support based on assessments (e.g., Star Renaissance, running records) and classroom observations. The school had already provided devices to all children for remote instruction purposes. We met with parents virtually to describe the logistics of the virtual tutoring at the beginning of the semester.

The undergraduate teacher candidate tutors were partnered with a classmate and randomly assigned a child tutee. Each tutor met with their tutee once per week for 30 minutes while their partner observed the lesson. The lessons were scheduled according to tutor and family availability. All lessons were recorded via Zoom™ so that the instructors and two graduate teaching assistants could view parts of the lesson and provide feedback and coaching. The tutors used a structured lesson plan. During each

lesson, they engaged students in a high frequency word review, reading of a familiar text and a new book, and word study. Tutors who worked with emergent readers also planned lessons that included working with letters and phonemic awareness. We provided digital leveled texts for the tutors to use during lessons and word study kits containing magnetic letters, dry-erase boards, and journals for the children to use at home during their lessons.

Participants

I am an associate professor in my seventh year at my university. I teach reading courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Prior to this position, I served as an elementary classroom teacher, reading specialist, Reading Recovery® teacher, and literacy coach. This self-study joins two of my primary research interests, literacy coaching and the ways in which preservice teachers work with children who find literacy learning difficult.

Students enrolled in several certification programs (Early Childhood [EC]-Grade 6 Reading, Special Education, Early Childhood STEM, Bilingual Education, Grades 4-8 Math, Grades 7-12 English, all secondary content areas) take this course. Most of these students have taken foundational reading courses prior to enrolling in the reading assessment and intervention course. For this study, 11 of the 21 student tutors (eight Latina females, 3 White females) provided consent to record our coaching sessions. Nine of these students were seeking EC-6 Reading certification and two were seeking certification in Special Education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to meeting with each undergraduate student tutor, I viewed their recorded lesson and used a note-taking guide (see Appendix A for blank note-taking guide and Appendix B for a completed note-taking form) to record observations and wonderings related to their teaching and to their tutees' reading behaviors during the guided reading component of the lesson. I scripted their book introductions,

prompts, and teaching points and wrote down suggestions for subsequent lessons. Each 30-minute coaching session was recorded via Zoom and later transcribed for coding. I read through each transcript to get a sense of the data as a whole. I then conducted an initial a priori coding based on the literature related to coaching conversations (Saldaña, 2021). The codes were then collapsed into the following themes: building rapport with tutors in a virtual environment, promoting tutor reflection, providing specific feedback to elevate instruction, placing an emphasis on consulting, and using questioning strategies.

Trustworthiness

In order to establish trustworthiness for this self-study, I analyzed two types of data for triangulation purposes: the transcripts of the individual coaching session recordings and the observation notes I wrote as I viewed each tutorial session. I also practiced disciplined subjectivity as I read through and coded transcripts. This process helped me to analyze the data using only what the literature says in regard to literacy coaching and to view the recordings with a critical eye (Guba, 1981).

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented as themes derived from coding the coaching conversation transcripts with 11 teacher candidate tutors and the notes I completed during my observations of their video-recorded guided reading lessons.

Building Rapport with Tutors in a Virtual Environment

Because this course took place during the first full semester of the pandemic, I had mostly met virtually with my students for the first five weeks of the semester. These first few weeks were crucial to building rapport with students because I wanted them to be comfortable with me since I would be observing their teaching and providing them with feedback. It can be challenging to build rapport virtually; however, it is something I paid close attention to during

virtual class sessions. I played music before class and during breaks and engaged my students in games, fun quizzes and surveys, and breakout room discussions and activities. This rapport helped when it came time to begin working with them individually. I also believe that I demonstrated for them ways in which they could work with their tutees during virtual lessons.

During each individual meeting with the tutors, there was at least one instance noted in the transcripts where I attempted to build rapport by responding to their concerns about lessons. Several students shared how they were uncomfortable prompting their tutee during the guided reading portion of the lesson and lamented that they were unsure of exactly what to say when the child needed support. My responses to this included: "We all struggle with prompting" and "It will get more comfortable as you go along" and were meant to quell their fears and help them feel like they were not the only ones experiencing these feelings. Tutors also worried about their book introductions and how they may have sounded too scripted. To address these concerns, I responded, "It will come with practice. It will get easier where you can just glance at what you have written down and continue with the lesson."

Promoting Tutor Reflection

I tried to allow for as much dialogue as possible in order for the tutors to have time to reflect on their lessons. It seemed many of them did not need prompting to reflect; they had questions ready and things they wanted to know. One student was worried she had given her tutee too much information about the book during her book introduction and asked, "Did I do too much on the introduction…should I have not been so up front with that [information] during the book introduction?" Others were curious about prompting and spent time during our conversation reflecting on what they had seen in their recorded lesson videos:

- I noticed a lot of blends and diphthongs she does not understand and she gets

frustrated and says, "I don't know this word - I can't do it." I kind of get stuck because I try the things that I know to help her, but I don't want to make her too frustrated where she does not want to keep going.
- If she is reading a paragraph and she gets a word wrong should I stop her then or wait until she gets to the end of the page? I was questioning myself because I did not feel like interrupting her.
- All those things will help and what you said about prompting and trying to think on the fly - there are things that I need to work on.
- I want to study the prompts so I have something to say instead of just making it up in the moment.

Two students wondered about the teaching point and expressed that they were confused about what to attend to during this final part of the guided reading lesson. "The hardest part was teaching something at the end, I did not know what to choose" was one student's confession, and "I think that my problem was that I thought that I needed to stick to the lesson plan and I forgot that you said that we could choose the teaching point" was another's.

Providing Specific Feedback to Elevate Instruction

During the beginning of each coaching session, I focused my attention on providing positive and specific feedback. I did not provide as much as I would have liked, as I devoted more time to consulting (see the next theme). Examples of positive feedback included: "You are very positive with her, you work really well with her. I can tell you work with children. You are so calm and teacher-like. That was enjoyable to watch" and "You are very friendly. You have a great disposition, and you seem patient, even over virtual, and you were able to bring out her personality."

My goal with these statements was to help the tutors see something in themselves that perhaps they did not see when they viewed their videos,

as many of them commented on problems they had with the lesson, rather than the strengths of their teaching.

Examples of specific feedback I provided included:

- You took her beyond the literal interpretation of the book and asked her what lessons she could learn.
- Even though you have your notes you made it like a conversation over what the book was going to be about.
- You told her the genre which is important. You said, "We are going to see some interesting facts," and you gave her a brief book introduction with meaning which I think she understood what the gist of the book was. You said, "This book is going to talk about animals that live in underground homes," and you said why some of the animals live underground and gave her some examples.

In these examples, I utilized tactics that are similar to those I use with children during guided reading lessons. By noticing and naming what the tutors did during their lessons, I was trying to ensure that these statements would be strong enough for them to remember to implement these same strategies during subsequent lessons.

I doled out some praise, which I try to do in a measured manner so that it is worthwhile and meaningful. There were times, listening to the transcripts, where I noticed that some of my praise was generic or used the same qualifier. For example, I said the following to two tutors about their general lesson plan: "So, you had all the pieces which is great" and "You stuck to your lesson plan which is great." In another instance, I said, "Your book introduction was really natural, which I appreciated." This particular statement bothered me somewhat because I made what the tutor did (and did well) more about my critique of the lesson than about the instruction and learning that was occurring.

Placing an Emphasis on Consulting

Consulting played a dominant role in my conversations with students. After viewing each guided reading lesson, I noted key points that I needed to reinforce with the tutors. Much of this existed in the form of advice that I hoped would resonate with them as they reflected on their lessons. I noticed patterns across their lessons, and the patterns that arose most often were related to keeping the book introduction natural and organic, presenting the illustrations and possibilities in the book to the child during the book introduction, presenting visual information during the book introduction, providing prompting during the reading, and engaging the child in a teaching point after the reading.

The success of the guided reading lesson hinges on the teacher's introduction of the book. The introduction should be tailored to the children as well as to the text. It should include the gist of the text and might include genre, story elements, text features, vocabulary, high frequency words, or complex language structures, among other information (see Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). It should also be a time for conversational exchange between the teacher and the children. While viewing the tutors' recorded guided reading lessons, I noticed patterns in their book introductions that were important to address during our individual conference sessions. Because book introductions were somewhat unfamiliar to them, they relied on the scripts of the book introduction they had written prior to the lesson, which caused the introductions to sound robotic and scripted rather than natural and organic. I provided the following advice: "Have fun; be enthusiastic," "Your introduction was speedy. Make it sound a little more natural even when you have a script," and "At first, we tend to read the script we've written word-for-word because we don't want to miss anything, but that is something that will come with practice."

Some tutors neglected to involve the child in noticing and discussing the illustrations and the possibilities that the book had to offer. I suggested to one tutor that she "talk about what the book is about and let her make predictions." To another, my advice was, "Invite her to make

some predictions and connections. Ask her what she sees on the front cover and what she thinks this book will be about." I wanted to get across to them that what we are teaching them to do is what readers do when they select a new book to read, in other words, to introduce a book to themselves.

Several tutors looked through the book with the child and provided the gist of the text but failed to include any feeding forward of visual information to help the child negotiate potentially tricky portions of the text. In order to mitigate this, I told a tutor, "While you're looking through pictures, have her locate a word she knows by saying, 'Here is a word you know: ___. Find it.'" During another conversation, I suggested to the tutor, "You might say, 'On this page Max Monkey is helping by scratching elephant's back. I wonder what three letters scratch begins with. Say it. Find it.' Embed this visual work in the natural book introduction." At the same time, I wanted to caution them against overusing this strategy by suggesting that they not feel like they have to find words on each page, thus leaving the child with some work to do.

Prompting during the child's reading of a text was another facet of the guided reading lesson where the teacher candidate tutors required a great amount of support. Some tutors needed specific guidance on what to say when a child came to a point of difficulty and required a call to action. In one instance, I said, "At a point of difficulty, you might say, 'So what might the elephant say that begins with /f/?' Give her a prompt to entice strategy use. You know that you want her to say the first part by getting her mouth ready, so prompt her toward that." On the other hand, some tutors provided too much prompting, usually in the form of just telling the child the word or giving them more of what might be considered "hints" that did not steer the child toward independent problem solving. In one of these cases I recommended, "We want to get out of their way when they're problem-solving. Prompt them when their miscue interferes with meaning."

There were several times during the coaching conversations when I provided advice in the form of prompts the tutors could have used during specific moments in the text, such as:

- Batteries would be a good word to break apart if he's stuck on that word.
- A higher-level prompt would be 'Something wasn't right here – go back and check.' If that doesn't call the child to action, try, 'Here's what you read – that didn't look right or make sense.'
- Instead of saying, let's try this word again, be more specific. Try, 'Go back and read that sentence – something didn't make sense.' This sends the message that you want her to listen to herself and go back and check on herself.

I also suggested to almost every tutor that they get to know the prompts as well as they can by stating, "Check out the prompting guide and write down some of those prompts so that you have something to say when she comes to tricky parts;" and "Study one or two prompts a week until you take them on board." I also reassured them that it is "okay to look at your notes where you have written potential prompts."

Finally, the teaching point that is supposed to occur after the child reads the text was an area where I offered a large amount of consulting. I mentioned to several tutors that the purpose of the teaching point is to teach the child something that came up during the reading of the text. The teaching point is powerful and immediate, and the goal is to teach the child something by example that they can use always. Several tutors neglected to include a teaching point, and to one tutor I said, "You missed an opportunity by not including a teaching point." I also provided specific examples of teaching points that they might have tried:

- How about the figurative language on pages 14 and 15?
- Look for a pattern in her miscues during what she just read.

- Pull out a difficult word and write it on a whiteboard. Show him how to break the word. Then take it back into the text.
- Celebrate the work they did (even if you prompted them) on a certain page. Say, "When you came to this tricky part, here's what you did to help yourself. Keep trying that."

Using Questioning Strategies

The use of specific and carefully worded questions was rare during these conferences. I posed generic questions, such as "How are you doing?," "Do you have any questions?," and "Does that make sense?" With several students, I honed in on some of the lesson components by asking if they had questions that were specific to those (e.g., "Any questions about the book introduction?" "…prompting?" "…decoding?"). As I reviewed the transcripts, I realized that I should have utilized my coaching skills and asked more specific questions that were geared toward patterns I noticed during observations of their lessons. I also realize that my lack of specific questioning may be tied directly to the amount of consulting (vs. feedback and coaching) that I did. It might have also had something to do with the limited amount of time I had to coach each of the 21 undergraduate student tutors.

Implications for Practice

The semester during which this self-study occurred had meaningful opportunities to coach my students who were serving as tutors. During previous semesters' pre-pandemic tutoring sessions, I was only able to observe five to eight minutes of seven tutors' lessons each week. Therefore, over the course of the semester, I may have only observed part of one guided reading lesson per tutor. Time dedicated to coaching was also limited, as I left written feedback for them and provided small or whole group coaching after the tutoring sessions concluded. During the semester under study, however, I was able to view every lesson taught by every tutor because they were taught virtually and recorded. Thus, I provided more specific

coaching directly related to the reading process and reading strategies than I would have in previous semesters. Anecdotally, my students shared how valuable the individual conferences were and how much they appreciated the teaching opportunity and the feedback, especially since they were missing out on other field-based experiences.

I have always considered the use of "wait time" to be one of my strengths when working with children in schools, preservice teachers in courses, and practicing teachers in coaching contexts. During this semester, though, I found it was more difficult to use wait time in a virtual setting. Perhaps it was just the staring at another face over the computer screen that seemed awkward, or maybe I was focusing on helping the tutors to be as comfortable as possible by omitting any stretches of silence. Whatever the reason, this is something I need to work on in order to give the PSTs time to process so that they can reflect and respond to my questions and feedback (Cazden, 2001; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Johnston, 2004). Teachers need time not just to problem-solve, but to problem-find as well. During these conference sessions, when I afforded them time to reflect, they usually brought up some of the same points that I had already intended to discuss with them and had the same wonderings as I did about the children with whom they were working.

Realizing that some tutors might find it intimidating to meet with their professor individually, especially in a virtual setting, I made sure to begin each coaching session with a brief chat about how they were doing and how their tutoring sessions and other classes were going. This rapport-building is crucial to setting the stage for productive coaching sessions where PSTs feel comfortable reflecting on their teaching and asking questions that will move them forward as teachers (Heineke, 2013; Lowenhaupt et al., 2014; Pletcher et al., 2019; Wall & Palmer, 2015). Adjusting body language in a virtual setting is challenging; however, I made sure my facial expressions during these meetings were relaxed and that I smiled at certain points during the conversation.

I relied on consulting strategies significantly more than coaching strategies. A question I asked myself after reviewing the videos and transcripts was, "Why do I assume my students can't respond to coaching strategies such as questioning, paraphrasing, and wait time?" I knew they were learning about the reading process in my course and in other courses, but I was not facilitating opportunities for them to reflect upon and discuss that knowledge during these conversations. Also, I noticed many patterns in consulting as related to certain topics, especially providing effective book introductions, prompting the child during the reading of the text, and delivering strong teaching points. While individual coaching is indeed beneficial, I may also try some small group coaching as well with students who have similar strengths and growth areas. It would also be advantageous for a group of colleagues to form a study group around coaching tutors in the reading clinic, as has previously been suggested for school literacy coaches (Mosley Wetzel et al., 2020; Rainville & Jones, 2008). This study grouping could be a venue for videorecording coaching sessions and role-playing.

Related to my lack of coaching was my lack of questioning. I did not offer these teacher candidate tutors the same kinds of questions that I might normally pose to practicing teachers. Before giving away my thoughts about a specific part of the lesson, I should have asked an open-ended question that would provoke reflective behavior and lead them to connect to previous learning in this course and other courses and discover strategies they might have used. Throughout these coaching sessions, I was explicit in telling them that they needed to study the prompts with which they might scaffold children's reading. It turns out that I need to follow my own advice and have some potential questions and prompts prepared prior to each conference.

Facilitating self-analysis, student tutors recorded their lessons so that their videos were available to view and review. I assumed they had viewed their videos prior to our individual conference

sessions, but some of them had not. Next semester, I will require that they view a segment of their video (most likely the guided reading portion) and complete a note-taking form, with time-stamps included, along with their reflections and questions. They can then send this document to me a few days prior to our conversation so I may consider it while I am viewing their videos and taking notes. This way, I will be prepared with possible coaching questions and statements that will encourage them to reflect on their lessons in meaningful ways.

Limitations

As this was a self-study, the data was collected for a small number of student participants enrolled in one course at one university. By analyzing data collected in small studies such as this one, "we can learn about specific conditions for learning that support preservice teachers in developing a reflective practice" (Mosely Wetzel et al., 2019, p. 52). The course instructor provided the coaching in an individualized setting, which may have caused the undergraduate student tutors to be intimidated and nervous. As the course instructor and coach, I, the first author, relied on my own analysis of the data collected and did not invite peer reviews.

Conclusion

While the pandemic deterred me from offering students crucial face-to-face tutoring experiences, it had an effect I had not anticipated. I made time to meet individually with preservice teacher tutors, thus providing more coaching and consulting than I had been able to provide in previous years. I learned some things about myself as a coach of soon-to-be teachers that I will carry with me this coming fall. Analyzing my own coaching language has given me the opportunity to grow my skills as a coach and will help me to encourage preservice teachers to be reflective and self-directed learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Coaching Note-Taking Guide

Instructor Observations:	Instructor Wonderings:
Book Introduction:	Book Introduction:
Book Reading:	Book Reading:
Discussion:	Discussion:
Teaching Point:	Teaching Point:

Appendix B
Sample Coaching Note-Taking Form

Coaching Notes

Instructor Observations:	Instructor Wonderings:
You're so friendly and sweet with her! Great disposition.	
Book Introduction: You asked good questions to get her thinking about the text.	**Book Introduction:** Try a little more enthusiasm! Also, engage the child by asking her to tell you about the cover and make connections. You asked her to tell you about the pictures, but then you told her about the pictures and started pointing out words. Instead of saying, "Do you know what this word is," have her identify one or two high frequency words as you're looking through the book and have her predict and locate one or two words that you think she may not be able to get to on her own. After the book introduction, you might say, "Now let's read to find out…"
Book Reading: *Souter/sweater* – great part to stop and do some prompting! Same with *swom/swam*	**Book Reading:** *souter/sweater* – prompts – Try: "Say the first part and think what would make sense." *"was looked after"* – that might be a good place to introduce in book introduction – structure *swom/swam* – prompt – Try: "You said *swom*. Does that sound right?"
Discussion: "Tell me about what you just read. What happened in the story?" Good prompting to get her to tell you more.	**Discussion:** Child gave very short answers. You might also say, "Tell me more." It's ok to go back into the book when referring to certain parts.
Teaching Point: Succinct	**Teaching Point:** *Sweater* – connect back to prompt. So you might say "You checked the first two letters, checked the picture, and thought what would look right and make sense."