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ISBN 1-883604-11-7

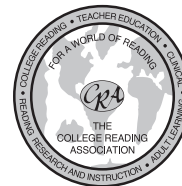
Literacy Issues During Changing Times: A Call to Action

Falk-Ross, Szabo, Sampson, Foote



College Reading Association Yearbook, Volume 30

Literacy Issues During Changing Times: A Call to Action



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Literacy Issues During Changing Times: A Call to Action



The Thirtieth Yearbook A Peer Reviewed Publication of The College Reading Association

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ISBN 1-883604-14-1

Printed at Texas A&M University-Commerce

Cover Design: Carlyn Ross Schlechter

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each year that we publish the *Yearbook*, the editorial team of Fran Falk-Ross, Susan Szabo, Mary Beth Sampson, and Martha Foote step back and acknowledge the tremendous work of so many of our College Reading Association friends and family who have contributed to the publication process! This year was definitely a superb one, and we wish to consider the efforts of all who made it possible to share the excellent articles within these covers.

A large bulk of the thanks are extended to the authors, who carefully converted their presentations into interesting and thought-provoking manuscripts. The peer reviewed articles in this edition provide a well-balanced look at literacy education in areas of professional development, teacher education, and literacy instruction and assessment. We would like to thank the keynote speakers for sharing their provocative presentations, and the award winners for using our *Yearbook* to disseminate their novel research.

The reviewers for this edition were also a busy group this year. The reviewers were able to find a balance between keeping a keen eye for details in content and mentoring new and seasoned authors with ideas for revisions. How lucky we have been to have our membership participate so freely in this important service for CRA. We also value the support of the CRA Publications Committee, which is chaired by Timothy G. Morrison of Brigham Young University. In addition, we are grateful to the members of the CRA Board of Directors who have continually supported the editorial team and the publication of the *CRA Yearbook*.

Our “production crew” consisted of dedicated editorial whizzes Karen Larmon Whalen, Margie Garcia, and Vivian Freeman. Karen Whalen kept the publication process organized through her organized manuscript tracking, her weekly schedule reminders, and her meticulous line editing. We are thankful to have had her expert eye on the flow of the papers in and out of our offices. Vivian Freeman, as always, was able to assemble and print a wonderful product. In addition, we would like to thank Carlyn Ross Schlechter, as she designed the cover for this *Yearbook*, depicting the important message of change and energy in the topics through her choice of icons and colors.

We are very fortunate and grateful for the ongoing support of scholarship and the *CRA Yearbook* provided by our universities. At Texas A&M University-Commerce, we thank President Dan Jones, Interim Provosts Gary Peer and Mary Hendrix, and the Dean of the College of Education Brent Mangus. We also send our sincere thanks to our colleagues in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction for their ongoing support of the publication and of our editorial team. In addition, at Northern Illinois

University we thank President John Peters, Executive Vice President and Provost Raymond W. Alden III, Chair of the Department of Literacy Education Norman Stahl, and Dean of the College of Education Lemuel Watson. At Pace University in New York, the School of Education's Dean Harriet Feldman, Associate Deans Mary Rose McCarthy and Annjanet Woodburn, and the Pleasantville Chair Leslie Soodak were especially helpful as we finalized this *Yearbook* edition.

We also recognize and appreciate the assistance provided by the administrative assistants in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University-Commerce, Maureen Preston, Erica Savala, and Priscilla Nichols. We also are thankful to our families, colleagues, friends, and readers who have provide ongoing support and encouragement.

FFR, SS, MBS, MMF
January 2009

INTRODUCTION

When the CRA conference met in Salt Lake City in November, 2007, most of us had an inkling that this was going to be an excellent series of presentations that would provide interesting professional development in the form of new insight into instructional and assessment strategies for literacy and a forum for disseminating new research. The title and theme of our conference was “Literacy at the Crossroads” and we knew that intriguing conversations would follow. Our lineup for the presidential speech, keynote addresses, and research awards was well organized by Ray Reutzel, and the educational environment of the time invited discussion of issues. As we met and talked, we were surrounded by the amazing physical and philosophical elements of Salt Lake City, many of us visiting the Mormon Tabernacle choir’s practice session! This 30th edition of the *CRA Yearbook*, through the articles developed by our membership at that conference, represents the intellectual context we all encountered.

This *Yearbook* begins with the article representing Ellen Jampole’s presentation to the CRA membership. In her presidential address, Ellen had us alternately laughing, considering, and reminiscing about how she and other academics understand and develop the knowledge we carry with us. She shares these same themes in her narrative, “Traditions, Storying, and Crossroads” that follows our conference theme and introduces the “Issues in Changing Times” that organizes this edition.

The second section reveals the specifics of a special group of presenters. Our four invited addresses are exceptional. From his presentation as the invited speaker for CRA’s Children’s Book Author, Michael Tunnel shares the journey he took as he researched *Mailing May*. In “Getting the Facts Right in Books for Young Readers” Michael specifies the many steps it takes to provide a well-balanced and historically correct version of one girl’s experiences. MaryEllen Vogt enlightens us about an important issue for all teachers in her article, “Teachers of English Learners: Issues of Preparation and Professional Development.” She presents a common scenario, statistics, and suggestions for supporting a population of students who are growing in numbers in our classrooms today. P. David Pearson’s article with colleagues Mia Callahan and Vicki B. Griffo on “Teacher Knowledge and Teaching Reading” sums up and continues his keynote address on the nature and importance of developing effective and quality teachers. These authors look deeply into teacher education programs and myths we must dispel. They suggest a toolbox of types of knowledge teachers will need and question how we can assess that knowledge. Timothy Rasinski, as the recipient of the CRA Laureate Award, writes on the “The Lost Art of Teaching Reading” in which he suggests a balance of the art and science of teaching reading. This theme is espe-

cially meaningful to our organization at this time, as we have reassessed our needs and renamed our organization to represent literacy educators and researchers. Tim provides explanations, research, and meaningful examples to develop this narrative.

The articles summarizing research completed by the recipients of three research awards follow in this *Yearbook*. Donna Wake, winner of the dissertation award, provides a look at middle school students' oral language in her paper, "Critical Inquiries in Oral Language Production: Preservice Teachers' Responses to Students' Linguistic Diversity." She discusses how she gathered samples and asked preservice teachers to rate the nature of the language samples, providing insight for teacher education. Amy Wilson, winner of the Master's Thesis Award, also focuses on the middle grades in her paper, "Case Study of a Middle School Student Attending a Separate Reading Class." Amy's research explores how attending a separate reading class supports a students' comprehension in his other content area course work. Mayra Daniels and Verna Rentsch write about leveling criteria for books written in Spanish for K-3rd graders in their paper "Collaboration and Discovery." This paper's explanation of a novel pilot study in an area that is not well documented details Mayra's research for which she won the Jerry Johns Promising Research Award.

The excellent remaining articles have been divided into three categories: issues of teacher education, issues of professional development, and issues of literacy instruction and assessment. The four articles on teacher education provide a balance of information in this area of concern as they focus on teachers' beliefs about classroom factors, the need for attention to writing instruction, technological approaches to instruction, and clarity in our use of terminology. The next section's four articles are on topics of professional development, alternative certification programs' teacher candidates' belief of self-efficacy, profiles for models of professional development, school reform, and teachers' perceptions of professional development activities. In our third section on literacy instruction and assessment, five articles update our knowledge in specific areas. These articles highlight preschool reading readiness and free book programs, a comparison of three states' reading tests, the effectiveness of guided reading programs for first grade teachers, important considerations for reading comprehension activities with English language learners, and a unique bookstore project for teachers of English language learners.

We hope you learn from and enjoy reading these articles that touch on all topics of importance in the changing environment of educational issues now before us. We look forward to continuing these conversations at future conferences and to reading the publications that spring from these conversations. It has been our pleasure to assemble this excellent set of articles for the *CRA Yearbook*.

FFR, SS, MBS, MMF

**PRESIDENTIAL
ADDRESS**

TRADITIONS, STORYING, AND CROSSROADS

Keynote Address

Ellen Jampole
SUNY-Cortland

Ellen Jampole has taught literacy methods, children's literature, measurement and evaluation, and history of education classes at SUNY Cortland since 1990. She has served as department chair and as the Interim Director of Graduate Studies. Ellen has been active in CRA since 1991. She also taught at LSU and prior to that, she was a regular classroom teacher (high school and elementary levels) as well as a reading specialist (grades K-6, 9-11). She loves reading and does so constantly.



Abstract

*My presidential address theme came from being Southern, a teacher, and having a love of reading. I have a fondness for Southern writers, humorous writers, and women writers, specifically, funny Southern women writers. I judge a book by its cover. If the title sounds interesting or if there's a catchy picture, then I am most likely hooked. I couldn't resist Jill Conner Browne's *The Sweet Potato Queens' Book of Love*. It has a great title and a hilarious picture of "royalty" in hot pink and green and big hair. All Southerners have observations about life which we share in a round-about way, making them into elaborate stories. Some observations/stories are quite fitting for us as educators and researchers; as we are at a crossroads in literacy. So, I'll share a few stories with you and give you my interpretation and advice.*

This speech is all Linda Gambrell's fault. I met her (and Pat Koskinen) at my first CRA meeting, the 1991 conference at Crystal City, VA; both of them befriended me. Later, after the conference, Linda called me and asked if I'd be interested in applying for the coeditor position for *The Reading News*...I was so excited that I babbled on and on to my department chair (a science educator so he had NO clue of who THE LINDA GAMBRELL IS)...the rest is history.

Historically, as one of the last duties, the CRA president gives an address—and traditionally sweats for a couple of years about the address (which in many ways is harder than planning the conference). My first thought after finding out I won the election was “I can't believe they elected me; OH GOOD GRIEF, I HAVE TO PLAN A SPEECH.” Planning this talk has made me crazy (and that's such a short trip). I lost sleep, said some CHOICE cross words; went up several crossroads...then I hit on a ROYAL idea, which I'll explain in a bit, after some background. I really wanted this speech to be finished early, so I could put my mind at ease, but I worked on it the day before I left for the conference (and even the morning I gave it).

I thought about the conference theme and started to tie in with a speech along the lines of: This year we are again at a crossroads in literacy and education. This crossroads is likely to stay for a long time, but we need to do as much as possible to make sure the road chosen is the right one for all children. While I believe we are at a juncture in education (and told Ray Reutzel in an email in September or October, 2007, to deliver me from people who feel balanced literacy is under-cover whole language), that speech wasn't me. Besides I couldn't wear my queenly regalia and talk totally seriously—the two just don't go together.

At the 2006 conference, in the J. Estill Alexander Forum, Allen Berger said writing a good sentence is hard to do...he is **so** right. Therefore, it follows that writing a good speech is practically IMPOSSIBLE, at least for me, so I will just talk from my heart.

I am from North Carolina, a proud Southerner. As such, I am steeped in manners, traditions, stories, and history. Judy Richardson dressed as a witch to give her presidential address. Tim Rasinski told us he learned everything from his dog. In 2006, Karen Bromley told us about the future of writing. All told great stories, very personalized to their interests.

I was my department's interim chair this past spring—since I wasn't the real chair, I decided I was other furniture...an ottoman...if I was an ottoman, well, I would just be the Empress. So, I decided to keep the theme of being a royal figure for my presidential address.

Harper Lee, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, Skip Fretwell, Charlotte Simpson, Celia Rivenbark, and Jill Connor Browne, great Southern storytellers all. Who are these last four people? Rivenbark is a writer for the Myrtle

Beach Sun Times (newspaper) and has written several books. She is a self described “tarnished Southern belle” with a keen eye and a sharp wit. Browne is a Sweet Potato Queen, writer, and actually **the boss queen**—she began the Sweet Potato Queens (SPQ) in 1982. She said that nobody else can be a Sweet Potato Queen, but we can be queens and boss queens of whatever we want. The SPQ as a group are rowdy women; they have adopted Laura Thatcher Ulrich’s slogan “well behaved women rarely make history.” (I highly recommend ALL the books Rivenbark and Browne have written.)

At Cortland, in the School of Education, I am known as the APA Queen, but I didn’t **pick** that queendom. I **picked** to be the Boss Queen of CRA—technically, I reckon, y’all picked me, but you didn’t know you picked me to be queen. To finish the list of Southern storytellers, Skip is my cousin and Charlotte was my mother.

I hope to tell you a story...I hope to share traditions. And, as any Southern mama worth her salt does, I will give you some advice you should follow just because I said so.

My queenly edict is: y’all listen and listen good...if you go to sleep, make sure you are in the back few (about the last two-thirds of the room) rows as I can’t see what you’re doing there.

All Southerners have observations about life. Of course we are really, really willing to share and in a long, round about way. As Rivenbark (2000) says, “We Southerners believe a simple yes or no has a certain harshness in it that could be construed as, horror of horrors, rude. We never answer a question simply. It just isn’t in us” (p. 36). We don’t share things quickly; we make them into elaborate stories.

Some observations/stories are quite fitting for us as educators and researchers, so I’ll share a few of them with you and give you my interpretation and advice as the Boss Queen of CRA.

But, first...I thought some more and maybe this speech is really Robert Tate’s fault. You see, I always wanted to be a teacher, from when I was a little girl and taught my younger brother to spell his name FRED (His name is Fred.) In the sixth grade, I was in school with Robert and Isaac. All three of us were from dysfunctional families. Robert and Isaac hated school; they hated to read. I loved to read—it was such an escape—I believed everybody should love to read. I don’t know what happened to Isaac, but Robert and I were in social studies/language arts together in 7th grade. Our teacher, Mrs. Page, gave us an assignment, to read a two-page Mark Twain piece. Mrs. Page came over to me (Robert sat beside me in our grouping) and told me to get busy. I said I’d read it; Mrs. Page did not believe me. Now, this was the dark ages...Robert told Mrs. Page he knew I’d read the piece and that she could ask me any question she wanted to and I’d be able to answer it—he so hated to read that he had watched me read. Robert cemented my desire to be a teacher.

Back to current time. Some of the life observations are contradictory—always wear clean underwear when you are going out and never wear panties to a party. Does that mean you only have a party at your house? Beauty is as beauty does; beauty is only skin deep . . . I suppose contradiction is fitting, since teaching and research are filled with diverging points of view!

LIFE OBSERVATIONS	HOW THEY FIT EDUCATORS & RESEARCHERS
<p>What's so special about being a Southerner? Well, just everything (Rivenbark, 2000, p. XV).</p>	<p>What's so special about being a teacher educator and researcher? Well, just everything that's all.</p>
<p>A closed mouth gathers no feet (Charlotte Simpson, personal to communication all my life).</p>	<p>There is always a time for listening—to others as well as ourselves. Listen to students. Listen government. Listen to what's going on worldwide, to be well-informed. Listen to your heart.</p>
<p>There are five men a woman needs—dancer, fixer, lover, the purchaser of everything we want and nothing we need, and finally the man we can talk to (Browne, 1999, pp. 105-111). (According to Bill Engvall, a man's needs are much more simple—and there are only three—beer, food, sex.)</p>	<p>There are five teachers every learner needs and has a right to. The fixer, who teaches strategies so the learners become skilled. The encourager, who cheers on each learner's success. The task-master, that keeps each learner honest and has high standards. The passionate one, who loves what he or she is doing and loves learning. The knowledgeable one, the one who has kept on learning, even though he or she has multiple degrees; the one David Pearson told us about Friday (November 2, 2007) that has the disposition to inquire and learn. The one who develops professionally. All of these together sound to me like an effective teacher. (Learners' needs are more complex than men's, it seems.)</p>
<p>Stop dressing your six-year old like a skank (Rivenbark, 2006, p. 27). You know, like the Britney Spears du jour. She goes on to say that the "7-16 girls' department offerings are no different than that of the juniors' department and beyond" (p. 30).</p>	<p>Don't jump on every (or even any) tacky bandwagon that comes around. Staying off bandwagons is akin to wanting to keep Peter Pan collars and cotton for our little girls instead of low-cut spandex with "sexy chick" front—do what's right for learners. We need to have a decent foundation to build on. Plutarch is still relevant; Dewey (1938) said we need to keep the old that we know is good and incorporate good new into the curriculum. We need to get the facts right, as Michael Tunnell told us Thursday (November 1, 2007) meaning we need to get teaching right.</p>

You better have a good defense (Browne, 1999, p. 95).	The best offense is a good defense, right? As Gerald Coles (2006) asked, what needs to be done to ensure that all children learn to read and write? We need to have a good defense to teach all learners to be literate—and our defense will come from research: knowing what works best for each learner. Pearson (November 2, 2007) said we need to be reflective, analytical, and organized. We need to know what works, what doesn't—and why it does or doesn't.
Read like your life depends on it (Skip Fretwell, personal communication, all my life).	Your professional life does depend on it. Be critical literates; know the subtext. Know theory. Know what you believe and why you believe the way you do. Read to stay current. Read to know things, professional and personal. As Rasinski (2002, p. 11) said, "there is a solid theoretical basis for reading as a necessary condition for improving reading achievement and . . . you cannot become a good reader without widely and regularly reading." Love reading for pure pleasure. (Besides your life may depend on it, given the recent parasites and outbreaks!)
Make new friends, keep the old, one is silver and the other is gold.	Mentor new people in CRA, keep up with your old buddies. We all need support and we can all give support. Linda Gambrell at the newcomers' luncheon said some of the best friends she's made have been through CRA.
Never wear panties to a party.	Do the unexpected. Liberate yourself and your students. Teach them to be thinkers.
Do what makes your heart sing.	Without passion, the singing of the heart, nothing great is accomplished. You have to love what you do to be great at it. You need to have the right disposition.
Be prepared.	Prepared: ready, set, equipped, organized, and primed. In the 1960s, the thought was that teaching was a subversive activity. It should be subversive—and effective. There are five mainstays of effective instruction—teacher knowledge, assessment, effective practice, differentiated instruction, and family-school connections (Reutzel & Cooter, 2008, p. vi-vii). Be primed to do the best for students of all ages. Be set to take action. Do your best; be equipped to be effective; be organized active thinkers; be ready, subversive do-ers. As MaryEllen Vogt told us earlier this morning (November 3, 2007) go beyond the basal as it's not enough. Your students' and their students' lives depend on it.

<p>Be p'ticklar (Browne, 1999, p. 59).</p>	<p>I could have started with this and just stopped because, as Browne says, this is the best advice in the whole history of the world. Be p'ticklar (be particular) covers EVERYTHING. We need to be p'ticklar in how and what we teach. There is no one right way to teach. Just like clothes, no matter what they say, are not one size fits all. Be p'ticklar in what you choose to teach with and about—select the best of the best. As Reutzel and Cooter (2008) remind us, it is the teacher who makes the difference. Take it to another level: from an excellent teacher and researcher to an expert teacher and researcher (MaryEllen Vogt, November 3, 2007).</p>
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My queenly attire during this conference has been a reflection of what I believe we collectively are—quirky, proud, a little off-beat yet classy, colorful, sparkly, blinding, noisy... whatever you want to call it. I'd like to change Ulrich's statement a bit to "well behaved literacy professionals rarely make history." I believe we members of the College Reading Association (to be the Association of Literacy Professionals and Researchers) have made history and will continue to make history.

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**KEYNOTE
ADDRESSES**

GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT IN BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS: RESEARCHING *MAILING MAY*

Keynote Address

Michael O. Tunnell

Brigham Young University

*Michael O. Tunnell teaches children's literature at Brigham Young University. He has published several professional books, including *Children's Literature, Briefly* (with Jim Jacobs; 2008) and *The Prydain Companion* (2003)—as well as a variety of journal articles about children's books. He also writes for young readers. Some of his titles include *The Children of Topaz* (1996), *Mailing May* (1997), *Wishing Moon* (2004), and *Moon without Magic* (2007).*

Michael Tunnell was the invited speaker for CRA's Children's Book Author presentation for the first evening of the 51st annual conference. The topic he chose to discuss was the research that goes into the writing of his books for young readers



I had never been to Grangeville, Idaho, but as I stood gazing down its main street, I was flooded with the strange and thrilling sensation that I'd stood there before. However, this small mountain town was no longer the place I had traveled so far to see. What I really was seeking was the Grangeville of the 1910s. But remnants of bygone days were there to be found, and therefore I was feeling the exhilaration recognized by anyone who chases history. It is the rush that comes with standing at the site of a human drama about which you've been reading and studying and dreaming. To be there

is often the only way to make your research complete, and when you arrive, the place seems magically familiar. In this case, I had been chasing a very tiny slice of Americana, the story of a 5-year-old Grangeville girl who made postal history in 1914.

My search for May Pierstorff began when I was browsing through a book titled *1910s* (Stewart, 1989, p. 24), a collection of interesting facts about that particular decade, and this brief entry caught my eye, “A 48-POUND BABY CHICK?” But instead of information about giant poultry, I found the story of an Idaho couple who could not afford to send their young daughter by train to visit her grandmother. How did they solve their problem? The Pierstorffs mailed her! Parcel post was new in 1914, but even then regulations prohibited mailing living things, except for queen bees and baby chicks. The limit for a package was 50 pounds, and little May Pierstorff apparently weighed in at around 48. She was classified as a baby chick, and for 53¢ worth of postage—much less than the price of a train ticket—she was loaded on the railroad mail car and then delivered to her grandmother’s doorstep later that day.

I smiled as I read this account of May’s mailing, but then I came to attention in my chair. I’ve always wanted to be struck by the muse, and maybe this was as near as I’ll ever come. Suddenly, I knew that May’s story was just the right stuff for a children’s book. However, I needed to know more of May’s story. The few paragraphs in *1910s* (Stewart, 1989) told me little, and the book did not provide a reference. I decided to start my search by visiting the history librarians at Brigham Young University. When I told them what I was after, I got a response I was destined to hear again and again: “It’s probably just folklore,” accompanied by pleasant laughter. When absolutely nothing surfaced during our search, it seemed May’s story was indeed an urban, or rather, a rural legend.

Nevertheless, the librarians suggested I call the Idaho Historical Society. If there was a shred of truth to the story, someone there should know. But when I got Guila Ford on the phone in her Boise, Idaho, office, she knew nothing of May Pierstorff and, with a pleasant laugh, suggested that the tale might be . . . well, a bit of western folklore. Nevertheless, she was willing to help me find out if this was fact or fiction.

I didn’t even know the town in Idaho from which May supposedly was mailed, or her destination, so Guila did a search of the Idaho census looking for Pierstorffs. In a matter of days, I received a letter telling me that the only Pierstorffs in Idaho during the early part of the twentieth century lived in the area around Lewiston. Included were photocopies of the 1920 census reports that listed the family of John E. Pierstorff and his wife Sarah. Though John and Sarah had five children, there was no May. I wanted to believe that their daughter, listed as Charlotte M., had the middle name of May. After all, she was 11 in 1920, which would have made her the right age.

Before I could decide what to do next, serendipity took a hand in my affairs. I was reading the August 2, 1993, issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, with no thought of May in my mind, when I ran across a four-page advertisement titled "America's History is in the Mail." It celebrated the opening of the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum and included a timeline of U.S. postal history. Beneath the year 1914 was printed: "Four-year-old Mary Pierstorff is delivered by U.S. Mail to her grandparents, for 53 cents (the chicken rate), because her parents were reluctant to pay the train fare. 'Mailing' children is soon banned by the post office" (*U.S. News and World Report*, 1993, p. 60). If the Smithsonian Institute knew about May (even if they had spelled her first and last names wrong), then not only was her story true, but I also had a solid source of information. I called directory assistance and got a number for the Smithsonian. A few minutes later, after being transferred only once, I was talking to Jim O'Donnell, a Museum Specialist at the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. Jim also didn't know May's story but was pleased to engage in researching "this bit of postal history." A couple of weeks later, I received a letter from Jim, who had asked the museum curator where he had found the information for the timeline. The curator thought it came from an old edition of *Postal Life*, but a search yielded nothing. Instead, Jim had found a brief, boxed article titled "The Parcel Post Kid," published in an issue of the *Parade Magazine* that accompanied the *Washington Post* on January 10, 1982. The article offered little new information, except a photograph of May and, of most importance, the points of her departure and arrival: Grangeville to Lewiston.

Now that I knew where May had lived, I zeroed in on the Nez Perce County Historical Society in Lewiston, Idaho. I telephoned and spoke with Lora Feucht, telling her I wanted to learn as much as I could about the little girl who was mailed from Grangeville to Lewiston in 1914. Her response, "That really happened? I've never heard a thing about it." She asked me to give her a week to do some research.

Soon after I received a large, brown envelope from Lora with all the evidence I had hoped for, including confirmation that the child from the 1920 census was the little girl who had been mailed. Lora had located Charlotte May Pierstorff's relatives, who still lived in the area, and from them acquired magazine and newspaper clippings galore, including May's obituary (which told the tale of her being mailed). She died in 1987, and though it was 1993, I felt as if I barely had missed being able to meet her.

In the packet of clippings, I found an article from the *Smithsonian* (Kernan & Lautman, 1993); highlighted for me was a single paragraph telling about May (p. 60). I've wondered since if this was the source the curator of the National Postal Museum had used for his postal history timeline. Other brief accounts of May's adventure also had appeared in

The American Philatelist, *The National Enquirer* (which, by the way, was as outrageously inaccurate as one might expect), and a variety of newspapers from the northern Idaho and Washington area.

One of the most important items sent to me by Lora Feucht was a photocopy of the article that appeared in the *Gem State Banner*, one of Lewiston's two newspapers at the time, on February 19, 1914, "SEND GIRL AGED 4 BY PARCEL POST" announced the headline, followed by "Weights 48 1-2 Pounds and Journey Requires 53 Cents in Stamps" (*Gem State Banner*). Though the *Banner* got her age wrong (she was 5 months away from being 6), this clipping erased even the slightest doubt about May's story. She indeed had been mailed to her grandmother in Lewiston: "Mrs. C. G. Vennigerholz, 1156 Twelfth Avenue." The event was newsworthy enough to appear in print the very day it occurred, and the article revealed much about what actually happened. For instance, the conductor on the Grangeville to Lewiston line of the Camas Prairie Railroad, Harry Morris, entered the mail car to collect a fare from the "little flaxen-haired miss" only to be shown the "stamps attached to her coat." The article also named Leonard Mochel as the mail clerk who delivered May to her grandmother soon after her arrival.

The news clipping was a valuable discovery, but there was an even bigger find in the materials from the Nez Perce County Historical Society—a typed, two-page account written and signed by Leonard Mochel the railway postal clerk who traveled with May. Leonard revealed he was Sarah Pierstorff's cousin, which meant May had not been abandoned to survive as best she could among letters and packages sorted by a stranger.

Leonard obviously recalled the events of February 19, 1914, years after they happened, for he began with these words, "This story dates back to the time when the Post Office Department increased the weight of parcel post packages to a limit of fifty pounds." Actually, parcel post within the United States had been initiated on January 1, 1913, only about a year before May was mailed. Before that time, only items weighing 4 pounds or less could be sent by mail. In my further research of the time period, I discovered that the United States government had maintained parcel post agreements with foreign countries long before reasonable domestic service was established. The new domestic regulations allowed 50-pound packages to be sent short distances (short-haul packages) and 20-pound packages to be sent long distances. Leonard made it clear that no one knew quite what to make of the new, hefty weights allowed. "There were numerous speculations as to the various things that could be carried by and in the United States mail," he said. "Many jokes about supposed happenings were recounted and several accounts were printed in the newspapers causing much merriment."

Leonard's memory seemed a bit foggy when it came to some of the small details. He can only approximate the year when he helped mail his cousin's daughter, "about 1915." He recalled May's weight (combined with that of her small valise) as 49 pounds and the amount of the postage as exactly 50 cents ("two cents for the first pound and one cent for each additional pound"). And on the topic of where the stamps were affixed, he also disagreed with most other reports. I had read that the stamps were glued to a tag attached to May's person or were glued directly to the back of her coat, but Leonard said they were "affixed to her valise."

Even though Leonard's memories about postage amounts and package weights may not be accurate, he still had the best view of the events of that day. His words offered something unavailable in any other source—a play-by-play, firsthand account. Leonard breathed life into the players of this tiny historical drama, and thus into the whole story. For instance, Leonard made no mention of tight finances as the reason May's parents chose to send her by mail. Instead, he painted the picture of a playful Sarah Pierstorff, who listened to jokes and stories about outrageous items sent by parcel post and decided to test the waters. She knew there would be no risk involved and that her daughter would not be frightened. After all, Leonard stayed with his cousin when in Grangeville, which meant he and May knew one another well. So one morning in February, Sarah stopped her postal clerk cousin before he left for work and asked him to mail a package to her mother. "I was sure flabbergasted," said Leonard, but he consented to give Sarah's idea a try. The postmaster didn't seem to raise much of an objection and "after several witticisms duly weighed her." Besides most living things, postal regulations also prohibited the mailing of smelly items. Though Leonard didn't quote the postmaster's witty comments, I can imagine him sniffing May, laughing, and declaring that she at least passed the smell test.

Leonard's report also gave a more personal look at May herself. For instance, he recounted that May became "dizzy and carsick" during the train ride. When she went to the door to get some air, the conductor, Harry Morris, caught her and "immediately protested that [Leonard] was carrying a passenger and asked for her ticket." When Leonard explained the situation and showed Harry the stamps, the conductor "laughed and remarked that he had seen everything now" and "that this would make an authentic news report." In 1962, when the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* interviewed May (Mrs. Kay Sipes), she wondered if the unsettling train ride in 1914 might have affected her subconsciously ("Girl Sent by Post has Dislike for Trains," 1962). "I love to travel," she said, "but I don't like to ride in trains." She also said she remembered very little about her amazing journey, only that she had to get up early, that it was bitterly cold, and

that Conductor Morris looked extremely important “with his gold watch and chain draped across his big tummy.”

Harry Morris turned in his news scoop as soon as the train arrived in Grangeville. Leonard thought that the story must have made every newspaper in the country and as a result “we found some of our relatives in the state of New York, and were able to trace our ancestry [sic] to the Mayflower.” But the aftermath of May’s mailing was not all pleasant. Within days, Leonard heard from his chief clerk, George Addleman, in Spokane, Washington. Mr. Addleman had read about May in the *Seattle Star Mirror* and wanted to know why Leonard shouldn’t be given 500 demerits for violating the interstate commerce ruling concerning passengers in mail cars (700 demerits meant dismissal). He insisted that half a fare be paid to the Camas Prairie Railroad. As there were no children’s fares at the time, the price of a ticket for May was \$1.55. If the Pierstorff’s were financially strapped, the 53¢ postage was a real savings. John Pierstorff was a farm laborer, and my research revealed that farm laborers in the mountain states averaged about \$10.00 per week in 1914.

The pressure mounted as other citizens decided to capitalize on the opportunity to use parcel post in creative ways. Within a week, a news article appeared in *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane. The headline read: “ILLEGAL TO SEND CHILD BY MAIL” (1914). After describing May’s mailing and its illegality, the article reported that local postal inspectors were “in receipt of a communication from Priest River from a man who asked permission to send a dog to Spokane. He was informed that the dog was unmailable.”

Leonard Mochel received a good scare, but in the end John and Sarah agreed to pay half the fare and Leonard escaped the 500 demerits. Though the article in the *Gem State Banner* (1914) stated that May would be returned to her parents by parcel post, it is a fair bet she wasn’t. However, no one, including May’s son, Gerald Sipes, seems to know exactly how May got back to Grangeville. Traveling from Lewiston to Grangeville was arduous in 1914, unless you took the train, because the roads were so poor. It is almost certain that May rode the train home as a passenger rather than a package.

Though the train was the easy way to travel, the line between Grangeville and Lewiston wasn’t your run-of-the-mill stretch of track. Lora Feucht also sent me information about this segment of Camas Prairie Railroad, including some photographs and a copy of a train schedule with the effective date of February 8, 1914. What I discovered was fascinating. This leg of the Camas Prairie Railroad belies its name—there is nothing prairie-like about the terrain. Though Grangeville sits on what is called the Camas Prairie, comparatively flat farmland nestled among the mountains, the edge of the

“prairie” rises to over 3,700 feet above sea level before making a spectacular plunge downward through rugged peaks and cliffs to Lewiston at an elevation of 732 feet. This 3,000-foot drop in elevation occurs on only 77 miles of track. As the crow flies, the distance is a good deal shorter, for the track is replete with switchbacks. In 1914, there were 61 trestles and seven tunnels along the way. The rails clung to steep mountainsides and sailed above dizzying canyon depths atop towers of crisscrossed timbers. “Steel on stilts,” folks called it. Little wonder May was carsick.

According to the schedule, Leonard and May pulled away from the Grangeville Depot at 7:00 a.m. Coming down the steep grade, the passenger train averaged 19.2 miles an hour; this included making stops at 14 small towns with names like Cottonwood, Culatesac, Fort Lapwai, and Joseph. Of course, Leonard would drop off and pick up mail at each stop until he made his final drop at 11:00 a.m. in Lewiston.

During my efforts to uncover May’s story, I also had the opportunity to speak and correspond with Gerald Sipes. Though I had missed meeting May, talking with her son, and eventually meeting him face-to-face, turned out to be a wonderful substitute. Gerald worked on the Camas Prairie Railroad his entire career as an agent-telegrapher and later as a claim agent-station supervisor. He was there when passenger trains still ran from Grangeville to Lewiston. Therefore, Gerald was able to answer questions about the railroad and about his mother, though he knew few details about the mailing incident. The first time I called Gerald, I asked if he had the photograph of May that I had seen reproduced with several of the magazine articles. If so, I asked, would you have a copy made for me? In 3 days, I found an envelope in my mailbox containing May’s photograph and an actual clipping of the February 19 article from the *Gem State Banner* (1914). “Enclosed are all of the clippings and photo [of] when Mom was 4 (1912) that I have left. Please return these as soon as possible so they won’t get lost,” read the accompanying note. Though we had never met in person, he entrusted me with the only original photograph of the young May that he possessed. When I finally met Gerald and his wife, Shirley, I found them both to be as delightful as my initial impression led me to believe. I also picked up a few more pieces of the puzzle from them, including the newspaper report that appeared on February 20, 1914, in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, entitled “Girl Journeys Parcels (sic) Post,” that confirmed May’s departure and arrival times.

At last, I seemed to have nailed down most of the facts, but I needed more than facts. I needed to share as much of May’s experience as possible, duplicate it as best I could. That required a visit to both Grangeville and Lewiston.

Lora Feucht and her colleagues at the Nez Perce County Historical Society hooked me up with two local people who made my visit seem like

a step back in time. The first I contacted was Carmelita Spencer, curator of the Bicentennial Historical Museum in Grangeville. Carm, as everyone in Grangeville called her, was the proverbial bundle of energy and knew Grangeville better than I know my own children. Happily, she agreed to show me the sites related to May.

My second important local contact was Jim Morefield. As Supervisor of Maintenance on the Camas Prairie Railroad, Jim literally had the power to recreate the past for me. I wanted to follow May's path from beginning to end, and that meant I had to ride the rails from Grangeville to Lewiston. It was a cold winter day when I called Jim, and he agreed to take me over the route, if I'd wait until April or May. I had more reason to be ecstatic than I realized at the time, for I was about to traverse the trestles and tunnels of what I soon discovered to be one of the last vestiges of old-time railroading.

In late April of 1994, I made the 650-mile drive from Provo, Utah, to Lewiston. Going north from Boise, the winding two-lane highway followed the Salmon and Payette Rivers, curling through canyons and mountain valleys that rival the beauty of any in the Rockies. Finally, after a few scenic hours of driving, I descended onto the high mountain plains of the Camas Prairie and soon was standing on the streets of Grangeville.

I never was able to determine where in the Grangeville area the Pierstorffs had lived, but I knew I could begin May's journey at the old post office. I called Carm Spencer, who appeared almost instantly in a Lincoln Continental that dwarfed her tiny stature. She whisked me away on a tour of the town, including not only the old post office masquerading as the Fireside Lounge but also the site of the old Grangeville train depot. The depot is gone, and I only have a blurry photograph of the small wooden structure that was snapped long after its heyday. Carm tried to locate a better shot, but the photograph files of the local newspaper yielded nothing, as did a search by the Idaho Historical Society.

However, I did see the Schmadeka Building. Erected in 1910, it was one of the few structures remaining that May likely passed on the way to the train station. Carm pointed to the brick building's second story, telling me about Dreamland Hall. There couples twirled away their evenings on Schmadeka's hardwood dance floor. I also saw the site of the Lyric, a silent movie auditorium around in May's time but replaced in the 1930s by the still impressive theater, the Blue Fox. And I was able to stand on the site, now occupied by a new bank, where the major department store sat in 1914. Even though Alexander-Friedenrich burned down a few years before my visit, I created a scene in *Mailing May* that took place inside the store.

With an odd sense of reluctance, I left Carm Spencer and Grangeville in order to make Lewiston by nightfall. Early the next morning Jim More-

field met me at my motel, colorfully named the Sacagawea, and with real anticipation, I climbed into his Ford Bronco turned hyrail (highway/rail vehicle).

We headed toward the small town of Spalding (known as Joseph in 1914). Jim needed a railroad crossing in order to drive the hyrail onto the tracks, and Spalding offered the closest and most traffic-free spot.

My major interest, of course, was to experience the route of May's trip, but the moment I crawled out of the Bronco to watch Jim settle it onto the rails, I knew I was now interested in some of the finer points of railroad-ing. For instance, I discovered that a Bronco's wheels are too far apart to sit on the rails until a wheel adapter kit moves them inward to measure 60 inches from center to center. I watched Jim lower and then lever into place the rail gear attached at the front and rear. Steel wheels, miniature railcar wheels with rubber treads, guide the hyrail along the track just like a locomotive, once the Bronco's steering wheel is locked in place. In a few minutes, we were on our way up the mountain to Grangeville.

We were able to enjoy the luxury of stopping whenever we wanted to take a photograph or examine a tunnel, and as Jim explained his railroad, I began to understand that it was virtually no different than it had been 80 years earlier. There were no electrical switches. No high tech computer monitoring. And though diesels had been substituted for steam locomotives, the trestles they passed over were still the same giant turn-of-the-century wooden structures, timbers replaced here and there over the years to keep them intact. But unlike the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and other lines restored for the tourist trade, the Camas Prairie Railroad still hauled freight up and down the mountains in 1994—a weekly train except during the busier grain-harvesting season.

I was amazed to discover what a gargantuan task it is to keep a rail line maintained in good working order. Railroad ties, for instance, must regularly be replaced as they deteriorate or are “cut in” by the constant pounding weight of the trains—the tie plate holding the rail literally sinks into the wood. Jim saw to the replacement of anywhere from 1,000 to 6,000 ties yearly on the Grangeville line alone, and as we cruised along, he pointed to hundreds marked with florescent paint dots awaiting removal. At 3,000 per mile, the job of checking the ties was no small affair.

Of course, the steel track must be checked and replaced as well. Jim showed me how track may soften or become pitted causing vibration that in turn destroys ties. The joint bars that connect the rails must be checked constantly for loose bolts or cracks. Jim showed me how to listen for loose bolts as the hyrail crossed each joint. Sure enough, just by the sound we discovered a few bolts that needed tightening.

I'm sure May wasn't the least bit concerned with railroad ties and joint bars, but I'm certain she paid plenty of attention to the steep grades and sharp curves, the dark tunnels and the towering trestles. I know I did. Soon after Spalding the hyrail started a sharp ascent with grades as steep as 3% and sharp switchbacks. Forty-one of the 61 trestles still remain, as well as six of the seven tunnels. In Lapwai Canyon, the track makes a complete semicircle as it crosses a curving trestle and runs through Tunnel 1 (a bore of over 800 feet), creating an arc with a diameter of only about 1,000 feet.

The trestles were breathtaking. The longest and tallest spans Lawyer's Canyon. Of steel construction and built in 1908, it is 1580 feet long and 286 feet high. Half Moon Trestle is the tallest wooden structure at 141 feet, and though it is 685 feet long, there are two others that approach 900 feet. Half Moon Trestle contains a million board feet of timber. Throwbacks to the steam engine days still grace these wooden bridges—barrel stands. About every 100 feet a small platform extends outward, designed to hold a barrel of water used to extinguish trestle fires.

We were high up on the side of an Idaho mountain by the time we reached Tunnel 5. As we started through, an owl swooped down from the pilings, flew over us, and then circled back, obviously angry that we'd disturbed his daytime repose. We stopped, and as I stood by the tracks peering at the owl and scanning the panoramic scenery, I felt like I was seeing exactly what May saw. If I turned my back on the hyrail, no signs of the late 20th century spoiled the illusion.

That evening I completed the last leg of May's trip. Back in Lewiston, I found the old Union Pacific Station where May was unloaded and carted with the mail to the Lewiston Post Office. Trains don't come into Union Depot these days. The building is a nicely restored office complex that retains much of the splendid appearance of a substantial railroad station circa 1914. From Union Depot it is only two blocks to the old Lewiston Post Office, a columned edifice similar to many of the larger government buildings of the era. The post office was completed in 1912, ready and waiting for May's arrival. Today Lewiston has a newer, more modern post office, and the city offices reside in the old post office building.

Then I remembered May's mailing label: "Mrs. C. G. Vennigerholz, 1156 Twelfth Avenue." Could the house still be standing? From the post office I drove up into Lewiston's avenues. I felt a chill pass through me as I pulled in front of a corner lot with a house bearing the numbers 1156. Leonard Mochel had walked up those steps to deliver May to her grandmother.

As I was snapping a few pictures, Linda Carlton came out the front door, wondering if she could help me with something. I suppose she was a bit suspicious of a strange fellow photographing her home. But when I told her May's story, Linda took me inside and showed me a large, framed

photograph of the Vennigerholz home before the Carltons bought and remodeled it. The house had been slated for demolition more than once; Bob and Linda Carlton saved it from what seemed a certain death.

As I stood outside 1156 Twelfth Avenue, I was warmed by a sense of satisfaction. True, some might think May's story insignificant. But to me, it is a story that epitomizes America and the innovative spirit of her people. Of all the details about May's story that I learned, I suddenly knew that the most important detail had nothing to do with railway schedules or postal rates but rather with the wonderful, creative ways in which ordinary people solve difficult problems.

Before the sun disappeared and darkness took the house, I gazed at it one last time. Though the Carltons had extended and modernized the place, I could still see Mary Vennigerholz opening the front door, a shocked look on her face—for no one had bothered to notify her that her granddaughter was coming, much less coming by parcel post.

Author's Note

This paper was excerpted from: Tunnell, M. O. (1996). The mailing of May. *Idaho Yesterdays*, 40(2), pp. 2-13. Reprinted with permission.

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TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS: ISSUES OF PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Keynote Address

MaryEllen Vogt

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Abstract

Throughout the United States, rapidly increasing numbers of students whose first language is not English are enrolling in our schools. A majority of these students are native-born English learners, while the remainder are foreign born. In order to meet the academic and language development needs of these students, we must rethink preservice and inservice teacher preparation. This involves planning preservice and professional develop-

ment programs that: (a) focus on the effective teaching practices that result in improved academic and language proficiency for English learners, and (b) are responsive to teachers' development over the course of their careers. Progressive Differentiation, as described by the National Academy of Education's Reading Sub-Committee (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005), is used as a framework for identifying levels of development throughout a teacher's career and for considering programmatic issues related to the education of English learners. Questions to consider and recommendations for preservice program design are included.

In Mr. Jensen's 8th grade American History class, there is a mix of linguistically diverse students. About half of the students are native English speakers, while the others have a variety of home languages, including Spanish, Armenian, Farsi, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and French. With this mix of students, Mr. Jensen feels frustrated when he assesses their understanding of the history concepts he teaches. Many of the English learners (ELs) have no background in American history, while others, even those who are native-born, lack the English proficiency to read and listen with comprehension. Because of the state history standards he must teach, he feels there is little or no time to stop and reteach his ELs and other students who may have failed to meet the day's objectives. He also worries about the students who seem to master history concepts almost effortlessly. Several of them appear disinterested and bored while he is teaching. Mr. Jensen frequently feels overwhelmed and at times inadequate to meet the varied academic and language development needs of his diverse students.

Like Mr. Jensen, many of today's teachers in the United States are challenged when their language of instruction differs from the home languages of many of their students. The purpose of this paper is to focus on teacher preparation in the United States especially as related to ELs, and to examine teacher development through Progressive Differentiation, as described by the National Academy of Education's Reading Sub-Committee (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). Additionally, the purpose is to reflect on our role as teacher educators in planning undergraduate and graduate programs and professional development that respond to teachers' developmental career paths.

Background

The number of ELs in our schools continues to grow, with the rate of growth considerably outpacing that of native-English speaking students. Limited English proficient (LEP) students (another name for ELs) comprise

approximately 10.5 percent of the nation's preK-12 school enrollment, up from 5 percent in 1990 (Hoffman & Sable, 2006). The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) reported in 2007 that the following states experienced growth of more than 200 percent in their LEP population between 1994-2005: Nevada, Colorado, Nebraska, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia (NCELA, 2007). As ELs attend our schools in increasing numbers contributing their talents and cultures, there are also troubling aspects related to their schooling (Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008, p. 6):

1. Only 4 percent of 8th grade ELs and 20 percent of students classified "formerly as EL" scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the reading portion of the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). This means that 96 percent of the eighth-grade limited English proficient students score *below* basic level. This is particularly noteworthy, because NAEP exams often exempt students at the beginning proficiency level of English as a second language (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003; Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008).
2. ELs have some of the highest drop-out rates (Steinberg & Almeida, 2004). Since NCLB (No Child Left Behind; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) legislation was enacted in 2001, there appears to be an increase in the number of high school ELs not receiving a diploma, because they failed high-stakes tests, despite fulfilling all other graduation requirements (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Center on Education Policy, 2005).
3. Fifty-nine percent of adolescent students identified as Limited English Proficient live in families with incomes 185 percent below the poverty line (2000 U.S. Census; Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005).
4. Eighty-nine percent of secondary Hispanic students read below grade level (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005).
5. A recent five-year, statewide evaluation study found that ELs with 10 years of schooling in California had less than a 40 percent chance of meeting the criteria to be redesignated as fluent English proficient (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005).
6. Ten percent of young adults who speak English at home fail to complete high school, but the percentage is over three times higher (31 percent) for young adult ELs. If ELs reported speaking English with difficulty on the 2000 U.S. Census, their likelihood of completing high school dropped to 18 percent. However, if they reported speaking English very well, their likelihood of graduating was 51 percent (Klein, Bugarin, Beltranena, & McArthur, 2004).

Diversity among English Learners

Who are the ELs that are experiencing performance gaps? As with all students, ELs are not the same. They differ in their educational backgrounds, culture, socioeconomic status, literacy levels in English, and other characteristics (Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008). For example, along the spectrum of ELs, teachers will find students with limited or no schooling in their primary language (L1), with limited or no literacy in their L1, and who lack experiences that are relevant to U. S. educational contexts. At the other end of the spectrum, teachers will find students with strong academic backgrounds in their first language, who are fully literate in their L1, and who have had a wealth of experiences that relate strongly to educational topics and content in this country.

Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum are students who were born in the United States, but their home language is not English. Many of these students have developed some literacy in both English and their home language, but often they lack proficiency in either. Worse, other native-born ELs are illiterate both in English and their home language, and they have been attending U.S. schools since kindergarten.

Currently, in both elementary (Pre-K to Grade 5) and secondary (Grades 6-12) education, there are more ELs in the United States that are native born than are foreign born. In the elementary grades, 24 percent of ELs are first generation Americans, while 44 percent of secondary ELs are foreign-born. The rest of the students classified as LEP are native-born (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwanto, 2005).

Of course, at various points along the spectrum there are other students whose profiles may be unique to their personal and educational backgrounds. As you read the following students' profiles (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008, p. 8), consider their academic and literacy strengths, as well as their English development needs.

1. Muyisa was born in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). She spoke Swahili and Lingala as a child, and French while in an international school in Brussels. Her father, a diplomat posted at the embassy in Belgium, was recently assigned to the U.N., and Muyisa is enrolled in a high school ESL program in New York City.
2. Born in the Dominican Republic, Diego came to the U.S. in third grade. He had attended school in his home town and learned to read and write in Spanish. His family settled in northern New Jersey, but they have moved frequently. He's now in Union City, NJ, and in a bilingual program.
3. Thanh came from a rural area of Vietnam. Through a family reunification plan, she arrived in the U.S. at age 12. She attended school occasionally in her village when she wasn't working in the

rice paddies but doesn't read and write Vietnamese well. She will enter a middle school near New Orleans soon.

4. Ignacio was born in Mexico and came to California at the age of four. He speaks Spanish at home and had limited exposure to English before enrolling in preschool in Long Beach last fall.

Each of these students is an English learner and all need English instruction at varying degrees. Additionally, each needs to learn age- and grade-appropriate content concepts in order to make satisfactory progress in meeting academic standards.

Educating English Learners

In recent years, two major syntheses of research on the education of English have been published, both with a focus on academic literacy (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The first, conducted by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (NLP) analyzed and synthesized research with regard to English literacy attainment. During their review, the panel considered studies on second language literacy development, cross-linguistic influences and transfer, sociolinguistic contexts, instruction and professional development, and student assessment. What follows are the major findings from the NLP report (August and Shanahan, 2006):

1. ELs benefit from instruction in the key components of reading as defined by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.
2. Instruction in these five components is necessary but not sufficient to teach ELs to read and write proficiently in English. Oral language proficiency is needed also, so ELs must have instruction in this area.
3. Oral proficiency and literacy in the student's native language (L1) will facilitate development of literacy in English, but literacy in English can also be developed without proficiency in the L1.
4. Individual student characteristics play a significant role in English literacy development.
5. Home language experiences can contribute to English literacy achievement, but on the whole, the research on the influence of sociocultural factors is limited.

The second major review which yielded some similar findings was conducted by researchers from CREDE (The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence), a former federally funded research center.

The researchers focused on EL studies about oral language development, literacy development (from instructional and cross-linguistic perspectives), and academic achievement. Findings related to this paper, and that are in addition to the NLP findings, include:

1. Processes of second language (L2) literacy development are influenced by a number of variables that interact with each other in complex ways (e.g., L1 literacy, L1 orality, socioeconomic status, and more).
2. Orality and literacy can develop simultaneously.
3. High-quality instruction for ELs is similar to high-quality instruction for other English-speaking students, but ELs need instructional accommodations and support to fully develop their English skills.
4. ELs need enhanced, explicit vocabulary development.

As you reflect on these findings, think about what a teacher would need to know to provide appropriate language and literacy instruction for ELs using the recommendations the research syntheses. Now, read this paragraph about literacy instruction for ELs taken from a recent *Reading Teacher* column (Manyak & Bauer, 2008, p. 434).

... we want to remind readers that code and comprehension instruction represents only one element in our framework for robust literacy instruction for ELs and to challenge teachers to keep in mind a vision of multifaceted instruction that includes not only effective instruction in basic reading elements but also language-rich, socioculturally informed, and additive literacy instruction as well.

At this point, you might be wondering: “Do the teachers with whom I work have this depth of knowledge? Are they prepared to provide the kind of language and academic instruction that ELs need? Is our current teacher preparation program adequately preparing teachers of ELs?”

The Teachers of English Learners

At present, the supply of teachers trained to work with ELs is far below the demand (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). In the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (NCES, 2002), 41.2 percent of the 2,984,781 public school teachers reported teaching ELs but only 12.5 percent had *8 or more hours of training* in during the past 3 years in how to teach ELs effectively. Six years after these data were reported, there are only five states that required preservice teachers to take coursework in second language acquisition theory, ESL methodology, and cross-cultural communication (Arizona, California, Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania). Fortunately for ELs, at the time of this printing, more states are on board and preservice teachers

are receiving at least some preparation in how to work with linguistically diverse students.

To close the achievement gap between ELs and their native-English-speaking peers, we must provide *all* teachers with effective preparation in teaching linguistically diverse students. This requires that *all* teachers learn how to teach content concepts and language concurrently, consistently, and systematically (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

Important Questions to Consider

Given the shortage of teachers who are fully prepared to teach ELs (such as those who are ESL-certified), and given the increasing numbers of mainstream teachers who have ELs in their classrooms, among the questions we should be asking are two that are especially important:

1. What do teachers need to know about teaching ELs?
2. At what point in their careers do teachers need to learn and be able to apply this information?

In the early 2000s, I had the opportunity to serve as a member of the Reading Sub-Committee of the National Academy of Education. Our charge was to create recommendations and write a report about how to prepare effective teachers of reading. One of the first discussions in the group included a comment something like, “Oh, no, not another report!” From 1998-2005, at least seven major reports were published on the topic of what teachers need to know to teach reading, and we wondered what we could add that would provide a new or different perspective.

First, the committee decided that the field did not need another list of what teachers should know and be able to do to teach reading. Rather, we focused our literature review and discussions within a developmental view of adult learning that presupposes the creation of structures to support the growth of teachers across their careers. We also wanted to focus on real, practice-based, usable knowledge.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the entire report (see Snow, Griffin, & Burn, 2005). Instead, I wish to ask you, as the reader, to reflect on the developmental framework created by the committee, Progressive Differentiation, and apply it to the preparation of teachers of ELs. Essentially, the framework responds to three key questions (Snow et al., 2005, p. 9):

1. How much knowledge is needed so that novice teachers at a bare minimum do no harm?
2. How much knowledge is needed for a teacher to be in charge of selecting curriculum, and individualizing instruction, independently?

3. How much knowledge is needed for a teacher to be a reliable resource for one's colleagues, or to be the person who evaluates teacher performance, and designs professional development?

In order to begin to answer these questions, we examined a teacher's career progression roughly correlated with the following five points (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005, pp. 7-9):

1. Preservice
2. Apprentice
3. Novice
4. Experienced
5. Master teacher

The less mature levels of knowledge of each of these career points underlie the more mature levels. That is, a teacher moves from one level to another, building upon the knowledge and experience gained in the previous levels.

We then postulated that along the continuum of a teacher's career are different and cumulative types of "knowing" (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005, pp. 7-9):

1. *Declarative Knowledge*: This is the "what," representing a teacher's acquisition of a solid foundation of procedural knowledge.
2. *Situated, Can-do Procedural Knowledge*: The teacher can apply knowledge and procedures in normal classroom circumstances.
3. *Stable Procedural Knowledge*: With a reliable set of supports, the teacher can apply knowledge and procedures to situations, conditions, and students that are out of the norm.
4. *Expert, Adaptive Knowledge*: The teacher is able to deal with the full array of instructional challenges, identify problems, seek new research-based knowledge and practices.
5. *Reflective, Organized, Analyzed Knowledge*: The teacher is able to analyze what is read, learned at conferences, and so forth, and evaluate if it is useful or not. He or she can lead professional development and collaborate with university faculty on program design.

The committee's task then was to answer this question for teachers of reading, "What would each component (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) look like for each point of a teacher's career path and for each level of progressive differentiation?" (See Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005, for a detailed answer to this question.)

The Progressive Differentiation framework and an examination of a teacher's career trajectory led me to reflect, and then worry about the

preparation of teachers of ELs. For example, within this framework is the assumption that preservice teachers have a solid foundation in declarative knowledge, and the apprentice, novice, and experienced teachers, over time and with experience and effective professional development, cultivate situated, stable, expert, and reflective types of knowing. By the time the teacher reaches the point of master teacher, the dominant type of knowing is primarily reflective with expert, stable, and situated types of knowing about equally represented. Declarative knowledge continues to develop as master teachers add to their knowledge and experiential base.

Why is this worrisome when considering teachers of ELs? The answer to this question leads to another question: What would progressive differentiation look like for preservice, apprentice, novice, experienced, and master teachers, as related to:

1. Understanding and instructional application of theories of second language acquisition;
2. Differentiated instruction for ELs at varied levels of English language proficiency;
3. Assessment of L1 and L2 literacy development;
4. Assessment of ELs' background knowledge, past learning, and funds of knowledge; and
5. Lesson design that incorporates both content and language development?

Additional troublesome questions then come to mind:

1. What would progressive differentiation look like for the teachers of Muyisa, Diego, Ignacio, and Thanh?
2. Should their teachers provide the same language and content instruction for them as for their native-English-speaking peers? Will be that be "enough" for them?
3. If not, what are the implications for the professional development of their teachers, so that they can provide appropriate language and content instruction given the students' varied backgrounds and language proficiencies?
4. Is it appropriate that the preparation of teachers who have ELs in their classrooms be "taken care of" in one preservice course (or less) during preservice preparation?
5. As progressive differentiation suggests, should current inservice teachers be expected to develop their knowledge and skills for teaching ELs through professional development? If so, what should this professional development look like?

6. Perhaps most problematic, which teachers (Apprentice, Novice, Experienced, Master) should have the responsibility for teaching ELs, when we acknowledge that the effective teaching of ELs requires deep understandings of second language acquisition and appropriate instructional methods?
7. Finally, what happens to current practices in schools throughout the country where the apprentice and novice teachers, many with no preparation in teaching ELs, are very likely the ones who teach the courses and classes with the highest numbers of ELs?

Implications for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

At this point, it is important to point out that I'm not suggesting preservice and apprentice teachers should be denied the privilege and responsibility of teaching ELs. Rather, in order for new teachers of ELs to move into the Stable Procedural Knowledge level where they can apply what they know to varied situations and diverse students, additional preservice preparation and ongoing, focused, and relevant professional development is necessary. Further, we need to recognize that while there are instructional practices that are effective for all students, there are specific teaching procedures that when implemented to a high degree, consistently and systematically lead to significantly higher academic gains for ELs (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Many of these teaching procedures are well known to teachers, but it is the combination of them and the consistency with which they are used with ELs that appears to influence academic gains.

One required preservice course in "multicultural education," or "second language acquisition," or "Teaching in the 21st Century" is not the answer. It is estimated that by 2025, over 25 percent of students in U.S. schools will be ELs (www.ed.gov). At present, in some regions of the country, there are districts that already exceed that percentage. Therefore, as teacher educators, we must ensure that all teachers are prepared to meet the academic and language needs of students whose first language is not English.

The reading subcommittee of the National Academy of Education concluded the report with recommendations for the preservice preparation of reading teachers titled, "Principles of Professional Learning" (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005, pp. 211-222). I believe these principles are also relevant to preparation programs for preservice teachers who will have ELs in their classrooms. I have included some specific comments regarding ELs in brackets below. The Principles include:

1. Programs that address the ideas and beliefs about teaching that teachers bring with them are more likely to foster dispositions of openness to new ideas and reflection on their own assumptions about effective teaching and learning. [It is not uncommon for pre-service teachers to have developed beliefs about ELs, immigration policies, and the responsibility of schools in the education of ELs. These beliefs must be discussed openly and honestly.]
2. Programs that foster the expectation of and skills required for continuous learning are more likely to support the development of career learning paths.
3. Programs that ensure the development of a comprehensive and usable knowledge base are more likely to sustain successful initial teaching experiences [if that knowledge base includes what we know to be effective instruction for all students, *plus* teaching approaches that are highly effective for teaching content and language to ELs.]
4. Programs that help teachers apply what they have learned in teacher-education programs *to particular contexts and students*, [my emphasis] ease the transition to classroom teaching.
5. Programs that promote articulation among the key components (standards, coursework, and internship experiences) are more likely to help teachers develop the sense of personal efficacy and professional responsibility they will need to achieve an integrated understanding of theory and practice. [If new teachers will be teaching in schools where there are ELs, the preservice preparation program, including field experiences, must prepare them to do so effectively.]
6. Programs that “stay the course” are more likely to succeed than those that change foci frequently. [Ideally, this mirrors how inservice professional development should be designed and implemented. That is, districts and schools must maintain a long-term focus for professional development and beware of competing initiatives (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008)].
7. Programs that are sensitive to local contexts [e.g., schools with ELs, from very few to many] are more likely to succeed than generic approaches.
8. Programs that encourage careful analyses of teaching and the generation of shared knowledge are more likely to nurture a sense of collective responsibility for instruction. [This is what is often missing from inservice professional development offerings.]

9. Programs that achieve a balance between school or program needs and the needs and goals of individual teachers are more likely to support teachers' movement along the developmental continuum toward becoming expert, adaptive practitioners. [Inservice professional development should be designed and implemented with this goal in mind.]

It is incumbent on each of us as teacher educators to advocate for effective content and language instruction for ELs, as well as the necessary professional preparation for the teachers who will be providing it. With the ever increasing numbers of English learners in our schools (whether immigrant or native-born), every state must require that all preservice teachers receive substantive preparation in how to effectively teach linguistically diverse students. It is also unrealistic to think that one 3-credit course will prepare new teachers to meet the language development and content needs of students acquiring English.

As the numbers of ELs continue to grow, teacher preparation and professional development that focus on research-based instructional models of sheltered instruction must be implemented (i.e., instruction in English targeted to ELs in which language and content are taught concurrently, with instructional practices that have been empirically validated as effective). From our work with the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP Model), we have found that in those districts and schools where administrators and teachers have focused on the academic and language needs of ELs, as well as the *developmental needs of teachers over time*, the academic and language growth for the ELs has been accelerated (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008).

This requires a fundamental shift in educators' beliefs about what constitutes effective teacher preparation and professional development, and an acknowledgement that systemic change requires time, coaching, collaboration, ongoing assessment of outcomes, and a commitment of financial and personnel resources to make it happen. Our future as a nation depends on the appropriate education of *all* of our students, including our many ELs.

Final Thoughts

In late October, 2007, I was working with teachers and administrators in Hazelton, PA. While reading the local newspaper, the *Standard-Speaker*, I came across an impassioned letter to the editor from a woman who resides in Sugarloaf, PA. It was a lengthy letter and because of space limitations, it is excerpted here:

They knew they were in America—this was our language—all children upon entering school should be proficient in the English

language. It should not be the job of kindergarden [sic] and first-grade teachers to teach English... If a child cannot keep up with the work, then they should be held back for a year or two until they are proficient..."

Not surprisingly, I found this to be a disturbing letter, not just because of the sentiments that are expressed, but also because there are other community members who share the belief that ELs should be retained, separated, and denied access to age-appropriate and grade-level subject matter until they have mastered English. For too long, this has been the tradition in American schools, and it is time for us to move past this antiquated and deleterious practice.

Snow, Griffin, & Burns (2005) and the reading subcommittee concluded the report by issuing a challenge to teacher educators. Once again, it is relevant not only to the preparation of reading teachers, but also to the preparation of teachers of ELs:

We need to engage in a serious self-examination of the challenges of teaching in today's world and the knowledge and skills needed to meet those challenges... We cannot, we believe, eliminate the achievement gap in our schools without closing the *knowledge gap* in our profession. (p. 223)

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TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND TEACHING READING

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Abstract

If we are to accept the challenge of a professional vision of teaching, it is our responsibility to ensure that all teachers head into the field with an adequately filled toolbox. We must also ensure that teachers have the ability, disposition, and opportunity to add to that toolbox throughout their

careers through continual learning opportunities. Only by facilitating and supporting the development of a deep and abiding professional knowledge that enables teachers of reading to apply their craft with flexibility and expertise—and then granting them the prerogative to do so—can we honor our commitment to each and every student who comes to school wanting to learn to read and write.

Helping children learn to read may look easy to the uninitiated, but teachers know better. The consummate reading teacher is at once a wordsmith and a meaning maker, a player and a coach, an artist and a technician—moving seamlessly between detail and vision, kindling in students the insights and connections needed to make meaning from print. The masterful reading teacher makes thousands of instantaneous decisions about assessment and instruction each day, some targeted to an entire class, others carefully choreographed for individual students, and all directed at ushering students securely onto the path of literacy and its attendant rewards.

Trying to characterize the nature and development of the complex knowledge base needed for any profession is a challenge, and teaching is no different. To determine the kinds of experiences that children need in order to learn to read and write well, to define the knowledge that teachers need to enable that learning, and then to carefully consider how teacher education can best develop that knowledge is the commitment we make as educators—to society as a whole and to each and every child. The stakes are high in today's policy world. An ever-increasing global economy demands that our nation's children be prepared with competitive skills and knowledge in order to succeed. As more jobs requiring low levels of education move abroad, available domestic jobs demand heightened levels of education (Levine, 2007). Consequently, teachers are faced with increasing demands in training, assessment, on-going professional learning, instructional expectations, and student outcomes. It is our responsibility to provide teachers of reading with the knowledge and skills to meet these extrinsic demands as they focus on fulfilling the intrinsic mission of our profession—helping children become lifelong readers.

Teacher quality has been found to be one of the most consequential school variables affecting students' learning (see Ferguson, 1991; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Large-scale longitudinal studies specific to reading achievement have found the same significant teacher quality effects in low-performing schools (Denton, Foorman, & Mathes, 2003; Foorman et al., 2006; Mathes et al., 2005). The ascendancy of teacher quality as the main guidepost for

educational reform is evident throughout policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002), which mandated that all states supply a “fully qualified teacher” for every classroom by 2007. While no one would argue that the premise of a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is noble and just, the impact and subtext of NCLB has, in actuality, *minimized professional standards* by defining a highly qualified teacher merely as one who has (a) fulfilled the state’s certification and licensing requirements, (b) obtained at least a bachelor’s degree, and (c) demonstrated subject matter expertise. Although teacher quality may be measured within the law by program and licensure completion, educational research clearly shows that program and test completion *are not* sufficient means for measuring teacher development and quality (Wenglinsky, 2002).

When national policies such as NCLB (2002) rest on the assumption that “scientifically-based” teaching methods and, in turn, quality teaching will alleviate difficulties for struggling students and ultimately close the achievement gap experienced by disadvantaged and minority students, more is required than simply putting certificated teachers into the classroom. To meet both the challenges of today’s teaching world and the goal of equitable education for all children, it is our responsibility as researchers and teacher educators to build a more comprehensive framework of teacher expertise—one that acknowledges the reality that new teachers, at the point of initial credentialing, still have much to learn to hone their expertise, and also embraces the expectation that teacher knowledge grows over time through the twin tools of teacher education and professional development. In the spirit of trying to understand the trajectory of teacher development, we set out to achieve several goals in this manuscript. Our first is to present two very different perspectives on teacher development—a marketplace view and a professional accountability view—and dispel some of the myths that have fueled these and other similar perspectives. We then make the case for a developmental perspective of teacher knowledge. Finally, we probe the complex nature of assessing teacher knowledge and address the nagging issues that continue to challenge us in this realm.

Contrasting Views of Teacher Development

The question of how to best prepare teachers for the classroom has been vigorously debated by educators and policymakers since the arrival of the common school in the 1830s, when teachers were simply required to have completed the level of schooling they were hired to teach (Labaree, 2008). Today, the debate is alive and well, with numerous studies and opinion pieces questioning the value and role of teacher education (Carn-

egie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986; Howey & Zimpher, 1989; Zeichner, 1993). Two opposing perspectives on teacher preparation currently dominate the controversy—the marketplace view and the professional accountability view.

Marketplace View

Chester Finn of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation advocates a *market vision* of teacher quality; invite all comers, give them the support they need, then use student performance as the sole criterion for weeding out the chaff (Finn, Kanstoroom, & Petrelli, 1999). Fire the teachers who don't produce and close the schools that don't perform. In other words, look for evidence of quality *after* hiring, based solely or primarily on student test score gains. The model works as a strict marketplace economy. Finn and Petrilli (2000) argue that we are using the wrong metaphor for teaching, at least in terms of teacher preparation. Rather than liken teaching to medicine, where the hallmarks of the profession are standards, internships, examinations for licensure, and mandatory professional development, Finn and Petrelli suggest journalism as a more apt metaphor. They propose that in teaching (as in journalism), a degree in the profession *may* be helpful in some instances, but degrees in other areas, such as English, law, or history, can lead to as much, if not greater success. Allow people from a variety of backgrounds to enter the profession of teaching and leave teacher quality and longevity to be judged by student performance.

Professional Accountability View

By contrast, in a professional accountability view (Darling-Hammond, 2006b), the professional community holds itself accountable for ensuring that teachers obtain the best disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge possible. The goal of the professional model is to make sure that standards are in place *before and after hiring*, through licensing, induction, evaluation, and professional development. The inherent promise is the same that any profession makes to its constituents—that its members will know as much as they can about their work. In this model of teacher development, the key is to first specify the minimal levels of development that are required for a teacher to begin working in his or her own classroom and then, recognizing that growth in both content and pedagogical knowledge is expected throughout a career (Pearson, 2001), support continued opportunities for teacher learning.

All that we have learned about the development of teacher knowledge contradicts the *market vision* assumptions and dispels the attendant myths (Darling-Hammond, 2006b) that fuel this and similar perspectives:

Myth 1: Teachers are born, not made.

Myth 2: Teaching is simple; the mere transmission of what you know. Therefore subject matter knowledge is all that is required.

Myth 3: Teaching is primarily learned through experience. Effective practice cannot be taught.

Myth 4: Teacher education programs offer little more than esoteric theories that muddy the practical requirements of teaching and may even hinder good teaching in general.

Research over the past 30 years instead supports a *professional vision*, in which teacher effectiveness is shaped by the extent and quality of both teacher education and experience. Reviews conclude that even with the shortcomings of current teacher education and licensing requirements, fully prepared and certificated teachers are generally better rated and produce better student outcomes than unskilled teachers (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik, 1985). There is much that teachers need to learn along the way, as they move from knowing a few vague principles about how to teach to possessing more specific knowledge about how to improve teaching and learning for specific subjects, skills, and processes. Short-circuiting teacher education short-changes teachers and students alike.

Understanding the Role of Teacher Knowledge:

A Developmental Model

The assumption of professionalism within the teaching profession has waxed and waned over the decades as we have moved between training and learning models of teaching (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). Teacher education experienced a major paradigm shift from the training model of the 1960s and 1970s to the learning model that emerged in the 1980s and continues to present day (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Hoffman & Pearson). The training model, often associated with the process-product research paradigm that was popular in the 1970s and 1980s, operated from a clear, if naïve, research and policy perspective. It assumed that we could (a) go out into classrooms to find out what teaching behaviors distinguish teachers who promote high achievement and growth from those who do not, and then (b) teach all teachers to use the processes characteristic of the more effective teachers. Teacher training, in turn, focused on equipping teachers with specific behavioral and psychological routines characteristic of effective teachers (see Hoffman & Pearson, for a full review). Numerous lists of teacher competencies emerged and became integral components of training programs, specifying criteria for teacher behaviors, learning

outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment plans. The compelling feature of the training model was its emphasis on student achievement as the screening device for inferring teacher quality and requisite behaviors. As a critical element to teacher improvement, these programs emphasized systematic training of teachers and the learning of instructional routines and procedures. This model gradually atrophied in the mid-1980s when teacher preparation expanded to consider the varying contexts in which teachers worked and the types of knowledge they needed to operate successfully in those contexts. The emerging learning model focused on teacher cognition rather than behavior, aimed to understand the source and development of teacher knowledge, and emphasized flexible application of knowledge in response to the variety of classroom contexts. While many teacher educators work under the assumption that the learning model of teacher development prevails, certain policies and practices, especially those enacted in the wake of the No Child Left Behind (2002) reform movement, would lead us to conclude that the training model is alive and well (Pearson, 2007).

Definitions of Knowledge

Teacher knowledge has been an elusive construct. Several researchers committed to professionalizing the teaching force (and, in the process, championing the learning model of teacher development) have worked to codify a professional knowledge base aimed at producing teachers who could not only enact effective teaching behaviors, but who were empowered learners, leaders, and school reformers in control of their own actions and thinking. Building on a tradition of subject matter knowledge and the rise of pedagogical knowledge, Shulman (1986) noted a “missing paradigm” of knowledge that he coined *pedagogical content knowledge*—a type of knowledge that extends beyond subject matter into “aspects of content most germane to its teachability” (p. 9). Knowledge has also been subdivided into categories such as *declarative knowledge* (knowing *what* to teach), *procedural knowledge* (knowing *how* to teach it), and *conditional knowledge* (knowing *why, when, and under what circumstances* to teach it) (see Almasi, 2003, pp.108-111). Educational psychology has long explored its own version of conditional knowledge in privileging the idea of *metacognitive knowledge*. Simply defined as both the knowledge about cognition and the regulation of cognition (Flavell, 1979), metacognitive knowledge is the awareness of what is needed to perform effectively and equips teachers with the tools necessary to take control of their own learning, enabling them to handle classroom complexities (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Rowan, Schilling, Ball, and Miller (2001) created a slightly different infrastructure of subdivisions for teacher knowledge, us-

ing the labels *Knowledge of Students and Content* for an understanding of likely concepts, misconceptions, and difficulties that students encounter, and *Knowledge of Teaching and Content* for an understanding of teaching actions appropriate for various situations. While each of these accounts has proven useful as a heuristic to help us better understand the types of knowledge teachers possess, each falls short of indicating precisely how knowledge matures over time.

What teachers learn prior to entering the classroom is a basis from which to begin, but it cannot, and does not, equip them with the requisite knowledge to apply and integrate learning theories into the myriad of complex classroom situations. We know that knowledge is dynamic and that teachers are made not born; they do, after all, get better over time. In other words, teachers are clearly stepping out of the classroom at the end of their careers knowing a whole lot more than what they stepped in with. The knowledge that evolves is a direct result of teacher education both in and beyond the academy. As teachers make and remake themselves, their knowledge is affected by a host of factors, including experiences prior to entering teaching, the type of training program attended, experiences and support in the classroom, as well as individual differences. The crucial questions in better understanding this journey are, “how do we define what it is that develops?” and “how does it change over time?”

Phases of Career Development

A good first step is to consider what it would mean to have a theory of how teacher knowledge develops over time. One way to think about development (see Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005) is as a continuum of professional career development, emphasizing the phases teachers pass through and requirements they fulfill, as well as a criterion for knowledge measurement along the way. Across phases, an individual teacher:

1. is admitted into a teacher education program based on academics and ability to work with children,
2. receives preservice preparation in a teacher training program,
3. takes licensing tests based on subject matter and teaching knowledge,
4. receives one to two years of mentoring in early teaching,
5. continues licensing requirements that are based on performance assessments such as portfolios, written evaluations, videotaped lessons, and student work,
6. participates in professional development in and out of the classroom, and
7. receives advanced certification based on performance assessments and examination.

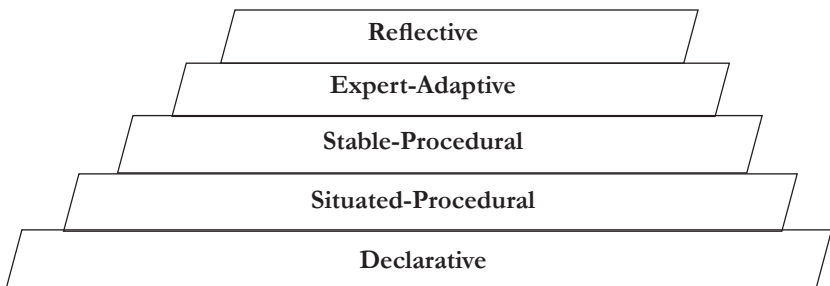
Career progression is only part of the picture, however. Fulfilling accreditation benchmarks such as graduating from a teacher education program and passing state licensure requirements does not guarantee that the teacher will possess the knowledge required for expertise—only that they will have passed through a stage where one would have expected them to have had the opportunity to acquire that knowledge.

A Trajectory of Teacher Knowledge Development

So, what does the changing face of teacher knowledge look like? What difference would it make whether or not it changed over time? How would we know it was changing? There are many accounts of the trajectory that professional knowledge takes throughout a teaching career. Most of these accounts are conceptual rather than empirical; they represent ideal trajectories rather than observed pathways. In this essay, we have privileged the account provided by Snow and her colleagues (2005) to emphasize a trajectory of teacher knowledge development for teaching reading. Their sequential model distinguishes five levels of differentiated and increasingly sophisticated knowledge that layer upon one another like the layers of an archeological dig (see Figure 1), with declarative knowledge at the bottom of the site (representing less mature levels of knowledge) and reflective knowledge nearest the surface (representing the more mature levels, levels that build on and benefit from less mature levels):

- declarative (*knowing what*),
- situated-procedural (*knowing how, but highly strategic in application*),
- stable-procedural (*knowing how, but routinized, almost automatic*),

Figure 1. Levels of Teacher Knowledge Building on One Another Like Layers in an Archeological Dig.

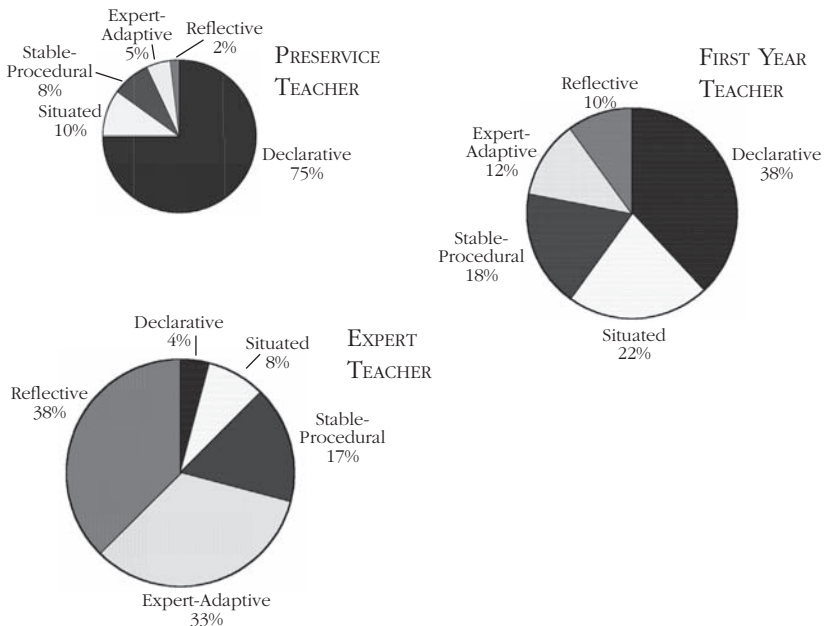


- expert-adaptive (*knowing how, when, with whom, and under what conditions*), and
- reflective knowledge (*knowing it all, where the potholes are, what needs fixing, what keeps you up at night*).

These five categories of teacher knowledge vary as a function of program emphasis and coincide with points along the career progression (see Figure 2). For example, declarative knowledge is most emphasized during subject matter and education coursework in a preservice certification program where a teacher-in-training is learning about topics such as content knowledge, child development, and instructional approaches. During this career point, declarative knowledge dominates professional learning in most programs.

As teachers enter their first year of teaching, they build on their declarative knowledge base with procedural knowledge of how to plan, organize, and maintain instruction for the majority of the class. While declarative knowledge still constitutes a large piece of the pie, it is not as pronounced. With the beginning teacher, situated- and stable-procedural knowledge become more pronounced. And, reflective and expert knowledge begin to develop in tandem. During this period, it is important for a teacher to have a reliable set of peer and mentored supports as expert knowledge

Figure 2. Hypothetical Distributions of Knowledge at Different Stages



is still developing. It is important to note that when looking at Figure 2 (the percentages are approximate, included only to indicate relative size), it is tempting to infer that declarative knowledge decreases over time and across stages. It does not. The size of the total pie increases at each level (note the difference in the size of the pie at each point), so that the total amount of declarative knowledge in each stage is larger than it is at an earlier stage, but it appears smaller because it takes up a smaller proportion of a substantially larger pie at later stages, when more mature levels of knowledge dominate.

As teachers gain experience and take on a more reflective, metacognitive role, they become more sophisticated in assessing the wide array of student needs and providing instructional strategies based on those needs. Additionally, expert teachers are able to recognize gaps in their knowledge base and seek ways to deepen their understanding. The master teacher is ready to take on leadership roles in the school, such as leading professional development activities and mentoring novice teachers. As this stage, expert-adaptive and reflective-organized knowledge carry a larger proportion of the pie, while the other aspects of knowledge, although larger in absolute size, are a smaller proportion of the total.

This model is not meant to presume that development occurs in a linear fashion across fixed stages. Rather, it aligns knowledge growth across a career progression and indicates a trajectory of teacher development that illustrates a professional evolution from novice to expert. As teachers become more expert, they know more about specific, particularly advanced, aspects of teacher knowledge.

Table 1 offers an illustration of how teacher knowledge might actually change for a given domain of reading (Cervetti & Pearson, 2005), showing how knowledge of the pragmatic aspects of language would change for each of the five levels of teacher knowledge.

Professional Growth: Preservice Education and Beyond

It is one thing to specify *what* teachers should know, but it is quite another to specify the point in their careers *when* they need to know it and *how* it can best be developed. Teacher education has been called to task even by those within the profession: the Holmes group (1986), the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986), and scholars such as Goodlad (1990), Howey and Zimpher (1989), and Zeichner (1993). They have all urged “the redesign of teacher education to strengthen its knowledge base, connections to practice and theory, and capacity to support the development of powerful teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 2006b, p. 20). In order for reforms to have a deep and lasting effect, the

Table 1. Changes in Teacher Knowledge Across a Career Pathway: Pragmatics

TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE	WHAT KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PRAGMATIC DIMENSIONS OF LANGUAGE MIGHT LOOK LIKE?
DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE	<p>Teachers at this level understand the fundamental form-function relationship in language use—that writers and speakers use the formal tools and features of text to fulfill different functions and achieve different goals (i.e., to inform, to persuade, to entertain).</p> <p>They have a passing acquaintanceship with key terms related to pragmatics—such as discourse, register, genre, textual devices and conventions, voice, style, persona, stance, perspective—but their knowledge is not well-developed or differentiated. They understand the social and cultural functions that texts perform in different contexts (school, work, play, home) and ways in which those contexts shape textual use and interpretation.</p>
SITUATED, Can-Do PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE	<p>Teachers possess at least a few routines for addressing these features of language use, such as Questioning the Author, and teach students about how to use genre and register to achieve particular effects on an audience (e.g., persuasion or entertainment). These lessons would be fairly prescribed and circumscribed—the understandings about text developed therein may or may not be applied to reading and writing activities in other classroom contexts.</p> <p>Teachers may be more skilled at teaching students the meaning of terms, such as <i>genre</i>, <i>voice</i>, and <i>perspective</i> than helping students apply these understandings to their reading and writing of texts.</p>
STABLE PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE	<p>At this level, the routines have become more or less automatic for the teachers, and they are beginning to be able to adapt to the performance needs of different groups and individuals. Teachers have acquired additional routines for developing students' understandings of the pragmatic dimensions of text and are beginning to develop approaches for assessing these understandings.</p> <p>The teacher's knowledge is becoming increasingly differentiated, as is instruction. Instruction may include more explicit attention to the form-function relationship, may include analysis of more subtle stylistic features (e.g., the connotative loading of words and idioms), and may include increasing attention to the ways that societal forces shape authors and texts.</p>
EXPERT ADAPTIVE KNOWLEDGE	<p>At this level, teachers are less reliant on specific routines and are better able to integrate issues of discourse and pragmatics into students' daily interactions with texts.</p> <p>The teacher's own understanding of these issues and their application to reading and writing has become more sophisticated. Whereas in the declarative stage, teachers understood the meaning of terms such as discourse, register and genre, they are now able to connect these stylistic variations to the pragmatic/social (and political or ideological) functions of text. Teachers at this level can anticipate and respond to obstacles that their students will confront in applying these understandings to their interpretation and composition of texts.</p>
REFLECTIVE, ORGANIZED, ANALYZED KNOWLEDGE	<p>At this level, teachers can use their understandings about pragmatic dimensions of text proactively and in larger contexts. They can evaluate the effectiveness of programs, routines, and activities designed to develop students' understandings about the pragmatic dimensions of text and their ability to apply these understandings to their reading and writing.</p> <p>These teachers may be involved in developing new approaches to teaching pragmatics at the school or district level.</p>

fundamental tools that teachers need must be discerned, and a clearer understanding of how best to help them develop these tools is needed. To create a meaningful career path for teachers—a path that honors the need for continuing development both personally and professionally—we must use our understanding of how teacher knowledge develops at various stages of a teaching career when considering methods of teacher education. Surely, what teachers of reading know when they walk into their very first classrooms will look different from what they know after years of seasoning. How much of this body of knowledge should they learn in preservice programs? What knowledge is better learned while on the job—through mentorship, professional development, or continuing graduate coursework? The abiding questions that should shape any effective model of professional growth for teachers of reading are, “how will teachers best develop essential knowledge for instruction?” and “at what points along the career trajectory do they acquire it?”

Preservice Teacher Training

Data from a number of studies indicate a robust relationship between teacher preparation in reading instruction and student outcomes (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1999; Fuller, 1999; Hoffman et al., 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000). Not only do teacher preparation and certification predict student achievement in reading, they are also significantly related to teaching practices associated with higher levels of reading achievement (Darling-Hammond). In addition, “more teacher education appears to be better than less—particularly when it includes carefully planned clinical experiences that are interwoven with coursework on learning and teaching” (Darling-Hammond, p. 10). Darling-Hammond also found that “measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates to student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status” (p. 4). Laczko-Kerr and Berliner compared the academic achievements of students in grades 2 through 8 taught by regularly certified school teachers (those who attended accredited universities and met all state requirements for initial teaching certification) to students of undercertified teachers (those who held either emergency, temporary, or provisional certificates, *including* Teach for America teachers). Results of the SAT-9 tests showed that students taught by certified teachers outperformed “precertified” teachers on each of the three subtests (Language Arts, Mathematics, and Reading) by about 2 months on a grade-equivalent scale. In comparing certified and uncertified teachers, the Texas Studies (Alexander & Fuller, 2004; Fuller, 1999) reported a significant, positive correlation between fully-licensed teachers and student passing rate on the

state achievement tests after controlling for socioeconomic status, school wealth, and teacher experience.

While not as transparently compelling as the evidence from student performance, many studies also show that teacher education has a significant impact on teachers' personal views about their own preparedness and about teaching in general. On a survey of beginning teachers in New York that compared teachers who had entered teaching through alternative pathways to graduates of teacher education programs, those who had graduated from teacher education programs answered that they felt better prepared to plan instruction, meet the needs of their diverse learners, create positive learning environments, and make subject matter knowledge accessible to their students (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

Simply put, teacher preservice preparation is critical to effective teaching. What teachers bring to the classroom is influenced by what they have had an opportunity to learn. But, even high quality preservice teacher education cannot adequately prepare teachers for all challenges and complexities of the classroom. Teacher development is a career-long process (as our model of knowledge development implies), and teachers not only develop their knowledge over time, they get better at teaching. Even if we have “modal” or “default” programs, we will always need to promote flexibility and versatility. Settling for scripted programs as a surrogate for teacher education can never address the growing complexities of today's classrooms. Rather, teachers need a deep and broad knowledge base—opportunities to become adaptive experts (Darling-Hammond, 2006b), not only in what to teach, but in how to teach it.

Ongoing Professional Development

Through research, we have learned a lot about how to effectively educate teachers before they enter the classroom, but we are less sure about how to continue the trajectory of professional development over time. A host of training studies emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s, specifically process-product research which demonstrated positive effects for teacher training in effective classroom practices (for a review, see Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). For example, comprehension instruction has proved amenable to direct training and also effective in promoting student engagement and growth in student achievement (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984). In addition, the National Reading Panel Report (2000) documented findings that teachers can successfully learn to implement strategy instruction when offered systematic training and feedback. But other modes of research, emerging in the late 1980s, questioned the efficacy of training, and began to consider teacher education as a more interactive, constructivist, teacher-centered process that situated knowledge and authority within the teacher. Influential studies by

Richardson and colleagues (Placier & Hamilton, 1994; Richardson, 1994) demonstrated that as teacher beliefs changed prior to changing practices, they were ultimately reflected in improved student reading comprehension. The Valdez study (1992) is a classic example of this approach, demonstrating that staff development has a positive effect on teacher disposition by promoting continued reflection and an openness toward effective change. This work has been extensively reviewed by teacher education scholars (e.g., Richardson & Placier, 2001; Wilson & Berne, 1999), resulting in a consistent set of conclusions, succinctly summarized by Richardson (2003) into a set of principles.

While combing the research literature to help us rethink what can and should occur during professional preparation and development, Cervetti and Pearson (2005) uncovered nine fundamental principles specific to professional learning, in most cases, highly overlapping with Richardson's (2003) principles:

1. programs addressing the beliefs that teachers bring with them about teaching are more likely to foster openness to new ideas and reflection on personal assumptions;
2. programs that foster the expectation of and skills required for continuous learning are more likely to support the development of career learning paths;
3. programs that ensure the development of a comprehensive and usable knowledge base are more likely to sustain successful initial teaching experiences;
4. programs that help teachers apply what they have learned in teacher education programs to particular contexts and students ease the transition to classroom teaching;
5. programs that promote articulation among standards, coursework, and internship experiences are more likely to help teachers develop a sense of personal efficacy and professional responsibility;
6. programs that stay the course are more likely to succeed than those that change foci frequently;
7. programs that are sensitive to local context are more likely to succeed than generic approaches;
8. programs that encourage careful analyses of teaching and the generation of shared knowledge are more likely to nurture a sense of collective responsibility for instruction; and
9. programs that achieve a balance between school/program needs and the needs of individual teachers are more likely to support teachers' movement along the developmental continuum toward becoming adaptive experts.

Considering these principles, the long-standing tension between top-down (externally imposed) and bottom-up (internally and locally developed) approaches to reform might be resolved in an amalgamation of the two. The top-down approach views knowledge as something to be imported from the external world. Thus, the task is to find that knowledge and those better ideas to implement, and then apply them. The bottom-up approach views knowledge as something that must be catalyzed within a specific teacher learning community. This approach focuses on better assessing the current needs of students and teachers in a particular setting and finding a path to meeting those needs. The essence of the dilemma is that we are quite sure that some level of external intervention (top-down) is required for teacher knowledge to develop fully. We see that not all know, or can easily learn on their own, all they need to know to become a masterful teacher of reading. However, if we deliver this knowledge to teachers on a silver platter, they may either reject it outright or, even worse, engage in mock compliance, hoping that the reform that brought the new knowledge into the school will soon go away. Embedding bottom-up principles within a top-down framework encourages genuine “buy-in” from the teachers by allowing their learning to be activated rather than bound and delivered; privileging interactions with their fellow teachers and, in turn, creating unlimited possibilities for learning; engendering confidence in their decision-making abilities; creating a sense of autonomy along with responsibility for what is happening in their classrooms; and empowering them to make deliberate and thoughtful changes in their classrooms based on their learning (Pearson, Taylor, & Tam, 2005; Richardson & Anders, 1994; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). In sum, instead of looking at top-down and bottom-up approaches as competing strategies, we should use them both to create a broad framework that outlines the expertise to be developed and sets parameters for how it should be implemented, but allows considerable versatility and flexibility in how one achieves the expertise.

If we are to accept the challenge of the *professional* vision of teaching outlined at the outset of this essay and aspire to this high level of prerogative teachers need to do their job (see Pearson, 2007), we must accept accountability for preparing a diverse candidate pool; for making sure they develop deep and broad knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will prepare them for the classroom and the variety of children they will serve; and to continue to support their personal and professional development as they move through their careers. In order to exercise professional prerogative in response to the increasing demands of the classroom and the varying contexts, teachers need more than a set of prescribed skills. They need an adequately filled toolbox when they head out into the field, and the ability to add to that toolbox throughout their careers with continual

learning opportunities. Ultimately, that toolbox should hold a number of tools, mainly types of knowledge layered from declarative to procedural to adaptive to reflective, namely:

- (a) an understanding of universal development—both of the child and the reading processes—common to all those taking the steps toward literacy;
- (b) an understanding and appreciation of individual differences, both within and without the learner, so that responses to student needs are appropriate, instructive, and constructive;
- (c) a deep intimacy with language—its phonology, morphology, etymology, orthography, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse—and an understanding of how best to develop and use implicit and explicit teaching opportunities that go beyond mere “transmission” of knowledge;
- (d) an ability to assess students with multiple indicators of learning progress and use the information in ways that ensure continuous development, including an ability to find alternate strategies to help those students not making good progress; and finally,
- (e) an ability to see “competing strategies” (e.g., whole language vs. phonics) as an opportunity to explore when and where each is most effective, based on a strong knowledge base of both the learner and the process of reading development.

When considering *how* teachers best learn, it is important to acknowledge a certain irony. While, as teacher educators, we go to great lengths to make sure attention is given to the research on children, how they learn, and their most optimal learning environments, we sometimes deliver this knowledge base to preservice and inservice teachers in a model that often ignores what we know about adult learning. Through the work of the Commission on Behavioral Social Sciences and Education and the National Research Council (1999), we know that novices differ from experts in how they learn—what they notice, how they organize and interpret their environment, and how they reason and solve problems. We also know that learning is an active process that involves interactions between preexisting competencies and the environment. Unfortunately, in a situation in which teacher knowledge is uneven, we tend to mandate methods for all teachers, *even* for those who have demonstrated that they possess the knowledge required to make differential decisions. One size does not fit all teachers. We know that learning is a time-consuming endeavor, and that people must achieve a threshold of learning that is sufficient to support transfer to new situations. And yet we often touch too superficially on topics of great importance. We need to heed these important truths about learning in

general when teaching our teachers. We need, first of all, to think of them as learners and, secondly, as adults with particular learning needs, interests, and preferences. Considering teachers as, first and foremost, learners, seems an appropriate stopping point for this only partially completed journey into the professional development of the teaching profession. One point that needs emphasis as we end this particular journey—nothing could be more important than understanding the nature of professional knowledge and the factors that account for its successful development.

Assessing Teacher Knowledge

As we continue to explore what it is that teachers of reading need to know and be able to do to reach all learners, we are faced with the simultaneous challenge of finding ways to assess that knowledge. It is a challenge fraught with a host of dilemmas, many of which continue to bedevil us. Perhaps in delineating these dilemmas, we will gain a clearer picture of our charge, putting us in a stronger position to resolve them using what we *do* know about effective assessments of teacher knowledge.

Our first dilemma is rooted in the inherent challenge of measuring a construct that is still in the process of being defined. How do we build valid assessments without a clearly specified body of knowledge to assess? To be sure, the domain of teacher expertise for literacy instruction is vast and complex. Of necessity, it would have to include knowledge of:

1. learners and how they develop,
2. reading acquisition and how it develops,
3. the structure of both oral and written language,
4. instructional techniques that can be tailored to a diverse group of learners, and
5. ways to monitor and assess children to promote optimal learning and development.

Without a deep understanding of what teachers of reading need to know and be able to do to become masterful in diverse settings, assessing their preparedness remains out of reach. The volume compiled by Catherine Snow and her colleagues (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005) goes a long way in providing a conceptually rich account of teacher knowledge, but it is based on professional consensus, not empirical evidence of the value and efficacy of the knowledge domains outlined. Other things being equal, we would rather rely on evidence than on our best professional consensus about the role of different sorts of knowledge.

A second persistent dilemma in assessing teacher knowledge arises from the difficulty of describing competence. On what basis will teacher proficiency be judged? Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) identified three

ways that outcomes of teacher education are currently being considered: (a) through evidence about professional performance, (b) through evidence of teacher candidate test scores, and (c) through evidence about impacts of teaching practice on student learning. What does understanding look like in the various domains of knowledge that support the teaching of reading when these alternative criteria of excellence are privileged? How much of a domain should a teacher master before stepping into a classroom?

To further confound the situation, assessment formats matter. Ideally, they should vary according to the domain being measured (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). For instance, a teacher's declarative knowledge might be appropriately assessed with a multiple-choice or constructed-response test such as the Praxis (Educational Testing Service, 2008), whereas a teacher's situated- and stable-procedural knowledge might be better captured through live or videotaped observation conducted by a literacy expert, and expert and reflective knowledge might more appropriately be measured through teacher-defended portfolios of lesson plans, assignments, and analyses of student work samples. Unfortunately, making principled arguments about what types of tests capture different types of learning, and what represents proficiency on each particular test, requires a deeper understanding than we currently have of the knowledge base for the teaching of reading.

Another nagging difficulty stems from the developmental nature of knowledge acquisition. Teacher knowledge develops over time, and mapping out an appropriate timeline of assessment that matches the developmental trajectory of teacher learning is an incredibly complex undertaking. How do we create assessments that not only reflect *what* teachers need to know, but also *when* they need to know it? Would we assess the same knowledge in the same way at the end of a preservice teacher education program as we would after a year of induction into the profession? The knowledge that teachers are expected to have should vary depending on where they fall on the developmental continuum. While the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) presents a rich model of what expert teaching looks like once it is in place (NBPTS, n.d.), it neglects the matter of development leading to the expertise. Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) underscored the need for a stronger understanding of the *when* aspect of teacher knowledge: "We need more studies that relate specific parts of teachers' preparation (subject matter, pedagogy, clinical experiences) to the effects on their teacher practice, and perhaps on student achievement" (p. iv).

Finally, the dilemma of creating reliable and valid assessments persists. In assessment design, the question of whether the test does the job

it is employed to do should always guide development. Many teacher tests have been criticized in the past for yielding insufficient evidence of test validity and reliability (Haertel, 1991; Haney, Madaus, & Kreitzer, 1987; Smith, Miller, & Joy, 1988). What do we know about validly and reliably measuring the knowledge and expertise we deem teachers of reading should have? Foundations of psychological science indicate the importance of demonstrating assessment reliability; for example, is there evidence of interrater consistency, as well as consistency of scores among evaluations of teacher work such as lesson plans, portfolios, and classroom observations?

Of greater difficulty is the task of demonstrating the various and interrelated forms of validity, such as criterion, construct, and consequential validity, that serve as an empirical evaluation of the meaning and consequences of the assessment. At a minimum, we must demonstrate two aspects of criterion-related validity: (a) the scores on a candidate assessment predict future success (as in predictive validity), and (b) the scores correlate with some external standard of teacher knowledge (as in concurrent validity). Also at a minimum, the scores ought to generalize to the full construct domain rather than limited aspects of it; in other words, are all aspects of teaching represented?

No task is more daunting than to demonstrate construct validity. We can usually manage to determine whether a measure looks and feels like what we say we are measuring (face validity) and distinguishes between something experts have (or have more of) but novices do not have (or have less of). That is surely a part of construct validation. However, more ambitious construct validation, in which we can validate that our assessment system is consistent with the theory of growth in teacher knowledge upon which the system is built, usually eludes us.

The most recent addition to the validity portfolio is consequential validity, which focuses on the consequences of using any assessment for making real world decisions, such as what happens when teachers either possess the knowledge or don't; do they teach better (different set of practices) and do kids learn more?

Another way of summarizing these dilemmas is to say that assessing teacher knowledge is difficult because we are trying to assess a concept that we have yet to clearly define. The good news is that we are making headway in resolving most of these major dilemmas. Research continues to shed light on the *what*, *how*, and *when* of the teacher knowledge needed for effective reading instruction and, in turn, elucidate critical information needed for developing good assessments. The light is still dim, but we have available to us a fair amount of relevant information and professional consensus to guide our efforts. We know, for example:

1. that defining and measuring knowledge to support the teaching or reading is an iterative process.
2. that using multiple assessments in multiple formats provides a more stable estimate of knowledge or skill.
3. that performance assessments, content-specific portfolios, structured interviews, and classroom observations provide important complements to paper and pencil tests of basic literacy skills, content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge.
4. that using student achievement test score gains as a measure of teacher knowledge [the so-called value-added measures (Braun, 2005)] overlooks or confounds many nonteacher factors (e.g., home background, attendance, mobility, school resources, socioeconomic status) that heavily influence student learning. We can hope to tie teacher expertise to student achievement, but for the foreseeable future, we need to be cautious.

We also suspect that viewing teacher assessment in a slightly different role—as a means of fostering ongoing personal professional growth of teachers—will add value to its fundamental role of maintaining quality and fostering accountability. But admittedly, rarely has the responsibility for assessing teacher knowledge and quality been viewed as a positive phenomenon that is the responsibility, and right, of every teacher.

Different approaches to teacher assessment hold different conceptions of what the process of teaching involves and what knowledge is being invoked. One assessment type does not fit all. Each one is limited and partial. As mentioned earlier, different assessment formats tend to be better suited to particular kinds of knowledge. We have developed and validated a range of approaches to measure teacher knowledge: paper and pencil tests, either multiple-choice or constructed-response; observations of classroom instruction, either live or via videotape; and reflective portfolios that give teachers an opportunity to explain, defend, and critique their own work. The chart below (see Table 2) suggests how various assessments best align to different knowledge types. Declarative knowledge, for example, is best, or at least most efficiently assessed via a multiple-choice or constructed-response test. Situated- and stable-procedural knowledge are best captured through live or taped observations reviewed by a literacy expert or a district supervisor, while expert and reflective knowledge can only be assessed by asking teachers to analyze their own practice by examining artifacts of their teaching and their students' learning.

Table 2. Assessing Different Types of Teacher Knowledge*

	TEST IT	OBSERVE IT	DEFEND IT
Declarative	√	?	
Situated	?+	√	
Stable		√	?
Expert	?-	?+	√
Reflective	?-	?+	√

*Note: √=yes; ?=not sure; ?+=maybe; ?-=not likely

As teacher educators, we need to ensure that teachers of reading possess the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed at each step of the way in their teaching careers. We need to pay special attention to the knowledge needed to navigate the dynamics and complexities of diverse learnings, something we have clearly fallen short of addressing, given the disproportionate academic underachievement of low-income and ethnic minority students. To do so, we must be able to assess exactly what is in the toolbox, and what is not, at key stages of development, and then provide professional experiences that will allow them to acquire the missing tools. It is our professional responsibility—to both our children and to the teachers we send into the classroom—to build into our profession the expectation that assessing knowledge is a good thing, that it helps us grow and become better teachers of reading. We need to do it as matter of course, all the while knowing that the ultimate assessment of how well we are doing as teacher educators will not be found in a single multiple choice test or even a carefully wrought performance review. It will be found in the toothless grin of a first grader reading his first book, in the easy exhale of a satisfied teacher energized by that smile, and by her abiding sense of a job well done. Finding and validating measures that allow us to predict when the easy exhales and toothless grins will occur would be useful.

Some Final Words

As a profession, we are under great scrutiny—some would say attack. Why? Because we have not met our part of the bargain that all professions make with society—to ensure that members of their profession, from novice to expert, possess the very best and most current knowledge available in order to adequately fulfill their professional charge, which, in the case of teaching, is to prepare our student population for productive entry into our civic participation and the economy. We desperately need teachers who can—and are given the prerogative to—apply their craft with great flexibility. Professional knowledge, deep and broad, is the only basis for greater

professional responsibility—the willingness to keep knowledge current, as well as a willingness to examine and change practice; in other words, to accept the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that new knowledge will trump old practice, no matter how comfortably the old ways fit (Pearson, 2007). This can only happen if all our teachers possess a disposition to inquire and to learn, to outgrow themselves as professionals. In the words of Cervetti and Pearson (2005), “We cannot . . . eliminate the achievement gap in our schools without closing the knowledge gap in our profession” (p. 223). Closing that knowledge gap ought to be the highest priority of teachers and teacher educators.

A final word on the mission of the professional education of reading teachers. We take the education of reading teachers seriously only because it is a means to an end. The goal is not simply increased teacher knowledge and skill, because that is only a means to the greater end of better teaching in our schools. And that, in turn, is but a means to an even greater end—more and better student learning, particularly learning to read and write. And reading and writing performance is useful only because it allows entry into a world of books and print and further learning, that in turn, is useful to the degree that it improves the quality of life an individual can lead—a life filled with options and opportunities. Thus, we take the teaching and learning of teachers seriously, because it is the first step on our collective journey to greater opportunity for each and every student who enters the doors of our classrooms. That is the prize, the purpose, and the power of teacher education. A noble calling. An awesome responsibility.

Authors' Note

This paper was based, in part, on the address that Pearson gave at the 2007 annual meeting of the College Reading Association in Salt Lake City. Please note that all three authors contributed equally to the final product and that we determined the order by random draw.

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CONTEXTUALIZING READING COURSES WITHIN POLITICAL AND POLICY REALITIES: A CHALLENGE TO TEACHER EDUCATORS

Jerry L. Johns

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This invited contribution by Dr. Jerry Johns, past president of the College Reading Association and Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus at Northern Illinois University, was the core presentation in the Teacher Education Division's business meeting. The theme was "Sharing Perspectives for Teacher Education and Reading Programs: Moving Forward from the Crossroads." Dr. Johns provided his perspectives and posed questions regarding teacher education issues.

Abstract

This brief commentary presents four areas that are influencing or have the potential to influence the content of reading/literacy courses at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Literacy professionals are challenged to carefully consider each of the four areas and decide if, how, and in which reading/literacy courses the areas should be included to better prepare graduates for the 21st century.

I was invited to address colleagues attending the 2007 CRA Teacher Education Division (TED). My intent was to challenge these dedicated professionals in the United States to consider four areas and how these areas might appropriately be integrated into the reading/literacy courses they taught. Small groups were formed and spirited discussions ensued. Time did not permit whole-group sharing, but I was encouraged by several CRA colleagues to present the following four areas to the broader professional community for consideration, reflection, and meaningful discussion.

Area 1: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Reading First

The forthcoming reauthorization of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) is likely to be extended to high school. There are several areas within the current authorization that are worthy of discussion for possible inclusion in reading/literacy courses:

- The five core areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension).
- The concept and reality of AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress. By 2014, all students must pass tests in order for the school to meet standards. (In 2007, 896 Illinois schools, 24 percent, failed to meet U.S. standards.)

Area 2: Striving Readers Act of 2007 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007)

Early in 2007, legislation was introduced that would provide grants to every state for reading and comprehension programs to meet the needs of students in grades 4 through 12. Schools and school districts would be able to hire and place literacy coaches, train parents to support their child's literacy development, and connect learning inside the classroom with learning that takes place outside the classroom. Demonstration programs begun in 2005 included eight programs nationwide. The potential for earmarking federal dollars for teen literacy could help impact students' reading skills, graduation rates, and success in life.

Area 3: Response to Intervention (RTI)

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education) has led to a three-tiered intervention system in most states. Tier 1 is core reading instruction in the classroom. The other two tiers are regular educational interventions that increase in intensity and duration before a special education identification would result. RTI is likely to have a growing impact on literacy professionals, especially those who work with students who struggle in reading.

Area 4: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state tests

The NAEP has existed for several decades (see <http://thenationsreportcard.gov/>). State tests are also widely used. In addition, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) is used in many of the nation's schools; moreover, it is required in Reading First (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) schools. These assessments

would seem to be appropriate for critical appraisal and discussion in various reading courses.

The Challenge

It is my hope that colleagues will spend some quality time discussing each of these four areas and the related items that are logical extensions of them. For each area, the following questions could be addressed:

1. Does it make sense to equip our students with a good understanding of these areas before they graduate?
2. In which reading/literacy courses could these areas fit appropriately and meaningfully?
3. What is currently being done with these four areas in existing courses?
4. Which areas deserve deeper treatment and reflection by our students?
5. How can we be proactive as additional legislation and policy become realities?

In the 1960s, there was debate about the role of the federal government in education. The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Act in 1965 (U.S. Department of Education, 1965) began what has now become the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). One challenge for literacy professionals in the 21st century seems to be how to meaningfully integrate these initiatives into reading/literacy courses, so our graduates are better prepared for the realities of today's classrooms.

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THE LOST ART OF TEACHING READING

J. Estill Alexander Forum for Leaders in Literacy

Timothy Rasinski

Kent State University

Timothy Rasinski is a professor of literacy education at Kent State University and life member of the College Reading Association. He has written over 150 articles and has authored, coauthored or edited over 15 books or curriculum programs on reading education. He is co-author of the award winning fluency program called Fluency First, published by the Wright Group. His scholarly interests include reading fluency and word study, reading in the elementary and middle grades, and readers who struggle. His research on reading has been cited by the National Reading Panel

and has been published in journals such as Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, Reading Psychology, and the Journal of Educational Research.

Tim recently served a three year term on the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association and from 1992 to 1999 he was coeditor of The Reading Teacher. He has also served as coeditor of the Journal of Literacy Research. Rasinski is a past-president of the College Reading Association.

In 1996, he won the CRA A. B. Herr Award which recognizes a professional educator who has made outstanding contributions to the field of reading. Tim is the 11th recipient of the CRA Laureate Award which acknowledges his impact on other reading professionals, including collaborative research, publications, and presentations with students, teachers, other professionals as well as longevity of membership and participation in CRA. As the recipient of this award, he gave the keynote at the J. Estill Alexander Forum for Leaders in Literacy.



Abstract

In his address, Dr. Rasinski demonstrates his passion for reading and those who teach it. He addresses the implications of No Child Left Behind on children's fluency instruction, asserting that the love of reading and the art of teaching may be casualties of the current interpretations of scientifically based reading instruction. Finally, he proposes that the art and science of reading instruction, especially in the area of fluency, need not be mutually exclusive. He calls teachers to return to a well-balanced approach in their efforts to develop effective instruction and nurture lifelong readers.

The best teachers of reading I know are artists. Their classrooms are their canvases. They create readers in the same way that visual, musical, and performing artists create beauty and meaning. Teachers simply work in a different medium.

The impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) legislation has had a profound impact on the teaching of reading in the United States. NCLB has led to a scientific orientation toward the key elements of effective instruction in reading that were identified by the National Reading Panel (National Institutes of Health, 2000); it has led to reading programs and materials being endorsed by scientific study and review; it has turned assessment, particularly progress monitoring and high stakes testing, into growth industries within education; it has made teachers and school administrators increasingly accountable for their students' objective progress in reading; and it has led to the treatment of reading and reading instruction as a scientific problem solved through employment of scientific methods. Terms and concepts like scientifically based reading research and instruction, adequate yearly progress, quantitative benchmarks, and highly qualified teachers are indicative of the way that reading instruction has been reduced to a finite number of variables that yield to control, manipulation, measurement, and analysis.

Make no mistake: teaching reading is a science. There is much that we can learn and much that we have learned from the scientific study of reading and reading instruction to make that instruction more effective. Recent advances in the teaching of reading from the emergence of phonemic awareness into the reading curriculum to the reemergence of reading fluency as an important instructional factor have come through the systematic and scientific study of reading. While the notion of treating the teaching of reading as a science is not necessarily bad—certainly the methods of science can lead to more effective instruction and higher levels of student academic achievement—the rush, and some might say the push, to establish ever more scientific rigor in reading and reading instruction has resulted in the decimation and, some might argue, the disappearance of the art of teaching reading.

Some of the manifestations of this agenda for a scientific approach to the teaching of reading have been, in my opinion, dreadful. Instead of students thinking about reading in terms of favorite stories and authors, taking delight in learning about the world, using literacy to help make informed decisions, appreciating well chosen words, well constructed sentences, and well written language, and achieving high levels of engagement in using reading to negotiate, appreciate, and change their worlds, students (and teachers) in this new scientific approach to reading instruction find themselves learning to read in a much different way. Students (and teachers) are required to define reading in terms of elements that can only be objectively observed and measured, prepare for periodic high stakes tests and the accompanying high level of anxiety that comes from knowing that poor performance can have devastating effects on students' and teachers' futures, be administered benchmark assessments that don't resemble real reading (nor real words for that matter), try and be encouraged to read faster than the day before, have reading materials selected not on the basis of content, interest, or literary quality, but on the sheer decodability of the text and frequency of certain words, and working with materials that are increasingly informational in nature, etc . The aesthetic joy of reading for the sake of reading has been replaced with the perceived satisfaction that apparently comes with the knowledge that one has passed a milestone on the so-called road to reading proficiency.

Teaching reading is a science. Teaching reading, however, is also an art—reading is more often referred to as one of the language arts than a language science. Teachers are artists, and their classrooms are their canvases. Art deals with the aesthetic—the beauty and joy that one finds in a painting, a musical composition, a sculpture, a dance or other movement of the body, or the written word. Certainly there is much beauty that can be found in the act of exploring the written word in all its various forms. Unfortunately, I have found that in the process of making reading instruction scientific, those aesthetic aspects of reading and reading instruction have gone by the wayside. Manifestations of this movement away from the aesthetic or artistic side of reading abound in our classrooms today.

I now see fewer and fewer children learning phonemic awareness through rhymes and song and more children “mastering” phonemic awareness through computer programs “engineered” to provide students with the phonemic awareness treatment. I see fewer children learning words through playful letter and word manipulation and word games. I see fewer children reading the great poets such as Carroll, Whitman, Dickinson, Frost, Hughes, Sandburg, Dunbar, and Prelutsky, and more children reading informational pieces on evaporation, the water cycle, animal habitats, and the workings of a computer. I see fewer children in school reading the best authors and literature available and more children reading decodable books and books that have a limited purpose that does not necessarily include a good story.

Fluency as One Example

Scientifically established concepts that can definitely help children become better readers have resulted in instruction that is most unusual and clearly divorced from a normal understanding of the purpose and nature of reading. For example, my area of specialty is reading fluency. The work of theorists such as LaBerge and Samuels (1974) and Schreiber (1980; 1991), followed by empirical work by many researchers (e.g., Chomsky, 1976; Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman & Oranje, 2005; Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985; Koskinen & Blum, 1984; Pinnell, et al., 1995; Rasinski, 1990; Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant, 1994; Samuels, 1979; Stahl & Heubach, 2005; Topping, 1987), and scholarly essays and reviews (e.g., Allington, 1983; Chard, Vaughn & Tyler, 2002; Dowhower, 1994; Kame'enui & Simmons, 2001; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 1989; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003) on the role of fluency in reading and reading instruction has resulted in reading fluency being recognized as an essential element in effective reading instruction. Further research has solidified the relationship between word recognition automaticity (an aspect of reading fluency) and reading comprehension/achievement (Deno, 1985; Deno, Mirkin & Chiang, 1982; Rasinski, 1992, 2004). In these studies reading rate was used to operationalize or indicate automaticity—thus speed of reading was found to correlate with comprehension.

The outgrowth of this research agenda on fluency has been the resulting definition of reading fluency as reading fast and instruction in reading fluency aimed at making students read ever more quickly. This line of reasoning is clearly flawed. Correlational relationships are not causal relationships and making students read faster and faster does not in itself lead to better comprehension or improved reading. Reading rate is an indicator of word recognition automaticity, the underlying variable. Focusing on speed does not necessarily improve automaticity. Wide and repeated reading practice increases automaticity. Despite the flawed reasoning behind the use of rate as an instructional goal, we are now stuck with the so-called scientifically based approach to reading fluency that draws students' attention to speedy reading.

There is little joy or aesthetic pleasure or satisfaction that comes from reading fast. Yet, that is the reality teachers and students face in contemporary classrooms. Indeed, we see the results of this approach every year at my university's reading clinic. Children who struggle with reading are the ones who most often encounter the full brunt of the scientific approach to reading. They come to us as defeated students. Not only do they experience difficulty in reading, they also have little interest in reading, see little value in knowing how to read, and do not view reading as a joyous experience. Rather, they have learned to dread reading and reading instruction. All science, no art: flawed instruction.

Reclaiming an Artful Approach to Reading Instruction

Rather than to allow our profession to be guided solely by a scientific orientation to reading, we need, as a profession, to demand that reading and reading instruction also be treated as the art that is. The aesthetic experience that is reading must have a place in our reading curricula in order for students to experience reading in its most complete sense.

They need to be allowed to experience the richness of all kinds of authentic texts—yes, informational texts, but also stories and poetry and plays and song lyrics and jokes and letters and diaries and newspapers and magazines and more. They need to be given opportunities to respond to their reading in ways that not only deepen comprehension but that allow them to create and transform the reading experience with other students. Stories can be turned into plays; poetry can be performed; songs can be sung chorally to an audience of parents and grandparents; provocative newspaper articles can lead to letters to the editor and government officials, informational texts can be responded to in response journals where students have a chance to question and wonder about what they have read.

Students need to have the opportunity to see their teachers experience the aesthetic side of reading as they are brought to tears when reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Rawls, 1961) or singing the refrain from *Love You Forever* (Munsch, 1986); and they need to be brought to tears, chills, laughter, awe, sighs, discussions, anger, and insight through what they read on their own and with classmates. Students need to be able to read independently, and they also need the opportunity to read as a group in order to develop a sense of community in their classrooms. They need to read a lot silently, but they also need to be able to read material aloud; so that they can make meaning with their voices and develop the prosodic side of reading fluency (Rasinski, 2003; 2006). Prosody has been recognized as an important part of reading fluency and reading (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Miller & Schwanenflugel 2006; Schreiber, 1980). And, because it does not lend itself easily to objective and quantifiable measurement, it has not been as thoroughly studied as automaticity in the reading science community.

Scientific and artful approaches to reading instruction need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, I feel it is incumbent on reading scholars to develop instruction that is both scientifically sound and at the same time artistic. Artful and scientifically based reading instruction should complement and supplement one another, not supplant one for the other, as seems be the common current practice.

Again, drawing from my own experience in fluency education, it is well recognized and scientifically established that guided repeated read-

ing (Samuels, 1979; see also Dowhower, 1987; 1994; Koskinen & Blum, 1984; National Reading Panel, 2000; Stahl & Huebach, 2005) is an effective approach to fluency development. This had led to the development of scientifically based programs for teaching the automaticity component of reading fluency where students repeatedly read a passage (most often an informational piece) for the main purpose of reading it quickly. To me, and many of my colleagues, this seems like an approach that lacks authenticity. It is not often in life where one is asked to practice a passage for the singular purpose of reading it quickly. Moreover, such an approach neglects the other side of reading fluency—prosody. There is little emphasis on students reading such a passage with appropriate and meaningful expression.

Taking an artful and authentic approach to the concept of repeated readings, I recognize the scientific basis for repeated readings; however, I also note that repeated readings are found in many authentic life experiences—most notably rehearsal for a performance. In rehearsing a script, song lyric, speech, or poem, the reader engages in repeated readings, not to read a passage quickly, but to read it meaningfully and expressively so that a listener will gain full understanding and appreciation for the text. Thus, an artful approach to repeated readings involves students not in practicing on informational texts, but on texts meant to be performed, more artful passages such as poetry and scripts. The aim of the practice is not speed but expression and meaning for an eventual performance for an audience. The scientific research behind this more artful approach to reading fluency suggests that it is effective in improving automatic word recognition fluency, prosodic reading fluency, comprehension, and overall reading achievement for students (e.g., Biggs, Homan, Dedrick & Rasinski, in press; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Martinez, Roser & Strecker, 1999; Rasinski & Stevenson, 2005). I fear that if our profession remains on this overly narrow focus on a scientific approach to reading instruction without a complementary consideration of an artistic orientation, students may be successful in learning the skill of reading, at least in ways measured scientifically, but at the same time, I fear that such a narrow orientation will also yield students who see little value in reading; certainly that it lacks any aesthetic appeal to readers.

I was an early reader—I knew how to read when I entered first grade (I did not attend kindergarten as none was available). My older brother and sister were also early readers. As I search my own memory it seems that it was an artful approach to reading employed by mother and father that turned us into readers. In my family, the reading of rhythmical words—singing songs (including songs in Polish and Latin), performing poetry, reciting prayers—was an everyday part of my family culture. Little did I know that my parents intuitively understood that this artistic and

meaningful approach to written language led my brother and sister and me into literacy, well before we ever set foot in a school.

The agenda in reading research and reading instruction has been co-opted by those who feel that reading and learning to read is strictly a matter of science. I feel that most members of the College Reading Association maintain a more balanced view of reading instruction. Our work to return to a more artful approach to reading instruction, to embrace reading instruction as art as well as a science is most certainly a well-balanced, reasonable, and effective approach to teaching reading and growing lifelong readers.

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**RESEARCH
AWARDS**

CRITICAL INQUIRIES IN ORAL LANGUAGE PRODUCTION: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Dissertation Award

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Abstract

This study examined how preservice teachers evaluated middle school students' oral language and examined the factors preservice teachers used that influenced their judgments. The study found that not only did preservice teachers respond to the middle level students' oral language based on their own sociocultural orientations, they evaluated student's oral language for alignment with mainstream language production based primarily on two factors: dialect and organizational structure. Preservice teachers may over-rely on a surface level awareness of oral discourse signifying a lack of awareness of deeper meaning-making constructs. Implications for teacher educators about how to better prepare those entering the field for working with nonmainstream populations and managing the complex interplay of language and learning are discussed.

The school age population in this country is growing increasingly diverse in terms of the cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds of students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003; Selwyn, 2007). This diversity is reflected in the oral language used in classrooms on a daily basis. Language can be a positive force for students in their pursuit of learning as they explore and express their understanding of new content. Conversely, language may be an impediment to learning for many students, particularly students from nonmainstream backgrounds (Delpit, 1988; Fogel & Ehri, 2006). If a student experiences a linguistic mismatch, that is, if the language of their home environment does not match the language of the classroom

environment, then language may actually impede learning for that student as they seek to translate language used in unfamiliar ways to language that is more familiar and comfortable to them.

A linguistic mismatch exists when the oral language of the student's home environment differs from the oral language expectations of the school environment. Linguistic mismatch has been linked to student academic failure (Adger, 1994; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Gee, 1988). "Sociolinguistic studies have convincingly demonstrated that differences between minority students and their teachers in cultural rules of language used affect, to a large extent, the children's success" (Ogbu, 1999, p. 149). Teachers may negatively evaluate these learners for their nonmainstream language usage, and as a result, these learners may suffer a range of potentially debilitating consequences.

An extensive research base alerts teachers to the complex relationships between class, language, and education (Bernstein, 1971; Cazden, 2001; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Fecho, 2004; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Michaels, 1983; Philips, 1983). However, Heath (2000) found that preservice teachers are unlikely to learn about linguistic diversity in their teacher education programs. Some researchers believe that even if this content is presented in teacher education programs, preservice teachers may possibly discredit or ignore this information due, in part, to their discomfort with the topic (Ball & Farr, 2003; Ball & Muhammad, 2003; Levine-Rasky, 1998).

The goal of this study was to discover what preservice teachers believe about student linguistic diversity, what factors influence their responses to student oral language, and how these beliefs and factors guide their evaluations of students. Heath (1983, 2000) found that many educators do not see oral literacy as a form of literacy at all. Yet, she asserts that in formal schooling, *most* judgments of students are made based on a students' ability to orally respond to the teacher-evaluator as expected. The following question provides a framework for this study: *How do preservice teachers respond to differences in student oral language (formal and informal usage) based on variability in dialect (standard to nonstandard) and organizational pattern (topic-centered to topic-associating)?*

Research Framework

This study was informed by Dell Hymes's (1971) theory of communicative competence. Hymes's theory highlights the heterogeneity of language as embedded in a social context. He felt that speakers are judged competent based on their ability to speak while being compared to an idealized standard of competence for a specific speech context. In his view, a classroom embodied such a specific speech context.

Hymes (1971) maintained that in classroom contexts, ideas of linguistic appropriateness are frequently aligned with mainstream ideals, and he felt teachers might misunderstand or misevaluate students who did not produce mainstream language. He believed that the language development of poor and minority children was one reason for their school success or failure. He noted that those students most often labeled as disabled in classroom language contexts were students from minority or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. He felt that these students were being mislabeled as disadvantaged, when in reality there was a home-school linguistic mismatch where schools did not value the home language.

A teacher's understanding of linguistic diversity can have a profound impact on a student's educational experiences. Teachers as evaluators determine what is linguistically appropriate and what linguistic factors count toward or against judgments of student competence (Heath, 2000). Anchored in Hymes's (1971) theory of communicative competence and current research in the field, this study investigates preservice teachers' responses to student linguistic diversity by examining two key linguistic factors: dialect (defined here as either standard or nonstandard English) and organizational pattern (defined here as either topic-centered or topic-associating). Dialect and organization are key factors in the research on oral fluency and linguistic evaluation, as discussed next.

In addition to these two factors, this study utilizes Hymes's (1971) idea of language as embedded in social context by having preservice teachers respond to oral language produced for both formal and informal contexts. This added layer was chosen to determine if the preservice teachers' expectations for oral language production would shift according to context. For example, preservice teachers might be more willing to accept instances of nonstandard English or associative organizational patterns produced in informal situations (i.e., a conversation) as opposed to formal contexts (i.e., a presentation). These factors were examined by asking preservice teachers to evaluate oral language produced by middle school students in response to a narrative text prompt.

Linguistic Factors

Standard English

A speaker's ability to produce Standard English is often linked to listeners' judgments about their linguistic and cognitive ability. Individuals unwilling or unable to speak Standard English are often held in low esteem (Jones, 1997). Ironically, while Standard English is an esteemed form of the language in mainstream contexts, sociolinguists contend that there is no clear definition or set of rules for Standard English. Instead, Standard English is only one social dialect of English, but it is the one privileged

in academic, media, and business settings (Reagan, 1997). Trudgill (1999) identifies Standard English as being primarily marked by specific subject-verb matches, third-person singular morphological markings, a lack of multiple negation, and the use of irregular forms of the verb “to be.”

Despite the lack of a clear definition, many teachers view Standard English as the only legitimate form of the language, and they see themselves as *linguistic gatekeepers* with *zero tolerance* for students producing nonstandard forms of the language (Ball & Farr, 2003; Ball & Muhammad, 2003). These teachers enforce a language idealization on their students with negative consequences for any student unable or unwilling to internalize and produce mainstream discourse. Yet, Labov (2001) and Gee (1989b) contend that teachers’ focus on grammar, form, and style (deemed superficial features) devalues deeper meaning-making and expressive constructs of language.

Organizational Patterns

Topic-Centered. In addition to Standard English, the research contends that teachers also respond to the organizational patterns students use to structure their discourse (Cazden, 2001; Gee, 1988; Michaels, 1981, 1983, 1984). Based on work with minority, early elementary students, Cazden and Michaels (1984) identified the organizational pattern most validated and expected in school contexts and produced by mainstream students as *topic-centered*. Topic-centered discourse has a thematic coherence, a linear progression, no change in perspective, syntactically complete sentences, and independent clauses with appropriate intonation. The speaker makes explicit references to time, place, and people and does not assume a shared experience or relationship with their audience. The listener is regarded as a stranger, and the speaker scaffolds audience listening with explicit cues. Gee added to this description by describing topic-centered accounts as more likely to be ideas based in rational and psychological contexts.

Topic-Associating. In contrast, the organizational pattern most often used by poor and minority students is described as *topic-associating* (Michaels, 1984) or *episodic* (Cazden; 2001; Smitherman, 1977). Topic-associating discourse includes a series of associated segments of anecdotal speech linked implicitly to a topic, without an explicit statement of the theme or point. These narratives often start with a time, person, or location; however, the account then shifts to other times, locations, and/or persons based on an implicit theme. The listener, who is considered a partner and co-constructor of meaning (Cazden, Michaels, 1981, 1983), must infer relationships between segments. Gee (1988) added that topic-associating speech focuses less on rationality and internal psychology and more on social networks and shared responsibilities of the characters.

Listeners who lack an understanding of the organizational structure of topic-associating narratives often see these accounts as disorganized, pointless, rambling, and incoherent (Ball, 1996; Michaels, 1983, 1984; Smitherman, 1977). Gee (1989a) contended that these listeners do not hold the *interpretive key* for understanding the students' language organization. Michaels (1984) asserted that in these cases the speaker and listener do not share each other's conversational intent and meaning. As a result, listeners (in this case, teachers as evaluators) who are unaware of topic-associating organizational patterns negatively evaluate students producing this type of discourse.

Methodology

Participants

Preservice Teachers. Thirty-six preservice teachers participated in the study: 33 women and 3 men; 27 juniors and 9 seniors; 32 European-American and 4 African-American students. All students were enrolled in the same undergraduate teacher education program for dual certification in elementary education and special education in a mid-sized, urban university in the Northeast. All students were considered "traditional" undergraduate students, aged 20-22.

The researcher visited preservice teachers during their course time. After the preservice teachers were told about the study and what they would do, the preservice teachers were asked to volunteer and sign up for a 1-hour time slot.

Since the preservice teachers had achieved junior or senior status, they had taken significant coursework in their major. At this point in their curriculum, the participants had taken three educational psychology courses; one educational foundations course; one mathematics education course; one literacy education course; and one methods, management, and assessment course. In addition, all preservice teachers had taken part in classroom experiences in both urban and suburban settings. Juniors in the program had completed two semesters of intensive Friday practicum service which contained 8 hours every Friday in a professional development school location. Seniors in the program had experienced 2 semesters of intensive Friday practicum service, as well as one full semester of student teaching.

Middle School Students. While the primary participants for this study were the undergraduate elementary/special education majors, a secondary participant population was used for this study as a resource. Forty middle school students provided language samples (oral text samples) for the study and comprised a secondary participant group.

These 40 middle school students were enrolled in the 6th grade and attended a local, urban, middle school. They were chosen in alignment with a student selection model proposed by Ball (1997). In this model, students are chosen based on the following criteria: ethnicity (recorded in school reporting demographics), economic background (student qualification for free or reduced lunch), and achievement (grade point average (GPA)). All students in this study were African-American, on free or reduced lunch status, and were considered high-average achievers (GPA of 2.6-3.4) or mid-average achievers (GPA of 2.2-2.6).

The school's curriculum coordinator assisted the researcher in selecting the middle school students for the study based on the selection criteria. The students' achievement status (high or mid-average) was determined from their first semester grade point average. Students were pulled from six different classrooms. The teachers and parents gave permission for the students to be pulled from the classroom for an hour-long creative writing and speaking session with the university researcher. The teachers coordinated their daily plans with the researcher to minimize the impact of the students' absences.

Procedures

Phase 1. The middle school students chosen for the study were placed into small groups of 8-10 students. The small group structure was chosen for pragmatic reasons. These groups of preselected middle school students were pulled from one classroom at a time. Six classrooms were used for this study. If a classroom had 8 students recommended for this study, those 8 students were pulled out at one time. If a classroom had 12 students recommended for this study, those students were pulled out in 2 groups of 6 by randomly selecting their names from the list of names provided.

These small groups joined the investigator in a private classroom setting in the school building where they were given a narrative text prompt. The prompt chosen for this study was titled *The Scarlatti Tilt* by Richard Brautigan (1971) a brief "whodunit" short story that contains all the main elements of a story (character, setting, and plot) in only 37 words. This prompt was chosen primarily for its brevity as well as for its potential for multiple interpretations, perspectives, and narrative responses (creative writing/speaking exercise), as students attempted to solve the mystery presented in the text. A pilot study conducted with this prompt revealed that the prompt was of high interest and had appropriate readability level for this age student. The brevity of the text meant that the focus for the student could be on creating an interpretative response to the prompt rather than on spending time reading the text.

Students were given 30 minutes to develop creative responses to the prompt to serve as a basis for the formal presentation to the group. Students were simply asked, "What happened in the story to get us to this point?" In

other words, they were asked to create a back-story, which provided the necessary background information to understand the narrative prompt. After 30 minutes, students formally presented their ideas to their small group members. Each student was given 4-5 minutes to present their back-story for the prompt, followed by an informal question and answer period where they were encouraged to explain why they made the choices they had and to answer their peers' questions. The informal question and answer period provided students with a chance to give justifications for the creative choices they used in structuring their responses to the text. On average, the formal presentations lasted between 90 seconds and 2 minutes. The informal conversations following the presentations lasted up to 3 minutes.

All student talk was audio-taped so as not to reveal the student-speakers' races or ethnicities. The tape recorder was started when the first presentation in each group began and continued to record until all formal presentations and informal conversations were completed. As a result, much discussion and debate was captured in the recording process. Later, these recordings were translated to digital files, transcribed, and then divided and coded into timed segments of sustained isolated talk produced by individual students. Each presentation was assigned a segment code. In addition, each sustained piece of informal speech, not typified by overlapping talk, was assigned a segment code. This second category of informal conversation was slightly harder to capture and code, as the middle school students engaged in many instances of overlapping talk, simultaneity, latching, and repetition (Heath, 1989). These speech segments were eliminated from the study. However, several good pieces of isolated student talk were captured. Overall, 40 formal presentations, 24 of which were followed with sustained informal conversational speech segments, were captured. These segments of isolated middle school student talk were labeled as "oral texts" and each given a unique code number.

Of the 40 formal presentations and 24 informal conversations, a total of eight exemplar presentations were chosen to present to the preservice teachers. These eight exemplar presentations were selected as a result of extensive discourse analysis according to Gee's (2005) model. Based on this model, the oral samples were first divided into *idea units*. Each idea unit received a numerical assignment, and each clause within the idea unit received an alphabetic assignment. The oral samples were then transcribed into stanzas, described by Gee as larger chunks of related thought around a topic, event, image, perspective, or theme that may or may not be linearly connected. Once divided into stanzas, idea units, and clauses, the oral samples were coded for nonstandard English and for the topic-associating and topic-centered markers.

As seen in Table 1, texts were first sorted into two contexts, or genres: formal presentation and formal presentation followed by sustained informal conversation. The use of genre (formal and informal) to structure the study

was selected with the idea that the middle school students might produce different language based on the demands of the task (formal presentations versus informal question and answer exchanges) and that the undergraduate preservice teachers participating in the study might respond differently to each speech context. For instance, the preservice teachers might be more accepting of nonstandard English usage during informal conversations as opposed to formal presentations. The preservice teachers might also be more accepting of topic-associating speech patterns if they were allowed to hear the middle school student's thought process for their presentation in the informal conversation following the formal presentation.

Table 1. Oral Language Text Positions (*i.e.* Oral Texts)

FORMAL "PRESENTATIONAL" GENRE		INFORMAL "CONVERSATIONAL" GENRE	
Standard	Nonstandard	Standard	Nonstandard
English and	English and	English and	English and
Topic-Centered	Topic-Centered	Topic-Centered	Topic-Centered
<i>FTCS</i>	<i>FTCNS</i>	<i>ITCS</i>	<i>ITCNS</i>
Standard	Nonstandard	Standard English	Nonstandard
English and	English and	English and	English and
Topic-Associating	Topic-Associating	Topic-Associating	Topic Associating
<i>FTAS</i>	<i>FTANS</i>	<i>ITAS</i>	<i>ITANS</i>

First, the oral texts were sorted into two contexts (formal presentation and formal presentation followed by informal conversation). Next, four exemplar presentations were chosen for each genre set based on variation along two continua: 1) dialect, a grammatical consideration matching student oral language to Standard English markers (Labov, 1972; Reagan, 1997; Trudgill, 1999) in vocabulary, phonology, morphology, and syntax; and 2) organization, relative alignment with topic-centered or topic-associating organizational patterns (Cazden, 2001; Gee, 1989a; Michaels, 1981).

In terms of dialect, the oral texts were examined for departure points from Standard English typical of speakers from minority and poor backgrounds based on Trudgill's (1999) description of Standard English markers and Labov's (1972) description of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). (See Table 2). The linguistic markers of AAVE share many features with other nonstandard English forms of language characteristic of economic status as much as with race (Ball, 1995; Trudgill, 1999). In the middle school students' oral texts, each instance of departure from Standard English was counted and coded. This process yielded a simple frequency count within each area for each oral text. The pieces with the fewest departures were considered more closely aligned with Standard English, and those with the most departures were considered furthest from Standard English.

Table 2. Standard English Coding Key

CATEGORY	CODE	DESCRIPTIONS AND EXAMPLES
Vocabulary	V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local language/vocabulary—"slang"
Phonology	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deletion of final sound: "tes" for "test" or "goin" for "going"; • altered initial sounds: "dat" for "that" or "sistuh" for "sister"; • consonant cluster simplification: "ma" for "mind" or "brudda" for "brother"; • changed vowel sounds: "pin" for "pen"; • diphthongs "ma" for "my"; • stress: "PO-lice" for "police"
Morphology	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using-s ending or suffix -s variation to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ plural -s: "they bes coming to dinner" or "theys coming to dinner"; ▪ possessive -s, "my mama sister" for "my mama's sister"; ▪ absence of third person singular -s: "he say he not ready to get married" for "he says he is not ready to get married"; or "she keep her distance, I keep mine" for "she keeps her distance, I keep mine"; or "she write poetry" for "she writes poetry" • Verb "be" variations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the verb "be" added: "he be goin' to laugh" or "he don't know what he be talking about"; ▪ the verb "be" omitted: "he workin'" for "he is working"; ▪ the verb "be" to express an ongoing action (habitual be): "she be hungry" for "she is always hungry"; • verb agreement discrepancies: "we was watching television";
Syntax	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of double negatives: "she don't believe nothing I tell her"; • emphasized perfective: "he done worked" for "he worked"; • immediate future: "he fixin' go to work" for "he is about to go to work"; • Dropped copula (a word that is used to link the subject of a sentence with a predicate; though it might not itself express any action or condition, it serves to equate or as sociate the subject with the predicate; sometimes called a linking verb): "you crazy" for "you are crazy"; • Altered syntax: "who she think she is" for "who does she think she is"

The oral texts were also coded for topic-centered and topic-associating elements based on the eight dichotomies established by Cazden (2001), Gee (1989b), and Michaels (1981) yielding a simple frequency count within each category (see Table 3). These dichotomies included degree of adherence to a central topic aligned with the prompt, linear sequence, shifts in perspective and time, degree of lexical cohesion, degree of assumed

shared knowledge, and degree of syntactically complete and independent clauses. Presentation pieces were chosen based on frequency counts of shared dichotomy elements—those pieces that were coded as primarily topic-centered or topic-associating.

Table 3. Organizational Pattern Coding Key

DICHOTOMY CRITERIA		CODE
TOPIC-CENTERED	TOPIC-ASSOCIATING	
Tightly structured discourse around a central topic and aligned with prompt	Associated segments of anecdotal speech loosely encompassing several (seemingly unrelated) topics; brings in elements not directly related to prompt	T <i>topic centered</i> or E <i>episodic</i>
Linear sequence—stanza leads to next in “train of thought”	Non-linear sequence—stanzas not overtly connected; “stream of consciousness”	L <i>linear</i> or A <i>associative</i>
No shifts in perspective or time	Shifts in perspective or time	Y <i>no shift</i> or X <i>shift</i>
High degree of lexical cohesion through nominal and anaphoric chains (topicalization wherein key nouns are mentioned and then turned into pronouns)	Lexical cohesion around themes and implicit and thematic relationships	C <i>cohesive</i> or I <i>inconsistent</i>
Shared knowledge not assumed and made explicit	Shared knowledge assumed and left implicit to topic, event, persons, or theme to be inferred by listener	P <i>private</i> or S <i>shared knowledge assumed</i>
Syntactically complete independent clauses with intonation to mark clauses and information units	Intonation used to mark breaks or discontinuity	G <i>independent clauses</i> or B <i>broken clauses</i>
Expression of autonomous knowledge and individualized self-assertion in psychological and rationalized contexts	Morality embedded in social networks, relationships, and responsibilities	R <i>rational</i> or M <i>moral</i>
Aligned with mainstream scripts, discourse, or expectations	Not aligned with mainstream scripts, discourse, or expectations	D <i>aligned with mainstream discourse</i> or N <i>not aligned with mainstream discourse</i>

Based on the analysis of the oral texts for dialect (see Table 2) and organization (see Table 3), eight final oral texts were chosen to represent the positions outlined in Table 1. For instance, the first oral text chosen was selected due to its high instance of Standard English (based on frequency count analysis) and its use of primarily topic-centered organizations (again—based on frequency count analysis). In contrast, the eighth oral language presentation piece chosen was selected for its low instance of Standard English and its high instance of topic-associating organization. Finally, the middle school students' oral texts chosen for this study were assigned pseudonyms to mask the students' ethnic backgrounds. The assignment of pseudonyms and the use of audio taping represent attempts to strip as much context from the situation as possible so that the preservice teachers focused solely on the language they heard. The use of context-stripping techniques has been used by other researchers, such as Cazden (2001) and Michaels (1984).

Phase 2. The 36 preservice teachers each joined the researcher for individual, one-hour-long sessions. The preservice teachers listened to the eight different taped recordings of oral samples produced by eight different middle school students in response to the prompt. Four oral samples contained only the formal presentations and four oral samples contained formal presentations followed by the sustained informal conversations in which the student explained why they created their back-story. Each of these eight tape recordings represented an example of one of the subgenre types found in Table 1. The formal recordings were presented first and in random order. This was done so the preservice teachers could not notice a pattern and were forced to look at the criteria for each genre set. Next, the preservice teachers listened to the formal presentations that also contained the informal conversational speeches, which were in random order.

The preservice teachers scored the students' oral texts using the *Oral Language Assessment Measure*—an assessment tool created for this study (see Appendices). The preservice teachers were then asked to explain their rationale for assigning scores to the oral texts in an interview with the author/researcher immediately following each set of oral texts. All preservice teachers' interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for thematic coding and to build thick description (Kelder, 1996).

Design

The methods chosen for this study were selected based on recommendations in the field for examining teacher beliefs and for examining how language works in natural contexts (Gee, 1999; Heath, 2000; Pajares, 1992). The research design took advantage of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in accordance with recommendations by Johnson

and Onwuegbuzie (2004). Quantitative approaches provide the ability to remove values, biases, preconceptions, and emotional involvements in an attempt to establish an existing reality. Qualitative approaches allow for an open exploration of the larger cultural, contextual, and systemic influences of language.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods fits with trends, which encourage researchers to consider environmental factors more closely, allowing the researcher to use more naturalistic conditions (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Recent studies in the fields of language and literacy have shifted from paradigms that are primarily behaviorist and quantitative to qualitative approaches that study cognitive, social, and cultural perspectives (Gee, 1999). This shift has led to the introduction of naturalistic and socio-culturally based methods of data collection, such as interviews, audio-taping and transcription, and responses to constructed tasks, such as dilemmas, vignettes, and exemplars (Heath, 2000; Pajares, 1992).

Data Sources and Collection

The *Oral Language Assessment Measure* (see Appendix A) used by the preservice teachers to score the middle school students' oral samples was developed by the study author in consultation with two prominent content area experts. The instrument had to be developed specifically for this study, as no previous study had attempted to quantify evaluator responses to oral language. Even the study conducted by Cazden and Michaels in the early 1980s relied solely on qualitative data to study captured speech (as cited in Cazden, 2001, and Michaels, 1984). This instrument's reliability was established via interrater reliability at .90.

The measure is deceptively simple, making it intuitively easy for the preservice teachers to use. The *Oral Language Assessment Measure* first provides a description of the middle school students' activity and provides the oral prompt that was given to and used by the middle school students (The Scarlatti Tilt; Brautigan, 1971) to create a presentation. The instrument then provided space for the preservice teachers to assign a score to each oral text they heard within each genre set ranging from best (*1=exemplary*) to worst (*4=unacceptable*). The preservice teachers were allowed to assign the same score to more than one student. Again, the oral text samples were presented in isolated segments produced by individual speakers. First, the preservice teacher's scoring of the four formal presentations was captured on side one of the instrument. Next, the participant's scoring of the four formal presentations followed by sustained informal conversation was captured on the second side of the instrument.

The simplicity of *The Oral Language Assessment* instrument contributes to its reliability. Its minimalist design means that the preservice teacher

participants must rely solely on their own ideas of “good” and “bad” to judge each individual oral text they hear. They must then later be able to articulate their justification for the decision they made in assigning each score. In contrast, providing a rubric specifying “good” and “bad” speech segments would have been leading and would have clouded the participants’ intuitive responses to the oral texts they heard.

Following the scoring of the oral texts response, the preservice teachers were asked questions via a written protocol (see Appendix B). Kennedy, Ball, and McDiarmid (1993) recommended following a constructed task (such as the scoring of oral texts) with an interview to allow the researcher to learn more about teachers’ rationales for their views and to allow for the comparison of data across multiple formats.

Data Analysis and Results

The preservice teacher participants assigned a score of 1 (*exemplary*) to 4 (*unacceptable*) to each oral text they heard. Mean sums were derived for the scores assigned to each oral text. Then the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In addition, the preservice teachers’ interview responses were transcribed. These transcripts were coded, and the codes were analyzed for topic and affect based on predetermined and emergent themes. Some themes were anticipated by the researcher, and the transcripts were coded for these themes on a first pass through the transcripts. All statements that did not fit the predetermined themes were examined in a second pass through of the scripts. Any recurrent or dominant themes that emerged from this analysis were defined via this analysis. A third pass through the scripts allowed the researcher to code for these emergent themes. The scripts were examined a fourth and fifth time by the researcher to eliminate error in the coding. Another rater checked the scripts and codes to establish interrater reliability.

Predetermined themes paralleled the original coding used for the oral texts in terms of dialect and organizational structure (see Tables 2 and 3). For example, if a preservice teacher made a remark about the use of double negatives in a particular oral text, the comment was coded (“S” for syntax). Moreover, if a preservice teacher’s comment was negative or unfavorable, the occurrence was also coded for affect with a “-” (minus) symbol.

Analysis of scores and the interview data revealed that the preservice teachers in this study responded to the oral texts in alignment with the research base. They scored the topic-centered oral presentations more highly than the topic-associating presentations. They also scored the oral texts of formal presentations (the first four oral texts heard) more highly than the presentations followed by the sustained informal conversations

(the second four oral texts heard), indicating an evaluative sensitivity to Standard English as the formal presentations held appreciably fewer instances of nonstandard English.

The mean sums indicated a split among the eight samples into the formal and informal presentation genres (see Tables 1 and 4). Three of the four formal presentations received the most favorable scores, while the four presentations followed by informal exchange received the least favorable scores.

Table 4. Within and Between Group Ordering of Oral Texts by Mean Score

ORAL LANGUAGE TEXT				ORAL LANGUAGE TEXT			
	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	N		MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	N
WITHIN GROUPS				BETWEEN GROUPS			
Formal TANS	1.70	.856	36	Formal TANS	1.70	.856	36
Formal TCS	1.83	.697	36	Formal TCS	1.83	.697	36
Formal TCNS	1.94	.791	36	Formal TCNS	1.94	.791	36
Formal TAS	2.64	.899	36	Informal TAS	2.06	.791	36
Informal TAS	2.06	.791	36	Informal TCNS	2.22	.797	36
Informal TCNS	2.22	.797	36	Informal TCS	2.31	.920	36
Informal TCS	2.31	.920	36	Informal TANS	2.39	.803	36
Informal TANS	2.39	.803	36	Formal TAS	2.64	.899	36

Note. The lower the number, the more positive the evaluation, 1 = Exemplary.

TC = Topic Centered; TA = Topic Associating; S = Standard English; NS = Nonstandard English; F = Formal; I = Informal.

The FTAS position represents one anomaly in this pattern as it was a text from the first, formal presentation oral text set and yet was harshly judged by the preservice teachers. Qualitative data revealed that the preservice teachers responded negatively to this particular oral text because of its brevity and the speaker's broken fluency (both emergent criteria). Due to these factors, this text should be reconsidered for its placement in this study.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine statistical significance *within* each set of four samples (see Table 5). Within groups, only one instance of statistical significance was indicated. A Wilks' Lambda Post Hoc analysis revealed that the FTAS response was more harshly evaluated statistically than all other oral texts within the genre set ($p < .000$; $d = .429$), again due in large part to the unfavorable response the preservice teachers had to this particular oral text.

Table 5. Within Groups Comparison—Formal Genre

SOURCE	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>p</i>
TCNS-TAS	35	1.14	.23	.004**
TCS-TAS	35	1.12	.19	.000***
TANS-TAS	35	1.33	.22	.000***
TCS-TANS	35	1.17	.20	.483
TCNS-TCS	35	.78	.13	.401
TCNS-TANS	35	1.23	.20	.230

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Between groups, statistical comparisons were conducted via a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by a Wilks' Lambda Post Hoc analysis ($p < .003$; $d=.50$). Statistical significance was found across all measures on all comparisons except for the TCNS position, where only marginal significance was evident ($p < .077$). (See Table 6). The qualitative data from interview transcriptions confirms that English (S = Standard English and NS = Nonstandard), organizational structure (TC = TopicCentered; TA = Topic-Associating), and type (F = Formal; I = Informal) were indeed significant factors, and these data provide substance for our discussion.

Table 6. Between Groups Comparison

PAIR	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>p</i>
FTCNS -ITCNS	35	.91	.15	.077
FTCS-ITCS	35	1.08	.18	.013*
FTANS-ITANS	35	1.01	.17	.000***
FTAS-ITAS	35	1.08	.18	.003**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

Standard versus Nonstandard English

The oral texts presented to the preservice teachers were analyzed for their overall percentage of nonstandard English, with results ranging from 2 % in the oral text coded FTAS to 25 % in the oral text coded ITCNS. Data analysis revealed that all eight of the formal presentations were equivalent in percentage of Standard English produced by the middle school students. However, the second set of oral texts (presentations followed by informal conversation) contained twice the amount of nonstandard English. Quite simply, the nonstandard English produced in the informal conversations following the formal presentations meant that these oral text sets, as a whole, contained twice as many instances of nonstandard English. Clearly,

the middle school students were careful to use Standard English in their formal presentations, but their informal talk was filled with instances of nonstandard English usage.

Within each of the two genre sets (formal presentation versus presentation followed by informal conversation), there was no clear pattern of bias for or against Standard English usage. However, comparison between groups revealed a startling outcome. With the exception of the harshly judged FTAS position (again, due to this middle school student's brevity and broken fluency), the formal oral presentations that were not followed by the informal conversation were more favorably evaluated by the preservice teachers. This finding may indicate that the preservice teachers are more harshly evaluative of students speaking informally, using more vernacular and nonstandard language. Half of the preservice teachers specifically remarked that the second set of texts included more nonstandard English in their interviews. A possible alternative reason for the harsher evaluations accorded the second oral sample set may be the preservice teachers' lowered expectations, as they were more sensitive to issues of population and dialect based on their interactions and discussion with the first sample set. This possibility is troubling considering the research on teacher expectations.

In addition to commenting on the nonstandard English present in the informal exchanges, the preservice teachers also specifically remarked on instances of nonstandard English they heard in the texts selected to represent the nonstandard positions (FTANS, FTCNS, ITANS, ITCNS—see Table 1). For example, in these formal presentations, preservice teachers commented on the middle school students' use of the word "*ax*" for "*ask*" or that they dropped the final "-g" sound from words like *quittin'*, *callin'*, *sleepin'* (both phonological markers for AAVE). Many preservice teachers commented that several of the middle school students used the word "*ya'll*" (an example of vocabulary usage typical for AAVE). Many preservice teachers noticed that the middle school students used a variation of the word "*be*" in their speech—"be be going up the stairs" (a morphological marker for AAVE). Finally, several preservice teachers noted phrases like "*she had might not have*" (an example of syntax usage typical of AAVE).

The anomaly represented by the FTAS position in these data is interesting. This text received unduly negative responses due to the speaker's brevity and broken fluency. This oral text had appreciably fewer instances of nonstandard English than any other presentation. However, a majority of the preservice teachers commented on the student's use of nonstandard English in their interviews even though they were unable to recall specific examples. The preservice teachers may have attributed nonstandard English to this presentation where none existed, possibly due to the speaker's broken fluency.

Topic-Centered versus Topic-Associating

There was no clear, initial pattern in the mean score data indicating that organization played a dominating factor in the preservice teachers' evaluations. In opposition to the research base, the preservice teachers' positively scored two topic-associating oral texts (FTANS, ITAS). Ultimately, this caused the initial, quantitative scores to be unclear and masked the pattern favoring topic-centered texts. However, data from the preservice teachers' interviews indicated that organization *was* important in their assessment of the students' oral language. Preservice teachers made many comments about the organization of oral texts they heard; such as, "*It felt like a stream of consciousness,*" or "*That one was good, because it had a clear beginning, middle, and end.*"

Initially, the high scores accorded to these two topic-associating oral texts were interpreted as a positive result indicating that the preservice teachers were able to listen beyond these texts' loose reliance on the prompt; the shifts in time, location, and perspective; the inclusion of unrelated and associative connections; and the exclusion of critical information. In listening beyond these topic-associating elements, it was hoped that the participants were truly able to understand the intent and inherent structure of these texts. However, the interview data indicated that the preservice teachers, in fact, were so confused by these two oral texts that they assigned positive scores for some rather superficial reasons.

Interview data indicated that the 14 preservice teachers were favorably impressed by the FTANS oral text because of its level of detail, 23 preservice teachers were impressed by its creativity, and 17 preservice teachers commented that it felt more like a story with its poems, rhymes, and riddles. Surprisingly, 17 preservice teachers commented that the oral text earned a high score due to the amount of *effort* (an emergent code) the student put forth. Preservice teachers made remarks that the student "*tried hard,*" and "*They really tried.*" In addition, 18 preservice teachers favorably evaluated the ITAS text because of its level of detail, as shown in these comments, "*Hers was really long,*" and "*She went a little more.*" In other words, the preservice teachers were assigning high scores for perceived effort and for quantity of speech rather than quality of speech.

Interestingly, 19 preservice teachers remarked that the FTANS oral text *felt linear* (a predetermined code) to them. Preservice teachers made remarks like "*bad a good sequence of events*" and "*bad a beginning, middle, and end.*" Fifteen preservice teachers commented that the ITAS text *felt linear* to them, 10 preservice teachers noted the speaker's use of a title, and 15 preservice teachers noted use of character names. However, the fact that the preservice teachers felt that the FTANS and ITAS were linear is of particular interest and is a significant finding. Even though discourse

analysis indicated that these two texts were topic-associating, the students used enough mainstream cues that the preservice teachers were convinced the speakers were producing mainstream topic-centered oral language (“*it felt linear*”), and this caused them to score these texts positively.

Although these two texts may be perceived as using a beginning-middle-end structure, starting with “*once upon a time*” and ending with “*the end*,” these narrative markers mask the fact that the beginning, middle, and end of these texts are unrelated in theme, time, or location. In other words, these formal presentations used surface markers (i.e. once upon a time) expected of topic-centered discourse; however, these surface markers masked the fact that these two presentations were topic-associating. In other words, the middle school students’ usage of conventional markers “fooled” the participants into thinking these stories were, in fact, topic-centered. Michaels and Sohmer (2000) found that some students can *take on* mainstream directed speech in classroom contexts and, in doing so, may mislead the teacher into assuming s/he has more competence than is actually present. This seems to be the case in this study. The students’ ability to create talk that *sounded like* what the participants expected for a narrative presentation may have worked to convince the preservice teachers of the students’ success in interpreting the text in this situation.

Comments made by the preservice teachers indicated that they did approach these oral texts with a mainstream script in mind. They wanted a title, names for the characters, and a beginning-middle-end structure. They also had expectations for how the students “should have” read the prompt, even though the prompt is purposefully open-ended. In one significant exchange, a preservice teacher commented that the student read the prompt “wrong” and as a result should receive a lower score. This response fits a Hull and Rose (1990) study that showed that teachers assumed that alternative interpretations made by students are misinterpretations or misreadings, without giving credit to the students’ internal logic or considering the students’ backgrounds.

What is problematic here is that the preservice teachers in this study seemed to be responding to the middle school students’ oral language at a surface level. This means that they might be less able to recognize the markers of nonmainstream language production and less able to scaffold student development toward more expert and knowledgeable uses of mainstream language.

Sociocultural Influences

A specific goal of this study was to uncover what preservice teachers believed about student linguistic diversity and how their beliefs guided their evaluations of students. As established, a teacher’s understanding

of linguistic diversity and students' linguistic competence across speech contexts can have a profound impact on a student's educational experiences (Heath, 2000).

It is significant to recognize that *every* preservice teacher in this study guessed that inner-city African American students created the oral tape recordings. Their guess was based on the speech patterns of the oral text. Nearly half of the preservice teachers made unprompted statements (see Appendix C) indicating that they were considering factors related to culture, language, and learning in response to the oral texts they heard.

The interview comments indicated that some of the preservice teachers *were* aware of their students' home backgrounds and were considering how background impacts use of language. However, their awareness was often couched in stereotypical and negative biases; such as assuming that Standard English was not spoken in the home or assuming that non-mainstream students were incapable of speaking Standard English. More importantly, although the preservice teachers were aware of the influence of culture on the students, they had no framework for using this awareness to structure their responses to the students' oral language.

The interview comments were initially frustrating to hear. No teacher educator wants to hear a preservice teachers operating from negative assumptions and biases. However, these comments also revealed that at the very least these preservice teachers are aware of the interplay of culture and language, albeit in a shallow and socioculturally biased manner. Because they are aware of the influence of culture on language and learning, then this awareness means their sociocultural assumptions may be open to negotiation and revision. Awareness can lead to an open exploration of issues of culture, language, and learning.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Because the preservice teacher participants for this study were not drawn from a randomized sample and came from one university, this study is limited in terms of generalizability and external validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). However, it is important to note that the preservice teachers for this study were representative of a common profile noted in the research for preservice teachers—female, middle-class, suburban, and European-American (Ball, 2000; Cowhey, 2006; Delpit, 1995, 2003; Gomez, 1993; Seidl, 2007). Therefore, since the preservice teacher population for this study matches the description of a typical preservice teacher, it does strengthen the generalizability.

An expansion of this study to other preservice teacher populations and practicing teachers is necessary. In addition, factors other than dia-

lect and organization might be equally valuable to explore. Emergent criteria from this study (fluency, length, level of detail, perceived effort, and speaker confidence) should be given further consideration in future studies. An examination of potentially different weights of the nonstandard markers is also important to consider. For example, a syntactic departure from Standard English may be more noteworthy in evaluative tasks than a phonological one. The influence of genre is also important to consider further, and researchers should explore student and teacher responses to various narrative and expository oral language situations. Finally, students' abilities to approximate mainstream discourse and teacher responses to surface level markers versus deeper meaning making constructs should be further explored.

Conclusion

This study was designed to inform teacher educators about the linguistic awareness of preservice teachers who are preparing to work with diverse populations. The research shows there is a negative stance in preservice teacher's belief about issues related to diversity (Ball, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Gomez, 1993). This study supports the research, as these preservice teachers did have a negative response to student production of nonmainstream aligned discourse (Ball & Farr, 2003; Ball & Muhammad, 2003; Cazden, 2001; Gee, 1989a; Jones, 1997; Michaels, 1981, 1984; Reagan, 1997). Yet, this study indicates that these issues are not as straightforward as past research has indicated.

Findings from this study indicate that preservice teachers do not naturally approach their students' oral language with an analytical ear. Indeed, these teachers listened for quantity bespeaking effort, and they listened for surface level markers aligned with narrative mainstream discourse. This is a problem for teachers who must recognize and value students' innate ways with words while also working to scaffold student language development toward acquisition of formal mainstream conventions.

This study also substantiates that preservice teachers do carry socioculturally-based assumptions about poor and minority students and that they are confused about how to manage linguistic differences among students (Ball & Farr, 2003; Heath, 2000). However, these preservice teachers were at least aware of the impact of culture on language and learning, even if they do not know what to do with this knowledge. This gap between teacher expectations, teacher awareness, and teacher understanding of what to do with this knowledge must be filled.

Based on the findings of this study, teacher education curricula must include information on how language works both inside and outside the

classroom. Teachers should further develop an awareness of the interplay of culture, language, and learning, and they should explore their own sociocultural biases and assumptions, including their acceptance of mainstream discourse patterns. They must become aware of the linguistic resources students bring to the classroom, even if these resources are not in alignment with mainstream practices.

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**Appendix A. Oral Language Assessment Measure:
Formal Presentations**

You will be listening to four different middle school students as they respond to a prompt given to them in a classroom setting. The oral prompt is included on a separate sheet (attached). The students you will be listening to were asked to respond to this oral prompt by creating a “back story.” They were given time to work on their back story, and then they formally presented their ideas to a small group of peers and their teacher. It is your job to score their responses. As you listen to each student’s presentation, please assign them a score of 1 (*exemplary*) to 4 (*unacceptable*). You also have space to take notes as you listen.



STUDENT	SCORE	LISTENING NOTES
Student #1 <i>(Pseudonym)</i>	1 2 3 4	
Student #2 <i>(Pseudonym)</i>	1 2 3 4	
Student #3 <i>(Pseudonym)</i>	1 2 3 4	
Student #4 <i>(Pseudonym)</i>	1 2 3 4	

Now, you need to **rank** these presentations from 1 to 4 with the highest mark of “1” going to the *best* oral presentation. After you rank the students, I will ask you a few questions about why you ranked the students as you did.

Student	Rank Assigned
Student #1	_____
Student #2	_____
Student #3	_____
Student #4	_____

**Oral Language Assessment Measure:
Formal Presentation with Informal Exchange**

Now that you have listened to a few formal oral presentations, I would like you to listen to four more presentations followed by the students' explanations for the choices they made in constructing their stories. You will hear both a formal presentation and an informal exchange.

Again, it is your job as these students' teacher to score their responses. As you listen to the students' presentations, please assign them a score of 1 (*exemplary*) to 4 (*unacceptable*). You also have space to take notes as you listen to guide your work.



STUDENT	SCORE	LISTENING NOTES
Student #1 (Pseudonym)	1 2 3 4	
Student #2 (Pseudonym)	1 2 3 4	
Student #3 (Pseudonym)	1 2 3 4	
Student #4 (Pseudonym)	1 2 3 4	

Once again, you also need to **rank** these presentations from 1 to 4 with the highest mark of "1" going to the *best* oral presentation. After you rank the students, I will be asking you questions about why you ranked the students as you did.

Student	Rank Assigned
Student #1	_____
Student #2	_____
Student #3	_____
Student #4	_____

Appendix B. Preservice Teacher Interview Protocol

Oral Language Sample Response

Questions #1-3 to be administered after hearing the first four “formal” samples of student oral presentations. Questions #1-6 to be administered after hearing all eight text samples.

1. Let’s focus now on the oral samples you just heard. I’m interested in why you scored the students they way you did. Why did you assign these students their score?
2. Can you tell me something about what you heard that helped guide your decision making in scoring these students? For example, what things struck you as you listened to these oral language samples? Did you formulate any criteria as you listened to help guide your decision making process?
3. Let’s consider each sample individually. Please let me know if you wish to hear any sample again at any time. What did you think of this person’s response? If you had to assign a “grade” (A, B, C, D, F) to this student instead of a rank, what grade might you give the student? Please describe this student to me as you see them in your mind’s eye. What do they look like? Who are they?
 - a. Did you note any instances where the student did not use correct grammar? Did you note any instances when the students used slang or vocabulary that you did not think of as appropriate for this purpose? Did this impact your decision making process?
 - b. Did anything about how the student organized their language interfere with your ability to appreciate their presentation? Did the students’ language coherent to you? Did this impact your decision making process?
4. This second round of samples are of students speaking in more informal situations. Did the change of context or task impact how you listened and the rank you assigned the student? Did your criteria change?
5. After listening to the second round of samples, would you go back and change your rankings on the first oral samples? If so, what changes would you make and why?
6. If you “picture” these students in your mind’s eye, what do you see? Can you describe each of these students to me as individuals? What do they look like? What are they wearing? Where do they attend school? What are their chances for academic success?

Appendix C. Comments From Those Teachers Thinking About the Impact of Culture on Language

When you ask them a question, everyone has a different kind of reasoning. I think it's interesting to see some kids in the lower class come up with some things you're not thinking of.

I think they were taught to speak in a different way than I was. So judging whether or not their speaking well is difficult... That's how their culture speaks, so I think it's hard to judge what good speaking is coming from a different background.

It could be hard for the student if they weren't never [sic] exposed to proper Standard English; it could be hard for them to make that change. I think it's more important that they can get their message across than actually speaking a certain way. They might actually have a harder time getting their message across if they're supposed to speak a certain way, because it doesn't make much sense to them... They are focusing more on whether their English is correct.

I think [Standard English] is taught in school, but not at home. It's a one-way street. They don't get it from both sides. It's hard for them to identify with. It's really hard for them to relate to. They don't know as much how to use it naturally as a suburban child would be because that is their natural form of speaking.

I felt that when they started to hesitate it was because they wanted to say something like how they would usually say something, but they realize that it wouldn't be correct grammar. So, they would repeat themselves and correct it.

It depends on the rubric that I am going to be using. Do I incorporate their culture? He's pretty much using what he knows.

Speaking well is important, obviously, but then we're never taught how to speak. I think it's mostly through the environment you're exposed to. Suburban kids are exposed to an environment where their parents are normally speaking correct English and grammar. They hear that all the time. They grew up with that and that's what they probably hear at school. They pick up on that; that that's the way they need to speak when they're in certain situations. I think that they don't hear that as much in the urban setting, usually at home. So, they don't usually speak that way as much... they don't know how to. I don't think that it's incapable of them to learn how to. I think that they can learn how to. I think they need more exposure to it and in a setting that they identify with; not necessarily just school. If they don't hear it at home and they just hear it at school; they're not going to think that it's that important. It's not what they identify with too much; in culture and in society it's not valued.

CASE STUDY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ATTENDING A SEPARATE READING CLASS

Master's Thesis Award Winner

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Abstract

Despite the popularity of offering separate reading classes to students in middle school, there is little empirical evidence suggesting that these courses support students' comprehension across the content areas. Therefore, this case study of a biracial Navajo and Paiute 8th-grade middle school student examined his reading comprehension and motivation with regard to his attendance in a separate reading class. Although he applied more reading comprehension strategies in his reading class by the end of the year, he did not apply these strategies to his other classes. Similarly, although he reported being more motivated to read, he attributed this change to a growing interest in his Native American heritage, rather than to the separate reading class.

As adolescents enter middle school, their reading practices often change. Research has shown that many middle school students' attitudes toward reading have sharply declined as they enter middle school (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995), a trend that appears to continue throughout the years they are there (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). In addition, students' comprehension of texts in school may decrease as students make the transition from reading primarily narrative texts in elementary grades to a range of expository textbooks in secondary schools (Moss & Newton, 2002). Though many elementary teachers assume responsibility for explicitly teaching reading, many secondary

teachers in the content areas may not believe it is their responsibility to provide direct instruction on reading texts in their respective disciplines (O'Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995). In short, middle school may be a time in which students' reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading in school may wane, while at the same time students are introduced to increasingly difficult texts with decreasing instructional support on how to read those texts.

Many researchers, however, note that middle school students are more complex than these overarching disheartening trends may suggest (e.g., Ivey, 1999; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). In fact, these negative attitudes toward reading may be due to a mismatch between school-sanctioned literacy practices and students' individual interests (O'Brien, 2006), rather than due to students' lack of motivation or difficulties in reading. Approximately 68 percent of middle-level schools across the United States require students to enroll in a reading course in order to provide students with responsive, individualized comprehension instruction on texts that interest them, while an additional 13 percent offer this type of course as an elective (McEwins, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 2003). These separate courses are designed to address at least two purposes: (1) to increase students' reading comprehension, including the critical reading of texts across multiple content areas (Ahrens, 2005; Moje & Sutherland, 2003; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999), and (2) to promote affective engagement with reading and writing through interactions with a variety of texts that are interesting and relevant to students (Dillon, 2000; O'Brien, Springs, & Stith, 2001).

Unfortunately, these separate reading classes can at times degenerate into the teaching of skills in isolation (Allington, 1990; Peters, 1990). However, when reading classes connect to students' interests and to others content areas, they have the potential to increase adolescents' love of reading and their comprehension in other disciplines. To investigate this potential, a qualitative, descriptive case study (Yin, 2003) was conducted of one middle school student who attended a separate reading class, whose two-fold purpose was to promote an affinity for reading and to improve comprehension on a variety of texts, especially those taken from the content areas. Specifically, the study was based upon the following three research questions:

1. What changes, if any, occurred in the student's reading comprehension?
2. Did the student apply the strategies that were learned in reading to content area classes, and what factors encouraged or discouraged him to do so?
3. What motivated the student to read, and how did that motivation change or remain the same throughout the school year?

Methodology

Research Participant

Jon (pseudonym), the student around whom the research was centered, was purposively selected because he was both “unique” and representative of the “typical” population of his middle school’s reading classes (Stake, 1995). In a school where over 97 percent of the student body was identified as Caucasian on school forms, Jon was “unique” because he proudly held onto his Navajo and Paiute heritage: He designed grass-dancing regalia with his grandmother; he shared his tribal music with others; he asked the principal to announce upcoming powwows over the school’s intercom; and he often expressed in public writings how proud he was to be Native American. Even though Jon had briefly lived near a reservation in the Western United States, he had spent most of his life in the suburbs of a large Western city. Consequently, he was comfortable in his school setting and conversed easily with countless European American friends, while he could just as comfortably slip into homemade regalia and move to the beat of barrel drums and Native American singing at weekend dance competitions.

In terms of reading in school, Jon was in some ways representative of the “typical” population of his middle school’s 8th-grade reading classes, which were designed to support “average” or “struggling” readers. His cumulative grade point average was 2.8 on a 4-point scale, and his previous teachers unanimously asserted that he was “average” in terms of his reading comprehension. For these reasons, he was a fitting selection for this case study.

Teacher/Researcher

I conducted this study as both a teacher at Hillside Middle School (pseudonym) and as a European American researcher. Although the school housed students from grades 7 through 9—somewhat older than typical middle schools, with grades ranging from 5 through 8—our school embraced a middle school philosophy, including a focus on the developmental needs of adolescent learners and collaboration between teachers in planning curricula (National Middle School Association, 2003). I taught language arts and reading to 8th-grade students, a position I had held at Hillside for 2 years, although I had taught previous years in other high school and middle school settings. As the only one of Jon’s teachers who held a reading endorsement, and as the only teacher who incorporated explicit comprehension instruction into my curricula, I was expected to provide Jon with the reading instruction that would support his comprehension in the content areas.

Setting: The Reading Class

One central purpose of the reading class was to support students' comprehension of a variety of texts, especially those in their content areas. To achieve this goal, I focused on explicit and consistent use of reading strategies, including those recommended by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) for text comprehension instruction, on literary texts and informational texts taken from the content areas. Additionally, I based the curriculum on state language arts standards, including standards that required students to apply comprehension strategies such as making connections, making inferences, asking questions, and summarizing information (Utah State Office of Education, 1999). Although I did not base my instruction on state standards in other content areas, I nonetheless used the textbooks and themes from those areas when planning instruction. Because my reading students had different science, social studies, and math teachers—each of whom was at a different point in different textbooks—complete coordination of curricula was not feasible, but students did practice applying comprehension strategies on their content area textbook pages as part of thematic units.

A second central purpose of the reading class was to provide students with a print-rich environment in which they would have opportunities to read and write a range of engaging, relevant, and personally interesting texts. To achieve this latter goal of motivation, other school faculty, community members, students, and I gave “booktalks” based on students' interest inventories and on subjects they covered in their content areas. Additionally, the students independently chose books or magazines on which to do self-selected projects that they presented to the student body in book fairs. In short, the class was based on different components of motivation outlined by Guthrie et al. (2007):

1. Students had opportunities to select books based on their *interest*.
2. Students could *control* their selection of reading materials and assessment options to a large extent.
3. Students could become actively *involved* in hands-on activities.
4. Students could work in *collaborative groups* to discuss common texts.

Data Sources

Qualitative. Over the course of 7 months, I systematically collected data from three different sources: (a) student assignments, (b) interviews, and (c) observations. These data sources allowed me to explore Jon's text comprehension and motivation to read across different settings.

Student Assignments. In order to gain insight into how Jon applied reading strategies across the content areas, I collected all available cor-

rected assignments from each of his classes, including my language arts and reading classes. Jon and I independently estimated that I collected about 90% of his total assignments, since some teachers threw away some assignments rather than returned them, and Jon may also have lost a few assignments.

One assignment, a think aloud, served as a qualitative pre/post assessment to indicate changes in Jon's application of comprehension strategies. During the think aloud at the beginning of the year and the end of the year, my reading classes worked in partners as they read informational websites aloud and stopped to discuss what they were thinking. Their conversations were tape-recorded.

Interviews. I used a phenomenological approach (deMarrais, 2004) to conduct interviews with Jon, his mother, and his other teachers. From these interviews, I hoped to discover any changes in Jon's reading practices at home and in his other classes.

I conducted interviews with Jon for 30 minutes after school, once every 2 weeks, for a total of 14 interviews throughout the last 3 quarters of the school year. During these interviews, in order to understand Jon's thinking as he completed typical assignments in his classes, I asked him to tell me how he figured out the answers to both the correct and missed questions on the various worksheets and other types of assignments that were used to give him a grade. Jon's own thought processes, combined with the final product of the assignments, indicated whether he understood and applied reading strategies to other subject areas.

Along with interviewing Jon, I also conducted six semiformal interviews with his mother to learn about Jon's reading practices at home. I also interviewed his content area teachers (at least three times per person) after they were asked at the beginning of the year to pay special attention to his comments and assignments.

Observations. Additionally, I took field notes daily while observing Jon during his language arts and reading classes. I also arranged to visit Jon's other content area classrooms, including social studies, prealgebra, physical science, wood working class, health, and physical education. I attended these various classes two to four times throughout the study during my planning time. During all observations, I noted Jon's actions and comments.

Quantitative-Pre/Post Quantitative Assessments. As part of my reading instruction, I gave three different pre/post assessments to all of my students to serve as indicators of their reading comprehension and motivation. The Gates-MacGinitie (MacGinitie et al., 2000) test was administered to assess reading comprehension. Questions from McKenna and Kear's (1999) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey were given to indicate any changes

in students' attitude toward reading, while the Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1999) helped me to gain a sense of any changes in my students' motivation to read as the school year progressed. The quantitative data were used to compare and contrast findings from the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts and classroom assignments were analyzed using constant comparative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), in which tentative categories related to reading motivation and comprehension (e.g., interest in sports, asking clarification questions about a text) were generated and refined during various stages of coding. To establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), two people who held a doctorate in education conducted an inquiry audit on a few randomly-selected data points and on my reconstructions as a whole, thereby checking the dependability of both the process and the product of the research. After the auditors and I had established categories based on our reading of the data, two coders—one of whom was a science teacher and a graduate student in education, the other of whom was the literacy specialist of a local school district—independently confirmed the codes and findings by reading 10% of the data, while suggesting themes that the auditors and I had missed. I purposefully selected key data points, such as the pre/post think aloud, to give to the coders, in addition to randomly selected data. Moreover, I held several member checks with Jon at the end of the data collection process, in which I asked him if the conclusions and results I had drawn were plausible to him. Additionally, a school administrator who had informally visited and officially evaluated my classes several times confirmed that descriptions of my teaching were credible to him. Finally, the quantitative data from the comprehension test and the attitude survey entailed a comparison of the total scores to see if there were any improvements.

Limitations

As with all qualitative research, my case study used the human as a resource in order to come to some understanding of the phenomenon in question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case, my dual position as a reading teacher and a researcher may have biased how I perceived the data, as some of it related to my teaching. Though several methodological checks were in place to minimize this bias, such as data audits, triangulation from several sources, member checks, and independent coders, the fact remained that it was I who took field notes, I who conducted the interviews, and I who ultimately wrote and interpreted the results.

Moreover, I was a direct authority figure in Jon's life, and consequently he may have been less than forthright in giving to me responses he thought I might not want to hear, on both the pre- and postassessments and in our interviews. Again, checks were put in place to counter this possibility. For example, nonevaluative questions were used in circumstances Jon may have been reluctant to share information that could hurt my feelings or reflect negatively on him. Nonetheless, my dual role as both a teacher and a researcher may have affected data collection and interpretation in ways I could not prevent or foresee.

Lastly, Jon's self-identification as a Native American proved salient to the data at hand, and though I tried to account for his perspective through member checks, I may not have been able to capture an insider's perspective of his experiences due to my status as a European American researcher.

Results

An analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data yielded information in two areas: (a) Jon's reading comprehension, and (b) his motivation to read in-school and out-of-school texts. To clarify the findings in these overarching categories, I have divided the data further into subcategories outlined in each section. Furthermore, in an attempt to maintain the integrity of the data, I have not changed any of the spelling or grammatical errors in people's original spoken or written words.

Jon's Comprehension

An analysis of the data yielded results in the following three areas related to Jon's reading comprehension: (a) application of reading strategies in reading class, (b) metacognitive awareness of the application of reading strategies, and (c) the application of reading strategies to other content areas.

Application of Reading Strategies in Reading Class. While he was in the reading class, Jon's application of reading strategies improved both qualitatively and quantitatively over time. A think aloud on an informational website about gangs, administered during the first weeks of school as students were reading *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), illustrated Jon's initially limited responses to texts. At the end of every paragraph his first comment was, "That's weird." He paid limited attention to text features by reading some headings and ignoring others. Though he asked some meaningful questions, such as "Why would someone wanna join a gang when they're 9?" for the most part his responses were brief and simplistic. In total, he applied four different types of reading strategies: asking questions, inferring, predicting, and making one text-to-world connection.

In contrast, Jon's think aloud at the end-of-the-year revealed a marked improvement in strategy usage. He effectively used 13 different reading strategies that had been explicitly taught in the reading class: asking questions, inferring, using context clues, predicting, checking predictions, visualizing, summarizing, activating background knowledge, making text-to-world connections, making text-to-self connections, determining the reliability of information, using the semantic features of a word to determine its meaning, and noting text features. This think aloud, conducted using an informational website on King Arthur during a unit on the Middle Ages, not only revealed an increase in the number and type of reading strategies used, but also revealed an increase in complexity of thought, as illustrated by the length of Jon's sentences and responses compared to his six-word responses at the beginning of the year. Jon remarked in fourth quarter to his partner:

Partner: That word [Chretien de Troyes] seems like . . .

Jon: French, probably. French. It's got the little Chetreire or whatever. Um, [I have a] connection, cause, like, people, like in the government . . . if there's like a missing person they look up their background like their heritage, their birth, their childhood, all their murders, whatever. It's like to get background knowledge.

Thus, Jon's pre/post think alouds revealed an improvement in his application of reading strategies. An improvement in comprehension was additionally confirmed by his Gates-MacGinitie (MacGinite et al., 2000) test scores, which indicated more than a one-year gain in reading comprehension.

Jon's pre/post assessments were not the only sources that indicated improved cognitive engagement with texts. His formative assessments in his reading and language arts classes also demonstrated marked improvement in reading strategy application. For example, at the beginning of the year Jon asked only inferential questions in discussions and written assignments, but by the end of the year he asked clarification questions as well. Early on, he wondered about the historical monograph *Black Potatoes* (Bartoletti, 2001) as he asked, "Why don't they learn about how the disease is transferred?" and while he was reading *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967) he asked, "Why is Pony boy going to the rumble when he doesn't have to fight?" By the 4th quarter, he continued to ask inferential questions but started to ask questions to clarify the meaning of passages as well. For example, upon reading a myth about King Arthur, he asked, "So his son betrayed him or something like that? That what it said?" The types of Jon's questions changed and became more diversified, thus giving him a greater repertoire of cognitive strategies to apply to his assignments. Similar gains were noted in his ability to make connections, to determine

the importance of information and to summarize, and to apply various strategies to ascertain the meaning of unknown vocabulary words. Although he perhaps had not “mastered” many of these skills, the coders and I noticed significant improvements in his use of them.

Metacognitive Awareness of the Application of Reading Strategies.

Not only did Jon improve in his reading strategy application, but he also was more cognizant of his mental operations as he read in his language arts and reading classes. His pre and post think alouds illustrate this point. Though the instructions for the two tasks were the same (pause after every paragraph and state what you are thinking as you read), Jon and his partner did not explicitly name any reading strategies in the first think aloud, even though their previous language arts teachers had taught these strategies. In contrast, they named several of them in the last think aloud. They explicitly said, “I infer that . . .,” “I predict that . . .,” “That’s my question,” “I can visualize . . .” and “Connection.” They also used verbatim words I taught them as statements readers would make in their head if they applied the strategies. For example, “I don’t know what _____ means, but I’m guessing it means _____.” Their language indicates that, not only were they applying more reading strategies, but they were aware they were doing so.

Other examples indicated Jon’s increased metacognition as well. For instance, when I asked him to tell me what he did to figure out questions for the English test [statewide end-of-year test], he responded, “Just, like basically you know how they had the big stories, you just read the questions, skim through the stories, try to find what you’re looking for instead of reading like small pieces of information that really aren’t that important to the question.” This response indicates the explicit use of three reading strategies: setting a purpose for reading, regulating reading rate (e.g., skimming when appropriate), and determining the importance of information, all of which Jon was taught directly in his reading class.

The Application of Reading Strategies to Other Content Areas. Despite Jon’s improvement in his metacognition and application of reading strategies while in my classes, he still did not apply them to his work in other content areas. For example, when I asked him how he figured out answers on his end-of-year science test, he responded:

It kind of depends on the question. Like if it was blank makes up everything, it’d be matter cause matter makes up everything that takes up space . . . like waves, like sound waves, they have to go through matter so on the waves part it’s like what would you need to have a wave like sound wave to be heard? You need matter and whatever.

This answer, based entirely on content, stands in stark contrast to his answer for how he would answer a question on a language arts test: by skimming and determining the importance of information.

Jon did not consciously use reading strategies throughout the school year on other assignments, either. For example, when I asked him how he figured out specific questions in prealgebra, he did not answer in terms of reading strategies, such as predicting and checking predictions or looking at the math book's text features, such as bolded words and modeled problems, to figure out the answer. Instead, he answered in terms of content:

Um, you just draw out the line graph and you just go from, start from the age, from, well, like, yeah, well, you do a line graph from twelve to eight. Oh yeah! You, like one is twelve, and, no—twelve to eighteen. I did that kind of weird right there. I don't know how I did that one.

As in his math course, Jon did not apply the strategies he learned in reading class to science, history, or health, his other classes that required frequent reading. He exclusively spoke in terms of content when he was explaining how he answered certain questions on assignments. For example, when I asked him how he answered a question on the Gettysburg Address, he explained:

Right there it says, 'It is for us the living and to be dedicated here the unfinished work for which work which they who fought here have thus so far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us.' Like, instead of going to that, he's giving advice to like dedicate themselves to what's going to happen before them, like in the future. So that's what I basically did. Yeah.

Alternatively, when asked how he figured out other problems, he occasionally answered, "The girl that sits next to me," when speaking of both science and history. I wondered what he would do if the girl changed seats, and Jon said, "Guess, probably." Thus, on assignments in which students had to read and make sense of texts, Jon did not think to question, reread, look at text features, or perform any other reading strategy outside of the classes that he attended with me.

Jon's Motivation

To investigate Jon's motivation to read, pre and post administrations of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1999) and the Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey (Gambrell et al., 1999) were given. The results indicated that Jon's attitude toward reading and his motivation to read significantly increased as the school year progressed. However, Jon did not attribute this increase to the reading class. Instead,

during the interviews, two other factors emerged as salient to his reading motivation: (1) reading to earn acceptable grades, and (2) reading to learn about his Paiute and Navajo heritage.

Reading to Earn Acceptable Grades. Jon's primary motivation to read and write texts in school was primarily for the grade. Jon himself said it best, "I just participated to get an A basically, and yeah. Just enough to get me by." In practice, this motivator conflicted with Jon's comprehension. As I observed him take a test in science, for example, I witnessed as he frequently looked off of the paper of someone he described as "smart." This coping strategy indicated that he was more concerned with receiving a good grade than with demonstrating what he had learned. On a similar vein, in math, I analyzed page after page of assignments on which Jon received 100 percent. Therefore, I was puzzled when I saw that Jon's math test scores were low, ranging from 20 to 50 percent. The discrepancy was at least partially explained when I observed Jon's math class; the students graded all of the assignments themselves. Jon, whose primary concern was to "get an A," gave himself perfect scores on most of his work. The teacher, in turn, did not grade the assignments on whether or not the problems were completed, but on whether or not the students wrote their scores on the top of the paper and circled them. In sum, Jon's focus was shifted almost entirely away from comprehension to the earning of a score—and in practice, the two were not necessarily always synonymous or even closely related. As Jon strove to earn acceptable grades, he ironically obviated the need to use comprehension strategies.

Reading to Learn About His Navajo and Paiute Heritage. At the time of the case study, Jon's Navajo and Paiute mother had begun to reestablish relationships with her relatives and had been attending powwows for approximately a year. Jon read and wrote often as part of an exploration of his growing identity as a Native American. For instance, when I asked the students, "What makes you *you*?" he answered in his journal, "Things that make me me is I am a native dancer. I feel like Dancing & Native Pride is in me." In response to other prompts, he wrote:

What I value the most is my native dance suit. Cause my grandma made it and she put alot of time and money into it. And My grandma said that I'm getting better and better at dancing.

The greatest Idea I have herd (sic) of was when I had the Idea to create a light weight long Bow. And it had kite string for strings. (Key: using the natural environment.) . . . The Bow represents hunter. The Bow has been past down to me by my Ancestors.

When presented with open-ended questions, Jon frequently wrote about his Native American heritage, and these responses were often longer than

the required length of the assignment. The longest piece of writing that he wrote for any of his classes was the chapter in his autobiography about his heritage. This chapter began with describing his deep roots: "My heritage dates back basically to the beginning of time. I am Native American; my tribes that I am from are the Navajo and Paiute tribes of Utah." Thus, Jon's culture motivated him to write, and he often would write more than was required for a grade if the subject was his ancestry.

Not surprisingly, much of the reading that Jon did both inside and outside of school related to Native Americans as well. His mother took him to the local library where he checked out books about Paiute words. He then wrote vocabulary lists and studied them voraciously, often bringing them to classes to look over before the bell rang. Jon also scoured his social studies textbook for information about Native Americans and then wrote a 13-page narrative about their history without ever showing it to his history teacher for credit or praise. He frequently visited websites with powwow schedules and could cite the addresses to several of them offhand. He used graph paper to create geometric designs of beads that he could later put on his head roach that he wore while dancing. He wrote the recipes for Native American dishes and gave them to his grandmother. Additionally, he created and distributed flyers to announce upcoming powwows in which he was performing. He wrote a song for his friend's musical band about searching for his dying family tree. In all, Jon's heritage was a profound motivator. It inspired him to read, to write, and to communicate in other modes about being Native American.

Implications

When combined with other research (e.g., Feldt, Feldt, & Kilburg, 2002; Moje, 1996) that suggests some students may not transfer generalized strategies from one subject or task to another, the findings from this case study have several implications. First and foremost, the study suggests the need for literacy instruction in the content areas, with the application of comprehension strategies tied to students' grades. As Wiggins and McTighe (1998) have asserted, "*What* and *how* we assess signals what we value" (p. 127). Accordingly, if content area teachers value masterful reading in their discipline, they will design assessments that reflect this priority. Furthermore, they will attach grades to these types of assessments.

This approach may have benefited Jon's comprehension in his content areas, as Jon characterized some of his assignments as the following: "They're one-answer questions, and it's like basically copying them out of books, like they just take out a word and you just have to find that word." Because Jon could oftentimes "get by" with a decent grade regardless of whether or not he asked questions, predicted outcomes, or summarized

findings in his content areas (for example), he was not motivated to apply these reading strategies, which may have taken extra time or thought. Instead, he could much more easily complete assignments by writing the answer when the teacher announced it, by copying answers out of a book or by copying answers from his friends.

If his teachers had tied the application of these strategies to his grade, they would have signaled to the student that they valued his comprehension, that they valued literacy within their discipline, and that they valued deep engagement with the subject matter. They may have provided a disincentive to cheat, since summaries and questions are more unique to individuals than one-word answers are. Finally, his teachers may also have decreased discrepancies between grades and comprehension by making effective reading and writing skills part of students' scores. In summary, content area teachers, and not just the reading teacher down the hall, are charged to provide comprehension instruction to students as an inherent part of their discipline (Gee, 1989) and as a part of their student assessments.

A second implication of this study is that students should be provided with school-sanctioned opportunities to draw from their personal experiences and interests as they connect to the content areas. Jon's increasing interest in his Native American identity motivated him to read and write texts both at school and at home. He wrote narratives about his ancestors drawn from his history textbook. He made geometric designs for head roaches drawn with principles of symmetry used in mathematics. He designed woodcarvings of powwow drumsticks for his woodwork class. He wrote informational and literary texts about his heritage in language arts and more. Just as Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005) emphasized the importance of drawing on students' funds of knowledge they bring from their homes and connecting them with content area learning, Jon's experiences suggested that he was motivated to read and write in the content areas when they connected with his heritage (to use Jon's term). Jon's experiences suggest that teachers from different disciplines—as diverse as math and woods—can seek to know their students and provide them with opportunities to make these connections.

In conclusion, this case study lends support to three big ideas. First, even though reading teachers are charged with helping students comprehend and enjoy various texts, the responsibility of doing so cannot rest on their shoulders alone. Second, students should have opportunities to draw from their funds of knowledge, as these opportunities can motivate students to learn content material. Finally, students deserve to be explicitly instructed and assessed on their use of comprehension strategies in their content area classes as well as in their reading class.

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COLLABORATION AND DISCOVERY: A PILOT STUDY OF LEVELING CRITERIA FOR BOOKS WRITTEN IN SPANISH FOR K-2ND GRADE

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Abstract

This pilot study explored the leveling criteria used to level books written in Spanish for learners enrolled in bilingual education classes at levels K-2nd. Qualitative data gathering and analyses were conducted to answer the following questions: (1) What text features identified and recommended for use by Fountas and Pinnell (1996) when leveling books written in English may be appropriate to level books written in Spanish?, and (2) What are appropriate criteria to evaluate the level of books written in Spanish for learners at levels K-2nd?

Background

The work begun in this project is important to the field of bilingual English Spanish literacy. To help English language learners (ELLs) of Latino descent become bilingual and bicultural, it is important to consider the accuracy of the difficulty level assigned to expository and nonexpository texts for books translated and subsequently leveled in Spanish. In this study, we begin an investigation that addresses only text leveling for books translated from English to Spanish or written in Spanish for students at levels K-2nd. We are not evaluating the difficulty level of the books that

we examined but are seeking to identify appropriate criteria to assign a level to books. We consider that a possible challenge with using the same criteria for leveling books in English and Spanish is that this may presuppose the languages to be identical and may not consider the influence and differences across texts that are direct translations versus sense to sense translations (Robinson, 2002). Languages have similarities but those with entirely different roots have fewer commonalities that transfer across them. Spanish is a romance language whose root is Latin while English does not fall into this category. For a book that is translated from one language to another to be an accurate translation, the translator has to hold a high proficiency level in the original language (Lambert, 1986), the culture or cultures that speak the language of the book, and the language into which it is being translated, as well as expertise in translation (Baker, 1977; Toury, 1995). Translators know that equivalence extends beyond the word level (Baker), and when they translate they are cognizant that there are huge differences between direct translations and interpretations of texts/sense to sense translations originally written in a different language (Munday, 2001; Venuti, 2000). Lado's work (1979) suggested that translation results in interlanguage interference that an unskilled translator cannot effectively bypass to achieve text equivalence. Therefore, evidence supports the hypothesis that translation requires a level of academic preparation not held by many functioning bilinguals, and that a translator who is not aware of the cultural differences across dialects in syntax, lexicology, and composition may not capture an author's intent using direct translation methods. Two concrete examples demonstrate the aforementioned, reflect issues of dialects, the necessity for translations to be culturally accurate, and the difficulty in achieving this. The translations for the words *dog* and *child* from English to Spanish. Typically, *dog* is translated to *perro*, and young child is translated to *niño*. The challenge arises in that all speakers of Spanish do not use the words *perro* and *niño*. To translate a text written in English for a learner from Guatemala, *dog* would become *chucho* and young child would translate to *patojo*. A speaker of Spanish from Cuba would only understand these very accurate dialectal translations from the context of the material because in Caribbean and Cuban Spanish a *chucho* is a light switch and a *patojo* is an adverb denoting an inability to walk due to an injury.

No previous research investigations have undertaken the process of developing a criteria for leveling books written in Spanish for learners enrolled in bilingual education classes in United States schools at levels K-2nd that appropriately acknowledges cultural differences across dialects. Although this may seem surprising, the nature of the Spanish language and the manner literacy has historically been taught in Spanish speaking

countries has not necessitated book leveling. When one acknowledges that in Latin America initial literacy has not extended beyond functional literacy (Daniel, 2007), it is easy to see why book leveling has not garnered much attention. For this reason, our initial pilot project begins at ground zero. The intent of this pilot study was to explore the appropriateness of existing leveling criteria used to level books written in Spanish by identifying what aspects of Spanish might suggest the need for the development of criteria specific to the language as seen in the books we would examine in this project. We wanted to begin to formulate a rationale for leveling books translated to Spanish after examination of such books. We sensed that publishing companies level books in Spanish using the same criteria that is used to level books written in English, and we were quickly able to observe that translated books are quite often given the same level across languages. Our initial observations also revealed that what book companies appear to do frequently is prepare two teacher guides for a book that differ in the types of questions the readers are asked. This often results in two different levels being assigned to the same book depending on the questions the teacher chooses to use with learners. This approach does not appear to address the linguistic differences in grammar and syntax across the languages that may contribute to a book in one of the languages being at a higher or lower level of textual and contextual difficulty. This method suggests that as levels are assigned to books, cultural and dialectal differences, the learner's funds of knowledge, and the translator's academic preparation may not be considered by publishing companies who seek to fill a need for bilingual materials. Because these factors may invalidate both the translation and the level assigned to a translated book it is therefore a component of biliteracy instruction that merits examination.

Previous research findings that inform this study only do so indirectly. Although promoting biliteracy in the United States is an ongoing scholarly agenda, educators have been forced to address top down mandates that have impeded the achievement of its goals. Researchers in the field of Spanish English biliteracy have recommended holistic, culturally-based methodologies for bilinguals in the making (Daniel, 2006; 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 1996; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Smith, Jiménez, & Ballesteros, 2005). However, the reality in many bilingual classrooms in the United States, as well as in schools throughout the Spanish speaking world, is for initial literacy instruction to center on the alphabetic or spelling method which consists of first teaching a learner the vowels, then adding consonants to form syllables, and then forming simple words (Carrasquillo, 1998; Ferreiro, 1997). By second grade, Spanish speakers reach basic alphabetization. This means learners can decode words with four or more syllables that may or may not be part of their oral repertoire. We want to highlight that reaching decoding

ability in Spanish means to have reached alphabetization. Neither decoding ability nor basic alphabetization denotes a learner has the knowledge to critically question and examine text. In Spanish speaking countries it has been a challenge to persuade learners to question written text due to the power structures that have dominated schooling (Ferreiro). The reality is that literacy is both subjective and objective as it maintains the social norms of cultures (Rodríguez, 1995). It is important to note that beginning readers of Spanish are more likely to be able to decode text written in Spanish than beginning readers of English. Spanish orthography is shallower and more predictable than English, especially in beginning instructional paradigms where learners are asked to combine one vowel (and vowels always have the same sound in Spanish) with one consonant. While learners may succeed at decoding, they may find it a struggle to understand the meaning of words from context unless these words are part of their everyday lexicon. Literacy development in Spanish continues from third grade on as readers expand their inner sense of the rules of the language, their knowledge base of where to place accents (a skill that many struggle to ever master), their ability to comprehend more complex text, and their increased competency in composition skills. Perhaps in Spanish speaking countries little attention is devoted to leveling books due to the fact that in so many Latin American countries subsidies to schools are limited and few teachers have narrative texts for their students to read (Daniel, 2007). Students are often taught to read using *cartillas* which basically are little more than phonetic spelling books. One could propose that this teaching methodology, which dates back to colonial times (Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 1992), continues to influence today's literacy instruction and delimits and perhaps negates the development of criteria for leveling books written in Spanish. Another important and shocking factor is the fact that readability formulas for books written in Spanish date back to the 1950s (Dale & Chall, 1948; Fernández Huerta, 1959; Spaulding, 1955). Clearly, there exists a need for further investigative work in this area.

Significance of Study

The results of this study provide important information that will serve as the basis for the development of criteria to be used to level books written in Spanish for learners at levels K-2nd. This investigation begins to inform the field of what constitutes appropriately scaffolded reading materials for second language learners enrolled in bilingual programs of instruction by suggesting guidelines to ascertain if the level given to a book is or is not appropriate for the individual learner.

Leveling Texts Written in English

In an effort to enroll students in the reading process and prevent frustration, Betts (1946) suggested an important teacher task is to help students choose appropriately leveled texts. These are texts that students can read with 90% accuracy at a 75% comprehension rate. It is important to note that readers need familiarity with 90% of the words in a text to comprehend what they read. The methods used to match learners to text have changed over the past 52 years. However, long after 1946, when Fry (2000) compared methodologies, he concluded that text leveling considers content, illustrations, length, curriculum, language structure, judgment, and format, and is therefore less objective than readability formulas. Hoffman et al. (1994) examined first grade basals using a more subjective predictability scale with the categories of repeated patterns, familiarity with concepts, rhyme, and rhythm. They also evaluated texts with a decodability scale of one to five. In her work, Hiebert (2002) proposed that the frequency of use of words influences text difficulty and therefore labeled highly decodable words with simple vowel patterns to be a critical text factor to consider. Hiebert defined the critical word factor as the number of unique words for every 100 in a text. This number is the indicator of the level of demand of a reading task for readers of English. Hiebert's critical word factor definition provided a measure that is perhaps a more quantitative and objective approach. Yet, currently, the state of affairs is that leveling of books written in English is accomplished through analysis of the features of text that Fry suggested result in subjective decisions. In the monolingual English classroom, teachers help students choose appropriately leveled books based on criteria providing the scope that Fry described as subjective. The five finger rule that asks a learner if he/she is able to read five words on a books page has also been proven appropriate for subjectively matching books to readers.

Similarly, Fountas and Pinnell (1996; 2006) suggested a subjective criteria. They recommend select text features be qualitatively examined when classifying the level of texts written in English. In their work, they categorized books into leveled categories of from less to more difficult that are useful to classroom teachers when choosing books for guided reading. The text features they identified included aspects of language such as learner familiarity of the vocabulary in a book and the low or high frequency use of a word. They also contrasted expository and narrative texts, as well as examined format. In this study, an evaluation of the appropriateness of Fountas and Pinnell's text characteristics was completed in order to identify the important text features to consider when leveling Spanish texts. After comparing and contrasting Fountas and Pinnell's categories with our beginning draft of text features in books written in Spanish, we noted similarities and differences across the languages that suggested our study might yield useful information.

(For more descriptive information of Fountas and Pinnell's leveling criteria, refer to Figure 1, Adapted Summary of Leveling Categories.)

Figure 1. Summary of Leveling Categories

Adapted from Fountas and Pinnell (1996)

TEXT FEATURE	ITEM FOR ANALYSIS	DIFFICULTY
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar to not-familiar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-abstract to highly abstract themes
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low v. high frequency • Number of syllables in words • Complexity of sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to read to more difficult • One or two syllable words to multisyllable words • Simple to complex sentences with embedded clauses
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of book • Font • Size of print • Organizational features • Illustrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short books with few lines of text to pages covered with words • Large to small • Large to small print • Text layout • From every page to none
Type of Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative with a predictable theme • Expository 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From simple ideas to complex plots • From clear to abstract presentation of information

Reading in Spanish

Linguists identify languages as having deep or shallow orthography; meaning that they have an easy or a difficult to learn sound print relationship (Chiou-Ian, 2002). Spanish is defined as more shallow than English, as more predictable phonetically, and as easier to decode than English. Although this is true, and Spanish has a more direct sound-symbol correspondence, there is much about the language that makes learning to read in Spanish challenging. Spanish syntax is more complex than English, and even in nonacademic conversations, speakers use tenses such as the conditional and the subjunctive to add layers of meaning to thoughts. Decoding in Spanish is but a first step to reading because comprehension is controlled by the reader's ability to follow long sentences. Such sentences may include so many clauses that an English writer would consider them to be run-ons. In Spanish, long paragraphs that include sentences consisting of descriptively elegant clauses written in the passive voice have been documented to be less interactional than in English (Lux & Grabe, 1991). For the classroom teacher, it is also important to know that Spanish writ-

ing incorporates numerous verb tenses that are regulated grammatically by the tense chosen in the first clause and whether or not the language is situated in the indicative straightforward mood where what is discussed is or did indeed take place or the subjunctive mood where events are possible but not certain to occur. For the most part, Spanish speakers communicate orally without realizing the complexities of their lexicon and of the grammar tenses they use when interacting in informal conversations.

Spanish writing differs from English in many ways. Sentences written in Spanish tend to be longer (Lux & Grabe, 1991; Montaño-Harmon, 1991; Reppen & Grabe, 1993) and when judged from the perspective of the English language may appear to or may indeed express ideas in a confusing manner (Montaño-Harmon). This places a responsibility upon the Spanish reader to investigate between the lines of text to examine words critically and situate the text in the writer's intended time frame. In contrast, teachers in the United States (U.S.) schools teach learners to write in the active voice because in U.S. society use of the active voice is the norm. This type of instruction places on the author the responsibility to write in a more straightforward manner that includes direct transitional devices; such as the words first, second, and third (Montaño-Harmon). Spanish speakers are neither taught to think nor to write in this style. They know that the author is not held responsible for what the reader understands and are familiar with long paragraphs that include unnecessary clauses. In fact, a study of fifth graders by Lux and Grabe (1993) strongly suggested that writing style is culturally influenced even in very young children.

Decoding in Spanish

In this section, we discuss select examples of decoding in Spanish that affect early literacy development because we considered this text feature in the investigation. Direct translation methods do not appear to consider the decodability of words being translated (Lambert, 1986; Robinson, 2002) and the factor of interlanguage interference (Lado, 1979). An examination of the vocabulary in the books required a consideration of aspects of initial literacy development in Spanish that could influence a book's difficulty level as evidenced in reader's miscues and comprehension.

Vowels in Spanish always hold the same articulated sound and are never silent. The letter *y* has one sound in yo-yo and another in the proper noun Mayra. In fact, this name is perfectly correct with either an *i* or a *y*. The *y* also sounds like the combination of two *ls* or the Spanish /*elle*/ as in *cebolla* onion. Data from an ongoing study (Daniel, 2007) demonstrates bilinguals frequently write the word onion, which in Spanish is correctly written *cebolla* as *sebolla*, *ceboya*, *sevolla* and *cevolla*. The letter *c* can duplicate the sound /*s*/ if followed by an *e* and/or an *i* as in the proper noun Cecilia. The *s* can also represent the phoneme /*z*/ and leads students

to write *zapato* as *sapato*, *zanahoria* as *sanahoria*, and *cereza* as *seresa* or *sereza*. Similarly, *b* and *v* are other problematic letters because they may stand for the same phoneme but have different graphemes. Beginning learners write *vaca*, the word for cow in Spanish, as *baca*. Because there is no differentiation between the production of /v/ and the /b/ in oral communication, students cannot bring an awareness of this difference to their reading. The hard sound of *c* in *vaca* can also duplicate the phoneme /k/ when it is followed by the letters *a*, *u*, or *o*. Similarly the letter *q* can hold the same sound of the *k* and the hard *c*. More data from an ongoing study (Daniel, 2008) has documented learners confuse the hard *c*, the *k* and the *q*. They write *quisiera* as *cisiera* or *qisiera*, and *isquierda* as *iscierda*, *isqierda* or *iskierda*. Beginning readers of Spanish are often challenged when text loses its linguistic rather than contextual predictability.

In addition, the invented spelling that demonstrates learners' decoding ability and generalization of Spanish orthography rules continues to be present in students' repertoire up through the third grade and beyond. In many instances it is difficult for the elementary level learner to grasp why in Spanish one letter is used rather than another. The best reading instruction includes balanced literacy instruction and considers that choosing the right book is essential as well as the emphasizing the understanding that many spelling rules are difficult to master in Spanish (Azurdia, 1998). The authors have repeatedly noticed that students seem to memorize rules that they apply and overgeneralize as they read and write. When students make these generalizations they are in effect demonstrating the good errors that reflect literacy development. Learners make educated miscues in their efforts to read and write until they memorize the correct Spanish orthography that may or may not make sense to them until long after they have memorized how to read and write a select word. Learning to read in Spanish is definitely neither simple nor straightforward (Azevedo, 1992).

Research Questions

1. What text features that Fountas and Pinnell (1996) identify as text features to use when leveling books written in English may be appropriate to level books written in Spanish?
2. What are appropriate criteria to evaluate the level of books written in Spanish for learners at levels K-2nd?

Methodology

Participants and Setting

Researchers/participants represent a microcosm of this country's teacher workforce and professoriate and were chosen by the professor who had

gotten to know them through delivering workshops at the school. Prior to beginning this pilot study participants demonstrated an interest in the investigation. Not all the bilingual teachers at the school were active participants in the study. It was important that all researchers had high proficiency levels in both Spanish and English and be willing to give the work the amount of time it would require. Participants were (1) a Mexican immigrant with a degree in dentistry holding a temporary teaching certificate to teach first grade bilingual, (2) a trilingual native of Chicago's Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen who remembered her mother making her sit down to study Spanish at home and was close to completing teacher certification, (3) a fifth grade teacher educated in Mexico and the United States who had a master's degree in reading from an Illinois university, (4) a doctoral student who taught bilingual kindergarten and held a reading specialist certification, (5) a Mexican-American bilingual kindergarten teacher, and (6) a Cuban-American professor who emigrated to the United States some 40 years ago and previously taught Spanish at the college level.

This work was conducted in a Midwestern elementary school in a community of 150,000 approximately 2 hours from downtown Chicago, Illinois, with characteristics of both a city and rural environment in its composition. The school was in a low socioeconomic district where 90% of the students are on free and reduced lunch. Five of the seven Spanish/English bilingual teachers were part of this pilot study. These teachers were hungry for knowledge and committed to helping their students because they knew that many of their ELLs begin K without having attended preschools and were not ready to begin formal schooling.

Limitations of Study

The scope of this study was limited because we only analyzed 500 books. Also, it is reasonable that the data used to reach our initial conclusions would be further triangulated through direct observations of ELLs engaged in reading in Spanish. Such observations with learners would be an opportunity to evaluate the levels assigned to Spanish texts using the text features identified in this pilot study. No observations of students reading books written in Spanish were part of this pilot investigation.

Procedures for Study

Qualitative data gathering and analyses of books were an ongoing part of this study. We began by identifying text features that composed initial categories for leveling books in Spanish after examining leveling criteria currently utilized to assign levels to books (See Figure 1) written in English developed by Fountas & Pinnell (2006) and deciding which text features might be appropriate for an evaluation of books leveled for Spanish speaking readers. Existing readability formulas used to evaluate the comprehension levels of

learners while reading in Spanish are over 50 years old (Fernández Huerta, 1959; Spaulding, 1955) and offer quantitative examination of text features. Fountas and Pinnell's work has contributed greatly to the field of reading instruction more recently and continues to strongly influence the way texts are matched to English readers holistically. Consultation of their criteria for leveling texts seemed an appropriate path for our research.

Secondly, prior experiences with students contributed to the development of the initial list of factors/questions/text features. The researchers shared many similar informal observations that suggested features of text to include in the book evaluations. Discussions took place at the elementary school and individual analyses of texts were shared, compared, and contrasted across participants during the meetings. Researchers met weekly for a 4-month period in after-school sessions that lasted 3 to 4 hours; sometimes they met for a full day. Initial qualitative and quantitative factors are listed in Figure 2 in the form of questions. Data are presented in Figure 3, Levels A-N.

Evaluative Process

To answer the beginning questions, we read and examined books leveled for Spanish readers to establish if the identified text features did in fact merit consideration. We wrestled with our criteria and the questions we had formulated from the moment we began the task. We needed to investigate what elements of texts, while appropriate for English, are inappropriate for Spanish. We used texts to inform what composed our limited knowledge base initially. As we read books to decide if the levels assigned to them aligned to our initial categories, many inconsistencies became evident. Text features surfaced that could be defined per the Spanish language, and we were able to triangulate our findings with little disagreement because none of us documented observations that were not repeatedly observed. We found that many narrative texts were literal translations that did not consider and capture the subtleties of the Spanish language, its colloquialisms, and different dialects across countries. We saw that without consideration of cultural nuances, translated texts offer words, sentences, and paragraphs that could cloud an author's intent and prevent the reader from establishing a personal connection to text.

Another factor that became obvious was that many words in very basic Spanish books have accents. In our work in the classroom, we had noticed that young learners beginning to read in Spanish do not appear to notice accents. It is important to mention that accented words in Spanish are those that deviate in some manner from expected pronunciation patterns. Words that follow normal pronunciation patterns do not have written accents. Sometimes in the Spanish language accents serve a different purpose; they differentiate words that would be written exactly alike were it not for the

accent and thus, when accented, have a different meaning and intonation. Readers of Spanish at levels K-2nd may not notice accents in text as they read unless they reach a point when decoding a word leaves them confused. We asked if young learners at K-2nd have a notion of the rules that regulate accents or if they just memorize words as they see them? Indeed, accenting correctly is a major challenge in Spanish literacy for learners of any age and it takes reaching a fairly high level of literacy before a reader and writer of Spanish knows where to place accents. We decided accents could be a text feature that merited investigation. (See Figure 2. Initial Text Features for Book Evaluation.)

Figure 2. Initial Text Features For Book Evaluation

- Are the majority of the words decodable for the reader?
 - Are words repeated in the text?
 - Are the words used in the book familiar to the reader?
 - Where are pictures located?
 - Are pictures appropriate for the topic of the book and for the learner?
 - How many words are there in a book?
 - Is the topic of the book age appropriate?
 - Is the topic of the book culturally appropriate for the learners?
 - What is the average word length?
 - How many syllables are there in most of the words in a book?
 - Does the student's ability to decode affect comprehension after initial alphabetization?
 - Do students notice accents or do they memorize them in words they use frequently or see written in their environment?
 - In what ways do verb tenses influence text complexity in Spanish?
 - Are dialogues used earlier in texts written in Spanish for young learners?
 - Is textual complexity of books written in Spanish related to the critical thinking required of the reader?
 - Does textual complexity and comprehension of text written in Spanish relate to the sentence length?
 - Do cognates present in the text decrease comprehension demands for learners who have some level of English language acquired?
 - Is this a narrative text that presents easily comprehensible ideas or is abstract thinking required?
-

Book Evaluation

Our examination of books provided evidence of the intricacies of Spanish that constitute the phonetic character of the language, how readers learn to decode Spanish text, and the ways ideas are expressed in the language. Spanish grammar adds subtleties with its choice of tenses that increase comprehension demands. For example, unlike the English language, which has lost its use of select grammar moods and tenses, Spanish uses the conditional tense to express courtesy and the subjunctive to denote uncertainty. Conversations conducted in English require the word *please* while in Spanish the verb itself shows the courtesy within the

message. Speakers of Spanish language use these tenses regardless of their age. In text we found that Spanish books employ dialogues much earlier than books written in English. Texts written in English also include repetitive patterns at higher levels. It may be that there is a relationship between the grammar required by the Spanish language to express courtesy and the early use of dialogues in narrative texts. We noted that another factor in leveling books written in Spanish was the choice and complexity of the grammar in sentences.

Another factor to consider in the leveling of texts in Spanish is the phonetic predictability of some of the language. English, with its schwas and words that ask readers to decode letters that may be articulated quite differently, may be harder to learn to decode than Spanish. In Spanish, vowels keep the same sound regardless of the consonants with which they are combined. This led us to ask if levels assigned to books written in Spanish should consider orthography and the familiarity of the content beginning with Level A. Would appropriate leveling place a greater emphasis on comprehension demands on learners and less on decoding challenges? We found that some book companies assign two levels to a book and justify this by the preparation of two teacher guides that focus on different levels of questioning. We wanted to investigate the rationale behind this. If a reader's ability to comprehend text written in Spanish is the factor that determines a book's level, then does comprehension override decoding?

We considered the number of words per sentence, the complexity of sentence clauses, and the number of sentences per page as factors that should be examined and included in the leveling criteria. We discussed how students enrolled in bilingual Spanish English classes may be immigrants or heritage speakers of the language who have learned Spanish at home. In either case, these students are exposed to English daily as they watch television or accompany a parent to run errands. When these learners begin kindergarten, they may or may not be ready for school. Our last consideration related to the high correspondence in vocabulary across the Spanish and English languages (Freeman & Freeman, 2000) and how this can help students comprehend as they strive to learn to read in either language. We wondered if true cognates, words that are spelled similarly in the first and the second language of a learner and hold the same meaning, could lower the level of difficulty of a book.

Data Analysis

Analyses consisted of triangulated comparisons through cross-examination of texts and the continued development of a list of text features/questions that would inform revised criteria for leveling books written in Spanish. Placement of text features (See Figure 3) changed during the

examination of texts because the objective of this study was to evaluate texts to develop this list during this work. Comparisons were appropriate because each book examined in this study was evaluated by each of the six researchers.

Results and Discussion

Examination of books leveled in Spanish allowed many inconsistencies in the leveling of these to become evident. Many of the narrative texts analyzed were literal translations and thus offered stilted language that could be compared to the Dick and Jane books of the early 1950s. These translations do not consider the subtleties of the Spanish language, its colloquialisms, and the dialects of Spanish spoken in different countries. It is common knowledge that Argentinian Spanish differs from Cuban Spanish, that Peruvian Spanish is different from the language spoken in Mexico, and so on.

Text analyses provided evidence suggesting that the intricacies of Spanish grammar intertwine to complicate decoding of the language. It is possible that as more complex tenses form part of a reading selection, greater comprehension demands may be required of readers. Perhaps it is the juncture of the predictable phonetic character of Spanish with the expression of complex ideas that involve compound tenses that makes text easier or more difficult. Although Spanish is easy to decode, it uses verb tense to express courtesy and uncertainty. Data analyses indicated it is important to investigate how tenses influence text complexity in Spanish. That young Spanish speakers demonstrate this knowledge in composing (Grabe & Lux, 1993) suggests this ability may also be held by young readers of Spanish. Analyses also documented that Spanish books employ dialogues much earlier than English books and have fewer repetitive patterns at higher levels.

Because Spanish vowels keep the same sound, levels assigned to Spanish books ought to consider orthography less important than the level of comprehension and critical thinking required of the reader. Levels might better delineate comprehension demands rather than decoding challenges. Reading through texts demonstrated that other factors; such as the number of words per sentence, the complexity of sentence clauses, and the number of sentences per page, merited documentation. As well, a factor to examine further and include in the leveling criteria is true cognates. Because there is a very high correspondence across the Spanish and English languages, it is important for leveling criteria to include the use of cognates.

Criteria were identified for grades K-2nd and labeled Levels A-M, although Levels M and N could easily apply to the 3rd grade level. Each level includes some to all of the components of the previous level and adds new factors to the level. (See Figure 3 for levels and descriptions.)

Figure 3. Text Features by Leveling Categories for Books Written in Spanish

LEVELS A-N

LEVEL A	LEVEL B
Vocabulary books	Total number of new words = 5
Direct speech in bubbles	Exclamation and question marks
Vocabulary accessible from prior knowledge/Funds of knowledge	Indent and dialogue dash (—) where speech begins
One line of print per page	Print location important for understanding
Illustrations relate to text	One sentence per page
Large print	One return sweep per page
Predictable/repetitive pattern	
Some words rhyme	
Periods	
One text change or none per page excluding articles	
Content and vocabulary familiar	
Spacing	
Book is 10 pages or less	
Present tense used	
Text printed in same location on all pages	

LEVEL C	LEVEL D
Return sweep	1st grade begins
2-3 lines of text per page	Text placed on both sides of book but in same location on all pages
Dialogues	One central idea in book
Basic levels of story grammar	Introduction to commas
Sentences begin and end on the same page	Total number of new words = 5 to 10
Preterite tense added to the present tense	
Total number of new word = 5	

LEVEL E	LEVEL F
More than one main idea per book	4-5 lines of text per page
Lines of text consistent with illustrations	Future tense used
2-3 lines of text per page	Commands frequently used
Direct objects present in text	Introductory level of inference required
Complex sentences	
Adverbs used	
Total number of new words = up to 10	

LEVEL G	LEVEL H
Inconsistent page layout	6-8 lines of text per page
Up to 6 lines of text per page	Imperfect tense used
Syllables in words increase in difficulty	Illustrations support and enhance text
Character development begins	Unfamiliar content present
	More main characters in book

LEVEL I	LEVEL J
Text considerably and consistently smaller	4 syllable words
Higher ratio of words to pictures	Sentence length increases to up to 15 words
Lines of text vary and frequently over 8 text	Scientific concepts questioned in informational
Conditional tense	
Past perfect	
Past progressive	
Poetic language	
Fairy tale story grammar	
Second grade begins	

LEVEL K	LEVEL L
Diphthongs with/without dieresis (<i>g, i, g, e</i>)	Up to 8 lines of text per page
5 syllable words (<i>enredadera, desayunamos, desnivelados, horizontales</i>)	Sentences increase in complexity with numerous ideas presented in one sentence
Frequent use of words that include cl, cr, tr, bl, and br)	Correspondence of tenses (imperfect, imperfect subjunctive) crucial in author's presentation of ideas. [<i>Qué pasaría si yo volarâ?/What could happen if I could fly?</i>]
	High level of syntactical understanding required of reader
	Concepts presented in text are not a part of learner's prior knowledge, setting familiarity, or funds of knowledge
	Visualization required of nonexperience
	Hypothesis or scientific inquiry required
	Fantasy presented while contained in realistic setting realistic settings

LEVEL M	LEVEL N
Numerous lines of text	Third grade level begins
1-2 sentences per book consisting of more than 20 words	Expository text asks reader to follow complex set of instructions to comprehend
Small print	Expository and narrative texts have more than 4 sentences of over 20 words per page
Text captions in informational text	

Conclusions

Analyses of data gathered in this work suggested that (1) there are inconsistencies in existing criteria used to level books written in Spanish, (2) using the leveling criteria designed for texts written in English does not take into account cultural appropriateness of books and problems with direct translations, and (3) the categories of text factors to consider in leveling books in Spanish developed in this study compose a solid beginning step to the development of appropriate criteria for leveling books written in Spanish. These categories can serve publishing companies in their leveling and assist teachers in choosing appropriate texts for their ELLs. This work, developing criteria for the text factors to be considered when leveling texts written in Spanish for readers at levels K-2nd, highlighted several issues that were not easy to place along a continuum of importance. The explanations in Figure 4 address some of the conclusions reached and delve into why these text features were placed at selected levels in the categories within Levels A through N in Figure 3.

Figure 4. Reasons for Conclusions

TEXTUAL FACTOR	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION
Decoding	A consideration at lower levels. Not a consideration after basic alphabetization is reached.
Vocabulary	Familiarity and cultural appropriateness can directly influence comprehension of content.
Content	Cultural congruence between the reader's life and the book's theme can highly impact basic comprehension.
Grammar	Tense complexity and the reader's ability to wield tenses is a consideration when assigning a level to a book.
Grammar Structure	Grammar structure is repeatedly observed to be more complex in Spanish texts.
Sentence Length	Sentences appear to increase in the task demands placed on the reader when they include several clauses that present ideas that may or may not be related to each other and transition devices are not present.
Translations	Often appear to be literal rather than sense to sense. May not consider reader's level of interlanguage development.
Dialogues	Included at lower levels of Spanish text.

The work completed in this pilot study is promising because it fills a gap in the field of language and biliteracy for learners enrolled in bilingual programs of instruction at levels K-2nd. This research justifies a different rationale for evaluating whether or not books constitute curricular materials that help readers achieve high levels of biliteracy. This work also reinforces the notion that to learn to read involves the whole person and is not a process that can be expedited through a one-dimensional, formulaic

scripted approach based on phonics (Cummins, 2007). Leveling of books written in Spanish requires an evaluation of books that extends far beyond the word level and decoding expectations. As Krashen (1994) documented in the *The Pleasure Hypothesis*, readers benefit from reading that which interests them because then the material is developmentally appropriate and culturally congruent. For books to fulfill the requirement of engaging the learner in the reading process, they must be aligned with the learner's level of comprehension and literacy. Within the descriptions of the leveling criteria developed in this study, there are gradations for learners at different stages. Although one might predict the sequence of acquisition of Spanish orthography (Azurdia, 1998), learners acquire high levels of literacy in the identified text features at their own pace and therefore benefit from reading at their level. Levels A-N offer teachers who believe in balanced literacy and differentiation a method to evaluate the classroom library.

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**ISSUES OF
TEACHER EDUCATION**

TEACHERS TALK: TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT FACTORS AFFECTING THEIR CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

The purpose of this pilot study was to find out what factors or events teachers believed had an impact on their teaching. This qualitative, exploratory study describes 16 teacher participants' responses to the question, "What do you feel are the factors that affect your teaching in the classroom?" The analysis indicated there were five factors or themes that teachers felt influenced their ability to teach effectively.

Introduction

Educators today are especially concerned about two things: student achievement and teacher quality. There is a growing body of research that shows classroom teachers are the most important factor in the teaching/learning process (Berlinger, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Therefore, it is important to encourage each teacher to become a "master teacher" as quickly as possible, and this can occur only through a commitment to continuous professional development (Berlinger; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Darling-Hammond; Fessler, 1985; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Jordan, Mendro, & Weersinghe, 1997; Robb, 2000; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Steffy, 2000). However, teacher development varies according to the teachers' attitudes, school experiences, and the professional development training they encounter along their journey to becoming a "master teacher" (Steffy). Ultimately, increased student achievement is dependent upon the teachers' knowledge and their beliefs that they can influence student achievement.

Educators and policy makers at both the state and national levels are at odds with each other over the best approach that should be taken

to improve teacher quality. However, most would agree that improving teacher quality, in turn, increases student achievement. In the current accountability movement, and with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002), test scores are used to define quality and are used to force fundamental change in schools (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Crocco, Costigan, & Zumwalt, 2004). If the goal of the accountability movement is to increase student achievement through monitoring test scores, then the accountability movement might be a fruitless endeavor. Research has shown that student achievement is gained through improved teacher instruction, which is accomplished through a long-term commitment to continued teacher development (Berlinger 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Marzano, 2003).

We, as literacy/teacher educators, believe that teaching is a complex endeavor that is affected by numerous factors that are located both inside and outside of the school environment. Too often in our readings of various professional journals, we have found that teachers' beliefs regarding ways to increase student achievement are missing (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Additionally, we believe that data interpretation during this accountability movement seems to take a simplistic stance. If students' test scores are high on the end of the year state achievement tests, then the school and teachers must be effective. If a teacher is able to pass the state developed content area and professional development tests, then he or she must be a highly qualified teacher.

With the understanding that each teacher has a strong impact on the teaching/learning process, the starting place for discovering what is actually influencing student achievement should come from the teachers who have first-hand knowledge and not from external factors. This idea is supported by Nespor (1987) and Pajares (1992) who both stated that improving schools begins with understanding teachers' beliefs. Even though the accountability movement is a major factor, many societal changes have occurred simultaneously with its development. Thus, we asked ourselves, "Could other factors impact teachers' perceptions of their classrooms and not just high-stakes testing?" Therefore, the purpose of our exploratory study was to discover teachers' perspectives regarding factors that influence their classrooms and their ability to teach effectively without directly mentioning the accountability movement ourselves. This approach is not well-documented in the research. Through the review of literature, we found that most research on the impact of the accountability age begins by introducing a predetermined list of questions on the impact of high-stakes testing, accountability systems, and NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) to teachers. In our research, we did not want to introduce any predetermined factors, so we went into our teacher

interviews asking the teachers to describe anything they felt affected their ability to teach in their classrooms. Thus, a single research question was created: *What do you feel are the factors that affect your teaching in the classroom?*

Our framework for the study was based on the idea that individuals have developed a complex pool of personal, private knowledge that they use to make sense of the world around them (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Dewey, 1938; Piaget 1973; vonGlaserfeld, 1989). Clandinin (1986) has applied this idea to her research on teachers' lives. Her teacher research has roots in the belief that teachers use their *personal practice knowledge* and *professional knowledge landscape*, which has been constructed and reconstructed, to influence how they teach in the classroom.

Review of Literature

As we reviewed the literature for the teachers' perceptions of the impact of state-mandated testing and accountability movement, we found that multiple research methods were used to collect data from teachers. However, the majority of these qualitative and quantitative studies relied on survey methods to address the impact of the accountability movement.

In their study with Florida classroom teachers, Jones and Egley (2007) found that over 80% of the surveyed teachers felt daily pressure to teach to the test, rather than spending more instructional time teaching long-term curriculum objectives. Additionally, Florida teachers indicated that lack of student improvement on state tests was due to the professional development they were receiving, which only focused on test taking strategies and not on effective instructional techniques. This was supported by Craig's (2004) study in which he followed a Texas high school principal for several years. When the state-mandated test scores dropped from exemplary ratings, the principal was asked to resign, and the new administration focused on skill and drill and other test taking strategies in order to increase test scores.

After an exhaustive review of the literature, Cimbriez (2002) found that "state-mandated tests...do influence what teachers say and do in their classrooms" (p. 5). Rex and Nelson (2004) interviewed two high school teachers who both reported not wanting to change instruction to teach to the state-mandated test, but in the end, when their students' scores were low on practice tests, they felt pressured to change their instructional practices to include practicing state-mandated testing questions in the hopes of increasing students' test scores.

Surveying Texas teachers, Gordon and Reese (1997) reported teachers who felt pressure to teach to the test resulting in their lack of motivation

and interest for teaching. Gilman and Reynolds (1991) surveyed teachers who reported a lower morale since the implementation of high-stakes testing. Hoffman, Assef, and Paris (2001) found that effective Texas teachers were leaving the field because of the high-stakes requirements. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) found that the high-stakes testing placed a premium on what was taught because of the singular focus on student performance on testing. In turn, this overemphasis on testing leads to teachers' lack of autonomy regarding the act of teaching.

Methodology

Research Design

A combination of phenomenological and grounded theory methods were used to answer the research question posed. Phenomenological methods provided a protocol for understanding teachers' beliefs. Phenomenology is defined as "describing the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). Grounded theory methods allowed us to build an overall framework of teachers' reported beliefs. Grounded theory is built inductively from the study of the phenomenon it represents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this research project, the phenomenological approach was used to explore the factors that affected classroom instruction. Phenomenology served as a means to understand the perceptions of the individuals in their context (Bodgan & Bilken, 1992; Creswell; Holstein & Gubrium, 2005); whereas, grounded theory methods provided the means to move beyond the descriptive practice narratives and build an overall understanding of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin). This research project served as the exploratory pilot phase in which we interviewed various classroom teachers from two Texas school districts.

Participants and Setting

Teachers' Information

The research participants were 16 Texas public school teachers, with bachelor's degrees either in elementary education or in a content area subject. Participants were not limited to reading and language arts teachers, because increasingly our graduate courses include middle and high school teachers wanting to learn more about literacy. We also teach content area reading and are involved with the teacher preparation of these content area preservice teachers.

Six of the teachers interviewed were elementary teachers, four were middle school teachers, and six were high school teachers. There were 5

male teachers and 11 female teachers. The elementary teachers' teaching experience varied, as one teacher had 0-5 years of teaching experience, three teachers had 6-15 years of teaching experience, and two teachers had over 15 years of teaching experience. The middle school teachers included two teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience, one teacher with 6-15 years of teaching experience, and one teacher with over 15 years of teaching experience. The high school teachers included one teacher who had 0-5 years of teaching experience, three teachers had 6-15 years of teaching experience, and two had over 15 years of teaching experiences.

The teacher participants were working in two different school districts. The first school district was located in a city of approximately 30,000 people with a median household income of approximately \$65,000. The school district had approximately 9,500 students attending 16 schools (5% African American, 80% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, and 2% other with 13% economically disadvantaged). The second school district was located in a rural area with approximately 24,000 people and a median household income under \$35,000. The school district had an approximate enrollment of 5,100 students in 12 schools (48% Caucasian, 27% Hispanic, 24% African American, 1% other, and 53% economically disadvantaged).

Researchers' Backgrounds

Both Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) stated that it is impossible for any researcher to remove completely all biases that s/he brings to the research setting. We, therefore, begin by sharing our backgrounds because of the interpretative nature of the phenomenology tradition.

Researcher #1. The biases that I may bring to the research setting are that I am a middle-age-white woman who has been married for 24 years to the same individual with two college-aged children. Professionally, I define myself through an accumulation of my unique experiences as an athlete, coach, teacher, librarian, administrator, and university professor that have played out in Texas, Florida, and Cairo, Egypt.

Teaching is the center of my professional work including a research focus on action research and teachers' induction and development processes. I believe strongly that teachers make the difference in student success, and that the reform/accountability movement should support teachers' development towards becoming effective teachers. However, too often current policy makers tend to marginalize teachers, which impedes teacher development. Ultimately, teachers are the ones that make a difference in the classroom, not the programs that are bought or the mandated rules.

Researcher #2. I am a white, middle-class, middle-aged women who has been married for 37 years to the same individual. We have two grown

children with families of their own and who have graduated from college. One child has a master's degree, and one has a doctorate degree. As a third generation educator, a teacher of regular education students at various grade levels, a reading specialist, and a professor where I teach undergraduate and graduate level students' literacy courses, I have had the experience of seeing and implementing reading instruction in a variety of ways. I have exposed students and educators to a variety of reading assessments and reading strategies that can be used to help all struggling readers.

Researchers' Perspective on Question Posed

Although our backgrounds are different, we share a common concern for teachers in this era of high-stakes testing. Our university teaching assignment allows us to work with preservice teachers in two different school districts during their year-long student teacher placement. We also teach undergraduate and graduate literacy courses. We feel that all we hear from our undergraduate and graduate students is the negative impact that the high-stakes testing is having both on the children and on their teaching. Our preservice teachers shared with us that when they are in the classroom, they see lots of skill and drill activities, worksheets, and timed tests. This observation makes sense, as our graduate students shared with us that their instructional day is focused solely on test preparation.

As reflective practitioners and researchers, we slowly began to question the real significance of the high-stakes test bashing. We wondered if this movement is covering up other societal concerns. What are the issues and challenges that schools and society are currently facing? Is high-stakes testing the only issue? Or, are there other issues such as the teaching force growing older with different generational ideas from their younger students? Could high-stakes testing possibly be a red herring? Because we do not teach every day in public schools, we do not know. So, as we consider our research, we believe that high-stakes testing is one layer of influence in the schools today. However, we also suspect that even though high-stakes testing has influenced teachers and schools, other factors are interacting and shaping schools, as well.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and field notes served as our sources of data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). All the interviews were conducted at the teachers' convenience—they chose the time and the location.

We triangulated interview transcriptions with our field notes to clarify points of concerns and understanding. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to over an hour. Additionally, we kept researcher notebooks that documented procedures and our thought processes during data collection. We identified teachers to interview through the snowball sampling method. This method

expands the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Groenewald, 2004). Initial informants were teachers we knew from our work in professional development partnerships.

Each teacher interview began with one of the researchers asking the teacher to answer the following question: *What do you feel are the factors that affect your teaching in the classroom?* We did not elaborate or make any effort to impose our personal beliefs about factors. We even discussed ways to restate the research question in ways that would not influence the classroom teachers' responses before we began the interviewing process.

Phenomenological data analysis methods guided our examination of teacher interviews, as described by Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994). The analysis process we followed was:

1. Teachers described their beliefs regarding factors that affect their classroom today.
2. Horizontalization of the data interview transcriptions and researchers field notes which involved finding statements from the interviews about how the participants and researchers were experiencing the event. This process is also referred to as "bracketing."
3. Statements from the horizontalization step were cut apart and then grouped into meaning units or clusters.
4. Using these clusters, we constructed topic themes by grouping like descriptors teachers had provided us. (See discussion section)

Results

Common Themes

Using the process of horizontalization or bracketing of the data (Moustakas, 1994), we extracted the significant statements from the interview transcripts and tapes, noting where repetitive and overlapping statements occurred. We reread the transcriptions of participants' interviews, reviewed our researchers' notebooks and list of significant statements related to the research question posed, and formulated five themes. These five themes were based on data that included common elements from all teacher participants' transcriptions. Teachers reported the following as factors (reported as themes) that affect their classrooms:

1. students' behavior problems,
2. testing and testing preparation requirements decrease time for instruction,
3. meetings to discuss administrative duties limit instructional planning,
4. increased teacher stress levels, and
5. increased time spent on administrative duties taking away from instruction.

Students' Behavior Problems. Teachers reported that students' behavior problems negatively affected their classroom instructional time. One high school teacher reported, "...time spent on telling kids to put their cell phones up, and then checking to make sure they did, takes away from my teaching time." An elementary teacher reported, "...that a behavioral unit is needed on her campus, as some students do not know how to get along." A middle school teacher shared that there had been an "increase of drug activity in her hallway...two students were arrested last week (for bringing drugs on campus)."

Testing and Testing Preparation. Teachers reported testing and testing preparation requirements decreased time for instruction. One middle school teacher, who taught Spanish, was given a TAKS practice book where students read practice TAKS passages in Spanish and then responded to TAKS questions in English. An elementary teacher said, "...I give 5 weeks of my time to giving benchmark test and TAKS test every year." A high school teacher shared, "I cover only science concepts covered on TAKS, leaving out many important concepts."

Meetings to Discuss Administrative Duties. Teachers reported attending meetings to discuss administrative duties limited instructional planning. One elementary teacher simply stated, "Too many meetings." A high school teacher reported, "If I am not in a meeting to discuss administrative procedures...I am expected to read my email hourly for more instructions." One middle school teacher said, "I am in fear of constant unknown factors."

Increased Teacher Stress Levels. Teachers reported increased teacher stress levels. One middle school teacher stated, "If I had to do it all over again, I would choose a subject that was not TAKS tested. I could choose my lesson plans, and I could plan my activities. I am scared to do different activities." One elementary teacher's stress came in the form of facility problems. Termites swarm her room every year. She shared at the conclusion of the interview, "I wish I had a new building." One middle school teacher, whose stress came from the problems of her students, said, "This year I have two students with cancer, one homeless student, and two students who are pregnant."

Increased Time Spent on Administrative Duties. Teachers reported the increased time spent on administrative duties taking away from instruction. A high school teacher said, "...many interruptions, passing out principal material to go home, and administrators checking and interrupting my class to check that I am completing administrative duties." An elementary teacher reported her planning time was spent on completing administrative duties such as checking emails from administration throughout the day, submitting attendance reports, and checking for dress code violations.

Interpretation of Significant Teacher Statements

We interpreted teachers' experiences by reviewing transcriptions, listening to interview tapes, and reviewing researcher notebooks. We will present our interpretation of the descriptive interviews by organizing the narrative data by elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and high school teachers.

The elementary school teachers expressed three main areas of concern that added stress to their day. First, they were concerned with the changes they were seeing in student behaviors, as they felt there were increased discipline problems. Second, they felt that the pressures of high-stakes testing had trickled down to their classrooms. Learning was seen as students completing worksheets, not as time for active inquiry. Third, they felt there were too many meetings where administrators passed along testing requirements and information, and they felt this time should be set aside for their individual planning and preparation for classroom learning experiences.

The middle school teachers had three major concerns that increased their daily stress levels. First, they viewed the changes seen in student behaviors through a social lens. From the middle school teachers' perspective, they felt that too many junior high students were engaged in inappropriate social behaviors as reflected by an increase in pregnancy and drugs on their campus. Second, the middle school teachers felt tutoring students to pass the state-mandated testing was a problem, as it took too much time, and they were more concerned about tutoring students to understand the major content concepts. Third, they believed they were attending too many meetings related to high-stakes testing preparation and procedures and not on helping them to improve their instructional needs. The first researcher was surprised at the level of concern that middle school teachers had toward their students. She wrote, "...I have always identified more with elementary teachers than secondary teachers because of their level of concern for individual students. Yet, as I leave my interviews with middle school teachers, I am surprised by the depth of 'caringness' for their students that their answers reveal."

High school teachers reported the same three concerns that added to their stress level. First, they felt students' displayed inappropriate social behaviors. Second, the high school teachers were concerned with the increasing number of ESL/Bilingual students and the issue of inclusion. They felt unprepared to teach these students, as they had not had specialized training. Third, they expressed concern over time spent in meetings and tutoring for one test and not on effective instructional planning time. High school teachers also reported a lack of materials for the wide-range of student needs.

Discussion of Findings

Teachers in this research project faced many challenges within the invisible and visible walls of their districts, campuses, and classrooms. Testing is a factor affecting classroom instruction across all grade levels, but it is not the only challenge. Testing requirements have increased the need for more meetings and more tutoring situations that require teachers to focus on only one aspect of the teaching/learning process: passing the test.

As literacy educators, we are concerned that teachers in our study have reported effective literacy strategies are gradually being replaced by test-taking strategies. Teachers do not have time for both test-taking and literacy strategies during their block instructional time. As previously stated, we included both literacy teachers and content teachers in our study, because middle and high school content teachers are enrolling in our graduate reading course in increasing numbers as a way to better understanding the reading/learning process. Conversations with our graduate students indicated content teachers are expected to implement effective literacy strategies in their classrooms. Yet, as we interviewed content area teachers, this issue did not emerge. However, all teachers were concerned about the lack of time for effective instruction because of time spent on test-taking strategies.

General teacher professional development opportunities that scaffold the emotional, cognitive, and affective development of a teacher are missing in action. At the same time, administrative duties carried out by teachers have increased via technology that requires teacher to check email throughout the day and input grades and attendance on the computers. From reported teachers' perspectives, changes in social settings and norms are reflected inside their classroom (e.g., one teacher reported an increase in homelessness and broken families) that have led to an increase in students' unacceptable behaviors, which has caused problems inside the classrooms. All of these factors reported by the participating classroom teachers have combined to cause stress in individual teachers trying to comply with the demands from their students, the parents, and the administrators.

Our phenomenology inquiry allowed us a glimpse into the complex landscape of teachers. Typical of a good research study, we leave this research project with more questions than when we arrived. Context appeared to be important, as teachers told stories of their professional lives. Without considering the complete context of a teaching situation, misunderstandings of the solutions can create another layer of complexity for teachers. As we reflected on the interviews and data, we saw teachers in these two school districts faced similar problems, but they also faced challenges that were uniquely shaped by their location. We are determined to return to teachers' lives through their classroom environment and continue to try to understand the challenges teachers face.

Implications for Future Research

We believe that a limitation of our study was the small number of teachers interviewed, which were from only two school districts in Texas, a state with over 1,000 school districts. Clandinin (1992) stated that teachers construct and reconstruct their professional lives based on their perceptions of their unique experiences and actions within their professional landscape. To truly understand teacher development in this era of accountability, we need to visit with teachers throughout the state. As we reflected throughout this research project, we began to wonder about how teachers continue to adapt to the stress factors that affect their classrooms. If teacher meetings are spent focused solely on high-stakes testing, where is the necessary teacher training to scaffold the teachers through the teacher developmental continuum?

In addition, as literacy teacher educators, we question our own preparation of preservice teachers. Are we doing the best job possible to prepare preservice teachers to address or cope with the multiple factors that will touch their classrooms? This question led us to consider longitudinal studies that track preservice teachers into their first 5 years of teaching and include interviews with their administrators, colleagues, students, and parents.

This pilot study provided a small glimpse of Texas teachers' perceptions of how Texas' state-mandated testing program influenced the teaching and learning in their classroom and professional work with colleagues. Findings suggest that the impact of state-mandated testing may be a powerful influence on campus and classroom culture. Our results have challenged us to broaden our research questions and to reach out to teachers from all regions and demographics of Texas.

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“MOST OF THE FOCUS WAS ON READING”: A COMPARISON OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ PREPARATION IN READING AND WRITING

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Abstract

This study compared teachers’ college-level preparation in reading with their preparation in writing. Results can be best summarized by borrowing the words of 2 teacher participants. The first explained, “Most of the focus was on reading,” and the second, “I learned writing was important, but not how to specifically teach it.” Additionally, the study investigated the connection between teachers’ college-level experiences and their current-day teaching practices. Results indicated that while teachers reported feeling equally confident in their ability to teach reading and writing, they devoted three times as many hours to reading-related instruction and activities as they did to writing.

The results of this research corroborate the position that reading has been given a place of priority while writing has been neglected (Bazerman, 2008). Furthermore, the results point to the need for teacher education programs to produce not only teachers who are highly skilled in the teaching of reading and writing but teachers who truly enjoy and value both, as well.

Introduction

In his introduction to the *Handbook of Research on Writing*, Bazerman (2008) wrote, “Much of the research in education has been on the reading side of the equation” (p. 1). Moffett and Wagner (1993) concurred, stating, “Most controversy in literacy has centered on how to teach reading and

has slighted writing” (p. 32). The goal of this research, therefore, was to explore the idea that writing has been “neglected” (National Commission on Writing, 2003) by comparing elementary-level teachers’ preparation in writing with their preparation in reading. Two general research questions guided the study. First, what types of reading and writing experiences have elementary-level teachers encountered in their teacher education programs? Second, how have these experiences impacted the way they currently approach the teaching of reading and writing within their own classrooms?

Conceptual Frame

A review of the literature reveals that differing approaches to the study of writing exist. For example, some approaches to the study of writing emphasize the complex problem-solving processes that take place as writers “think on paper” (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Rose, 1980; Shafer, 2000). Other approaches, however, view writing as a traditional form of rhetoric, tending to focus on “mechanical” issues such as form and style (Charney, Newman, & Palmquist, 1995).

Writing as a Powerful Problem-Solving Process

Many scholars have reflected eloquently on the powerful role of writing (Calkins, 1994; Graves & Kittle, 2005; Routman, 2005). For instance, Spandel (2005) contended that writing “encourages a deepened understanding of things that are hard to grasp. Writing encourages writers to think reflectively . . . to change their minds. To tear their beloved construction down, right to the foundation, and build it anew” (pp. xi-xii). This image of writing as “building” parallels the notion that writing is a tremendously complex act of problem-solving (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Graves (1981) called the writing process “a series of operations leading to the solution of a problem” (p. 4). As writers tackle the blank page and actually construct their text, a visible entity emerges which reflects possible solutions to the problem at hand. The more writers work with their ideas, the more they are able to revise, rethink, and clarify their thoughts (Murray, 1980), until finally committing to their best possible solution.

This problem-solving process, although labor-intensive, holds much potential. MacArthur, Graham, and Fitzgerald (2006), editors of the *Handbook of Writing Research*, called writing “one of mankind’s most powerful tools” (p. 1), citing its role in communication, self-expression, and the dissemination of ideas. Grace (1999) corroborated, saying, “Writing is power. It can generate new energy and it can be a catalyst for personal change and enlightenment. Writing is reaching out, taking risks, exploring the world, and shaping the future” (p. 60).

Writing as an Underemphasized Process

Writing is powerful (Grace 1999; MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006), and yet, a recent report published by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003) claimed that writing has not received the full attention it deserves. The report, entitled *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution*, maintained that "both the teaching and practice of writing are increasingly shortchanged throughout the school and college years" (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 14). *The Neglected "R"* called for an overhaul in the way writing is taught and recommended a dramatic increase in the amount of time and financial resources devoted to writing. The report also called for the launch of an implementation campaign, called the Writing Challenge to the Nation, which translated the commission's recommendations into concrete steps ("Report Calls," 2003), asserting that, in order for students to succeed in college and in life beyond school, the quality of writing must be improved (National Commission on Writing).

Oswald and Still (2004) echoed the Commission's concern for the neglect of writing when they called attention to the fact that the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000), with its emphasis on scientifically-based reading research, did not include writing as one of the "five essential components" of reading instruction. They contended that writing has been pushed aside in favor of other subjects, including reading, which can be more easily tested.

Lack of Writing Emphasis at the Classroom Level. With the great degree of emphasis currently being placed on the findings of National Reading Panel (2000), it comes as no surprise that writing continues to remain neglected in the classroom (Totten, 2005). Ada and Campoy (2004) maintained that, while "significant emphasis has been placed on modeling the reading process" [within the classroom]...not enough emphasis has been given to the equally important need for modeling the process of writing (p. 30). Kara-Soteriou and Kaufman (2002) expressed a similar concern about the lack of modeling that took place in the classrooms in which they observed. They also reported that the teachers they observed did not feel comfortable incorporating writing into their classrooms. Cohen and Wiener (2003) made a similar observation, when they stated, "Far too many teachers admit that they lack confidence in their ability to effectively teach writing" (p. 153). They attributed teachers' feelings to a variety of sources including their own negative experiences with writing in school, their lack of confidence in their own ability as writers, their perception that writing is difficult, and poor preparation in their teacher education programs.

Lack of Writing Emphasis at the University Level. It is not hard to understand why writing is neglected by classroom teachers when their university-level experience is considered. In his article, "Why Johnny Can't

Write, Even Though He Went to Princeton,” Bartlett (2003, ¶ 6) explained that “even at the nation’s best colleges, the teaching of writing has long been treated less like a high priority and more like an afterthought.” The result of this “neglectful attitude” is two-fold: low-quality writing programs and low-quality writers.

Further compounding the university-level neglect is the treatment writing traditionally receives within teacher education programs. Both Spandel (2005) and Thomas (2000) maintained that most practicing teachers were never formally educated to teach writing. Bowie’s (1996) work corroborated; his results indicated that the notion of the teacher as a writer and as a teacher of writing are addressed only minimally in preservice preparation programs. Furthermore, he reported that most future teachers desire more writing instruction than they receive. Chambless and Bass (1996) substantiated this lack of preparation, explaining that many practicing teachers believe their teacher education programs did not prepare them for the use of instructional practices associated with the teaching of writing. Finally, Totten (2005) claimed that preservice teachers are not being given ample opportunity to experience writing-to-learn strategies within their coursework. He believed teacher education programs must accept responsibility for preparing teacher candidates to effectively incorporate writing into their future classrooms.

The outcome of this lack of preparation is that, when teachers do attempt to teach writing, they tend to “revert to teaching in the manner in which they have been taught” (Stover, 1986, p. 21). Spandel (2005) explained that as teachers fall back on their own school writing experiences, it usually involves “assigning, collecting, and correcting writing [rather than] . . . thinking out loud, talking about where personal writing topics come from, drafting on an overhead or chalkboard, reading an in-process piece aloud, revising, editing, or even coming up with a title” (p. 78).

Writing as a Form of Current-Traditional Rhetoric

The “assigning, collecting, and correcting” model is associated with an approach to writing instruction known as “current-traditional rhetoric.” This approach focuses writing instruction on “mechanical” issues such as form and style (Charney, Newman, & Palmquist, 1995). Utilizing a “bottom-up” approach, current-traditional instruction moves from small units—words, sentences, and paragraphs—to larger ones, as defined by the rhetorical modes: description, narration, argument, and exposition (Williams, 2003). Another pedagogical feature of the current-traditional approach lies in the way teachers evaluate student writing: they edit students’ papers as if they were “preparing manuscripts for publication” (Williams, p. 45). Emig (1971) referred to this type of instruction as “a neurotic activity,” by

explaining, “There is little evidence . . . that the persistent pointing out of specific errors in student themes leads to the elimination of these errors, yet teachers expend much of their energy in this futile and unrewarding exercise” (p. 99). In his meta-analysis of composition research, Hillocks (1986) concluded that the current-traditional approach is not very effective in teaching students how to write. Nevertheless, the current-traditional approach is “the most influential and widely used approach to teaching writing today” (Williams, p. 46).

The impact of such an approach to writing instruction can be negative, indeed. Smith (1982) contended that because of this type of training, which tends to stunt “free and natural expression” (p. 17), many students eventually develop negative feelings towards writing. He alleged:

Writing is something that everyone ought to be able to do and enjoy, as naturally as singing, dancing, or play. Like singing, dancing, and play, writing may be one of those activities that all children enjoy—and enjoy learning to do better—until, all too often, they become discouraged or disinterested because something happens to inhibit their free and natural expression. And that something that happens can often be associated with education or training; it results in a loss of spontaneity, a painful self-consciousness of “error,” a reluctance to perform and learn because of a perceived inability to achieve certain extrinsic standards. (p. 17)

Mathers, Kushner Benson, and Newton (2006/2007) corroborated Smith’s sentiment when they reported that student writers often associate teachers with “criticism” and that this criticism eventually spawns negative attitudes towards writing. Likewise, Kear, Coffman, McKenna, and Ambrosio (2000) reported that students’ attitudes towards writing generally worsen as they move from grade to grade. The authors cited tedious writing assignments, lack of choice, and negative feedback as causes for this decline. Finally, Shafer (2000) posited that a teacher-centered paradigm “makes the learner irrelevant because individual voices and goals become ancillary to those skills, those topic sentences, that are supposedly paramount to a ‘correctly’ done essay” (p. 30).

Many students believe that writing is important and are quite certain of its connection to success in school and life; however, writing still conjures up feelings of anxiety, dread, and loss of control. Consequently, many students tend to avoid writing when possible (Palmquist & Young, 1992), and such avoidance perpetuates the cycle of neglect.

Participants and Research Setting

The current research involved elementary-level teachers from two different school districts; one located in northeastern Ohio and the other

in southwestern Pennsylvania. All teachers within their first, second, or third year of employment with the districts were invited to participate. A 77% response rate yielded 17 teacher participants. Of these 17, 14 were female and 3 were male. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 48, and 5 of the 17 held master's degrees.

Procedures and Data Analysis

This research took place in three phases. The first phase involved the administration of a questionnaire to all teacher participants. The questionnaire asked teachers to describe their training in both reading and writing. For example, participants were first asked to report the number of college-level reading courses they had taken as part of their teacher training programs. Next, a Likert-scale item required participants to rate, on a scale of one to four, how well-prepared they felt to teach reading upon completion of those courses. Finally, an open-ended item asked them to elaborate on the rating. Information regarding teachers' college-level training in writing was solicited using the same format.

The questionnaire also asked teachers to describe their current classroom practices related to reading and writing. For instance, participants were required to approximate the number of hours they devoted to reading-related instruction and activities on a weekly basis. Next, a Likert-scale item asked participants to rate, on a scale of one to four, how successful they believed their current reading instruction to be. Finally, an open-ended item allowed teachers to elaborate on their ratings. Information regarding teachers' current instructional practices in writing was gathered using the same format.

Table 1. Participants' Teacher Education Experiences ($N = 17$)

	MEAN	MODE	RANGE
Number of college-level reading courses taken as part of teacher education	4.22	3	2-8
Number of college-level writing courses taken as part of teacher education	1.30	0	0-8
Perceived level of preparation to teach reading (scale of 1-4)	3.53	4	3-4
Perceived level of preparation to teach writing (scale of 1-4)	2.80	3	1-4

The second phase of the research involved the calculation of descriptive statistics for each of the quantitative items on the questionnaire (See Table 1). For instance, the mean was calculated for items related to participants' teacher education experiences, including the number of college-level reading and writing courses taken and the perceived level of preparation to teach reading and writing. The mean was also calculated for items related to participants' current classroom practices, including the number of hours devoted weekly to the teaching of reading and writing and the perceived level of success in the teaching of reading and writing. Additionally, because of the presence of extreme scores, mode and range were calculated and considered. For example, although the mean number of college-level writing courses taken was 1.3, the most common response was "0" courses taken, with responses ranging from a low of "0" courses to a high of "8."

Finally, the third phase of the project involved a content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of the teacher-participants' written responses to the open-ended questions. First, the written responses were read and reread in an attempt to reduce the data. During this process, patterns related to the research questions emerged, thus forming categories for coding. For instance, initial categories included positive/negative experiences with reading/writing in teacher education programs (at the undergraduate-level), positive/negative experiences with reading/writing beyond the undergraduate-level (e.g., graduate school, teacher inservices, etc.), and positive/negative experiences with the teaching of reading/writing. Next, all coded responses were displayed in a database according to these categories. Lastly, individual coded responses were examined in relationship to the other responses grouped within the same category, thus allowing more subtle themes to emerge. Coded responses were reorganized within the original categories to reflect these patterns.

Results

Results related to participants' experiences in their elementary teacher-education programs are reported first. Results related to participants' current classroom practices are presented next. These results corroborated the notion that writing has, indeed, been "neglected" (National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Participants' Teacher Education Experiences

The most striking finding of our examination of teachers' college-level preparation in reading and writing can be summarized by borrowing the words of one teacher participant, who wrote, "Most of the focus was on reading." For example, the teachers in this study reported being required to take more classes in reading than in writing (See Table 1). The mean number

of reading courses taken as part of teacher education by participants was 4.22, whereas, the mean number of writing courses taken was 1.30, with the most common response (mode) being 0. Teachers also reported feeling better prepared at the conclusion of their coursework to teach reading than writing. The mean score for participants' perceived level of preparation to teach reading was a 3.53 (on a 4-point scale), while the mean for perceived level of preparation to teach writing was a 2.80.

The content analysis of the teachers' written responses also underscored a focus on reading within their teacher education programs. For example, one participant wrote, "Almost every class stressed the importance of reading." Another teacher commented, "The college did an excellent job of exposing me to a variety of books I could use in the classroom and creative ways to present them." With regard to writing, however, one teacher wrote, "I can honestly say that I do not recall having any college-level coursework that was related to the teaching of writing." A second participant explained, "I learned writing was important, but not how to specifically teach it." A third teacher commented, "I have not received much training in writing. I just go from what or how I know a writing should be set up."

Participants' Post-Teacher Education Experiences

The positive experiences with writing that participants did report came in the form of post-undergraduate experiences; for example, inservices, workshops, graduate courses, and on-the-job collaboration with colleagues. For instance, one teacher explained, "I didn't feel completely prepared to teach writing just from college, but as I took professional development and worked with other teachers, I've really felt much more prepared."

Participants' Current Classroom Practices

Table 2 summarizes the results of the portion of the questionnaire which dealt with teachers' current classroom practices related to reading and writing. These results indicated that, similar to what was modeled in their teacher education programs, teachers chose to put "most of the focus... on reading" within their own classrooms. For instance, the mean number of

Table 2. Participants' Current Classroom Practices (N = 17)

	MEAN	MODE	RANGE
Number of hours devoted weekly to reading	13.69	None	6-25
Number of hours devoted weekly to writing	4.35	None	2-10
Perceived level of success as teacher of reading (scale of 1-4)	3.40	4	1-4
Perceived level of success as teacher of writing (scale of 1-4)	3.44	3	3-4

hours devoted weekly to reading was 13.69, while the mean number of hours devoted weekly to writing was 4.35.

Although a great disparity existed in the number of hours devoted weekly to reading and writing, teachers reported feeling equally confident in their ability to teach both subjects. The mean score for participants' perceived level of success as teachers of reading was 3.40, while the mean score for perceived level of success as teacher of writing was 3.44.

Influence of Wide Use of Instructional Methods. The content analysis of the teachers' written explanations revealed that they attributed their "success" to a wide variety of teaching methods and practices—no one method stood out. For instance, teachers associated their success as teachers of reading with the following: read alouds, small reading groups, basal readers, literature centers, trade books, vocabulary study, phonics instruction, graphic organizers, reading tests, book discussions, reading strategies, independent reading, and state-mandated reading assessments. The successful teaching of writing was associated with the following: putting spelling words in sentences, taking notes, the writing process, writing in complete sentences and paragraphs, phonetic spelling, word walls, dictionaries, topic sentences and supporting details, writing for real reasons, writing across the curriculum, journals, and state-mandated writing assessments.

Influence of Collegial Collaboration. The content analysis of the teachers' written explanations of their "success" also revealed the importance of postundergraduate experiences, including on-the-job collaboration with colleagues. For instance, with regard to reading, one teacher commented, "Just by attending workshops and working with my colleagues I've become more knowledgeable." Another participant wrote, "My colleagues and I share tons of ideas with each other." With regard to writing, a teacher reflected, "We have had a few workshops that have helped me set up a paragraph format and key words for state writing assessments." Another participant attributed her success in teaching writing to "collaborating with teammates and sharing of ideas . . . along with researching for ideas."

Limitations

The current research relied exclusively on self-report measures as it sought to uncover the types of reading and writing experiences elementary-level teachers encountered in their teacher education programs and to determine how these experiences impacted the way the teachers currently approach the teaching of reading and writing. Follow-up research might utilize observations of the participants within their classrooms in an attempt to verify data gathered from the self-report.

The self-report measures used in the current research asked participants to describe their training in the teaching of reading and writing and to

discuss their current classroom practices related to the teaching of reading and writing. The nature of the discussion was left to the discretion of the participants. They were not specifically asked to comment on the influence of factors which fell beyond their control; such as mandates issued by their districts regarding time allotments for the teaching of reading and writing, the types of professional development offered by their districts on the teaching of reading and writing, or the impact of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) on their approaches to the teaching of reading and writing.

Discussion

Hoffman et al. (2005) maintained that participation in a high-quality teacher education program which focuses on the teaching of reading, “positively influences the experience of the teachers entering the profession and the quality of and student engagement with the literacy environments they create in their classrooms” (p. 280). Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, and Place (2000) reported the same to be true of participation in a teacher-training program that emphasizes the importance of writing. The results of this study indicated, however, that while many teacher-training programs do provide high-quality experiences in reading, the same cannot be said about writing.

The results of the current research can be best summarized by borrowing the words of two teacher-participants. The first explained, “Most of the focus was on reading,” and the second, “I learned writing was important, but not how to specifically teach it.” Indeed, participants reported being required to take more college-level courses that prepared them to teach reading than writing. Furthermore, many participants revealed that they had received no formal training in the teaching of writing.

The participants’ lack of training played itself out on two fronts, both of which proved problematic. First, because they left their teacher education programs feeling unprepared to teach writing, participants felt forced to “figure it out” as they went along on the job. In many cases, this process involved relying on the guidance of more-seasoned colleagues. This fact begs the following questions: (1) How were these colleagues trained? (2) Did they, too, graduate from teacher education programs which neglected writing? (3) If so, does their approach to the teaching of writing simply amount to “teaching in the manner in which they have been taught” (Stover, 1986, p. 21) which most likely involves the “assigning, collecting, and correcting” (Spandel, 2005, p. 78) model? and (4) Who should be held responsible for breaking this cycle? We concur with Totten (2005, ¶ 2) who maintained that colleges and universities must “accept their responsibility to adequately prepare teacher candidates to incorporate writing into their classrooms in

an effective manner.” Only by doing so will writing ever be restored to its “proper place in the classroom” (“Report Calls,” 2003, p. 4).

The second implication of our participants’ lack of training in the teaching of writing revolves around a comparison of their perceived level of success as teachers of reading and writing with their reported number of hours devoted weekly to reading and writing. Although participants reported feeling equally successful in their current attempts to teach reading and writing, they nonetheless devoted, on average, more than three times as many classroom hours each week to reading as they did to writing. These results left us wondering why teacher participants dedicated so little time to writing as compared to reading. If not due to a lack of confidence, to what else can this difference be attributed? An editorial in *The Reading Teacher* (“What’s Your Hobby?” 1996) provided one possible explanation: “Teachers sometimes admit reluctantly that they have never liked to write, find writing difficult, don’t have the time to write, and in fact, are not writers” (p. 358). And since, as Newkirk (2003) pointed out, “we all regularly avoid tasks that do not give us some form of pleasure” (p. 33), it only makes sense that teachers who have never been given the chance to personally experience the pleasure of writing would avoid it. We believe the onus of responsibility for providing this type of experience falls into the hands of teacher education programs. Newkirk concurred; he contended that teacher education programs must include opportunities for preservice teachers to encounter the pleasure of writing. “Without these experiences of engagement, writing teachers are outsiders to the craft they teach” (p. 33).

The results of the current research corroborate the position that reading has been given a place of priority while writing has been neglected (Bazerman, 2008; Moffet & Wagner, 1993; Oswald & Still, 2004). This reality proves detrimental, since, as Graves (2002) reminded his audience, reading and writing are complementary processes. He explained:

We forget that writing is the making of reading. Children who write apply phonics, construct syntax, and experience the full range of skills inherent in authoring a text. Writers are more assertive readers and are less likely to accept the ideas and texts of others without question, since they are in the reading-construction business themselves. (p. 2)

Because of this symbiotic relationship, students deserve teachers who are highly skilled in the teaching of both reading and writing. Students also deserve teachers who value both reading and writing. Finally, students deserve teachers who consider themselves both readers and writers. In order for students to have exposure to such teachers, teacher education programs must examine the role writing plays in their curricula to see whether, in fact, “most of the focus (is) on reading,” for it is only by dedicating more

time and attention to the way writing is handled that the cycle of neglect will be broken.

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TEACHING EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURES: USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES TO MAKE LEARNING EXPLICIT

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Abstract

Teachers and preservice teachers are familiar with using storyboards to examine narrative plot structure. However, use of storyboards can easily be transposed to help students examine expository text structure. Coupling storyboards with graphic novels and digital stories can add more power in supporting students' exploration of expository text. Graphic novels are a visual-textual convention used by teachers to engage students and to teach visual and literacy skills. Digital stories are a visual-audio convention enabling students to explore content using graphics, audio, video animation, and Web publishing. Readers of this article will learn how storyboards, graphic novels, and digital stories can be used to teach expository text structure across content areas to preservice teachers and to younger grade-school students.

I hate reading for his class. The book doesn't make sense. I can read the same page over and over again, and it doesn't stick. I don't know why I'm reading it, so then I don't read it. I just wait for him to tell me what I need to know in class. Can you help me read this stuff better?

Janna (pseudonym)—preservice teacher
referring to a required state-based history course
and the course textbook (Field Notes. DW 9-18-07)

Preservice teachers easily grasp how to teach narrative structure to young students, but struggle in teaching them to identify and use expository text structure. As the quote above indicates, preservice teachers may themselves struggle in reading expository text and may not be familiar with the process of finding and using the structure of informational text to aid in

comprehension. Yet, these same candidates are expected to teach their elementary students to decode and comprehend expository text.

Often preservice teacher candidates learn how to teach expository text in a content reading or reading foundations class. This content and this type of course are not uncommon in elementary education program requirements. However, as indicated by the above quote, teacher candidates may struggle in learning this content based on their own lack of familiarity and frustration with expository text. The research indicates that teachers and teacher candidates often favor narrative over expository texts in their personal preferences and in their instructional practice (Gee, 1989; Gibson, 2008; Kamberelis, 1999; Nathanson, 2006).

In his research, Kamberelis (1999) contended that narrative texts and text structures appear to involve special cognitive and affective advantages when compared to expository texts. He contended that narrative stories are more engaging and are easier to comprehend due to their familiar structure. This structure aids readers in making connections, drawing inferences, and comprehending what they read. In contrast, expository text does not carry the same implicit familiarity as a story. As a result, students struggle with comprehending informational text (Gee, 1989; Nathanson, 2006).

In his 1999 study, Kamberelis found that teachers were more familiar and more comfortable with narrative rather than expository text. As a result, he concluded that teachers were more likely to favor narrative over expository texts in their classrooms and instructional practice. Yet, excluding or minimizing student exposure to expository text perpetuates a cycle wherein readers become more familiar and better able to comprehend narrative text and less familiar and less able to comprehend expository text. This cycle may cause students to struggle as they progress through the grades as they are expected to read more expository text in their coursework (Nathanson, 2006). As the quote at the beginning of this article indicates, even college students may struggle in comprehending expository text they are required to read. Finally, preservice teachers engaged in this cycle may themselves become teachers who favor teaching narrative over expository text to their students, thus continuing a cycle where narrative is privileged to the point of eclipsing the reading of expository content.

The purpose of this article is to share the development of an action research project to determine the effectiveness of a new curriculum developed to aid preservice teachers in learning and teaching strategies for comprehending expository text. Action research is a systematic, self-reflective process of inquiry undertaken by practitioners to improve practice. It is a relevant methodology for addressing research questions and issues in educational contexts (Caskey, 2006).

As such, this project is founded in an action research model wherein a problem was defined (the ability of preservice teacher candidates to comprehend, to teach, and to value teaching expository text), an action plan was implemented (a new curriculum was designed to scaffold preservice teachers to read expository text and to teach their students to read expository text), an assessment was designed (to analyze the effects of this curriculum on preservice teachers' understanding of expository text organization, their understanding of how to teach this content to their future students, and their motivation to teach this content to their future students), data were gathered and evaluated, and reflection on the results occurred.

This paper will share the details of the curriculum developed for teaching expository text structures to preservice teachers and will discuss the data gathered from the implementation of that curriculum. The research questions that drove this study were: (a) Will the use of a traditional narrative convention (the storyboard) assist undergraduate preservice teachers to understand and teach expository text structure? (b) Will the use of contemporary narrative conventions (i.e., graphic novels and digital stories) assist undergraduate preservice teachers to understand and teach expository text structure?

As preservice teachers are more comfortable and more familiar with narrative structure, typical narrative conventions were chosen to help these preservice teachers explore the structure of expository texts. These conventions include: storyboards, graphic novels, and digital stories. These conventions were also chosen for their use of visuals and technology—influences thought to engage and motivate students in learning the content.

Literature Review

A review of the literature includes research analyzing teacher responses to reading and teaching expository text with a clear preference indicated for narrative text and narrative text conventions. Those narrative conventions of the storyboard, graphic novels, and digital stories are also discussed below for their power and ability to scaffold teachers and students in comprehending expository text structures.

Teacher Responses to Narrative versus Expository Text

Preservice teachers often become frustrated when assisting struggling readers to comprehend and respond to expository text. As discussed above, they may struggle themselves to read and respond to expository text. Preservice teachers may assume that if students can read (i.e., decode), they can read and comprehend expository text. However, Nathanson (2006) contended that “reading expository discourse places a unique demand

on a reader's cognitive processing and relies on the reader's ability to apply prior knowledge and to make use of the text's organization and structure" (p. 3). These textual structures include: sequence, compare/contrast, description, cause and effect, and problem-solution (Dymock, 2005; Moss, 2004). In other words, students must be explicitly taught to read expository text as the skills required to comprehend this type of content are different in some degree from those necessary to comprehend narrative passages.

Complicating this scenario is the fact that reading and writing in the content areas are critical parts of high stakes testing and literacy standards (Nathanson, 2006). Students are expected to comprehend more content-based texts as they progress through the grades and to pass tests showing their mastery of this skill. In addition, most advanced school reading, as well as work-related reading, is expository in nature. Few careers privilege reading narrative in the job description. Teachers must assist students in understanding how to read content.

In order to successfully comprehend content, the unique attributes of expository text must be recognized. Expository text structures involve explaining, demonstrating, or arguing a point through the use of logical rhetorical structures. Recognizing the organizational structure of expository text is critical to the ability to comprehend what is read (Nathanson). Knowledge of the organizational structure of texts can be used to guide reading, to activate prior knowledge, and to fill in gaps in comprehension. Teaching content area literacy involves numerous strategies that must be explicitly shared with students, and many of these strategies involve knowing the logical structures and patterns of expository text. Students who have a good understanding of expository text structure have better success in their ability to comprehend the text (Dymock, 2005; Heath, 1983, 2000; Nathanson).

While the ability to read and write using expository text structures is important, research indicates that narrative text structure has a privileged place in early childhood and elementary classrooms (Gee, 1989; Kamberelis, 1999; Nathanson, 2006). Kamberelis found K-2 students' exposure to and experiences with different text forms varied remarkably in favoring narrative over expository content. Because of their differential exposure to these literacy forms, students possessed dissimilar knowledge of narrative and expository text structures. He found that the students he studied "seemed to possess more knowledge of narratives than other genres and younger children often defaulted to narrative genres when composing science reports and poems" (¶ 1). Similarly, Gibson (2008) also found that her 2nd grade students lacked familiarity with the structure of informational text and relied in writing on narrative formats. Based on his study,

Kamberelis concluded that students develop differentiated and flexible repertoires of genre forms and functions and that their mastery of expository content was often less developed.

Kamberelis (1999) also determined that the teachers in his study favored and were more familiar with narrative structures. Their positive affective stance toward story formats impacted their ability and willingness to comprehend, to produce, and to teach expository forms. Yet, based on the need for students to work with expository texts in their advanced schooling and career placements, elementary teachers may need to re-evaluate the importance of including expository content in their literacy curricula.

Nathanson (2006) contended that educators might reconsider using narrative structures to teach all forms of content. He feels that the use of narrative structure across disciplines may be used to aid students in understanding expository information. Similarly, Staal (2000) recommended the use of narrative conventions, such as story maps and structured graphic organizers, to help students identify problem, conflict, solution, and characters in a wide range of content area texts.

The ideas advanced by Nathanson (2006) and Staal (2000) in using narrative conventions to teach expository content are intuitively appealing. If teachers and students are more comfortable and more familiar with narrative texts, then using narrative conventions to comprehend expository text may be an appropriate scaffold for teaching expository text structure. Storyboards are a time honored and traditional convention used to explore narrative text. More contemporary narrative conventions of graphic novels and digital stories are also important to consider for their power in exploring text structure and content. These forms of literacy (storyboards, graphic novels, and digital stories) all share some commonalities beyond their basis in narrative traditions. These literacy forms ask students to combine media and modality in exploring content (text and images), and they rely on primarily visual formats. These narrative formats are more fully described for the purposes of this study in the next section.

Storyboards

Storyboards have long been used by literacy teachers to help their students understand plot sequence in narrative texts (Doherty & Coggeshall, 2005; Shurtleff, 2006). Storyboards are essentially graphic organizers that include a series of illustrations or images displayed in sequence. They were originally used by the Disney Company in order to plan small action films (Langham, 1994). Teachers have used storyboards for a range of purposes, from helping students comprehend narrative text through planning complex video or Web projects. However, storyboards can also

be used to aid students in understanding expository text by helping them “tell the story” of the expository structure used in a particular text.

Graphic Novels

Graphic novels are a visual-textual convention currently being used by teachers both to engage students and to teach visual and literacy skills. In format, graphic novels are a type of comic book with an extended and complex storyline. Graphic novels have been recommended for use with struggling readers because their illustrations assist the students in grasping meaning in a way they cannot in reading a typical textbook (Crawford, 2003; Pisah & Stahl, 2005). Because graphic novels appeal to young people, especially to boys, teachers can use them to bridge the gap between their students’ prior knowledge and the ideas they encounter in texts, including content area text (Bucher & Manning, 2004).

Using graphic novels in the classroom requires that teachers extend their ideas about and skills in multiple literacies. Schwarz (2004) maintained that schools must prepare students to think critically with and about all kinds of texts. In later work, Schwarz (2006) contends that graphic novels are an excellent resource for teaching multiple literacies. This is in line with the International Reading Association (IRA, 2003) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 1996) recommendations that students be able to work with print and nonprint texts as a part of their literacy experiences. Preservice teachers can learn how to use graphic novels effectively to improve their students’ abilities to read and to respond to content area text.

Digital Storytelling

Bedenbaugh (2007) explained digital storytelling as the art of telling stories with any of a variety of available multimedia tools, including graphics, audio, video animation, and Web publishing. Robin (2005) noted that digital storytelling is engaging and interactive. More importantly, the process and product of digital storytelling involves all the modalities of literacy instruction, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing. Again, this is in line with the IRA (2003) and NCTE (1996) requirements that students engage in meaningful interactions with print and nonprint texts.

While digital storytelling originated to explore narrative formats, many educators have used digital storytelling as a means for promoting content literacy, including having students view and represent personal narratives, view and represent historical themes, and examine events that inform or instruct (Robin, 2005). As students and teachers create digital stories, progressing from idea to final product, they have no choice but to consider the structure of the content they use as a basis for their stories.

Robin (2005) wrote that when producing digital stories, students must “organize these ideas as they learn to create stories for an audience” (¶ 1). The need to organize information necessitates an understanding and exploration of text structures.

Methodology

Participants

Participants for this action research study included 10 undergraduate, preservice teachers enrolled in a small, rural university in the South. These students were enrolled in a course titled “Developing Content Readers.” This course was required for these students for their early childhood (P-4) program and licensure. The students were traditional undergraduate students in the junior or senior year of their program. The diversity was limited, with only one African-American student and one Native American student in the group. Prior to this course, 8 of the 10 students had taken a required course in reading foundations, and all students had taken a required course in integrated methods for language arts and social studies.

Since this was an action research project, the researcher and author was also the instructor for this course, the reading foundations course, and one of the instructors for the integrated methods course. The researcher/author had worked 1 year at this institution and 5 years as a reading and general methods instructor at a mid-sized university in the urban Northeast. At both institutions, the curriculum is similar. The content or expository reading class focuses on helping preservice teachers learn strategies to teach elementary students how to comprehend and respond to nonfiction text.

Data Collection

Data points for this action research project included: (a) a pre/post assessment developed by the instructor of the course, and (b) a final independent assignment created by the students. The final assignment had students create either a digital story or a graphic novel based on their preference. Regardless of their final product choice, students also had to produce a graphic organizer, a storyboard, and a script prior to creating their final project.

The pre/post assessment developed for this study was created by the author/researcher after a search revealed no existent tools deemed adequate for assessing teacher or student knowledge of expository text structure. The tool was intentionally designed to be very simple and based directly on the text assigned to the preservice teachers to read in preparation for this section of the course. The course text was *Content Area Reading and Literacy: Succeeding in Today's Diverse Classrooms* (Alvermann, Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2006).

The key concepts included in the assessment were also verified through a meta-analysis of other instructional texts used in the field for instruction of this type of class, including *Content Area Literacy Instruction for the Elementary Grades* (Alvermann, Swafford, & Montero, 2004), *Reading for Information in Elementary School: Content Literacy Strategies to Build Comprehension* (Frey & Fisher, 2007), *Developing Readers and Writers in the Content Areas K-12* (Moore, Moore, Cunningham, & Cunningham, 2003), *Reading to Learn in the Content Areas* (Richardson, Morgan, & Fleener, 2006), and *Reader's Handbook: A Student Guide for Reading and Learning* (Robb, Richeck, & Spandel, 2002).

All six textbooks identified were analyzed for content by the author/researcher. The common text structures most prevalent in these texts were listed and defined (See Figure 1). Next, graphic organizers that matched each common text structure were gleaned from these texts and from an Internet search, and common signal words for each text structure were listed (See Figure 2). Finally, examples of brief text passages matching each text structure were pulled from these books and from an Internet search as exemplars.

Figure 1. Content Analysis—Common Expository Text Structures

TEXTBOOK	LISTING OR DESCRIPTION	SEQUENCE OR TIME ORDER	COMPARE AND CONTRAST	CAUSE AND EFFECT	PROBLEM—SOLUTION	OTHER
Content Area Reading and Literacy: Succeeding in Today's Diverse Classrooms	X	X	X	X	X	
Content Area Literacy Instruction for the Elementary Grades.	X	X	X	X	X	
Reading for Information in Elementary School: Content Literacy Strategies to Build Comprehension	X*	X	X	X	X	
Developing Readers and Writers in the Content Areas K-12	X♣	X	X	X		
Reading to Learn in the Content Areas	X	X	X	X		ANALOGY/ EXAMPLE
Reader's Handbook: A Student Guide for Reading and Learning	X	X	X	X		LOCATION ORDER
Internet Research	X	X	X	X	X	CLASSIFICATION, PERSUASIVE

*referred to as exemplification or concept/definition

♣referred to as topic/subtopic

Figure 2. Text Structures, Graphic Organizers, and Signal Words

TEXT STRUCTURE	GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS	SIGNAL WORDS
Listing or descriptive	Spider map	strong use of adjectives, adverbs, and phrases
Sequence or time order	Cycle, series of events chains, time line	first, next, last, before, after afterwards, another, finally, initially, later, following that, when, now, in the past, previously, presently
Compare and contrast	Compare/contrast matrix, T-chart, Venn diagram, ladder map, alike/different chart, semantic feature analysis	although, yet, while, however, same/different, like/unlike, on the other hand, however, less than, least, more than, most other, differently, difference, similarly, dissimilar, but, not only...but also, either/or, neither/nor, while, yet, likewise, also, in comparison, in contrast, conversely
Cause and effect	Cycle, fishbone map, cause/effect pattern	since, because, as a result, if... then, therefore, due to, hence, thus, as a result, consequently, subsequently, accordingly, eventually, initiated, the outcome
Problem-solution	Problem-solution map	since, because, as a result, if... then, therefore, due to hence, thus, as a result, consequently, subsequently, accordingly, eventually, initiated, the outcome

The pre/post assessment was designed based on these key characteristics of expository text structure. The assessment was comprised of five questions. The first question asked preservice teachers to list four common expository text structures. Questions two through five asked preservice teachers to read a brief paragraph and write the name of the expository text structure utilized in that paragraph next to it (See Appendix A). Students were given the preassessment on the first day of the curriculum sequence and were given it again as a postassessment 2 weeks after the conclusion of the curriculum sequence.

The final, required, independent assignment was a product created by the students and graded using a developed rubric (See Appendix B). The rubric assessed the following elements: (a) identification and description of text structure, (b) organization, (c) inclusion of signal words, and (d) quality of final product. The final product was an extension project designed to have the preservice teachers use their newfound knowledge. First, the preservice teachers were provided with a children's text that used one of

the expository text structures discussed (See Appendix C). The preservice teachers were then challenged to create either a digital story or a graphic novel describing that text and its use of a specific expository text structure. In other words, they were to tell a story to explain their text and its underlying structure. Either option chosen by the student had to be accompanied by a graphic organizer, storyboard, and script to be approved by the instructor prior to the creation of the final product. These preliminary products had to make explicit the expository text structure inherent in the text.

The Curriculum

The five most common text structures were introduced to preservice teachers, including sequence and compare/contrast—considered easier structures for students to learn—as well as description, cause and effect, and problem solution—considered more difficult for students to learn (Dymock, 2005). The curriculum sequence was based on the sequence recommended by Moss (2004) for teaching expository text structures.

1. Introduce the organizational patterns of expository text and explain that expository texts have different organizational patterns called text structures.
2. Explain the text pattern using exemplars; point out the signal words associated with the structure; and teach common graphic organizers associated with text pattern.

Prior courses taught by the author/researcher had also used Moss's (2004) recommended sequence as an instructional approach. However, the informal results of these class sessions were felt to be limited in the long-term retention and motivation of the preservice teachers. Quite simply, the preservice teachers in past courses did not appear to find this content engaging. As a result, while Moss's sequence was retained, in the new curriculum more was done to activate the preservice teachers' prior knowledge of narrative text structure in order to help them bring their prior knowledge to bear in examining expository text structures. In addition, the newly created final project was added to increase the participants' engagement time with the content.

The following is a description of the curriculum sequence. The course in this study met twice a week for 1 hour and 15 minute sessions. Each session is detailed below.

Session 1. The preservice teachers were placed into groups and presented with an envelope containing a Snoopy cartoon strip cut up and dissembled. They were asked to place the cartoon panels in order based on what they knew of narrative text structure. Happily, the student groups were all able to easily succeed at this task. The groups then took part in a discussion where they were asked to identify any narrative conventions they knew in relation to the Snoopy comic strip that enabled them to suc-

cessfully reassemble the comic strip. They readily identified plot (sequence), character, setting, and conflict. With some prompting they were also able to identify theme, point of view, and some key terminology (e.g., dénouement, climax, etc). Finally, the preservice teachers viewed a storyboard and a digital story of the Snoopy comic strip created by the instructor. In the storyboard and digital story, the Snoopy comic strip was analyzed for narrative plot structures using a graphic organizer to explicate the narrative structure. Showing the preservice teachers a digital story this early in the curriculum was intended to increase their engagement with the content and excite them about the creation of their own final products.

This anticipatory set raised the interest of the preservice teachers and established their confidence in their own knowledge base regarding narrative text structure. The preservice teachers were able to discuss with confidence the narrative text as a predictable structure. They also discussed the fact that their knowledge of narrative structure allowed them to succeed in the Snoopy activity. The instructor began to explore with the preservice teachers the idea that expository texts have predictable structures, and knowing these structures could aid their comprehension of these texts.

Sessions 2-3. Once the preservice teachers' prior knowledge of narrative text structure was activated, the curriculum transitioned into the use of traditional classroom techniques to explain expository text structure, including PowerPoint, discussion, guided practice, visuals, etc. In line with Moss's (2004) recommendation, the preservice teachers were introduced to each of the identified, expository organizational patterns in great detail (sequence, compare/contrast, description, cause and effect, and problem-solution). First, each pattern was explained. Next, the preservice teachers were shown examples of graphic organizers for use with each text pattern (e.g., Venn diagrams and T-charts for use with compare/contrast text structures). Then, the preservice teachers reviewed the signal words associated with each expository text structure. Finally, text examples of each structure were shared, analyzed, and discussed.

Session 4. Once the preservice teachers had completed the instructional sequence, they were placed into groups and given a guided practice activity. The preservice teachers were presented with short paragraphs (including those they had seen on the preassessment), were asked to identify the structure used with each paragraph, and were asked to diagram each paragraph using one of the graphic organizer options they had reviewed. The preservice teachers and instructor conferred during the activity to confirm student knowledge and clarify any misunderstandings.

Once this guided practice opportunity was successfully completed, and in order to prepare for the next class session, the preservice teachers were asked to verbally review what they knew about the use of storyboards in

examining narrative texts, in order to activate their prior knowledge. The preservice teachers examined several storyboards and reviewed what they knew about using storyboards to aid students' exploration of narrative text structure. The preservice teachers' were aware of the use of storyboards due to their involvement in the reading foundations and integrated methods courses. Again, the preservice teachers' prior knowledge was tapped first to help aid their transition into the idea of graphic novels and digital stories as a base for the independent project.

Next, to introduce the concepts of graphic novels and digital stories as an extension to the storyboard concept, the preservice teachers were assigned to independently research these two topics and to present their findings to the class as a group. Half of the class researched graphic novels, and the other half researched digital stories. In their research, the preservice teachers were asked to answer six guiding questions as follows (and to use as examples of graphic novels or digital stories):

1. How could the use of graphic novels (or digital stories) in the classroom motivate students (especially struggling readers) to learn?
2. How could the use of graphic novels (or digital stories) distract students from learning?
3. How could graphic novels (or digital stories) be used to explore expository text structure?
4. How could graphic novels (or digital stories) be used to teach comprehension skills, especially inferencing?
5. What elements do graphic novels (or digital stories) share with the convention of the storyboard?
6. What conventions are unique to graphic novels (or digital stories)?

In addition, the instructor made available to students a variety of graphic novels and digital stories via online Web-based applications and in the education library at the institution (See Appendix D). Graphic novels and digital stories were chosen to represent different text structures and content areas (math, science, social studies) for a variety of grades.

Session 5. The class was divided in half, and the preservice teachers were provided time at the beginning of this class session to combine their research findings on graphic novels or digital stories. Once the preservice teachers had reached a consensus on how to best answer the six guiding questions, they were asked to share their understanding of these two literacy forms and present exemplars from their research. The preservice teachers then took part in an extended discussion based on the guiding questions and the research found by the groups. The findings of the students yielded some interesting facts and spurred some charged discussion in class. Finally, the preservice teachers were presented with the details of the final

project and were given their children's texts. They were given 2 weeks to create their final products, including gaining approval on their preliminary products (i.e., graphic organizer, storyboard, script).

Session 6. At the end of 2 weeks, the preservice teachers met to share and evaluate their work.

Final Project Exemplars

As an example of a final project, 3 students' exemplars will be described here. Beth (pseudonym) was given the book *If You're Angry and You Know It* written by Cecily Kaiser (2005) and illustrated by Cary Pillo. This book uses a problem-solution organizational structure. In this book, young children are given strategies for dealing with their anger (i.e., "if you are angry and you know it, walk away" (pp. 9-12) or "if you are angry and you know it, take a deep breath" (pp. 13-16). Beth analyzed this text for its organizational structure, created a graphic organizer depicting that structure, created a storyboard and a script to explain the structure in the text, and then created her digital story. Beth showed visuals of the text cover, her graphic organizers, and the appropriate pages of the book as she discussed them in her digital story.

Beth's script analyzing this book read:

The book, *If You're Angry and You Know It* is about handling the emotion of anger. This book uses an expository problem-solution text structure. *If You're Angry and You Know It* is a story about the different approaches children can use to manage feeling angry. The reoccurring problem in the story is the angry feeling that the children have. The text then offers different solutions for children to address that problem. For example, the first child uses stomping his feet as a solution to his angry feeling. The second child uses a drum as a solution to his feeling. The third child walks away from the person causing the angry feeling as a solution. The fourth child takes a deep breath as a solution to her angry feeling. The fifth and final child makes a decision to tell a friend about his angry feeling. In the end, the solutions to the problem create an overall solution—that is—being happy.

Joanne (pseudonym) was given the children's text *Soil* by Robin Nelson (2005). This book uses a descriptive organizational structure. In this book, the attributes of soil are discussed and accompanied by gorgeous full color pictures. Joanne analyzed this text for its organizational structure, created a graphic organizer depicting that structure, created a storyboard and a script to explain the structure in the text, and then created her digital story. Joanne showed visuals of the text cover, her graphic organizers, and the appropriate pages of the book as she discussed them.

Joanne's script analyzing this book read:

Soil by Robin Nelson. Soil is a content text about dirt. This book uses a descriptive text structure. Descriptive text uses the idea of collecting related facts. Let me show you how this structure works within this text. As depicted by this graphic organizer, the text can be divided into parts related to soil consistency, size, color, and benefits. For example, soil is made of tiny rocks. Soil can be dark black. Pieces of soil can be big. Soil can help plants grow. As we can see this text uses descriptive text and photographs to teach its readers about soil.

Finally, Mandy (pseudonym) was given the children's text *George Washington: A Life of Leadership* by Robin Nelson (2006). This book uses a sequential organizational structure. In this book, the life of George Washington is chronicled. Mandy analyzed this text for its organizational structure, created a graphic organizer depicting that structure, created a storyboard and a script to explain the structure in the text, and then created her digital story. Mandy did the best job of these three in including and making explicit signal words for her text and text structure.

Mandy's script analyzing this book read:

The title of this book is *George Washington: A Life of Leadership*. This book uses a sequential expository structure. This means that the book progresses in an order from one date to another, or chronologically. A sequence can be signaled by the words such as: first, next, last, or etc. Many times a sequence follows a date or chronological order, much like that of this book. *George Washington: A Life of Leadership* follows a sequential structure, because it follows a timeline. First George Washington grew up in Virginia. Then George Washington became a great American army leader. After that he fought in the American Revolution against the British and became an American hero. Then George Washington became the first president of the United States of America. He then began plans for the Capital City and the White House located in Washington D.C. Finally he ended his presidency after eight years of leadership. As you can see, the book follows a timeline in a sequential order.

Data Analysis

Results

In terms of the preassessment results, few of the preservice teachers were able to list or identify *any* of the expository structures included in the preassessment. The average score on the preassessment was .7 out of a possible 8 points. Fortunately, the preservice teachers' responses on the postassessment provided a much more positive result. On the postassessment, the preservice teachers averaged 7.5 out of 8 (See Table 1).

Table 1. Pre/Post-Assessment Results

	PREASSESSMENT	POSTASSESSMENT
Student 1	0	8
Student 2	2	8
Student 3	1	7
Student 4	1	8
Student 5	0	7
Student 6	0	7
Student 7	0	8
Student 8	1	8
Student 9	1	8
Student 10	1	8
Mean	.7	7.5

$p > .0001$, $t = 23.4$; $df = 9$; $SED = .291$

Beyond the overwhelming improvement in the pre/postassessment measure ($p > .0001$, $t = 23.4$; $df = 9$; $SED = .291$), the preservice teachers also created remarkable final products. The average score on the final project was 18.2 out of 20 points possible. For identification and description of text structure, preservice teachers earned an average of 4.8 out of 5 possible. For organization of text structure, preservice teachers earned an average of 4.9 out of 5 possible. For inclusion of signal words, preservice teachers earned an average of 3.6 out of 5 possible. For quality of final product, preservice teachers earned an average of 4.9 out of 5 possible (See Table 2).

Table 2. Final Project Assessment Results

	IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF TEXT STRUCTURE	ORGANIZATION	SIGNAL WORDS	QUALITY OF FINAL PRODUCT	TOTAL POINTS
Student 1	5	5	4	4	19
Student 2	4	5	3	5	18
Student 3	5	5	3	5	18
Student 4	5	4	4	5	16
Student 5	5	4	5	5	19
Student 6	5	5	3	5	17
Student 7	5	5	3	5	18
Student 8	5	5	5	5	20
Student 9	5	5	3	5	18
Student 10	4	5	4	5	19
Mean	4.8	4.9	3.6	4.9	18.2

Discussion

The results of the pre/post assessment in this study were remarkable. The students took the preassessment on the first day of the curriculum *after* they had read the assigned content for this curriculum. Yet, their results on the preassessment were disquieting. Initially, this finding was disheartening. In essence, these preservice teachers had been asked to read a piece of expository text, and they had not been able to recall that text. Initially, it was thought that the preservice teachers had not, in fact, read the assigned text. However, upon review, the preservice teachers' texts had been highlighted and notated, indicating that the texts had been read. Only one conclusion was evident. Ironically, these preservice teachers had not comprehended or retained the expository text they were assigned to read.

After scoring the preassessments in Session 1, a spontaneous discussion ensued wherein the preservice teachers indicated their dissatisfaction with the text and with the instructor for making them read this text. This discussion extended into a rich exploration where the preservice teachers shared their frustration and feelings of inadequacy in their reading abilities. The quote at the beginning of the article was a typical response for this group. Unfortunately, the data from this class session were not formally gathered or coded beyond some simple field notes collected in the session.

Fortunately, the results of the posttest in comparison to the pretest results were encouraging. The results indicated that this curriculum was powerful in allowing the preservice teachers to learn and apply this content.

The final products created by the preservice teachers were also encouraging. An examination of the project rubric results indicated that understanding and using signal words was still an area of weakness for the preservice teachers and an area of the curriculum that needs revising and strengthening.

Interestingly *all* of the preservice teachers chose to create a digital story. This fact may be due to the use of the Snoopy digital story as the curriculum set induction. Students may have felt more familiar and more comfortable with the digital story format having viewed the instructor's digital story. However, informal student feedback to this curriculum indicated that they favored digital stories over graphic organizers and found the digital stories to be more exciting and engaging due to their use of multiple modalities. While the graphic novels may have been perceived as easier to create, the power of the digital stories, due to their use of images, music, sound, and movement, clearly enticed these preservice teachers.

The affective response of the preservice teachers to what they learned about teaching expository text structure across content areas was also encouraging. In an informal follow-up oral discussion, the preservice teachers remarked on their own improved self-efficacy when it came to reading their content textbooks. They felt that understanding the organization of

expository content had aided them in comprehending text, and several of the preservice teachers commented on the usefulness of graphic organizers in capturing the main ideas and supporting details in the expository passages they had been asked to read in their college coursework. One student commented,

I think I get it now. If I know how the writing is organized, I can use one of those graphic organizers to take notes about the main idea and details. That way I can figure out what's important to remember. Right?

Janna (a pseudonym)—a junior preservice teacher
(Field Notes. DW 10-16-07)

In this oral analysis, the preservice teachers ranked this assignment and their final products as among their favorite within this course (100%) and within their entire educational program (90%). In addition, all of the preservice teachers indicated that if they had the technology available to them in their school placements, they would use this same project with their own elementary students. These comments were inspired in large part by the digital stories created by the students in the Scott County, Kentucky, school district and reviewed in class in response to Sessions 4 and 5.

Finally, all of the preservice teachers enrolled in this course used their final product (a digital story) in their final student teaching portfolio. Six of these students used their product as evidence of their mastery of Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standard One: *The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2007, p. 14). These students wrote a rationale that established their understanding of the structure of reading and literacy instruction for their students. The remaining 4 students used their product as evidence of their mastery of INTASC Standard Six (p. 25): *The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, non-verbal and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.* These students wrote rationales that spoke to the use of media and technology as one means to enhance communication and move students into inquiry learning.

Specifically, all 10 students cited the research by Robin (2005) indicating that digital storytelling was an instructional tool that was both engaging and interactive. They felt that the multiple modalities of digital stories appealed to students familiar with formats like television, cinema, and the Internet. In addition, these students felt that the communication avenues provided by digital stories taught valuable skills by asking students to research, write, organize, navigate technology, present, interview, draw on their interper-

sonal skills, problem solve, and think critically (Robin). These skills fostered inquiry in the classroom.

Limitations

While the results of this action research intervention were encouraging, a limitation of this study was the failure of systematic collection of field notes based on student-generated discussions of content. These discussions occurred spontaneously in several of the class sessions, and the views of the students yielded some interesting facts and spurred some charged discussion in class which could have added to this study. Another limitation of this study was the inability of the researcher to conduct this action research as a more controlled experimental design. An experimental design contrasting a class section using this new curriculum sequence with a section taught without the addition of the scaffolding narrative conventions (storyboards, digital stories, and graphic novels) might yield some interesting data. Finally, implementation of this curriculum clearly should have included an affective response pre- and postassessment measure to better capture this population's emotional responses to expository text, their feelings of self-efficacy in reading expository text, and their feelings about teaching expository text structures.

Conclusion

This action research project with preservice teachers described the implementation and results of a curriculum designed to teach expository text structure using narrative text conventions. This paper shared the details of the developed curriculum and the results obtained on two separate assessment measures as the instructor attempted to determine (a) if the use of a traditional narrative convention (the storyboard) could assist undergraduate, preservice teachers to understand and teach expository text structure, and (b) if the use of contemporary narrative conventions (graphic novels and digital stories) could assist undergraduate, preservice teachers to understand and teach expository text structure.

Labbo, Eakle, and Montero (2002) wrote that although computers have been readily available in classrooms for more than a decade, many teachers "are unsure about how to integrate computer-related activities into their literacy curricula" (¶ 2). Current research contends that teachers can and should integrate technology to support their students' literacy development when appropriate. However, preservice teachers will not feel comfortable using technology in their literacy instruction unless they experience it first-hand in their own teacher education programs (Groth, Dunlap, & Kidd, 2007).

In this study, preservice teachers successfully learned to teach expository text across content areas by using narrative text conventions and technology-based formats to scaffold their understanding of expository text structures. These preservice teachers were involved in creating digital stories to identify and communicate expository text structure to students. The results of this study indicated that the preservice teachers better understood expository text structure. They also enthusiastically read graphic novels, built storyboards and created digital stories to teach what they learned about how informational text is organized.

Implications for Teachers and Teacher Education

Surprising findings in this study included the fact that preservice teachers truly struggled with their ability to comprehend expository text, and they had a negative affective stance toward reading expository texts, like their college textbooks, on their own and with their future students. If preservice teachers struggle with comprehending expository text, then how can they be successful in teaching their future students to comprehend nonfiction passages? If they do not feel able or comfortable reading or teaching expository comprehension strategies, then how can their future students gain the skills necessary to be successful in reading content?

Preservice teacher educators must work to break the cycle evidenced in this and other research. This action research project showed that deep involvement and the integration of multiple modalities and technology may be one way to disrupt that cycle. Areas for further research include continued use of multiple modalities, as well as continued work with preservice teachers' affective and self-efficacy stances toward expository texts.

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Appendix A. Expository Pre/Post-assessment

List 4 common expository text structures.

Read each of the paragraphs below and decide which expository text structure it is using. Write the name of that expository text structure next to the paragraph

	<p>Crows tease other animals. Sometimes a crow gives a playful nip to the tail of a dog or other animal, then flies out of reach. Crows also mimic the calls of other birds. They imitate all sorts of other sounds—a squeaky door, a puppy’s yelp, a cat’s meow. Tame crows can be taught to say such words as “hello,” “good-bye,” and “hot dog.” (<i>Robb, Richek, & Spandel, 2002, p. 134</i>).</p>
	<p>In 1876, inventor Alexander Graham Bell developed the telephone, which let people speak over the wires. This new invention was a great success. In 1880, there were just 33,000 telephones in the world. Ten years later, there were nearly half a million! (<i>Robb, Richek, & Spandel, 2002, p. 130</i>).</p>
	<p>Rocks can be broken by ice. Water expands when it freezes. If water gets into a crack in a rock and then turns into ice, it pushes the crack open. When the ice melts, water can get farther into the rock so that when the water freezes again it opens the crack a bit more. Eventually the rock will break open altogether (<i>Robb, Richek, & Spandel, 2002, p. 136</i>).</p>
	<p>For example, a moth’s antennae, especially the male’s, are usually wide and feathery. A butterfly’s antennae are thin with little knobs on the ends. Moth bodies are usually plump and furry. But most butterfly bodies are sleek and slender (<i>Robb, Richek, & Spandel, 2002, p. 138</i>).</p>

Appendix B. Expository Text Structure

Now it's your turn.

1. You have been provided with a text that uses one of the expository text structures discussed in class.
2. Create a graphic organizer depicting your text and making explicit the expository text structure and get approval from the instructor upon completion of this step.
3. Create a storyboard depicting your text and making explicit the expository text structure and get approval from the instructor upon completion of this step.
4. Write a script to accompany your final product depicting your text and making explicit the expository text structure and get approval from the instructor upon completion of this step.
5. Then create a digital story explaining your text *and* expository text structure.

CRITERIA	DISTINGUISHED	PROFICIENT	BASIC	UNSATISFACTORY
Level of description	Clearly describes expository text structure in rich detail	Clearly describes expository text structure in satisfactory detail	Clearly describes expository text structure in sufficient detail	Poor or unclear descriptions—lacks detail; description shallow and unsupported
Organization	Identifies and uses appropriate organization for text structure and all elements of text are included	Identifies and uses appropriate organization for text structure and most elements of text are included	Identifies and uses appropriate organization for text structure but few elements of text are included	Does not identify or use appropriate organization for text or elements faulty, inaccurate, or missing
Signal words	Includes explicit use of 5 signal words	Includes explicit use of 1-2 signal words	Includes explicit use of 3-4 signal	Does not include explicit use of signal words
Final Product	Clearly connects expository text structure by using text to support and illustrate; every element fully covered and illustrated	Connects expository text structure by using text to support and illustrate; most elements fully covered and illustrated	Connects expository text structure by using text to support and illustrate; few elements fully covered and illustrated	Does not connect expository text structure by using text to support and illustrate
	19-20 points	17-18	15-16	below 15 points

Appendix C. Expository Texts

Descriptive Text Structure

- Drescher, J. E., & Moseley, K.W. (1973). *Only birds have feathers*. Irvington, NY: Harvey House.
- Markle, S. (2005). *Outside and inside giant squid*. New York: Walker Books for Young Readers.
- Nelson, R. (2005). *Soil*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.
- Pringle, L. P., & Marstall, B. (2002). *Crows! Strange and wonderful*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Souza, D. M. (2002). *Skunks do more than stink*. Southampton, NY: Cooper Beech.

Compare/Contrast

- Collard, S. B., III, & Jenkins, S. (2000). *Animal dads*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gilders, M. (2002). *Why am I rare?* Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Red Deer Press.
- Mak, K. (2001). *My Chinatown: One year in poems*. New York: Harper Collins
- Pellegrini, N. (1991). *Families are different*. New York: Holiday House.

Sequence

- Adler, D. A., Wallner, J. C., & Wallner, A. (1992). *A picture book of Christopher Columbus*. New York: Holiday House.
- Gould, R. (2000). *Kidtopia: Round the country and back through time in 60 projects*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.
- Gustafson, S. (1994). *Alphabet soup*. Seymour, CT: Greenwich Workshop Press.
- Morozumi, A. (1993). *One gorilla: A counting book*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Nelson, R. (2006). *George Washington: A life of leadership*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.
- Ryan, P. M., Pallotta, J., & Mazzola, F. (1996). *The crayon counting book*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Onyefulu, I. (1997). *A is for Africa*. London: Puffin.
- Webb, S. (2004). *My seasons with penguins: An Antarctic journal*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Problem-Solution

- Kaiser, C. (2005). *If you're angry and you know it*. Emeryville, CA: Cartwheel.

Appendix D. Graphic Novels

- Abnett, D. (2007). *Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad*. New York: Rosen Classroom.
- Avi. (1993). *City of light, city of dark: A comic book novel*. New York: Orchard.
- Burleigh, R. (2002) *Into the air: The story of the Wright brothers' first flight*. San Diego, CA: Silver Whistle.
- Delgado, R. (1997). *Age of reptiles: The hunt*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse.
- Delgado, R. (1996). *Age of reptiles: Tribal warfare*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse.
- Eisner, W. (2000). *A Contract with God: And other tenement stories*. New York: DC Comics.
- Gonick, L. (1991, 2001). *The cartoon history of the universe*. New York: Collins
- Jeffrey, G. (2006). *The Loch Ness Monster and other lake mysteries*. New York: Rosen Classroom.

- Little, D. & Rekrut, M. D. (2005). Going graphic: Comics at work in the multilingual classroom. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(3), 252-253.
- McGruder, A. (2004) *Birth of a nation: A comic novel*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Satrapi, M. (2006) *Chicken with plums*. New York: Pantheon.
- Satrapi, M. (2003) *Persepolis: The story of a childhood*. New York: Pantheon.
- Satrapi, M. (2005) *Persepolis 2: The story of a return*. New York: Pantheon.
- Shone, R., & Ganeri, A. (2005). *Alexander the Great: The life of a king and conqueror*. New York: Rosen Classroom.
- Siegel, S. C., & Siegel, M. (2006). *To dance: A ballerina's graphic novel*. New York: Aladdin.
- Spiegelman, A. (1973, 1986). *Maus I: A survivor's tale: My father bleeds history*. New York: Pantheon.
- Spiegelman, A. (1992). *Maus II: A survivor's tale: And here my troubles began*. New York: Pantheon.
- Stamaty, M. A. (2004). *Alia's mission: Saving the books of Iraq*. New York: Knopf.
- Stevens, J. (1995). *From pictures to words: A book about making a book*. New York: Holiday House.

Digital Stories

- UC Berkeley Center for Digital Storytelling <http://www.storycenter.org/>
- University of Houston-College of Education <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/>
- BBC "Telling Lives" Digital Storytelling <http://www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives/>
- Scott County, KY School District <http://www.ncrel.org/engage/resource/stories/scott.htm> and <http://www.dtc.scott.k12.ky.us/technology/digitalstorytelling/studentstories.html>

THE STRATEGY DEBATE: HOW TEACHER EDUCATORS AND TEXTBOOKS MAY CONTRIBUTE TO CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract

Preservice teachers are often inundated with various reading strategies to use in their classrooms. While the effectiveness of research-based reading strategies is agreed upon, the meaning of the word strategy is not. It is used interchangeably with other similar terms such as skill, activity, or process. This metacognitive commentary discusses how the language employed by teacher educators and textbook authors may be quite confusing to preservice teachers. Suggestions for research about the use of various educational terms to label comprehension strategies and implications for teacher educators are discussed.

As doctoral students at Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMU-C), we have worked with faculty as research assistants and teaching assistants in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Some of the professors, specifically Drs. Sampson, Raine, Linek, and Szabo, have been involved in on-going research to evaluate the knowledge and performance of preservice teachers as they progress through teaching internships and residencies. As part of one study, "An Examination of the Knowledge and Implementation of Content Reading Strategies by Preservice Teachers in the Primary Grades" (Sampson, Raine, Linek, & Szabo, 2006), future teachers were asked to define the terms *strategies*, *activities* and *skills*. Not only were the preservice teachers' definitions quite varied, but some interesting discussions took

place among the researchers while they worked to come to consensus on the sorting, coding and categorizing of those responses. Ultimately, all those involved with this research came to realize that the terms strategies, activities, and skills may not be clearly understood or articulated by even the most learned reading professionals, much less by those teachers who are in the beginning stages of their educational careers.

Just as these realizations were being made at TAMU-C, Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris were preparing to speak on nearly the same subject at the 2006 National Reading Conference, with Pat Alexander as a rebuttal speaker to their views. These professors subsequently published an article detailing their premise entitled “Clarifying Differences between Reading Skills and Reading Strategies” (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008). Echoing the findings of Sampson, Raine, Linek and Szabo (personal communication, November 30, 2006), Afflerbach and his colleagues stated, “Although researchers and educators think that skills and strategies are central to the development and success of reading it appears that the terms are used imprecisely and inconsistently” (p. 366). Another set of researchers, Alexander, Graham and Harris (1998), had previously stated that although the term strategy has been commonly used, its definition has not always been clear. In fact, the terms strategies, skills, and activities have often been used interchangeably, and even professionals within the field of education disagree as to a specific definition for each term.

Thus, we began to see a need to clarify terminology and investigate the use of these terms as they occurred in the textbooks required for our preservice teachers, such as *Total Literacy: Reading, Writing, and Learning* by Sampson, Rasinski, and Sampson (2003) and *Effective Reading Strategies: Teaching Children Who Find Reading Difficult* by Rasinski and Padak (2004). All of these authors are widely respected and published in the field of reading and literacy, so we wondered how these texts defined the term strategy, what teaching suggestions they provided, and what terminology the authors used to describe them.

Theoretical Perspectives

While the research by Sampson et al. (2006) and the commentary by Afflerbach et al. (2008) focused on several terms, this commentary centers on the term strategy. “During the 1970s, when it first dotted the reading landscape, the term strategy signified a form of mental processing that deviated from traditional skills-based reading” (Alexander & Jetton, 2000, p. 295). However, over the past decade, the term strategy has also been used when referring to strategy instruction, which “consists of teachers’ direct instruction, scaffolding, and guided practice in learning from text” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 413). Thus, when using the word strategy,

teachers, professors, and researchers may be referring to observable teacher-directed instruction or internalized reader-directed processing. The varied uses of the words strategy and strategic in all forms of professional writing, from reading textbooks to journal articles and research reports, only contributes to the confusion.

Defining Strategy

The word strategy has varied meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. For example, the Merriam Webster online dictionary defines strategy as, “A careful plan or method” (Merriam Webster, 2008), which can relate to numerous subjects. On the other hand, in the world of literacy, the term strategy is often linked to comprehension because strategic reading aids in comprehension. Furthermore, Harris and Hodges (1995) define strategy as “a systematic plan consciously adapted and monitored, to improve one’s performance in learning” (p. 244). There are a variety of comprehension strategies which can be used before, during, and after reading to help set the purpose for reading and allow students to activate their prior knowledge about a particular subject (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Teacher-Directed Strategies and Reader-Directed Strategies

In our roles as teaching assistants, one of our primary objectives was to model effective instruction for our preservice teachers. Educators on our campus commonly referred to the need to model and implement “reading strategies” with our students, so they would be able to implement them in their own classrooms. The hope was these teachers would implement research-based strategies to develop their students into strategic readers; ones who had a repertoire of strategies to use when reading. Thus, we were using the term strategies on two levels. The *Total Literacy* (Sampson et al., 2003) text distinguishes between these two levels as *teacher-directed strategies* and *reader-directed strategies*.

First of all, reader-directed strategies are ones students can implement on their own. The goal is for students to be able to pull out information from text to become informed readers. By giving students an assortment of strategies, teachers are enabling them to improve their comprehension and therefore, be accountable for their learning. An example of this is a Sketch-to-Stretch, in which children illustrate what they picture in their minds as they hear a specific story. Discussion follows afterward to engage students to further explain their thoughts. Another reader-directed strategy discussed in *Total Literacy* was the Author’s Chair in which students sit in a special chair to share their writing with the class. The other students are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the story or poem afterward (Sampson et al., 2003).

The Comprehension Connection

In our classes, one way we conceptualized strategies was as reader-directed, meaning the processes students must employ in order to become effective readers. The process of learning how to implement the strategy is just as important, if not more so, than the different steps of the strategy itself. We wanted our preservice teachers to enter the classroom with an understanding of strategies readers can use to improve their comprehension. According to the National Reading Panel Summary Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), “comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading” (p. 14). This use of the term strategy was in line with the definition proposed by Afflerbach et al. (2008):

Reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text...The reader’s deliberate control, goal-directedness, and awareness define a strategic action...Being strategic allows the reader to examine the strategy, to monitor its effectiveness, and to revise goals or means if necessary. Indeed, a hallmark of strategic readers is the flexibility and adaptability of their actions as they read. (p. 368)

On the other hand, we commonly used the term reading strategies to describe something implemented in the classroom by the teacher in order to engage students before, during, and/or after reading in an attempt to improve their reading comprehension. These teacher-directed strategies focused on resources which aid students in the comprehension process without the strategy becoming an end in itself. Some examples of these strategies include Reader’s Theater, KWL, Language Experience Activity (LEA, Allen, 1973), and literature circles. Thus, we used the term strategies on an instructional level, referring to teacher-directed processes, such as those used by a professor with preservice teachers or by an inservice teacher with her elementary students. Afflerbach et al. (2008) referred to this as the “instructional counterpart” of their aforementioned definition of strategies and stated that teachers must be “metacognitive with explicit teaching...[to] explain, model and use reading strategies” (p. 369). They went on to suggest that teachers might implement “reciprocal teaching of reading strategies in pair-share activities... classroom interventions...teach students how to be strategic readers” (p. 369). In short, what we had labeled as reading strategies, those that teachers implement, Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris referred to as classroom interventions.

Therefore, it was clear that our dual usage of the term strategies might contribute to preservice teachers’ lack of clarity on its definition. We were

using this term to describe a lesson structure employed by teachers with the intent to develop certain behaviors in their students. In essence, we were saying that teachers use strategies to teach students strategies.

In looking at the textbooks we had been using with our undergraduates, we found that the term strategy was not clearly defined in either one, even though the word “strategy” was part of the title of one of the texts. We decided to ask two of the textbook authors for their definition of the term strategy. Mary Beth Sampson, one of the co-authors of *Total Literacy*, defined a strategy as, “a learning process that can be implemented and used in varied situations with varied content” (personal communication, October 30, 2007). Timothy Rasinski’s definition of a strategy also included an active process that requires the reader to make an evaluation (personal communication, November 3, 2007). While both literacy experts described a strategy as a process, there were slight differences in their interpretations. While such differences may seem insignificant, it highlights how professionals in the field use and define terminology differently. Afflerbach et al. (2008) expressed concern that confusion and inconsistency surrounding educational terms like skill and strategy “can render our instruction less effective, even confusing to our students and to us” (p. 372).

Confusing Terminology in Professional Texts

Instructors often utilize textbooks as a key component in undergraduate literacy courses. Therefore, these texts must clearly and uniformly define reading strategies, as well as describe the most effective, research-based classroom interventions teachers should use. Some of these interventions might include Reader’s Theater, KWL, Language Experience Activity (LEA, Allen, 1973), and literature circles, which were included in both of the textbooks for our literacy courses.

However, we noticed some differences between the terminology used by the authors of our course textbooks. First of all, they used a plethora of terms for what Afflerbach et al. (2008) would call classroom interventions, including strategy, activity, informal assessment, student-centered instructional routine, technique, procedure, process, and approach. Some labels that Sampson, Rasinski, and Sampson (2003) used were activity, instructional method, informal observation, process, technique and procedure. In *Effective Reading Strategies*, Rasinski and Padak (2004) labeled these classroom interventions using such terms as activity, informal assessment, or instructional routine. We found the use of so many different terms to describe the same types of things quite interesting, especially since Rasinski was an author for both texts.

We also noticed that sometimes the same classroom intervention was labeled differently in our two textbooks. For example, brainstorming,

where students simply write down or call out everything associated with a given topic, was labeled as a strategy in *Total Literacy* (Sampson, Rasinski & Sampson, 2003), it was labeled as an activity in *Effective Reading Strategies* (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). Finally, we noticed that the authors categorized comprehension strategies in a variety of ways (from activity to instructional technique, from teacher-directed to reader-directed) or did not categorize them at all. Sampson et al. (2003) described a Venn Diagram as a way to compare and contrast text but did not give it a label, while Rasinski and Padak (2004) called the same graphic organizer a compare/contrast chart, but did not label it as a classroom intervention.

Thus, we began to see that there were many synonyms for what we had called reading strategies. Experts in the field may use that term or many others to describe teacher-directed activities.

Conclusion

In the past, we often used the term reading strategy as an umbrella term to include both teacher-directed activities that are implemented with students in the classroom to facilitate comprehension, as well as reader-directed activities that are eventually internalized and implemented independently. After looking through the textbooks, engaging in conversations with other educators, attending the talk with Afflerbach et al. (2006) and reading the subsequent article in *The Reading Teacher* (Afflerbach et al., 2008), we came to realize that perhaps we should change our use of the term for the strategies teachers employ in the classroom, perhaps adopting the term classroom interventions used by Afflerbach et al. (2008). If instructors of preservice teachers are to hold their students accountable for learning how and when to use these classroom interventions to aid in their students' comprehension, there must be some uniform definitions of these terms within the fields of literacy and teacher education. It is critical that preservice teachers go into the classroom with a clear definition and understanding of comprehension strategies and how to teach them through models, explanations, and thinking aloud (Afflerbach et al. 2006). If preservice teachers go into classrooms confused about the terminology related to comprehension strategies, their students will likely feel confused as well.

Implications for the Future

Ultimately, there is a great need for clarification of these terms, as well as uniformity in the use of other educational terminology. The creation of a shared professional vocabulary would assist professors in preparing their preservice teachers to be effective in the classroom. Guthrie and

Wigfield (2000) admitted that although strategies for reading are difficult for students to learn and use, they are ultimately empowering and motivating: "Possession of strategies and the motivation for using them are likely to be mutually enhancing" (p. 413). Therefore, textbooks, as well as any other teaching materials, used with preservice teachers must adequately, and uniformly, define strategies and suggest effective methods of strategy instruction. At the very least, teacher educators need to provide this clarification of terms so that preservice and practicing teachers are aware of the overlap in meaning and the use of terms for their own instruction/intervention and assessment for students.

Questions that researchers may want to investigate in the future include:

1. How can professors impart the knowledge of applying effective strategies in the classroom when the terminology is generally inconsistent?
2. How are these terms used on state teacher certification exams?
3. How do state and local curricular objectives use the terms strategy and comprehension strategies? What terms are used to describe classroom interventions?
4. Are college textbooks aligned with the objectives, strategies, and interventions classroom teachers are expected to teach?
5. How will administrators evaluate inservice teachers' effective use of classroom interventions?

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**ISSUES OF
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INVESTIGATING ALTERNATIVE-CERTIFICATION TEACHER CANDIDATES' SELF-EFFICACY AND OUTCOME-EXPECTANCY BELIEFS TOWARD THE TEACHING OF READING

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Abstract

This quantitative pre/post study investigated if a content area reading course had an impact on alternative-certification (A/C) teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and outcome-expectancy beliefs toward the teaching of reading. The summer session reading course, which had three different sections each taught by a different teacher, contained 113 A/C teacher candidates. Each A/C teacher candidate completed a background questionnaire and the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (RTEI; Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) as part of a class assignment. The RTEI scoring rubric, descriptive statistics and a paired t-test were used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that this content area reading course had a positive impact on both the A/C teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to teach reading and on their outcome-expectancy beliefs in their ability to influence student learning.

Introduction

Two of the major education challenges faced in the United States are: (1) finding qualified teachers, and (2) improving student achievement. Concerning the first challenge, it is becoming difficult for some states and school districts to find skilled teachers who not only meet a set of education standards, but who have also demonstrated competency in each subject matter they teach. Often this is not an easy task. Since the creation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002), the responsibility and obligation for states and school

districts to get an appropriately skilled teacher into every classroom has been problematic. This problem has intensified due to a shortage of teachers (Voke, 2002).

To alleviate this problem, many states have instituted an Alternative Certification (A/C) program. Beginning in the 1980s, A/C has become a viable way to recruit, train, and certify perspective teachers (Feistritzer & Chester, 2000). Alternative Certification is an approved educator preparation program specifically designed as an alternative to a traditional undergraduate certification program, for individuals already holding at least a baccalaureate degree, as described by the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (1993). In lieu of enrolling in a 4-year undergraduate teacher education program, A/C teacher candidates can earn their teaching certificates in as little as 1 year, often while teaching. All 50 states and the District of Columbia now report they have at least some type of alternate route to teacher certification, with approximately 485 nonuniversity-sponsored programs providing alternative certification to qualified persons (Feistritzer, 2007). Based on data submitted by the states to the National Center for Education Information report, the number of teachers obtaining certification through alternative routes has substantially increased since the late 1990s. Nationally, approximately one-third of newly hired teachers are coming through alternative routes to teacher certification. Alternative certification is becoming more and more popular with state education and certification agencies as a realistic way to reduce their teacher shortages (Feistritzer).

The second educational challenge pertains to the educational outcome that skilled teachers provide. As society advances, each member must have well-developed literacy skills. These skills are not just important but are vital to our progress as a nation (Baynton, 2001). This means that an appropriate level of reading is essential. The federal government has also realized this need and suggests that there needs to be a focus on literacy in our classrooms (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). While reading does not come naturally for all students (Vacca & Vacca, 2008), it must be learned if one is to adequately access, analyze, and critically evaluate information that is read (Headley & Dunston, 2000; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Sturtevant & Linek, 2004).

Therefore, a major goal of education is to improve all students' reading achievement by providing skills and strategies that will develop their ability to read. Many hours, much thought, and large amounts of money have been used to develop numerous reading programs designed to help teachers assist students with learning to read; yet, many students continue to struggle. Many factors, such as poverty, minority status, school atmosphere, school administration, and stress have been examined to see how they relate to the reading difficulties that students display, and that teachers encounter,

in the classroom (Ascher & Fruchter, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Yet, during the past two decades, research has also shown that the most important factors in improving student achievement are: (1) the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Allington, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Strickland & Snow, 2002), and (2) the teachers' beliefs in their own teaching, or their self-efficacy (Cervone, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Teacher quality usually results in greater teacher effectiveness, which in turn, raises students' achievement (Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988; Ascher & Frucher, 2001; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1977, 1997; Borman & Kimbal, 2005; Chard, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, 1998; Kaplan & Owings, 2002; Pajares, 1997). It has been found that "high quality teachers possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from their less effective peers, and these characteristics include knowledge on how to teach reading" (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004, p. 59). It is this knowledge that is very important in helping the struggling reader.

Another important characteristic that contributes to high quality teachers is teacher self-efficacy (Allinder, 1994; Bandura, 1977, 1997; Dellinger, 2002; Enochs, Smith, & Huinker, 2000; Krusher, 1993; Pajares, 1997; Riggs & Enochs, 1990; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Self-efficacy is one's belief about one's abilities (Cervone, 2000). These beliefs are part of the foundation upon which one's behaviors are based. These beliefs have been closely associated with Bandura's (1977, 1986) social-cognitive theory of efficacy. He defined efficacy as a person's belief in his own "capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. Efficacy is concerned, not with the skills one has, but with the judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Theoretically, efficacy has two constructs. The first construct, self-efficacy, pertains to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391), while the second construct, outcome-expectancy, refers to one's "judgment of the likely consequence . . . a behavior will produce" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). These judgments powerfully influence behavior, as "what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave" (Bandura, 1997, p. 25).

People's conceptions of their self-efficacy are developed and verified through various sources of information (Bandura, 1977). Bandura believed that one's self-efficacy is enhanced or raised in four basic ways: (1) performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal

persuasion, and (4) various physiological states. The first and most important influence on enhancing self-efficacy is the successful completion of a task. Mastery experiences are especially important for people with little confidence in their own ability to perform the required tasks. The second influence occurs through vicarious observational experiences where others model the desired behavior. For example, by seeing someone else succeed, the teacher might be encouraged to copy him or her (Bandura, 1977; 1997; Weigand & Stockham, 2000). The third way to raise one's self-efficacy is through verbal persuasion. This persuasion should be in the form of encouragement in order to talk the person through their insecurities and allow them to overcome their self-doubts (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Finally, various physiological states or reactions can influence one's self-efficacy. If a person has limited negative physiological reaction to a task, there will be little to decrease that person's self-efficacy relative to the task. However, if the negative physiological impact is severe (for example, nausea and vertigo at the thought of having to speak before a group), the person's belief in his/her ability to do the task will be significantly decreased (Starko & Schack, 1989).

The effects of self-efficacy are varied. Self-efficacy influences motivational and self-regulatory processes and influences one's thought patterns, emotions, attitudes and self-esteem. These, in turn, determine one's actions, behaviors or outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Self-efficacy determines how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles and how resilient they will be in the face of adverse situations (Bandura, 1997; Cervone & Scott, 1995; Wingfield & Ramsey, 1999).

The construct of self-efficacy pertains to all sorts of cognitive and behavioral tasks (e.g., smoking or engaging in sports activities); this also embraces the field of teaching (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). The term 'teaching self-efficacy' has been used in the literature to refer to a teacher's beliefs in his/her own ability to effectively impact student learning and bring about positive student change. Bandura believed a teacher's perception in his/her ability to teach (teacher self-efficacy) and to positively influence students' development (outcome-expectancy) is an important influence in the classroom which, in turn, influences student learning (Mayberry, 1971). According to the Educational Testing Service study *How Teaching Matters* (Wengliński, 2000), a teacher's knowledge of content is important, but how that content is taught will substantially affect student achievement. Teachers need to believe themselves efficient enough to use various methods of teaching in order to be effective (Vacca & Vacca, 2008).

Various studies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Kushner, 1993; Pajares, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998) have found that teachers' self-efficacies are revealed in the classroom in both negative and positive actions. Some

of the negative actions of a teacher's poor self-efficacy include: (1) using only lecture, (2) overusing worksheets, (3) reading the basal script, and (4) becoming frustrated when a student is not learning (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). On the other hand, some of the positive actions associated with high self-efficacy about one's teaching ability include: (1) using of a variety of teaching approaches and materials, (2) being less likely to criticize students, (3) using good classroom management skills (Hosford, 1980), and (4) being more flexible if the classroom routine is interrupted (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Mayberry's research (1971) suggests that if a teacher believes that s/he does not have the ability to effectively teach a certain subject or a specific component of that subject, his or her teaching will be affected. Then student achievement will also be affected (Goddard, 2004; Weasmer & Wood, 1998). Thus, positive self-beliefs lead to desirable practices in the classroom, while negative self-beliefs are seen as barriers both to desirable professional behaviors and to student achievement.

It is important to mention that teacher self-efficacy is situational and varies in levels and strengths depending on classroom activities, situations and/or the content being taught. High self-efficacy and outcome-expectancy in one area (science or math) does not necessarily mean that one has a similarly high belief in another area (language arts or classroom management). Therefore, self-efficacies and the outcome-expectancies held by teachers and/or teacher candidates need to be developed in each area of teaching.

In the teaching of reading, a teacher's confidence in his or her ability to teach reading well to all students can be defined as "reading teaching self-efficacy" (RTSE). The teacher believes s/he has the knowledge and skills needed to identify students with reading problems and is capable of using various methods to help them learn to read. "Reading teaching outcome-expectancy" (RTOE) is a teacher's belief in his or her ability to devise systematic effective instruction and intervention procedures in order to bring about a positive change on a student's reading development.

Given the importance of teacher beliefs on how they teach and on their ability to affect positive student change, the present study was undertaken to investigate the impact that a content area reading course had on 113 pre-certified A/C teachers' reading teaching self-efficacy (RTSE) and on their reading teaching outcome-expectancy (RTOE). Thus, the following two research questions were developed:

1. Does the completion of this reading course affect the Reading Teaching Self-Efficacy of alternative certification teacher candidates?
2. Does the completion of this reading course affect the Reading Teaching Outcome-Expectancy of alternative certification teacher candidates?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 113 (29 male and 84 female) students in an alternative certification program (A/C). Most of the students were Caucasian (73%) or African American (19%). Other ethnic groups were represented by 3% or less. The students' ages ranged from 25 to 48 years old ($M = 36$).

The A/C teacher candidates had previously earned a B.A. or B.S. in a field other than education but had decided to change career goals and obtain a teaching degree. Thus, they had come back to the university to work on their master's degree in education through the A/C program (see alternative certification program description below).

These A/C students were considered "precertified," as they had not yet taken any teacher certification tests required by the state. Twenty-one (19%) of the A/C teacher candidates were teachers of record and using choice 3A to complete their internship phase (See program description below). Fifty-one (45%) A/C teacher candidates were currently doing their one-semester internship, while 24 (21%) had already completed their internship the semester before taking the reading course. Seventeen (15%) A/C teacher candidates were just beginning the program and in the observation phase.

The A/C teacher candidates were working on different certifications. Sixty-three (56%) reported they were working on their Early Childhood-4 certification; 25 (22%) were working on their Grade 4-8 Certification; and 25 (22%) were working on their secondary certification. Ninety-eight (88%) of these A/C teacher candidates reported that this was their first reading course, while 15 (12%) had indicated that this was their second and last required literacy class.

Alternative Certification Program

The (A/C) program at the university, in northeastern Texas, spanned 13-14 months. The program has been organized into four phases: Observation, Preinternship, Internship, and Postinternship.

1. *Observation*—This phase included documentation of 20 hours of observation in a PreK- 12th grade instructional setting was required prior to the internship semester. Each A/C teacher candidates was required to write a brief narrative describing their observation experiences.
2. *Preinternship*—This phase began the semester prior to their internship. During this phase, A/C teacher candidates were enrolled full-time as students. During their coursework, they received professional development training that introduced them to models of teaching, curriculum development, classroom management, the

development of reading and study skills, motivation for student achievement and evaluation of student learning.

3. *Internship*—This phase marked the beginning of the A/C teacher candidate's field experience in the classroom. Once internship began, a partnership was formed between the program and the school district. During this phase, the A/C teacher candidates received supervision that consisted of structured guidance and regular ongoing support from a university supervisor and a school district mentor teacher. There were two choices for completing internship:
 - A. A year-long paid internship where the A/C teacher candidate was employed as the teacher of record in their certification area. This type of internship was dependent upon finding a position. It was the sole responsibility of the candidate to find an acceptable position. The A/C teacher candidates who took this direction were considered highly qualified in a specialized subject area, such as geometry or physics.
 - B. A one-semester unpaid student teaching internship where A/C teacher candidates were assigned to a mentor teacher's public school classroom. This was a full-day, five-days-per-week commitment.
4. *Postinternship*—This phase marked the final semester of the program. The last coursework was designed to help the A/C teacher candidates derive further meaning from their classroom experiences.

Course Description

According to the university's A/C program, the content area course is designed to focus the student's attention on teaching reading comprehension, concept development, and strategies for interacting with expository materials. The role of the teacher, the text, and the student are also examined in the learning process. Text analysis methods, teacher directed strategies, reader-based strategies, and literature are discussed as appropriate for all elementary, middle, and secondary grade levels.

Researchers and Setting

The three teacher researchers worked together to plan both the study and the content of the courses being taught. Syllabi and materials were shared. All three instructors used the same calendar, the same textbooks, and the same handouts so that the assignments and activities would be, if not the same, very similar. While teaching the course, the goal of these

three teacher researchers was the same: to provide students with an interactive, supportive, postbaccalaureate college methods course in teaching reading skills that apply to content area classrooms. Thus, the A/C teacher candidates would learn how to use techniques for teaching reading and how to teach different aspects of reading in content areas such as social studies, sciences, health, and business applications. The course merged the teaching of reading skills and learning strategies for effective teaching by content area teachers.

Survey Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the data and to help with the investigation: a background questionnaire and the Reading Teachers' Efficacy Instrument (RTEI; Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004). The first instrument, the background questionnaire, was a short information sheet that the researchers created to document basic background information on each A/C teacher candidate, such as ethnicity, race, and number of reading courses taken.

The second instrument was the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004), which was created to determine teacher candidates' beliefs in their ability to teach reading effectively and their beliefs in their ability to positively impact students' learning of reading. The instrument contained 16 statements, 2 factors and a Likert Scale modification with response choices ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Procedures to Collect the Data

For the precourse data, the A/C teacher candidates were given both survey instruments, the background questionnaire and the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004), on the first day of class. For the postcourse data, the A/C teacher candidates were again given the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari) survey instrument on the last day of class. The survey instruments were administered to the whole class and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The teacher/researcher told the A/C teacher candidates that there were no right or wrong answers. The survey examined their perceptions of their ability to use reading strategies to teach reading effectively in their content area subject matter and not their actual knowledge. The procedure that all three teacher/researchers followed was:

- Step 1:* The teacher/researchers explained the purpose of the instruments to their students in their individual classes.
- Step 2:* For the precourse data, copies of both survey instruments were distributed to each class member. For the postcourse date, only the RTEI was distributed.
- Step 3:* The teacher/researchers went over the background questionnaire to ensure that the A/C teacher candidates understood how to fill out the form.

- Step 4:* The teacher/researchers next had their students look at the RTEI. The Likert-scale was discussed so students understood the response options. They were told they would be using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to rate their beliefs about their teaching of reading.
- Step 5:* After going over the explanations, the teacher/researchers asked if anyone had any questions about the survey instruments before they began.
- Step 6:* Finally, the A/C teacher candidates were instructed to read carefully each question and/or statement before responding to it.

Data Analysis

In order to determine if the one summer reading course had an impact on A/C teacher candidates' beliefs, the teacher researchers examined the data from students in all three classes as one course. The researchers tried to control for differences in style of teaching, organization of subject matter, or structure of a class by using the same syllabus, textbooks, handouts, classroom activities, tests and projects. The focus of the study was to find out if the course content was having an impact on our A/C teacher candidates' knowledge and beliefs. Thus, the scoring rubric that accompanied the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) was used to examine the data, along with descriptive statistics and paired *t*-tests.

Results

Instrument Reliability

As the data from the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) was used to examine these A/C teacher candidates' belief, analyses first had to be done on the instrument to ensure that it was reliable. A reliability analysis was done on each subscale. It was found that for the RTSE subscale, the pretest alpha was .72 and the posttest alpha .74. Next, reliability was done on the RTOE subscale. It was found that the pretest alpha was .81 while the posttest alpha was .78. These results were high enough to consider the instrument reliable (Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991).

Using the original inquiry questions to guide our discussion, the following findings describe the effects of the course instruction intervention.

Question 1: Does the completion of this one reading course affect the reading teaching self-efficacy of alternative certification teacher candidates? To examine these A/C teacher candidates' beliefs in their ability to teach reading, the reading teaching self-efficacy (RTSE) subscale was used. The

scoring sheet that accompanies the RTEI (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) was used to determine if A/C teacher candidates had high beliefs (scores of 47-50), average beliefs (scores of 36-46) or low beliefs (scores of 10-35) in their ability to teach reading effectively. Forty-three A/C teacher candidates had low self-efficacy beliefs and four had high self-efficacy beliefs toward the teaching of reading before the course began (See Table 1). After the coursework was completed, only 12 A/C teacher candidates still had a low self-efficacy belief, while 12 had a high self-efficacy belief toward the teaching of reading.

Table 1: Belief Levels Held by A/C Teacher Candidates

	PRE-RTSE N=	POST-RTSE N=	PRE-RTOE N=	POST-RTO N=
Low Belief Level	43	12	7	1
Average Belief Level	66	77	84	45
High Belief Level	4	12	22	67

Because there was a change in the self-efficacy scores from pretest to posttest, the researchers used descriptive statistics to examine the mean scores of each statement. The examination of the data showed that, after the reading class was completed, these A/C teacher candidates achieved a higher mean score ($M = 32.72$; $SD = 3.4$) than they had at the beginning of the course ($M = 31.06$; $SD = 3.1$). Next, a simple paired t -test was calculated to see if the growth in mean scores was significant. As seen in Table 2 below, this difference was statistically significant ($p = .01$) indicating that, after the successful completion of the reading course, these A/C teacher candidates felt more confident in their ability to effectively teach reading and use strategies in content to help all students learn.

Table 2: Paired T -test of the Pre-Posttest on the RTSE and RTOE subscale

	PAIRED DIFFERENCES					t	df	SIG (2-TAILED)
	MEAN	SD	SEM	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL OF THE DIFFERENCE				
				LOWER	UPPER			
Pair 1: PreSE PostSE	-1.106	4.04	.379	-1.859	-.354	2.913	112	.004*
Pair 2: PreOE Post OE	-3.451	3.15	.296	-4.038	-2.865	-11.665	112	.000*

*Correlation is significant at the $p \leq 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

Question 2: Does the completion of this one reading course affect the reading teaching outcome-expectancy of alternative certification teacher candidates? The scoring rubric, which accompanied the RTEI (Szabo & Moh-tari, 2004), was used to determine what level of beliefs these A/C teacher

candidates' held. The scoring levels for the RTOE subscale, which looked at their belief in their ability to impact student learning and reading development, are: high beliefs (scores of 25-30), average beliefs (scores of 18-24), or low beliefs (scores of 6-17). Examining these A/C teacher candidates' outcome-expectancy belief responses, as seen in Table 1 above, showed there were 7 A/C teacher candidates who held low outcome-expectancy beliefs and 22 who held high outcome-expectancy beliefs. However, after the course was finished, only 1 A/C teacher candidate still held a low outcome-expectancy belief, while 67 A/C teacher candidates held high outcome-expectancy beliefs.

As there was an upward change, descriptive statistics for the RTOE subscale statements were examined. The analysis showed that these A/C teacher candidates, after the reading class was completed, achieved a higher mean score ($M = 25.39$; $SD = 2.43$) than they had at the beginning of the course ($M = 21.94$; $SD = 3.54$). Thus, a simple paired *t*-test was calculated run to see if the growth was significant. As seen in Table 2 above, the difference was statistically significant ($p = .01$), indicating that, after the successful completion of the reading course, these A/C teacher candidates felt more confident in their ability to influence student learning and reading development.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations that one should take into account while interpreting the results. First, even though there were 113 A/C participants, this is a small sample. Second, for the majority of these A/C teacher candidates, this was their first reading course. Effects might be different if they had had previous reading courses that extended their understanding of the teaching of reading and reading development. Third, the RTEI (Szabo & Mohktari, 2004) was a self-reported survey and how one feels today is not necessarily how one will feel tomorrow. Fourth, even though each of the three instructors used the same syllabus, the same materials, the same calendar, and the same texts and handouts, the personal bond with the members of the class and/or the instructor could have caused some minor variations.

Discussion and Conclusions

Alternative certification is an approved preparation program specifically designed as an alternative to a traditional undergraduate certification program, for individuals already holding at least a baccalaureate degree (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2008). Alternative certification is a relatively recent process being embraced by many states to relieve the current teacher shortage. While much is known about those certified

by traditional programs; there is little quality research about A/C teachers' beliefs (Allen, 2003).

In this age of accountability, NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) stresses student achievement. Student achievement has been linked to teacher self-efficacy (Weber & Omotani, 1994). Increasing teacher self-efficacy does not happen automatically; it has to be cultivated and nurtured (Bustos-Flores, Desjean-Perrotta, & Steinmetz, 2004). This study is congruent with past research on self-efficacy: coursework and knowledge can change one's beliefs about him/herself, which in turn, can affect the outcome-expectancies they have for their students (Dembro & Gibson, 1985; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Pressley et al., 2001; Weber, 1994). This is especially true when teaching reading or subjects in which reading is essential (Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2002).

Prior research has demonstrated that when both outcome-expectancy (belief in one's ability to affect student achievement) and teacher self-efficacy (the personal belief in a teacher's ability to teach) are combined and the results are positive, then it shows that a teacher's performance is enhanced (Vrugt, Langereis, & Hoogstraten, 1997). Studies have also shown that a lack of confidence in skills leads to low self-efficacy, which in turn leads to low performance (Bandura, 1986). Thus, when teachers are faced with teaching a class in which a reading skill is needed, and they do not feel competent to teach that skill, their teaching may not be a total success. Their ability with that skill or in that portion of the class may be compromised, which may lower both their outcome-expectancy and actual student achievement.

Findings from this study indicated that taking this content area reading course did have a positive impact on A/C teacher candidates' self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach needed reading skills to students. These findings also indicated that taking the content area reading course did have a positive impact on the A/C teacher candidate's outcome-expectancy beliefs in their ability to affect student learning positively. This change in turn affects outcome-expectancies for their students.

If teacher efficacy is such an important factor, the investigation of teacher beliefs about reading is vital. The use of effective instruction hinges on the teachers' efficacy beliefs about the teaching of reading and their knowledge about teaching reading. Much is known about those certified by traditional programs; however there is little quality research about the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers (Allen, 2003; Podgursky, 2004). Therefore, the question that stands to be considered is: With the limited amount of coursework taken before becoming certified, how effective is the A/C teacher?

Even though this is a preliminary examination of the data, this study seems to be congruent with past research by Hoy and Spero (2005), Goddard (2004), and Weber and Omotani (1994), in that knowledge gained from coursework can change teachers' beliefs about themselves and how

they will teach. The results of the study lead to the conclusion that after taking this reading course, the majority of these A/C teacher candidates believe they can effectively teach reading skills. It also demonstrates that these A/C teacher candidates believe they can have a positive impact on student learning and reading development.

Future Research

This content area course did provide for positive change in A/C teacher candidates' self-efficacy and outcome-expectancy beliefs. However, there were still many A/C teacher candidates who held an average level belief at the end of the course. Thus, as this was a preliminary examination of the data, the study raised new questions to be considered, such as these:

1. This study was done with A/C precertified candidates for whom this reading course was their first reading methods course. Would each reading course taken subsequently have a similar effect?
2. Which classroom activities help build one's efficacy toward the teaching of reading?
3. Are there differences related to demographics (age, prior schooling, gender, race, certification area, grade levels taught, phase in the program, etc.)?
4. Why do some A/C teacher candidates still have low levels of self-efficacy and outcome-expectancy?
5. Why are so many A/C teacher candidates' self-efficacies and outcome-expectancies still at the average level? Would giving interns assignments that have them working one-on-one and in small groups with students raise their self-efficacy and outcome-expectancy scores?

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CONSENSUS BUILDING THROUGH THE LENS OF Q-METHODOLOGY: DEFINING PROFILES FOR EFFECTIVE MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LITERACY PRACTITIONERS

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Abstract

In an effort to provide a more solid foundation when designing professional development, this project supports the use of Q-methodology as an appropriate tool for defining the shared belief profiles of potential participants. Q-methodology is a research method used in psychology and the social studies for investigating viewpoints of participants on a particular topic. The research suggests that shared beliefs are an essential component of effective professional development. With this in mind, the overarching research question that guided this study investigated if Q-methodology is a viable research tool when seeking to define belief profiles in support of planning meaningful professional development. This project took the format of a two-phase study focused on the integration of technology into the literacy curriculum. Each participant was given a set of 40 statements to rank in order from least to most important by using a Q-sort grid. Analysis of the data revealed three belief profiles, and most importantly, the notion that the teachers most likely to integrate technology with literacy instruction held beliefs aligned with those of technologists. The main finding resulting from this study suggests that Q-methodology is a viable tool to use when defining shared beliefs. In particular, Q-methodology may provide the first step when planning for meaningful professional development.

Introduction

Educators must expand their mission of preparing students for their futures by keeping a mindful eye on the new demands still unimagined in the professions and workplaces of tomorrow. As this mission is expanded to include preparing teachers to integrate new technologies in their classrooms, one direction must turn to improving the relevancy and meaningfulness of professional development offered to them. That is to say that the topics for professional development need to be applicable to this new technological classroom and relevant to the individual practitioners' developmental level. Moreover, professional development should be presented in such a way that teachers will be motivated and gain the confidence to take advantage of the technological tools that are, or will be, present in their future classrooms.

Currently, there is a growing emphasis on the need for professional development within the literacy community. Indeed, mandated professional development hours have created an ever-expanding menu of growth opportunities for the educators. At best, educators will approach these experiences "seriously and systematically;" while, in turn, these experiences should be engaging for the participants, encouraging them to work together, to increase the "power and authority of their shared work" (Griffin, 1991, p. 244).

This is a mighty task, as research has shown that less than 10% of teachers implement new ideas learned in traditional workshop settings (Joyce & Showers, 1988). However, collaborative relationships have been found to be instrumental in facilitating professional growth in teachers. Gee (2003) suggested that "discourse" allows for the building of relationships of this sort and he purported:

Discourses often constitute a "community of practice," that is, they are ongoingly engaged in and bonded together through a common set of endeavors within which they may have distinctive, but overlapping functions. . . . Such communities of practice reproduce themselves through "apprenticing" newcomers, in thought, word, and deed, to their characteristic social languages, cultural models, and social practices. (p. 37)

Taken together, these two insights anchor a belief that professional development should shift away from solely providing content for improved teaching and focus on building meaningful relationships amongst teachers.

In support of this goal, creating meaningful relationships amongst participants in professional development experiences, two researchers investigated a particular research methodology. With regard to specific issues of literacy, the researchers investigated the usefulness of Q-methodology in uncovering belief profiles. In so doing, the researchers hoped to construct an avenue toward more meaningful professional development, based upon

stronger relationships amongst the participants and a greater understanding of their attitudes and beliefs.

Significance of the Study

We saw many major areas of significance evolving from our analysis. Without a doubt, seminars abound that understand the nature of technological tools; however, what is lacking is an authentic understanding of the participants who will use these tools. Specifically, we questioned their interests, skills, and beliefs. Moreover, we pondered if indeed there was a profile for such participants.

The research question addressed through this study focused on belief profiles of educators and their integration of technology into the literacy curriculum. Although the researchers share a particular passion for this topic and find the results of interest, they view the significance of the study through a broader lens focused upon the potential of understanding belief profiles to advance relationships within professional development. To this end, the researchers have detailed the procedure as a guide for others to implement the methodology while investigating belief profiles for varying interests within the discipline of literacy.

Theoretical Framework

Professional Development

To better serve the needs of teachers in their quest to integrate technology meaningfully, professional development should be thoughtfully constructed. Ultimately, professional development should establish environments conducive for nurturing collegial relationships. Sanders and Schwab (2001) identified “that education is a deeply human process, and that those who teach both need and deserve psychological and social support to keep their energies focused upon what is essential” (p. 277).

The most effective models of teacher professional development must move beyond the traditional model based on the transmission of information from someone in authority. Research suggests that professional development should engage and empower teachers to have a stronger voice in directing their own learning (Educational Research Service, 1998; Lyon & Pinnell, 2001; Rob, 2000). Adults learn best in situations that reflect a constructivist view of learning. According to Zepeda (2002), learning involves a transfer of ideas from a person who portrays a significant amount of knowledge on a particular topic to one who may not be as well-versed. However, the transfer of ideas is only part and parcel of this constructivist process that also involves personal reflection on ideas, experiences and points of view.

Zepeda (2002) further stated, “When a constructivist perspective is applied to teacher learning, a key focus becomes how teachers learn to make critically reflective judgments in the midst of action and how they subsequently change their actions in response to new insights” (p. 816).

The ultimate model of professional development will result in the formulation of learning communities among staff members involved in the experience. Shamburg (2004) also found:

An approach to professional development that emphasizes the social dimensions of learning from classroom teachers . . . would facilitate learning channels among professional developers and teachers, with an emphasis on formalizing opportunities for teachers to share and reflect with each other. (p. 242)

Q-Methodology

Stephensen (1953) and Valenta and Wigger (1997) verify that the goal of Q-methodology is to uncover different patterns of thought. Q-methodology provides the vehicle for uncovering and identifying the range of participant opinions regarding a specific topic of investigation. Valenta and Wigger suggested a design to include the following: Stage one—development of the statements to be sorted, Stage two—sorting of the statements by participants, and Stage three—analysis and interpretation of the data.

As noted by Brown (1996), the instrumental basis of Q-methodology is the Q-sort technique, which conventionally involves the rank-ordering of a set of statements from agree to disagree. Usually the statements are taken from interviews and are grounded in concrete existence.

Related Literature

Integrating Technology with Literacy Instruction

Leu (1997) has been one of the key informants and supporters of the literacy community and beyond regarding the integrating literacy instruction with information technology. Leu coined the term “deixis” to describe the changing nature of literacy, as we know it. What is unique about Leu’s term is that it refers mainly to the time and speed at which the nature of literacy and literacy instruction is continually changing. Leu noted that during the course of the last 20 years, this rapidly changing nature has been the most rapid in the history of literacy. As can be gleaned from this brief description of the nature of literacy as deixis, one can easily realize how complex the nature of literacy has become and will become in the future of literacy education.

Leu (2000b) stated that technology needs to be integrated into the literacy curriculum to meet the demands of increased globalization of world economies and systems of communication. If educators hold a pragmatic

philosophy of teaching, then their goal is to prepare students for their literacy futures. The current trend is that the world is becoming globalized with much help from the industry of information and communication technologies (Leu, 2000a).

Literacy students of today will be faced with many challenges that involve using the Internet on a daily basis in order to accomplish the tasks on which they are working (Leu, 2000a). As adults, these students will be required to access and locate information needed to solve the problems to which they are assigned. They will need to critically evaluate whether the information they retrieve is valuable and worthy in helping to reach their potential goals. They will ultimately have to report their findings and their completed work to their peers and their supervisors. In order for our students to be prepared for this environment, they will need complex and varied literacy skills, including critical literacy, comprehension, and effective communication skills.

Mossberger, Tolbert, and Sansbury (2003) concurred that in order to possess the skills needed to thrive in the information age; one must be skilled in three areas. First, a sufficient degree of technical competence is needed in order to access information. Second, the ability to analyze and evaluate pertinent information is necessary as information is continuously available. Third, a high level of basic literacy skills is essential for both technical competence and critical analysis and evaluation of information. Further, Mossberger et al. (2003) suggested that the information-literate person must:

determine the nature and extent of the information needed, access needed information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her own knowledge base and value system, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, accessing and using information ethically and legally. (p. 41)

Objectives, Goals, and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the possibilities that exist when Q-methodology is employed to uncover belief profiles. This purpose aligned with the overarching research question that guided this study by investigating if Q-methodology is a viable research tool when seeking to define belief profiles in support of planning meaningful professional development. The four specific research questions that provided direction for this study included:

1. What are the belief profiles of undergraduate and graduate students in literacy with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?
2. What are the potential belief profiles of undergraduate and graduate students in technology with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?
3. What are the commonalities and differences of these belief profile sets, if any?
4. What are the potential belief profiles of expert groups with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?

The purpose of this study was to expand the knowledge base for integrating technology with literacy instruction. This study explored the beliefs of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in courses from two different disciplines (technology and literacy) at two urban universities, as well as classroom teachers who were nationally recognized for their expertise with integrating technology in the literacy curriculum. Ultimately, this study sought to investigate if there was a potential profile associated with teachers who are committed to integrating technology in meaningful ways while supporting the acquisition of literacy skills.

Methodology

Participants

The potential participant groups for this study were purposefully selected according to Q-Methodology guidelines. Brown (2007) suggests that the goal in acquiring the Q sample is to aim for representativeness. Since the application of Q technique narrows responses into functional types, the number of participants is generally small. Individual participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous.

In phase one of this study, the participants included 13 graduate students in technology, 15 undergraduate students in literacy, and 1 graduate student in technology/literacy. The participant groups were selected based upon their involvement in a particular type of university course. For example, students in technology were enrolled in a course focusing on educational technology applications. Students in literacy were enrolled in a course focusing on literacy instructional methods. The single participant in technology/literacy was enrolled in a course designed to emphasize the nature of integrating technology into the literacy curriculum.

In phase one of this study, additional participants were added and included 10 undergraduate students in technology, 5 undergraduate students in literacy, and 9 graduate students in literacy. A special category of experts was also included and was comprised of 3 classroom teachers, who were

nationally recognized for their expertise with integrating technology in the literacy curriculum. In addition, 1 doctoral student from a noted university research team focused on investigating the integration of technology with literacy instruction was also included.

Instrumentation

The concourse used for this Q-sort consisted of 40 statements taken from dissertation research conducted on the practices and beliefs of exemplary primary grade literacy teachers and their integration of technology (See Figure 1). The Q-sort activity asked each participant to sort 40 individual cards representing the concourse of statements onto an enlarged Q-grid data sheet (See Figure 2). Each participant was asked to force rank the statements from -5 to +5, with the negative number being of least importance to them

Figure 1. Concourse

-
1. Integrating technology fosters mechanical operation of the computer for the teacher.
 2. Integrating technology fosters mechanical operation of the computer for the student.
 3. Integrating technology fosters active learning for the student.
 4. Integrating technology fosters visual literacy for the student.
 5. Integrating technology fosters collaboration and team building for the teacher.
 6. Integrating technology fosters collaboration and team building for the student.
 7. Integrating technology fosters higher level questioning by the teacher.
 8. Integrating technology fosters higher level questioning by the student.
 9. Integrating technology fosters construction of new knowledge for the teacher.
 10. Integrating technology fosters construction of new knowledge for the student.
 11. Integrating technology fosters increased student motivation.
 12. Integrating technology fosters increased teacher motivation.
 13. Integrating technology foster individualized instruction.
 14. Integrating technology fosters family involvement.
 15. Integrating technology fosters the development of oral communication skills for students.
 16. Integrating technology fosters the development of global communication for the teacher.
 17. Integrating technology fosters the development of global communication for the student.
 18. Integrating technology fosters modeling/demonstration on the part of the teacher.
 19. Integrating technology fosters modeling/demonstration on the part of the student.
 20. Integrating technology fosters research on the part of the teacher.
 21. Integrating technology fosters research on the part of the student.
 22. Integrating technology fosters monitoring on the part of the teacher.
 23. Integrating technology fosters content integration.
 24. Integrating technology fosters a democratic classroom where the teacher acts as a facilitator.
 25. Integrating technology fosters "fun" in the classroom.
 26. Integrating technology fosters an expansion of instructional topics in the classroom.
 27. Integrating technology fosters the ability for teachers to stay current with new technologies.
 28. Integrating technology fosters the ability for students to stay current with new technologies.
 29. Integrating technology fosters life-long learning for the teacher.
 30. Integrating technology fosters life-long learning for students.

Figure 1. Concourse (continued)

-
- 31. Integrating technology fosters creativity for teachers.
 - 32. Integrating technology fosters creativity for students.
 - 33. Integrating technology fosters authentic learning experiences for the student.
 - 34. Integrating technology fosters instructional support by the teacher.
 - 35. Integrating technology fosters instructional support for the teacher.
 - 36. Integrating technology enhances existing classroom activities.
 - 37. Integrating technology fosters the development of new instructional approaches for the teacher.
 - 38. Integrating technology fosters the discovery of new uses for technology tools for the teacher.
 - 39. Integrating technology fosters the discovery of new uses for technology tools for the student.
 - 40. Integrating technology fosters the realization that meaningful professional development is an ongoing process for teachers.
-

and the positive number having the greatest importance to them. After ranking the statements, participants were instructed to record the number of the statement with their choice of its placement onto a smaller version of the Q-grid data sheet (See Figure 2).

PQ Method 2.11 (Atkinson, 1992) software was the statistical tool used to enter the Q-sort data in an electronic manner. The PQ Method 2.11 software computed correlations among and between sorts, as well

Figure 2. Q-Grid Data Sheet

After you have made your placements on the large grid,
please record the numbers on this data sheet.
Number should not be placed in the grey areas.

-	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

Thank you for your participation.

as allowed the researchers to rotate the factors in a variety of ways. Factors in Q-Method can be defined as categories that emerge and reflect the subjectivity of the participants' responses to these Q-sorting activities.

Procedures

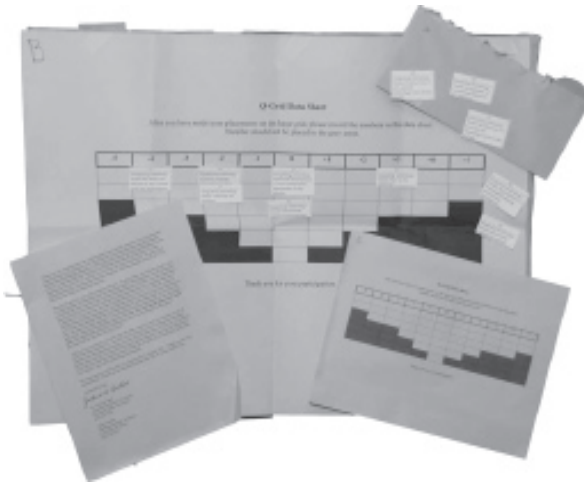
Phase One. Stage One: A concourse was developed which consisted of 40 statements taken from dissertation research conducted on the practices and beliefs of exemplary primary grade literacy teachers and their integration of technology.

Stage Two: Appropriate research sites were secured and consisted of educators dedicated to literacy and/or technology as evidenced in their enrollment in a university course of either nature. Q-sort packages were created for each participant (See Figure 3). The Q-sort activity was systematically administered to each participant in a face-to-face setting following the protocol for administration (See Figure 4).

Figure 3. Q-Sort Participant Packet

Items included:

- Enlarged Q-Grid Data Sheet
- Protocol document
- Concourse statement cards
- Q-Grid Data Participant recording sheet



Stage Three: The researchers entered and analyzed the concourse data with PQ Method 2.11 software. Prior to entering the data, each participant data sheet was coded according to their area (technology or literacy), their educational standing (Graduate or Undergraduate), and their institution. The participant's ranking of the 40 concourse statements were entered one by one into the PQ Method 2.11 software database. The researchers titled the PQ study "TechLit." Data was analyzed using Principal Components and Varimax Rotation on the PQ Method 2.11 menu of options.

Phase Two. Stage One: The researchers employed the same concourse of statements as used in phase one of this study.

Figure 4. Protocol for Administration of Q-Sort

Good evening and thank you for your time.

I am involved in a research project that investigates the thoughts of graduate students in education. In a few moments, I will be briefly describing the nature of the study and data collection and will invite you to participate if you are willing. I will be passing out a consent form for you to sign indicating your willingness to participate in this study. If you do agree, then you will also be receiving directions and materials to complete a 15 minute activity in the next few minutes. Participating in this activity is risk free and your responses will remain anonymous.

During this activity, you will complete a Q-sort. As part of this, you will be asked to sort a certain number of statements onto the enclosed chart. The statements will be displayed on individual cards that you will manipulate, place onto the chart, and then record your choices onto a separate data form. As you can see (provide a visual for the chart), the chart extends from a (-) number to a (+) number with the negative number being of least importance to you and the positive number being most important to you. Please note that the chart has a limited number of spots under each value. You are asked to read the statements on the cards and rank them. This is a forced choice activity and **only one card can be placed into each spot**. We realize that at times it is difficult to narrow your choices to the spaces provided, but we ask that you try to do so.

Please take a moment to complete your response to the consent form indicating your choice for participating in this study and return your consent form to me.

If you have chosen to participate in this activity, please take a folder as you hand in your signed consent form and begin the activity. As you are completing the sort, please feel to raise your hand and I will come to you for individual clarification as needed... After you have placed your cards onto the chart, please record your choices on the Q-Grid Data Sheet. Recording your choices involves writing the statement numbers into the appropriate spaces on your Q-Grid Data Sheet.

When you are finished please return all materials to your file folder and return your folder to me.

Thank you.

Stage Two: The researchers secured additional participants including a group of graduate students in literacy, a group of undergraduate students in literacy, an additional group of graduate students in literacy, a group of undergraduate students in technology, as well as an expert group in technology and literacy. The Q-sort packages remained the same as in the initial phase of the study and administration was also conducted face-to-face with the student groups. The connection to expert groups was made via email (See Figure 5) with the Q-sort packet distribution and completion conducted by United States mail.

Stage Three: The researchers entered and analyzed the concourse data with PQ Method 2.11 software. Prior to entering the data, each participant data sheet was coded according to their area (technology or literacy), and

Figure 5

On Tuesday, July 24, 2007, at 09:29 AM, Kristine L Still wrote:

Dear potential participant,

My colleague and I are conducting research that involves identifying profiles for teachers most likely to integrate technology in meaningful ways in their classrooms. We are seeking your help since you have been identified as a model for using best practices when integrating technology with literacy. We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to complete a 15 minute sorting activity that would involve prioritizing belief statements about technology integration.

If you would be able to complete such a task, please respond to this email message on or before August 6th, 2007. If you are available to complete the task, please also include your mailing address with your response so that we can forward the necessary hard copy materials to you.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Professionally,

Dr. Kristine Lynn Still

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their expert group affiliation or educational standing as in phase one. The participant's ranking of the 40 concourse statements were entered one by one into the PQ Method 2.11 software database. The researchers titled the PQ study "TechLit 2." Data was analyzed using Principal Components and Varimax Rotation on the PQ Method 2.11 menu of options.

Limitations. After completion of phase one, the researchers noted three limitations, all of which dealt with the participant groups. First, only one tech/lit graduate student participated. Second, the participants included graduate students in technology and undergraduate students in literacy. Therefore, the researchers questioned if the dichotomy was due to tech/lit characteristics or to undergraduate/graduate characteristics. Finally, there was a lack of an "expert group" in technology and literacy integration to more thoroughly delineate the initial profile suggested by the tech/lit graduate student. After analysis of these limitations, the researchers modified the design of the study by including the additional participants as noted above in phase two of the research project.

Discussion of Research Findings

Phase One

The following table represents the total number of participants in phase one of the study and where their responses were reflected, based upon the three major factors of data. This data set acknowledged that the graduate students in a course focused on integrating technology with literacy aligned on the same factor as those students enrolled in a graduate course focused on technology. What is remarkable to note is that none of the undergraduate students in literacy aligned with this same factor.

PARTICIPANTS	FACTOR #1	FACTOR #2	FACTOR #3
Graduate Students Tech/Lit <i>n</i> = 1	1	0	0
Graduate Students Tech <i>n</i> = 13	7	2	3
Undergraduate Students Lit <i>n</i> = 15	0	6	8

The following tables for Factor #1, Factor #2, and Factor #3 represent the data as it separated into three groupings during phase one of this study. These tables indicate the top three favorable choices and the bottom choice selected while participating in a forced ranking of the 40 statements on the concourse. According to these tables, each factor portrayed a particular type of teaching belief.

Factor #1 suggested a belief that technology could be a vehicle for motivating students to work independently if scaffolded with prompts from the teacher encouraging the students to think at higher levels while engaging in authentic learning tasks.

Factor #1

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters individualized instruction

Integrating technology fosters higher level questioning by the teacher

Integrating technology fosters authentic learning experiences for the students

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters mechanical operation of the computer for the teacher

Factor #2 suggested a belief that focused on enhancing the existing classroom by increasing teacher motivation and allowing for student research opportunities. Much like Factor #1, Factor #2 did not emphasize the importance of mechanical operation of the computer by the teacher.

Factor #2

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology enhances existing classroom activities

Integrating technology fosters increased teacher motivation

Integrating technology fosters research by the student

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters mechanical operation of the computer for the teacher

Factor #3 suggested a belief that focused on enabling an atmosphere of fun and discovery within the classroom. It is interesting to note here that this belief set did not encourage technology integration outside the four walls of the classroom.

Factor #3

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters fun in the classroom

Integrating technology fosters the discovery of new uses for teachers

Integrating technology fosters the discovery of new uses for students

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters family involvement

Of the 40 statements in the concourse (See Figure 1), the following 7 statements did not aid in differentiating any of the factors during phase one of the study. However, there was a consensus of agreement among all factor groups for these statements.

Positive or

Negative

Statement

- | | |
|---|---|
| + | Integrating technology fosters active learning for students |
| + | Integrating technology fosters visual literacy for students |
| - | Integrating technology fosters the development of oral communication for students |
| + | Integrating technology fosters creativity for students |
| - | Integrating technology fosters instructional support by the teacher |
| - | Integrating technology fosters instructional support for the teacher |
| + | Integrating technology fosters the development of new approaches for teachers |

Phase Two

The following table represents the total number of participants in phase two of the study. In this phase, four factors emerged and this table indicates where those responses were reflected, based upon these four major factors of data. This data set acknowledged that as we expanded the tech/lit population to include an expert group, the majority of this population also loaded onto Factor #1 as was the case in phase one of this study.

Participants	Factor #1	Factor #2	Factor #3	Factor #4
Expert Group <i>n</i> = 4	3	0	1	1
Graduate Students Literacy <i>n</i> = 9	0	3	4	2
Undergraduate Students Literacy <i>n</i> = 6	1	1	1	2
Undergraduate Students Technology <i>n</i> = 10	0	3	3	2

The following tables for Factor #1, Factor #2, Factor #3 and Factor #4 represent the data as it separated into four groupings during phase two of this study.

These tables indicate the top three favorable choices and the bottom choice selected while participating in a forced ranking of the 40 statements on the concourse. According to these tables, each factor portrayed a particular type of teaching belief.

Factor #1 suggested a belief that honored an authentic learning environment, that if integrated with technology, would most certainly foster active learning for the student. In addition, teacher motivation in this belief profile appeared to be supported by the teacher's ability and interest in providing authentic active learning opportunities for their students rather than on the technical expertise possessed by the teacher. Clearly this belief profile supported student engagement as opposed to focusing on teacher skill development.

Factor #1

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters authentic learning experiences for the student.

Integrating technology fosters increased teacher motivation.

Integrating technology fosters active learning for the student.

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters mechanical operation of the computer for the teacher.

Factor #2 suggested a belief profile very similar to that found in Factor #1. However, fun in the classroom was an additional characteristic that emerged from this set of responses. What is of note in this example is the lack of interest in teachers communicating globally through technology which does not seem to align with their desire to provide active learning experiences for their students. As a teacher prepares these types of activities, one would assume that communicating to a wide audience would yield more resources.

Factor #2

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters fun in the classroom.

Integrating technology fosters increased teacher motivation.

Integrating technology fosters active learning for the student.

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters the development of global communication for the teacher.

Factor #3 suggested a belief profile that technology affords the opportunity for both teachers and their students to remain current in their respective domains of interest. Ironically, this ability for students to stay current is somewhat isolated due to the fact that collaboration and team building was the bottom choice.

Factor #3

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters the ability for students to stay current.

Integrating technology fosters creativity for teachers.

Integrating technology fosters the ability for teachers to stay current.

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters collaboration and team building for students.

Factor #4 suggested a belief profile that technology was dedicated to aiding teacher development through life-long learning where they would have the opportunity to acquire new approaches, as well as stay current. It is perhaps not surprising that technology fostering a democratic classroom was the bottom choice in this profile because clearly teacher development was ranked higher than student development.

Factor #4

Top 3 Choices

Integrating technology fosters life-long learning for the teacher.

Integrating technology fosters the development of new approaches for the teacher.

Integrating technology fosters the ability for teachers to stay current.

Bottom Choice

Integrating technology fosters a democratic classroom.

Of the 40 statements in the concourse (See Figure 1), the following 3 statements did not aid in differentiating any of the factors during phase two of the study. However interestingly enough, there was a consensus of agreement among all factor groups for these statements.

Positive or

Negative

Statement

- Integrating technology fosters higher level questioning by the teacher.
- Integrating technology fosters increased student motivation.
- + Integrating technology fosters creativity for students.

This table illustrates a compilation of the factor loadings, or in other words, a break down of how the statements were categorized by all sub-groups from both phases one and two of this study. The most significant as well as recurring finding through the entire study is that the expert group and the graduate student tech/lit participants continually loaded onto Factor #1 along with the graduate students in technology. On the contrary, it is noteworthy that the graduate students in literacy did not align with either of these groups on Factor #1. What this suggests is that the graduate students in literacy hold a different belief profile than the expert, tech/lit graduate students, and technology graduate students.

Participants #4	Factor #1	Factor #2	Factor #3	Factor #4
Expert Group <i>n</i> = 4	3	0	1	0
Graduate Student Tech/Lit <i>n</i> = 1	1	0	0	–
Graduate Students Literacy <i>n</i> = 9	0	3	4	2
Graduate Students Technology <i>n</i> = 13	7	2	3	–
Undergraduate Students Literacy <i>n</i> = 21	1	7	9	2
Undergraduate Students Technology <i>n</i> = 10	0	3	3	2

Discussion of Research Findings as Related to the Research Questions

The researchers revisited the content of the four research questions that guided this investigation as a context for the discussion and implications of their findings.

What are the belief profiles of undergraduate and graduate students in literacy with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?

Although there was no conclusive individual profile, the researchers noted that graduate students in literacy loaded onto many of the same factors as those of undergraduate students in literacy. Statement characteristics from these factors suggested a lack of technological sophistication. Moreover, they portrayed participants who are more concerned with the concrete operations of day-to-day classroom literacy events.

What are the potential belief profiles of undergraduate and graduate students in technology with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?

In contrast to their colleagues in the literacy field, undergraduate and graduate students in technology did not appear to load onto the same factors. There was a significant loading of graduate students in technology as opposed to undergraduate students in technology onto Factor #1, which exemplified a more accomplished approach to teaching with technology in meaningful ways. Perhaps this is not surprising when one looks closely at undergraduate technology educational courses. Overwhelmingly, the technology skills taught in these types of courses rely heavily on those skills employed by the teacher for clerical purposes and instruction. In contrast, the graduate students in technology focused their use of these innovative tools for the improvement and enhancement of student learning in their classrooms.

What are the commonalities and differences of these belief profile sets, if any?

There were obvious commonalities and differences between the suggested profiles of the participants in both phase one and phase two of this investigation. Indeed, Factors #1, #2, and #3 appeared in both phases of this study, whereas a fourth new and completely unique factor emerged in phase two. What this suggested was with additional participants, the loadings from each individual were more aligned and converged closely around each factor. In other words, the factors were better able to differentiate the typology of the participants encountered in this study. Moreover, with the appearance of the fourth and new factor in phase two, there were fewer consensus statements which were common to many participants. This supported the researchers' notions that a more distinct profile of each factor would emerge after the analysis in phase two.

What are the potential belief profiles of expert groups with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction?

The expert group loaded noticeably onto Factor #1, which defined a more abstract thinker who looks toward the future and what their students will need in their life as adults in the 21st century and beyond. As we visited Factors #1 through #4, the skills moved from the abstract (Factor #1) to those more concrete and applicable to day-to-day classroom operations (Factor #4).

Implications and Future Research Directions

The researchers in this study began this project by questioning the usefulness of Q-methodology as a viable tool for investigating and defining belief profiles. Their investigation led them to explore the readiness of literacy practitioners as a target audience for planning professional

development focused on meaningful integrations of technology into the literacy curriculum. When the researchers investigated the participants in this particular study, they questioned if there would be distinct profiles and if there were, where would literacy teachers coalesce? The findings of this study suggest that there are indeed the beginnings of potential profiles for those most likely to integrate technology in meaningful ways in the literacy curriculum. Surprisingly, the literacy experts were closely aligned to the profiles of technologists, while the graduate literacy teachers did not have a single participant who loaded onto that same factor.

The researchers would like to offer two implications that emerged from their investigation. First, with regard to integrating technology with literacy instruction, the teachers most likely to integrate technology in skillful ways along with a literacy focus are more often highly skilled in their uses of the technological tools available to them. This implication suggests that looking more closely at the experiences of these literacy experts as classroom teachers would be useful. This may be a viable path to offering the necessary scaffolding to design and facilitate meaningful professional development. Specifically, professional development is needed that focuses on how to authentically integrate technology in meaningful ways into the literacy curriculum while providing the essential skills needed for success in the 21st century.

The final implication that emerged concerns the use of Q-Methodology as a means for discovering belief profiles in an effort to design effective professional development across multiple disciplines. The researchers suggest that Q-Methodology does allow for a more defined understanding of belief profiles. What this further implies is that when beliefs are at the forefront of the professional development design process, a more thoughtful experience for participants may result.

Authors' Note

The authors wish to express gratitude to Dr. Stephen Brown at Kent State University for his assistance with analyzing the data as well as his overall support of the project.

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SCHOOL REFORM: AN INSIDE VIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

After being involved with several school reform efforts, it became evident to the researchers there are many issues that may inhibit the success of school reform. The purpose of this study was: (a) to examine the issues and concerns of teachers across different professional development experiences, and (b) to examine the types of behaviors that teachers exhibit during professional development experiences that may prevent school reform. From the analyses of the data, e.g., observation field notes, teacher interviews and surveys, two themes with supporting categories were identified: (a) too much going on, and (b) developing coping behaviors. The results indicated that teachers across different professional development experiences in this study were overwhelmed with new initiatives; therefore, there was too much going on for school reform to occur. As a result, the teachers developed a variety of coping behaviors to deal with the issues and concerns as they participated in the professional development.

Scholars throughout the decades have noted our educational system struggles to make curricular changes that address the needs of teachers and children. In fact, the way that literacy and other facets of instruction are implemented in schools has basically remained unchanged (Goodlad, 2002; Teale, Zolt, Yokota, Glasswell, & Gambrell, 2007). As researchers, we have completed several extensive professional development programs focused on improving literacy instruction. After conducting one of these programs with two inner-city elementary schools, we were troubled by the lack of reform that was actually occurring. This was especially significant considering the two schools were receiving approximately \$1 million in

federal funding to support their professional growth and the improvement of their school literacy programs. The purpose of this study was to examine how the issues and concerns that teachers have about professional development programs impact their engagement in these programs.

Literature Review

Adult learning theory creates the framework that supports this study. Knowles (1980) described adults as reflective, problem-oriented learners who can direct, or at least assist in, the planning of their learning. Adults have a collection of life experiences that are a rich source for learning. Furthermore, adults are motivated by internal factors that affect their desire to learn, such as reaching a personal goal in a job or activity.

When teachers are engaged in learning, they need time to process any new concepts that may affect the way they teach. Time allows them to reflect on what they are learning and how it contributes to their personal and practical knowledge of teaching, and it allows them a chance to share their successes and concerns with colleagues. Through reflection and collaboration teachers are able to make active, conscious decisions based on their beliefs and practices (Bean and Morewood, 2007; Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Cooper & Boyd, 1998; Dewey, 1933; Robb, 2000; VanDeWeghe & Varney, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

Adults' varied life experiences may affect how teachers perceive their need to participate in professional development activities. Their own professional concerns and needs are individual and may require different types of support to be successful (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Oja, 1991). As a result, professional development should not only focus on common school needs, but it should also support the individual needs of teachers (Duke & Stiggins, 1986; Guskey, 2003; Licklider, 1997; Marzano, 2003). Further, teachers' professional development activities often take place in a social context (Hargreaves, 1995; Little, 1986; Mezirow, 2000; Standerford, 1997; Taylor, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) where cultural and economic relationships of power and personal interests are at stake (Cervero & Wilson, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Sarason (1971) pointed out that the social aspect of collaboration promotes opportunities for teachers to reflect on their learning and clarify new concepts. In the process, Mezirow (1996) asserted that the context is transformed to create individual meaningful experiences for the learner.

Even though much is known about the important factors that contribute to teachers' successful implementation of any new professional development plan designed for school wide improvement, some school reform movements continue to fail. Therefore, it is important to examine what teachers

do and think while involved in professional development. This qualitative study was conducted to examine data collected over time in several different settings and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the issues and concerns of the teachers across these different school experiences that inhibited their individual professional growth and school reform to occur?
2. What types of behaviors did the teachers in this study exhibit during the professional development programs?

Procedure

Over the past 10 years, we have worked as consultants in numerous educational settings to improve literacy instruction. These were longitudinal (2 - 3 year) projects that included: (a) two schools that had received federal grant funding to focus on literacy for 2 years, (b) two schools involved as partners in a professional development network with a university for 3 years, and c) two schools in different school districts that developed new literacy programs over a period of 2 years.

During these professional development experiences, various data were systematically collected, since triangulation of data is necessary to validate findings (Creswell, 2002). The researchers collected observational field notes in every classroom involved in the professional development programs. Before observations began, we attended and participated in school faculty meetings. We also visited each classroom once to introduce ourselves to the students. Classroom observations included noting how the teachers organized and implemented instruction based on information presented during professional development meetings. Each classroom was visited twice during the fall and spring of each year for each professional development experience. Often we acted as participant observers. These efforts were intended to examine how the teachers carried out their daily instructional routines (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Interviews of 45 classroom teachers (K-5) and 6 school administrators were conducted in the fall and spring of each school year for each professional development experience. The interview format was open-ended and included items that encouraged teachers to reflect on their use of any new instructional activities in their classrooms pertaining to the professional development.

Teachers were also asked to complete surveys that gave the teachers the opportunity to openly describe their thoughts and feelings while participating in the professional development. Survey data were completed at the end of each year across the different experiences. The surveys were anonymous to add validity to the responses that were given. The survey included two

types of items: (a) questions using Likert scales, (e.g., To what degree did the activities support your acquisition of strategies to support best practices in reading?), and (b) short response items, (e.g., What content topics do you feel need to be added to support your professional development with best practices in reading? Describe how you have grown professionally).

During and after conducting these interviews and surveys, we spent considerable time reflecting on the data to identify what was happening in the schools that inhibited their school reform efforts. Analytic induction and typological analysis were the primary methods of analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This included coding, cross checking both by individual researchers and between researchers, memos, as well as developing categories and themes (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2003). Throughout the process, observational field notes, records of the interviews, and end-of-year surveys were organized and examined systematically as the data were collected. The analyses of these data were conducted in several steps:

- Step 1. The data were coded and analyzed independently by each researcher as it was collected. For example, once the interviews were collected in the fall of a year, they were transcribed, organized, and examined.
- Step 2. At the end of each year of a professional development experience, the researchers met to refine the coding of the data for that specific year. The next year data were collected in the same manner.
- Step 3. At the end of the professional development experience, the researchers met twice to refine the coding of the data for that specific experience.
- Step 4. Over time, new categories from different experiences were examined separately in the same manner and then recorded within the database.
- Step 5. After the professional development experiences concluded, the researchers met to further clarify the identified common categories and subsequent themes across the experiences.

Results

Data analyses revealed several issues and concerns across the school experiences that inhibited teachers' professional growth and school reform to occur. In the process, two themes emerged from the data: (a) too much going on, and (b) development of coping behaviors. These themes and their supporting categories are described below.

Too Much Going On

Research clearly indicates that true reform occurs within a coherent plan of professional development in which all of the parts of the plan come together to create and sustain professional development (Guskey, 2003). However, administrators have to be careful that these plans do not become so comprehensive that the teachers and schools get overloaded (Schmoker, 2004). From our experiences, it appeared that many elementary teachers and schools were functioning on overload. We found that teachers were not only expected to maintain their current programs but also to immediately implement any new learning from the various professional development programs. As a result, most of the teachers that we worked with were overwhelmed.

The information from the survey data was consistent with what we observed when we worked in the schools. In one setting, the teachers were involved with the development of a new writing program, as well as having professional development on other topics, such as time management and use of technology. Because of too much going on, the teachers were unable to focus on their writing program or any of the other professional development programs. The teachers who were involved with the federal grant had the same difficulty. The grant required teachers to change their practices not only in reading but also in writing. In addition, they were receiving professional development activities for their math program.

Inconsistent Messages. A related aspect to the problem of being involved with too many different programs was the issue of inconsistent messages teachers were hearing when going to the various professional development sessions. For example, in one setting we were asked to help the teachers learn about the writing process, which encourages students to write on topics of choice. However, in the same year, from another source, it was stressed that children need to learn to write from a prompt. Certainly children can write on topics of choice and on assigned topics; however, the teachers considered this conflicting information and continued teaching in the way they felt most comfortable.

Inconsistent messages also happened in the schools with federal grant funding. Teachers were learning how to implement the 4-Block Reading Program (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 2001). One component of this program is the Making Words Block, which teaches children various familiar word patterns. But the schools also had a very skill-oriented reading series that taught phonics in a different manner. The emphasis in this series was on teaching isolated sounds. In addition to those two programs, the children were using a commercial computerized phonics program. Children spent 20 minutes each day on this program. They learned sounds, basic sight words, and other early reading skills. Consequently,

the teachers were expected to deal with three different types of phonics programs. So, not only were the teachers receiving mixed messages about how phonics should be taught with these programs, but also the students were attempting to learn phonics in three very different ways.

Because of the overload obstacle, teachers did not have time to reflect on how they were to implement and incorporate what they were learning into their instructional practices. In order for teachers and schools to make lasting instructional changes, they need to focus on one issue over time (Guskey, 2003). In some cases, the one large issue may need to be broken into smaller steps, in which all stakeholders would come together to create change. For example, many of the schools that we worked with were concerned about their students' reading scores on various tests. This alone could be a focus for an entire school year (or even longer). The issues related to reading comprehension could be addressed along with modeling appropriate strategies teachers could use. Teachers would then need time to learn and implement the strategies, reflect on the outcomes, and refine their teaching before moving onto another topic related to reading.

Not Enough Time. Teachers in all these situations were trying to maintain their already full days as well as juggle the additional demands of professional development activities. The teachers' days were full of required curricula, mandated by the state; such as reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, technology, library, anti-drug programs, and other programs. The teachers who were in at-risk schools also had children participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, Title I Reading Programs, and/or other programs to meet the special needs of some students. Further, all of the teachers were expected to adjust for a variety of school-sponsored programs. For instance, these schools had enrichment programs where speakers came in to share their experiences or bring animals from zoos. All of these created a well-rounded educational program, but it made for a very tight schedule. Even so, the teachers were expected to meet the state-mandated curricular goals.

The professional development programs added another layer to the time press issue. The teachers had to leave their classrooms for programs and/or meetings that were connected to the professional development. Even with excellent substitutes, the curriculum was most likely not going to be covered as well as with the classroom teachers. The teachers in our experiences perceived all extra meetings or programs as additional layers. As a result, many of the teachers felt as though they should cover their "real" program and do the professional development activities in addition to their current program. For example, teachers in the schools with

federal grant funding were learning a variety of ways to have students respond to their reading. However, the teachers thought they needed to have the children complete what was required (i.e. workbook pages) in their reading program and then have the students do any other activities as enrichment. Some teachers never understood that they could substitute the new activities for the worksheets. Their writing programs were treated the same way. The teachers still thought they needed to have the students do grammar worksheets rather than use the writing process to deal with grammar. Consequently, because of the press for time and the pressure to teach required programs, the teachers did not use many of the strategies presented in professional development sessions. The teachers' professional development was not only inhibited by the extreme overload of topics and school responsibilities, but it also impacted their ability to collaborate and build professional relationships with other teachers and the school administrator.

Lack of Collaboration to Build Professional Relationships. Adult learning theory stresses the importance of collaboration within the schools as a way to promote teachers' ability to reflect on their learning and to solve problems (Knowles, 1980). However, in many cases, administrators state that they want to create an environment for teacher collaboration and decision-making, but in fact they exhibit behaviors that are counter to creating a collaborative environment. One example is when the administrator chooses the topics for professional development and sets the routines in which the teachers will perform. By assuming this control, the administrator is limiting teacher collaboration in planning and implementing professional development activities.

This was evidenced in our work as consultants in the schools and from the survey data. For instance, the administrator in one school established that the teachers would learn about the writing process because the test scores showed a need in that area. The administrator established the time frame and content for the professional development. Teachers in the school were not included in the decision to learn about the writing process. Teachers' responses on the survey were similar. Most reported that the principal or district office determined any professional development activities. Some teachers reported that all of them had to attend whether or not the topic was appropriate for all teachers.

Another administrative behavior that was counter to establishing a collaborative environment was the belief that it was important to keep order in a school. For example, because of one principal's idea to keep an orderly school, there was no faculty room for the teachers to use. He felt that when the teachers in his school had the opportunity to talk to one another, they raised issues that he could not control. Finally, many

administrators seemed to create schools with a competitive environment. This happened when administrators regarded some teachers more positively than others. This resulted in a situation where the favored teachers had more power and the rest of the teachers became more concerned with developing programs that they felt would meet the approval of the administrator and these teachers rather than meeting their own professional needs.

Development of Coping Behaviors

The teachers found some ways of coping with the issues that emerged as they participated in the professional development. However, these coping behaviors stood in the way of school reform.

Use of Signs. Teachers began to use outward signs that they had changed their curriculum. For example, the observations revealed teachers who were learning about the writing process posted common terms (e.g., brainstorm, first draft, revise, edit, and publish), as well as other indicators that they were implementing some form of the writing process, (e.g., author's chairs and writing folders). However, the teachers were maintaining their traditional programs. Students all started and ended their writing together, usually after being given a prompt. The teachers completed all of the editing of the students' writing. As a result, the students did not have the opportunity to reflect about their writing. In the schools with federal funding, teachers created folders for running records (Clay, 1985), but they never consistently took running records of their students' reading in order to understand their students' reading behaviors. Vygotsky (1978) believed that learners use signs as a way to direct, control, and channel mental operations to assimilate new information. Originally, we hoped teachers were using these concrete signs as an initial effort to participate in the professional development. However, in most of our experiences, the teachers used the signs as a way to satisfy the principal and the various consultants.

Participation without Learning. Teachers' learning is impacted by their life experiences and is influenced by their interests and concerns. Because of this, teachers will have different professional development needs and will require different types of support (Diamond, 1993; Duke & Stiggins, 1986; McLaughlin, 1987; Oja, 1991). For professional development to be successful, teachers need to be able to address their individual concerns and determine how they will be involved during any learning experiences (Taylor, 2000). Unfortunately, the teachers across the different experiences in this study were required to attend professional development programs where everyone had the same program regardless of their needs, interests, and knowledge base. This contributed to the teachers appearing

to participate to satisfy administrators but not learning the content from the professional development. As a result, little energy was invested into problem-solving based on their individual instructional needs or changing their instruction. For example, once the pretesting was over in the schools involved in the federal grants and instructional needs of the students were identified, we met with the teachers in varied groups over time (e.g., individually, in small groups, and across grades). The purpose of the meetings was to involve them in the professional development plans. We demonstrated literacy strategies at their request and planned with them for their personal professional development issues. During these sessions, few of the teachers asked questions or made an effort to incorporate what was demonstrated in their own teaching. The teachers continually signed up for demonstration lessons. However, it became evident that they were not incorporating the strategies that had been modeled. As one teacher stated, "I wish you would get back to my classroom soon and show my students a guided reading lesson. We have not done that for awhile." Generally, the statement many teachers expressed to us was that "this too shall pass."

Give Me Something that I Can Use Tomorrow. Because of the pressures mentioned earlier to implement strategies immediately into the curriculum and the lack of time to reflect on what they were learning, teachers across the different professional development experiences pressed us for activities that they could take back to the schools and use the very next day. Their attitude seemed to be that the only good professional development activity was one where they were given tons of ideas that could be used immediately. This also meant that the professional development itself needed to be full of hands-on activities for the teachers. They did not want to "waste time" discussing theory or rationales behind strategy use or reflect on their own instructional practices.

Discussion

The results of the study show that maintaining coherent professional development is difficult (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2004) for a variety of reasons. As Firestone et al. (2004) suggested, it is important to prioritize professional development. However, they acknowledged that prioritizing professional development created a dilemma by missing the needs of individual schools and teachers because some professional development areas of concern may not be covered. This was evident throughout the schools in this project. As in the case of the federal grant schools, they were attempting to do too many things and everything became important. Because these particular schools had large numbers of

at-risk students who were struggling with reading, writing, and math, there was an attempt to address all of these issues at the primary-grade level. As a result, the teachers at these schools were unable to focus on the students' greatest needs. In addition, little attention was paid to individual teachers' strengths or professional growth needs.

Even though the researchers discussed and explained the underlying tenets of effective professional development with the various school administrators, the results of this project indicated that this message was not understood and implemented by the administrators. Thus, the tenets of constructivist learning (Dewey, 1933; Vygotsky, 1978) which underlie adult learning (Baumgartner, 2001; Locks-Horsley, 1995) were missing in these initiatives. Basically, the initiatives were driven by several outside sources: grant guidelines, district and state initiatives, and test scores. So, even though there were several aspects of effective professional development in our work, such as small group meetings, regular meetings, strategy modeling, telephone hotlines (Courtland, 1992; Henk & Moore, 1992; Vacca, Vacca, & Bruneau, 1997), system-level factors interceded to limit the effectiveness of the programs (Chinman et al., 2005). In these cases, the teachers were confronted with differences in theoretical orientations of various consultants and district-level representatives, as well as differences in the teachers' training.

Finally, even though the teachers involved with the federal grant became aware of current research and a variety of different strategies to use while teaching struggling readers, many still relied on very explicit instruction of skills and the use of worksheets in a whole-class instructional framework. Consequently, all the children received the same work regardless of their needs. It became obvious that they needed more support in differentiating their instruction. As Chard (2004) stated, the "closely connected cycle of instruction of identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, plan and deliver instruction, monitor performance, and adjust instruction based on the performance is unfamiliar to most teachers" (p. 185).

Implications for Successful Professional Development

Several practical implications were revealed from the analyses that need to be considered when planning, organizing, and implementing professional development programs. Professional development should be schoolwide with common goals and objectives that meet not only students' needs but the teachers' needs as well (Guskey, 2003; Shindorf, Graham, & Messner, 1998). Consequently, teachers have to be active participants in the decision-making processes as the professional development is planned (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Sarason, 1997).

In planning professional development, Chinman et al. (2005) state that four factors should be considered. First, the complexity of the new intervention or curriculum should be taken into account, because individual school's needs, goals, and other issues may be different than what the new program offers. Then, system-level factors have to be appraised, which include the school faculty's (administrators and teachers) theoretical orientation, as well as teachers' efficacy and knowledge base. Further, the school's resources should be assessed including the amount of time, money, and training that are necessary to make and sustain changes. For example, many times teachers are the experts, and they should conduct some of the professional development. However, they are overlooked, and outside consultants are hired. Finally, the characteristics of the school as a community should be considered and whether program adaptations can be made successfully.

Teachers' individual professional growth issues should never be ignored (Duke & Stiggins, 1986; Guskey, 2000; Licklider, 1997; Marzano, 2003). Because learning is a constructivist process, all participants bring different experiences to any new professional development. Encouraging teachers to actively search out their own interests often leads them to form collaborative learning groups with peers who have similar interests. Collaborative support, as well as making time for teachers to meet with their peers, reflect on what they are learning, and work out the problems of implementing new instruction, is critical (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Bean & Morewood, 2007; Birman et al., 2000; Fullan, 2001; VanDeWeghe & Varney, 2006). Basically, any professional development should be long term to allow teachers to work through any issues (Bean & Morewood; Guskey, 2000).

Professional development is not something that should happen just to the teachers. Schools should develop community of learners to include everyone (administrators, teachers and caregivers) who has a vested interest in school improvement (Donaldson, 2007; Niesz, 2007; Sarasan, 1997).

Limitations of the study

Even though steps were taken to insure the accuracy of the data analyses, there were some limitations. First of all, this study was conducted by two researchers who made the observations and collected the data while developing close working relationships with the teachers across the different experiences. This could bias how the data were interpreted. Secondly, this study was limited to the teachers in the specific schools who were involved with the professional development experiences; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to schools outside the study. Nevertheless, the results of this study revealed the need for educators to determine how current professional development programs are being implemented and make any necessary adjustments to insure their success.

Conclusion

We are in agreement with Elmore (2002) who stated, "It is not so much about knowing what good professional development looks like; it's knowing how to get it rooted in the institutional structure of school" (p. 12). Hence, in order to facilitate effective school reform, the "design process must be intentional from the beginning, a redesign process" (Ferner et al., 2001, p. 189). This study reiterates the need to thoughtfully and completely involve teachers in all steps of the redesign process.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN A CASE STUDY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The focus of this study was teachers' perceptions of professional development that influenced their reading instruction in a Reading First school. Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman's (2002) work served as the framework for this study. This framework identified two categories of effective professional development: structural and core. The structural category consisted of the following characteristics: reform type session, duration, and collective participation. The core characteristics were active learning, coherence, and content. Seven teachers were interviewed and their responses were aligned with the six characteristics in the framework. In this study, teachers' demographics, such as grade levels, years of experience, certifications, and additional coursework varied. Overall, the teachers' responses aligned with the structural and core characteristics of the guiding framework. Implications and future research suggestions of these findings are discussed.

Introduction

Current research in reading education emphasizes that *teachers* make the difference in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; International Reading Association, 2000). Because research indicates that the teacher variable heavily influences student achievement, schools as a unit are

affected by the quality of teachers they have in their classrooms. Professional development is one way for teachers to become more effective and provide more high quality instruction. As stated by Guskey and Sparks (2004), "Recognizing that schools can be no better than the teachers and administrators who work within them, policy makers emphasize professional developments as a key component in nearly every education improvement plan" (p. 12). To address this issue, professional development, which is not only necessary for moving teachers to "high quality teaching" but is also federally mandated, is now a focus in educational research. An important concern for professional development is teachers' perspectives of what constitutes effective professional development (Doubek & Cooper, 2007).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to better understand teachers' perceptions of what they considered to be influential professional development (focusing on reading instruction) by aligning teachers' responses with research-based guidelines of effective professional development. The following research question guided this study: How did the professional development, which the teachers' perceived to be influential, align with the elements research indicates as necessary for effective professional development? One Reading First school was targeted to explore the trends in teacher perceptions.

Literature Review

Every profession must continue to learn in order to advance the field; the field of education is no different (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman 2002; Guskey, 2000; National Staff Development Council, 2001). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) supports teachers' participation in professional development. This professional organization focuses on improving student achievement through professional development. Further, the NSDC, the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2005), and Doubek and Cooper (2007) emphasized the importance of providing teachers with time to participate in professional development. NSDC suggested that 25% of a teachers' work week be allotted to professional development. When teachers are provided time to engage in professional development they are more able to actively engage in their learning, thus creating a more productive and effective experience.

National Directives

The current federal legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) specifically includes improving teacher quality. According to this federal document, in order to provide all students opportunities to learn from effective teachers, funds are provided to support effective professional development. These funds are used to provide

teachers with professional development that implements research-based techniques that are applicable to classroom instruction.

Because of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), some schools are eligible for the Reading First grants in which additional funds to support professional development are available. The Reading First grant stipulates that the professional development must focus on reading instruction. Specifically the professional development must include the five pillars of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000), student assessment, and instructing struggling readers (Reading First Support, n. d.).

Guidelines for Effective Programs

Although professional development provides a means to “improve teacher quality,” less than 1% of the research focusing on professional development has actually targeted reading teacher inservice (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000). Moreover, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001) found that little research focused on how professional development influenced teaching or student achievement. Because of this lack of research, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) suggested in the National Reading Panel Report (NRP) that more research on professional development, specifically in the area of reading education was needed.

According to Doubek and Cooper (2007), research should continue to focus on the professional development sessions that are perceived by teachers to be the most effective when a variety of professional development opportunities are available. In order to deconstruct teachers’ perceptions of effective professional development, research provides guidelines for effective professional development. For example, the NSDC (2001) suggested three areas of focus for professional development: content, context, and process. According to the NSDC, *content* focuses on teachers’ deep understanding of the subject area they teach and the research based instructional practices these teachers implement. *Context* refers to reflection and collaborative opportunities for each teacher to participate in collegial dialogue with fellow teachers. *Process* is defined as how teachers learn the information presented during the professional development session (i.e. the learning process teachers use during professional development).

According to AERA (2005), there are four guidelines for providing effective professional development. These guidelines include: (1) providing professional development that focuses on the subjects teachers are teaching; (2) using authentic assessments and curricula during the professional development session so that teachers are able to transfer newly acquired information to actual classroom practice; (3) providing teachers with time to attend professional development; and (4) implementing an evaluation tool

that reflects the impact that the professional development has on teachers' instruction and student learning.

Desimone et al. (2002) suggested there are two categories of professional development: *structural* and *core*. They indicated that it is necessary for the *structural* category components to be established in order for the *core* category components to occur during professional development. Each category contains three components which are necessary for effective professional development.

The components in the *structural* category include: reform type, duration, and collective participation (Desimone et al., 2002). A reform type session is a professional development session that is delivered in a nontraditional format of professional development (e.g. a study group). The time span and number of contact hours account for the duration of a professional development session. Collective participation addresses the need of collaboration among peers of the same grade level, department, or school.

The *core* category includes active learning, coherence, and content. Active learning provides teachers with opportunities to participate in activities that include receiving feedback on their classroom practice and/or analyzing authentic classroom data. Coherence includes aligning professional development opportunities with teachers' goals, district goals and standards, and state standards. The content component focuses on deepening teachers' subject knowledge. The characteristics found within the structural and core categories (Desimone et al., 2002) provide a framework gaining a better understanding of effective professional development.

Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development

Teacher beliefs about professional development are an important issue that must be addressed. Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) indicated that teachers perceived professional development to impact their beliefs about literacy and literacy instruction. A review of the research (Anders et al., 2000) revealed that although research on teacher beliefs existed, the research that was available did not indicate the influence teacher beliefs had on instructional practice or student achievement. First, teacher beliefs about professional development are impacted by the amount of choice teachers have when selecting a professional development session (Bean, Swan, & Morris, 2002). When teachers are given choices about professional development, their needs are more often met; therefore their beliefs about the effects of professional development on their instruction may be influenced.

Secondly, Doubek and Cooper (2007) asserted that the factor that frequently influenced teacher beliefs about professional development

was a positive change in student achievement. Teachers may be more likely to transfer knowledge from the professional development session to classroom practice when their students benefit, and thus, teachers may perceive professional development opportunities more positively. While many agree that effective professional development can enhance teachers' literacy instruction, it is important to consider teachers' perceptions of effective professional development. Further research is needed on teachers' perceptions of professional development. This study specifically focused on aligning teachers' perceptions with the characteristics of effective professional development.

Methodology

Context

Jacolyn Elementary School (pseudonym) was a Title I school located in a city of just under 24,000 people with a 50% poverty rate in the north-eastern United States. The racial demographics of this school were 71% White/Other and 29% Black. The school district in which Jacolyn Elementary School was located had three primary centers that included grades 1-3. All kindergarten classrooms were located at the district's kindergarten center. In the 2006-2007 school year, Jacolyn Elementary School had 270 students and 19 teachers (including 15 general education teachers, a special education teacher, a gym teacher, a music teacher, and a computer teacher). The school was selected for this study because it had improving student achievement scores on the statewide test and had received a Reading First grant. The Reading First grant provided funds for a full-time reading coach and a part-time reading coach. Since Jacolyn Elementary School was a Reading First School, one assessment used in grades 1-3 was the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002). In the spring of the 2006-2007 school year, 9% of first graders, 20% of second graders, and 23% of third grade students scored "at-risk" on the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) component of the DIBELS assessment (Good & Kaminski). Also, all third grade students were required to take the state mandated assessment in reading. The spring of 2005-2006 state assessment scores indicated that 57% of third grade students were "ongrade level;" this was the third consecutive year that Jacolyn Elementary School's third grade state assessment scores improved. Students also participated in quarterly assessments that aligned with their core reading program, *Success for All* (SFA; Slavin, Madden, Chambers, & Haxby, 2001).

Sample

This study included a purposeful and convenient sample. Purposeful sampling was implemented in order to select a school that would meet

specific criteria. Jacolyn Elementary School was chosen to participate in this study because it was a Reading First school with improving student achievement, according to statewide test scores. The sample was convenient, because the teachers who participated in this study volunteered. The researcher attended grade level meetings to explain the research and recruit volunteers. Ultimately, this study included seven teachers with a range in years of experience; the minimum amount of teaching experience was 4 years, while the maximum years of teaching experience was 10 years. Participants included one 1st grade teacher, one 2nd grade teacher, four 3rd grade teachers, and one special education teacher. Each grade level was represented by at least one participant in the sample. All teachers who volunteered for the study completed it.

In addition to years of experience, the teachers in this sample also varied in the types of educational experiences and areas of certification they had. Five of the seven teachers held initial certification in elementary education, while two teachers' initial certifications were in elementary and special education. The teachers had varying degrees of coursework beyond their initial certification, including two teachers who had completed a master's degree program and were continuing to pursue additional graduate work.

Procedures

The teachers participated in a brief preobservation interview, a classroom observation, and a postobservation interview. The results for this article were obtained from part of the postobservation interview (See Appendix). Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed.

The post-observation interview requested each teacher to select a professional development session that they perceived had influenced their reading instruction. For example, the opening question on the post-observation interview protocol was, "Let's go back to the professional development that prepared you for this [observed] lesson and discuss the professional development activity in which you were involved from this school year that had a large impact on your teaching practices." Each teacher was then asked specific questions about the characteristics of the professional development session that they selected. These specific questions focused on the framework established by Desimone et al. (2002). Examples of the postobservation interview questions directly related to the framework developed by Desimone et al. included:

1. How was this professional development activity conducted? (e.g., Structural: Reform Type)
2. Did this activity allow for a practical experience? Were you using actual student data or receiving feedback on your teaching? (e.g., Core: Active Learning).

Data Analysis

The framework for effective professional development (Desimone et al., 2002) was used to analyze each teacher's responses about professional development. This allowed the each teacher's responses to be aligned with the characteristics, described by Desimone et al., for effective professional development and to better understand which characteristics these elementary literacy teachers perceived as valuable. Since the teachers' responses were aligned with this framework, the definitions provided by Desimone et al. for each characteristic are provided (See Table 1). These definitions were used to classify teachers' responses to better understand the perceptions about professional development that impacted their reading instruction.

Table 1. Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

STRUCTURAL	DEFINITION
Reform Type	Such as a study group, teacher network, mentoring relationship, committee or task force, internship, individual research project, or teacher research center, in contrast to a traditional workshop, course, or conference
Duration	Including the total number of contact hours that participants spend in an activity, as well as the span of time over which the activity takes place
Collective Participation	The degree to which the activity emphasizes the collective participation of groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level, as opposed to the participation of the individuals teacher from many schools
CORE	DEFINITION
Active Learning	Opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in the meaningful analysis of teaching and learning for example, by reviewing student work or obtaining feedback on their teaching
Coherence	The degree to which the activity promotes coherence in teachers' professional development, by incorporating experiences that are consistent with teachers' goals, aligned with state standards and assessments, and encourage continual professional communication among teachers
Content Focus	The degree to which the activity is focused on improving and deepening teachers' content knowledge

(Desimone et al., 2002, p. 83)

The teacher's interview was designed to address each of the characteristics of effective professional development in the framework created by Desimone et al. (2002). By aligning the teachers' responses to this framework for effective professional development, the researchers were able to analyze individual teacher's perceptions of effective pro-

fessional development. Moreover, these data allowed the researchers to synthesize the information across teachers for a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of effective professional development in this case study school. Because the responses were analyzed using this specific framework for effective professional development, the teachers answered specific questions that explicitly addressed each of the characteristics. For example, each teacher answered the following question, specific to the reform characteristic: "How was this professional development activity conducted?" The answers were nontraditional forms of professional development, such as study group, individual research project, etc. The teacher interview which includes questions for the other five characteristics can be found in the Appendix.

Once all of the interviews were conducted, the responses were read and coded. The teachers' responses were either coded as demonstrating the specific characteristic (e.g. reform type session: yes [Y]) or not demonstrating the specific characteristic (e.g. reform type session: no [N]). In order to ensure reliability in the coding of the interviews, two raters read and coded 20 percent of the responses from the teachers. First, the two raters read the definitions of the six characteristics that would be used for analysis. Next, the raters discussed each definition. Then, once the raters' understanding of the characteristics was clarified, they each began to individually code 20 percent of the responses. Finally, after the raters individually coded the responses, the coded responses were reviewed. Initially, the two raters achieved 83 percent interrater reliability on this portion of the data; however, any differences in their coding were discussed. This discussion further enhanced each rater's understanding of the definition for each characteristic, providing more reliable data analysis.

Results

Each teacher identified a professional development session s/he perceived as influential. Because each teacher identified a different professional development session, responses varied across the sample. Table 2 demonstrates how the researchers aligned every teacher's response with the structural characteristics in the Desimone et al. (2002) framework, while Table 3 represents the teachers' responses and the core characteristics.

To illustrate the approach to analysis, the responses of Teacher 1 are described. This teacher selected a specific professional development session that she perceived to influence her reading instruction. Once she identified the professional development session, she responded to questions that were tailored to the six components identified by Desimone et al. (2002) as necessary for effective professional development. Teacher 1 indicated the graduate course in which she was enrolled impacted her reading instruction.

First, Teacher 1 responded to questions about the structural category: reform type, duration, and collective participation. Based on the definition of reform type by Desimone et al.(2002), a graduate course would not be considered a reform type session because it is a more traditional format for professional development. However, reform type sessions typically occur over a longer period of time; the graduate course did occur over multiple sessions. Because of these factors, the researchers coded the graduate course as nonreform professional development session; yet the researchers acknowledge that graduate courses may have elements of reform type sessions such as occurring over time. Finally, collective participation was not a part of this professional development session, because teachers from the same district, school, and grade level were not necessarily enrolled in this graduate course.

Next, the questions focused on the components of the core category; active learning, coherence, and content. Teacher 1 indicated that she received feedback on her teaching from her colleagues in the course (i.e., active learning). Also, Teacher 1 stated that the material presented in the graduate course aligned with her personal goals, and district and state standards. Teacher 1 indicated that the graduate course specifically focused on literacy programs and struggling readers (i.e., content).

Structural Category

Table 2 demonstrates how each teacher's responses about effective professional development align with the structural characteristics.

Table 2. Structural Characteristics: A Comparison between Research and Teachers' Responses

	IDENTIFIED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION	REFORM	DURATION (MULTIPLE SESSIONS)	COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION
T. 1	Graduate Course	N	Y	N
T. 2	Online course	Y	Y	Y
T. 3	Graduate Course	N	Y	N
T. 4	Grade Level Meeting	Y	N	Y
T. 5	Grade Level Meeting	Y	N	Y
T. 6	Grade Level Meeting	Y	N	Y
T. 7	Grade Level Meeting	Y	N	Y

Reform Type Session

Overall, teachers selected professional development sessions that fit the definition of a reform-type session provided by Desimone et al. (2002). Specifically, the teachers who selected grade level meetings as the most

influential professional development indicated that this nontraditional form of professional development impacted their reading instruction. Overall, the teachers who selected grade level meetings indicated that this form of professional development addressed their reading instruction needs over time. Teacher 2 identified an online course in which s/he was participating. This was a reform-type session, because it provided this teacher with a network of colleagues for collaboration. As Teacher 2 stated when describing the online course, "It is study group. It is individual, but we do e-mail each other. We have little mini-study cases, where we have to respond to something, and then we have to respond to someone else's answer. So, we are communicating back and forth" (personal communication, March 30, 2007).

Also, the two teachers who were enrolled in the graduate course chose that as the most influential professional development, indicating that elements of the graduate course were reform-type in nature (i.e., the teachers both described an individual research project they were responsible for in the course). Teacher 1 briefly explained the individual research project, "We had to develop our own literacy plan. That was the main thing we had to do. We had to research and pick our own literacy program to use as a principal" (personal communication, March 31, 2007). Although Teacher 1 discussed an individual research project, it occurred within the context of a graduate course. As noted earlier, Desimone et al. (2002) specifically articulated that graduate courses were not considered reform-type sessions.

Duration

Three teachers identified professional development sessions that occurred over multiple sessions where topics were revisited over time (e.g., the graduate courses and the online course identified by those teachers enrolled in the courses). Although grade level meetings were identified by the other four teachers, the topics that each teacher indicated as influential were only discussed at one meeting; the topics were not discussed over a length of time. For example, Teacher 5 indicated that the most influential professional development session for her was meeting with the SFA (Slavin et al., 2001) representative. Teacher 5 stated that she was able to ask the SFA representative questions, but this type of meeting only occurred once.

Collective Participation

The participants of this study agreed that being able to collaborate with peers influenced their instruction and made the professional development session more effective. The professional development that took place during the grade level meetings had this component of effective professional

development built into the session, since teachers were able to collaborate with colleagues who were teaching at the same grade level. Teacher 2 indicated that other teachers at Jacolyn Elementary School participated in the online course; thus, creating a community at the school level where teachers could communicate with one another.

Although two teachers identified the graduate course as most influential, that course did not align with the definition of collective participation as defined by Desimone et al. (2002) since the course participants were from many schools, departments, and grade levels seeking a variety of certifications. Indicating the diversity of the graduate course, Teacher 1 responded, "It is all the people who are going for educational administration. And all students who are getting a master's as reading specialists and we have a few undergraduates" (personal communication, March 31, 2007). At the same time, it was obvious that these two teachers felt that there was collaboration in this course, even though the collaboration occurred among teachers and administrators from various schools and districts.

Core

Each teacher's responses about effective professional development were classified according to the characteristics in the core category (See Table 3).

Table 3 Core Characteristics: A Comparison between Research and Teachers' Responses

	IDENTIFIED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION	ACTIVE LEARNING	COHERENCE	CONTENT
T. 1	Graduate Course	Y	Y	Literacy program/ struggling readers
T. 2	Online course	Y	Y	GRRM/fluency/ vocabulary
T. 3	Graduate Course	Y	Y	Literacy program/ struggling readers
T. 4	Grade Level Meeting	Y	Y	Assessment results
T. 5	Grade Level Meeting	Y	Y	Fluency
T. 6	Grade Level Meeting	Y	Y	Writing
T. 7	Grade Level Meeting	Y	Y	SFA program

Active Learning. All of the participants in this study selected a professional development session that they perceived to impact their reading instruction. Interestingly, all of the teachers in this study selected a professional development session that included active learning. Most of the teachers indicated that the professional development sessions that they selected included reviewing student work, while a few of the participants indicated that they received feedback on their reading instruction during

the professional development session. "It [the professional development session] used actual student data; yes their own essays. Right, we graded them [the essays] first and then they had someone else grade them to see if we were all on the same page" (Teacher 6, personal communication, April 3, 2007).

Coherence. Each teacher selected a professional development session that they perceived to align with their personal goals of reading instruction. Also, all of the teachers indicated that the professional development session that they selected aligned with the district and state standards. Teacher 4 indicated that the professional development session that she identified aligned with her personal goals. She also emphasized that the professional development aligned with district and state standards, because everything that she teaches is standards-based (personal communication, April 2, 2007).

Content. Since each teacher was asked to select a professional development session that influenced *his or her* reading instruction, it was not surprising that the content of the professional development sessions varied. Among the seven participating teachers, a consistent content theme or focus of the professional development was not identified.

Discussion

This study focused on teachers' perceptions of effective professional development and how teachers' perceptions aligned with what research describes as effective professional development. Research on professional development and research on professional development focusing on reading instruction is limited (Anders et al., 2000; Garet et al., 2001; NRP, 2000). This study contributes valuable information to the field of research about professional development in reading instruction. The following conclusions about teachers' needs and perceptions about effective professional development were drawn from this study.

First, in general, teachers identified professional development opportunities that aligned with the structural characteristics of effective professional development as identified by Desimone et al. (2002). However, since teacher's responses varied across this sample, the individual components of the structural category (e.g. reform type, duration, and collective participation) must each be individually examined in order to provide the most effective professional development for the participating teachers. For example, the reform type or context of the professional development varied among teachers; graduate level courses, online courses, and grade level meetings were among teachers' selections.

A second conclusion of this research was that the professional development sessions selected by the teachers aligned with the core characteristics of effective professional development (Desimone et al., 2002).

The teachers in this study indicated they valued professional development that provided them opportunities to actively participate and aligned with district and state standards, as well as their personal goals for reading instruction. Teachers indicated that the process of using actual student data, as suggested by AERA (2005), allowed them to transfer knowledge from the professional development sessions to their classroom practice. Also, the professional development that teachers described varied in content, indicating that teachers have different professional development needs. The content of the professional development session must align with the content that teachers are teaching in their classrooms for professional development to have the most impact on instruction (NSDC, 2001; AERA).

Another conclusion was that teachers were willing to participate in professional development that advanced their knowledge about reading instruction. The results of this study appear to indicate that *different* teachers perceive *different* professional development as effective. Therefore, when teachers have a variety of professional development opportunities, they will continue to learn via the session that best meets their needs (Bean et al., 2002). According to Guskey (2000), this continued learning is essential in order for teachers to gain a deeper understanding of reading and to be able to implement better reading instruction in their classrooms.

Also, teachers in this study responded positively towards the professional development opportunities that were offered during the school day (e.g., grade level meetings). This indicates that when time is provided for teachers to participate and engage in professional development, the teachers perceive these sessions as more useful (AERA, 2005; Doubek & Cooper, 2007; NSDC, 2001). This participation will allow teachers to learn more about reading instruction and transfer knowledge from the professional development session to classroom instruction. As classroom reading instruction changes, student achievement may improve.

A final conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that professional development did impact each of the teacher's reading instruction. Teachers in this study perceived that their reading instruction was influenced by their participation in specific professional development sessions; as found by Commeyras and DeGroff (1998). Each teacher identified a professional development session that met his or her needs; therefore, each teacher was able to transfer the information gleaned from the professional development session to their classroom practice. Again, a variety of professional development opportunities must be available to meet teachers' needs (Bean et al., 2002). Furthermore, meeting teachers' individual needs in professional development sessions allows teachers to perceive professional development as a means to increase student achievement (Doubek & Cooper, 2007). Two things seemed to be critical in this school: (a) teachers were given the

opportunity to be learners, and (b) the attempts to develop professional development reflected what research has shown about teacher learning.

Limitations

Although this study adds to the body of research currently available about effective professional development, it is important to consider the limitations of this research. The data collection for this research occurred in one Reading First school and only accounted for about one half of the grade level faculty at this school. Therefore, the information gained from this case study school should be generalized with caution, given the small sample size. Moreover, the study focused on professional development from the 2006-2007 school year. This study did not report on any professional development that teachers perceived as influential before the indicated school year.

Implications for Professional Development

It is important for professional development providers to be cognizant of the research on effective professional development and incorporate the elements of effective professional development per the recommendations of current research. Research, such as this, continues to develop a more defined framework for effective professional development. Several suggestions based on the findings of this study align with the framework designed by Desimone et al. (2002) with regard to effective professional development, as well as the recommendations from the NSDC (2001) and AERA (2005). (See Table 4).

Table 4. Alignment of Findings and Research

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:	AERA 2005	DESIMONE ET AL., 2002	NSDC 2001
Should be available through different settings		X	X
Should provide a variety of content over time		X	X
Should provide opportunities for collegial work		X	X
Should provide opportunities for active involvement	X	X	X
Should align with teachers personal goals and district/state standards	X	X	X
Should focus on a variety of topics to fit individual teachers' needs	X	X	X

Another vital implication to consider is that teachers need time to devote to their own professional development (AERA, 2005; NSDC, 2001). The majority of teachers in this study indicated the professional development

that most influenced their reading instruction occurred during the school day at grade level meetings. Incorporating professional development opportunities during the school day would allow school administrators to come closer to the NSDC's recommendation of allotting one quarter of a teacher's workweek to their own professional learning. The other three teachers in this study indicated that they were willing to use their personal time to advance their knowledge of reading instruction. These three teachers initiated their involvement in professional development opportunities that occurred outside of the school day.

Further Research

Given the need for more research on effective professional development, the following suggestions for further research will help to define the most effective characteristics of professional development.

1. What other components of effective professional development on reading instruction do teachers value?
2. Which components of professional development are the most influential to teachers when transferring knowledge of reading instruction from professional development sessions to classroom practice?
3. How do teachers decide what information from professional development sessions on reading instruction to implement into their classroom practice?

Research that continues to find answers to questions such as these will allow professional development to better address teachers' needs which will positively impact reading instruction.

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Appendix. Teacher Interview Protocol

POSTOBSERVATION CONFERENCE

School PD

1. Let's go back to the PD that prepared you for this lesson. Let's discuss the professional development activity in which you were involved that had a large impact on your teaching practices. Make sure that teacher answers the following:

Additional prompts (to get in depth information about the PD activity)

Reform: How was this professional development activity conducted? (i.e., study group, individual research project, etc.)

Duration: How many hours was this activity? Was this activity revisited over time or was it a single session?

Collective Participation: Who participated in this activity? (i.e., teachers in the same grade, department, school)

Active Learning: Did this activity allow for a practical experience? Were you using actual student data or receiving feedback on your teaching?

Coherence: Do you feel that this professional development activity aligned with your personal instructional goals? Did the activity align with district, and state standards? Did the activity encourage teachers to communicate with each other even after the activity was over?

Content: Was there a specific content focus in this professional development session (i.e., fluency)?

**ISSUES OF
LITERACY INSTRUCTION
AND ASSESSMENT**

FREE BOOK PROGRAMS FROM BIRTH TO FIVE: THE EFFECT ON PRESCHOOL READING READINESS

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The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years.

Commission on Reading, 1985

Abstract

Reading aloud to young children, one of the most beneficial activities that parents can do to further children's oral language and early literacy development, presupposes that interesting and age-appropriate texts are readily available. In certain segments of the population, most notably those with lower incomes, this is often not the case. This paper reviews several programs which provide, free of charge, books for parents to share with their children. Analysis of the effects of such programs is also discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Research by Karoly and her colleagues (1998) demonstrated that children develop much of their capacity to learn from birth to age 3. Children's early literacy acquisition takes place long before they go to school and building cognitive and language skills improves later reading ability (Wells, 1985). "Parents and early caregivers play an essential role in laying the foundations for literacy by talking and reading daily to babies and toddlers" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 2). In 2001, DeTemple noted, "The kinds of talk that occur during book reading may be particularly well suited to the development of language skills that children need to draw on to do well in school" (p. 55). A more recent study by the U.S. Department of Education (2003) showed that, regardless of a

child's economic status, children who have children's books and music available in their homes displayed higher levels of reading knowledge and skills than did their counterparts who grew up in less rich home literacy environments.

Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini (1995) contended that interactive parent-child reading experiences may be the most important element of the home literacy environment. Their research also noted that gains to child literacy acquisition through shared reading experiences in the home are larger for younger children and decline in importance as children enter formal instruction at school. A similar relationship exists between socioeconomic status and exposure to books and other print materials. Baker, Scher, and Mackler (1997) reported that "...90% of the middle-income parents reported daily book-reading activity, whereas 52% of the low-income parents did so" (p. 71). Neuman (1996) surmised that it was partly the availability of books and other reading materials in the home that may have affected these differences in such shared book experiences in the home. In Kuo, Franke, Regalado, and Halfon's research (2004), the median number of books in the home was 30, while 10 books or fewer were reported in 21% of the homes. Particularly noteworthy was their finding of "...2% reporting having no children's books at all" (p. 1945).

It has been estimated that just over 60% of low-income families do not have a single book in the home suitable for a child (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Stedman, Tinsley, and Kaestle (1991) found that low-income adults are less likely to buy books or subscribe to newspapers. As Krashen (2004) noted, "The research supports the commonsense view that when books are readily available, when the print environment is enriched, more reading is done" (p. 57). He looked at the affluent Beverly Hills area of Los Angeles and the low-income Watts neighborhood of the same city. There was an average of 200 books per home in Beverly Hills compared to less than one book (.4) in the average Watts home.

Many of the above-mentioned effects of reading aloud to children and of shared book experiences would not have been possible without the presence of one-third of the literacy equation (the reader, the child, and the text), that of the text itself. The U.S. Department of Education reported in 1999 that parents were four times more likely to read aloud to their children when given free books and encouragement. Without easy, constant, and inexpensive access to texts, there would be no shared book experience for many of these children in the first place. The remainder of this paper describes several free, preschool literacy programs in the United States and England (Reading is Fundamental, Reach Out and Read, the Imagination Library, Bookstart). It concludes with a statewide program in the author's home state (Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy). The

Ferst Foundation is one such attempt to make sure that access to reading materials is not a determining negative factor for the targeted population of preschool age children.

Programs in the United States and England

In 1966, Margaret McNamara started Reading is Fundamental (RIF). It was designed to motivate children to read by distributing books to them completely free of charge. Within 10 years, it had grown to 60 schools throughout Washington, D.C. In 1975, IDEP (Inexpensive Book Distribution Program) was created by the U.S. Congress to provide federal matching funds. According to their website (www.rif.org), "RIF's highest priority is reaching underserved children from birth to age 8." RIF proudly claims that they have provided over 265 million children's books since Mrs. McNamara started the program; and now sends 16 million new, free books to 4.5 million children yearly. Most of the children in the program receive two to five books per year. Included in this initiative is the Care to Read program, a series of six workshops to train those who work with preschool children on various aspects of early literacy and language-building activities. Pressley (2001) wrote, "When books are made available to young children—for example, through community efforts such as Reading is Fundamental—children are more likely to engage in literacy-promoting activities, with the result enhanced language and literacy skills" (p. 3).

Since 1989, pediatricians and other health care professionals have been involved in a book-sharing program, Reach Out and Read (ROR), to promote infants' and toddlers' overall health as a part of their general pediatric care. ROR focuses on the importance of reading aloud to very young children to enhance their vocabulary knowledge and eventual literacy success. When parents bring a child for a check-up to the doctor or health care provider, the importance of reading aloud is stressed and a free book is given to the child to keep. A 10-book "course" is the norm and several research studies (Mendelsohn et al., 2001; Sharif, Reiber, & Ozuah, 2002; Weitzman, Roy, Walls, & Tomlin, 2004) found positive gains made by the participants. Sharif et al. focused on vocabulary gains, Mendelsohn et al. on language development, and Weitzman et al. on what they termed the "home literacy profile." All three studies noted gains, and Weitzman et al. wrote, "...modest literacy intervention, such as ROR, can have a significant impact on a child's home literacy environment" (p. 1248).

In 1996, the Dolly Parton Foundation created the Imagination Library which provided one free book a month to children under 5 in her home county, Sevier County, Tennessee. It quickly spread across the state, and by 2001, had moved to local communities in other states, Canada, and

the United Kingdom, now numbering over 750 sites. By partnering with the Penguin Group publishing company, the Literacy Site website was established to allow people to donate monies towards the purchase of these books.

The Imagination Library includes 6-10 bilingual titles (dual language books); this number changes yearly depending upon their availability and cost. The books are chosen and reviewed yearly by a nationwide committee composed of representatives from Parents as Teachers National Center, the International Reading Association, the University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and from classroom teachers. (www.dollysimaginationlibrary.com). In 2004, the not-for-profit "Governor's Books from Birth Foundation" was established in Tennessee to serve as a resource and to help sustain local county Imagination Libraries programs throughout the entire state. As stated by Dickinson and Neuman (2006):

The only variable that directly correlates with reading scores is the number of books in the home ... The Literacy Site and its domestic partner, First Book, provide children from low-income families in the U.S. with books they can take home and keep. (p. 31)

High/Scope Educational Research was commissioned in 2003 to produce a study on the effects of sharing books from the Imagination Library, "The Literacy Outcomes and the Household Literacy Environment: An Evaluation of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library." The authors reported that 85% of the total sample (of families receiving Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books) reported reading with their child almost every day or more. These families not only had quality books in their home but were reading them with their children nearly every day.

For 34% of the households in a Tennessee study group, the Imagination Library (IL) program was the primary source of children's books. Though a large percentage of IL families report almost never visiting a bookstore (35.3%) or library (46.3%), 85.3% of parents surveyed said that IL had made their children more interested in books and 71.4% said they read to their children more often (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2003).

A similar program has been created in England to give books to children less than 5 years of age, especially those whose parents could not afford them on their own. Bookstart began in 1992, and research "suggests that there have been worthwhile and sustained benefits for children" (Hannon, Brooks, & Bird, 2007, p. 17). In a small study involving six recipient families, Dunn (2007) reported that 100% of these families engaged in daily reading activities with their children, though she noted that 40% of eligible families never picked up their second free Bookstart pack.

State and Local County Programs

A program that has been adopted so far by over one-third (58 out of 159) of the counties in Georgia is designed, not to address all the issues related to early literacy, but to focus on the one specifically noted above, access to age-appropriate reading materials and books. The philosophy of this program is that while its volunteers cannot do everything, they can eliminate one of the reasons why parents, especially less well-to-do parents, do not read to their children—the availability of quality books in the home. This has been accomplished under the auspices of what is now known as the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, named after Robin Ferst Howser, the woman who created the program in a single Georgia county in 1999. She was inspired by the success of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program in Tennessee. Publicity was raised through local newspapers, community fairs and festivals, through word of mouth from school teachers to parents of preschool children, and from the general success of the program itself.

In Georgia, local funding is raised in each participating county by a Community Action Team (CAT) which acts as a cosponsor. Monies are raised by grant writing, benefits, gifts from wealthy and not-so-wealthy benefactors, and even by high school and college students. These last two groups are given the goal to raise \$175 which will “sponsor” a single child in the program from birth to age 5. Application forms are made available for parents of newborns at local hospitals and are also shared at daycare centers, formal and private preschool programs, churches, local libraries, and even through local home-school associations. These applications can be mailed or submitted over the Internet.

All children from birth to 5 (when they “graduate” from the program), regardless of family income, can be registered, and each is then mailed, completely free of charge, an age-appropriate hardback book each month. The first book in the series of 60 books (5 years times 12 months) is Watty Piper's (1978) *The Little Engine that Could* and the final book is *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* (Slate & Wolff, 2001). Other titles range from such classics as *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947) to newer titles such as *Cookie's Week* (Ward & dePaola, 1988), and *Mi Amor Por Ti/My Love for You* (one of several dual language books in the series). Also included are informational texts such as *My Very First Book of Colors* (Carle, 2005a) and *My Very First Book of Shapes* (Carle, 2005b). It is very important that both fiction and nonfiction is distributed and shared with children since, as Mohr (2003) noted, “. . . informational texts have a strong role to play in the literacy development of even the youngest readers. . .” (p. 71). See Appendix A for the 2008 list of all titles.

An introductory 12-page “Parent's Guide” is sent to the home after each registration is received. It includes targeted suggestions for parents of

children from “Birth to 3 years,” “4 & 5 year olds,” “Everyday Activities,” and extended book lists appropriate for those two age-group distinctions. Each book mailed directly to the child monthly is accompanied with a parent’s newsletter containing suggestions for oral language and literacy activities to complement the text and the age of the intended recipient. This parent newsletter includes specific parenting and literacy activities directly related to the accompanying book (looking for certain colors in the pictures, word games associated with the language used in the text, craft activities to accompany the text’s theme, etc). Other books are also suggested with each new title sent. The back page of each newsletter has information supplied by the local CAT to the publisher of the newsletter which is specifically related to the local community in which the recipient resides. Some of these activities might include: literacy activities at the city or county public library, the local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, family events such as local community festivals, and so on.

It is estimated that there are slightly more than 6,000 children under the age of 5 residing in the author’s county. After well over a year of organization and fundraising efforts, the first local mailing was made in 2005. The local Ferst organization has sponsored an annual “Bluegrass, Burgers, and Books” community event for the past three years which raises money and increases its local presence through advertising and in the local newspapers. A local university is currently on board with student-sponsored fundraisers, one involving the Greek organizations on campus and another involving a competition between the various residence hall students. A local high school student group is aiming to be part of the “League of Extraordinary Students,” engaging in fundraising to sponsor one or more children from birth to 5. The local Ferst organization is currently instrumental in mailing over 2,250 books each month to children in the county, and the number continues to grow. The statewide program recently celebrated the distribution of the 750,000th book mailed to a participant and hopes to blanket every county and major metropolitan area in the state by 2010.

Summary Data

In Morgan County, where Robin Ferst Howser started what she called the Ferst Books Foundation in 1999, the local superintendent of schools, Dr. Stanley DeJarnett, shared the following: the percentage of children passing the Morgan County primary kindergarten readiness test, currently scoring 7 or higher on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) was at 67% for the general population and 45% for the children enrolled in the Ferst program in the fall of

2001 (www.ferstfoundation.org). After 3 years of Ferst's operation in the county, the percentage of children passing the kindergarten readiness test increased to 82% of the general population and 80% of the Ferst population in the fall of 2003. Recently, Dr. DeJarnett announced that now over 90% of these children in Morgan County scored at the "ready" stage on the DIBELS. And while the district's goal was to have 90% of their children reading on grade level by the end of third grade, that goal has now been met by students at the end of second grade. Dr. DeJarnett attributed the majority of that gain to the distribution and utilization of Ferst books in the local homes.

In Jasper County, the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program was implemented in 2003. Data collected by the Jasper County Family Connection Evaluation Team consisted of Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program-Revised (GKAP-R; Georgia Department of Education, 1998) scores from fall of 2004 (kindergarten readiness scores—pretest) and spring of 2005 (first grade readiness scores—posttest). Only 80% of kindergarten students were "ready" for school in the fall of 2002 with an average overall readiness score of 150, just above the required score of 140. A phonics program, Animated Literacy (Stone, 1999), was introduced systemwide in the kindergarten and Head Start/PreK programs in school year 2002-2003, and Ferst later that same year. By spring of 2004, GKAP-R scores were at 93% "ready" for first grade.

In Carroll County, 825 students were assessed with the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised (CIBS-R; Brigance, 1999) in the fall of 2007. Parents were asked if their child had participated in the local Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program. Of this group, 207 children with Brigance scores had received books from the Ferst Foundation while 618 had not. The students who received books (the YES group) performed significantly better ($M = 76.425$, $SD = 19.52$) on the Brigance than the group who did not receive books ($M = 68.86$, $SD = 22.19$).

Conclusion

The Ferst Foundation's Community Action Team in the author's home county, Carroll County, is mostly comprised of educators who are very concerned about the long-term effects of low literacy levels across the county, especially in the low-income portion of the population. As noted from Krashen's research (2004), it is seemingly common sense that easy access to books for children is certainly a place to start in attacking this problem. On-going tracking of the effects of this monthly, free book program as it continues to grow will hopefully give us the quantitative and qualitative data needed to substantiate our assumptions as to its benefit to

the books' recipients and the local quality of life. The results so far, both locally and across the state, as well as from similar book-sharing programs, bode well for the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy becoming a substantial factor in increasing literacy levels statewide.

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Appendix A. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library—2008 Book List

All of the following books are published by Penguin Group, Inc.

The first book each child receives is *The Little Engine That Could* (customized version)

The month children turn 5 he/she receives

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready For Kindergarten (customized version)

	Group 6 (Children born in 2003)	
A Place Called Kindergarten	Groundhog Gets A Say	Mr. Katapat's Incredible
Badger's Fancy Meal*	Invisible Moose	Adventures
Five Nice Mice*	Jon Phillip Duck	Owl Moon
Flossie and the Fox	Lissy's Friends*	Thank You World*
People's Ears?		Why Do Mosquitoes Buzz in
	Group 5 (Children born in 2004)	
Aesop's Fables	Grandfather Buffalo	Red, Red, Red*
Apple Farmer Annie (bilingual)†	Legend of the Indian Paintbrush	Snowy Day
Coyote Raid In Cactus Canyon	Luke Goes To Bat	Take Care Good Knight
Eight Animals on the Town†	Officer Buckle and Gloria	The House That Jack Built
Eight Animals Play Ball†	Zinnia's Flower Garden	
	Group 4 (Children born in 2005)	
Boom Chicka Rock	Little Toot	Rooster Can't
Bunny Cakes	Llama Llama Mad At Mama*	Cock-a-doodle-doo
Easy Street	Little Monkey Lost*	The Gruffalo*
Firefighters To The Rescue	My Lucky Day	Tiger Can't Sleep
Fluffy and Baron	You Can Do Anything*	Tomie's Little Book of Poems
	Group 3 (Children born in 2006)	
Big Brother, Little Brother	Little Loon And Papa	Pigs Love Potatoes*
Big Sister, Little Sister	Max's ABC	Pip and Squeek*
Cool Time Song	Mine-o-saur*	The Wild Little Horse
Llama, Llama Red Pajama	Momma Will You?	Tomie's Three Bears
	Group 2 (Children born in 2007)	
A Mud Pie For Mother	My Two Hands My Two Feet	Raindrop Plop!
ABC Look At Me	My Very First Book of Colors	Ready, Set, Skip*
Corduroy Goes To The Doctor Down*	Panda Whispers*	Skippy Jon Jones Up and
Good Night, Gorilla	Peter Rabbit*	Your Kind of Mommy*
	Group 1 (Children born in 2008)	
Giggles With Daddy	Lull-A-Bye Lil' One	Tomie's Little Mother Goose
Kisses For Mommy	Max's First Word	Wake Up, Sleepy Bear
Look Look!	Spot Goes To The Farm	Where's My Nose?
Look At The Animals*	Tomie's Baa Baa Black Sheep	Where's Spot?

*New title †Bilingual title

(www.ferstfoundation.org)

THE TALE OF THREE STATES’ READING TESTS: COMMONALITIES, DIFFERENCES, AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

In this research, the authors address high-stakes reading tests—specifically those that states create and use to judge student achievement and schools’ yearly annual progress. While much has been explored about the implications of these tests for students and their teachers, relatively little is known about their content. The authors investigated this gap by systematically analyzing three states’ reading frameworks and their released test items. Their findings indicate there are both similarities and differences among these tests’ passage features (e.g., type, length, readability, attention to cultural diversity, and graphics) and their questions’ attributes (e.g., number, type, and mental demands). The authors conclude by exploring the implications of their findings for teachers, teacher educators, and students.

In this accountability age and with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) came high stakes testing. High-stakes testing is defined as a single test that determines a student’s academic future (The National Forum, 2002). Students take them, while many educators complain about them. But, what do we really know about these high stakes tests? The researchers address that question by analyzing three states’ reading frameworks (i.e., the definition of reading provided in web-based documents) and released test items. Specifically, we wondered about three things: (1) the tests’ passage features (e.g.,

type, length, readability, attention to cultural diversity, and graphics), (2) their questions' attributes (e.g., number, type, and cognitive demands), and (3) the potential implications of these comparisons for classroom teachers, teacher educators, and students. Our attention to state reading tests coincides with our interests as reading teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. In addition, as Dutro and Valencia (2004) note, reading is "unquestionably the most high profile, legislated, and hotly debated subject area, especially in light of the No Child Left Behind legislation and Reading First guidelines" (p. 7).

A Theoretical Backdrop

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and the research behind it serve as the scholarship behind our inquiry. As most Americans, especially those with school age children, know, NCLB mandates annual testing. However, Congress mandated the tests but left the specific design of them to the states (West & Peterson, 2003). Given this lack of specific direction, most states have developed and implemented K-12 tests designed to assess students' reading proficiency in light of their individual state frameworks and curriculum. [Refer to the Digest of Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006) for a complete listing of these states.] While isolated information about these individual tests can be obtained, to this point comparisons across state tests have not been undertaken. Since state test results hold the same implications for teachers and their students, we consider the exploration of the tests' commonalities and differences important and timely.

The general topic of standards, and an accountability system linked to them, has received widespread attention. Many scholars (e.g., Cuban, 2004) accept their combined potential, but also see land mines that can accompany this national testing trend. Some, like Darling-Hammond (2004), lament the replacement of more thoughtful assessment and accountability systems, fearing the curriculum will become narrowed as expectations for teachers to address the tested standards and the format used to test them rise. In fact, Pearson (2006) found using the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (Good & Kaminski, 2002) did narrow the curriculum, which justified those fears. As Pearson suggests, tests like these lead to curricular activities that do not coincide with widely accepted criteria and do not promote students' reading achievement.

Research has also looked at the impact of these high-stakes tests on teachers (Agee, 2004; Allington, 2002; Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001; Thomas, 2001). Allington and Thomas worry that an overemphasis on the testing of standards can threaten teachers' desire to use authentic purposes for reading and writing. Agee pinpoints the dilemmas that one teacher cognitively

and affectively encountered in a test-driven teaching context. The teacher hoped to enact ideas that she learned from her undergraduate preservice program. Instead, Agee found that the demands of mandated, high-stakes tests muted a broader attention to multicultural literature and thwarted constructivist approaches to teaching. Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris surveyed Texas teachers in order to find their stances regarding their state test Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS; Texas Education Agency). At the time of their investigation, their findings confirmed the negative impact on both teachers and students in Texas. The teachers who responded to their survey specifically noted that the amount of time spent preparing for the TAAS test hurt their students more than it helped. In their view, the emphasis on testing contributed to both student retention at various grade levels and eventually the student dropping out of school. Various research has found that the downside to high-stakes testing and accountability preempt the positive effects for this model of change.

Other researchers have investigated various cognitive and affective attributes associated with reading tests and their administration (e.g., Thurlow & Bolt, 2001). For example, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2008) identified the anxiety that often accompanies what they termed the “constant drumbeat of testing” (p. 14), the effects of health and poverty on test performance, and school funding inequities that further impact poor and minority students. In another study, Fletcher et al. (2006) inquired about the test performance benefits of providing accommodations for low achieving students. They unveiled the importance of matching the accommodations to an identified need. In their study, when the package of accommodations addressed an identified need such as decoding, students showed significant improvement on the state test. Also, McGlinchey and Hixson (2004) considered other assessment tools that might predict success on a state test (in this case the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, MEAP). They used a 1-minute oral reading sample of fluency to predict MEAP results and found a positive correlation between them. While noting the insufficiency of oral reading rates or fluency, they used these positive findings to propose the use of reading probes as a formative assessment to assist the teacher in making instructional decisions prior to the administration of a higher stakes test such as the MEAP.

In yet another line of inquiry, scholars explored the alignment between state frameworks, the standards linked to them, and district literacy standards. In a document analysis of 42 states’ reading documents, Wixson and Dutro (1999) unveiled the variability in the ways that states conceptualize and organize the subject of reading. Dutro and Valencia (2004) focused on four states and one district from each. They found what they considered heartening links between frameworks and state and local standards, but they cautioned that standards best serve as guidelines.

On a related note, a final group of researchers investigated state reform processes (e.g., Guthrie, Schafer, Afflerbach, & Almasi, 1994; Lindle, Petrosko, & Pankratz, 1997)—how states go about the work of establishing standards. While this study does not specifically seek to judge the merits of the tests under review, scholarship that explores the content and format of reading tests does apply. Decades ago, Farr and Carey (1986) addressed the question, “Do reading tests really measure reading?” They concluded:

At best, tests can provide some indication of how someone reads, but the relationship of such indications to actual reading behaviors must be inferred. . . . Reading is not what reading tests test. . . . Tests are activities to engage examinees in behaviors that are like what they do in everyday life. But, tests are not reality. The testing conditions, the purposes of reading, the examinee’s attitudes toward tests all influence test performance. (p. 16)

Willis (2008) expanded beyond this surface level concern to consider race, class, and power. In her account, she noted the influence of philosophical assumptions and ideological stances that historically influence reading comprehension testing and the overriding influence of the dominant class. She concluded her text with a call for “theories that are flexible enough to embrace multiple systems of knowing and determine why, under what conditions, and how reading comprehension occurs” (p. 313).

Although this is only a brief account of the research literature linked to state standards and tests, it serves to confirm that a comparative look at how states assess the standards they set for students remains undone. For that reason, we directed our attention to high-stakes tests administered in three states. We focused on basic questions about the test passages and the types of questions designed to assess the student’s understanding of them and then made comparisons among the three tests. This translated into the following two general questions: (1) What text features do the sample passages include? and (2) What attributes define the assessment items that these tests used? (Refer to Appendices A and B for the specific directions that these analyses took.)

Methodology

We compared Southwest, Midwest, and Northwest states’ fourth grade reading tests. We selected grade four since reading programs typically make more of a shift to reading comprehension over word identification. We selected the states based on their geographical diversity. Because we think the comparative data supersedes an identification of the states, we stay with this geographical notation. This decision does not go without

precedent since Dutro and Valencia (2004) cited geographical regions rather than state names.

Preparatory Steps and Data Collection

For each state, we worked in two-person teams. Our teams' overall approach to this work coincides with the basic elements of document analysis, a type of qualitative investigation involving the study of written materials (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). Our written materials included a collection of information about these three states' reading frameworks from their websites. We used these states' theoretical declarations about reading as background information. Our analysis applied to the tests that we acquired. Using web-based searches of tests released to the public within the last 2 years, we located two expository and two narrative passages and the test items for them. In the end, we examined four sets (a text passage and its questions) for each state. We then decided on two areas for analysis that we considered central to a reader's comprehension and success on these tests: (1) the attributes of the tests' passages and (2) the attributes of the text-based responses. We explain these attributes in the next section.

Data Analysis

The judgments that we made about the passages and the text-based responses stemmed from interpretational analysis (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). This involved a systematic set of procedures. Due to the collaborative feature of this work and the assignment of a two-person team for each state, attention was paid to agreement. We began by establishing and defining the features that we would analyze for the passages and the response items. To assure fidelity between our definitions and our use of them, we held regular meetings. At each, we checked the decisions made by each team and further refined our definitions as necessary for clarity, sufficiency, and consistency of use. We relied on this ongoing process of use and confirmation to guarantee the compatibility of our various decision points and to achieve a consensus around any questions that arose. This process allowed us to establish reliability in the making of each decision point for analyzing the text and the test questions. Once we confirmed a confidence in our analyses, we used descriptive statistics (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) to further highlight differences and commonalities within and across tests. Ultimately, we generated individual charts for each state that served as a basis for an aggregation of information across them.

Test Passages. Based on our understanding of the elements that affect reading comprehension (e.g., Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Lenski & Lewis, 2008; Paris & Stahl, 2005), we selected several decision points for each passage. First, we identified the source (e.g., a selection from a trade book, magazine, or textbook) and type of text (e.g., expository or narrative). We

then noted the attributes of the texts. We determined length of the passage by doing a word count, applied the Fry (1968) readability formula (as cited in Lipson & Wixson, 2003) to determine a readability level, and noted graphic and print features, such as choice of font and use of headings. We also considered culturally dependent references, which we operationally defined as topical diversity and/or prior knowledge assumptions (See Appendix A for a copy of the analysis form for passages).

Text-Based Responses. Our selection of features for analyzing the test items fell into two categories: (1) surface features and (2) content. Surface features included the number and type of questions (e.g., extended response or multiple-choice). To analyze content, we first considered the questions' clarity, which we defined as a clear match between the stem of the question and the response expected for it. We used the answer key for these passages to define an expected response. Then, we relied upon the solid research base and straightforward definitions reflected in the Question Answer Relationships (QAR) categories created by Raphael and Wonnacott (1985) to label the test questions. QAR uses three classifications of questions. The first, *Right There*, includes questions that can be answered from a single sentence in a passage. The second, *Think and Search*, requires an inference. At times, the inference involves crossing sentence boundaries. The inference might also involve linking information found in different parts of a text or connecting text information with prior knowledge. In the final category, *On Your Own*, questions are motivated by the text's information, but the answer comes exclusively from the students' prior knowledge (See Appendix B for a copy of the analysis form for responses).

Findings

We were limited to the released items from fourth grade reading tests rather than an actual test. Therefore, we used the term "test" to refer to the collection of each state's released passages and assessment items that we analyzed. While we used the most recent passages available, to meet our decision to include two narrative and two expository selections we needed a 2 year time frame across states to obtain our samples. In addition, in each state we had to look at different school year tests to find four samples (two narrative and two expository), as some tests had mostly narrative and some tests contained mostly expository text. With these reminders in mind, differences appear for the tests and released items within each state as well as across the tests and released items of the three states that we compared. To pinpoint these differences, we begin with an individual reporting of the three states and then offer comments that look across them.

The Tale from the Northwest

Test Passages. For the tales of the Northwest, we analyzed the released fourth grade test items from the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years. These released items included four passages: two expository and two narratives. The structure of these test passages varied in length, readability, and type. The length of the four passages ranged from 170 words to 517 words, a difference of 347 words. The average words per sentence had a difference of approximately eight words between the highest and lowest data points. The expository passages were the shortest in length, yet on average had the longest sentences. In contrast, the two narrative passages were significantly longer (a difference of more than 100 words). Based on our use of a Fry readability formula, the readability of the four passages also differed, ranging from a third to seventh grade reading level. The narrative stories had reading levels of grades 3 and 4, while the expository stories had reading levels of grades 6 and 7.

The 2004-2005 narrative text often used dialogue and quotation marks. At times, the passage specified the speaker of the comment directly. At other times, the reader needed to infer who was speaking. One example that required an inference included a need to understand beginning and ending quotation marks, as they related to a question posed by one speaker and answered by another. Both expository texts used a descriptive organizational structure. One selection used a sequence pattern within one of its paragraphs.

The four passages had identical format and layout. The print format consisted of single spaced, standard font paragraphs without any use of numbering or headings. While each text contained a graphic, the type of graphic was the only variation. The graphics used in the passage included both pictures and a graph. Three out of four graphics (two pictures and one bar graph) were linked to the text information or questions. This link was central to the reader's understanding of the text two out of the three times. In the remaining text, the graphic was nonessential to the reader's understanding of the passage. In summary, the text features of these four passages varied only in graphic choices and their relatedness to their meaning.

In an analysis of these released items' cultural references, the two narrative passages included culturally dependent references to names, places, and events. For example, the 2005-2006 released passage, *Thomas Jefferson and the Big Cheese*, referenced the White House in this statement: "When Leland got to Washington, he borrowed four horses and a wagon and brought his gift straight to the White House." To understand the setting of this part of the story, the reader needs to possess some cultural knowledge, not only about the United States government, but also about where the President lives. In the second narrative passage, the culturally dependent reference came from knowledge that we attributed to white, middle class America

and was central to understanding the passage. Information presented in the two expository texts focused on whales in a way that was judged as not culturally dependent. In other words, students would need to read the passage, but they would not need a firsthand understanding of whales to comprehend this text.

Text-Based responses. Students in the Northwest state needed to show their understanding of these passages in a variety of ways. Three of the four texts presented students with questions that required both multiple choice and extended response answers. For the extended response answers, lines were provided that indicated the expected length of the response. However, the expected answers for the extended response questions were unclear. Each asked students to include details or examples from the text, but lacked guidelines about how to do this. For example, whether students were expected to paraphrase that information or quote it directly from the text remained unclear.

The four passages included 16 questions that we analyzed and labeled based on the knowledge needed to answer them. This analysis revealed that only 2 of the 16 questions asked students *Right There* or literal questions. The remaining 14 questions, labeled as *Think and Search*, demanded that students make inferences. The majority of the *Think and Search* questions required students to use both the text and personal knowledge. The following examples typify these questions: “Why do gray whales change their home during the year? Include two details from the selection in your answer,” and “If a whale is stranded, what is its problem?” None of these passage questions were labeled as *On Your Own* questions, questions that a reader could answer by referring exclusively to his or her prior knowledge.

The Tale from the Midwest

Test Passages. For the tale of a Midwest state’s test, we analyzed the released fourth-grade test items from the 2003-2004 and 2005-2006 school years. Of the four passages analyzed, two were expository and two were narrative, as was consistently chosen for each state. The narrative texts were trade book excerpts from *Because of Winn-Dixie* (DiCamillo, 2000) and *Hannah* (Whelan, 1991). One expository passage came from *Ranger Rick* and the second from *National Geographic World*.

The structure of these test passages’ lengths varied from 785 and 946 words for the narrative texts and 511 to 622 for the expository selections. The readability of the passages ranged from third to fifth grade. The narrative stories had reading levels of grade 3 and 4, while the expository passages had reading levels of grades 4 and 5. Interestingly, the only text that was identified as having a fifth grade readability level was expository, a text structure that many in the field of literacy consider more difficult and challenging for readers to comprehend (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005).

The layout of passages showed that three of the four had one or more text features or graphics. The trade book excerpt from *Hannah* (Whelan, 1991) had one picture, a line drawing. However, it was peripheral rather than integral to understanding the passage. The passage *My Life with Bears* (Pelton, 1999) included 10 text features: 8 photographs, 1 imported graphic image, and 1 map of the United States that accentuated the state of Tennessee, the setting of the story.

Across these passages, we noted two cultural references. One came from the reference to Winn-Dixie, a regional grocery chain with stores located primarily in the Southeastern states. The other culturally dependent reference addressed a potato harvest, a festival referenced in the excerpt from *Hannah* (Whelan, 1991).

Text-Based Responses. The 2003-2004 released items included one extended response question, labeled as a *Think and Search* question, that required the student to piece together information from across the text to answer. The 2005-2006 passages had 16 multiple-choice questions, 8 for the narrative text and 8 for the expository text. Of the 16 questions, we labeled 3 as *Right There* or literal questions, 7 as *Think and Search*, and 6 as *On Your Own* questions.

Looking at the answers for these 17 questions, 7 were identified as clear. The lack of clarity for the remaining 10 responses revolved around the need for students to make inferences to arrive at an answer.

The Tale from the Southwest

Test Passages. For the tale of the Southwest, we analyzed the released fourth grade passages from a state's 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 reading assessments. Like the Midwest and Northwest passages, we included two expository and two narrative passages. None of the sources for these four passages were specified. The structure of these test passages varied in length. The two narrative selections contained 707 and 472 words, while the expository selections had 272 and 559 words. Each passage had a readability level of fourth grade.

Examining the layout of these test passages showed that four texts contained a limited number of graphics or text features. Both narrative passages contained a picture. One picture was computer-generated, while the other picture was a drawing. Both pictures were identified as unimportant to the understanding of the text. The 2003-2004 expository passage included one computer-generated picture, along with three photographs. All were central to the understanding of the expository passage. The second expository text from 2002-2003 did not include any graphic images. However, a graphic design was used to create the appearance of a report.

With respect to cultural references, one of the expository and one of the narrative passages exhibited deep cultural significance. These cultur-

ally dependent references were not embedded in language or linguistics, but rather in character representation. For example, some of the characters were depicted in culturally relevant roles. The mother and daughter took “goods to the market” to be sold. The father and son remained at home to continue farming.

Text-Based Responses. All of the questions released for each of these reading tests were multiple-choice questions. The 2002-2003 narrative passage had 12 questions. The 2003-2004 narrative passage had 6. Five questions followed the 2002-2003 expository passage, and 12 items assessed the 2003-2004 expository passage. The majority of questions (32) were classified as *Think and Search*. Of the remaining questions, 2 were *Right There* and 1 was *On Your Own*.

With respect to answers, 34 of the 35 questions were identified as having an expected answer that was clear. The expected responses to all 35 questions were also classified as clear.

Commonalities and Differences of the Test Questions

While both similarities and differences existed across these released items and across the categories we considered, we found the differences in the assessment items most notable and consequential for teachers and their students. We tabulated the fourth grade questions and responses across the expository and narrative passages on the released state tests (See Table 1).

Table 1. Commonalities and Differences of the Test Questions across States

QUESTIONS	NORTHWEST	MIDWEST	SOUTHWEST
<i>Types</i>			
Extended Response	6	1	0
Multiple Choice	10	16	35
<i>Classification</i>			
Right There	2	3	2
Think and Search	14	7	32
On Your Own	0	6	1
ANSWERS			
<i>Expected Answer</i>			
Clear	13	6	34
Unclear	3	11	1
<i>Expected Response</i>			
Clear	10	7	35
Unclear	6	2	0

Note: The values represent the number of questions for each state's test that fell into each category.

Implications for Students and Teachers

These tests vary in the content of the passages, the number and types of questions, and the cognitive demands required for a reader to comprehend and respond. For instance, a student who has difficulty providing a written response for text understandings would fare better in the Southwest state. Afflerbach (2007) claimed that extended response items demand more of a reader, since he or she must devise a response rather than choose from a list of options. With this in mind, the multiple-choice format of the Southwest state's test might make it easier for students. A multiple-choice format, however, might still be a disadvantage. Too often, the wording of an intended distracter makes an incorrect option seem not only plausible, the intention of distracters, but also specifically supportable by the text. A multiple-choice format does not offer a student an opportunity to clarify the reasonableness behind a response deemed incorrect by those who constructed the test. Students who thrive on questions that allow a personalized response would fare best in the Midwest state. In addition to the different types of responses permitted on the tests, the passage differences might also alter a student's performance. For example, one of the test passages is an excerpt from *Because of Winn-Dixie* (DiCamillo, 2000). A student who has read the novel might have a better chance of answering the questions correctly than a student who only reads the text excerpt. A student who needs to persevere to understand a passage might appreciate the shortness of some selections and the lower readability of others.

For teachers, the differences in the tests' assessment items might influence teachers' classroom practices. For example, since the Southwest test questions do not require students to write, Southwest teachers might be prone to an exclusive diet of multiple-choice items for the texts that students read in class. Since the Northwest questions are primarily *Think and Search*, Northwest teachers might hesitate to explore those broader questions (i.e., *On Your Own*) that link to a text, but do not require specific information from it. Since the Northwest released items include more balance between multiple-choice and extended responses, Northwest teachers would need to assist students in framing written responses as well as navigating multiple-choice items. Midwest teachers would need to attend to writing, but not with as much emphasis as Northwest teachers. They also have reason to address *On Your Own* questions, since their state tests' released items have the highest number of them.

Discussion

Our findings are limited by the three states that we selected and our dependence on the test items available to us for our systematic examina-

tion. In spite of these limitations, this study raises several issues and hopes about the form and role of state tests.

A variable state-by-state approach to testing design leads to test variations that might lead to a variable label (i.e., proficient or below standard) for the students who take them. These labels and the pass rate percentages they generate matter. As Allington (1983) noted years ago, student labels come with consequences. These might include placement in special programs or, in today's world, retention at grade level or the loss of a high school diploma. However, and as a result of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), overall pass rates determine whether schools receive praise or probation. These potential ramifications emanating from the government should not be influenced by geography.

Both the form of the test and the individual passage selections we examined were different from state to state. Specifically, the type (narrative or exposition) and substance (the topics) of the passages directly impacted the cognitive demands of the questions that students must answer. This underscores the stance of Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2008) that "test passage comprehension has more to do with prior knowledge and experience than with test preparation drills" (p. 18). We hope that district administrators and classroom teachers realize that time spent on test preparation, regardless of the tests' features, might unwittingly do more to limit students' test performance than enhance it, as they are limiting their students' experiences with various topics, which in turn, limits the background knowledge they need to pass the tests.

Like other high-stakes tests, and as Afflerbach (2007) attested, these tests do not provide products that offer insight into students' reading needs. At best, they trigger what Afflerbach termed "backward inferencing" (p. 139), a process dependent upon best guesses that try and pinpoint instructional direction from a test score. Therefore, we hope that state testing programs will allow schools to return to using assessments for the purpose that good testing can accomplish—that of informing teachers about each individual students' reading achievement. Such testing would not need comparability across geographical locations. It would require assessments that identify the components of a personalized literacy program designed for improving the literacy achievement of each student. This shift would require more attention to formative assessments that monitor progress over time, rather than supply a label of performance based upon one moment in time. As Sizer (2004) stated, "They (standardized tests) hardly provide either enough information or the balance of information necessary to assess accurately either a student's mastery or a district's or school's effort" (p. xxi). These state designed tests are no exception.

Authors' Note

The authors acknowledge the important contributions of Sara Hausken, Megan Itani, Megan Jennings, and Jennifer Robinson to the data collection and analysis for this project.

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Appendix A. Text Analysis Chart

TEST (CIRCLE ONE): MIDWEST SOUTHWEST NORTHWEST REVIEWER: _____

FEATURE			
LENGTH OF PASSAGE	# OF WORDS IN THE SENTENCE:	# OF SENTENCES IN THE PASSAGE:	AVERAGE WORDS PER SENTENCE:
Readability	Notes: If recording time, count it as one word if presented numerically (e.g., 3:00 a.m.). If written (e.g., three a.m.), count the number as one word and a.m. as one word.		
Source (narrative or expository)			
Culturally dependent references	Surface: References to names or cultural events	Deep: Text information culturally dependent	Pose six questions: How are the characters depicted? How is the family depicted? Who are the heroes of the story? How do the characters resolve the dilemma they face? Is the diversity of the cultural community evident? Who wrote the story?
Graphics	Type:	Number:	Linked to text information or questions: Yes No If yes, determine whether the graphic is central (i.e., assists the reader to understand the text), peripheral, or unrelated/misleading.
Type	Narrative Dialogue: Yes No If yes, does it note the speaker or expect the reader to understand beginning and ending questions?	Exposition: Label the type of text structure	Other:

Text features: Print	Spacing: Single or double?	Paragraph or line numbering: Yes No	Font and type: Standard? Other
Text features: Presentation	Layout: Standard Other (specify)	Use of headings and subheadings? Yes No	
Use additional spaces as necessary to add features that your analysis unveils			

Appendix B. Question Analysis Chart

TEST (CIRCLE ONE): MIDWEST SOUTHWEST NORTHWEST REVIEWER: _____

NAME OF SELECTION: _____

Notes: Complete on form for each of the four selections reviewed. In selecting options, stay within the last two years or the most recent and have one exposition and one narrative selection per year.

<i>Surface features</i>			
Total number of questions per selection			
Types of questions	Extended response Number:	Multiple choice: Number:	Other (specify) Number:
<i>Content</i>			
Expected answer (Respond for each question.)	Clear Q Q Q Q Q	Unclear Q Q Q Q Q	If unclear, why? Q Q Q Q Q
Expected type of response	Clear Q Q Q Q Q	Unclear Q Q Q Q Q	If unclear, why? Q Q Q Q Q
Question Label	Right there (note number question) Q Q Q Q Q	Think and (note whether T&T or T&PK) Q Q Q Q Q	On your own (note number of question) Q Q Q Q Q

GUIDED READING: IT'S FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

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Abstract

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 1999) has encouraged educational professionals to seek out teachers who best use solid teaching practices. Decades of practice have shown that guided reading is an example of a solid teaching practice (Clay, 1985; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Thus, this study sought to identify if teachers were implementing guided reading into their classrooms and to examine why teachers were or were not using this instructional practice. Surveys were distributed to four elementary campuses (kindergarten-fifth grade). The surveys asked the teachers for information about their teaching experience, training they had received, and method of reading instruction used in the classroom. Data revealed that primary teachers (K-2) practice guided reading more frequently than upper elementary teachers (3-5), even though all participating teachers received training in guided reading either in college, through their school district and/or via self-study. The teachers' rationales for implementing, or not implementing, guided reading are discussed along with the teachers' descriptions of its benefits and limitations.

Introduction

Guided reading has long been an accepted form of effective reading instruction (Clay, 1985; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Through the work of Marie Clay's Reading Recovery, the guided reading framework became a prevalent instructional practice in the primary grades. Through Fountas and Pinnell's work (1996, 2001), guided reading continues to be considered a best practice in general education classrooms. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) defined the practice of guided reading as, "an instructional setting that enables (teachers) to work with small groups of students to help them learn effective strategies for processing text

with understanding" (p. 189). However, in schools today the term 'guided reading' is often used in reference to small group instruction of primary students who are struggling to read. This is a very narrow interpretation of guided reading and does not encompass the broad definition expressed by Fountas and Pinnell. Both of these researchers do not limit the use of guided reading to primary grades or just to struggling students. This paper explores how guided reading is used (or not used) to assist all students in their quest to read for meaning.

In the primary grades, guided reading increases students' oral reading fluency, phonetic understanding, as well as their overall reading level (Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez, & Rascon, 2007; Iaquina, 2006). As students move into the upper elementary grades, guided reading has the potential to remediate, teach critical reading strategies and word study, and increase students' self-regulation (Villaume & Brabhan, 2001; Whitehead, 2002), all important aspects of reading for meaning. Avalos et al. (2007) modified guiding reading for English Language Learners by having the students read aloud, use culturally relevant material and engage in vocabulary journals as ways to instantiate the process of reading within a second language. They found such revised guided reading instruction increased the sixth through eighth graders' reading ability an average of 1.3 to 1.8 grade levels. In addition, they reported an increase in student engagement when the guided reading framework was adjusted to meet their unique needs.

McCurdy, Daly, Gartmaker, Bonfiglio and Persampieri (2007), conducted two experimental studies with third grade students to examine small group instruction of guided reading and specifically, how reading strategies were taught. There were three administered conditions. The instructional condition consisted of small group reading instruction and rereading. The second group obtained a tangible reward as their performance increased, and the control group was used for comparison. The instructional condition showed the greatest increase in fluent reading performance. Another study (Bonfiglio, Daly, Persampieri & Anderson, 2006) investigated which type of small group instruction would show the most growth. Their strategies included passage previewing, choral reading, error correction, and tangible rewards. These strategies were provided to the students in a variety of combinations and over time to determine which would offer the most gains when used in guided reading. Fourth graders in the instructional, small reading group that included passage previewing, error correction and choral reading increased their fluency (correctly read words) and decreased their errors per minute. When compared to traditional instruction, students' active engagement increased 6.25% during participation in the small group instruction. The combination of previewing, error correction and choral reading was found to be the most effective instructional practice for guided reading and easily transferable into any classroom.

Wiggins (1994) found that when third grade teachers used the flexible small groups in addition to their basal series, the below level readers increased their reading capabilities. These students' reading levels moved from approximately 2 months below grade level to 2 months' above grade level. Unfortunately, the below level students in the traditional class fell another 6 months behind their small-grouped peers. It can, therefore, be assumed that teachers are willing and able to use the state adopted textbook and objectives while also implementing guided reading (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Wiggins). Although it might be true that teachers are comfortable with basals and much of the reading instruction in school is still basal driven (Wiggins), it is also accurate to say that basal stories can be leveled and used within the guided reading framework (Fawson & Reutzel) to make instruction increasingly powerful for students, especially those that struggle.

Capitalizing on the notion that guided reading can enable readers to grow in their reading capabilities, Massengil (2003) used the framework of guided reading to assist low-literate adults. For this study, the instructional focus during guided reading was on word recognition and reading strategies to aid comprehension. The results included an increase in each adult's overall reading level, ranging from 1.4 to 2.9 grade levels. Although a small study ($N = 4$), Massengil (2003) showed that not only is guided reading important in the composition of reading skill for children, but also for adults. It acted as a pedagogical strategy that worked to increase the reading capabilities of all readers.

These diversified research findings, across various settings and age groups, validate that the guided reading framework promotes effective reading instruction.

Purpose of the Study

With such data supporting the use of guided reading to teach reading skills and strategies, three questions arise: (1) Have teachers been trained in guided reading practices? (2) Are teachers implementing guided reading? and, (3) What is their rationale for implementing or not implementing guided reading? In a time where Annual Yearly Progress (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) must be monitored and high-stakes testing remains in the forefront, it is imperative for teachers and administrators to understand not only the benefits of guided reading, but also the possible barriers to its implementation.

Methodology

Setting

Four out of 63 elementary schools within one urban school district in Southwest Texas with a population of 1,296,682 were asked by the first researcher to participate in the study. These schools were selected due to their proximity and availability to the researcher. In 2007, the school district had two elementary schools receive an Exemplary rating by the Texas Education Agency, 23 were Recognized and 38 were Academically Acceptable. Three of the schools surveyed were Academically Acceptable and one was Recognized. The district's student population consists of approximately 85% Hispanic, 10% African American, 4% Caucasian. Of those, 92% of the students are considered to be economically disadvantaged.

Participants

Seventy-one K-5 teachers were asked to complete the survey in order to participate in the study. Eighty-nine percent of the teachers were female and 11% were male. However, 46 teachers completed and returned the survey. Six of the respondents were not full-time certified teachers, and therefore their surveys were excluded, bringing the total number of teacher participants to 40 primary and upper elementary teachers.

Nineteen of the respondents taught primary grades K-2, and 21 of the teachers taught grades 3-5. Fifteen of the teachers were in their first 3 years of the profession. Four teachers had taught between 4-6 years, and 21 teachers had taught for more than 6 years.

Survey Material

These primary and upper elementary teachers were asked to fill out a guided reading survey (See Appendix A), which was created by the first researcher. The teachers were asked to give some background data about themselves that included: current grade level, years of experience at that grade level, and the total number of years of teaching experience. Next, the teacher participants were asked to identify the type of guided reading training, if any, they had received. Finally, the teachers were queried as to the frequency of guided reading utilization.

Data Analysis

The background questions and the training questions were tallied based on the teachers' circled responses. The essay questions, which asked the teachers for a more detailed explanation of guided reading instruction were read and common phrases grouped together to create categories. These categories were then reviewed and reevaluated using constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1994) until every comment was included in a representative category. Finally, each category was given a title that described the comments it contained.

Results

Have Teachers Been Trained in Guided Reading Practices?

Of the 40 primary and upper elementary teachers, 21 teachers indicated that they had received guided reading training of some kind at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Thirty-three teachers indicated that they had participated in staff developments ranging from 3 hours to 3 days that included work with guided reading. Eight teachers indicated that they had completed a self-study on guided reading while reading different professional development books such as: *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey (2007), *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies* by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm and Wayne Otto (2001), and/or *Guided Reading: Making It Work* by Scholastic (2000). (See Table 1).

Table 1: Teacher Background Data

	K-2 TOTAL = 19	3-5 TOTAL = 21	TOTALS
<i>Teacher information on how they gained knowledge about guided reading.</i>			
College Training	10	11	21
Staff Development	16	17	33
Self-Study	6	2	8
<i>How guided reading was implementation.</i>			
Daily	14	5	19
2x a week	0	2	2
3x a week	3	6	9
Varied	1	6	7
Never	0	1	1

Note: The number of trainings received exceeds the total number of teachers since they may have had more than one type of training.

Are Teachers Implementing Guided Reading?

Fourteen of the 19 primary teachers reported using guided reading on a daily basis. The other five primary teachers stated they used guided reading two to three times a week (See Table 1). Some of the primary teacher's descriptions were not necessarily in alignment with a guided reading format, as two teachers specifically stated that it was part of the *Success for All* (SFA; Slavin, Madden, Chambers, & Haxby, 2001) program that had been adopted and implemented in their schools. However, the majority of the primary teachers described their guided reading time as small group instruction to practice reading. One primary teacher wrote, "Guided reading groups are individualized based on the weaknesses of the children. We focus on blends, sight words, and decoding skills. We

also do questioning strategies for all students to think about the story.” Another teacher wrote, “Students will be grouped to come with me by need. Together we will read a leveled reader. Depending on the students’ needs, we will work on varied skills they need to practice.”

On the other hand, only five of the 21 upper elementary teachers stated they used guided reading on a daily basis (See Table 1). Again, some of the explanations of guided reading provided by the upper elementary teachers did not follow the guided reading framework. A fifth grade teacher explained that, “In reading, as in history, I will preview the section the students are about to read, ask leading questions, then having whetted their appetite, will allow them to begin reading in small groups. This is usually a team of either 3 or 4 students who will take turns reading out loud.” Another upper elementary teacher stated that, “Before reading, we take a picture walk or complete a K-W-L. I try to help them make a connection to the text. Then complete a word study/vocabulary part. This is done through word routines or game activities. I provide and/or model a comprehension strategy through a mini-lesson depending on content being covered. During reading, I prefer partner reading but sometimes it can be echo reading or independent reading. Small groups are pulled everyday. After reading, there is group discussion or completing a graphic organizer or journaling.”

The remainder of the 15 upper elementary teachers revealed that they used guided reading at various times and in differing ways (See Table 1). One teacher described her attempts at the application of the guided reading process as to “Set purpose, read, reflect, and summarize.” Still, the majority of teachers from the survey specifically mentioned meeting with groups that had been formed on the basis of their reading ability. Such grouping was spoken of as increasingly important for the struggling students. Teachers made comments about guided reading as helpful for, “identify[ing] the struggling reader,” and for “working with the different reading levels.” The grouping of readers of a similar level as called for in the guided reading framework, allowed these teachers to work particularly with those that struggle.

There was one 4th grade bilingual teacher, however, who stated that she never implemented guided reading even though she had received training on the Balanced Literacy Model. “My students can all read at grade level, so we work on reading comprehension through Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS; Texas Education Agency) passages. We do buddy and partner reading,” she explained. Although she admitted to not using the guided reading framework, she did use several of the pieces that are included as best practices within guided reading, such as comprehension strategies.

While many teachers reported using groupings to enhance their students' learning, only eight upper elementary teachers said that their reading groups were flexible or that the groups were based upon some sort of assessment data. While the small group time in these teachers' classrooms was said to be focused on a specific reading skill and/or strategies, rather than decoding or phonics, it was also true that the teachers did report matching the needs of the students to those of the curriculum. The curriculum seemed to guide the teachers, not the students. As one of the teachers said, "A focus lesson is given on the skill of the week. Students are called to reading groups to practice the skill." Another said, "I conduct a mini-lesson on the story that we will be covering. Mini-lessons might include reading strategies, fluency, and comprehension."

Table 2 displays the descriptors used by both primary and upper elementary teachers to explain how they implemented guided reading in their classroom. Primary teachers used descriptors more often than upper elementary teachers did. The total tally of descriptors for the primary teachers was 38, compared to the 30 provided by upper elementary teachers. Although teachers varied in the depth of their descriptions, 14 of the 19 primary teachers concentrated on guided reading and its use for small group instruction. On the other hand, only four upper elementary teachers cited a concentration on small group instruction. Also described by primary teachers was a focus on using guided reading as a read aloud and for strategy instruction. Thus, while the primary educators spoke of guided reading as a tactic for small group instruction, the top two descriptors by upper elementary teachers were skill practice, followed by strategy instruction. However, such descriptors were infrequent (only 6 of the 21 teachers mentioned any descriptor of their guided reading instruction). Other variations in the descriptors were a result of the development of the children as readers that each teacher worked with. For example, kindergarten teachers mentioned environmental print as a component of guided reading, but those in the upper elementary grades did not mention it, while silent reading was listed by upper elementary, but not by those in the primary grades.

Based on the data in Table 1, it is more likely that primary teachers will use guided reading on a daily basis than those who teach older children. However, it also seems true that those in the lower grades have also received training in the guided reading framework, and that they utilize that training in their own personal ways. Most upper elementary teachers, on the other hand, use guided reading an average of three times a week. Such a schism between those that instruct younger children and older children in reading to learn and learning to read made us wonder about the ways in which those currently engaging in guided reading with their classrooms were doing so.

Table 2: Descriptors of Guided Reading Implementation

GUIDED READING ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY FOR K-2 TEACHERS TOTAL = 19	FREQUENCY FOR 3-5 TEACHERS TOTAL = 21
Small Group Instruction		
Based on Ability and Needs	14	4
Reading with Leveled Readers	1	3
Practicing Reading Skills	3	6
Teaching Reading Strategies	6	6
SFA Program	0	3
Read Aloud	8	1
Partner Reading	3	3
Silent Reading	0	4
Environmental Print	2	0
Integration	1	0

Note: The number of activities exceeds the total number of upper elementary teachers since they may have written more than one type of activity.

What Is the Teacher's Rationale for Implementing or Not Implementing It?

After looking for patterns and trends in the survey data, we turned our attention to the ways that teachers, both in the primary and upper grades, spoke about guided reading. As such, we saturated ourselves in the essay data. Teachers began by answering about their rationale for using (or not using) guided reading in their classrooms. Teachers at all levels gave the benefits they saw in the guided reading experience. Both also admitted the reasons that they did not engage in guided reading or why guided reading had problematic usage in the classrooms.

Benefits According to Teachers

The benefits for implementing guided reading were discussed by several primary teachers. Comments such as, "I see that students are retaining different strategies to assist them to progress in their reading," and "Targeting on student weaknesses and more one-on-one instruction" were prevalent and provided as reasons to use guided reading. It was additionally reported that students within a classroom (primary or upper) in which guided reading was used experienced improved comprehension skills, higher fluency levels, improved TPRI/BRI results, and an increase in overall reading test scores, according to the teachers (See Table 3). While utilized primarily in early grade educators' classrooms, one upper elementary teacher wrote he felt that comprehension is improved while employing elements of guided reading. Such a comment was unique for those teaching in the upper grades as even the teacher who made the comment also said he did not "really use guided reading much."

Table 3: Benefits and Limitations of Guided Reading

BENEFITS	FREQUENCY	LIMITATIONS	FREQUENCY
Improved Comprehension	2	Lack of Time	12
Improved Fluency	2	Restricted Use of Materials	3
Improved Test Scores	3	Limited Space	1
Retention of Reading Strategies	2	Organization and Management	2
Ability to Identify and Target Students' Needs	1		

Note: The number of benefits and limitations is less than the total number of teachers since they may not have written a response to this question.

Limitations According to Teachers

In explanation of why teachers, particularly those in the upper elementary grades, were not implementing guided reading on a more frequent basis, the teachers stated that they felt they did not have the time. They believed that guided reading on a daily basis or in the manner in which they were trained (See Table 3) was “too much” or “not right for the level of my students.” Upper elementary teachers made comments such as:

- “Not enough time because of math-warm-ups”
- “Too short a time to do all activities to make the students fluent readers”
- “Not always easy finding a large block of time”
- “Students not in the group have trouble being self-directed”

While those teaching in the higher grade levels made comments about time, teachers in the lower grades, although reflective of time, argued that they “wished” they could “meet with small groups on a daily basis, but there [was] not enough time” for such everyday meetings. So, while teachers of the older students felt there was not enough time to ever meet or that they were unable to find a large enough block of time, those in the lower grades spoke of the lack of time on a daily basis to meet with each of the groups.

Three upper elementary teachers explained that the structured reading program adopted by their district was the reason they were unable to implement guided reading. “The major setback is that SFA (Slavin et al., 2001) is very scripted and one is not allowed to deviate from the script to remediate or introduce different strategies,” reported one upper elementary teachers. Teachers, both primary and upper, expressed that they were, “restricted in what materials to use” in their schools. Such a limitation could be a result of the program expectations (upper) or the lack of resources (primary). Although scripted curriculums such as SFA (Salvin et al.) are perhaps inclusive of best practices and research-based, they often have required implementation by the district/school in attempts

to help the students who struggle. While stakeholders buy and utilize such curricula, teachers reported feeling stymied and unable to use the practices for which they were trained if such curriculum were expected. This was true regardless of grade level.

There were also two upper elementary teachers that, although not using guided reading in their classrooms, felt that nothing was missing in their reading instruction. One teacher reported that her “students are all at the same reading level,” and therefore they all “benefit[ed] from the whole group instruction.” Her belief that all of her students were on the “same [reading] level” enabled her to see her use of reading instruction in whole class format as merited and a fine way to work with students at a similar ability level. One other upper elementary bilingual teacher stated that not using guided reading worked well for her. She explained, “The students receive help from one another, myself or the Title I reading teacher.” An interesting note to these caveats is that both of these teachers also identified with the statement that there was not enough time for guided reading.

Discussion

Guided reading has long been an accepted form of effective reading instruction (Clay, 1985; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) and is prevalent in the primary grades (Clay). However, at the upper elementary level, guided reading practices have the potential to assist all students in their growth as readers (Avalos et al., 2007; Bonfiglio et al., 2006; McCurdy et al., 2007; & Whitehead, 2002). The students are able to engage in a variety of texts that interest them at their level and practice skills and strategies previously taught whole group (Wiggins, 1994). It also provides time to help students discover which strategies work best for them individually and with which types of texts (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). Guided reading could also be a time for Junior Great Books or Literature Circle discussions (King, 2001), without losing its purpose for helping students “learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 189).

These teacher participants reported receiving a variety of trainings regarding the guided reading framework. However, based on the data, primary teachers were more likely to implement guided reading, particularly on a daily basis, than upper elementary teachers. Upper elementary teachers reported using guided reading three times a week or on a varying basis (See Table 1). In addition, elementary teachers used a variety of descriptors to describe the instructional practice (See Table 2) and commented that if they were to implement guided reading with efficiency and results, they needed more time and materials. Data illuminated three

areas about guided reading that should be discussed in response to the above presented data.

Teacher Training

As stated in the surveys, all the teachers received training in guided reading. However, knowledge of the components and framework of guided reading is needed, as there were a variety of descriptors used, especially by upper elementary teachers, which were incorrectly represented as parts of guided reading. If we want teachers to implement guided reading in ways conducive to the growth of student reading capabilities, they need a deeper understanding of what guided reading means as well as the procedural framework involved. Such education would allow the move from theory into practice. Although it was true that teachers reported training, it was also evident that the actual practice and inclusion in the real world of their particular classroom was negated. Teachers need to be able to focus on each student's reading growth regardless of allotted time as the goal of guided reading is to provide students with long term advantages, not just a band-aid or quick fix to get them through the current school year. Teachers need to have administrative support, coaching, and mentoring of the practice until they feel comfortable and confident with its use. The more secure a teacher feels using guided reading to meet the varied needs of her students, the greater the potential for students to experience growth as readers. Teachers need to be supported to not just spout the positives of guided reading, but engage in those very actions.

Management

Time management seems to be an issue regardless of the teachers' years of experience (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Yet, if instruction is not of a high quality, more time will be required for learning the objective. As stated in the surveys, the teacher participants, especially the upper elementary teachers, expressed that they did not have enough time to implement guided reading. Thus, it can be said that teachers need support in securing time for guided reading.

Wiggins (1994) found that unlike the students in the guided reading classes, the below level students in traditional reading classrooms actually fell farther behind, thus requiring even more instructional time. Therefore, it is more efficient to use a quality teaching framework that is responsive to students' needs (Allington, 2002), such as guided reading, that will save instructional time in the long run, by reducing the need for continued remediation. Research (Allington, 2001) encourages teachers and administrators to evaluate how they spend their instructional day to determine if every available minute is being used for instruction. Recent research states that about 2 hours each day is spent on nonacademic activi-

ties (as cited in Allington, 2005). The concerns about time and classroom management are valid but not impossible to solve.

The integration of the content areas into the guided reading framework is one way to allow teachers to find additional time. Such content area reading teaching is invaluable for reading to learn which is needed more intensely as the student's gain schooling years. Using the science and/or social studies texts for guided reading material may assist in integration of content, comprehension of content, and time management. Integration could also be achieved by asking the librarian for multiple copies of books at different levels on a similar topic. Another option is to use magazines and newspapers that make the topics being discussed relevant and authentic. The reading specialist can also offer assistance in loaning leveled books from their libraries.

Limitations and Future Research

This survey only addressed the views of a small portion of the educational population. A larger sample size would be necessary for deeper analysis and reflection on the movement from theory to practice were guided reading is concerned. A closer look at the teachers' individual definitions of guided reading followed by their individual practices would allow research to evaluate where the breakdown between communicating the method of reading instruction and sustaining its practice is located.

As educational expectations continue to rise, more comparative and quasi-experimental studies are needed to evaluate guided reading at the upper elementary level. Qualitative data on student engagement and students' efficacy are also needed to provide a clear picture of guided reading's value. Guided reading can assist students in their growth as readers, if teachers can effectively implement the process of creating and managing flexible groups. The goal of guided reading is to continue to advance all students on their reading continuum. Educators cannot afford to allow the limitations mentioned in the survey to hinder guided reading implementation. Future research should then identify the benefits of guided reading in the upper elementary grades, define its effective implementation, and support teachers in integrating this method into their instruction.

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Appendix. Guided Reading Survey

Current Grade Level: _____ Years of experience at current grade level: _____

Total years of experience: _____

1. Please indicate which type of guided reading training you've received.
None College Course Staff Development Self Study
 2. Please describe the type of training indicated above.
 3. Please indicate how often you conduct guided reading groups.
Never (skip to #7) Daily 2x a week 3x a week Varies
 4. Please describe how guided reading is implemented in your classroom.
 5. What types of materials do you use for guided reading?
 6. How do you assess students?
 7. Please describe your overall method of reading instruction.
 8. Do you see any limitations or benefits to your current reading instruction?
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ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS, VOCABULARY, AND READING COMPREHENSION: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

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Abstract

This literature review analyzes and synthesizes current research on reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction for English Language Learners. The theoretical criteria guiding the selection of research studies are explained. First, terms such as language minority children and English Language Learners (ELLs) are defined. Second, the literature on reading comprehension outcomes for language minority children and ELLs is discussed. Third, because of the prominent role that reading comprehension strategies play in reading comprehension instruction, literature on comprehension strategies for ELLs is discussed. Fourth, studies in vocabulary development and instruction for ELLs are reviewed. Lastly, positions on vocabulary instruction and comprehension are considered in relation to current needs of the ELL population. In view of these separate but interrelated bodies of literature, implications for instruction in reading comprehension in the content areas for ELLs are discussed.

Introduction

The population of English Language Learners (ELLs) is one of the fastest-growing groups among the school-aged population. There are over 9.9 million ELLs of which 5.5 million are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) by virtue of their participation in Title III services based on assessments of English language proficiency (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). ELLs are defined as individuals whose language backgrounds are other than English, and whose English proficiency is not

yet developed to the extent where they can benefit fully from English-only instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006). As indicated by several sources (e.g., August & Shanahan; Francis et al.) the term English Language Learner (ELL) is often preferred over the term Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) as it emphasizes accomplishments and strengths rather than deficits. Thus, in this review I use the former one.

In the last two decades, the growth rate for the population of ELLs was 169% compared to only 12% of the general school population (Francis et al., 2006). Although approximately 80% of the population of ELLs are Spanish speakers, there are over 400 languages spoken by ELLs in the United States (Genessee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). The changing demographics of this population and the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB; U. S. Department of Education, 2002) present schools with the dual responsibility of teaching these children English for communicational or social purposes and for academic tasks. Over two decades ago, Cummins (1981; 1991) distinguished between these two types of language skills and referred to them as Basic Interpersonal Communicational Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS characterize everyday conversations and are a type of context-embedded communication. BICS are often implicated in oral uses of languages and rely on shared experiences; such as discussing a movie or a baseball game and asking for directions on the street. CALP, on the other hand, is a set of language skills that serve more cognitive and academic purposes and is generally used in decontextualized forms; such as reading a science book, listening to a lecture on history, or giving a speech. These language skills take place without the immediate or explicit context of an interactive social situation, and thus, rely more on the background information and details necessary to convey the message in a meaningful way (Riches & Genessee, 2006). Most of the language used and learned in school contexts requires CALP. Literacy skills, such as reading comprehension, fall within CALP. That is, language use that is less contextualized and more abstract than language used in everyday social interactions. These literacy skills, used in academic contexts, are the focus of this review.

More recently, CALP has been described as academic language skills (e.g., Francis et al., 2006) which include not only academic or content specific vocabulary, but also the language skills needed to produce and understand complex language structures. Within this review, the focus is on two specific dimensions of academic language skills: (a) academic vocabulary, and (b) reading comprehension skills. Academic vocabulary plays a core role in the acquisition of the academic aspects of a language. Reading comprehension skills are critical in learning from text.

Furthermore, because specific reading comprehension skills must be mastered in the context of specific subject matter (Snow, 2002), ELLs need to develop academic vocabulary, as well as the reading comprehension skills that will give them access to complex texts needed for their content knowledge development. Past research has focused primarily on the development of oral English language proficiency in ELLs, while text-level skills have often received limited attention (Genessee et al., 2006). In particular, researchers have indicated that there is a lack of research examining the reading comprehension development of language minority children, with existing studies characterized by varied methodology and different means of assessing reading comprehension (Lesaux, 2006). In addition, the majority of these studies have been conducted outside the United States. On one hand, this provides a broader framework to study the reading comprehension of language minority students; however, on the other hand, it confirms the scarcity of research on reading comprehension development for ELLs in the United States.

Therefore, this literature review arises from the need to summarize the extant body of literature in the domain of reading comprehension for ELLs with an emphasis on comprehension strategies and vocabulary skills. The literature review is organized in six sections: (1) Definition of terms, (2) Studies comparing reading comprehension outcomes in ELLs and language minority children (defined below) and native speakers, (3) Studies examining reading comprehension strategies for ELLs, (4) Studies with a focus on vocabulary instruction for ELLs, (5) A discussion of reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction in view of ELLs' needs, and (6) Conclusions and implications for reading comprehension instruction of ELLs.

Definitions of Terms

The Report of the National Literacy Panel (NLP) on Language-Minority Children and Youth was published in May, 2006, (August & Shanahan) with a thorough synthesis on current research on literacy for language minority students. Under carefully selected criteria, the panel reviewed studies in various areas of literacy related to language-minority students. Given the wide scope of the populations of interest, the panel also provided several definitions to describe the criteria for selection of studies and the populations under study. For the purposes of the current review, two definitions from the panel are relevant to describe the populations of interest: the definitions of language-minority children and ELLs.

Language-minority children are defined as "...individuals from homes where a language other than the societal language is actively used...A language-minority student may be of limited second language proficiency, bilingual, or essentially monolingual in their second language" (August &

Shanahan, 2006, p. 21). Language-minority students have had the opportunity to develop some level of proficiency in a language other than the societal language. In the United States, for example, children of Spanish, Japanese, or Chinese speaking homes are considered language-minority. However, these individuals are also referred to as language minorities in any other country where their home language is not the societal language. Thus, children of Turkish immigrants who speak Turkish at home but live in the Netherlands would also fall under this group. The panel also used the more broadly known term ELLs to refer to those “individuals who come from language backgrounds other than English and whose second (English) language proficiency is not yet developed to the point where they can profit fully from English-only instruction” (August & Shanahan, p. 21). The term Limited English Proficient (LEP) had been formerly used in the literature, and the National Literacy Panel (NLP; August & Shanahan) opted to only use it when they were citing external sources or legal requirements.

Reading Comprehension in Language-Minority Children and ELLs *National Literacy Panel Studies on Reading Comprehension*

The National Literacy Panel (NLP) on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006) reviewed five studies that included reading comprehension as a dependent variable. The panel concluded that research examining the reading comprehension development of language-minority students was lacking and the existent studies varied in methodology and definitions of reading comprehension (Lesaux, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan, 2006). Furthermore, the few available studies that compared language-minority students with their native speaking peers were primarily conducted in the Netherlands and yielded results indicating the reading comprehension performance of language-minority students fell well below that of their native-speaking peers (Lesaux, 2006). The conclusions of some of these studies agree with findings observed in U.S. studies of ELLs and are worth mentioning due to their pioneering role in determining the central role of vocabulary in the reading comprehension of second language readers. For instance, some of the Netherland studies were conducted with early elementary students in grades 1 and 2 (e.g., Verhoeven, 1990; 2000) and compared Dutch and Turkish children learning to read in Turkish and Dutch as a second language (L2). Conclusions from these studies indicated that the vocabulary and reading comprehension of the Turkish children—for whom early language input was limited to Turkish at home and Dutch at school- did not develop at the same rate as those of their Dutch counterparts. In addition, by the end of grade 2

the Turkish children's oral vocabulary (both receptive and productive) became stronger predictors than word decoding of reading comprehension in the second language. Thus, word decoding did seem to play a role in the reading comprehension of L2 readers, but the influence of oral language vocabulary skills on reading comprehension was much stronger than the ability to decode. Further, it was found that vocabulary had a much stronger effect on reading comprehension for the language-minority students than for the Dutch, monolingual students. Findings from studies including children in higher grades with very similar populations to those in these early grade studies (Aarts & Verhoeven, 1999; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998) supported the notion of the crucial role that vocabulary plays on the reading comprehension of L2 learners across the age span.

Studies beyond the National Literacy Panel

A few studies focusing on comprehension of L2 learners have both supported and expanded some of the initial findings summarized by the NLP. Droop and Verhoeven's (2003) work with language-minority children in the Netherlands indicated that L2 learners showed very little progress over a 2 year period (grades 3 to 5) in productive vocabulary, but this slow pattern of growth was not in terms of receptive vocabulary. In addition, the L2 children lagged behind their monolingual counterparts during the 2 year period in reading comprehension skills, although their decoding skills improved at the same level as the children whose first language (L1) was the predominant societal language.

Three studies included a specific focus on the comprehension skills of ELLs in the United States by examining possible models of reading comprehension for L2 learners. Two of these studies examined models of reading comprehension for ELLs (Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005, 2006) by employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). These two studies examined the contribution of cognitive and language variables to the reading comprehension of Spanish-speaking grade 4 ELLs. In both studies, 69% of the students had received initial literacy instruction in Spanish, and 31% had received initial literacy in English. The first study compared the extent to which the effects of alphabetic knowledge, fluency, vocabulary and listening comprehension contributed to the reading comprehension of ELLs who had either received initial literacy instruction in English or in Spanish (Proctor et al., 2005). Results indicated that both groups of children had relatively strong word decoding and fluency skills, with no significant differences between the groups. However, all students' oral language and comprehension skills were relatively underdeveloped with vocabulary at a grade 1 level and listening comprehension at a grade 2 level. The students who received initial instruction in English did better than the Spanish-instructed students on reading and listening comprehension. These results

supported previous findings from the Dutch studies indicating that decoding and fluency were essential skills for comprehension of text; but that oral language skills, such as vocabulary and listening comprehension, had a stronger influence for ELLs.

In their second study, Proctor et al. (2006) examined the same variables in the same population but incorporated measures of Spanish to test the influence of the first language on the English literacy development of ELLs. Results once again supported the notion that vocabulary was a strong contributor to reading comprehension. In addition, Spanish vocabulary knowledge was found to enhance English reading comprehension, although minimally. The researchers concluded that support of literacy skills in the L1 was beneficial for students' development of literacy in the L2. However, given the minimal contribution of L1 to L2 comprehension, they concluded that reading comprehension was a literacy skill that was highly susceptible to instruction in the language in which it was being measured.

The third study examining comprehension skills in U.S. ELLs compared a cloze test of reading comprehension with an experimental measure that assessed memory for text information, integration of new information with background knowledge, and inferencing; all skills that are central to reading comprehension (Francis et al., 2006). The researchers found that the cloze measure was much more related to print skills than the experimental measure, which was more related to oral language skills for ELLs in grade 3. They concluded that more research was necessary to validate the use of this measure of reading comprehension with ELLs, especially to gain deeper understanding of whether the skills assessed develop differently for ELLs than for native English students.

Overall, studies examining reading comprehension as an outcome variable indicated that vocabulary (both receptive and productive) plays a significant role in the comprehension of ELLs. While this set of studies showed that ELL children achieved parity in decoding skills with their L1 counterparts, they also consistently found that L2 learners lagged behind in vocabulary skills. These results have been found across different populations of L2 learners and different educational systems (e.g., in The Netherlands and United States) which provides generalizability to these findings. In addition, strong support for the crucial role of vocabulary in L2 learners was evident in models of comprehension that indicated the specific contribution of vocabulary to the reading comprehension of ELLs when other variables were statistically controlled (e.g., Proctor et al., 2005, 2006).

Comprehension Strategy Instruction for ELLs

The impact of comprehension strategies on reading comprehension has been well documented in the empirical literature for at least 3

decades (e.g., Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Pressley, 2000). However, most of this work has been done with the general school population (See Harris & Pressley, 2006, for a review). Much less empirical work has explored the role of comprehension strategies within the ELL population. This section discusses studies that compared the use of reading strategies by ELLs and native speakers (e.g., Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996) or provided an in-depth qualitative analysis of reading strategies focused solely on ELLs (e.g., Jimenez, 1997). The majority of these studies included Spanish speaking ELLs spanning grades 3-7 who were reading below grade level. In addition, most students in these samples were close to oral proficiency in English, which permitted students' understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in strategy use. For example, Jimenez et al. (1996) provided strategy instruction in English and Spanish for successful and less successful Spanish-speaking L2 readers. Findings indicated that effective Spanish-speaking readers had an enhanced awareness of the relationship between the English and Spanish languages and used strategies, such as cognates, to their benefit; whereas less successful readers were hardly aware of these benefits and did not use Spanish to enhance or support their English reading comprehension. In addition, successful Spanish-speaking readers used comprehension monitoring and questioning more often than less successful readers after having received instruction on these strategies. These findings led the author to conclude that, like monolingual readers, effective L2 readers appear to be more strategic in their reading than less-successful or struggling readers (Jimenez et al.), irrespective of language status.

In line with these results, a recent study compared the frequency of use of avatars to support strategy use in a digital text environment between English-only speakers and Spanish speaking ELLs (Proctor, Dalton, & Grisham, 2007). Prompts and models for summarization, prediction, clarification, visualization and questioning were embedded in digital narrative and expository texts. Results showed that ELLs were more likely, after 4 weeks of instruction, to use reading strategies prompts and vocabulary supports than English monolingual speakers. However, no benefits for reading comprehension were found after the intervention for either group. Findings on the frequent use of strategies seemed to indicate that ELLs who had some oral mastery of the English language and received comprehension strategy instruction responded favorably to instruction, becoming aware of the need to use cognitive strategies to support their reading comprehension in their L2. In addition, anecdotal data indicated that ELLs made better use of comprehension strategies when texts were interesting, culturally relevant or meaningful to them (Jimenez, 1997; Proctor et al., 2007).

Another set of studies within the domain of strategy instruction for ELLs have focused on ELLs' *awareness* of the benefits of reading strategies (e.g., students' reflections or responses to the use of strategies), rather than on the actual benefits of strategies for comprehension (Jimenez, 1997; Padron, 1992). Results within these studies showed there was a developmental trend in metacognitive skills in relation to the use of sophisticated strategies versus more simple ones; such that older learners are more aware of the benefits of more complex (or sophisticated) strategies than younger learners. For example, grade 3 ELLs were less aware of the benefits of which strategies and when to use them to assist with their comprehension than older, grade 5 students. In addition, grade 3 students reported using what the authors denominated "weak" strategies (such as reading fast, writing down every word, and thinking about something else when reading) more often than grade 4 and grade 5 students (Padron). These descriptive findings emphasized the importance of teaching the cognitive as well as the metacognitive dimensions of strategy use to L2 learners.

Overall, studies in strategy instruction for ELLs indicated that, like monolingual students, ELLs (a) responded well to specific strategy instruction (e.g., questioning, making inferences, monitoring, summarization, visualizing, identification of main idea, etc.) and could effectively use these to enhance their reading comprehension; and (b) showed metacognitive awareness, with students in the lower grades using less-sophisticated or less-appropriate cognitive strategies than students in higher grades. In addition, studies pertaining exclusively to ELLs indicated that successful ELL readers used their two languages to their advantage, whereas poor or struggling L2 readers were not necessarily aware of the benefits that speaking two languages can have for their reading.

Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

Most studies examining ELLs' reading comprehension emphasized the crucial role that vocabulary has for reading comprehension in these populations. Because of this key role, research has examined the impact that vocabulary instruction has for ELLs as a way to improve their overall learning and their reading comprehension in particular (August et al., 2005). However, August et al. (2005) noted that there are few true experimental studies that have examined the development of vocabulary in ELLs, and these often lacked strong experimental designs compared to studies of vocabulary with monolinguals (Nation, 2001).

Instructional approaches of vocabulary have varied in the amount of emphasis placed on the explicitness or implicitness for teaching specific words (e.g., Nagy & Herman, 1985), the types of vocabulary taught (e.g., text based versus content based) and the depth and breadth of the words

taught. For example, instructional studies such as the one conducted by Nagy, Garcia, Durgunoglu, and Hancin-Bhatt (1993) indicated the value of cognates for the reading comprehension of Spanish-speaking ELLs in grades 4, 5 and 6. Although awareness of cognates can be thought of as a cognitive reading strategy, it can also be described as a vocabulary instructional approach because of its focus on word level knowledge (e.g., knowledge of common roots or word origins across languages). Specifically, students' performance on English reading comprehension was found to be higher when students knew the words in Spanish and were able to identify the English word as a cognate. What was particularly interesting about this study was that reading comprehension was measured as vocabulary in context rather than in isolation, such that target words were assessed as part of a sentence or a short paragraph, rather than as disconnected from discourse, which is an important implication for reading comprehension. More recently, Carlo et al. (2004) focused on depth and breadth of word knowledge in a 15-week intervention for fourth and fifth graders. Students participated in multiple word learning activities; such as learning word definitions, cognate awareness, word roots, games, activities to learn affixes and cognates, and monitoring their own understanding as they read texts. Words came from a variety of content areas and from texts that were available in English and Spanish. The intervention helped students increase their vocabulary knowledge after the 15 weeks of instruction, as was evident in measures of receptive vocabulary, polysemy, word association, cloze, and morphology. Students also showed some growth in reading comprehension. However, as indicated by the authors, this improvement in comprehension was less dramatic than for vocabulary knowledge (Carlo et al.). In addition, a limitation of this study was that the measure of reading comprehension consisted of a cloze measure with 18 deleted words, 10 of which were taught in the intervention. Since the cloze measure contained a limited number of words and only assessed literal word knowledge, this could be classified as a somewhat constrained measure of reading comprehension. In contrast, measures of comprehension assessing the use of inferences and word knowledge in relation to key concepts in text are necessary to provide a more thorough assessment of L2 students' comprehension.

Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Instruction in View of the Needs of ELLs

The literature on the needs of ELLs in vocabulary development and its impact on reading comprehension, unquestionably indicates the need for instruction in both. However, studies that focus on *both* the reading comprehension and the vocabulary for ELL students are relatively scarce. This is especially true when the focus is on content area literacy, an area where the

needs of ELLs are substantial. Indeed, like monolingual students, ELLs in the upper elementary grades need to learn an increasing body of content area knowledge. Yet ELLs present a particular challenge to educators because of the crucial role that academic language plays in the development and assessment of content area knowledge (Francis et al., 2006).

Therefore, academic vocabulary is a crucial determinant of success with academic content for ELLs (Francis et al., 2006), especially for those students in the upper elementary grades who are confronted with the demands of mastering subject matter content and whose language skills need to be at the levels of meeting these requirements. In addition, ELLs need the reading comprehension strategies that all learners need in order to build content area knowledge from text. Despite these needs, empirical studies focusing on academic vocabulary and content area reading are very scarce. An exception to this was the study conducted by Hacquerbord (1994), which examined reading comprehension in L2 Dutch high school readers in the content areas of geography and social studies. The findings indicated only moderate differences between L1 and L2 students in reading comprehension but significant differences in vocabulary and other language measures. Hacquerbord concluded that vocabulary in the content areas was not only a dimension of language, but an aspect of subject-matter knowledge and discourse that was not necessarily language specific. Rather, specific content vocabulary was seen as highly dependent on the knowledge construction and prior knowledge of the reader.

In view of the empirical evidence pointing to the needs of ELLs in reading comprehension and the specific needs that ELLs in the upper elementary grades have with accessing text, two possible implications for reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction are considered. These implications are rooted in two theoretical views on vocabulary instruction.

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

The first view supports the explicit teaching of vocabulary words, by creating rich language contexts in which students are exposed to words on multiple occasions and where word awareness is created through the explicit focus on words. Various approaches to the explicit teaching of vocabulary include elaborate criteria on the selection of types of words and word-related activities, which have been repeatedly shown to increase vocabulary knowledge in monolingual students (e.g., Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Blachowitz & Fisher, 2006; Graves, 2006) and in ELLs (Carlo et al., 2004). These have derived a variety of rich-language and word-awareness vocabulary activities.

Additionally, models of explicit vocabulary instruction have also received support in the field of English as a Foreign Language. In particular, it has been indicated that the use of word cards as part of a vocabulary pro-

gram for high school and college students and other adult learners support the learning of large amount of words in an effective and fast manner (e.g., Nation, 2001). Furthermore, Nation indicated that "...there is no research that shows that learning from context provides better results than learning from word cards" (p. 12). It should be noted that this approach did not preclude additional exposure to vocabulary words; such as through reading, listening and speaking. However, at least in the field of foreign language instruction, researchers support word learning in explicit ways (e.g., Laufer & Yano, 2001; Nation) and noted its time-effectiveness in contraposition to learning words from context.

Incidental Vocabulary Instruction

The second position on vocabulary learning has been rooted in what has been termed the *incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis* (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). The incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis maintained that monolingual-English students learned words from context and increased their vocabulary and academic knowledge through multiple literacy experiences, particularly through reading. Specifically, Nagy et al. (1985) proposed that incidental word learning from context during reading was the major mode of vocabulary acquisition during the school years and that vocabulary growth was determined by the volume of the child's experience with written language from text. The researchers noted that vocabulary learning under the incidental learning hypothesis occurred in terms of small increments, so a child needed more than one encounter with the word to grasp its several meanings. Therefore, this view did not contend that the fastest way to deliver instruction of a word was through direct, explicit presentation, but rather that the efficacy of learning words from context resided in the volume of vocabulary growth that could be accounted over the long run (Nagy et al.).

Just like the explicit approach to vocabulary instruction has support within the field of L2 acquisition, so does the incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis. Specifically, researchers within this tradition have proposed that extensive reading and meaningful encounters with text support both the oral language development and the reading comprehension of L2 learners (e.g., Coady, 1997a; Krashen, 1989). It stands to reason that the possibility of this approach being optimal for the L2 learner depends on the individual having a minimal vocabulary in his second language, so that reading comprehension can occur. This has been called the "beginner's paradox" because of the paradoxical situation faced by the beginner language learner who cannot learn through extensive reading because he still does not know enough words to read well (Coady, 1997b).

The "book flood" studies conducted a couple of decades ago (Elley 1991; Elley & Mangubhai, 1981) constituted strong evidence of incidental

language development in L2 learners through extensive reading of interesting texts. These studies, conducted with large numbers of students ages 6 to 12 (from over 100 to over a 1000 participants), showed that students exposed to a variety of interesting books and genres during a sustained period of time (at least 12 months) showed improvements in language knowledge, word recognition, academic performance, and grammar measures (Elley). In addition, although there were no formal measures of learners' attitudes to reading, informal observation and teacher reports indicated that book flood learners appeared to increase their enjoyment of reading over the course of the study (Elley & Mangubhai). Given the many intervening variables in a study of such a large magnitude, Elley attributed the success to at least five factors: (a) extensive input of meaningful print (i.e., books used in the experiments generally contained a lot of pictures and were not controlled according to a word list but were written appropriately for young native speakers); (b) incidental learning of language in the context of reading; (c) the integration of oral and written activities; (d) focus on meaning rather than form; and (e) instruction supporting high intrinsic motivation.

Conclusions and Implications for Reading Comprehension Instruction of ELLs

This review focused on factors contributing to the reading comprehension of L2 learners, which included language-minority students and ELLs as defined by the NLP (August & Shanahan, 2006). Although the goal of the review was to focus on the comprehension of ELLs, the limited number of studies within this population and the more encompassing criteria adopted by the NLP, expanded the number of studies to include those with language-minority children that were not exclusively ELLs. In addition, these latter studies, although with different L2 populations than ELLs, contributed to our understanding of the difficulties that ELLs have in reading comprehension when faced with the task of reading in the target L2.

The review started by focusing on studies examining reading comprehension as a dependent variable in language minority children. Overwhelmingly, these studies revealed the prominent impact that both receptive and productive vocabulary plays in the reading comprehension of these learners. Indeed, study after study (e.g., Aarts & Verhoeven, 1999; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Proctor et al., 2005, 2007; Verhoeven 1990, 2000) showed that the contribution of vocabulary to L2 learners' comprehension was so substantial that it dwarfed the specific contribution of word decoding—to the extent that given proper schooling, these children developed decoding skills faster than they did oral and written vocabulary. A second group of studies examined the role of reading comprehension strategies in the reading instruction of ELLs. These studies rep-

licated findings found for the general school population indicating the need for explicit comprehension strategy instruction for these children. Findings supporting the significance of reading strategies for the comprehension of ELLs should not be underestimated, especially in light of the greater attention that educational practice has traditionally paid oral language skills in ELLs, sometimes to the detriment of specific reading comprehension skills such as instruction in reading strategies. A third group of studies focused exclusively on vocabulary instruction for ELLs. This is certainly an area that has received attention from researchers (e.g., Carlo et al., 2004; Proctor et al., 2005, 2007), but has yet to expand to the field of content area comprehension instruction. Finally, the review examined two major positions in the field of vocabulary acquisition; the explicit and incidental learning views on vocabulary acquisition and instruction. These positions are particularly relevant in view of their findings for monolingual populations and thus potential implications for ELLs, as well as the current needs that ELLs experience in the vast and multiple content domains in which they need academic vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

All in all, it is evident from these findings that research in literacy for ELLs needs to attend to the specific role that academic vocabulary in particular plays in the development of content area reading. Considerations of the two vocabulary positions described here, and the crucial role that vocabulary and reading strategies play in comprehension, need to be examined in light of the challenges posed by content area literacy instruction for these learners. For instance, some basic questions that emerge from the findings from this review are:

1. What is the impact of explicit versus incidental vocabulary instruction on the comprehension of ELLs during content area classes, such as science and history?
2. How do these types of instruction impact knowledge development in different content areas?
3. How can either type of instruction be fused with strategy instruction for ELLs?
4. Are there potential different impacts of each type of instruction according to the language proficiency of the ELLs?

Furthermore, considering the call from the RAND panel on reading comprehension for content area comprehension instruction (Snow, 2002), questions to explore include:

1. What should be the balance between emphasis on vocabulary versus strategy instruction in a given content area, in view of specific knowledge needs of ELLs in that area?
2. Are there differential effects on the motivation to read that are fostered in ELLs by the type of vocabulary instruction adopted?

These are just some questions that emerge from the findings reported in this review based on the needs of ELLs and that can help shape the field of content area literacy for this population of students.

In view of these questions, suggested guidelines for future research in these domains should examine: (a) the reading comprehension processes of L2 learners with a major focus on measures of reading comprehension in the content areas, (b) models of vocabulary instruction that either examine explicit incidental academic vocabulary learning in comparison to control groups, (c) the development of models of reading comprehension instruction in the content areas that integrate both academic vocabulary instruction and reading strategy instruction, and (d) the examination of students' motivational patterns for reading while participating in some of these types of instruction. Ultimately, the empirical findings and theoretical positions advanced in this literature review provide some preliminary ground on which to build future research about the literacy development of ELLs. The current literature highlights the need for research that examines the best combination of literacy practices that would render major benefits for the academic language development, content area comprehension, and knowledge development for one of the fastest growing population of students in the U.S. public schools.

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THE BOOKSTORE PROJECT: HOW ONE ELL TEACHER USED PROJECT WORK TO PROMOTE READING

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Abstract

An ELL teacher in Texas provides documentation of how a Reggio-inspired project led to increased progress in her students' reading, while at the same time providing them with engaging learning experiences. Project work is a research-based method of enhancing literacy development. This manuscript describes how the Bookstore Project provided a rich learning opportunity, improved language development, and provided support for academic achievement for fourth and fifth-grade English Language Learners, as evidenced by their success on state standardized assessments.

Latino students are the largest minority group in the United States and the fastest growing population in public schools in the United States (Rolón, 2003). As a group, their academic achievement is far behind their peers (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007; Rolón). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) legislation requires the same standards and expectations in education for all students, including this large minority group, many of whom are English Language Learners (ELLs). Thus, a major dilemma for many teachers is how to educate ELLs in meaningful ways, so they develop the language needed for successful learning of content and continued academic growth. Evidence shows that ELLs must be given opportunities to engage in educational discourse and to participate in challenging and meaningful tasks (Gebhard, 2003). To provide these types of experiences, teachers must focus on enhancing the kinds of school tasks or

assignments, in essence, “the work” (Schlechty, 2002) students are asked to do. Toward this aim, the ELL teacher-researcher in this Texas school looked to her own adaptation or reinvention of an approach that has been evolving for over 50 years in the city of Reggio-Emilia, Italy.

Research Review of the Project Model

In the Northern Italian city of Reggio-Emilia, young children are engaging in projects or investigations stemming from their own questions about nature and their world. Projects are based on the teacher’s careful consideration of the students’ discourse and knowledge and with thoughtful consideration regarding the possible learning that could ensue as the students work together to find answers to their questions or complete their project goal (Edwards, Forman, & Gandini, 1998). “Projects provide the part of the curriculum in which children are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices—usually in cooperation with their peers and in consultation with their teachers—about the work to be undertaken” (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 28). The work develops confidence in the students and their abilities, while increasing their motivation to learn (Edwards et al.).

The project model has been replicated in other countries such as Sweden, Japan, and China, and has gained a great deal of attention for its success (Bilingual Kids, n.d.; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Fleet et al., 1999; Liu & Chien, 1998). The idea has long been supported by many respected American educators, as well (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Gardner, 1992; Katz, 1998; Kilpatrick, 1936; & Mitchell, 1971). In the early twentieth century, the “father of American education,” John Dewey, advocated for experienced-based learning and implemented projects as a key component of his famous lab school in Chicago (Dewey, 1900, 1938). A colleague and collaborator in this “new” method was Lucy Sprague Mitchell of the Bank Street College, who taught teachers how to provide investigations for students within their immediate environment in 1934 (Mitchell). More recently, Lillian Katz and her colleagues, Sylvia Chard and Judy Harris Helm, have expanded the project method in their work at the University of Illinois (Helm and Katz, 2001; Katz & Chard, 1989). In their research, they provided many examples and “how-to” guides for involving young children in exploratory projects that incorporate the mastery of academic and literary skills. In general, activities and investigations need to be based on student interest to ensure meaningful experiences that will help students construct new understandings (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Therefore, it is important to carefully observe students, noting their comments, dialogue, representations (drawings and other constructions), interests, and wonderings.

The kind of project approach that has been utilized and continues to evolve in Reggio-Emilia is based on the image of the child as extremely

capable. Rather than focusing on what the children cannot yet do, these educators are more interested in capitalizing on what the children already know and how they can build on that to lead their learning. They view the child as full of potential, laden with curiosity, and capable of “negotiating” their learning as provocations, events that provoke their thinking and learning, present themselves within their environment (Gandini, 1993). Secondly, the Reggio schools have put into practice key tenets of social constructivist theory (Fosnot, 1989), considering the center of education to be a triad of children, teachers, and families. The approach provides opportunities for collaborative, small groups to conduct projects in which children co-construct theories, conduct investigations to test these theories, and create various forms of symbolic representations to express new understanding and learning. A key component of the Reggio Approach is the ongoing role of teachers as researchers. Their way of coming to know their students’ current theories, knowledge and skills is through careful listening, observation, documentation and collaborative reflection about the children’s learning process and the projects they create. Carlina Rinaldi, President of Reggio Children, referred to this aspect of the Reggio Approach as “the pedagogy of listening” (Rinaldi, 2000).

The teacher-researcher in this study became familiar with the Reggio Emilia approach when *The Hundred Languages of Children-Advanced Reflections* (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998) was used as a primary resource in a doctoral class focusing on curricular, instructional, and social-contextual design. Reggio’s approach focuses on creating learners with a disposition to raise questions, pose theories and search for answers within the context of an enriched environment and supporting relationships. Likewise, the action research of this ELL teacher focused on scaffolding children as they engaged in an exploration and investigation arising from their own questions about how to provide books and enhance reading volume for their schoolmates. The resulting inquiry-driven project exemplified “negotiated learning” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998) in which the children’s own questions, writing and visual representations, and observations of their best ways of learning served as the data for the teacher’s research and basis for her subsequent instructional designs and provocations to enhance the children’s learning. As the educators in Reggio Emilia do, this ELL teacher revisited, reflected upon, and collaboratively discussed the documentation of the children’s journey as they proceeded with the bookstore project. As in the Reggio schools, the documentation became a major tool for building the teachers’ knowledge of her students’ language learning, what they knew or believed at the time, and their learning processes.

Following in the footsteps of the educators in Reggio Emilia, this ELL teacher sought to determine what would happen to her students’ literacy and learning when she provided them the opportunity to engage in a

student-originated project. The teacher's action research investigated the question, "How does project work affect student learning for English language learners?"

The Setting of the Project

This investigation was conducted in one English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom in a school district in northeast Texas. These fourth and fifth grade ELL students were pulled out of their regular education classrooms to attend the ESL class daily. The typical schedule of the ESL class consisted of 30 minutes of independent reading, 10 minutes of group sharing, 30 minutes of independent writing, 10 more minutes of group sharing, and 10 minutes of time specifically allotted for the book project. Students could choose to work on bookstore project tasks during independent time, too, such as reading a book to write a review or writing an advertisement.

Participants

The ESL class consisted of two 4th-grade and two 5th-grade students labeled as limited English proficient. All students were of low socioeconomic status (SES) and considered by the district to be at risk of low academic achievement. Two students were Hispanic, one student was Bosnian, and one student was Vietnamese. The Hispanic students had been in the United States for over 3 years. The Bosnian student had been in the United States for 2 years, and the Vietnamese student had just moved to the United States at the beginning of the school year. Three students were male, and one student was female.

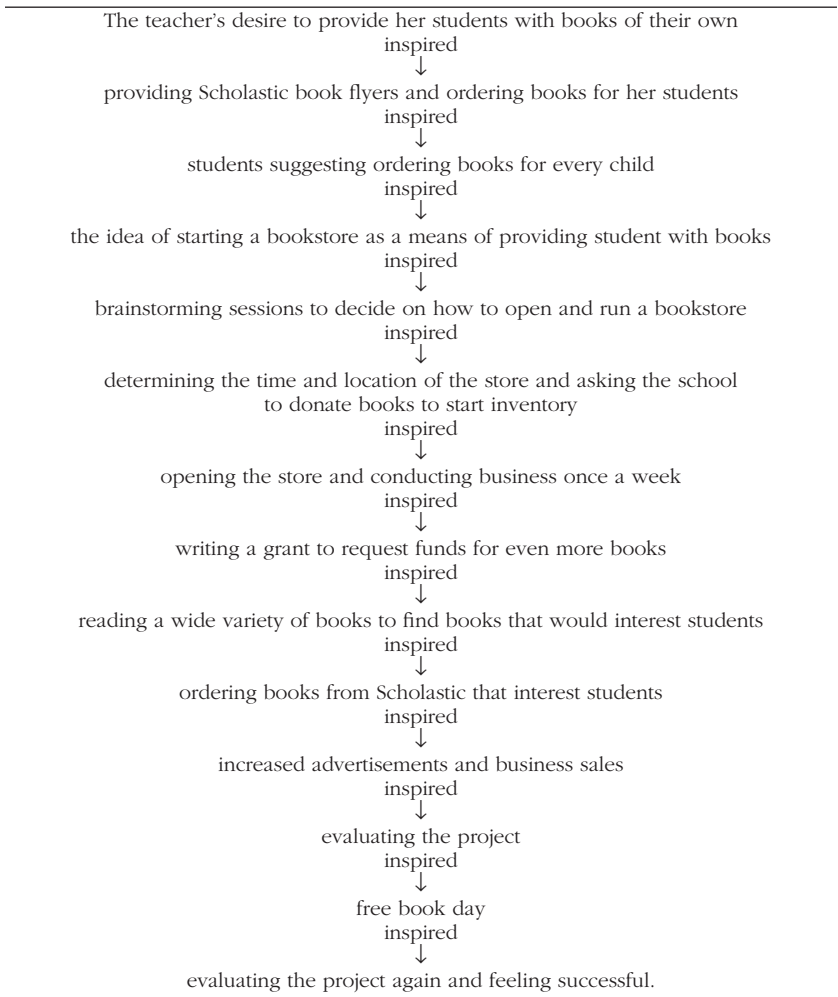
The Project Development

Based on the research revealing the high positive correlations between the number of books children own, read, or have read to them, and their reading achievement, as well as the impact that low SES can have on reading achievement (Nueman, 2006), the teacher decided to provide her ELL students with books, in an attempt to counteract the effects of the impact of the students' lack of books, limited proficiency with English, and low SES status. Each month, she gave them a Scholastic book club flyer/order form and allowed them to choose one book that they wanted. She ordered the book for them, and they got to keep the book. She discussed with her students why she wanted to buy books for them and why she felt it was important for them to choose the books they wanted. The students were very excited, not only to choose their own books, but also to be able to write their names in them and take them home.

While this endeavor was indeed an attempt to instill in her students a value for books through modeling how important reading was to her, it

quickly developed into more. The teacher recognized the potential for a project based on the children's question about how to provide a book for each child in the school. This question/goal of the students turned into a year-long, school-wide effort to provide students with interesting books. At the onset of the project, neither the teacher nor the students knew exactly what it would entail. By the end of the Bookstore Project, these ELL students had engaged in selecting appropriate books for various audiences, ordering books, discussing books, writing book reviews, taking inventory, conducting business transactions, keeping a budget, creating advertise-

Figure 1. Investigation Map of The Bookstore Project



ments, public speaking, letter writing, grant writing, and collaborating to achieve their goal and make an important contribution to the school. The lengthy process of the evolving project will be described below. Also, see Figure 1 for an illustration of how the project unfolded.

Provocations to Extend Thinking

The teacher did not have to wait long into the school year before a student provided a question ultimately leading to a “provocation” for a project. “What about all the kids whose teachers cannot buy them books to have?” questioned one of the fifth grade students. The teacher then took this question to other students for their consideration. The students engaged in serious discussions and brainstormed ideas, recorded on paper, to try to find a way to help other kids have access to books. From this initial query from a single student, the “Bargain Books” Project emerged which included the collaboration of the entire group of fourth and fifth grade ELL students.

The Goals of the Bookstore Project

In keeping with the negotiated learning process utilized by American educators inspired by the Reggio Approach, both the teacher and the students were instrumental in determining goals for the project as it evolved. The teacher wanted the students to learn the state curriculum, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, as they are called in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2007b), and be able to pass the statewide standardized assessment, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or TAKS (Texas Education Agency, 2007a). Every third, fourth, and fifth grade student was required to take the TAKS test in the spring semester of school. The teacher’s hunch was that a negotiated project would still provide learning opportunities and exposure for many of the state standards. One major goal the students set for their project was to help every child in the school receive at least one book. The students were convinced that if others could own self-selected books, the students would develop a life-long love for reading and learning. Thus, over the course of the year, the project went from being one involving a few students to a school-wide initiative to increase book ownership and voluntary reading in the school.

The simple question of how to provide books for everyone in the school provided opportunities for continued provocations the teacher could use to lead the children’s thinking. These provocations included questions, such as: (a) how the students could provide other students in the school with books, (b) where the books would come from, (c) how the books would be disseminated, and (d) how they would know if their project was being successful. The students and teacher brainstormed responses to the teacher’s provocations and also consulted with outside

experts, such as the librarian or principal, for advice. From the very beginning the project was a collaborative effort in which the students were able to maintain ownership. Ultimately the provocations turned into a year-long project to open a bookstore where students and their families could buy quality books at minimal costs. The first step of the project was to determine how much to charge for books. The students decided that \$1 was reasonable, but that no child who wanted a book would be turned away if he or she did not have enough money. The children could have the books regardless of how much they could pay. The next step was to get an idea of how they wanted the bookstore to be conducted. The students decided that they wanted Bargain Books to be open at the end of the school day, at least once a week, if not 2 days a week. They thought the main hallway would be a good place to have the books, so that everyone in the school would have access to the store. In order to get books, the students decided to ask students and teachers to donate gently used or new books. They hypothesized that many students had books at home that they no longer read, and they would be happy to donate them to someone who would want to read them.

After the preplanning stage, the students scheduled a business meeting with the principal to pitch their business ideas to her and hopefully gain her approval for their project. They planned an agenda and prepared questions for the meeting. Their first business meeting was a success. The principal approved the start of a school bookstore. She did change the time and location of the store, because she thought that after school was too hectic for people to shop. Instead, Bargain Books would be open on Fridays before school and during the first hour of school, and would be located at the end of the main hall instead of in the front of the hall. The principal also approved a flier to be sent home to all the students requesting book donations for the store. She also suggested asking the librarian for ideas on how to store the books.

Energized and motivated by the success of the first business meeting, the students immediately wrote a letter to the librarian to set up a business meeting with her. They drafted announcements about the bookstore and made posters publicizing the store to put around the campus. It was not long before there were enough donations to be able to open the store.

The Grand Opening

Similar to many businesses, Bargain Books opened with a grand opening. All students who had donated at least one book were given personal invitations to attend the grand opening, but the event was open to the entire school. Free refreshments, music, and decorations brought attention to the store and helped start the business successfully. The rib-

bon cutting ceremony started the grand opening, followed by shopping, snacking, and chatting about the store. From then on, Bargain Books was open for business every Friday.

Funding the Store

The students quickly realized that they needed more books for their store, so they applied for a local grant. The grant was designed to award funding for innovative teaching approaches. The students had to learn this new genre of writing in order to write their paper for the grant. They included some of the research they had learned about the correlation between reading volume and reading success, as well as their goals and intentions for the project. The grant proposal took several weeks to complete, but the time proved valuable. The students were awarded \$1,000 to buy books for their store. They now had the funding they needed to keep their inventory stocked and to supply high-interest books.

The additional funding allowed the students to place orders from Scholastic Books. Each month, the students selected books they thought were high-interest for each grade level. They kept a budget, placed orders on the Internet, checked packing slips, and more. Aside from the money they received, the main benefit of the grant was that it showed the students that they, ELLs who had been struggling to read and write in English, could write well for a specific audience, because they had won among hundreds of other applicants. It affirmed for them that they had skills that could help them reach their goals in life.

Running the Store

From November to May, the bookstore, Bargain Books, was open every Friday morning. Students who could afford to bought books, and students who could not were given books. The ELL students in charge of the project kept track of the names of the students who received a book from the store, kept inventory, recorded donations, placed orders, and continually assessed the project to find ways to make it more effective. The students used daily reading workshops to read books for possible inclusion in the bookstore and engage in literature discussions with the group. Daily writing workshops provided the time needed to complete their writing tasks, such as composing professional letters and book reviews. The writing workshops allowed students to not only engage in the writing process individually, but also collaboratively. The workshops facilitated the discussion and events within the project.

The project ended in May, just before school dismissed for the summer. During the semester, students made coupons for teachers to give to struggling readers to encourage the students to get free books from the store. Students who struggled to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and

Skills (TAKS; Texas Education Agency) were also provided with coupons to choose free books. Students publicized new books with school-wide announcements and written book reviews. These ideas were in addition to the weekly business responsibilities of running the store.

During the last month of school, the students evaluated their project goals and found that only about a third of the students in the school had received a book. Although this included almost 300 students, the ELL students wanted to do more. They decided to have an end-of-year sale for the entire school. For 2 days, Bargain Books was open for classes to browse and students got to choose a book for free. This allowed every student in the school to receive a free book and ensured that every student had a book to read over the summer. In this way, the students involved with the project were able to achieve their goal of providing every student in the school a book. The end-of-year sale was an effective and motivating way to end the project.

Data Collection

This action research study sought to determine if this teacher-researcher's interpretation of the Reggio Approach would serve to support ELLs in their language development and academic achievement. Five kinds of data were collected. The qualitative data collected and analyzed included:

1. Transcripts of the student's discussions, conversations, and contemplations as plans were made for the Bookstore.
2. Artifacts of their writing in various forms.
3. The teacher kept anecdotal records on her observations of the learning processes and content knowledge and skills exemplified by the students through the course of the project.

The quantitative data collected and analyzed included:

1. The teacher also kept a list of the state curriculum that needed to be taught and correlated it with her lesson plans to record the TEKS that were addressed through the project.
2. TAKS scores were collected for the reading subtest for all the students.

The combination of these data collected provided a comprehensive demonstration of the students' growth, as will be described in the next section.

Findings and Evidence

Transcriptions

The transcriptions of the student's discussions, conversations, and deliberations as they made plans for the bookstore revealed the following categories regarding student language development: (a) participating in extended discussions, (b) utilizing grade-appropriate vocabulary, (c) utilizing complex sentences, (d) asking more higher-order thinking questions, (e) increasing accuracy in pronunciation, and (f) comprehending self-selected texts. For example, the following discussion took place when ordering books one afternoon in the spring.

Student 1: We should order six of *Because of Winn-Dixie* (DiCamillo, 2000).

Student 2: No, it costs too much to buy so many. We should get one or two.

Student 1: I think we should get more because students really like the story, since it is about a girl and a dog. They like stories like that. And I have seen people get that book from the library, so I know they like it.

Student 2: OK, if you know they like it.

Student-Created Products

Student-created products such as letters, advertisements, and narratives revealed more writing than would have usually happened, varied vocabulary, and varied purposes for writing. The following is an example of the students' writing:

We are happy to announce the opening of Bargain Books, a new bookstore here at our school. We will be selling new and used books at bargain prices. We need your help. Please bring any books you would like to donate to help start the store. We need fresh books that are not torn or written in. Please bring your books next week and put them in the box in front of the cafeteria. Thank you!

Teachers' Anecdotal Notes

Analysis of the teacher's anecdotal notes revealed the following themes about the students' learning processes or development of content knowledge: (a) students think as problem solvers, (b) consider the desires of others, (c) work collaboratively, (d) examine literature and literary components, and (e) eagerly engage in discussions, reading and writing.

Academic Goals

In order to address the research question about how project work affects student learning for ELLs, the academic goals of the project were

Table 1. English Language Arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) Addressed in the Bookstore Project

BOOKSTORE PROJECT EVENT	CORRESPONDING TEKS*
Daily reading workshops	5.1 listens actively and purposefully in a variety of settings; 5.2 listens critically to analyze and evaluate a speaker's message; 5.3 listens to enjoy and appreciate spoken language; 5.4 listens and speaks to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures; 5.6 uses a variety of work identification strategies; 5.7 reads with fluency and understanding in texts at appropriate difficulty levels; 5.8 read widely for different purposes in varied sources; 5.9 acquires an extensive vocabulary through reading; 5.10 comprehends selections using a variety of strategies; 5.11 expresses and supports responses to various types of texts; 5.13 inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources; 5.14 reads to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures.
Formal business meetings	5.5 speaks clearly and appropriately to different audiences for different purposes and occasions.
Professional writing (business letters, book reviews, grant proposals)	5.15 writes for a variety of audiences and purposes, and in a variety of forms; 5.16 composes original texts, applying the conventions of written language, including capitalization, punctuation, and penmanship, to communicate clearly; 5.17 spells proficiently; 5.18 applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing; 5.21 uses writing as a tool for learning and research; 5.22 interacts with writers inside and outside the classroom in ways that reflect the practical uses of writing.
Daily writing workshops	5.19 selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing; 5.20 evaluates his/her own writing and the writing of others.
Order supplies for the bookstore including books	5.23 understands and interprets visual images, messages, and meanings; 5.24 analyzes and critiques the significance of visual images, messages, and meanings.
Create signs and fliers to publicize the bookstore	5.25 produces visual images, messages, and meanings that communicate with others.

*©Texas Education Agency, 2001

evaluated. Many state mandated learning objectives, or TEKS, regarding reading, writing, math, and social studies were addressed and mastered by the students. Through book reviews, writing for various purposes, reading a wide variety of books for the bookstore during reading workshops, and

other project-driven tasks, the students learned the curriculum necessary. There were only minimal reading and writing objectives that needed to be explicitly taught, such as systematic word study, because they were not taught during the project in authentic situations. See Table 1 for a complete listing of the English Language Arts elements of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2007) that students experienced during the Bookstore Project. This illustrates that, although the students' interests and questions determined many of the directions of this project, the state curriculum was still addressed.

Additionally, all of the students passed the state assessment test in reading, indicating that the project approach may have contributed to the students mastering the standards satisfactorily. Therefore, this negotiated approach to project work proved an effective method for teaching required standards, even with ELLs.

Implications and Conclusions

The ELL students who participated in the Bookstore Project experienced an array of learning activities from writing letters to writing grants, from placing orders to keeping inventory, and from managing money to advertising, while meeting the state curriculum requirements. Throughout the year, the students begged to learn more. They were deeply engaged in their project, motivated by their own interests and discoveries. All decisions about the bookstore were made by the students in collaboration with the teacher. As always, the teacher was a member of the community of learners but did not control the project. Prompted and supported by the teacher, the students did contact experts as needed, such as the principal, the assistant principal, the librarian, and their parents. Still, the responsibility for the bookstore belonged to the students along with the power to make decisions. In the end, the students mastered the state curriculum while their desire for reading and their amount of reading increased. The bookstore project provided an avenue for these ELLs to share their developing love for reading with the school in a meaningful project. Their story illustrates the academic achievement English language learners can reach when provided with motivating opportunities. In true Reggio-inspired style, these students lived up to the image of the child as powerful and capable when provided the opportunity, resources, and support from their teacher.

Something must be done to close the learning gap between ELLs and native English speakers. The project approach inspired by Reggio-Emilia allows teachers to reach students in meaningful, relevant ways, and affords opportunities for these ELLs to interact with English speakers and use English about academic content in meaningful and necessary conversation.

While schools are increasingly faced with standardized assessments and scripted curricula, this study provides an example of how a teacher can reinvent the project approach to make it applicable to her school, provide a more integrated and relevant learning opportunity, and motivate her students. As this shared experience shows, allowing students to pursue their own authentic questions and help form their own work can be a powerful way to engage ELL students in learning.

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