The Reading Professor

Volume 41 | Issue 1 Article 1

2018

Volume 41, Issue 1

The Reading Professor

Publication Forum for

Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education

Volume 41
Number 1
Fall/Winter 2018

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education
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The Reading Professor

The Journal of Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education
A Special Interest Group of the International Literacy Association

Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education

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ABOUT THE COVER

Polysemy, the linguistic term for multiple meanings, is common in the English language. Johnson and Johnson (2011) discussed lexical and grammatical polysemy and gave examples such as, "Wally is good at making chips" and "They can fish" (pp. 90-91). Without more clues, we do not know if Wally is skilled in golf, good at making snack/meal chips, or adept at making computer parts. "They" might have knowledge about fishing, might have permission to fish in a certain spot, or they put fish into cans to preserve them.

An anonymous wit wrote that a "garden is a place where the mind goes to seed," and with the rudbeckia pictured on this issue's cover, the polysemous statement is apt.

Photo courtesy of Bonnie Johnson

References

Brussell, E. E. (Ed.). (1988, 1970). Webster's new world dictionary of quotable definitions (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Johnson, D. D., & Johnson, B. (2011). Words: The foundation of literacy. Boulder, CO: Westview/Perseus Academic; New York: Taylor & Francis/Routledge.

Editors' Corner:

The Reading Professor frequently receives queries about the Journal's guidelines. They are printed below for the convenience of prospective authors.

The Reading Professor

Guidelines for Authors

The Reading Professor is a peer-reviewed electronic publication forum for Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education (PLTE). The Editorial Board members welcome the submission of research papers that address aspects of literacy instruction at all levels. Authors are encouraged to submit articles directed toward the improvement of reading instruction. *The Reading Professor* publishes instructional practices, innovative strategies, historical research, course development information, and book reviews.

Requirements and Evaluation

- Authors must be members of the Special Interest Group Professors of Literacy and Teacher Education and the International Literacy Association.

- The first author should submit a cover letter that includes contact information of author(s), and a statement verifying that the manuscript currently is not under consideration for publication by another journal.

- The first author should submit the manuscript via an e-mail attachment to

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- Manuscripts should be double-spaced (including references) and must follow the format of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Manuscripts that do not follow APA Style will not be sent out for review.

- Manuscripts should be limited to approximately 20 pages in length (including references).

- Authors' names should appear only on the cover letters.

- Avoid inclusion of the authors' identities in any portion of the manuscript to ensure an impartial review.

- Manuscripts are evaluated by at least three reviewers; authors' names are not revealed to the reviewers.

- Manuscripts are evaluated in terms of significance of topic, clarity of communication, overall organization, methodology (if appropriate), interpretation of information, and aptness for the Journal.

- Decisions about publication usually are reached within two months, but this is not always possible due to workloads. Reviewers' decisions are final.

- Accepted manuscripts may be edited due to space requirements.

Twenty Years of Growing and Sustaining a University Student Reading Council

Bethanie C. Pletcher, Robin D. Johnson, and Kelli Bippert

Abstract

Few universities have a large, successful student organization devoted to growing future teachers by way of leadership, teaching, and volunteer opportunities. One such organization exists at a mid-sized regional university in South Texas, the Student Reading Council (SRC). The SRC is a student-governed organization that develops its members professionally through the use of frequent meetings with guest speakers. Members and officers, usually preservice teachers, learn leadership skills and have opportunities to network with local schools and community organizations. This paper describes the mission and history of the organization, as well as future steps in growing membership, improving meetings, and fulfilling service to the community. The current faculty advisors hope to share information to encourage and aid others seeking to start such an organization.

Keywords: *student reading councils, preservice teacher leadership, reading, community service*

> "It's a really good feeling to know that you accomplished a year of providing the members with different speakers, different opportunities to work events, to be a part of the community…" Current Student Reading Council officer

The quotation above embodies the mission of the Student Reading Council (SRC), a student-led organization on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. This organization, having ties to the state literacy organization, the Texas Association of Literacy Educators, was created by former students and reading faculty members to "promote literacy in the community and serve as a network group between current and future educators" (SRC mission statement). SRC members accomplish this goal each year through several avenues: member meetings, tutorial programs in the local schools, community events, and fundraisers. These activities allow its members to begin their career paths as teachers early in their undergraduate years and practice teacher behaviors, such as communicating effectively with others, working with a team, and building a repertoire of literacy teaching strategies (Pucella, 2014). Members also have opportunities to lead within the organization, which Bond (2011) recommends as crucial to developing future teacher leaders.

What is the Student Reading Council?

Our search of active councils, similar to ours, revealed evidence of two others. Both exist at large institutions of 29,000 and 39,000 students. We found student education organizations in our state; however, these are organizations that focused on bilingual and early childhood education. We are delighted that our institution, where student enrollment is around 12,000, has been able to sustain and grow membership in our unique student council.

Mission

The mission of the Student Reading Council at our university as stated is to "promote literacy in our community and serve as a network group between current and future educators." We asked those involved with SRC to talk about the mission as they see it. Their responses fell into two categories that align with the written mission: community involvement and teacher development. The current and past officers discussed the mission as being primarily to "spread" and "promote" literacy in the surrounding community. They believe it is important that the community sees the organization and the college of education as resources from which they can draw. They want to build families' appreciation of literacy and reach out to those who cannot afford books for their children by holding book drives and events that have literacy at their core. Faculty advisors, on the other hand, focused on the professional development and networking opportunities that involvement with the council provides. Getting preservice teachers familiar with the profession of teaching and daily school life was mentioned, as was the learning of strategies for literacy instruction through monthly meetings and tutoring opportunities. One former faculty advisor said her goal was for them to "feel more a part of the profession" and act as a "member of the teaching culture." Another mentioned that the student reading council is what its members make of it, and that some students see it as a "hoop to jump through" or a "box to check." However, those who become very involved in it will reap the benefits.

Membership

The council rewards active membership in order to grow and sustain its numbers. Each year, members who are graduating and have been active in the organization by attending meetings and engaging in volunteer opportunities are given a TAMUCC Student Reading Council graduation cord to wear at the commencement ceremony. There are also active member awards given to those who complete a predetermined number of volunteer hours. Active members are honored at an annual organization luncheon and bestowed with gifts, such as SRC t-shirts, books, and paid registration to the state literacy conference. One of the original faculty advisors donates money to the organization for a textbook scholarship to be awarded annually to a member who writes an essay that lists their actions to promote the mission of the organization.

An Organization Governed by Students

The Student Reading Council truly is a student-run organization at our university. Each year, in February, there is a call for those members who are interested in serving a one-year term as an officer. Members may nominate themselves or others. The offices are President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Hospitality, and Historian (a new role added for the 2017-2018 academic year). The election is held during the March meeting and nominees deliver a brief speech informing why they would make an effective officer and what they have previously done to serve the organization. While most offices have traditionally been filled by undergraduate students, the office of Treasurer is held by a doctoral teaching assistant. This has been a decision of the faculty advisors and officers who feel that this position is best held by someone who is on campus regularly and has experience handling money. One officer said that she appreciated the consistent "transparency of the treasurer and that the SRC monies were always handled professionally." The officers hold a monthly officer meeting, even during months when member meetings are not held. During these meetings, the officers plan member meetings, fundraisers, and community events; and discuss issues such as ways to involve members, ways to grow membership, and how they might be more involved in the surrounding schools and community. The faculty advisors are present during these meetings to support the officers, as the officers determine the meeting agenda and run the meetings. During interviews, both current and past faculty advisors spoke to the good fortune of recruiting exemplary students for officer positions and how important this is to the smooth and efficient operation of the organization. When asked about working with other students as officers in a student organization, one current officer said, "You're not on your own when you're an officer. Everyone just helps each other. It's very collaborative. You can talk to them about your classes and whatever is bothering you." The officers work together, and even though there is the typical hierarchy from President to Secretary, it is inspiring to watch them synergize, to the point where an outsider would not be able to pick out who serves in which role. The current SRC president told us her fellow officers make it "easy for [her] to be in charge of the organization." This is the kind of teamwork that we as faculty advisors want to see, for this teamwork is evident to the members and carries over into the organization's work.

Role of Faculty Advisors

Serving in the role of faculty advisor for any student organization is a balancing act. Advisors need to be available to provide guidance and suggestions while also allowing the student officers and members to lead the organization. A current faculty advisor feels that "it's so important to not just be a 'figurehead' as I have seen with other organizations, but to be truly involved with these students and provide leadership to the extent that it is needed." As mentioned above, at least one faculty advisor attends each officer meeting. It is also crucial that all faculty advisors attend the six Student Reading Council meetings each year, as "the students need to see us there and want to build relationships with us outside of class" (current faculty advisor interview). A former advisor said, "I always sat in the back row because I wanted members to take responsibility…for the organization." Advisors also attend the meetings so that students will perceive them as more of "a real person" and "more approachable" (current faculty advisor interview). Several students told us stories about showing up for their first meeting, not knowing anyone, and how seeing one of their professors was "comforting." The student officers and members shared that they want to see the faculty advisors and other reading course instructors at meetings, and one student said, "It's nice to see that the professors take the time to attend these meetings. It shows that they're interested in learning." The faculty advisors enjoy this aspect of service to the university because "it is worth it – personally and professionally, and we learn from others and work with others on literacy activities and events" (current faculty advisor interview).

Social Media

The officers of the Student Reading Council stay in touch with members through a variety of social media outlets. The organization has a link on the university website that houses a flyer with meeting dates. All university organizations are also required to register their members through a program called OrgSync. Here, the officers can keep track of members, access member information, and send emails about upcoming events. The secretary and hospitality officer are responsible for updating the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts by posting event dates as well as photos from past meetings, fundraisers, and volunteer events. These digital avenues of communication keep the momentum and excitement going between monthly member meetings.

Gathering Information about the Student Reading Council

In order to gather information about our university's student reading council, the three current faculty advisors conducted individual and group interviews with thirteen people who are or have been involved in the organization (see Table 1). Two former advisors, one who has been on the reading faculty for 20 years and the other who has been on the reading faculty for 15 years and was a former student member, were interviewed regarding the history of the student reading council. Five current officers were interviewed in two groups, and one former officer interview was conducted individually. Also, one group of three current undergraduate student members was interviewed. The three current faculty advisors, two reading faculty and one teacher education faculty, responded to the questions in writing. All interviews lasted about 20 minutes, were audio-recorded, and all were completed face-to-face, with the exception of one interview with a former officer that was conducted by phone. Participants were chosen based on availability and desire to contribute to this project. All are confidential except for the three current faculty advisors who are also the authors of this article. All of the participants completed informed consent forms as well. The current faculty advisors transcribed all interviews, printed out the transcriptions, and

grouped information based on the questions asked during the interviews (see Appendix A).

Table 1 Participants

Role in the Student Reading Council	No. of years involved
Reading faculty member	20
Reading faculty member/former advisor/ former student member	20
Reading faculty member/current advisor	3
Reading faculty member/current advisor	2
Teacher education faculty member/current advisor	1
Current president	3
Current vice president	2
Current treasurer	3
Current secretary	2
Current hospitality representative	2
Former president	3
Current undergraduate student member	2
Current undergraduate student member	2
Current undergraduate student member	2

History of the Student Reading Council

The Student Reading Council (SRC) has its roots in the 1980s. According to one former faculty sponsor, the SRC was on the books as early as 1993, although it had been lying dormant during the 1980s, and existed in name only. During the early 1990s, the council did not actively hold member meetings. By 1996, under the direction of two reading faculty members, the membership began to increase, and at its peak had as many as 160 student members. These students participated in reading conferences that took place at the university. According to one local public school superintendent, these SRC member-participants were considered preferred teacher candidates due to their experience with public speaking and had "presentation experience and were the ones that she preferred."

In the following years, as the direction of the SRC shifted in response to the Texas Education Administration (TEA), the SRC centered efforts on mentoring, and the SRC enrollment decreased to around 20 active student members. For the following eight years, the organization barely survived.

Through the early 1990s, new faculty sponsors breathed life into the organization, bringing the membership back up to almost 70 student members. Once again the focus of the SRC changed to that of teacher preparation and development, and provided students opportunities to participate in activities such as mock interviews. The sponsors at this time made the following clear to undergraduate participants, "If you're going be successful, here are the things that [the SRC is] doing" (sponsor interview). The focus on teacher preparation encouraged elementary education students to participate in the SRC and aided them in finding success in the teaching profession.

During the mid- to late-90s, the SRC was one of the few student organizations on the university campus, with meetings at standing-room-only capacity. At this time, the SRC was allowed more freedom in how it operated due to the absence of university organizational oversight. During this period, SRC meetings went from a make-and-take model to a focus on providing professional development, networking opportunities, and practical classroom teaching advice.

Beginning in 2006, the increase in university student organizations led to more competition for student time and commitment. This led to a decrease in student participation, which became a concern for faculty advisors. However, a renewed focus on providing students with practical teaching advice and professional development opportunities, as well as a commitment to keeping meetings to one hour in respect of the students' time, helped to improve student membership.

For the past thirty years, the SRC has continued to offer teacher education students opportunities to learn practical teaching skills, and provide important services to the local community through its volunteer activities.

Meetings

There are three Student Reading Council meetings per long semester, and all meetings occur at noon on Saturdays due to students' busy weekday schedules. The regular meetings are held in September, October, November, February, and March, with a luncheon meeting held each April. Attendance at meetings has hovered at around 30-40 for the past three years. Each regular meeting follows a structured format and lasts no longer than one hour. Attendees often comment that this is helpful, as many of our students work and some have children. Members who were interviewed shared that they appreciate the structure and timeliness of the meetings, as they are busy students. They "know what to expect" and "exactly how the organization is run." The president leads each meeting by opening with minutes from the past meeting, as well as the treasurer's report, and asks for member approval on these items. New business is then discussed, such as upcoming fundraisers, community events, tutorial opportunities, and other important agenda items that need to be shared with members. A guest speaker shares information with the group for 15 to 20 minutes. The president then closes the meeting.

The officers, with the help of the faculty advisors and other reading faculty, select a guest speaker for each meeting. During the past three years, there has been a wide range of speakers who have provided their perspectives on reading education (see Table 1). The advisors, students, and members agree that it is important to invite people from our local community who are knowledgeable in their area and who are enthusiastic and engaging speakers. When interviewed, several members indicated that the speakers are the main reason they attend meetings and they appreciate the variety of speakers and topics presented. The speakers volunteer their time to do this; however, the officers give the speakers a small gift card and a handwritten thank-you note for their contribution to the organization.

Those members and officers with whom we spoke described the meetings as "fun," "organized," and "professional." To

increase membership and meeting attendance, most reading course professors offer extra credit for involvement with the Student Reading Council, and there are drawings for children's books during meetings as well. One student told us that, after their initial attendance, people "keep coming because [they] want to."

Table 2 Guest Speakers

Speaker	Topic
Middle school English teacher	Reading notebooks
Elementary school principal and literacy leader	Reading instruction
Community college reading instructor	Vocabulary strategies
Secondary ELAR district coordinator	Disciplinary literacy
High school principal and literacy leader	Reading instruction
Preschool coordinator and teacher	Shared Reading instruction
University reading center support personnel	Dyslexia
School librarian	Establishing libraries overseas
Elementary teacher	Teaching abroad
Associate professor of science education	Best practices in teaching

Benefits of Student Reading Council Membership

Learning about Teaching

A foremost goal of the Student Reading Council is to professionally develop preservice and in-service teachers, because, to quote one faculty advisor, "We can't very well teach them everything there is to know about classroom instruction in our courses, and the SRC is one more way to develop their toolkits." This is accomplished through three venues: guest speakers at the monthly meetings, service learning, and conference attendance.

Guest speakers. A literacy professional is invited to speak at each council meeting. Our guest speakers play a significant role in the learning of the student members. When asked about the speakers (see Table 2), the advisors, officers, and members indicated they appreciate the information presented and have learned about instructional strategies and resources for teaching. Members who are completing their field-based courses and student teaching leave each meeting with ideas they can use immediately in their classrooms. These brief professional development sessions also excite preservice teachers about their future careers. Hearing from practicing teachers and administrators is invaluable as members are exposed to "teacher talk" (officer interview). One officer commented, "I felt more at-ease and confident going into the classroom [after hearing from guest speakers]."

Service learning. Undergraduate SRC members learn about opportunities to work in the community by attending meetings, since faculty members share information about tutorial programs in local schools. These programs provide early exposure to local schools and to the realities of teaching. The students gain confidence in pedagogical methods and have the chance to talk about literacy teaching and learning outside of the four walls of the classroom. These experiences help them "connect the dots" (member interview) of their university learning and their work with children and "make the university coursework come alive in its practical application with real students" (Griffin & Zhang, 2013, p. 266). Students who have volunteered their time in these after-school tutoring programs or worked in the America Reads program in the elementary school located on the university campus shared with us the advantages of such work. First, it has confirmed their career choice, which is consistent with research conducted in this area (Griffin & Zhang, 2013). Many students express anxiety about being in schools as teachers for the first time; however, with the experiences afforded them through the Student Reading Council's connections, they are more optimistic about going into their field-based courses. One member indicated that the tutoring experience "helped [her] transition being around kids." Several studies (Barnes, 2016; Jones, Stallings, and Malone, 2004; Lane, Hudson, McCray, Tragash, and Zeig, 2011) found that, during these tutoring experiences, preservice teachers began to develop an identity for themselves as teachers. Second, they learn about planning and implementing lessons. One member said she learned how to teach guided reading lessons, which helped her later when she had to teach similar lessons during her field-based course. A former Student Reading Council, now an in-service teacher, said she took many of her experiences as a tutor into her own classroom. Thus, these experiences help to extend preservice teachers' understanding of instructional strategies (Swick & Rowls, 2000).

Conference attendance. Each year for the past three years, all student officers, as well as three members voted as "most active" in the organization, receive funding from the Student Reading Council to attend the state organization's reading conference. They enjoy the learning experiences there, as well as opportunities to engage teaching professionals in conversations about reading instruction. These early conference experiences help them understand the importance of future conference attendance to stay current in their field. The attendees also give back to the Student Reading Council by serving as guest speakers and sharing what they learned at the meeting that is held the month after the conference.

Networking

Networking is defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as "the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business" (Networking, 2017). Being a member of SRC and attending meetings is a way to connect with university administrators and professors both in the field of literacy and in other content areas. It is also a place to build relationships with public and private school principals and teachers in the community. This opportunity to network as a way to enhance future job attainment opportunities is one of the benefits of membership in the Student Reading Council.

Advisors. Advisors interviewed spoke of networking benefits both from the perspective of how it benefits them as an advisor and member of the university faculty, and how it

benefits the students who are members. The idea of getting to know others involved in SRC was discussed. One advisor shared a benefit for her saying, "…it has helped me develop a stronger bond with our department and with the students. As they get to know me, and I them, we can build a better relationship in and out of the classroom."

Advisors also saw SRC as a way for students to get to know peers in other capacities and build relationships beyond the college classroom. These relationships might lead to future partnerships, job opportunities, and knowledge of surrounding districts. As students participate in projects and opportunities provided by SRC, they bond and create friendships built on common interests that may last beyond the college years. Another networking benefit advisors mentioned was the fact that students "really get to know the professors on a personal basis, as well as professional basis." A current advisor summed up networking benefits by saying, "I think students start to realize the value of networking. I push the social aspects of the organization, since this is the best opportunity that they'll have to talk and ask questions and learn about their future career in a more casual, informal way."

Officers and members. Officers interviewed echoed many of the same themes advisors mentioned. They felt that networking with professors and other students was a top reason to be a part of SRC. They discussed building relationships and making future connections within the community and schools. One officer said, in relation to getting to know other students, "Since you most likely have a class or two together at some point in time, it's only gonna help you get to know other education majors if you can come here and talk to each other." In relation to connections made with professors, one current officer noted, "It's made me feel more comfortable talking with my professors and asking them questions." An overall benefit shared by a former officer was the fact that being a member of SRC allowed her to network with other teachers and professionals in the reading/literacy field. She said, "You get to meet a lot of people, a lot of speakers, a lot of professional teachers and administrators out there, and learn what they've done for the community, instead of just sitting in a classroom."

Connecting with others was the benefit most members spoke about during their interviews. One member said, "SRC is a chance to make new friends. You see people/faces from classes that you have; maybe you don't really talk to them…but when you see them and they're the only person you know in the room you go and sit next to them, and then you start volunteering together. You make connections that you [normally] wouldn't." Another member discussed the value of being noticed by their professors, therefore creating a connection that can last throughout their years at the university.

Leadership

Leadership in the Student Reading Council was found to benefit undergraduate students in their endeavors as future teachers in a number of ways. Forster (1997) defines teacher leadership as the effort to support and enhance practices within the school and among colleagues. Teacher leaders work toward improving their profession to benefit students and teachers within their schools. The different roles that teachers adopt as leaders can be through an ownership role, such as by organizing events; participant role, which can be demonstrated through volunteer efforts; and witness role, through sharing new information with fellow teachers (Rogers & Scales, 2014). Teacher leaders take on a number of additional duties within their schools in an effort to improve the learning environment (Bond, 2011). Providing avenues for supporting and shaping teacher leadership, such as through organizations like the SRC, is one of the many responsibilities that teacher preparation programs should undertake (Forster, 1997).

Advisors. The Student Reading Council advisors described benefits related to student participation in the SRC. According to Pucella (2014), it is important that teacher preparation programs support preservice teachers' leadership skills while students are still forming their own personal philosophies of education and teaching. One benefit that the SRC advisors found was the chance to become involved in other professional organizations. One example of this was the encouragement for students to attend and participate in local and regional literacy conferences, where students often present their own research. These opportunities were seen as a way to help teacher education students build their leadership skills to prepare them as classroom teachers and future campus leaders. The SRC officers also described benefits of participating in meetings and volunteer opportunities. Student leadership skills, which can translate to teacher engagement within the school and community, can be supported by increasing the scope of what teacher preparation programs see as preservice teacher development (Bond, 2011). Students' identities as future teacher-leaders can be developed "through an expansion of knowledge of themselves as leaders, others in the school community, and teaching through sharing strategies" (Bond, p. 7).

Officers. One benefit described by the officers was the improvement of their professional and leadership skills. Pucella (2014) contends that preservice teachers need to be provided opportunities to take on leadership roles as undergraduate students: they are "not too young to lead" (p. 20). Once in the schools, these new teachers need experiences that will promote their engagement within school leadership roles. The SRC officers shared that they had learned to become more assertive leaders through experiences such as contacting SRC meeting presenters, creating meeting agendas, delegating tasks, and taking charge during monthly meetings.

The SRC officers also stated that they had developed into more responsible students and leaders. The need to balance due dates for events related to the SRC and the experience in seek approval through proper bureaucratic channels were possible through the leadership roles taken on by the officers. Officers became more responsible through the planning of special events, such as the annual luncheon. Additionally, they acknowledged that as officers, they were setting an example as the representatives of the SRC, and they felt that ultimately, the image that they portrayed reflected on the entire SRC.

Other benefits of serving as an officer included an improved position for their future teaching career through

opportunities to network with students, professors, and professionals. They were also able to use their officer role as evidence of leadership on their professional résumés. The benefits described by the SRC officers not only allowed them to improve leadership and professionalism, but had a potentially direct impact on their hiring outlook.

Few experienced classroom teachers reported to have received guidance in leadership while enrolled as teacher education students (Pucella, 2014), and these opportunities continue to be lacking in some teacher education programs. The SRC is one such way these programs can provide guidance and leadership support for preservice teachers (Forster, 1997).

Volunteer Opportunities and Community Events

The Student Reading Council is invited to many community events throughout the year to support literacy. McDonald, Tyson, Bryko, Bowman, Delport, & Shimomura (2011) state that exposure to new geographic or cultural settings offer opportunities to engage with others who are different from themselves. By volunteering for literacy nights at schools throughout the city and family events held in community centers, SRC members and advisors meet children and families who introduce them to their world of experiences beyond the university. Advisors, officers, and members shared events that they had attended such as family literacy nights, parent reading nights, and book fairs. One goal of SRC volunteers is to hand out books and plan literacy activities for school events like Family Math Night or Spooky Science Night that are focused on content areas other than reading. Schools also provide volunteer opportunities for SRC members at Book Fairs and during after school programs. One advisor mentioned the fact that "we have built partnerships with schools by sending students out to tutor." A longtime SRC member said that her favorite things to do at the book fair were "to help children pick out books, play games with them, and read them stories." One member even dressed up as Clifford the Big Red Dog during a school book fair.

Members also see the importance of these literacy events for networking and becoming a stronger teacher. One officer noted that she liked "to work in different events in the community and build a résumé for becoming a teacher." This sentiment was echoed by an advisor who said, "Networking with community members and helping build partnerships with SRC is also important. I love wearing my SRC t-shirts and sharing what the students do with anyone who asks!"

Collecting books to share with community organizations and school partners has been a large part of SRC through annual book drives. Every spring, the SRC sets out boxes around campus for book donations and lets students know what organization will benefit from the books collected. One of the most successful book drives benefitted Child Protective Service (CPS) offices across South Texas. Through this donation, over 300 children receiving services from CPS received a brand new book as a gift for the holidays. The other gently used books collected were given to CPS offices to create libraries in their visitation rooms. The goal for this initiative was to encourage parents to spend visitation time reading with their children and to provide caseworkers with a readily available educational tool to enrich the children's time while in the office. Another book drive held on campus during the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) conference collected over 150 books and $90 in donations to be delivered to a women's shelter and children's shelter in South Texas. SRC members sat at volunteer tables throughout the conference to sign people in, direct people to their rooms, and talk to them about the book drive. In order to have more books available to share during literacy events in the community, the President of SRC submits an annual request for book donations from a local grocery store chain that results in boxes of books being delivered and put to use. Once received, SRC members are able to hand out these books at community events. One officer said, "I like to see the look on the kids' faces when they get a new book."

Giving back to the community was a reason that advisors, officers, and members offered for taking the time to volunteer for SRC. One advisor stated that these events provided "opportunities to go into the community and to do something and give back." An officer shared, "It was an intrinsically rewarding experience [to hand out books] and promote literacy and represent ourselves as an organization. It was nice to volunteer and give back to the community." The SRC also held a volunteer day for creating manipulatives and resources for an afterschool literacy library that will be used for tutoring at a local community center. The director of the center has said that those activities have been a valuable resource for tutors to use when reading with students, helping them with their homework, and getting them excited about literacy.

> McDonald et al. (2011) maintain that
>
> "partnerships with community organizations may move teacher education efforts closer to the overall goal of preparing teachers with contextualized knowledge of children than allows them to incorporate the complexity of children's lives into the classroom in ways that ultimately improve children's opportunities to learn" (p. 1696).

Taking part in these volunteer opportunities and community events help the future teachers in SRC learn more about their strengths as a teacher and learn more about the children and families with whom they may one day work. They also help them integrate into the communities where they will serve and become aware of the many cultures that create the fabric of the city.

Future of the Student Reading Council

There are three areas that were mentioned most when discussing the next steps for the Student Reading Council: membership growth and retention, organization of meetings, and volunteer opportunities. The health of the organization is dependent on listening to former and present advisors, officers, and members and being willing to look at both the positive aspects of SRC and what might be improved.

Membership Growth and Retention

Many of the advisors interviewed spoke of the need to continue to grow membership and get the members more involved with one specifically saying,

"I definitely think we need to keep growing our membership and advertising our events.

We need to cross departments and talk to/encourage the professors in Teacher Education and even content area departments/colleges to share dates/events with their students. This connects with the philosophy we have that every teacher is a reading teacher!"

Another advisor suggested that advertising more across departments and colleges might "encourage more students to consider running for office." Two advisors shared the idea of growing membership by seeing more of a graduate presence. This might be achieved by visiting graduate classes in multiple departments and colleges to share the purpose and role of the SRC on campus and in the community, and encourage professors to discuss the benefits of membership with their graduate students.

Officers and members of SRC communicated the idea of inviting people outside of the university to join. One option mentioned was to encourage community members to attend a meeting and speak with them about the importance of literacy education in the community and the need to support future teachers. One member's idea of outside membership consisted of reaching out to high schools in the area. She said, "I think it would be a good idea if we had younger people in the club too, so that they can get an idea as to what it's like." She even discussed the idea of university students who are members partnering with the high school students to mentor them and talk to them about university life and a career in teaching.

For recruitment within the university population of students, members suggested a mixer and more of a presence at new student orientations, including a focus on freshmen or first year students who are in their first semesters and may be unsure of their career direction. One member noted, "If we did a little more outreach into the university to let people know who we are and what we're doing, more students might check us out."

Organization of Meetings

A theme that emerged from the participant interviews concerned the possible restructuring of meetings. The most important aspect of meetings mentioned by officers was to keep them interactive. One way to involve meeting attendees, according to all participants, is to focus on the speakers. One advisor suggested changing the process for securing speakers in order to vet them more carefully. She said to "make it more of a competitive process," and then to "be clear about the expectations and nature of our organization and what our members need to hear." A former advisor wanted to remind SRC officers to always "amp up the speakers and choose ones who have a lot of energy and will be listening to the students' needs." Another advisor spoke about putting speakers first on the agenda, then old business, and ending the meeting with new business, in order to maintain the momentum of the meeting.

Volunteer Opportunities

Although many volunteer opportunities are offered each semester, advisors wanted to see even more shared throughout the year. One advisor suggested partnering with a local literacy council on a regular basis to tackle illiteracy problems across all age groups in the city. Another suggestion was to adopt a retirement home and have members read to residents on a rotating schedule.

The need for more members to participate was shared. One officer said, "The members really should be more involved and more willing to volunteer. It's helpful to have the members come early to meetings and events and want to help out." These statements were echoed as other officers said they thought it was "nice to see the SRC members out in the community." To address these comments, in the future, officers and advisors will need to make sure that volunteer opportunities are available at times when members would be able to help; officers and advisors will also need to make sure that they share the events far enough in advance so that plans can be made and schedules can be adjusted. Incentives beyond the graduation cords may need to be offered for volunteer hours. A survey could be shared at the first meeting to allow input from members regarding what type of volunteer activities they would like to see offered.

The types of volunteer activities that officers and members would like to see continue are participation in a state literacy association annual conference and the tutoring opportunities offered in school districts served by the university. One member said, "I want to do more read-alouds and connect with more elementary campuses." Another said, "I would like to see SRC go to hospitals and read to children who are in hospitals for long periods of time." The Student Reading Council has a long history of being involved in the community and these suggestions for more partnerships are strong possibilities for the future.

Conclusion

The Student Reading Council has, for many years, provided preservice teachers with a place to "find their voices" as teachers (Pucella, 2014, p. 16). They lead the organization each year by providing members opportunities to teach, learn, network, and fundraise. The members give back to the surrounding community and, in doing so, gain experiences that they will use during their teaching careers and begin to solidify their choices to become teachers (Lane et al., 2011; Jones, Stallings, & Malone, 2004). As faculty advisors for the Student Reading Council, we continue to promote seamless facilitation between our courses, the organization, and authentic experiences in classrooms and our community.

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Appendix A

Implementing and Sustaining University Student Reading Councils Interview Protocol

- What was/is your role with the TAMUCC Student Reading Council?
- Describe your role with the SRC (undergraduate student member, graduate student member, former undergraduate student member, former graduate student member, current officer, former officer, faculty member).
- How many full semesters have you been an active member of the TAMUCC Student Reading Council?
- **For student members who are not or have not been SRC officers:**
  - Have you considered pursuing an officer role?
  - How many meetings per semester have you attended?
  - What would you like to share about the SRC meetings (format, speakers, other)?
  - What activities have you been involved in through the SRC (parent nights, tutoring, fundraisers, award recipient, speaker, etc.).
  - What are the benefits of taking part in the Student Reading Council?
  - What is the mission of the SRC as you see it?
  - What might you tell others who might be interested in joining the SRC?
  - What are the future directions you would like to see the SRC take?
- **For officers:**
  - In what officer role(s) have you served?
  - How many meetings per semester have you attended?
  - What have been your experiences as an SRC officer?
  - What would you like to share about the SRC meetings (format, speakers, other)?
  - What activities have you been involved in through the SRC (parent nights, tutoring, fundraisers, award recipient, speaker, etc.).
  - What are the benefits of taking part in the Student Reading Council?
  - What is the mission of the SRC as you see it?
  - What might you tell others who might be interested in joining the SRC?
  - What are the future directions you would like to see the SRC take?
- **For faculty advisors:**
  - How many meetings per semester have you attended?
  - What have been your experiences as an SRC faculty advisor?
  - What would you like to share about the SRC meetings (format, speakers, other)?
  - What activities have you been involved in through the SRC (parent nights, tutoring, fundraisers, award recipient, speaker, etc.).

- What are the benefits of faculty involvement in the SRC?
- What is the mission of the SRC as you see it?
- What are the benefits of student involvement in the SRC?
- What might you tell others who might be interested in joining the SRC?
- What are the future directions you would like to see the SRC take?

- **For founding faculty member:**
  - What is the mission of the SRC as you first envisioned it?
  - In what ways has it changed since its inception?
  - What are the future directions you would like to see the SRC take?

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Putting Reflection into Action: Learning from Preservice Teachers' Reflective Practices during a Summer Literacy Tutoring Program

Lunetta M. Williams, Megan Schramm-Possinger, and Kelly Scott

Abstract

This study focuses on preservice teachers' reflective practices during a field-based tutoring experience in a summer literacy methods course. As part of the class, preservice teachers and their elementary-aged students served as "Summer Secret Agents," sleuthing nonfiction selections together to find fun in learning facts. Throughout the tutoring experience preservice teachers reflected on what they were learning in the course as well as how they implemented new, corresponding strategies while concurrently working in the field. Preservice teachers' reflections were analyzed qualitatively; results indicate that more explicit instruction on how to problematize in reflections is needed. For example, reflections containing discordant evidence over time were consistently evident, rendering this more of a compliance based exercise and less of a true exploration of evidence used to foster improvement in K-12 student learning gains. In addition, preservice teachers did not appear to integrate the strategies they learned into more complex, integrated knowledge schemes: reflections focused on the strategy covered most recently in class. Discussion, pertinent implications – including the consequences of "misdiagnosing" student difficulties and devising strategies accordingly, and suggested future research are provided so "Summer Secret Agents" can be replicated, and further refined, to foster positive outcomes for preservice teachers and the students they serve.

Keywords: *preservice teachers, literacy, reflection, nonfiction*

Introduction

The ability of a preservice teacher to engage in reflective practice is often cultivated prior to their entry into the field – i.e., during teacher training (Ross & Gibson, 2010). Reflecting on experiential learning offers preservice teachers the opportunity to consider how teachers execute the theories of "best practice," as well as how students respond to them in "real life." Learning through reflection can foster the cultivation of increasingly elaborate, qualitatively different knowledge schemes grounded in the intersection between K-12 students' interests, their academic competencies, and preservice teachers' use of specific pedagogical practices designed to foster their students' skills – such as reading comprehension (Gelter, 2003). Questions emergent from reflection can include, "Why did this student recall more of the text when sharing her synopsis of what she read today?" "Is she more confident?" "Did using games to foster recall, such as Jeopardy, lead to this positive result?" "Is her interest in the text associated with greater comprehension?" "What about her knowledge of the topic?" "For example, did her limited knowledge of John F. Kennedy lead her to recall much less about the text?"

As preservice teachers reflect upon what they are learning and have learned in coursework, as well as their experiences in the field, they can re-examine which practices worked well, which were less effective, why this was the case and what they plan to do next. The salience of the last step, that is "what they plan to do next," cannot be understated, as misconceptions of the nature of K-12 learners' difficulties can cause pre- and in-service teachers to implement strategies of limited value to their students. In addition, this type of reflection renders theories of best practice, past experiences as a learner, and the complex realities of classrooms in the real world as a fruitful amalgam from which more elaborate, sophisticated notions of practice can develop. Within this article, there is a focus on reflective practice in the context of literacy instruction. Specifically, the authors highlight preservice teachers' -- taking a Literacy Methods course -- reflections throughout a tutoring experience where they applied their new course knowledge into practice.

For the purposes of this article, we use Rodgers (2002) definition of reflection, which is based on Dewey's model of reflective teaching (1933). As such, reflection includes the following: (1) the process of making meaning, and building continued, increasingly connected, deeper understandings through experience; (2) systematic, rigorous, and disciplined thinking, rooted in scientific inquiry; (3) embeddedness in the community and the people therein; and, (4) an emphasis on prioritizing personal growth as well as the development of others.

Literature Review

Notwithstanding, reflection in teacher education has been defined in very different ways, and correspondingly, has been conducted differently (Tannebaum, Hall, & Deaton, 2013). Consistent among many theorists, however, is that preservice teachers frame their epistemology of reflection according to their cultural, political, affective and contextual standpoints (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Schon, 1983).

Dewey's work on reflective thinking (1933) was from the perspective of teachers, whereby educators reflect in order to maximize their professional effectiveness. Inherent in this process, according to Dewey, is a willingness to seek multiple perspectives in relation to a problem or question, consider accepting new ways of acting or thinking, anticipate the consequences of taking next steps and use these judgments to make decisions. He noted within this process the thoughtful classification of ideas, linked together temporally as a means for understanding an issue according to one's cognitions and beliefs.

This process—problematizing, and considering how to interpret corresponding interconnected experiences—frequently involves remaining suspended in periods of doubt (Dewey, 1933; van Manen, 1995). Given the agreement among theorists regarding the salience of problem identification as a prerequisite for teacher reflection, it is reasonable to assume that preservice teachers' dispositions – such as a willingness to continuously improve --, as well as attitudes – such as viewing problems as opportunities, not indicators of personal deficiencies – either advance or constrain whether reflection occurs (Corcoran & Leahy, 2003; Ross & Gibson, 2010).

Other studies examined preservice teachers' reflections both during and after their literacy field experiences. This included preservice teachers' perceived ability to support or instruct students during literacy instruction, their metacognitions—broadly speaking (Fang & Ashley, 2005; Griffith, 2017; Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 2002; Timmons & Morgan, 2008), and their beliefs regarding how to teach reading (Fang & Ashley, 2005; Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000; Scharlach, 2008). These results indicate that reflective practice in literacy teacher training, and teacher training in general, has consistently proven to be important.

For example, Shulman and Shulman (2008) report that lessons learned from "evaluating, reviewing, and self-criticizing" for the benefit of "purposeful change" are key to teacher development (p. 4). Specifically, these theorists indicate how they cultivated these metacognitive skills in preservice teachers by meeting regularly to discuss their lessons, practices, and assessments (Shulman & Schulman, 2008). Content from these discussions was used to cultivate cases that were explored in detail. Other educators engaged in analogous forms of structured reflection then revisited the lessons learned from these critical analyses.

This was likely to have been successful, in part, because preservice teachers' choice of pedagogical techniques is informed by what they interpret their students' intentions and perceptions of learning to be, as well as which instructional activities are in their repertoire. This seems self-evident, but the consequences of making choices through this interpretive lens are less so. Specifically, if preservice teachers' interpretations of their students' knowledge, interests, and multifaceted challenges dictate their next instructional moves, and if their interpretations are inaccurate, then – as noted above -- the instructional choices they make are less likely to be effectual.

For example, a subset of research in preservice teachers' reflections revealed their tendency to commence literacy instruction with K-12 learners according to a deficit theory (Fang & Ashley, 2005; Leko & Mundy, 2011; Mallette et al., 2000; Scharlach, 2008); that is, students' reading struggles stemmed from either a biological disability or an inability to retain information. Compounding the potentially negative effects of this view was preservice teachers' limited confidence in and/or knowledge of how to assist students with reading difficulties (Fang & Ashley, 2005; Scharlach, 2008). The instructional practices they enacted, grounded in their reflections of their students' pervasive shortcomings and sense of limited pedagogical efficacy, are likely to have been suboptimal. This can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle: preservice teachers' reflections of student deficits and beliefs in their inability to "fix them" result in poor outcomes that further reinforce their initial beliefs.

Levels of Reflective Practice

Intersecting with preservice teachers' beliefs is the depth of their reflections. Specifically, preservice teacher's practices in the field, in the absence of substantive reflection, are often categorized as technical where preservice teachers think about the degree to which their teaching (i.e., "means") led to their desired student outcomes (i.e., "ends") soon after having taught and then change their behavior accordingly (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 35; Reynolds, 2011, Smith & Lovat, 1991). Technical or descriptive reflection – often based on intuition, however, can constrain the kinds and the number of questions posed. It can also result in teachers formulating a single explanation, in the absence of other possibilities, of student disengagement or limited recall of the text. Having said that, preservice teachers' engagement in technical reflection is a precursor to the cultivation of more sophisticated reflective practices, such as practical reflection.

Practical reflection is a broader analysis of whether means led to specific ends considering goals and the assumptions upon which conclusions are made (Hatton & Smith, 1989). For example, Danielson (1989) reports the conclusions derived by her preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections of their experiences as students learning to read. These reflections resulted in preservice teachers' markedly broadened ideas regarding the pedagogical practices they would integrate in their classrooms, such as fostering learning of literature through creative drama and reading to students aloud. Thus, engagement in practical reflection reminded preservice teachers of the enriching pedagogical methods they had not considered, given their goals as educators, the language they used as students, and the meanings they attributed to specific experiences (Danielson, 1989).

Critical reflection includes practical and technical elements, yet builds upon this with a consideration of moral and ethical requirements, such as equity, justice and respect for others. Although the relative sophistication of critical reflection, versus technical and practical reflection, has been noted, theorists reiterate the salience of always viewing dilemmas through both an educational and a moral lens (Holloway & Gouthro, 2011; Reynolds, 2011; Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

Schon (1987), whose work was influenced by Dewey (1933) and van Manen (1977), also operationalized a reflective stance, or more specifically "reflection-in-action," which involves thinking about the enactment of tasks in real time to inform the creation of thoughtful modifications (p. 27). He cited the salience of reflection-in-action for educators, particularly due to the uneven nature of what teachers-in-training learn theoretically and what they confront in practice.

Reflection-in-action, can be descriptive, technical, dialogic, or critical, yet occurs while a situation is occurring (Schon, 1983). Contemporaneous reflection is focused on neither the past nor what is to be expected in the future – it is a temporally immediate. The emphasis on altering practices extemporaneously -- according to information in real time

-- in lieu of retaining standardized technical procedures, irrespective of their utility, holds merit.

Central Research Question

Reflection is critical for preservice teachers to engage in as they examine what instructional practices worked and why and ponder what they plan to do in the future that could further benefit their students. Accordingly, the central research question for this study was, "What is the nature of a sample of preservice teachers' reflections when conducting nonfiction literacy lessons with a small group of students?"

Methods

Participants

Participants were preservice teachers enrolled in a six-credit hour, eleven-week summer section literacy methods course. They were all Elementary Education majors (n = 12) in their junior year of study, who attended a midsize university in an urban area within the southeastern United States. In addition, all had successfully completed a three-credit prerequisite course that focused on basic literacy concepts and children's literature. The proportion of males to females in this sample reflected the larger population of preservice teachers attending the university; participants included eleven Caucasian females and one Caucasian male.

A second set of participants were elementary students (n = 17) who recently completed second, third, or fourth grade at a Title I school near the university. All were attending an afterschool program that also offered a summer camp. Provided by participants was parental consent and their assent to participate in this study.

Context of Literacy Methods Course

The overarching goal of this methods course was to prepare preservice literacy instructors for their professional roles by engaging them in pertinent hands-on pedagogical practices. This was a hybrid online course, with preservice teachers completing work both online and face-to-face every week. During most face-to-face sessions, the class met at the elementary school where preservice teachers worked with a small group of elementary students in a supervised setting for one hour. Following this, preservice teachers met their professor and attended class for two hours on-site. The course focused on methods for teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, and methods that could foster students' interest in literacy. Some specific course activities included learning about nonfiction text features using a method -- that a co-author exhibited -- entitled, Nonfiction Text Feature Creatures (Turner, 2013); watching video clips of efficacious literacy instruction; and, discussing readings on how to engage elementary students during book discussions. Methods used to foster engagement included posing open-ended questions and engaging in hands-on literacy activities -- such as working with Elkonin Boxes and situating exploration of text as "Secret Agents" (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2014).

Summer Secret Agents. More specifically, research reveals that youth enjoy solving puzzles and reading mysteries (Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Zarnowski, 2013). To capitalize on this, small groups of elementary-aged learners were called "Summer Secret Agents." The Secret Agents read nonfiction texts focused on their interests, and in the context of doing so, noted the emergence of scientific mysteries to be solved. Then, partners worked together as sleuths or secret agents to uncover answers to questions that emerged from the books they read.

The structure of preservice teachers' weekly session with their elementary student participant(s) was:

a) Reviewing the guidelines and goals of the summer program entitled, "Summer Secret Agents" (modified from Heller, 2006; Zarnowski, 2013);
b) Discussing the purpose of the lesson/complete a pre-reading activity;
c) Reviewing salient vocabulary in the text;
d) Reading a nonfiction book;
e) Sleuthing for information (Heller, 2006; Rosenblatt,

Table 1 Research Participants

Number of Participants	Grade (Most Recently Completed)	Gender	Ethnicity
3	2nd Grade	Female	African American
2	2nd Grade	Female	Caucasian
2	2nd Grade	Male	African American
1	2nd Grade	Male	Caucasian
1	2nd Grade	Male	"Other"
1&1	3rd Grade	Male and Female	Caucasian
1	4th Grade	Female	African American
3	4th Grade	Female	Caucasian
1	4th Grade	Male	African American
1	4th Grade	Male	"Other"

1994); and,

f) Writing about the text in a journal.

Again, to foster engagement, all elementary students were encouraged to read books focused on their nonfiction interests and chose books autonomously from a wide array of options (within their Lexile Level). Also, strongly emphasized was facilitating student participants' sense of belonging as they worked with the same group of learners, -- pending student attendance --, and engaging in social interactions (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004).

During the first three weeks, the professor provided a lesson plan template to scaffold preservice teachers' literacy lessons with young students. In addition, the professor modeled pedagogical techniques in class such as the use of "think-alouds" and picture walks (Temple et al., 2014). After three tutoring sessions, the template contained fewer scaffolds, allowing preservice teachers to make decisions regarding which methods to employ given their expanding repertoire. For example, although some tutees benefitted from the use of "think-alouds," others did not, and preservice teachers' lesson plans differed accordingly.

Lesson plans were due 48 hours before the day of tutoring so the professor could review them beforehand. After each tutoring session, preservice teachers completed an assignment – i.e., a reflection – in response to two prompts: (1) describe your tutee's nonfiction reading comprehension; and (2) describe your tutee's nonfiction reading attitudes. The reflections were due two days after the tutoring session, and the professor deliberately provided preservice teachers with feedback that would not constrain the veracity of each reflection. Grades for this assignment were binary, based upon whether it was completed or not. Preservice teachers were reminded weekly that the purpose of their reflections was to capture growth, however discreet, and to record quotes (verbatim) and witnessed behaviors regarding their students' comprehension and reading attitudes. As alluded to above, these literacy teachers-in-training were unencumbered regarding how they responded to reflection prompts, however, it is reasonable to assume that many wished to present themselves favorably to the professor.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the preservice teachers' reflections about their students' comprehension and reading attitudes, the authors applied rigorous qualitative data analytic practices, including the development of codes and identification of patterns using constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the first stage, the authors performed initial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) on participants' reflections, read and re-read their entries, and then identified patterns that emerged as themes. The authors addressed reliability after coding 20 percent of the reflections through independent coding among all three researchers (i.e., authors). The authors met to discuss their codes and themes and engaged in a second stage -- pattern-coding -- (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to collapse initial codes into categories based on the similarities among them. After agreeing on the refined codes, the authors began their independent analyses. The authors met regularly as a team during this time and engaged in peer debriefing which helped them to stay reflexive in their data interpretations (Patton, 2002). The authors' analyses indicated over 90% agreement.

Results

Two overarching themes emerged from these data: preservice teachers demonstrated various challenges in problematizing the nature of their students' challenges and/or disinterest in reading; and, their discussions for each week were focused on the pedagogical practices and course content covered during that time – with little to no integration or mention of techniques covered in the weeks prior. Both themes will be explicated in this section.

Challenges in Problematizing

Specifically, the first theme was evident in preservice teachers' consistent focus on identifying and attending to problems over multiple tutoring sessions according to incongruous threads of evidence and corresponding interpretations – rendering a problem about a singular topic divorced from its antecedent. One reflection, for example, was, "[the student] likes to learn about dinosaurs." Accordingly, this preservice teacher was responsive to her student's preference and brought in a book to read on dinosaurs the subsequent week. She then stated:

> *The topic of today's book, dinosaurs, did not turn him off but did not seem to captivate him. However, he had some prior knowledge on dinosaurs and he could make some connections between what we were reading and how it applied to his life; I felt that was a significant move forward.* (personal communication, 2017).

The question of why a topic of interest would not captivate him was not explored, suggesting the importance of teaching preservice educators how to acknowledge that which is perplexing and seek multiple, possible explanations regarding aspects that affect students' growth and engagement. In addition to fostering these habits of mind, it is critical that preservice teachers find comfort in problematizing – i.e., wonder why their students understand concepts differentially well and seek more information.

Again, discontinuity among reflections was a theme evident in several other instances. For example, one preservice teacher noted that her student "loved learning about tigers, understood the bold words, understood pictures, and was somewhat confused regarding the difference between an index and the table of contents." In reference to her students' attitudes towards nonfiction – during the same tutoring session --, she noted the student "doesn't really focus, didn't really listen, and had fun drawing on her folder." Although the student loved learning about tigers and understood text features, perhaps she was unfocused and did not listen, however, a thoughtful reconciliation of these somewhat discordant descriptions was not provided by the preservice teacher. Another preservice teacher reflected that her student "had a lot of background knowledge about

outer space so she was very interested in the book" and that "the book seemed too easy for her." Regarding the student's attitudes, the preservice teacher noted that the student "is engaged when I asked her questions but she can also be easily distracted because she seems a little bored." While the reflection indicated that the student had much interest in the book, the student's tendency to be also be distracted and bored was not fleshed out by the preservice teacher. Seeking information is clearly an important skill in and of itself, and it requires gathering data, generating multiple reasons regarding possible causations and correlations, and then using data from subsequent interchanges to discern the most likely reasons for variance in students' growth.

For example, another preservice teacher wrote that her student "understood how to pull information from the text to have a discussion about the facts in the book, however, she wasn't confident in her ability to retain the information and wanted to look back in the text." The student may have been a confident reader, as she was able to successfully discuss the book's contents, and she may have been using a strategy that many skilled, confident readers use, looking back in the text, to assist with recalling basic information. In another example, one preservice teacher noted her student was "upset because her fellow schoolmate [was] absent...so perhaps she enjoys more social ideas." It is possible this student is socially-driven, but there are many other potential reasons why a student may or may not be engaged (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004) and exploring a variety of reasons is important if teachers are to be sound, reflective diagnosticians who can devise strategies that best meet the needs of their students.

In addition, many preservice teachers noted in their reflections that the "Secret Agents" connected the nonfiction texts to other books read or personal experiences, however, they did not expand on how these connections impacted comprehension or attitudes. For example, one preservice teacher wrote that her student "was able to draw parallels from the text and her life," and another preservice teacher noted that the Secret Agent "was able to add onto what we learned with her own experiences." The reflections briefly mentioned the use of connecting to the text, but they did not note whether the connections further aided in unpacking the text's contents or enjoying the information learned.

Focus on Recent Pedagogical Practices and Course Content

Preservice teachers often attributed positive outcomes to the pedagogical practices used during the same time frame. For example, a preservice teacher noted her student did not demonstrate high levels of comprehension after having read a text on John F. Kennedy. She attributed that to her students' lack of confidence. In a subsequent reading session, her student demonstrated stronger comprehension of a text about Pocahontas. During this session, the preservice teacher played Jeopardy with her student, and she attributed having played Jeopardy with an increase in her student's comprehension. The preservice teacher in explaining her student's gains in comprehension did not note other factors such as the student's strong interest in the topic (Pocahontas) and her familiarity with the story after having watched the movie several times, as important. Having said that, it was clear that this preservice teacher, and others, were actively working towards finding the pedagogical practices that optimally facilitated their student's interest in reading nonfiction text and comprehension of what they had read.

Additionally, preservice teachers tended to reflect on the literacy methods course content covered most recently as opposed to carrying the same concepts in their reflections and revisiting them throughout the semester, a finding also cited by Leko and colleagues (2015). For example, after discussing text features in the literacy methods class, many preservice teachers reflected on their students' understanding of them. One preservice teacher in our study noted:

> *He [The elementary student] showed rather adept skill at using nonfiction text features, such as captions and visuals, to answer some concerns that he had; for instance, using the visuals to understand that a snake's fangs are indicative of whether or not they are poisonous…* (personal communication, 2017).

Another methods class session focused on engaging students in discussion, including the use of statement cards, prompts placed on index cards to assist students as they responded to the text (e.g. "This part of the text makes me wonder"). Immediately following this class session, engaging students in book discussions was often mentioned in preservice teachers' reflections. One preservice teacher noted, "During our activity, she did a fabulous job of using statement cards to base her thoughts about global warming and was able to verbally communicate what her thoughts were to the group." Purposefully engaging secret agents in discussion was not mentioned in reflections after the week when the strategy was introduced. This tendency suggests that the students need practice using each technique before it becomes part of their broader, everyday repertoire. It is also fair to assume from the findings that students proposed next pedagogical steps would likely be associated with what was learned that week and may not be reflective of what was learned all semester. This leads to further discussion and recommendations about how preservice teachers can be supported and challenged to reference and integrate skills and strategies learned earlier on in a semester or through former courses into their preservice teaching experiences.

Discussion and Recommendations

As per the results, it is clear there is a need for explicit instruction as to why reflection is important at the preservice level. Specifically, substantive reflection can equip teachers-in-training to make more sound instructional, student-based decisions in their first year of teaching and beyond (Corcoran & Leahy, 2003). This explicit instruction can take on the form of questioning to scaffold the preservice teacher's thinking such as, "You began the lesson with a detailed and thoughtful plan but teaching does not always go according to plan. What 'in-the-moment' teaching decisions did you make?" (Griffith, 2017, p. 4).

The instructor's lessons and strategies modeled played

a role in what the preservice teachers reflected upon after their sessions. Thus, there is a need for literacy educators to be intentional in how they model and discuss reflection and metacognitive thinking. Some recommendations for literacy educators are:

- Include reflective components in lesson plan templates and activity directions;
- Explicitly model reflection and explain how it impacts student learning;
- Focus on reflective practice from the beginning of the preservice teachers' training program to facilitate increasingly sophisticated understandings of these habits of mind (Griffith, 2017);
- Emphasize the importance of engaging in reflective practice throughout their teaching careers and with social support, such as focus groups or mentors (Corcoran & Leahy, 2003; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Nolan, 2008; Rieger, Radcliffe, & Doepker, 2013; Risko, Vukelich, & Roskos, 2002); and
- Consider the use of reflective interviews in which the literacy educator and preservice teacher meet regularly to discuss analysis questions, such as "Can you think of another way you might have taught this lesson?" (p. 290) which can lead to higher levels of reflective judgment (Pultorak, 1993).

There is also a need for preservice teachers to think about reflection differently than they had in the past. Some recommendations of ways to inspire reflective practice from preservice teachers are to encourage students to:

- Problematize (Dewey, 1933; van Manen, 1995) and consider several possible ways to try rather than assuming there is only one right approach;
- Expect to encounter complex situations;
- Be willing to take the time to focus on the student(s) and think beyond compliance on course tasks; and for professors to,
- Model the behaviors enumerated above.

Limitations of this study, due to the sample size as well as somewhat homogenous participant demographics are due to the enrollment in the course and as such beyond the researchers' control. Conducting future studies to examine preservice teachers' reflections with a larger and more diverse population, during a longer amount of time, would be of great value. Although conclusions drawn from self-reported data can be limited, they still offer important insights into preservice teachers' meaning making as learning takes place (Patton, 2002). Further, like Griffith (2017), the authors recognize the possible influence of the course professor's teaching, course readings and discussions. Future research could replicate this study over more than a one-course sequence to see the possible effects that continued instruction could have on preservice teachers' reflections (Mallette et al., 2000). Other studies could triangulate interview and other qualitative data to provide additional insights regarding preservice teachers' reflections and further understand what they are thinking before, during, and after the time of instruction.

Conclusion

It is not enough for preservice teachers to list their practices while reflecting on field experiences. Preservice teachers should develop the language to explain why they engaged in certain practices and how the results of having done so influenced their decision-making; this explication of practice can empower them to feel like a teacher and "assume the identity of teacher as professional" (Griffith, 2017, p. 9) as they engage in metacognitive and thoughtful thinking.

Just as teachers question their students to help them reach the next levels of understanding, reflection provides the same meaning-making experience for themselves as practitioners. Thinking about reflection as more than just for compliance for a course and recognizing the possibilities of reflection as a continuous improvement tool is a fundamental step preservice teachers need to take. With that said, teacher educators should recognize that reflection is a skill that needs to be taught explicitly in order for their teachers in training to utilize it meaningfully, intentionally, and throughout their careers. The additional time required to model reflective practice early in preservice teachers training has the potential to result in not only more reflective practitioners but also educators who diagnose their students' strengths and weaknesses more accurately. These diagnoses dictate the pedagogical moves educators will take, making this an aspect of teacher training that is essential if we are to equip preservice teachers to engage in student-centered instruction.

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Enhancing Teacher Education through Field-Based Literacy Laboratories

Nicole Maxwell, Danielle Hilaski, and Kellie Whelan-Kim

Abstract

Teacher preparation programs are responsible, at least in part, for the level of readiness of their graduating teacher candidates, many of whom report feeling unprepared to begin their teaching career (Holmes Group, 1995; Levine, 2005, 2006; MacIver, Vaughn, Katz, 2005; Lewis et al., 1999; Rust, 2010; Walsh, 2001). In response, universities and teacher education programs must develop innovative ways to fully prepare teacher candidates for the classroom. School-university partnerships have the capacity to cultivate environments that foster instruction and experiences that more effectively prepare teacher candidates for their first teaching position. Through these partnerships and the Professional Development School (PDS) model, teacher candidates can apply instruction from university courses to working with P-12 students in the field within practice-based teacher education (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Laboratories connected to university literacy courses and held in PDS elementary schools are one creative method the authors have found to better prepare teacher candidates for the classroom. Through a literacy assessment laboratory, teacher candidates can acquire a meaningful understanding of how to implement literacy assessments and analyze the assessment data to determine appropriate individualized instruction for their student. Furthermore, increased confidence in their abilities to conduct these literacy assessments, analyze the results, and plan responsive instruction based on the students' needs may also occur.

Keywords: *literacy, laboratories, teacher education, Professional Development School, teacher candidate*

Introduction

Teaching is complex and multidimensional. With no cookie cutter or magic formula for being successful, there is no one right way to behave as a teacher (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Nieto, 2013). In an "increasingly complex society and rapidly changing, technology based economy" (Darling-Hammond, 1998), teachers are responsible for educating an increasingly diverse student population to higher academic standards. Teachers, as a result, are faced daily with complex decisions that involve high-stake outcomes affecting students' futures. These outcomes require different and more demanding kinds of knowledge and skills (Bransford et al., 2005). To make good decisions, teachers must be well-versed in instructional strategies, learning differences, language and cultural influences, and individual temperaments and interests. Teachers must be able to apply their knowledge of learning and performance to make on-the-spot decisions regarding the students' needs and the instructional strategies and approaches that will be most appropriate for each individual learner (Bransford et al., 2005) within the context of a "standards-based, accountability-driven system of education" (Levine, 2006, p. 5).

While the demands and expectations of teachers are continuing to increase, researchers (Levine, 2006; Rust, 2010) report that teacher candidates often feel underprepared for their first teaching position. Of the 91,623 teacher education candidates graduating with baccalaureate degrees (Snyder, 2016), many have graduated without the skills and knowledge needed to be effective teachers (Levine, 2006; Ruth 2010). Principals, according to Levine's (2006) report, Educating School Teachers, revealed that teacher candidates were ill-prepared in the following ways: integrating technology into their teaching, implementing curriculum and performance standards, using student performance assessment techniques, working with parents, and managing the classroom. In addition, they are not prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and diverse cultural backgrounds. These inadequacies likely contribute to the continued teacher shortage. Nearly 17% of teachers leave the field of education within their first five years (Gray, Tale, & O'Rear, 2015). Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) predict the annual shortfall for teachers nationwide could reach 112,000 by fall 2018.

Rust (2010) and others (Holmes Group, 1995; Levine, 2005, 2006; MacIver, Vaughn, Katz, 2005; Lewis et al., 1999; Walsh, 2001) argue higher education is at least partially to blame. Criticisms of education programs include activities and training in college courses often disconnected from classroom practices, brief student teaching placements, limited supervision in field placement, and field placement isolated from coursework (Lewis et al., 1999; MacIver, Vaugh, Katz, 2006; Walsh 2001). Amidst all of these criticisms, educational researchers (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) agree that teacher educators have the capacity to positively change teacher education, creating a more effective, better-prepared teaching force.

School-university partnerships have the potential to create environments that foster instruction and experiences that more effectively prepare teacher candidates for the classroom. Through these partnerships, teacher candidates can apply their training from college courses to working with P-12 students in the field through practice-based teacher education (Ball & Cohen, 1999) within the Professional Development School (PDS) model. These field placements are likely to last for longer periods of time than the traditional model of teacher education programs (Teitel, 2003). Consequently, they provide greater opportunities for teacher candidates to develop a firm foundation in teaching, resulting

in an increased likelihood for success and retention. Together with these extended field placements, the PDS model can open the door to additional opportunities for hands-on practice to better prepare teacher candidates. In particular, the authors have found that involving teacher candidates in literacy laboratories, in which they apply their literacy course knowledge directly to working with elementary students, increases the teacher candidates' readiness to meet the demands of teaching literacy in their own classrooms.

Literature Review

Literacy courses taught in a more traditional way in teacher preparation programs focus on the knowledge base of theory and strategies in teaching reading. However, in this more traditional setting, preservice teachers can be more passive receivers and often lack the opportunity to transfer their developing theoretical knowledge into practice in an authentic way. Researchers (Al Otaiba, Lake, Greulich, Folsom, & Guidry, 2012; Haverback & Parault, 2008; International Reading Association, 2003a, 2003b; Maloch et al., 2003) have identified a gap in research related to effective instructional approaches for reading teacher education. Several reports have indicated the need for higher quality learning experiences for preservice teachers, specifically in the area of literacy education (Al Otaiba, Lake, Greulich, Folsom, & Guidry, 2012; Hoffman et al., 2005). Among the currently available research, one of the commonly cited solutions related to this need is the importance and impact of more authentic, field-based experiences in developing a deeper understanding of teaching. Hoffman et al. (2005) summarized, "Specifically, supervised, relevant, field-based or clinical experience in which preservice teachers receive ongoing support, guidance, and feedback is critical" (p. 269). A 2003 report of the International Reading Association highlighted course-related field experiences with interaction and modeling from mentors as a key element in high quality programs in teaching reading (International Reading Association, 2003). In addition to the field experiences themselves, scaffolded reflection has been discussed as a major aspect in making field-based literacy experiences more effective and meaningful (Bean & Stevens, 2002).

A survey of teacher education programs and reading teacher educators conducted by Hoffman and Roller (2001) indicated a growing move toward incorporating a more hands-on approach involving extensive field experiences within courses before student teaching. These researchers also noted the faculty preparing preservice teachers in reading believed these field experiences were highly important. When preservice teachers are provided with the opportunity to work directly with striving readers in a one-on-one setting, they are able to put their beliefs and strategies into practice in an authentic way. According to a review of the literature related to the benefits of this more authentic context for developing teachers, Haverback and Parault (2008) found that preservice teachers in a field-based, hands-on setting report a positive impact on their teaching beliefs, perceptions of students as individuals, and understanding of theory and reading strategies. In addition, the impact of extensive field experience in the teaching of reading has been cited to extend into the first years of teaching (Hoffman et al., 2005; Maloch et al., 2003).

The enduring impact of authentic teacher preparation experiences, specifically the PDS model, was discussed in a study by Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011). Beginning teachers were surveyed in order to determine the impact of the type of program on their perceptions and decisions related to teaching. These beginning teachers graduated from teacher education programs implementing three different types of models, including a traditional model, a PDS model, and a Teacher In Residence model. More than half of the beginning teachers surveyed who graduated from a teacher education program using the PDS model identified receiving and applying a solid theoretical foundation for methods and strategies as a strength of their program. Furthermore, the authors claim, "They found value in learning theory and then getting the practical application of theories in their partner school placements" (p. 342). A deeper understanding of theoretical foundations and research-based practices is especially important in identifying reading difficulties and appropriately selecting intervention strategies.

Lefever-Davis and Heller (2003) further described the benefit of the PDS model, specifically in developing literacy educators. Through the authentic context of the PDS partnership, "No longer does the preservice student learn in isolation from children...undergraduates move from campus to schools and back again, interacting with children and practicing the art of teaching reading and writing" (p. 2). The PDS model and guided laboratory experiences discussed in this article aim to provide these elements.

Context

The Professional Development School model allows teacher candidates, in-service teachers, college literacy professors, and elementary students to benefit from an ongoing collaboration. According to Teitel (2003) in the Professional Development Schools Handbook, professional development schools are "...innovative types of school-college partnerships designed to...bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher education programs - restructuring schools for improved student learning and revitalizing the preparation...of...educators at the same time" (p. 2). Promotion of student learning is the primary goal of a PDS partnership. In this context, stakeholders in the PDS partnership are committed to working together to provide authentic learning experiences for teacher candidates and elementary school students.

Professional Development Community Model

For the purposes of discussing the authors' experiences, it is important to define what is meant by a professional development community (PDC), especially in relation to a PDS. In reference to the field-based piece of student teaching, Teitel (2003) states that the organization and structure of PDS's involve "clusters of preservice teachers working together as a cohort, placed in a school community, rather than with one individual teacher, and often for longer or more intensive internships" (p. 128). These elements align

with the PDC model that operates at our university, although the school community reaches beyond one school. Typically, each PDC includes five or six elementary schools in which teacher candidates are placed for their field experience three days a week. Teacher candidates are usually part of a different PDC during each of the two years of the Elementary and Special Education (ELE/SPED) program. In order to meet the requirements of the dual-certification program, it is sometimes necessary for the same teacher candidate to split his/her field placement between two elementary schools within the same PDC. University classes are held in one of the elementary schools included in the PDC, when space is available. However, the courses are held on the university campus when no elementary schools in the PDC have open space for additional classes.

Holding university classes in the elementary school makes it easier to conduct a laboratory in which teacher candidates work with elementary students. These laboratory experiences involve authentic opportunities for teacher candidates to implement the pedagogical practices they learn about in their university classes with elementary students. Additionally, the teacher candidates have the support of their professor as they work with the elementary students in the event issues or questions arise. Three of the four literacy classes in the ELE/SPED program at the University of North Georgia have utilized laboratories at some point.

Laboratory Experiences in Literacy Courses

Laboratory experiences can be meaningfully integrated in teacher education coursework creating authentic learning experiences. Some common characteristics of a successful laboratory include: interactive teaching methods in the college coursework, authentic teaching opportunities in the laboratory experiences, opportunities for written reflection, and time and space for critical and thoughtful talk through a Socratic Seminar. Some specific examples of how laboratory experiences have been integrated into literacy courses at the University of North Georgia are described below.

Teaching Reading and Writing in Elementary Schools is the course that provides an overview of literacy skills associated with phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Most of the PDC's have implemented a lab in conjunction with this course. The laboratory enables teacher candidates to plan and implement guided reading lessons, writing mini-lessons, and a phonological awareness literacy station with small groups of elementary students. Typically, students work in pairs or small groups to teach these lessons to encourage collaborative planning and problem-solving.

Reading in the Content Areas is another literacy course in our program that has successfully included a laboratory. This laboratory was unique in that it married literacy and science coursework through a science and literacy laboratory. In this laboratory experience, teacher candidates were able to put what they learned about comprehension strategies and informational text from their university class into practice with elementary students through the implementation of inquiry-based science lessons that included corresponding literacy activities.

The other literacy course that has included a laboratory, and is the focus of the information provided below, is Assessing Literacy in Early Childhood Education. The content of this class involves teacher candidates learning about various literacy assessments, including those associated with emergent literacy, word recognition and spelling, informal reading inventories, and reading comprehension. Conducting a laboratory in conjunction with this class allows the teacher candidates to practice giving the assessments to an elementary student and to analyze the results for the purpose of developing assessment-based reading lessons individualized to the students' identified strengths and needs.

Reading and Assessment Laboratory

The aim of the Reading and Assessment Laboratory is twofold: to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to administer and analyze literacy assessments in a supportive environment and to provide elementary students with individualized and responsive reading instruction. The teacher candidates provide the elementary students with hands-on, real-life, field-based literacy assessment experiences once a week in the laboratory. Teacher candidates plan and implement reading lessons and conduct weekly assessments. This opportunity offers teacher candidates genuine learning experiences in terms of assessment techniques, data analysis, assessment-driven instruction, learning theories, and reading intervention techniques.

This two-and-a-half-hour literacy assessment course is strategically organized around a consistent and structured weekly schedule. The class time is divided between course content instruction, the laboratory experience, written reflection, debriefing through a Socratic seminar, and planning. The time allocation is outlined in Figure 1.

In class each week, teacher candidates learn about and practice a variety of literacy assessments to aid them in identifying the elementary laboratory students' strengths and weaknesses. This information is then used for teacher candidates to create assessment-driven instruction for the elementary students.

Following the content instruction in the college classroom, teacher candidates participate in a 45-minute Reading and Assessment Laboratory where they administer the assessments addressed in class and provide individualized reading instruction for a striving elementary reader. The laboratory experience situates learning in an authentic context of teaching and learning, enabling teacher candidates to marry theory and practice and to learn in and through practice. Content learning regarding literacy assessments and literacy instructional approaches and activities becomes contextualized and embedded into the ongoing work of the laboratory.

Further, the laboratory setting scaffolds teacher candidates' developing understanding of the relationship between assessment and instruction. While administering these assessments, teacher candidates receive just-in-time support from their professor related to clarifying confusions, modeling procedures, and analyzing results. Teacher candidates appreciate the risk-free, comfortable environment, because it allows them to assume the primary

role of teacher as they work with their students. They can receive instructional recommendations from their instructor and peers that are based on their students' specific needs and are given immediate instructor feedback, when needed, while administering a new literacy assessment. Additionally, they have the ability to listen-in on peers' reading lessons if they need modeling or additional support.

Self-reflections and Socratic seminars.

A time for written and oral reflection follows the laboratory experience. Teacher candidates first reflect in writing on their experience in the Reading and Assessment Laboratory by addressing their performance, their questions about the assessments and instruction, and what they learned about their elementary student. After reflecting through writing, the teacher candidates come together as a learning community to share their reflections within the context of a Socratic seminar. In a Socratic seminar, participants "listen closely to the comments of others, thinking critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others" (Israel, 2002, p. 89). This structure encourages teacher candidates to share their reflections, ask questions, make connections, and analyze their assessment data, creating a professional learning community. Additionally, the laboratory component provides a shared experience for all teacher candidates to ensure this type of dialogue can occur.

The written reflection and reflective discussions in the Socratic seminar become the vehicle for teacher candidates to puzzle through and define their beliefs and practices as related to striving readers, assessment, and assessment-driven literacy activities and approaches. The informal, collaborative discussions during the Socratic seminar make learning a collective endeavor where teacher candidates are learning from one another, capitalizing on the group's existing capabilities and enriching their learning opportunities. In this context, teacher candidates are invited to engage in critical and thoughtful talk about their instructional practices, beliefs, and educational theories. Discussions, situated in the concrete tasks and artifacts of learning, enable teachers to clarify their needs and collaboratively problem solve. These ongoing, reflective discussions encourage teacher candidates to explore and refine their philosophical and pedagogical beliefs. Additionally, they prepare them for the reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching and learning. Literature supports that when teacher candidates are engaged in learning opportunities that are focused on the particulars of teaching, learning, subject matter, and students, they "can deepen [their] knowledge of subject matter and curriculum, refine their instructional repertoire, hone their inquiry skills, and become critical colleagues" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1042).

Benefits of one reading and assessment laboratory.

Teacher candidates taking the Assessing Literacy in Early Childhood Education course in their junior year of the Elementary and Special Education (ELE/SPED) Program at the University of North Georgia participated in a weekly Reading and Assessment Laboratory at one of the elementary schools in the PDC. In the Reading and Assessment Laboratory, the University of North Georgia teacher candidates worked with kindergarten and first grade students, who were selected by their teachers based on literacy needs.

These teacher candidates noted that the combination of interactive teaching methods in the literacy assessment course, authentic teaching opportunities in the laboratory, and debriefing through Socratic seminars positively impacted both their teaching and learning. Specifically, they noted that as they learned about and administered a wide variety of literacy assessments, they gained a meaningful understanding of how to implement literacy assessments and analyze the assessment data to determine responsive paths for instruction. As teacher candidates were provided instruction on data analysis and asked to analyze their students' assessment data, they began to use this information to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Based on this analysis, teacher candidates then began to create targeted, purposeful literacy instruction at the cusp of their students' learning. Through this experience, teacher candidates acknowledged the value of using assessment data to guide their instruction.

The positive impacts of this model are demonstrated through the words of our teacher candidates. One teacher candidate admitted that she initially felt overwhelmed by the responsibility to administer so many different assessments and plan reading instruction in response to these assessments for the laboratory. However, by the end of the course, she said she understood that the assessments narrowed her focus "beautifully," allowing her to teach with purpose. Another teacher candidate also recognized this important relationship between assessment and instruction sharing, "We are actually using our assessment to inform instruction. So we get to see the [student] growth." An additional benefit of this model was acknowledged by one of the teacher candidates, who stated, "Not only was my student's confidence boosted [as a result of the laboratory], but it has also boosted me"… "and a lightbulb went off and I realized I can do this [create assessment-driven instruction]." Similarly, other teacher candidates admitted feeling more prepared and knowledgeable in their field placements, as a result of this experience.

One classroom teacher, who is a graduate of the University of North Georgia teacher education program, recognized the significance of the laboratory for teacher candidates, as well as the elementary students. He shared the following reflection:

I feel like this is a very UNIQUE opportunity because the model is not one of pushing in and simply observing, but it allows the interns [teacher candidates] to pull the student away and gather individualized data. From this data, it allows them to develop a comprehensive plan tied to all ELA [English/Language Arts] standards of kindergarten. The focus of reading lets the interns see the foundational needs/strategies that are essential to this developmental stage. They consistently had the students engaged, giving them a differentiated lesson that they may not get on a weekly basis, since they are always in a group setting. The lab really gives them an insight into how reading is built from the ground up.

This unique time with another student is so valuable and I know this from experience! (Email, May 19, 2017)

As this quotation reveals, teacher candidates do not just master the course content through the laboratory experience, but they develop a deeper understanding of reading development, assessment-driven instruction, and effective instructional practices. Consequently, they establish a greater sense of their philosophical and pedagogical beliefs.

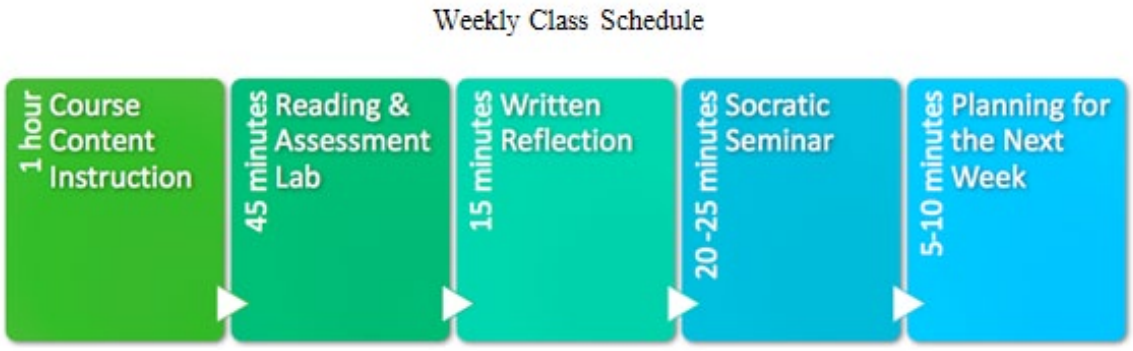
Elementary students also benefit from individualized and responsive reading instruction during the Reading and Assessment Laboratory. Since teacher candidates prepare weekly lesson plans based on the state standards, elementary students are given opportunities to practice rereading familiar books, participate in hands-on word work activities, and experience read alouds or guided reading of new books. These literacy-focused instructional activities provide students with multiple, scaffolded learning opportunities. Considering these lessons are customized to each individual student's strengths and weaknesses, based on the results of previously administered literacy assessments, each student receives literacy instruction at the cusp of their learning.

Conclusions

Implementing a laboratory experience with elementary students in conjunction with university coursework provides a more constructivist approach to training teacher candidates than most university courses typically afford (Andrew, 2007). Rather than sitting in a lecture, the students apply what they are learning about in their coursework to working with elementary students and then engage in individual written reflection, as well as discussions with their peers about their experiences through the Socratic seminar. Together, they can problem-solve and brainstorm ideas about their next steps. In doing so, the teacher candidates are able to refine their craft, adapting their instructional decisions to meet the needs of the students they work with in the laboratory. These more purposeful and meaningful learning experiences enable teacher candidates to engage in situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and to more effectively make connections between theory and praxis, leading to more significant shifts in their beliefs and practices.

Laboratory experiences integrated into teacher education coursework are a positive example of the powerful learning opportunities that can occur for teacher candidates and elementary school students, as a result of the PDC model. The PDS and PDC models allow for these types of collaborations to occur. Laboratory experiences can become a meaningful part of teacher education courses, contextualizing and embedding course content in practical teaching experiences and allowing teacher candidates to refine their philosophical and pedagogical beliefs. Replacing more traditional, lecture-oriented instructional approaches with more practice-based methodologies, such as laboratories, can provide a means to authentic, practical learning experiences for teacher candidates. At the same time, elementary students are provided the opportunity to receive assessment-driven, individualized instruction that meets their needs. Consequently, teacher candidates and elementary students benefit from the interactions involved in the laboratories. The marriage of the laboratory experience, interactive teaching methods, and debriefing through Socratic seminar aims to alleviate the concerns regarding quality teacher education (Levine, 2006; Rust, 2010) and to ensure teacher candidates leave their undergraduate education programs feeling more prepared.

Figure 1



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Facilitating Teachers' Appreciation and Use of Controversial Picture Books

Francesca Pomerantz

Abstract

As a professor who teaches graduate courses in children's literature, I am concerned about teachers' self-censorship and limited use of high quality children's books that contain potentially controversial material. The rejection of what Leland, Lewison and Harste (2013) called "risky books" (p. 162) is problematic because "risky books" often deal with social and moral issues, broadening children's views of the world and presenting stories that require and help develop complex, inferential thinking. Voelker (2013) identified several factors that can help pre-service teachers think critically and expansively about children's books, including introducing them to literary criticism to help them identify quality in children's literature and defend their selections, as well as the use of small discussion groups to surface a variety of viewpoints. This article explains the challenges in presenting "risky" books to teachers and then presents a specific model for small group discussion that facilitated teachers' appreciation and use of such books.

Keywords: *children's literature, picture books, censorship, literature circles, adult learning*

The Challenges

Understandably, many teachers "choose not to use certain books for fear that these texts will create controversies leading to confrontations with parents, the members of the wider community, or school administrators" (Freedman & Johnson, 2001, p. 357). Pre-course surveys indicated my students, who are mostly in-service elementary school teachers or teaching assistants, did not feel confident about knowing what to do if challenged. This fear is well-founded given the highly publicized controversies ignited by the inclusion of controversial books in the school curriculum. For example, *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005) and *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), critically acclaimed picture books based on true stories, have been targeted for censorship due to concerns about depictions of homosexuality and violence. *And Tango Makes Three*, in which two male penguins take care of an orphan baby penguin at the Central Park Zoo, has been present on the American Library Association's Top Ten Challenged Book List seven times since it was first published. In March 2013, the *New York Post* ran a story entitled "New York approves war-oriented reading textbooks for third grade classrooms" in which *The Librarian of Basra's* inclusion on a recommended book list was described as highly inappropriate. This picture book is about a courageous Iraqi librarian who saved the books in Basra during the bombing of her city, but the misleading and alarmist opening line of the article stated "Tales of war, bombs and abduction – coming to a third grade classroom near you" (New York Post, 2013).

My experiences teaching pre-service and in-service teachers confirm Wollman-Bonilla's (1998) findings from almost two decades ago that some teachers object to texts they think might frighten children "by introducing them to things they don't or shouldn't know about" (p. 289). For example, like the teachers in Wollman-Bonilla's classes, my students have expressed concerns about the picture book *Tar Beach* (Ringgold, 1991) on the grounds that talking about poverty and racial discrimination might be too upsetting. A student wrote on her pre-course survey: "I avoid books with controversial issues or books that seem inappropriate. I want to avoid issues with parents." Violence, religion, and depictions of drug/alcohol use seemed especially risky to my students. Another student wrote:

> I tend to avoid books with any drug or alcohol use. An example can be seen… when I was substituting for another fourth grade teacher who had left an interactive read-aloud book about Babe Ruth- one specific chapter in this book focused on his alcohol addiction, which I felt was not appropriate to share with fourth graders so I skipped this chapter.

Some teachers are also uncomfortable with books that challenge an exclusively positive sense of national identity. For example, one teacher in my class rejected The *Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) because the unidentified military personnel depicted could be U.S. soldiers and children might conclude that U.S. soldiers bombed Iraq. Apparently, she did not want her students to grapple with this fact, and thereby rejected a book that meets all of the selection criteria outlined by Al-Hazza and Boucher (2008) in their article about high quality literature portraying Arabs or Arab-Americans. Al-Hazza and Boucher (2008) provided useful criteria to help teachers identify and select literature with Arab and Arab-American characters that avoid stereotypes and build cultural understanding. They included *The Librarian of Basra* on their suggested book list; however, if teachers consider books like *The Librarian of Basra* to be too controversial, the use of such recommended books in the classroom will remain elusive.

Adult Learning and Structured Discussions

The specific question guiding this inquiry was: How could I move teachers beyond their initial and narrow reactions to controversial books? Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997), discussion protocols (Ippolito & Pomerantz, 2013-2014; Pomerantz & Ippolito, 2015) and literature circles (Daniels, 1994; 2002) offered some ideas. Mezirow (1997) explained, "Adults have acquired a coherent

body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world...They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings " (p. 5). He theorized that adults "transform...frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based "(p. 7). In order to support this transformation and critical reflection, educators need to provide adult learners with opportunities to use "their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). Dialogue is the key to this transformative process since "learning is a social process, and discourse... central to making meaning" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10).

Protocols are structured discussions with guidelines for dialogue that may, when implemented well, facilitate the discourse so integral to adult learning. There are protocols for all types of conversations, such as teachers looking at data to inform instruction or engaging a group of teachers in discussing an instructional dilemma (for more information about protocols see http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/). Protocols "allow professionals to have meaningful, insightful discussions about challenging topics...without becoming too emotional, judgmental, or overbearing in terms of participation"(Ippolito & Pomerantz, 2013-2014, p. 49). The guidelines for dialogue encourage equal participation, listening, and the development of mutual understanding. According to Fahey and Ippolito (2015) "Protocols are the structures that help educators try on different ideas, examine assumptions, ask unsettling questions, and embrace discomfort in a way that is safe and manageable" (p. 3).

In order to consider the topic of controversial picture books from a variety of perspectives and encourage dialogue that would facilitate appreciation and use of the books, I reframed literature circle roles, originally conceived of by Daniels (1994, 2002) as the protocol for small group discussions. To assist teachers in implementing literature circles, Daniels created role sheets (Questioner, Illustrator, Word Wizard, Literary Luminary and Connector) to serve as a conversational scaffold. Thein, Guise and Sloan (2011) applied Daniels literature circle model in a 10th grade classroom "as forums for engaging students in discussion of multicultural or political texts" (p. 15). Their findings informed the development of the literature circle model implemented in my course. They concluded:

> If teachers choose to enact literature circles in their purest form - with no teacher interference and free choice of topics for discussion - then students cannot be expected to take up any specific stances or perspectives toward texts. Moreover, if teachers want students to move beyond initial personal responses to a text, a typical literature circle is not likely an appropriate space for this work. (p. 22)

Instead, Thein, Guise and Sloan (2011) proposed modifying the literature circle roles with the purpose – critical literacy – in mind and suggested alternative role descriptions and tasks, such as "stereotype tracker" and "critical lens wearer" (p. 22).

Method

With Thein, Guise and Sloan's (2011) advice in mind to modify literature circle roles with the purpose of the learning in mind, I created roles specific to the discussion of controversial picture books. Assumptions about child development often shape teachers' thinking about "risky" texts and overwhelm considerations of literary quality or curricular opportunities; therefore, the roles included "child development theorist," "literary critic" and "curriculum coordinator" to help participants evaluate and appreciate aspects of the texts they might not initially perceive or value. A "discussion director" role was also included to facilitate dialogue and participation. Each role with its rationale is described in the section that follows.

The Discussion Director developed questions to discuss with the group, building on their own initial responses, but also the question-posing ideas of Fisher and Frey (2012) and Harste (2014). Harste stated that "text analysts not only gain personal and social meanings from texts but also examine how the text is trying to position them" (p. 95). For example, suggested text analysis questions include "whose voices are represented and whose are missing in this text?" and "what did the author want me to believe after reading the text?" (p. 95). Fisher and Frey (2012) emphasized text-focused questions involving making inferences, identifying the author's purpose, and presenting evidence-based opinions. These types of questions can help readers move beyond negative or fearful reactions when discussing controversial books and scaffold thinking to higher levels of analysis readers might not achieve on their own.

The Child Development Theorist used the "Books for Ages and Stages" guide in Kiefer and Tyson (2014, pp. 39-48) to make recommendations regarding the approximate age/grade level audience for these books. This guide lists characteristics of specific age groups and the implications. For example, one of the characteristics of eight and nine-year-olds is that they are "developing standards of right and wrong" and beginning to "see viewpoints of others" (p. 44). The implications are that books shared with this age group should encourage discussion of multiple perspectives, standards for right and wrong and the nuances and complexities in determining right and wrong. Additionally, the Child Development Theorist consulted a child development text for child development theories to provide support for their recommendations. Grounding recommendations in child development theory is a way to move readers beyond basing all conclusions about a book on personal assumptions about child development.

The Literary Critic evaluated the book based on literary and artistic qualities with reference to the evaluation criteria in the course text (Kiefer & Tyson, 2014). The Critic researched why the book won awards, and, depending upon the book, read articles specific to evaluating literature with

African-American and Arab or Arab-American characters (Gray, 2009; Al-Hazza & Boucher, 2008). *The Curriculum Coordinator* researched how the book might relate to a teacher's curriculum and state frameworks. Additionally, the Curriculum Coordinator investigated and explained why the book is controversial or challenging for teachers and how teachers might respond if challenged. Keifer & Tyson's (2014) Ten-Point Model for Teaching Controversial Issues, originally developed by Susan Jones of Educators for Social Responsibility, was a resource for thinking about how discussion of the book could be framed in a classroom. The approach outlined in the Ten-Point Model takes the burden off teachers to have all the answers when discussing challenging material. For example,

> …students begin by pooling what they know and what they think they know about an issue. They also develop a list of questions. This is followed by an information-gathering period during which students search for answers to the questions…using information they have collected, students correct any misinformation previously listed and develop more questions. This process continues until some type of culminating activity emerges from the information (p. 21).

In a follow-up course assignment after the picture book discussion, course participants selected and read a controversial children's book from the American Library Association's list of banned and challenged books and wrote a rationale defending the book's inclusion in the classroom library. The rationale included many of the same components as the literature circle discussions, such as referencing child development theories, making connections to curriculum standards and analyzing literary quality.

To carry out the discussions, students were divided into literature circle groups and each group read one challenging children's picture book. In addition to *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005) and *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), texts included *Patrol* (Myers, 2002) and *The Man who Walked between the Towers* (Gerstein, 2003). The "risky" subjects depicted in these books are the Vietnam War (*Patrol*) and breaking the law to tightrope walk between the Twin Towers, including a brief mention of the Towers' destruction on September 11, 2001 (*The Man Who Walked between the Towers*). Students completed reflections after the discussion in response to the following question: How did the discussion influence your thinking about the assigned picture book? They also completed pre-and post-course surveys about their beliefs related to selecting and using children's literature adapted from Voelker (2013). The adapted survey used a 5-point Likert Scale and 15 statements, such as "I would not read or provide books to children in which the characters or author appear to criticize the United States," "I would not read or provide books to children depicting war or violence" and "I would not read or provide books to children in which the characters are gay." Students rated their responses "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "No Opinion," "Agree," or "Strongly Agree." Additionally, the pre-course survey had 5 open-ended questions, such as "What types of books do you avoid for your classroom?" and "What types of books do you seek out for your classroom?" Data collection occurred in two course sections with a total of 21 participants. Data analysis consisted of 1) comparing participants' responses on their pre and post-course surveys to note any shifts in thinking and 2) reading and re-reading for patterns across the post-discussion responses.

Results

According to the surveys, all participants completed the course with a new confidence in recognizing quality literature and knowing what to do if challenged. Whereas all of the students initially expressed comfort with books depicting same sex parents, several changed their minds about other topics and indicated they would now share books that a) could be construed as critical of the U.S., b) depicted characters who drank alcohol, c) contained true stories presenting real life struggles and challenges, and d) depicted war. Several patterns emerged in the post-discussion responses: Participants increased their appreciation of stories that initially seemed controversial because they noticed their book's literary and artistic merit initially obscured by their concerns, and/or perceived learning opportunities offered by their book they had not considered prior to discussion.

Literary and Artistic Merit

Increased appreciation of, as well as comfort and confidence with the texts, were strongly connected to new considerations of literary merit and themes surfaced by the discussion. Some students, initially put off by the subject matter of their books, did not consider or appreciate the themes or literary qualities of the books prior to the discussions. One student wrote about Patrol: "I think my opinion was fogged by the content at first, and I am now more clearly able to notice the strong literary qualities." Another student wrote:

> By having this discussion, I was able to see more of the central message. When I first read this book [*The Librarian of Basra*], I was very intimidated by the war and violence aspect. I generally shy away from these types of books/themes but I feel more comfortable now. My main fear was how my children would react. I now know it is less about the war and more about Alia's heroic actions.

Similarly, other students wrote the following about *The Librarian of Basra* and attributed their changed appreciation of the book to the discussion:

The discussion influenced my thinking about the book

in many ways. The questions the discussion director presented opened my eyes to just how many themes are in this book. The big one is showing Alia as a hero. I look forward to using this book as a read aloud and/or in my reading group. Even though this book could be seen as controversial, I believe there is so much learning to be done and so much teaching.

> Prior to reading this book [The Librarian of Basra], I never would have dreamed of talking about the war in the Middle East with my students. However, now, in reflecting on this book, I can confidently say that I would feel very comfortable sharing this book with my students. It addresses a topic (the conflict in the Middle East) in a manageable/understandable way for children to begin to become familiar with this topic...ultimately, I am thankful to have the opportunity to discuss this book in a literature circle because it helped show me that I can talk about the conflict in the Middle East with my students and I should not shy away from this topic.

Another student commented on her increased comfort and confidence, as well as very specific information about how she would approach using *And Tango Makes Three* influenced by The Ten-Point Model for Teaching Controversial Issues (Kiefer & Tyson, 2014):

> Our literature discussion helped me to gain insight about how to address a controversial book with students and families. Some people in my group mentioned educating parents and opening up a dialogue with them before introducing the book [*And Tango Makes Three*]. I also thought it was a great idea to introduce the book with a question. For example, what is a family? This way students can ask questions and research answers. With these strategies for dealing with controversy in mind, I would definitely use this book in my classroom. Previously I was hesitant, but I now feel like I have some good ideas in place for addressing controversy.

Learning Opportunities

The literature circle discussion also enhanced participants' abilities to recognize the learning opportunities afforded by the books. For example, one student saw many more curriculum connections after the discussion. She wrote:

> Our discussion made me think more positively about this book [*Patrol*] in many ways. First of all, it was interesting to talk about all of the curriculum connections that were introduced, and then built upon throughout the discussion. Most evidently, there is a clear connection to U.S. history and the Vietnam War. But beyond that, we drew connections to geography...and ELA standards [such as] descriptive language [and] point of view. After our literature circle, I see many more uses for this book than I did when I read it independently.

Another student explained:

> The discussion changed my thinking about *The Man Who Walked between the Towers* because it brought to light the many ways this book could promote discussion in the classroom, including determining right from wrong, having consequences for your actions and more. Personally, I think the class discusion on the book helped me see how the book can be used in many different ways, not just focusing on the 9/11 attack.

In addition to changing students' perceptions of the books, the discussions increased the use of the books in elementary school classrooms. For example, one participant (a second grade teacher) wrote:

> After taking this class I realized that some of my favorite books to read to students are the "controversial" ones. I think they have so much value and so much to give to young readers that it is a shame to shelter them from it. And Tango Makes Three was one of my favorite books I read in this class and I read it to my second graders. Every student loved it and wanted me to read it again, they also had very valuable ideas to add and it opened up a great discussion.

Discussion

Some teachers might underestimate children's abilities and interest in "risky" texts such as the ones used in the literature circle discussions. However, many children want to talk about complex issues, "to dig deeper and talk about important real life" concerns (Leland, Lewison & Harste, p. 162). Helping teachers overcome their fear of books that initially feel risky is an important step towards putting high quality literature front and center in schools and children's lives. As one teacher explained on her survey at the end of the course:

> I believe it is important for students to have access to books that present the characters with real life challenges and emotional obstacles, as students can learn

> a great deal through vicariously experiencing life through literary characters. Topics such as gay marriage, alcohol, poverty, death, war, bullying and others that are often considered controversial, can give students much insight into the world. Students should be given opportunities to explore these difficult subjects with proper guidance and care from teachers. Students are not as "sheltered" as we would like to think and these topics need to be addressed in the classroom if students are to really understand them. In addition, students need to have opportunities to explore literature from other countries and cultures in order to become global citizens and develop respect and a connection with people of diverse cultures and ethnicities.

We are bombarded with stories of political controversy and polarization, terroism, racism and war on an almost daily basis. Controversial books such as the ones described in this paper are perhaps needed more than ever to break down cultural barriers, replace stereotypes with deeper understanding of the lives of others, surface children's questions and concerns, and create empathy and connection. So far my students have used these books in their classrooms without reported incident. Although they may experience future controversy, these teachers are now better prepared to use high quality controversial children's books for the benefit of their students and to weather any potential storms that may arise.

The literature circle roles described in this article proved to be an effective scaffold for learning and dialogue as defined by Mezirow (1997):

> Effective discourse depends on how well the educator can create a situation in which those participating have full information; are free from coercion; have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments); become critically reflective of assumptions; are empathic and open to other perspectives; are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view; and can make a tentative best judgment to guide action (p. 10).

The literature circles were spaces in which participants collectively created a richer source of knowledge about the books, had opportunities to ask questions, evaluate the evidence presented, change perspective and form a decision about the book. The literature circle roles helped to focus the discussion, enabling participants to see beyond their initial response and broaden their thinking. Literature is one of the most powerful tools we have as teachers to engage children in considering social issues, alternate viewpoints, different cultures, and the range of human experience. Structured literature discussions in university children's literature or literacy pedagogy courses offer a promising and potentially powerful tool to engage teachers in considering and using the full range of available quality literature.

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Improving Reading Comprehension Skills of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Supplemental Guide for Early Childhood Educators in Inclusive Settings

Neal Nghia Nguyen, William Garnett, Patrick Leytham, and Jeff Gelfer

Abstract

National data trends illustrate more students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are provided academic and behavioral services in the inclusive general education environment. Reading is a unique skill in which some young students with ASD perform at or above their typically developing peers. However, as the curriculum shifts from decoding to advanced comprehension, these same students with ASD begin to struggle. One probable reason for this hindrance might be due to the perspective of Theory of Mind and the two cognitive deficits such as Weak Central Coherence and Executive Functioning. This article provides four suggested instructional practices or mini lessons as a supplemental guide that an early childhood educator can implement in a one-on-one type of instruction within an inclusive setting to address these above deficits and ameliorate the comprehension abilities of students with ASD. Lastly, directions for future empirical studies to validate the above four suggested instructional practices are briefly discussed.

Keywords: *reading comprehension for ASD, reading mini-lessons for ASD, priming with visual supports, pre-teach vocabulary, graphic organizer*

Pause and Ponder

- How does each of the two cognitive deficits (*Weak Central Coherence, Executive Functioning*) and the perspective of Theory of Mind influence the way that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) comprehend text at a higher-order level (e.g., access and build background knowledge, making connection to the text, and summarizing/generating main ideas of the text)?
- How do early childhood educators use mini lessons as their day-to-day effective instructional practices in a one-on-one setting within an inclusive general education classroom or a resource setting to assist students with ASD?

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized as a neurological disorder with deficits in social skills, communicative ability, and restricted and repetitive interests (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2015), the prevalence of children diagnosed with ASD has escalated to 1 out of every 68. One outcome of this increase is the number of children with ASD ages 3-5 receiving intensive early intervention services (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007, 2012). For the past decade, the rates of ASD diagnosis proliferated in the United States and Canada (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, Thomson, 2014; Office of Special Education Programs, 2007, 2012). Moreover, the number of students age 6-11 in the U.S with ASD receiving special education services in the general education environment increased from 37.93% in 2007 to 41.30% in 2012 while services in the self-contained environment decreased from 38.11% to 36.14% over the same time.

Some students with ASD demonstrate commensurate reading profiles with their typical peers up until about the age of 8 (Nation, Clarke, Wright, & Williams, 2006; Whalon & Hart, 2011b). In their findings, Newman and colleagues (2007) suggested that children with ASD and hyperlexia surpass their typically developing peers in sight word recognition, phonemic awareness, and phonics skills in the early years. It is critical, however, for educators to understand that proficient ability to decode in the early years might not be an adequate predictor of reading comprehension ability in later years (Nation et al., 2006). As students with ASD progress in the reading curriculum, specifically the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the instruction shifts from answering literal questions about the text and retelling the events of a story to higher-order thinking skills such as accessing and building background knowledge, generating main ideas, and determining cause/effect relationships (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Roberts (2013) accentuated reading comprehension as a covert task (i.e., students understand the texts within their minds). Thus, educators ought to consider daily instructional practices that enable them to examine, overtly, the equivalent levels of reading comprehension and the use of prior knowledge to demonstrate thorough understanding of texts (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013). Educators can therefore use the early grades when students with ASD are ahead in their reading abilities to teach advanced comprehension

skills.

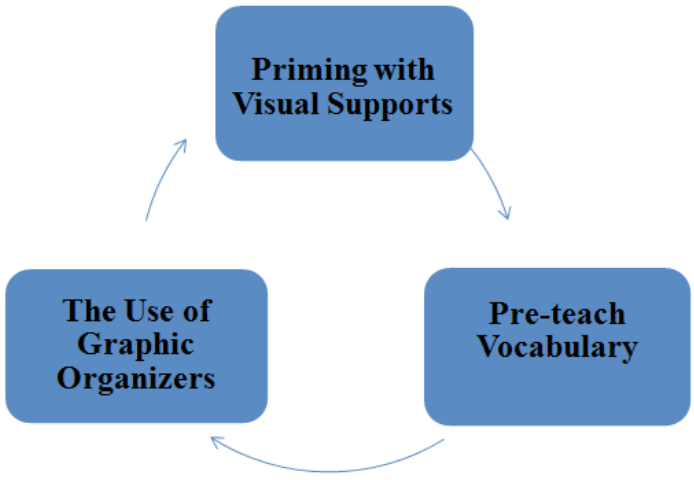
Given the various academic profile of students with ASD, comprehension is one pertinent building block of effective reading instruction that is problematic to acquire (Chiang & Lin, 2007; Nation et al., 2006; Whalon & Hart, 2011a, 2011b). Of other cognitive factors that affect the comprehension deficits for students with ASD (e.g., communicative output, language processing, repetitive behavior), the above difficulty in reading comprehension for students with ASD may be affected by: (a) Theory of Mind, (b) Weak Central Coherence, and (c) Executive Functioning (Gately, 2008; Williamson, Carnahan, & Jacobs, 2012). Theory of Mind (ToM) is defined as the ability to understand others' point of view (Frith, 2012). From a Theory of Mind (ToM) perspective, students with ASD may find it difficult to understand a character's point of view, understand that the author may have a different perspective from theirs, and may not be able to make inferences or use context to make predictions. Weak Central Coherence (WCC) refers to the inability to bring details together into a whole idea or concept (Williamson, Carnahan, & Jacobs, 2012). Weak Central Coherence deficits might impact the students' ability to summarize or identify the main idea of an event (Happe & Frith, 2006; May, Rinehart, Wilding, & Cornish, 2013; Williamson et al., 2012). Finally, Executive Functioning (EF) is defined as the process of organizing, planning, and monitoring progress with a situation (Carnahan, Williamson, & Christman, 2011). Students with ASD may exhibit EF deficits as they try to create sequences of events, access and make connections to prior knowledge, and create mental images of the text being read (Carnahan et al., 2011).

As previous early childhood and special educators, we know and aware of (1) the rote nature of some instructional practices for students with disabilities, and (2) the prominence to assist educators in identifying and selecting appropriate instructional practices to improve the overall comprehension abilities of students with ASD. This consolidated knowledge of students with ASD (increasing participation in the general education environment, the pressing need to teach advanced comprehension skills in the early grades, the three main cognitive deficits) will assist educators in recognizing and selecting appropriate instructional practices to improve the overall comprehension abilities of students with ASD. While some of the suggested instructional practices in this article are standard practices, it is pertinent for an educator to follow the sequences in skill acquisition for these students (See Tables 1-3). Additionally, it is critical and worthwhile for educators to examine and consider the following items prior to the actual implementation of each of the suggested mini lessons: (1) the current sufficient reading/language skills that children with ASD are expected to have before the implementation of the following mini lessons, (2) the appropriate selection of books for each individual student with ASD based on his/her current reading/language level or skill, and (3) the various cognitive factors and levels of their interactions with students with ASD (i.e., not just the abstract engagement in teacher-directed of sequential lessons or mini lessons with isolated text and/or visual supports). While future empirical studies are indispensable to substantiate the impact of the following instructional strategies on reading comprehension, the authors of this article thought that it might be helpful for educators of young children with ASD to begin or attempt to use these evidence-based strategies in their classrooms. The purpose of this article is to provide early childhood educators four suggested instructional practices that can be implemented as supplemental mini lessons in a one-on-one inclusive setting.

Individualized or One-on-One Mini-Lessons

According to the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, all students in grades K-5 are expected to (a) understand key ideas and details, (b) understand craft and structure of text, (c) integrate knowledge and ideas, and (d) improve their range and level of text complexity (2010). The following instructional practices focus on the first set of anchor standards (understanding key ideas and details) and is presented in the form of mini lessons that educators can implement in a one-on-one type of instruction in the inclusive learning environments. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of a few of the various sequential instructional practices to teach reading comprehension to students with ASD.

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Early Childhood Educators to Use Mini-Lessons to Enhance Reading Comprehension for students with ASD



Reading comprehension is the process of making connections between students' prior knowledge and new information from the text, become aware of the thinking process during daily reading, and actively react to reading texts (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013; Rasinski & Padak, 2008). While typically developing students may be able to associate their background knowledge to the text being read, students with ASD may encounter difficulties due to their restricted and repetitive behaviors or interests (RRBs) (Harrop, 2015; Kirby, Boyd, Williams, Faldowski, & Baranek, 2017; Mancil & Pearl, 2008). One possible approach to expand these restricted interests is to implement the following standard instructional practices to: (a) help the students access and build their background knowledge on the text to be read, (b) help the students create their own mental images, and (c) help them make connections to their background knowledge.

From a WCC perspective, students with ASD may encounter difficulty accessing and building background knowledge. The first two instructional practices that might be helpful for students with ASD access and build upon background knowledge is (1) priming (Williamson & Carnahan, 2010) with visual supports (Hume, 2013) and (2) pre-teach vocabulary. During the first instructional practice (i.e., priming), the educator pre-reads the text with the student and identifies two to three concepts/details (Additional examples or details of this first instructional practice are provided in Table 1) that need to be learned from the text (e.g., settings, events, solutions, problems, characters). Next, the educator draws (See Figures 2 and 3) or creates an image of each detail (A duck and a fish-characters of the story) on two separate index cards (with the help of the student). Then, while in the individualized or one-one-one setting, each index card is presented to the student such as, "This is a duck Joe. Touch the duck." (i.e., primarily for students with language delays or non-verbal) or "This is a duck. Say out loud the word duck." (i.e., for students with sufficient reading/language ability and repeat the process for the index card with the fish with student). Each student is reinforced for completing the command and this process is repeated until consistent responding is established. Once the first detail index card is learned (the duck), the next detail index card (the fish) is presented to the student as a means of teaching him/her to discriminate between the already learned detail and the new detail. The learned index card is placed closer to the student while the new index card is placed farther away and the entire process starts over again. As each student demonstrates success with identifying the correct detail, the educator moves the new index card closer to the student and repeats the process until the student can successfully identify the correct details (repeat the above process for other details such as settings, events, solutions, and problems). As the educator can assist the student to access and build upon their background knowledge, the student with ASD is likely to help himself or herself to conquer the existing WCC deficits by acquiring the ability to recognize details of both words and images from the reading texts. Table 1 shows a number of sequences that an educator can teach the student with ASD to access and build upon his/her background knowledge.

Figure 2. An example of a picture on an index card created by the student with the teacher's assistance during "Priming"

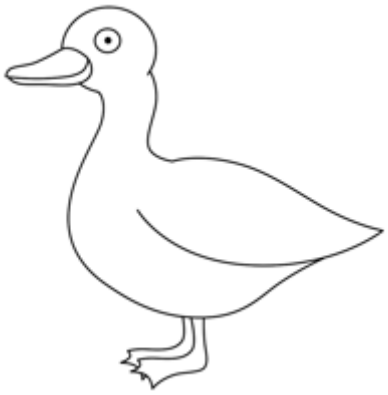


Figure 3. An example of a second picture on an index card created by the student with the teacher's assistance during "Priming"

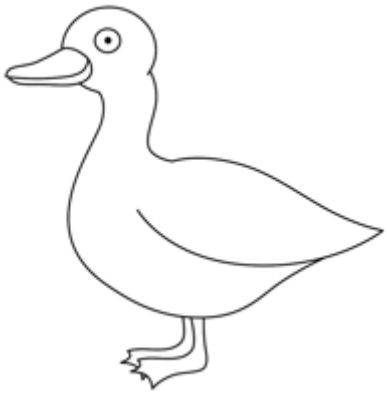
Table 1
Access and Build Upon Background Knowledge for Students with ASD in an Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom

Sequence	Teacher	Student
1	Priming with visual supports: (Hume, 2013; Williamson & Carnahan, 2010) Pre-reads text and identifies key concepts/ details. "Joe, who are the characters in the story (character)?", "Where does this story take place (setting)?", "What are some of things that happened in the story (events)?", "Did the baby duck get lost from her Mom (problem)?", "What do you think Joe? How did the mother duck find her lost baby (solution)?".	Reads with the educator during a shared-reading to choose two or more concepts/details from the story. Respond to the educators' questions or brief discussions (prompted and encouraged by the educator).
2	Draws or creates images of concepts/ details on index cards. "Help me draw a duck and a fish, Joe".	Helps the educator draw the pictures of a duck and a fish (characters) on 2 separate index cards.
3	Presents first index card to the student and states: "This is a duck Joe. Touch the duck" and/or "Say out loud the word duck".	Touches index card (e.g. touches the duck) or say out loud the word 'duck' and is reinforced. (May need to be repeated until response is consistent).
4	Introduces new index card to the student and states: This is a fish. Touch the fish Joe" and/ or "Say out loud the word fish".	Touches the correct second index card (e.g. touches the fish) or say out loud the word 'fish' and is reinforced.
5	Places learned index card (e.g. duck) close to student, and new index card (e.g. fish) away from student and states: "Touch the duck again Joe" and/or "say out loud the word duck again".	Touches the correct or learned index card (e.g. touches the duck) again and/or say out loud the word 'duck' and is reinforced.
6	Moves new index card closer to student and states: "Now touch the fish and/or "say out loud the word fish, Joe."	Touches the correct new index card (e.g. touches the fish) or say out loud the word 'fish' and is reinforced.
7	Repeats process until new index card (fish) is next to learned index card (duck).	
8	Introduces new index cards for (settings, events, solutions, and problem) and repeats steps 1 through 7 with student with the above different concept or details	

Note. Adapted from Hume, 2013; Williamson & Carnahan, 2010.

The second instructional practice is to pre-teach vocabulary (Koppenhaver, 2010) using a picture-to-text matching strategy (Fossett & Mirenda, 2006). First, the educator writes or prints on index cards the words (See Figures 4 and 5) of the details taught during the above priming with visual supports lesson (with the help of the student). For instance, if the picture on the index card were a duck, the corresponding text index card would have the word "duck" written/typed on it. Next, the educator teaches the student to identify the text using the same procedure as outlined in the priming lesson. The educator then creates a series of additional index card(s) (See Figure 6) that has the two to three details taught using the priming with visual supports lesson printed on the left-hand side of the page with the matching vocabulary words on the right-hand side (with the help of the student). Each new index card contains the same pictures and words, but the order in which they are presented is varied. Once the student can identify the vocabulary words, the educator presents the index cards to the student and says, "Draw a line to match the picture with the word." Reinforcement can be provided after each successful match, and this process is repeated until the student is able to correctly match the pictures with the vocabulary words for any additional details of the stories (e.g., settings, events, problems, solutions) besides the presented characters (duck and fish). Priming the students' background knowledge and pre-teaching key vocabulary will most likely remediate the WCC deficits exhibited by students with ASD as key details of the text are taught (See Table 2 below).

Figure 4. An example of a picture with a word on an index card created by the student with the teacher's assistance during "Pre-teach Vocabulary"



DUCK

Figure 5. An example of a second picture with a word on an index card created by the student with the teacher's assistance during "Pre-teach Vocabulary"

FISH

Figure 6. An example of pictures with words on an index card created by the student with the teacher's assistance during "Picture-to-text matching"

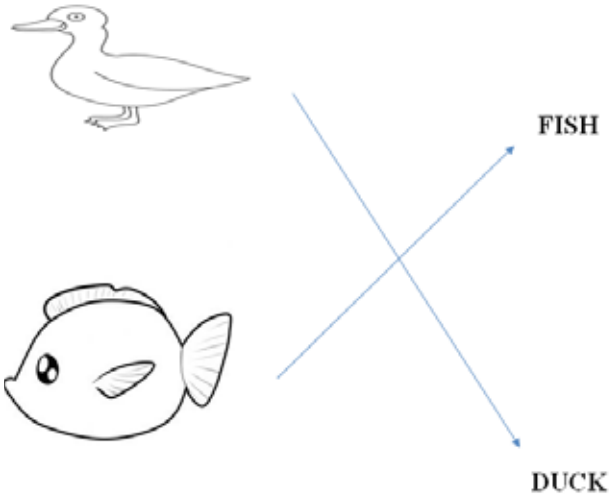


Table 2

Pre-teach Vocabulary for Students with ASD in an Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom

Sequence	Teacher	Student
1	Pre-teach vocabulary (Koppenhaver, 2010) using a picture-to-text matching strategy (Fossett & Mirenda, 2006). Writes/prints words for learned images from previous lesson on index cards. "Joe, it is time for us to work on writing words". Creates index cards where the learned images of details/concepts are on the left side and the word for each learned image of the detail/concept is on the right side. The images and words should be varied and be placed in a different order than previously presented.	Helps teacher write/print words on index cards (from the first instructional practice "priming").
2	Presents first index card to the student and states: "This is the word duck. Touch the word duck" and/or "Say out loud the word duck".	Touches index card (e.g. touches index card with the word 'duck' on it) and/or say out loud the word 'duck' and is reinforced.
3	Introduces the second index card to the student and states: This is the word fish. Touch the word fish" and/or "Say out loud the word 'fish".	Touches index card (e.g. touches index card with the word 'fish' on it) and/or say out loud the word 'fish' again and is reinforced.
4	Places learned index card (e.g. duck) close to student, and new index card (e.g. fish) away from student and states: "Touch the word duck" and/or "Say out loud the word duck again Joe".	Touches index card (e.g. touches index card with the word 'duck' on it) and/or say out loud the word 'duck' again and is reinforced.
5	Moves the second index card closer to student and states: "Touch the word fish" and/or "Say out loud the word fish again Joe".	Touches index card (e.g. touches index card with the word 'fish' on it) and/or say out loud the word 'fish' and is reinforced.
6	Repeats process until new index card (fish) is next to learned index card (duck)	
7	Pre-teach vocabulary (Koppenhaver, 2010) using a picture-to-text matching strategy (Fossett & Mirenda, 2006). After all words have been learned, presents index cards to student and states: "Okay Joe, now draw a line to match the picture with each of the words".	Student draws a line from image on the left of the index card(s) to the corresponding word(s) on the right of the index cards and is reinforced for correctly matching the image(s) to the corresponding word(s).
8	Introduces new index cards for (settings, events, solutions, and problems) and repeats steps 1 through 7 with student with the above different concepts or details	

Note. Adapted from Fossett & Mirenda, 2006; Koppenhaver, 2010

After conducting the first two mini-lessons or instructional practices, the next step is reading the text with the student. The main objective during this phase of instruction is to help the student with ASD make connections to the text, "to become critical, curious, strategic readers" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013, p. 434). Making connections to the text can be accomplished by connecting text-to-self (TS), text-to-text (TT), or text-to-world (TW). A student with ASD may have difficulty with all three ways to make connections due to his/her existing WCC and EF deficits discussed earlier (Happe & Frith, 2006; May et al., 2013).

A third instructional practice that can address all three connections (TS, TT, TW) is the use of a graphic organizer. A graphic organizer, sometimes referred to as a story map, is an effective visual representation (display, diagram, or outline) of a story structure or concept being studied and shows the relationship between information (Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002; Fisher & Schumaker, 1995; Sam & Rajan, 2013; Whalon, Hanline, & Woods, 2007). One known evidence-based strategy to proliferate the ability to "make connections from text" is to generate graphic organizers (Stringfield, Luscre, & Gast, 2011). Graphic organizers have been used to teach students with ASD to comprehend social studies content (Schenning, Knight, & Spooner, 2013; Zakas, Browder, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Heafner, 2013), science content (Knight, Spooner, & Browder, 2013), and to improve reading scores for students with ASD (Stringfield, Luscre, & Gast, 2011). To implement this third mini lesson, the educator would first select the graphic that matches the book being read. Continuing the example from the first two mini-lessons, the student is reading a fiction book where one of the characters is a duck. Using a Venn Diagram, the pictures and/or words (e.g., duck, fish, drink, water, every day) learned during the priming and pre-teaching vocabulary mini lessons would already be printed on one side of the diagram (See Figure 7). While the educator reads the book with the student, s/he would identify similarities and differences between the student responses (i.e., I drink water every day) and the pictures/vocabulary words previously learned (e.g., the duck also drink water out of the lake daily). As each similarity/difference is identified, the student would attempt to draw/write the shared details or idea on his/her graphic organizer (i.e., the duck and I both drink water for survival) with the assistance of the educator (the Venn Diagram should be partially filled out by the educator for the student with insufficient reading/language level or skill to begin with). For TT and TW, the educator could also use a similar Venn Diagram to work with the student to identify, distinguish, and discuss similarities and differences in details from the current fiction book with any other books that the student has read in the past (with a duck, fish or both as characters). Secondly, with the student's acquired knowledge about the two characters (duck and fish), the educator might want to extend the conversations (see additional examples from table 3) and/or activity with the student (for comparative purpose with the use of the Venn Diagram) regarding the important roles of these animals to the world (e.g., people eat fish as part of their daily healthy diet).

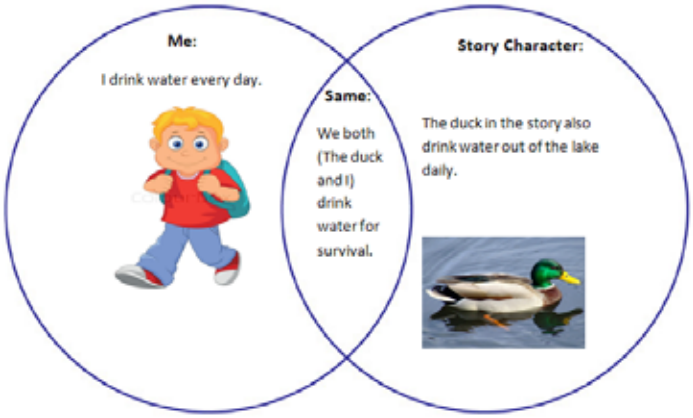


Figure 7. An Example of a Venn Diagram for Linking Text to Self (TS) for Students with ASD in An Inclusive Early Childhood Setting

Table 3

Using Graphic Organizers (Venn Diagram) for Students with ASD in an Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom

Sequence	Teacher	Student
1	Graphic organizer (Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002; Fisher & Schumaker, 1995; Sam & Rajan, 2013; Whalon, Hanline, & Woods, 2007) Selects graphic organizers that best fits the text (e.g. A Venn diagram for showing differences/similarities)	
2	Add pictures/words learned on the graphic organizer (e.g. prints pictures/words on one side of the Venn diagram)	
3	Reads text and identifies similarities and differences between concepts/details with the student “Joe, ducks drink water, and you drink water too. So you both drink water. That’s how you are the same.”, “Do you remember any stories that we have read in the past with ducks in it?”, “Do you think ducks are the same everywhere in different countries?”, “If ducks are not the same from different places, what might be some of the differences?”	Writes details (with the assistance from the educator at the beginning) on the graphic organizer. (e.g. On Venn Diagram where one circle is the student and the other one is the story character, the educator assist the student to write “I drink water” in his/her circle, and “Ducks drink water” in the story character circle. Then, where the circle intersects, the educator helps the student to writes, “We both drink water.”
4	Continues to identify differences and similarities for the rest of the text with other characters with the student	Continues to practice writing differences and similarities for the rest of the text (with the assistance from the educator at the beginning)

Note. Adapted from Baker, Gersten, & Scanlon, 2002; Fisher & Schumaker, 1995; Sam & Rajan, 2013; Whalon, Hanline, & Woods, 2007).

A fourth instructional practice is the use of an adapted story map to organize and summarize texts (another type of graphic organizer) (See Figure 8). Story maps have long been utilized as pre- and postreading tools to assist emerging readers to "organize" and/or "recall" facts (Diehl, Bennetto, & Young, 2006) or to figure out the main ideas or events that happen throughout the story. Gately (2008) found that the use of story maps proliferates the length and multiplicity in narratives of students with ASD. In their findings, Stringfield and colleagues (2011) suggested that the use of story maps might be useful for elementary teachers to teach reading for students with High Functioning Autism (HFA). To date, according to Nguyen and colleagues (2015), no literature has been published on how to teach students with ASD to summarize texts at a comprehension level that is higher than solely recalling facts. Perhaps, practitioners or educators of students with ASD could use the suggested and adapted story map (See Figure 8) to begin the above-mentioned task. First, the educator would model, engage, and assist the student to fill out the general information (i.e., book title, student name, date, characters, time of the day, and the location of the story). It is appropriate to allow the student to go back and reread the story (or shared reading with the educator) while completing this initial task. Next, the educator begins to use both open-ended (e.g., why do you think the fish swam ahead from the duck?) and close-ended type of questions (e.g., how many ducks do you see in the story?) to help the student to fill out the sequential events (beginning, middle, and the ending) of the story. Lastly, after reviewing with the student regarding the various events that happened in the story on the filled-out story map, the educator would "practice" with the student on figuring out the main idea of the entire story. The educator would again assist the student to discuss and write down the "one-sentence" main idea on the last box of the story map. It is worth noting that this entire process could become difficult at times for the educator when working with a student with insufficient reading/language skills. However, with consistent practice, the student would most likely become familiar with the process.

Overall, in an attempt to alleviate the current WCC and EF deficits for students with ASD, the above mini lesson that use a variety of graphic organizers such as the Venn Diagram would allow the student with ASD to make TS, TT, and TW connections. Moreover, the additional use of the adapted story map provides a specific approach to help him/her to: (1) recall facts, (2) summarize facts, and (3) stating and writing down the main idea of the story with the educator or independently with additional practices (See Table 3 and Figure 8).

Story Map

Book Title: The Two Best Friends
Student Name: Joe Smith
Date: 07/02/2018

Setting

Characters	The duck and the fish
Time of the Day	Late afternoon
Place	The lake in the park

Beginning

- The duck and the fish met each other
- They asked each other's names
- They swam and played with each other at the lake

Middle

- They became friends
- They ate lunch together at the lake
- They both enjoyed the afternoon

End

- It is getting dark
- The two friends get ready to go back to their families
- The duck and the fish said goodbyes to each other

Main Idea of the Story

- This story is about a duck and a fish met each other at the lake in the park and they became best friends.

Figure 8. An Example of an Adapted Story Map for Text-Summarizing for Students with ASD in an Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom (Stringfield, Luscre, & Gast, 2011)

Directions for Future Inquiry and Concluding Thoughts

The authors of this article acknowledge that the above suggested instructional practices are still in its embryonic phase (not in the context of a case study or an empirical study); however, we strongly believe that it is necessary for educators in early childhood inclusive settings to begin to use sound judgements to adhere to the existing evidence-based practices that are grounded in research for students with ASD. Future studies would not only be needed but it is critical to validate the effectiveness of the above mini lessons, particularly how each of the above strategies or instructional practices enhance reading comprehension abilities of this student population. Next, additional studies should also emphasize on how each of the existing cognitive factors of students with ASD (i.e., EF, ToM, and WCC) influence the way these students understand reading texts with the use of the above four instructional practices.

For the last few decades, educators across the country are expected to provide effective reading instruction for students with ASD, particularly the needed one-on-one instructional practices that occur in the self-contained classroom, the inclusive general education environment or within a resource setting. By focusing on enhancing comprehension skills in the early years, educators may be able to alleviate the deficits in the later years. Furthermore, by providing educators the above four suggested evidence-based mini-lessons as supplemental tools to teach reading comprehension skills to students with ASD, this student population might have the opportunity to acquire these critical skills much earlier.

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A Parent-Teacher Reading Conference Project: Using a Virtual Environment (TeachLivE™) to Improve Elementary Pre-Service Teachers' Conferencing Skills

Michelle J. Kelley and Taylar Wenzel

Abstract

One of the most common forms of parent communication in the elementary classroom is the parent-teacher conference, specifically sharing student progress, yet little time is dedicated in teacher preparation programs towards developing this skill (Baum & Swick, 2008; Dotger, Harris, Maher, & Hansel, 2011). This paper describes a parent-teacher conferencing project created to provide elementary pre-service teachers with the opportunity to develop their reading assessment conferencing skills in a virtual environment with instructor feedback prior to completing their final internship placement. After identifying effective reading conferencing behaviors during phase one of a multi-year study, the researchers (also instructors) designed a Parent Conference Project reflecting these effective conferencing behaviors. This paper shares the parent project components, including a coding tool used by instructors to help provide concrete feedback and evaluate pre-service teachers' reading conferencing effectiveness. Student feedback on the project is also shared.

Introduction

For more than a decade, national studies have pointed to the need for increased school and family communication (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Markow & Martin, 2005) and federal policies have subsequently required parent involvement or engagement as a condition of funding (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015 ; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Many researchers posit that the most significant opportunity to foster communication and collaboration between the school and family is the parent-teacher conference (Henderson & Hunt, 1994). Parental involvement is recognized as a contributing factor to student achievement, yet most teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare pre-service teachers to communicate with parents (Dotger, Harris, Maher, & Hansel, 2011), let alone prepare them to share assessment data clearly and accurately. Baum and Swick (2008) attribute this deficit in teacher preparation programs to a theory approach to parent-teacher conferencing, whereby the instructor typically shares ways to communicate with parents via a formal presentation, rather than engaging students in real-life applications. Epstein and Saunders (2006) surveyed 161 deans of colleges of education across the United States and found that only 7% of respondents agreed that new teachers from their own programs were ready to work with students' families, even though over 96% believed this competence to be important. Parent-teacher conferences are arguably the most common form of family-school communication as evidenced in the Met Life Survey of American Teachers, where 97% of the 800 teachers reported that students' parents are regularly asked to come to parent-teacher conferences (Markow & Martin, 2005). According to Markow and Martin (2005), "communicating with and engaging parents is the most frequently cited challenge among new teachers and the area they feel least prepared to take on in their first teaching position" (p. 4). This gap in teacher preparation is the focus of the parent project reported in this paper, which is part of a broader multi-year study exploring the efficacy of elementary education pre-service teachers as it relates to conducting parent-teacher conferences that are specifically focused on clearly and accurately sharing reading assessment data. This paper describes the second phase of this study, the alignment of effective reading conference behaviors identified in the first phase of the study (Kelley & Wenzel, 2017) to the development of a Parent Conference Project that implemented a coding tool designed to evaluate elementary pre-service teachers' effectiveness when communicating reading assessment data and instructional goals to parents.

Literature Review

Parent-Teacher Conferencing and Pre-Service Teachers

Challenges related to parent conferencing are not a new concept. In 1990, Fredericks and Rasinski noted that, "most teachers are not sufficiently trained in parent teacher conference techniques" (p. 174). Furthermore, they suggested that a successful reading program, "be designed in such a way that both parties work together to establish priorities, develop common goals, and achieve concrete solutions" (p. 174). Effective conferencing requires preparation and practice, demanding a thinking-on-your-feet fluency in which a teacher uses professional knowledge, skill, and disposition simultaneously (Walker & Dotger, 2012). Typically, pre-service teachers have very little opportunity to practice parent-teacher conferencing, yet there is an indisputable need to include this type of training in teacher preparation programs (Henderson & Hunt, 1993). In spite of the evidence, pre-service teacher programs do not characteristically include conferencing skills as a major course objective (Henderson & Hunt, 1993; McNaughton, Hamlin, McCarthy, Head-Reeves, and Schreiner, 2008), and most often, the skills required to effectively engage in conferences are "only addressed through occasional readings,

lectures, or observations of parent-teacher conferences" (Dotger, Harris, & Hansel, 2008, p. 337).

Role-Play and Simulation

Pre-service teachers need to practice teaching skills outside the classroom environment, where it is okay to fail and where they are mentored by teacher educators (Puvirajah & Calandra, 2015). Role-play has been one successful activity used to train teachers for parent conferences (Henderson & Hunt, 1993). In addition, simulation allows pre-service teachers the opportunity to practice teaching skills, such as parent-teacher conferencing, without irrevocable damage (Kelley & Wenzel, 2017). McNaughton et al. (2008) suggest pre-service teachers be taught active listening in order for them to better make empathetic comments, ask appropriate questions, and communicate effectively to parents. Dotger, Dotger, and Maher (2010) adapted a "case" approach used in medical schools, allowing pre-service teachers the opportunity to practice parent-teacher conferences with feedback and reflection. The Simulated Interaction Model (SIM) began as six cases, but developed into 27 different simulations. Standardized Parents (SP) were trained to exhibit specific characteristics and attributes of parents identified in the cases. Teacher candidates interacted with SPs and received immediate feedback from faculty members following the simulation (Walker & Dotger, 2012). They found that teacher candidates participating in a simulation (case) showed improvements in professional dispositions and skills. Specifically, they improved their ability to structure a conversation with a parent and they became more responsive to parents. Their research yielded seven categories of desired conferencing behaviors. Walker and Dotger (2012) utilized experts in the field to establish content validity of one of their cases and reliability of the coding scheme they developed based on their research.

Role-Play and Simulation in a Virtual Learning Environment

The adage, "practice makes perfect" applies to pre-service teachers as well. They need many opportunities to practice being teachers (Puvirajah & Calandra, 2015). Pedagogy is fundamentally important in terms of understanding the "why" of teaching, but virtual learning environments appear to be integral for practicing teaching skills, the "what" of teaching (Johannesen, 2013). Reality-based virtual learning experiences that require pre-service teachers to think on their feet coupled with self-evaluation are promising (McDonald, 2012). The act of role-playing and simulation in a virtual environment, along with critical dialogue not only increases pre-service teachers' engagement, but also builds their instructional repertoire (McDonald, 2012). Role-play and simulation in virtual environments have been found to provide many benefits not attained from traditional classroom instruction; including better comprehension of content and improved interpersonal relations skills (McDonald, 2012; Puvirajah & Calandra, 2015). A virtual environment can better prepare pre-service teachers for interacting with parents by helping them to hone communication skills without the threat of damaging important relationships in the event of a communication misstep (Dotger, Harris, Maher, & Hansel, 2011).

TeachLivE™

This multi-year study utilized TeachLivE™, a virtual classroom environment that facilitates teacher professional development without potentially harmful ramifications (Dieker, Hines, Stapleton, & Hughes, 2007). TeachLivE™ has been used successfully to improve pre-service teachers' classroom management, communication, and instructional skills through interactions with student avatars (interactors) in a controlled environment. Dieker et al.(2007) explain, "In a simulated experience, a [pre-service] teacher is able to do what they wouldn't, couldn't or shouldn't do in real life to obtain compelling, trial-and-error examples of why and how key methods work" (p. 11). Originally, the TeachLivE™ avatars developed were middle school students with varying exceptionalities. Recently, English Language Learners and adult avatars have been added to TeachLivE™, thus widening the potential uses of this virtual environment. In this study, pre-service teachers interacted with a parent avatar, allowing them the opportunity for realistic practice of a parent-teacher reading conference with real-time instructor feedback.

Methods

Purpose of the Study, Participants, and Background

As previously stated, this paper focuses on the second phase of a multi-year study exploring elementary pre-service teachers' efficacy of conducting parent-teacher conferences centered on clearly and accurately sharing reading data and related interventions for a single case study student as part of a semester-long course assignment (see Table 1). In the first phase of this study, the researchers (also instructors) observed over 200 pre-service teachers during an entire academic year as they conducted parent-teacher reading conferences in TeachLivETM (Kelley & Wenzel, 2017). The participants were Elementary Education seniors enrolled at a large urban university in the state of Florida. The researchers used the first phase of the study to identify effective pre-service teacher behaviors during a parent-teacher reading conference, using the structuring and responsive conferencing behaviors identified by Walker and Dotger (2012) as a starting point. Given that the primary goals of the project were related to the pre-service teachers' ability to accurately share reading assessment and intervention data from their individual case study students in a professional manner, it was necessary for the researchers to refine and align the desired conference behaviors to the content-specific project goals, specifically referencing informal reading assessments that the pre-service teachers learned and used with school-aged students in their case study assignment. Ultimately, the

researchers agreed on eight behaviors. The broad structural behaviors of the conference included: the opening, gathering information, sharing reading data, and identifying next steps. The responsive behaviors of the conference included: maintaining a positive relationship, managing the flow, exhibiting professionalism, and communicating clearly. Additionally, the researchers' developed indicators that represent each of the eight effective reading conferencing behaviors and drafted a coding tool that an instructor could use to a) provide the pre-service teacher with more specific feedback and b) evaluate the pre-service teacher's reading assessment conferencing effectiveness (see Figure 1). In addition, a response guide was developed for the virtual parent (simulated by a live interactor) that included open-ended probes and suggestions for what kinds of questions to ask during the conference in order to a) foster the pre-service teacher's "thinking-on-your-feet fluency" (Walker & Dotger, 2012) and b) assist the instructor in determining whether the pre-service teacher could accurately respond to a parent's common questions or concerns related to his or her child's reading development. For example, the pre-service teachers were required to give an informal reading inventory to their case study student. In the parent-teacher conference, they were expected to share the results of this assessment. While conferencing, many of the pre-service teachers were not able to explain the grade level equivalence of Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels or if the child was independent or instructional on the text level read. Thus, if a pre-service teacher said, "I used the DRA and your child was at a level 16," and there was no follow-up related to what a DRA is or what level 16 means, the parent avatar was asked to probe. Another issue that arose was related to terminology and content knowledge. For example, a pre-service teacher might share that his or her case study student was having problems with fluency. The parent avatar was prompted to probe further. They might say, "My child is fluent. She talks just fine. What do you mean she isn't fluent?" Some other probes recommended included: "Is my child on grade level?" "What are you doing in school to help my child?" "What can I do at home to help my child?" "Why is my child spending so much time being assessed in reading?"

This paper focuses on the second phase of the study, which included piloting a coding tool used by instructors while observing pre-service teachers conferring in TeachLivE™. This phase was completed during the fall semester of 2016 and involved 53 pre-service teachers and the two researchers, instructors of a reading practicum course taken concurrently with a part-time internship in a K-6 classroom. As such, the researchers were also participants in the study. The reading practicum course is a mixed-mode class, meeting online and face-to-face. In this course, pre-service teachers complete a case study on a K-6 student (ideally from their internship placement or in an on-campus university clinic setting). This overarching case study assignment involves the pre-service teacher comprehensively assessing a K-6 student in the following reading areas: motivation, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. After conducting assessments on a single K-6 student, the pre-service teacher meets with his or her course instructor in an individual data conference to share the K-6 child's strengths and weaknesses and identify areas of focus for instruction or intervention. The data conference provides the instructor with the opportunity to review the assessments given, determine if assessments were chosen and evaluated correctly, and identify whether the pre-service teacher has selected appropriate instruction or intervention goals. This setting also serves as an opportunity for the pre-service teacher to practice communicating reading assessment data, although with the course instructor as the audience. Additionally, in the data conference, there is an expectation for sophisticated use of content-level vocabulary to be shared. Following this data conference where instructional goals for the case study student are confirmed, the pre-service teacher implements instruction/intervention for the K-6 student, post-assesses in the areas of the instructional goals identified, and writes a diagnostic report (case study) documenting the experience. Traditionally in this course, the culminating assignment has been a (fictitious) letter to the parent of the child about whom they conducted the case study. In this letter, the pre-service teacher shared the reading data collected, instructional approaches used, his or her determination of the success of the instruction based on post-assessment data, and recommendations for at-home support. The parent letter was not given to the actual parent, but was instead used as evidence that the pre-service teacher could accurately share and communicate reading data and reading instruction with families. The Parent Conference Project described in this study was developed to complement the case study process and involved removing the parent letter requirement and replacing it with a more authentic simulated reading assessment conference in TeachLivE™, utilizing the parent avatar as previously described. Through this process, pre-service teachers prepare for and conduct a seven-minute reading assessment conference with a parent avatar who takes on the role of the parent of the child with whom the case study was conducted. After the conference, the pre-service teacher completes a reflection where he or she self-assesses the conference simulation based on the eight-conferencing behaviors (both structuring and responsive) and responds to open-ended prompts (see Figure 2). The instructor uses the coding tool (see Figure 1) while observing, and provides the pre-service teacher with specific, immediate feedback following the conference, but after the pre-service teacher has had a chance to reflect on his/her own reading assessment conferencing behaviors. During this debrief discussion, the instructor and pre-service teacher determine whether a 2nd virtual conference rehearsal experience is warranted based on which indicators on the coding tool were observed and/or not observed during the simulated reading assessment conference. If a pre-service teacher is identified as needing a 2nd conference in TeachLivE™, he or she identifies the behaviors that they want to focus on as a goal area for the subsequent reading assessment conference, prior to leaving the debrief with the instructor. Supporting instructional features of the project include face-to-face elements (brainstorming effective

conference behaviors, class discussion about parent conferences with introduction to project tools, and conference role plays in class) and online elements (an online module including links and resources related to parent teacher conferences).

Data Collection and Survey Instruments

The data points pertinent to this phase of the study included: a coding tool and a post-conference reflection.

Coding Tool

As previously mentioned, during phase 1 of the study, the researchers/instructors observed over 200 pre-service teachers conferring in the TeachLivE™ simulation environment. This led to the revision of a coding tool used to both provide guidance and feedback to teacher candidates, and assist with evaluating pre-service teachers' conferencing skills. During the summer of 2016, the researchers revisited observations completed in phase 1 of the study to identify patterns indicative of each desired conferencing behavior. The goal was to mimic the teacher evaluation terminology used in local public schools. Therefore, three categories of performance were identified: Not Observed, Developing, and Applying, and appropriate descriptors for each category were created based on the review of data collected during phase 1. For example, during the opening of the conference, pre-service teachers were expected to state the purpose of the conference specific to sharing the reading assessment data that they had collected. A developing indicator for this behavior would be the pre-service teacher being general, nonspecific, and/or lacking clarity. They might pose, "I'd like to talk about your child's reading". While an applying indicator would reference specific reading assessment data and sound like, "I'd like to talk about your child's reading comprehension, specifically her use of self-monitoring strategies as she reads". The coding tool was designed to allow the researchers to highlight or underline the appropriate descriptors based on observation and to determine whether the pre-service teacher needed to conduct a second conference for additional rehearsal and simulated practice. For the purpose of this project, and in alignment with course objectives and standards, the researchers decided that two of the eight behaviors were non-negotiable for demonstration during the conference: sharing reading data and professionalism. Pre-service teachers were instructed that they must receive a rating of "applying" in four out of the five indicators under the behavior sharing reading data and a rating of "applying" in all three of the indicators under the behavior professionalism in order to be excused from a second parent-teacher conference (see Figure 1). During the debriefing discussion, the researcher shared the coding tool markings and provided each pre-service teacher with individual feedback about his/her conference skills and the determination of whether or not a second conference was warranted based on the indicators met. Beyond the researchers' determination of whether or not a second conference was required, they also allowed the pre-service teachers the option to do a second conference if they desired more practice, even if he or she had met the assignment expectations. If a pre-service teacher was required to do (or desired) a second conference, the pre-service teacher was asked to identify a goal for improvement, which the researcher then indicated on the coding sheet. The focus of the second conference would be to see an improvement in the area that the pre-service teacher identified. The researchers used the same coding tool for the second conference, but wrote with a different colored writing utensil to record the second observation. Again, the researchers debriefed with each individual pre-service teacher after the conference, providing overall feedback, but honing in on the goal that the student had self-selected for improvement.

Post-Conference Reflection

The pre-service teachers completed an online post-conference reflection form (see Figure 2) each time they completed a parent-teacher conference in TeachLivE™. On this form, the pre-service teachers reflected on their performance for each of the eight identified conferencing behaviors, specifically documenting their perception of whether or not each indicator on the coding tool was demonstrated. The reflection was captured prior to the debriefing feedback discussion held with the instructor. This data collection sequence was intentional so that the pre-service teachers' reflections would accurately represent his/her own self-perception of the effectiveness of their conferencing skills. Following the debriefing where instructor observations and ratings were shared, each pre-service teacher completed the remainder of the reflection, identifying what course supports were most helpful and least helpful for their development of conferencing behaviors, in addition to identifying what they would do differently if given the chance to replicate the conference experience.

Findings

As this phase of the multi-year study involved the piloting of the coding tool and the post-conference reflection form, the pre-service teachers' conference outcomes and feedback from their post-conference reflections were the key sources of data for analysis.

Pre-service Teachers' Conference Outcomes

Of the pre-service teachers who conducted a parent-teacher conference, 62% demonstrated the conference behaviors identified as non-negotiable from the onset of the Parent Teacher Conference project, meaning that they were not required to complete a second conference. Interestingly, however, 4% of the participating students voluntarily requested to have additional practice through a second simulation, though not required. This left 38% of the pre-service teachers who were required to set a conferencing behavior goal and complete a second parent-teacher conference simulation.

The coding tool served as the feedback tool for the instructors. Depending upon the observed behaviors, the

instructor could give the pre-service teacher specific feedback related to each of the eight behaviors in the post-conference debrief. On the coding tool, the instructor identifies misconceptions and contradictory comments. For example, one pre-service teacher noted that the child "was on grade level, but falling below in comprehension". Another pre-service teacher explained that the child was "a great reader, reading Magic Tree House Books," yet shared that "the fluency was 68 WPM," a reading rate markedly below the grade level expectation set by the school district's reading plan and only a single dimension of fluency shared. The coding tool also allowed the instructor to document how the pre-service teacher responded to parent questions. For example, when one pre-service teacher said she was "working on sight words and digraphs," the parent avatar legitimately asked what those were and for examples to be shared. When another pre-service teacher mentioned that she was "using Readers Theatre to develop fluency," the parent avatar wanted to know what that meant. Pre-service teacher responses to such parent avatar questions were recorded on the coding tool and thereby helped the instructor determine if each pre-service teacher was able to demonstrate "thinking-on-your-feet fluency," clearly and accurately, as related to reading assessment and instruction. In the debrief, the instructor shared these observations in alignment to the indicators met and clarified any misconceptions or confusions that were demonstrated over the course of the conference.

Feedback obtained from pre-service teachers was based on their self-reflection of the value of the Parent Conference Project as a learning experience, their identification of the most helpful instructional features for parent conferencing in the practicum course, and their perceptions of what they would have done differently if they had the chance. Further, additional feedback obtained by the students who were required to engage in a 2nd virtual parent conference included the change in conference indicators demonstrated from the first conference to the second conference and their perceptions of why they improved by the 2nd conference. Sample student responses for these feedback categories have been compiled (see Figure 3).

On the post conference survey, when asked what activity was most helpful in developing their parent-teacher conferencing behaviors, 60% of the pre-services teachers identified instructor feedback, 30% selected course content (online and face-to-face), and 10% chose the TeachLivE™ experience. When asked what activity was least helpful, 50% of the pre-service teachers chose the "none" category, while 22% checked online content, and 11% selected TeachLivE™, in class rehearsal, and in-class content.

After a second conference was completed by 42% of the initial participants, they were again asked what contributed to their conferencing skills. Thirty-two percent of participants identified instructor feedback, 14% chose course content (online and face to face), and 10% chose identifying a goal. When probed what activity was most helpful 27% selected instructor feedback, 9% chose course content and identifying a goal, and 4% chose TeachLivE™.

Discussion

As the results indicate, the majority of the students in the second phase of the study felt that instructor feedback was critical to developing their parent-teacher conferencing skills, while only a few students identified TeachLivE™ as a key instructional support. Interestingly though, the TeachLivE™ experience is what allowed the instructors to provide timely feedback based on specific conferencing indicators observed and not observed. It may be that students do not view TeachLivE™ as an instructional support. As instructors and participants in this research, we also speculate whether the students' preconceived notions of the TeachLivE™ conference experience, including their anticipation and nervousness during the preparation, may have impacted their low response rates in identifying the TeachLivE™ experience itself as a key learning experience. Further development of this specific reflection item might also be useful in determining whether the TeachLivE™ experience was beneficial, as compared to other more traditional instructional elements (such as online module resources and in-class role plays), followed by a more detailed breakdown of the elements of the TeachLivE™ parent conference, including: instructor feedback, uninterrupted virtual rehearsal, and simulated parent questions/ confusions.

Additionally, many students identified the course content (both online and face-to-face) as helpful to their conferencing skill development. After phase one of the research project, changes were made to online and in class content, based on the identification of the structuring and responsive behaviors. The alignment of the course content to the project expectations assisted the instructors and researchers in providing clear, specific feedback. The virtual experience in TeachLivE™ was also moved to later in the semester, allowing the instructors to have more time to instruct and guide students to be more successful in the parent-teacher reading conference.

Limitations

This second phase of the multi-year study was reliant upon the adaptation of tools from phase one, which included a lot of trial and error. The TeachLivE™ virtual environment provided pre-service teachers with a risk-free environment in which to practice parent-teacher reading conference skills and allowed the researchers to identify effective reading assessment conference structuring and responsive behaviors; however, a significant limitation exists where the tools developed were created to be in direct alignment with the case study assignment for the reading practicum course. As such, discussions about other content area progress (such as math and science), classroom expectations, and/or student behavioral concerns are not addressed in the TeachLivE™ parent reading conference experience as currently implemented. Thus, as currently designed, this project is narrowly focused on the accurate communication of reading assessment data, and it excludes many of the other reasons why teachers conduct conferences. The researchers do suggest, however, that,

while the categories and criteria on the developed tools are specific to reading conferences, they could be easily be adapted to other content areas or general conference topics. Previous TeachLivE™ research guided us to have the virtual experience last no more than seven minutes, but many of the students reported that they needed more time to demonstrate their conferencing skills. Therefore, this time constraint will be revisited. An additional limitation is that the preservice teacher participants in this study represent only two sections of students enrolled in a reading practicum course, when a total of 6 sections of the course were offered at the participating university during the semester of this implementation phase. Challenges related to scalability could emerge, especially when it comes to scheduling and time demands for virtual conference experiences. Additionally, access to TeachLivE™ may be a limitation for other institutions seeking to replicate this project, due to lack of access and/or the participation costs.

Conclusion

As previously discussed, pre-service teacher programs have not characteristically included parent conference skill development through major course objectives or targeted learning experiences (Henderson & Hunt, 1993; McNaughton et al., 2008) despite research that highlights the complexity of conferencing behaviors as a synchrony of professional knowledge, skill, and disposition (Walker & Dotger, 2012). Emerging findings suggest that the learning experiences embedded in this project are both meaningful for pre-service teachers and have resulted in the documented development of conferencing competencies based on desired reading conferencing behaviors. The implementation of the TeachLivE™ parent-teacher reading conference incites preservice teachers to develop their "thinking-on-your-feet fluency" (Walker & Dotger, 2012), which is a skill that cannot be practiced through a parent letter or case study writing tasks. This study reiterates the complexities of parent conferencing and the need for focused training in teacher preparation programs, with a specific emphasis in challenges that emerge when sharing reading assessment data and instructional plans in a parent conference setting.

Table 1
Parent-Teacher Project Research Overview

Phases of Study	Goals
Phase 1: Fall 2015-Spring 2016	Identify effective reading conferencing behaviors. Draft a Coding Tool and Project Rubric to be used in Phase 2.
Phase 2: Fall 2016	Pilot the use of the Coding Tool. Pilot use of the Post-Conference Reflection Tool.
Phase 3: Spring 2017	Full implementation of Parent-Teacher Conference with revised tools.

Figure 1 Researcher Parent-Teacher Reading Conference Coding Tool

Structuring Behaviors	NO	Developing	Applying
1.Opened the conference by…			
introducing self.			
using parent's and child's name.			
using specific comment(s) to affirm or praise the child.		Used some comments to affirm or praise child, but non-specific (the child is great…fun…awesome).	Used specific comments to affirm or praise the child (ex. the child did great during the math activity, he/she could count by 5's).
stating the purpose of the conference specific to reading assessment data.		Identified a purpose for the conference referencing data or instructional goals in general/non-specific terms (I'd like to talk about your child's reading) and/or lacked clarity.	Identified conference purpose specific to reading assessment data (I'd like to talk about your child's phonics, specifically long vowel knowledge).
2.Gathered information from the parent by …			
asking if they had specific concerns/ questions they wanted addressed in the conference.			
seeking input regarding out of school reading habits.			
actively listening and responding.		Some listening and responding.	Actively listened to the parent by nodding, taking notes, repeating what parent stated, and/or probing.
3.**Shared reading data by…			
Using the data conference form or other documents.		Used minimal data sources and/or had documents but did not use them.	Used data conference form or other documents while sharing data.
responded to the parent's questions with specific answers.		Responded to parents questions, but not necessarily answering them in full, correctly, and/or vague (Oh I think your child will be fine).	Responded to the parent's questions with specific answers.
using terminology the parent could easily understand.		Used some terminology but did not fully or accurately explain acronyms or content-specific language.	Used terminology easily understood by parent (no acronyms or explained acronyms and/or content-specific language).
accurately reporting reading data interpretations.		Shared somewhat accurate interpretations of assessments/data.	Shared completely accurate interpretations of assessments/data.
accurately sharing how the child's reading behaviors align to grade level expectations.		Somewhat shared how child's reading behaviors align to grade level expectations (ex- seems to be doing fine, no need to worry, he's doing well).	Accurately shared how child's reading behaviors align to grade level expectations.
4. Identified next steps by…			
sharing what would be done at school to improve reading.		Vaguely identified "next step" procedures and/or next steps which may not be aligned to student's needs.	Identified feasible "next step" procedures aligned to student's needs.
providing ideas for at home support to improve reading.		Provided parent with non-significant home ideas to improve (vague, not specific to student's needs).	Provided parent with home ideas to improve (specific, feasible examples related to student's needs, such as book titles).
Responsive Behaviors			
5. Maintained a positive relationship by…			

being positive, praising, encouraging efforts, and/or validating ideas/feelings.		Sometimes maintained a positive tone and/or inconsistent. Validated little or showed little about parent's ideas and feelings.	Maintained a positive tone by smiling, gesturing, good posture, and/or appropriate tone. Validated/showed parent's ideas/and feelings throughout the duration of the conference.
showing a genuine interest in the student's well-being.		Showed little interest in the student's well-being and success.	Showed interest throughout the conference in the student's well-being and success by being animated, nodding, agreeing, and/or notetaking.
6. Managed the flow by …			
maintaining the time.		Did not manage time (too short, too long, or may have spent too much time on one aspect of the conference).	Managed time well (finished on time or slightly early), clear, succinct.
maintaining the flow.		Conference was disjointed (jumped from one thing to another) and/or used a script to read off (robotic in nature).	The conference was well planned and flowed from one part to another. A conversational tone was maintained.
keeping the conversation "on track."		Held conversation but did not keep it "on track". May have lost track of purpose.	Conversation was "on track" for the most of the conference
meeting the purpose of the conference.		Somewhat met the purpose of the conference.	Met the purpose of the conference as stated in the opening.
7.Exhibited professionalism by…**			
arriving on time.			
dressing professionally.			
using content-specific language.		Used content-specific professional language minimally.	Used content-specific professional language throughout the conference.
8. Clearly communicated by…			
using transition words to connect ideas (rather than conversational fillers).		Used some transitional words, but used conversation fillers (ex-um, definitely, excited, okay, awesome, yea).	Used transitional words to connect ideas and primarily stayed away from conversational fillers.
using grammatically correct English.		Used grammatically correct English inconsistently during the conference.	Used grammatically correct English throughout the duration of the conference.
Displaying appropriate, engaging body language.		Displayed some welcoming body language throughout the duration of the conference (posture, facial expressions, gestures, and/or eye contact).	Displayed consistent welcoming body language throughout conference (posture, facial expression, gestures, and/or eye contact).

Figure 2 Student Parent-Teacher Reading Conference Reflection #1

Participant Code _____ Date of Conference _____

	NO	D	A	Instructor Feedback
Structuring Behaviors				
Opened the conference by…				
introducing self.				
using parent and child's name.				
using specific comment(s) to affirm or praise the child.				
stating the purpose of the conference specific to reading assessment data.				
Gathered information from the parent by…				
asking if they had specific concerns/questions they wanted addressed in the conference.				
seeking input regarding out of school reading habits.				
actively listening and responding to the parent.				
**Shared reading data by…				
using the data conference form or other documents.				
using terminology the parent could easily understand.				
accurately reporting reading data interpretations.				
accurately sharing how the child's reading behaviors align to grade level expectations.				
Identified next steps by…				
sharing what would be done at school to improve reading.				
providing ideas for at home support to improve reading, such as book titles.				

	NO	D	A	Instructor Feedback
Responsive Behaviors				
Maintained a positive relationship by…				
being positive (praising, encouraging efforts, and/or validating ideas/feelings).				
showing a genuine interest in the student's well-being.				
Managed the conference by …				
maintaining the time.				
maintaining the flow.				
keeping the conversation on track.				
meeting the purpose of the conference.				
**Exhibited professionalism by….				
arriving on time.				
dressing professionally.				
using content-specific language accurately.				
Clearly communicated by…				
using transition words to connect ideas rather than conversational fillers.				

using grammatically correct English.				
displaying appropriate, engaging body language.				

** In order to be excused from mock conference #2, candidate must demonstrate all behaviors in sharing data and exhibiting professionalism, and can only miss one behavior in each of the other areas.
KEY: NO- Not Observed; O- Observed; D-Developing; A-Applied

What do you think went well during your parent-teacher conference?

What would you do differently if you had the chance to conduct this conference again?
Check any of the following course activities that contributed to your parent conferencing skills:

____ in class session on parent conferencing
____ online content/modules
____ virtual rehearsals (TeachLive)
____ feedback from the instructor/researcher
____ identifying a goal to improve

Which course activity (from above) was most helpful and why?

Which course activity (from above) was least helpful and why?

Figure 3 Sample Student Feedback Responses from Post-Conference Reflection Forms

Post-Conference #1 Reflections	
Self-reflection of the value of the Parent Conference Project as a learning experience	*This method of learning was helpful because it allowed me to practice speaking to parents about reading assessments and to explain what the data meant. It allowed me to gain confidence and make note of what aspects of a conference are important and which areas I need to discuss with parents.*
Identification of the most helpful instructional features for parent conferencing	*This lab was very useful to me because it allowed me to get a feel of how a parent would react to the information that I was providing. I really liked having the rubric because it allowed me to fix a few things before I had the actual conference with Yadiel's mom. It was great for practice and it helped me feel more confident when meeting face to face with Ms. Zambrana.* *Although I am not the biggest fan of practicing with avatars, I do believe that it is a great learning experience. When talking, I do or say things that I never notice and being able to participate in TeachLivE allows me to get proper feedback.* *This is extremely helpful. I watched a parent conference soon after I had this experience and it was not as complex. So this experience over prepared me for what I will experience as a teacher.* *This was very helpful because it will prepare me to have conferences in the future with parents. It allowed me to take my data and actually explain what it meant to the parent.* *It was very helpful that the avatar was very life-like and asked real life questions. The questions were somewhat challenging, which simulated a real conference. I think that this helped to calm my nerves about parent/teacher conferences and provided me with a valuable experience.* *It was helpful because I was caught off guard by questions I wasn't expecting the parent to ask. It prepared me to answer questions on the spot that I am not prepared for.*

Perceptions of what they would have done differently if they had the chance	*If I could do something differently, I would explain Adrian's grade level reading a little better. Since he is two grades below the reading level, I should not say "don't worry". I need to be honest.* *I would further explain terminology in a way the parent can understand. The parent was confused when I spoke about fluency and when I described it to her I left our parts that contribute to fluency other than words correct per minute.* *I would focus more on relating long vowels to the student's reading fluency, as well as explain fluency to the parent to give a better understanding of what long vowels have to do with the student's reading skills. I would also provide the parent with a list of book options to read with their student.* *One of the biggest things I would do differently is to have a checklist to follow as I go through the conference to make sure I hit everything instead of trying to remember all that I need to hit. I would also try to be more relaxed as I was nervous for some reason.*
Post-Conference #2 Reflections	
Change in conference indicators demonstrated from the first conference to the second conference	*After doing this conference the 2nd time I feel that I was able to manage the flow of the conversation better and that I was able to effectively share information.* *This time around, I was a lot more clear with any information I provided to the parent. I also spoke with better grammar :)* *After doing this conference the 2nd time I feel that I was able to manage the flow of the conversation better and that I was able to effectively share information.* *I think my confidence during this confidence helped me to correctly deliver the information to the parent so that they are aware of their child's progress in reading instruction.*
Perceptions of why they improved by the 2nd conference	*This time around, I was a lot more clear with any information I provided to the parent. I also spoke with better grammar :).* *After doing this conference the 2nd time I feel that I was able to manage the flow of the conversation better and that I was able to effectively share information.* *I was able to talk about all the important data with the parents. I felt very prepared and ready to discuss the student's strengths and weaknesses with the parent. I also feel as if I did a good job answering the parent's questions and responding to her initial concerns.*

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Teaching Future Teachers: Modeling Methodology while Delivering Content

Jacqueline Witter-Easley

Abstract

Teacher educators apply research-based methods for fostering their students' literacy skills across disciplines, such as those needed to both comprehend and use writing to learn information in content-area texts. Intentional instruction of comprehension skills leads not only to enhanced understanding of a given text, but also to increased use of comprehension strategies while reading new texts. This article serves three purposes: it will describe effective comprehension strategies, discuss how to apply those strategies the information conveyed in their text books, and develop a mindset of intentionality to enable future teachers to make connections between the activities and the content.

Introduction

Educational theory is the cornerstone upon which teaching methods are built. Teacher candidates must learn and understand research-based theories in order to maximize their future students' educational experiences. Teacher educators understand the significance of conveying these theories to their teacher candidates. In addition to conveying general theories, teacher educators work to facilitate the translation of research-based theories into effective classroom practice.

As a teacher educator, I have found this process to be difficult for teacher candidates to understand. When I began teaching reading methods courses, I modeled a variety of research-based literacy strategies by embedding them into assigned text readings and class sessions. I believed that through their participation in such authentic literacy experiences, they would develop their schema (Rumelhart, 1978) about effective teaching methods and access their schema to apply these methods to their own lesson plans and clinical teaching placements. I soon realized, however, that the integration of literacy skills into authentic reading materials and activities was not enough. I noticed that many candidates did not automatically connect these in-class activities to their own lesson plans. I came to the conclusion that I needed to do more than embed and model literacy strategies. I needed to include a key element: intentionality. This means that I learned to pause the authentic activity and intentionally dissect the process that I modeled, its connection to theory, and the research that supports it (Risko, Roller, Cummins, Bean, Block, Anders, & Flood, 2008). By adding intentional discussions to the methods, I now teach to both sides of the teacher candidates' mindsets: the traditional-student mindset (one who participates in the activity and acquires content knowledge), and the future-teacher mindset (one who dissects the activity through the lens of theory and research). As Ball and Forzani (2009) note, "Helping students learn academic skills and content requires not only strong knowledge of that content but also the capacity to make the subject accessible to diverse learners" (p. 501). One way I have found to ensure that the students understand both mindsets is through a handout of a t-chart. I label the left side of the chart with the name of the activity and the right side as "Research-based theory". The students fill out the chart as both the activity and follow-up discussion progress, thereby creating a resource that both describes how to implement the activity as well as the theoretical foundations upon which the activity is based.

Teacher educators of all content areas must effectively deliver content (theories, pedagogy) while modeling best literacy practices to help their undergraduate students access that content in text books and articles (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In turn, teacher candidates must possess the ability to dissect these experiences so that the underlying theory becomes evident and the activity is executed effectively in their clinical experience lesson plans and future classrooms. According to Pearson (2009), intentional instruction of comprehension skills leads not only to enhanced understanding of a given text, but also to increased use of comprehension strategies while reading new texts. When connecting this information to the preparation of teacher candidates, I have learned that I cannot simply assign text chapters to read without modeling literacy strategies that will foster the active construction of meaning from those texts. In this paper, I describe a variety of activities I've used in my own reading methods courses. They demonstrate both authentic literacy methods that I've embedded and modeled into my content lessons, and intentionality-of-purpose discussions for all phases of a class session: before, during, and after reading and discussing a text.

Authentic Pre-Reading Activities

Writing Notebooks

The act of writing provides the human brain with time to simultaneously process and reflect upon new concepts. By taking time at the beginning of a class session to engage students in writing about a given topic, query, or experience, teacher educators are not only modeling appropriate teaching techniques, they are also ensuring that their students will have accessed their schemata about the topic and bring forward relevant ideas to the

class discussion. Furthermore, the act of writing allows the students to think critically, and expand upon their initial thoughts with increased depth of analysis. This is time well spent! I have implemented a variety of "quick writes" (Daniels, Steineke, & Zemelman, 2007, p. 30) into my students' writing notebooks.

- Writing from a List (Buchner, 2004)—This is an excellent strategy that is a twist on traditional brainstorming lists. I begin by posing a question or statement to the class related to upcoming content (such as, "Why should we start each school day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance?"). The students make a list of at least five reasons in their notebooks. By setting a specific amount, I am requiring the students to think beyond their first, most obvious, ideas. They have to dig deeper to finish the list. Next, I instruct them to reread their lists and circle the one item they believe to be their most important reason. Note that they most likely selected a reason near the bottom of their list—evidence of the power of effective brainstorming practice. Finally, I tell the class to write out their selected reason at the top of the next page, in a complete sentence, and then expound on it in paragraph form. I often call on volunteers to read aloud their paragraphs and frame the class discussion around them, interjecting key points throughout the session.

  Intentionality of this activity—After a while, I pause the class discussion and ask, "How did I guide you to think deeply about this topic?" I scaffold this dissection of the activity by having the students enumerate the steps involved in the lesson and describe the purpose behind each step. We then note the reasoning behind setting a required amount of ideas to the list and connect this to the benefits of creating disequilibrium and fostering deeper thinking through guided brainstorming sessions.
- Read-Aloud Reactions—I often read aloud a short text (or excerpt) that is related to the education profession and/or class session's topic. This allows me to model the importance of reading aloud to students of all ages. Next, I pause and have the students write in their notebooks one of the following: a) free-write response to the text; b) response to an open-ended question about the text (such as a prediction); c) two items of new information; or d) an "aha" moment learned in the text. Once they've completed their written reactions, I put them into small groups (3 – 4) and have each member share his/her response. After we regroup as a whole class I ask each group to report on the main ideas they discussed. As each group reports, I list their ideas on the board and use this as a frame for the class discussion about the topic at hand.

  Intentionality of this activity—Near the end of the class session, I'll stop to ask the students to turn and talk to their neighbors about how I moved the students from the read aloud segment to the class discussion. I point out the use of small groups as a type of scaffolding between independent writing and whole class discussion. I often ask, "How did my placement of the small group discussion at that point in the activity impact the overall class discussion process?" Describe the benefits of effectively using small group discussions to: maximize student involvement, create community, develop creative thinking, enhance discourse skills, and optimize time on task.
- Quotables—As students file into the classroom, I post on the board a quotation from a notable article or the upcoming text chapter. Next, I direct the students to write a question they have about the quotation. I arrange the students into small groups (3 – 4) and have them pass their papers clockwise to the person next to them. On command, each student is to read the question and write their own response. After a set period of time, they pass the notebook to the next person who must write a new response (no "ditto" or "I agree" allowed). This continues until the original authors receive their notebooks back and have time to read through all of the responses. We then meet back as a whole group and several students share their questions aloud, while I list these questions on the board. This allows me to set a purpose for reading. I direct the class to think about either their own question or one from the board as I read aloud the article or segment. They should also read through their peers' responses to their questions in light of having heard the context and lead a discussion about the article, focusing on the quotation's meaning in relation to the course content.

  Intentionality of the activity—As the whole-class discussion unfolds, I ask the students to describe the benefits of passing their questions around their small group and receiving written responses. Often, I flip the perspective on this question by asking about the benefits of having them write a response to each question—especially after several peers wrote answers to the question and they could not simply respond with "ditto." What type of thinking did this phase of the activity require? Furthermore, how does the act of writing a question about a statement challenge students to think critically? My goal in this phase of the discussion is to facilitate the students' understanding of how to frame class discussion that is not teacher-centered, but rather student-centered with teacher guidance so that the class moves steadily toward higher-levels of comprehension (Zwiers, 2008). In this way, discussions become tools for constructing ideas and creating new knowledge (Mercer, 2000).

Academic Language

Vocabulary knowledge and comprehension of text are reciprocal literacy processes (Stanovich, 1986). As teacher candidates read through their text books, they encounter academic language and must learn this terminology of the education profession in order to comprehend the text and, ultimately, apply it to their future classrooms. Furthermore, teacher candidates must understand and experience effective strategies for teaching vocabulary so their future students will apply these strategies to their own reading.

- Bull's Eye Words—Before class, I post on the board a list of key words from an upcoming article or chapter. Next, I divide the class into small groups and give each group a stack of self-sticking notepads. One or two members of each group will copy down the list of words, one word per sticky note. Meanwhile, I make a bull's eye target with three concentric circles on it for each group. Group members will go through each word and discuss whether they know it very well, are somewhat familiar with the term, or do not know it at all. Once they've sorted the words into these three categories, I instruct them to arrange the words onto their group's bull's eye target by placing the words they know very well in the center (bull's eye), those they are familiar with in the middle ring, and those they do not know at all in the outer ring. This is similar to the use of Knowledge Charts (Blachowicz, 1986) in that students rate their own knowledge of a set of words. Once all of the groups have completed their bull's eye targets, I will lead a discussion of the words, focusing primarily on those that the students have placed on the outer ring (those they do not know at all).

  Intentionality of the activity—After reviewing the key words with the students, I ask them whether they all knew the meaning of the words they placed in the bull's eye before meeting with their group. Most often, several of the words would have been learned through the small-group discussions and by collaborating with their peers. I guide them in reflecting on how this type of structure enabled them to increase their learning of content beyond traditional methods of looking up vocabulary words in a dictionary and writing them in a sentence. As the discussion progresses, we focus on my role and how I maximized use of time on task (focusing primarily on words that the group struggled with the most—those in the outer ring). I make sure to guide the students into understanding how this activity will assist them in reading the upcoming article or chapter: the new vocabulary has now been learned and they will be able to access their schema when they encounter these words during their independent reading of the text.
- Word Sorts—When a text book chapter contains a significant amount of academic language, I create a list of those terms that students will encounter and divide the class into small groups. I provide blank index cards and tell the students to copy down the list, one word per card. The small groups must then review the words and consider which words are related, then sort them into groups. Next, each group must decide on a label for each category of words and use a blank index card to write the label (in a different colored marker), placing it at the top of its word group. Finally, allow time for a "gallery tour" by having the class quietly walk around the room to view each group's word sorts. I often use my iPad™ to take digital photos of the sorts and project them on the whiteboard to review and discuss. I facilitate the discussion so that the accurate meanings of the words are conveyed and important connections are highlighted in the upcoming text.

  Intentionality of the activity—I typically ask the students questions about this activity that cause them to become aware of their own learning processes. This allows me to emphasize their cognitive processes that evolved during the collaborative sorting phase, the labeling phase, and the gallery walk. For example, I have asked, "How did viewing your peers' word sorts provide depth of experience with the new vocabulary words?" I often make a list on the board as students share their answers aloud so that we have a frame of reference for our discussions. In addition, I guide the students in examining the teacher's role during the final whole-class discussion of the word sort photographs. I may ask, "How did the instructor ensure that you learned the new words?" Or, "How could you (the teacher candidates) use this activity with your own students?" The use of word sorts (Zutell, 1998) allows teacher candidates to gain first-hand experience in the benefits of this seminal reading and spelling method for students of all ages.

Authentic Reading Activities

Structured Bookmarks

When students are assigned a text to read independently, instructors expect them to arrive in class the following day ready to discuss it. In my experience, I've found that effective comprehension occurs when readers interact with the text, mentally engaging with the content as well as monitoring their thinking about the information (Pressley, 2000). Unfortunately, this does not often happen for our students when we simply assign a text. The troubling question I have asked myself is, if my education students do not engage and interact with text as they read, how can I be sure they'll be equipped to teach their future students to do this? One way that I have accomplished both the teaching of content knowledge and

the process of interacting with the text is through the use of structured bookmarks. Following are several examples of bookmarks I have created and used with teacher educators that effectively engaged them with the text and set a purpose for reading and learning key content. I describe the intentionality of the bookmarks' benefits at the end of this section.

- Anticipation Guides (Allen, 2004)—Traditional anticipation guides are created to facilitate pre-reading skills by posing statements for the reader to react to before reading the text. This increases student engagement with the text because the anticipation guide's statements activate schemata that are needed in order to comprehend the information. By reacting to the statements on the bookmark, education students have more of a personal investment in the text's material. Furthermore, the statements should challenge potential misconceptions about key content so that the reader will need to monitor his/her own thinking while reading the text. Anticipation guides on bookmarks should include 2 – 3 statements related to the main ideas and essential content of the assigned text. I have found this bookmark to be most effective when used before reading an article or chapter that focuses on a topic of which teacher candidates tend to have preconceived notions. To make this bookmark, I developed statements about the text's content (see Figure 1). For each statement, I created a two-column chart labeled "before reading" and "after reading." I included a Likert scale response key (A = strongly agree; B = agree; C = disagree; D = strongly disagree) and instructed the students to read the statements in class (before reading the assignment). Next, I tell them to fill out the first column, "before reading" by noting their level of agreement with the statement and writing their reasoning for this level. I direct them to put the bookmark in their text to mark the assigned chapter and tell them to fill out the "after reading" column for each statement when they finish reading the assignment. Finally, I use these bookmarks as a springboard to the discussion during the subsequent class session.

RESPONSE BOOKMARK—Pages 418-437
Respond to the following statements both before and after you read Chapter 2.
A = strongly agree B = agree
C = disagree D = strongly disagree

1. *Literature-based reading programs can be used with all students, including struggling readers.*

Before Reading:	After Reading:
_____ , because:	_____, because:

3. *The process of selecting literature to use in my classroom is an overwhelming task.*

Before Reading:	After Reading:
_____ , because:	_____, because:

4. *Characteristics of authentic multicultural literature include:*

List your ideas before reading:	After Reading:

Figure 1

- Personal Perspectives—When I find an article or text topic that reflects a current issue in education, I create these bookmarks because they immerse the reader into the perspective of people who would be impacted by that issue. Typically, I've created bookmarks that focus on one of three different roles: teacher, principal, student. Each bookmark includes the main topic from the upcoming text or article assignment. Before reading the article, I instruct the students to look at their own role on their bookmark and fill in their responses, from this perspective, to two items (on the bookmark): "needs" and "concerns." Next, I tell the students to place the bookmark with the reading assignment and use it while reading the text (homework). After the reading, I assign the students to fill out the bookmark's final two sections: "text statements" and "your reactions." Their reactions must be written from the perspective of their bookmark's role (teacher, principal, or student). During the following class session, I use their completed bookmarks to discuss the assigned text.
- Reading Between the Lines—I have found that

teacher candidates do not typically reflect on their own inferential thinking processes (Herrmann & Sarracino, 1993; Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 1999). Their inability to do so has impacted the quality of their lesson plans about inferential questioning and thinking. I developed a bookmark adapted from Zwiers (2004) to guide them in developing their self-awareness of their own inferential thinking about text, while also providing them with a concrete framework to use for teaching this abstract skill to their future students. To prepare it, I developed three inferential questions about an assigned text. I created a 4 x 4 chart in landscape layout for the bookmark and labeled column 1 "Questions", column 2 "The text says…", column 3 "I know that…" and column 4 "Therefore…". I inserted each question, one per box, in column one (see Figure 2). In class, I reviewed the three questions and instructed the class to keep them in mind as they read the assigned text on their own. Next, I reviewed the heading of column two and told them to note textual information that addresses each question and fill it out as they read. For column three, they must think and write about what they already know about that information. For column four, they must draw their own conclusion by using the text information combined with their own background knowledge. During the following class session, I frame the discussion from their responses on the bookmark.

- Double-Entry Bookmarks (Tovani, 2000). I have often found that it is difficult to model the process of metacognition. By creating a bookmark that focuses the readers' attention on the author's writing and their thoughts about the content, I have embedded this process into my classroom practice. This bookmark contains two columns, the first labeled "Quotation (p. #)" and the second labeled "Reaction." Before reading the text, I instruct the students that as they read, they will highlight statements, words, or phrases that resonate with them and copy them down in column one. Next to each statement, in column 2, I tell the students to write their reactions to it. To scaffold this process, I describe and list sample reactions, such as: "This reminds me of…", "I don't understand this statement…", "I wonder why the author said…", "I agree with this…", etc. They will meet with a small group during the following class session to share their quotes and reactions. During their small-group discussions, I circulate the room and note quotes and reactions that are most relevant to the main ideas from the text. I use these notes to frame the whole-class discussion and activities.

Intentionality of the bookmark activities—When implementing bookmarks into the class reading assignments, it is most effective to discuss their benefits to learning near the end of the term. I direct the students to keep the bookmarks in their text books for the semester so that we can review them collectively. To begin the discussion, I often ask, "How would you describe your level of engagement when reading the text while using these bookmarks?" By listing their ideas and mapping them into comprehension processes (such as: schema activation, critical thinking,

Reading-Writing Connections (Ch. 11; Vacca, et al.)

Questions:	The text says…	I know that…	Therefore…
How are reading and writing related?			
How would you incorporate the writing process into your classroom's Writing Workshop?			
Compare Guided Writing to Guided Reading and Guided Modeling. Why is Guided Writing important?			

Figure 2

etc.), I guide the students to understand that their engagement was likely heightened and more conducive to higher levels of comprehension because each bookmark activated their schema, encouraged them to monitor their thinking while reading, and slowed their reading pace in order to attend to the items required on the bookmarks.

This discussion facilitates the teacher candidates' discovery that such activities, when thoroughly planned and implemented, allow the teacher to control the students' reading rate and engagement with the text—despite their reading the text without the teacher's presence. Finally, I continue the dissection of these tools by describing the various whole-class discussion activities that ensued after each bookmark was completed during the term. To sum up the discussion, I provide a t-chart handout for students to fill out independently, with the left column labeled "bookmark activity" and the right column labeled "comprehension processes". Students should fill in the chart as each bookmark is reviewed and discussed.

Authentic Post-Reading Activities

Posters

When teacher candidates experience the use of student-created posters as powerful learning tools, they, in turn, will more likely implement this strategy in their future classrooms. This authentic activity connects to the real world by encouraging the students to create a visually appealing chart that conveys critical information to a real audience: their peers.

- Content Area Word Walls—After reading and discussing a text, I assign the teacher candidates to create a graphic organizer for the academic language and/or key vocabulary they learned while reading the chapter or article and display them in the classroom. I typically divide the class into small groups and have each focus on specific sections from the text to create a graphic organizer that suits their section's purpose (i.e., flow charts for cause-effect information; Venn Diagrams for compare-contrast information; word sorts for descriptions of various topics; etc.). Before displaying their posters, each group should have time to teach their poster's content to the class.
- Persuasive Posters—After reading an article or excerpt about a current educational issue, I have the teacher candidates work with a partner or small group to brainstorm questions they have about this issue. After sharing the questions with the class, I guide the groups in framing their questions into surveys. Once each group has settled on a quantifiable survey question related to the article's issue, I tell the groups to go into the campus community and ask their question to their peers, faculty, and staff, requiring a minimum of 30 responses. When they meet back in the classroom, I provide materials for creating a poster and tell each group to display their questions and the survey results in a visually appealing and accessible manner on their posters. Finally, I spend the remaining class time (or begin the next session) having each group discuss and present to the class their poster's question, why it is relevant, its statistical results, and their analysis of the results' implications for future teachers. We then display the posters in the hallway for the campus to view.

  Intentionality of the posters—The creation of posters vs. taking notes or writing independently in notebooks is a powerful component of the learning process because through this activity, students must review their notes, collaborate with peers to organize their notes into meaningful contexts, and then present their information to the public. I have noticed that when students present information to the public, whether it be their peers or the community-at-large, they tend to increase their effort into making the information understandable, factually based, and interesting to read. They put in this extra effort because they are writing for both an authentic purpose and a real audience (Barnes, 2018).

  By shifting the purpose to creating content that their peers will value, teachers engage their students in truly authentic literacy. The students take pride in their work and feel accountable to the community to present them with credible information conveyed in a visually appealing way. If teachers only ever assign research papers, tests, and graded notes, the students will only write for their teachers—not a real audience. This is true for students of all ages, but made very evident to teacher candidates when they have the opportunity to reflect on their own output of effort into projects with a real audience. I have encouraged such reflection through freewriting about this experience in their writing notebooks and then building a discussion from their notebook entries.

Online Publications and eBooks

According to Vacca et al., (2015), "[s]upporting students' writing of electronic texts is one of the important reading-writing-technology connections that can be made in the classroom" (p. 338). Integral to the successful implementation of this process is the provision of similar experiences for teacher candidates in their own coursework. For example, after reading a variety of texts related to a principle unit of course study, I have assigned the teacher candidates to create a book with a familiar format, such as an alphabet book, or a "top ten" book. Each student (or pair of students) worked on one topic from the unit and developed their page for the class book. After

peer-editing and revising, I published their work into a class book and distributed copies to the students. This could be accomplished with online publishing, too—either as an eBook or through a self-publishing site. It is very powerful to have the class create a book and have an "Author Event" on campus—complete with author talks and signatures available to the attendees! I plan to further the publishing experience by creating an online Teacher Education Journal. My goal is to create a scholarly journal that publishes teacher candidates' research papers, creative writing related to education, essays, poems, reflections, and artwork.

Intentionality of publishing activities—After celebrating the students' published works, I ask them to describe in their writing notebooks their personal insights into participation in writing projects that resulted in authentic publications. I allow time for individuals to share their notebook entries with the class and guide them in understanding how the writing process was implemented in this activity. We share these entries as a whole group, discussing the benefits of writing for a real audience and the increased level of comprehension, authentic application of course content, and powerful reading-writing connections that were made manifest through this project. We typically close the discussion with a brainstorming session about creative publication venues to use with their future students.

Conclusion

Teacher candidates are excellent students. They've been students for more than half their lives and they know how to complete work, study for tests, take notes, and participate in class discussions. The real challenge for teacher educators lies in creating authentic classroom activities that teach content while also modeling effective pedagogy and methods in a way that moves the teacher candidates from the traditional-student mindset into the future-teacher mindset. The most common approach to creating that teacher mindset is to provide clinical experiences in real classrooms. However, without guidance from the education professor during in-class activities, teacher candidates tend to create lesson plans that reflect their own schooling experiences more than those modeled for them in their methods courses (Darling-Hammond, 2008). The education professor must not only model authentic teaching processes through content instruction, s/he must also intentionally dissect the activity so the teacher candidates will shift into the future-teacher mindset and confidently implement similar activities into their clinical experience lesson plans. Through this triage of in-class modeling, mindset-shifting discussions, and implementation into their clinical experiences, the teacher candidates will develop their abilities to think metacognitively about their strategic use of various teaching methods. Through the years of my own experience as a reading methods professor, I have witnessed increased usage of the literacy strategies in my students' lesson plans that I have not only embedded into my content instruction but also intentionally discussed. The teacher candidates articulate their instructional approaches in their lesson plans clearly, and demonstrate their readiness to shift into their professional teaching roles as they transition into their student teaching semester.

Literacy processes are integral to the learning of all content areas. Teacher educators will increase their teacher candidates' abilities to foster higher levels of comprehension and communication skills among their future students by embedding the modeling and intentional dissecting of authentic literacy methods across all content areas and grade levels. This is possible when teacher educators select authentic texts (articles, excerpts, text book chapters) and teach the content of these texts through the use of research-based literacy activities throughout the learning segment: pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. My goal has been to provide examples of authentic literacy activities for teacher educators to use as a starting point for embedding them into their own content area methods courses. Through my descriptions of discussing the intentionality of the activities, I aimed to encourage teacher educators to consider the development of their students' mindset shift. As teacher educators implement these activities, they will likely develop their own unique methods for intentionally integrating literacy methods into their courses while setting aside class time to dissect the activities and connect them to their students' clinical experience lesson plans.

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