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Teacher Candidate Book Introductions

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Authors' Notes

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TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive multi-case study was to explore teacher candidates' book introductions during their field-based studies in elementary classrooms. The participants were 11 undergraduate students (also teacher candidates) enrolled in a field-based reading course at a South Texas regional university. The lessons occurred in the teacher candidates' cooperating teachers' elementary classrooms. Five sources of data were analyzed using both a priori and open coding to determine themes. The book introductions included information related to the meaning of the text and helping students make connections to text; however, little to no syntactical or visual cue information was included. The findings have implications for reading course instructors to ensure that teacher candidates have many opportunities to see and practice the delivery of book introductions during guided reading instruction.

Keywords: guided reading instruction, preservice teachers, literacy schemata

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction

Linda, a teacher candidate (TC), and four first grade children are seated at a small table. Linda brings out a book that is a perfect choice for guided reading, as evident by the squeals of delight from the children. There is marked enthusiasm in her voice and on her face as she engages the children in a brief discussion of the story in order to build on their background knowledge. The story is about cats who are “friends” and “enemies,” and by the time the children are ready to read it, they have a firm understanding of these two terms. While observing this teacher, one would think this was her own classroom. She is putting into practice all that she has learned from her reading courses about setting the stage for guided reading instruction.

By the time our teacher candidates enter their reading field-based course (a course taken at an elementary school), the scenario above is what we would like to see occurring when it is time for them to teach an actual guided reading lesson. There are, however, existing barriers to this, such as limited opportunities for observation and practice prior to the field-based experience. A book introduction, like the one demonstrated in the opening narrative, takes place prior to the children’s reading of the text during guided reading instruction and is the “process of drawing the children into the activity [of reading] before passing control to the children and pushing them gently towards problem-solving the whole first reading of the story for themselves” (Clay, 1991b, p. 265). The literature surrounding book introductions, as Clay (1991b) defined them, is sparse. Book introductions usually receive only a brief mention in articles relating to comprehension of text, rather than going into depth about the actual language that teachers use during their delivery. More research is needed on which aspects of text teachers choose to focus during book introductions and why they make these decisions.

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Our TCs spend the majority of the final year of their educator preparation program in elementary classrooms completing field-based experiences. It is in this context that they put into practice what they have learned during their two years of courses focused on their major. They are expected to teach several lessons over the course of the semester. One issue we have encountered concerns small group guided reading instruction. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore TCs' verbal book introductions during their field-based studies in elementary classrooms and use what was discovered to evaluate what is being taught in the undergraduate reading courses that are precursors to this course at one university.

When we interviewed the participants for this study prior to observing their lessons, we asked them to share their knowledge of and experiences with guided reading. All indicated that they had discussed guided reading in at least three of their six reading courses. However, only half of them had observed a guided reading lesson in a classroom, and only half of those had taught or co-taught a guided reading lesson. This concerned us—no wonder they were apprehensive about teaching a lesson. They were unsure of how these lessons were supposed to “play out” (Leonor, interview, April 12, 2017; Hannah, interview, April 12, 2017) and they told us they wished they had more practice.

Our experiences above echoed those of other researchers (Garmon, 2005; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Shaw, Dvorak, & Bates, 2007), who have written about the importance of meaningful teacher candidate field experiences that include focused observation experiences of skilled inservice teachers. Our study was designed to add to the literature a dimension of guided reading instruction that is seldom addressed in regard to those studying to be teachers—the guided reading book introduction. As we examined the patterns in our own teacher candidates' lesson plans and transcripts, we sought to learn how to best improve the

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

teaching practice at our university, and possibly others, by exposing the facets of guided reading that needed more attention.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in both *social constructivism* (Vygotsky, 1978) and *psycholinguistic theory* (Goodman, 1967). Students learn best when they make connections to prior knowledge and experiences. This learning takes place through interaction and participation in activities that are interesting to them. Acquisition of academic concepts would not happen without deliberate instructional activities which should be carried out in the student's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky), which is the psychological "space" where students' experientially rich concepts meet the teacher's systematically organized academic concepts. Also, readers employ cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, and visual) to anticipate the upcoming text while reading (Goodman). Teachers use information based on observations of children's use of these systems and build book introductions around them.

Literature Review

Book introductions are teaching moments that are designed to make instructionally leveled texts more accessible to students and are delivered prior to a guided reading lesson. A "picture walk" is one way teachers help to introduce students to a leveled text by discussing its illustrations, format, genre, and structure. Stahl (2008) characterized picture walks as "a clearly defined protocol designed to yield student-generated discussion predictions about a text" (p. 364). While there is no script for picture walks, they are completed in a "page-by-page" manner (Stahl, p. 366). Briggs and Forbes (2009) and Lipp and Helfrich (2016), however, explained that a book introduction is not simply a "picture walk," rather it is a "carefully prepared introduction" to the text that opens many possibilities for understanding the text (Briggs & Forbes, p. 706).

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Stahl (2008) found the picture walk to be an effective technique for introducing texts to young readers when compared to two other instructional strategies (Directed Reading and Thinking Activity [DRTA] and Know-Want to Know-Learn [KWL]). The planning and delivery of the teacher's book introduction are pivotal and influence children's reading of the text, as "the teacher plans the teaching/learning interaction carefully, considering small group composition and text selection, selecting intentional lesson objectives. . ." (Gaffner, Johnson, Torres-Elias, & Dryden, 2014). Holdaway (1979) described the book introduction, or "tune-in", as "a brief, lively discussion in which the teacher interests the children in the story and produces an appropriate setting for reading it" (p. 142).

Definition of a Guided Reading Book Introduction and What It Includes

A book introduction is pre-planned, as the teacher has previously read the text and recognized areas that may prove difficult to readers. The teacher describes the basic story structure, looks at a few pictures with the students and discusses them, and establishes a basic story-line (Schwartz, 2005). There is no specific set of guidelines for the planning and delivery of book introductions, as each one is geared toward meeting the needs of specific students. There do exist, however, certain aspects teachers might consider while preparing students to read a text. Since readers search for three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic) (Clay, 1991a), it makes sense that a book introduction includes items related to these. How a teacher decides to attribute weight to each one depends upon the readers and the text. The teacher might approach the meaning of the text by pointing out illustrations, plot, or links to other texts they and the children have read together. Finding and rehearsing tricky literary language can address grammatical structure. The teacher and students can look at high frequency words and word parts to address the visual cueing system.

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Purposes of a Book Introduction

In studies which examined reading instruction (Pearson, 2009; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), inefficient time spent on teaching explicit reading strategies and reading comprehension was a concern (Fletcher, Greenwood, Grimley, Parkhill, & Davis, 2012). Researchers Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampston, and Echevarria (1998) rarely observed explicit comprehension instruction during classroom observations throughout the duration of the school year in a research study they conducted with ten teachers in grades four and five. The need for teachers to explicitly teach both comprehension and vocabulary when instructing students in guided reading is further documented by Liang and Dole (2006) and Paris and Hamilton (2009).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2017) placed a great emphasis on the teacher's book introduction, maintaining that, "The truest test of a teacher's selection of and introduction to a book is the child's reading of it" (p. 147). In other words, teachers will know immediately after the children read the text how supportive their book introduction was. Teachers can then take this information and use it to plan subsequent book introductions, adjust the amount of scaffolding during lessons, choose books, and decide what to teach next (Clay, 1991b).

Scaffolding. Vygotsky's theory (1978) is utilized in the discussion of the guided reading texts, as it "emphasizes social interaction as a tool for transmitting specific knowledge for learning how to construct problem solving activities" (Dorn, 1996, p. 16). Fountas and Pinnell (2012, 2017) described how teachers accomplish this by providing an introduction to the text that allows readers to complete some of the problem solving. This orientation helps children "build a stronger first understanding of the story" (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007, p. 744). It is an important step in the guided reading lesson, as teachers are delivering just the right amount of

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

scaffolding during these lessons. Clay (2005) stated, “In the first year or two of learning to read it helps if the child knows what the story is about” (p. 91) before reading. These introductions prime the readers, leaving them anxious to get their hands on the book!

Talking to build meaning around a text. Book introductions begin with the teacher, but unfold as conversations between the teacher and the children (Briggs & Forbes, 2009; Clay, 1991b; Labadie, Wetzel, & Rogers, 2012; Van Bramer, 2004; Van Dyke, 2008). These conversations are meant to be natural, revolve around the content of the text, and arouse children’s curiosity. The teacher helps the children build the meaning of the story by feeding information forward (Dorn, 1996) and helps them use their prior knowledge to make connections. The teacher also intently uses language to help children negotiate the “book language” that will inevitably appear, thereby encouraging children to “appropriate the words of others” (McIntyre, Kyle, & Moore, 2006, p. 41). Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2015) found that “Guided instruction that neglects to engage students’ prior knowledge is attempting to build comprehension in a vacuum, in the absence of a foundation that is needed to anchor new learning” (p. 113). It is during this time that teachers may ask inferential questions which can include discussions about vocabulary and comprehension. Here, students share what they know about the topic through “verbal display” (Kleeck, 2008). Additionally, Page and Meade (2018) found that “Vocabulary or lexical learning strategies . . . form an essential part in language development” (p. 1).

Book Introductions in Practice and in Reflection

The National Reading Panel (2000) and Snow (2002) found that little research had been conducted on how TCs teach reading. However, research does indicate the value of field experiences for TCs and the need for specific feedback, support, and guidance from teacher

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

educators in order to improve practices (Garmon, 2005; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Shaw, Dvorak, & Bates, 2007). Hanke (2014) found that some teachers struggle with interpretation and implementation of guided reading. Hodges, Blackwell, Mills, Scott, and Somerall (2017) discovered that “by engaging in carefully crafted teaching and learning experiences and subsequent reflection on those experiences, teacher candidates learn to make meaning of theories originating in classroom practice and develop theories of their own” (p. 35).

The importance of examining how teacher candidates conduct book introductions also lies in the knowledge and research gap described by Phelps and Schilling (2004). The lack of research into how teacher candidates develop content knowledge is overlooked because of the following: reading is often viewed as an integrated discipline, few individuals question teacher knowledge about reading, and more concern lies with TCs acquiring knowledge of general teaching methods and curriculum (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Phelps & Schilling, 2004). A recent study (Stefaniski, Leitze, & Fife-Demski, 2018) found that as teacher candidates had an opportunity to *practice teaching reading* they were able to tie student reading behaviors and assessments to their students’ reading ability. Providing teacher candidates with opportunities to practice book introductions in an authentic setting and giving them specific feedback on their delivery of book introductions support the development of effective instruction (Dillon, O’Brien, Sato, & Kelly, 2011). Putnam and Borko (2000) further supported teacher learning in authentic environments and training that is specific to current practice.

Studies have shown that critical reflection on experience continues to be an effective technique for professional development (Ferraro, 2000). Shulman and Quinlan (1996) described effective teachers as those who are able to reflect on their teaching. Teachers who received instruction in planning and organizing guided reading lessons, which included book

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

introductions, noticed improvement in students' reading comprehension (Abbot, Dornbush, Giddings, & Thomas, 2012). Shavelson, Webb, and Burnstein (1986) reported that, although teacher candidates' lesson reflections can be (potentially) limiting, they allow course instructors to gauge their processing of concepts learned in class.

Methods and Procedures

For this qualitative descriptive study, we analyzed the content of TCs' small group guided reading lesson book introductions, debriefed with TCs after their lessons, and interviewed them regarding their experiences. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) What is included in the content of the book introductions and how do the TCs decide on which areas to focus? 2) In what ways do TCs, working in a field-based setting, prepare book introductions for small group guided reading instruction and what are the qualities of these introductions? and 3) What do the TCs notice as they reflect on their lessons?

Participants and Setting

The participants involved in this study were 11 female undergraduate students (also TCs) between the ages of 20 and 30 enrolled in two sections of a reading field-based course at a South Texas regional four-year public university. The ethnicity breakdown is as follows: six White, four Hispanic, and one who identified herself as "other." The study occurred during the spring semester. Students classified as seniors who were seeking a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a specialization in reading. As such, all eleven students had completed the five prerequisite reading courses prior to enrolling in this course (i.e., early reading, elementary reading, diagnosis and correction of reading problems, content area reading, and children's literature). As part of the early and elementary courses, teacher candidates participate in several activities that are designed to familiarize them with guided reading instruction. These experiences include: 1) at

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

least three hour-long class sessions in each course that address guided reading instruction (foundations and examples through readings and videos) and 2) writing a guided reading lesson plan. During the diagnosis course, students tutor a child in a one-to-one setting where they are to implement guided reading instruction. In the reading field-based course, students are guided through the process of writing guided reading lesson plans and are encouraged to observe a guided reading lesson.

During the field-based experience courses, the TCs were present in their assigned classrooms two days per week for three hours at a time to observe and then teach lessons. The three authors were instructors at the same university, and, although the first and second author had previously taught all TCs in other courses, only the third author was currently serving as their instructor.

The actual small group guided reading lessons occurred in the TCs' cooperating teachers' classrooms; six were placed at a primary school that serves students in grades prekindergarten through two, and five were placed at an intermediate school that serves students in grades three through five. Both schools were located in the same district situated in a suburb of the small city where the university was located. Each TC conducted her lesson at a kidney-shaped table with two to five students in each group. The field-based experience course instructor and one of the first two authors were present for each lesson.

Data Collection

Interviews. We interviewed each participant prior to beginning the study to collect attribute data as well as information regarding their knowledge, values, attitudes, and beliefs related to small group guided reading instruction in the elementary grades (see Appendix A).

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Debriefing interviews. Immediately following each guided reading lesson observation, the researchers debriefed with the TC to gather information about her perception of the lesson. The researchers also provided feedback about the lesson if it was requested (see Appendix B).

Lesson plans. The teacher candidates were provided several examples of completed guided reading lesson plans by the course instructor, each of which contained explicit planning sections for book introductions (see Appendix C). The TCs then planned lessons of their own and the cooperating teacher and site professor reviewed the lessons and provided constructive feedback for any needed revisions. The researchers collected hard copies of these (one from nine TCs and two from two TCs who asked us to observe an additional lesson).

Small group guided reading lessons. Each small group guided reading lesson book introduction was audio-recorded and transcribed. Book introductions ranged from five to twelve minutes.

Field notes. Notes were taken related to the physical environment of the cooperating teacher's classroom and location of the small group lessons, as well as notes regarding the TCs' and students' body language, tone, volume, and expressiveness.

Data Analysis

Lesson Transcripts. We first read through each transcript quickly, getting an overall sense of each one. Then we used *a priori* (Saldaña, 2013) categories to begin coding each transcript, using Clay's (1991b, 1998) suggestions as to the content teachers might include in a book introduction: statements and questions having to do with the cueing systems: **meaning** (illustrations, connections to students and other texts, plot, topic); **structure** (review of book language, sentence patterns, syntax, punctuation); and **visual** (high frequency words, orthographic features). It is important to note here that the guided reading lesson plan provided

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

for the TCs included the subheadings *meaning*, *structure*, and *visual* to guide their planning. As a second cycle coding method, we applied *initial coding* to each small group guided reading lesson transcript. Charmaz (2006) recommended this coding method as it allows the researcher to remain open-minded in order to more thoughtfully consider the data collected. Additional teacher actions that did not fit into the *a priori* categories, such as text feature information, rapport with students, and student engagement, were applied to the book introduction transcripts.

Interviews. Following the small group guided reading lesson book introductions, these transcripts were analyzed. We coded interview transcripts and debriefing sessions according to *a priori* categories mentioned above.

Trustworthiness

We realized that, “A limitation of only using interviews of participants is that they may have chosen to tell the researchers what they thought they would want to hear” (Conner, 2010), so the observations of the researchers provided a means of triangulating the data (Fletcher et al., 2012). Also, guided reading lesson plans do not tell the whole story, so being able to align what occurred or did not occur during the book introduction alongside the TCs’ lesson plan notes was paramount. There were instances where information was included in the lesson plan, but not carried out during the lesson, and there were instances where the TC improvised during the actual lesson. The debriefing sessions added another layer of trustworthiness, as the TCs were given the opportunity to share the ways in which they negotiated the planning and execution of their book introductions. We each analyzed the collected information separately and then together to ensure reliability of codes and categories. Finally, we sent transcripts of interviews and debriefing sessions to participating TCs for their review as a form of member checking.

Findings

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Content of Teacher Candidate Book Introductions and Instructional Decisions

Lucia (April 26, 2017) mentioned in her interview the need to introduce a book “properly.” Among the TCs’ definitions of book introductions that are most aligned with Clay’s (1991b) were “getting the students prepared for the book they are going to be reading,” “making sure they have all the tools that they need in order to succeed,” and “it helps them know what the book’s about, what’s going to happen.” Sandra (interview, May 3, 2017) also understood the consequences of a poorly executed book introduction when she said, “I think if it’s not done well it can give them too much information or it can be boring or they won’t understand what you’re trying to get them to think about.”

Information about the text. During their interviews, most TCs mentioned that it is important to provide students with information about the book such as the title, author, and genre, as well as some text features, if applicable, such as the table of contents and the glossary (see Table 1).

Ten of the observed lessons included the title of the text, but two TCs never actually told the students what the title was. Two lessons included naming the author and illustrator and five included some discussion of the genre of the text used, mainly because the texts were unfamiliar to students and were usually works of folktales or nonfiction.

The TCs included content in their book introductions by focusing on additional areas where they could scaffold for understanding of the book: making meaning through illustrations; making meaning through plot or topic; making meaning through connections and background knowledge; and the introduction of vocabulary, and structure and visual clues (see Table 2).

Making meaning through illustrations. Every lesson included a picture walk, where the children examined each picture in the text in a page-by-page manner. The TCs invited

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

students to respond to the illustrations with statements and questions like, “Let’s look at the pictures and see what we can find out about the story before we read it” (Hannah, lesson transcript, April 26, 2017) and “What do you see in this picture?” (Amy, lesson transcript, May 3, 2017). When interviewed, the TCs volunteered that picture walks were important because “they help students like a guide” (Alissa, lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017) and “the pictures give them an idea of what they think the book might be about.” (Sandra, lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017). One TC, however, said, “basically you’re just going through the pictures” (Kendra, lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017). There was also an understanding that children need the pictures at the early reading levels; as one TC told her students, “the pictures are going to help you figure out what the text is saying” (Alissa, lesson transcript, May 3, 2017).

Making meaning through plot or topic. When interviewed, seven TCs discussed how teachers need to provide students with the gist of the text prior to inviting them to read it (see Table 3). They said that the gist includes the plot (for fiction text) and a summary of the book (beginning, middle, end) so that students will know what to expect when reading. One TC, Hannah, said “they [students] need to know beforehand what’s going to happen” (interview, April 26, 2017). Another said that providing the gist is a good way to “warm them up” (Alissa, lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017). Only two TCs referred to this process as having to do with “meaning.”

One TC indicated the gist of the text on her lesson plan; however, she provided an incomplete version of it during the actual lesson. Another gave the gist of the lesson but did not provide any related notes on her lesson plan. Three TCs included a summary of the text on their lesson plans, yet failed to tell students about the text at all.

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Making meaning through connections and background knowledge. All TCs helped students connect the text to their experiences. This usually occurred as a question/answer session where the TC asked the children specific questions related to the text, such as questions about their personal background knowledge (their lives outside of school), questions about children's experiences with something from the plot (fiction), questions about their knowledge of the world (fiction and nonfiction), or questions about the genre (see Table 4). Maria (interview, April 26, 2017) told us, "you can't grab a book that the kids don't know anything about," thereby showing that there is an understanding that guided reading instruction is geared toward students' reading and interest levels.

Introduction of vocabulary. During their interviews, all 11 TCs brought up the importance of introducing vocabulary words to children and all of them included vocabulary in their lesson plans. However, three neglected to include a vocabulary discussion during the actual book introduction. The lessons that contained vocabulary instruction prior to the reading of the text had an average of three words that were discussed. This number indicates that the TCs thought it important to not introduce too many vocabulary words, which showed that they have an understanding about keeping the text at their readers' instructional levels. When asked about vocabulary instruction specifically, one response was, "If there are that many new words in a text, it [the text] might be too hard" (Amy, lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017). Lucia (lesson transcript, April 26, 2017) began a discussion with her group by saying, "There are about five vocabulary words that we're just going to briefly go over; just to make sure that everyone knows what they mean."

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

In every instance where vocabulary words were the focus, the teaching occurred in a question/answer format while the TC asked students to locate the words in the text, such as in the following exchange:

Hissed. What do you think that word means? The word hissed means when cats go,

Hssss (made the sound) (Leonor, lesson transcript, April 26, 2017).

When asked how their cooperating teachers introduced vocabulary prior to the reading of a text, we received several responses similar to this one: “So, she’ll give examples and definitions. Then she’ll have the kids give their own definitions of what they think those words are” (Lucia, interview, April 26, 2017). It seems our TCs were emulating their mentor teachers by engaging in similar vocabulary instruction practices.

Structure and visual cues. Instruction on syntax (structure cues) was a missing component in all thirteen lesson plans and actual verbal book introductions provided during guided reading lessons. As such, there were no instances of TCs inviting children to rehearse complex book language and sentence structure.

Regarding the use of visual information, four TCs required their students to locate several high frequency words prior to reading the text with prompts such as, “We’re going to talk about some words that you might find difficult to read” (Sandra, lesson transcript, May 3, 2017). These particular instances were heard during lessons with students in the primary grade levels, where one might expect to see this practice as students are gaining control over accurate reading. These TCs mentioned in their interviews that pointing out sight words is important because it “gives children a connection that they’re learning those words for a reason and that they come up often in books” (Maria, April 26, 2017). Although no TCs indicated on their lesson plans that they would work with spelling patterns during the book introductions, four of them did. Prior to

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

their lessons, the consensus in interviews was that introducing some words that the students might struggle with was important because “when they read it [the text], they won’t struggle as much” (Minda, interview, April 26, 2017) and that the teacher needs to “make sure they are using their strategies to break down words” (Camille, interview, May 3, 2017). Only one TC actually used the term “visual cues” when discussing this part of the book introduction during her interview (Minda, April 26, 2017). Two TCs asked students to predict and locate a word based on the beginning letter. This is an example of that prompting.

How do you know it’s a house? I want you to point to the word, house. It has an H, right? (Sandra, lesson transcript, May 3, 2017).

Two other TCs requested that students look at inflectional endings of words, as in this interaction.

Box in the word combing with your fingers. It’s the same word – you just changed the ending (Melissa, lesson transcript, May 3, 2017).

How Teacher Candidates Prepared and Introduced Storybooks During Guided Reading

Choice of text. During the debriefing interviews, three themes emerged in the area of preparation: resources used, including text choices, and knowledge of students as readers.

Resources. The TCs used multiple resources to prepare for guided reading lessons, including their course textbook, the Reading A to Z website (<https://www.readinga-z.com/>), and the guided reading leveled library available at the school. The TCs chose the text they used based not only on the reading level of the students, but also on the perceived interest level of the students. They wanted to choose texts with which they were comfortable and that they knew would be a success for, what was for many of them, their first guided reading lesson. They indicated that they searched for books that would “pique their [students’] interest” (Amy, lesson

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

debriefing, May 3, 2017)) and books that would ignite discussions. Choosing books the students had not read before, books they could integrate with a content area and current topic of study, a genre that the students had not worked with lately, and books with lively illustrations were also mentioned as reasons for selecting texts.

Knowledge of students as readers. The information the TCs knew about their students influenced their choice of text and what they included in their lesson plan. Only three TCs knew their students' reading levels because they had worked with that group before; the others consulted with their cooperating teachers. Many TCs decided on which questions and teaching points to use based on prepackaged lesson plans that accompanied the texts, sometimes adapting these and adding their own ideas. They then plugged in this information on the lesson plan template provided to them by the course instructor. Only one TC mentioned using what she knew about her students to plan the lesson:

...knowing my students does really help me prepare for my lesson because knowing what their strengths and their weaknesses are helps; I always put a lot of effort into my lesson planning, so it makes it easier for me when I'm teaching it. I've had a lot of courses going over how guided reading lessons are supposed to play out (Leonor, lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017).

What the Teacher Candidates Noticed as They Reflected on Their Book Introductions

During the debriefing session that occurred after each TC's guided reading lesson, we opened the conversation up to them, asking them to reflect on their lessons. All began their reflections with a review of what they thought were the pros and cons of their lesson implementation. Each TC said they felt more confident and prepared to teach another lesson and had thought about what they might do differently. The most common deficiency mentioned was

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

that they had skipped some sections, and, after considering their students' responses, they realized the need to spend more time on certain parts of the introduction to prepare the students. Many also said they would practice more before their next lesson.

'Cause we always want to reflect, even if it's your thousandth guided reading lesson, you're always going to go back to that introduction and okay, how could I have been more supportive or do I need to be that supportive, was I too supportive? (Hannah, lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017).

We found that the TCs' reflections correlated with the themes identified in addressing our first research question: sharing information about the text, making meaning through illustrations, making meaning through plot or topic, making meaning through connections and background knowledge, the introduction of vocabulary, and structure and visual clues.

Information about the text. The majority of the TCs covered the title, author, and genre of the book, but reflected that they might have probed the students more on the purpose and importance of each of these terms. During Melissa's second lesson debriefing (May 3, 2017), she recognized that she had shared more of the information about the book and added that next time she might go over the name of the author and illustrator and ask the students what each person does. Lucia (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) said, "I also like showing them the table of contents and the glossary; this way, they know how to reference it." The importance of discussing the structure and genre of the text as a scaffold during the book introduction was reflected on by some TCs. Camille (lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017) shared, "I should have clarified the [structure of the text] a bit more so that way the book would have been probably a little bit easier for some."

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Making meaning through illustrations. Almost all TCs discussed “picture walks” and how those can facilitate the subsequent reading of the text. Some wished they had not taken as long on the picture walk, and others felt that they should have spent more time on certain pages of the book. Leonor said,

I know that it's important for students to understand what the book is going to be about, so to facilitate that I asked, what do you think the story is going to be about? I liked hearing their predictions because it builds anticipation—I've got to read this book to find out (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017).

In her first lesson debriefing, Melissa (April 26, 2017) reflected, “I would again look at the pictures; the pictures tell you a lot about the story. So the pictures definitely helped my group understand what was going to happen.”

Making meaning through plot or topic. Almost all TCs commented on not giving away the ending of the story. They reflected on the fact that they wanted to share a few important events throughout the text to pique student interest, but wanted the students to be excited to read and find out the resolution to the problem on their own. Leonor (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) reflected, “The book introduction is, to me the most important part of the story because it gives them that little hook or grasp in the beginning for them to actually want to read it.” Alissa, in her lesson debrief (April 26, 2017), said, “It went well because I told them what the story was going to be about—I didn't give them the ending.”

Making meaning through connections and background knowledge. Kendra (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) said, “I was trying to connect my book introduction with their background knowledge and things that maybe they've experienced that maybe they can connect with the text.” Other TCs talked about the importance of recognizing the students' schemata

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

because “it helped their interest level and made the book and lesson more meaningful” (Alissa, lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017). The TCs reflected on the fact that the students had to be interested in the topic. In their book introductions, they noted it was important that they help students to make connections beforehand and to see the relevance of the text. Lucia (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) said, “You really have to plan the questions and practice so that you are excited and show that to students. Then they will be too.”

Introduction of vocabulary. Many TCs mentioned the relationship of the text’s vocabulary to student comprehension. Minda (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) said, “I knew that some of them [students] struggled with comprehension, so I just went ahead and assumed that some words might be tricky for them.” Maria mentioned in her debriefing interview (April 26, 2017) what she would do differently in her next lesson. “I would discuss the vocabulary; they would have known what the words meant [while reading] and they would not have been so confused.”

Visual clues. Seven of the TCs, including all of those teaching in primary grades, discussed how they introduced high frequency words that students would encounter during the reading by drawing the students’ eyes to the classroom word wall. Melissa (lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017) reflected on how she scaffolded the reading of a new word when she reminded the student to cover up the suffix and read the root word first. Another, Camille (lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017), discussed how she could have helped students break apart words during the introduction. She said, “I would actually have liked to put the words in[to] syllables for the kids, just have them on the desk so that way they can look at that, too.”

Scaffolding. During their reflections, the TCs emphasized the nuances and challenges of providing the right amount of support for the children through the venue of the book

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

introduction. Kendra (lesson debriefing, April 26, 2017) shared, “I think it’s important because if they have that information, they won’t be as intimidated about reading. . . it will get them to think more critically about their reading.” Melissa (lesson debriefing, May 3, 2017) stated, “. . . some kids just aren’t excited about reading, so you give them an opportunity where another classmate . . . is excited about a book and . . . it might change their attitude towards reading.” Lucia (debriefing, April 26, 2017) said, “It has to be very structured, like, you can’t just grab a book and go for it.” The TCs shared their awareness of the benefits of successful book introductions as related to overall student enjoyment of reading and the fact that what they planned mattered.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which teacher candidates at one university implemented their prior knowledge of guided reading book introductions in elementary school classrooms during a field-based reading course. As we observed the TC participants’ lessons and debriefed with them, we agreed that a passion and excitement for teaching reading existed amongst them all. They were eager to reflect out loud about their lessons and responded to feedback that helped them to think deeply about lesson elements, such as designing book introductions based on the needs of their readers and considering the cueing systems (i.e., semantics, syntax, and visual cues). The TCs’ lesson plans told the story of how they envisioned their book introductions. Their actual book introductions revealed what they chose to invite the children to attend to, and their reflections during interviews with us helped them reconcile the two. The TCs’ overuse of the term “picture walk” during interviews led us to believe that this was a term the instructors were using in the reading courses students took prior to the field-based course and that perhaps the TCs were equating the book introduction with a

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

simple page-by-page journey through the texts' illustrations. Even though the picture walk is an effective technique (see Stahl, 2008), it can turn into a monotonous overture to the guided reading lesson if it is the only means of introducing the book. It also turns out that the lesson plan the TCs were instructed to use not only lists "picture walk" as one of the "before reading" strategies, but lists it first. However, after interviewing each TC, it seemed they were not viewing the book introduction as just a "picture walk" after all (Briggs & Forbes, 2008; Lipp & Helfrich, 2017), but an instrumental piece of the guided reading lesson that was more complex than this simple term suggests. Looking across all sources of data helped to understand how the TCs handled the task of working with children in a guided reading setting; in other words, the ways in which they supported the reading of a new text by way of scaffolding.

A Focus on Meaning and Comprehension Through Conversation

The teacher candidates included salient information that pertained to the meaning of the text in their lesson plans, which showed an understanding that this information would drive students' reading of the text. Almost every TC captured the attention of the children by helping them connect their prior knowledge to the text's topic. This noticing aligns with research that has previously been conducted, which points to the need to introduce prior knowledge (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2015) in order to facilitate comprehension instruction during guided reading instruction (Liang & Dole, 2006; Paris & Hamilton, 2009). In fact, Cervetti, Wright, and Hwang (2016) found that students with greater background knowledge had more success with word learning and better comprehension of informational texts. This intentional time devoted to initiating conversation prior to reading the text is a reflection of social learning theory; how "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level..." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

There were several cases when the book introduction execution did not match the lesson plans. In other words, the TCs either did not follow their plans, which resulted in a haphazard book introduction, or they did not include sufficient information about the gist of the text for students prior to their reading of it. Clay (2005) placed high importance on children knowing a little about a story before reading it. Hanke's (2014) study found inservice teachers sometimes struggle with implementing guided reading in the classroom, so it seems normal for these TCs to be working at the novice level.

Their lack of focus on visual information during lesson implementation differs from other study findings (Pletcher & Christensen, 2017; Brown, 2003; Hoffman et al., 1984) and points to how their reading course instructors have placed heavy emphasis on reading for meaning. We also believe that this stress on meaning may have acted as a default mechanism when the TCs were unsure of what else to do with the book introduction. While a smart choice, it perhaps prevented them from working in their students' ZPDs in other areas (Vygotsky, 1978). As mentioned previously, most TCs did not know the students well as readers, thus making it quite difficult to plan a book introduction tailored to their needs.

Use of Cueing Systems

Our undergraduate reading program curriculum includes many examples of the cueing systems and how readers use three sources of information (meaning, structure, and visual) to read text (Goodman, 1967). Goodman and Clay (1991a) wrote about the ways in which readers "cross-check" one cue against another and may reread after a strong self-monitoring of the text if something does not match up. They argue, however, that the source that drives the reading of a text is meaning, and that the other two cues cannot stand alone. Our participants have grasped this concept during their previous courses, as their focus was squarely on comprehension,

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

evident in both their lesson plans and their actual book introductions. Visual and structure information, however, seemed to take a backseat in their planning and delivery of book introductions. The structure piece, especially, seems to have caused the greatest confusion as our TCs tried to negotiate the ways in which this piece works with the others to facilitate accurate reading. This may explain why attention was not given to structure cues on lesson plans or during verbal book introductions.

All TCs had solid rapport with their students, even though they were nervous since most were not used to working with these particular students and they were being recorded. However, they taught their lessons as though they were the main teacher in the room, confident in their abilities. We recorded words such as “smiling,” “patient,” “enthusiastic,” “expressive,” and “patient” to describe their demeanors, and we indicated that several of our participants were “naturals.” All TCs praised their students in some way; several had to redirect students, but did so in a nurturing manner. During all lessons observed, the children were excited to read the text, as evidenced by their eye contact with the TC, their smiles, the questions they asked, and the overall engagement in conversations surrounding the book. Most children participated fully in the lesson and were responsive. Overall, our findings indicated that the TCs had learned what should be included in a book introduction, but needed more practice with small group guided reading to implement their own book introduction lessons successfully.

Implications

This study has several implications for the work that university literacy education professors do in reading instruction courses. At our university, teacher candidates complete five reading courses prior to enrolling in the reading field-based course that was the context for this study. By this point in time, it is expected that they have a solid foundation in understanding the

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

reading process, and this includes the teaching of small group guided reading lessons, more particularly the book introduction part of these lessons. The findings from this study will assist reading teacher educators, those who teach in the university classroom and those who teach in the field, in designing lessons with undergraduate students. Findings will also provide teacher educators, field-based supervisors, and mentor teachers with specific information to look for while observing TCs as they deliver book introductions during small group reading instruction. In other words, teacher educators need to help teacher candidates understand and use the cueing systems (Clay, 1991a; Goodman, 1967) in optimal ways to support readers through book introductions. Our findings will also help teacher educators and mentor teachers coach TCs in the delivery and reflection of their book introductions, with the goal of successfully scaffolding children's first reading of texts in a small group guided reading setting.

The findings presented here have made evident the need to continue to press the importance of the book introduction in grades one through five. This means making sure that the book introduction is not only covered in all reading courses, but that course instructors provide several examples and opportunities for practice. This time for practice helped preservice teachers in Sefaniski et al.'s (2018) study engage in the process of tying the observation of student behaviors to actual reading instruction. Undergraduate students can practice writing book introductions for all genres and levels with one another in pairs and small groups, and later write and deliver book introductions in a reading diagnosis course where they work with students in a one-to-one tutorial situation.

As part of their field-based coursework, instructors need to make sure teacher candidates are observing guided reading lessons at several grade levels and taking diligent notes, perhaps using a protocol or blank lesson template. Then, as they teach lessons, they can record them and

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

reflect later, taking note of the ways in which teachers supported their readers, asking questions such as, Did they support their readers enough? Too much? What evidence of this support did I see in the subsequent reading of the text? How do I now take what I learned and apply it to the next lesson I teach? We want to make sure TCs are teaching more than one lesson per field-based semester, so that they enter their student teaching experience, and later their own classrooms, fully prepared to continue this work.

Limitations

A small sample of teacher candidates was used at one university. Also, these TCs were limited as to what lessons they could implement due to their status as guests in their cooperating teachers' classrooms. The cooperating teachers with whom they worked during the semester possessed varying levels of knowledge about guided reading instruction and therefore each put into practice various shades of the strategy in their classrooms. There existed several variables that were beyond our control, such as the range of grade levels and text gradients and the differences in text genres. These variables limited our ability to detect some patterns. For many of these undergraduate TCs, this guided reading lesson was the first one they had taught, which may have instilled some nervousness while being observed. Since we were at the mercy of the school and the willingness of the participants, it was only feasible to collect data on one guided reading lesson per participant, which is also a limitation of our study.

Directions for Future Research

There are many possibilities to build on this study by conducting similar studies with *practicing* teachers of varying levels of teaching experience. We want to find out the kinds of preparation related to guided reading instruction that practicing teachers have and how they continue their professional development in this area. Also, in what ways do they reflect on their

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

book introductions? What information about students do practicing teachers use to write book introductions and guided reading lessons and where do they obtain this information?

The book introduction segment of the guided reading lesson prepares children for what is coming and is intended to set them up for a successful reading of the text. It also acts as a model for children to be able to preview books on their own and introduce texts to themselves. This part of the guided reading lesson is vital, as it can “make or break” the subsequent reading of the book. Therefore, it is worth the time devoted to teaching teacher candidates ways to plan, implement, and reflect on guided reading book introductions.

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Tables

Table 1. Book Information Presented during Book Introductions

<u>Type of information</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Title	10
Text features	9
Genre	5
Author	2
Illustrator	2

Table 2. Other Areas of Instruction Presented during Book Introductions

<u>Content</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Making meaning through illustrations	13
Making meaning through background knowledge	13
Vocabulary	13
Making meaning through plot or topic	7
Visual cues	4
Structure cues	0

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Table 3. Examples of Book Introductions

Examples of Delivered Book Introduction Summaries that Were Delivered as Written	
Written Book Introduction	Delivered Book Introduction
<i>This is a story about a very mean king. This mean king does not like to laugh, dance, smile, or sing. This very mean king does not let his people laugh, dance, smile, or sing as well. Let's read the story and see how the very mean king and his people begin to laugh, dance, smile, and sing!</i>	<i>Okay so, we're going to read a book about a very mean king. This king doesn't like to laugh, dance, or smile. He doesn't even let his people laugh, dance, or smile. We're going to read to find out what happened and how they end up dancing and smiling. Very good! And what are they doing? They're happy, right?</i>
<i>Today we're actually going to learn about how they make it from a jar. This book is about two little boys who decide that they want to go make popcorn and they're trying to figure out why their Mom would leave the jar of popcorn in the refrigerator. So, while one boy is making the popcorn, the other boy is reading fun facts about the other popcorn.</i>	<i>The Popcorn book is a fun little picture book about twins cooking popcorn. While one twin is cooking the other twin looks up amazing popcorn facts. As he reads aloud, we learn about the ancient history of popcorn and the surprising ways it's been used.</i>
Example of a Book Introduction Where the PST Delivered Part of What Was Written on the Lesson Plan	
Written Book Introduction	Delivered Book Introduction
<i>In this story, a rabbit goes on a balloon ride and sees a lot of different things. Let's read the story and see what the rabbit sees on his balloon ride.</i>	<i>So today we are going to read a book about a rabbit.</i>

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Example of a Book Introduction Where the PST Delivered a Book Introduction that Was Not Indicated on the Lesson Plan	
Written Book Introduction	Delivered Book Introduction
Not indicated on lesson plan	<p><i>So, today we're going to read book about a sandwich shop.</i></p> <p><i>Today we are going to be talking about guessing, or making predictions about what might happen in a story.</i></p>
Example of Book Introduction that Was Indicated on the Lesson Plan but Was Not Delivered During the Lesson	
Written Book Introduction	Delivered Book Introduction
<p><i>In this story, we meet a fisherman who catches something unexpected. Have you ever gone fishing before? What do you think the fisherman caught? Let's see what was so magical about this fish.</i></p>	Did not deliver gist of text

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Table 4. Questions Asked Related to Children's Background Knowledge

Questions asked related to children's personal background knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have your grandparents ever told you guys a story? <u>Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs</u>, where the grandfather is telling an odd story.</i>
Questions about children's experiences with something from the plot (fiction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you think you would see if you took a balloon trip? <u>The Balloon Trip</u>, where a rabbit takes a trip in a hot air balloon and sees things from a bird's eye view.</i>
Questions asked related to knowledge of the world:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do penguins live? Where is Antarctica? <u>Penguins</u>, an informational text • What is a kernel? <u>The Popcorn Book</u>, an informational text. This PST also brought in a corn kernel to show students.
Questions asked related to genre:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>So, Rumpelstiltskin is a fairy tale. Okay, and we know that cause if we look in the front we see that...it starts with, "Once there was a," so usually fairy tales starts with once upon a time or, In a faraway land."</i>

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

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TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

- Which of the following READ courses have you taken? 3310 Early Reading, 3320 Elementary Reading, 3351 Diagnosis, 3352 Content Area Reading, 4380 Children's Literature)
- What have you learned in your previous READ courses (3310, 3320, 3351, 3352) regarding providing book introductions during small group guided reading lessons?
 - What do you feel is important to include in a guided reading lesson book introduction for students reading at early text levels (guided reading levels A through L)?
 - What do you feel is important to include in a guided reading lesson book introduction for students reading at later text levels (guided reading levels M through Z)?
- Why do you feel these are important?
- If you were to audio- and video-tape an expert teacher's guided reading book introduction of a fiction text, what would you want to see and hear?
- If you were to audio- and video-tape an expert teacher's guided reading book introduction of a nonfiction text, what would you want to see and hear?
- In what ways might a guided reading book introduction help or hinder students' subsequent reading of the text?

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Appendix B

Lesson Debriefing Protocol

- Tell us about your guided reading lesson today, in particular, the book introduction that you provided for your group of students.
- What went well?
- What information did you provide for your students in order to set them up to read the text? How did you know to provide this information?
- How did this information help (or not) your readers read the text?
- What might you do the same next time? Why?
- What might you do differently? Why?

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Appendix C

Lesson Plan Template

Book Title:	Grade:	Book Level:
Date:	Genre:	
Teaching Objective:		
Book Introduction: (include meaning, structure, visual) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult Words/Vocabulary (include page numbers):• Background Knowledge:		
Before: Picture Walk/Reading Strategy Review/Lesson Objective/Vocabulary <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.		
During: Focus on punctuation in story and include reading prompts <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.		
After: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the story• Return to Teaching Point		

TEACHER CANDIDATE BOOK INTRODUCTIONS