

VOLUME 13, SPRING 2013

Reading Matters

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE COUNCIL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION



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Reading Matters

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

Volume 13, Spring 2013

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

SCIRA's *Reading Matters*

Classroom teachers, teacher educators, administrators, and researchers are invited to submit manuscripts to SCIRA's professional journal, *Reading Matters*. Authors are requested to submit unpublished work not under consideration by any other publication.

Types of Submissions:

Reading Matters welcomes practical, theoretical, and research articles, generally no more than 15 pages, related to all areas of literacy.

Articles should be clearly written, purposeful, and discuss the topic in some depth where treatment of the topic is interesting, insightful, and based on the writers' experience. Brief commentary pieces on teaching literacy are welcomed, as well as short teaching tips, teacher or student poetry, vignettes of classroom experiences, and student artwork (with parental permission).

Manuscript Form:

Manuscripts should follow APA 6 style guidelines. Please be sure to include an abstract. As manuscripts are subject to blind review, content should not reveal author identities or affiliations. Full references for all citations should be included, following APA guidelines.

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscripts should be typed in Microsoft Word and sent as an email attachment to sarah.hunt-barron@converse.edu and jmalloy@andersonuniversity.edu. When naming your file, please use simple, clear file names. Include a cover page giving the author(s)' names, affiliation, complete mailing address, email address, and home and work telephone numbers. Manuscripts will be peer reviewed and edited for style, content, and space limitations by the editor.

The Review Process:

Manuscripts undergo a blind-review process, with at least two reviewers from the Editorial Review Board. Acceptance decisions are based on interest and relevance to SCIRA membership, usefulness, clarity, timeliness, and cohesiveness. The overall balance of the journal's content also influences editors' selections.

Manuscript Deadline: July 1, 2013

The President's Message

Callie Herlong



On behalf of the South Carolina State Council of the International Reading Association, it is a pleasure to bring greetings in this year's thirteenth edition of Reading Matters. Sarah Hunt-Barron and Jacquelynn Malloy, co-editors, and their committee have done an outstanding job to produce this professional journal. We are proud of this journal and appreciate the diligent work of many contributors. As you put the pieces together in literacy this year, these articles will inspire new ideas to use in your classrooms and educational settings.

SCIRA and IRA work to provide opportunities for professional development through annual conferences, a Young Writer's Conference, a literacy workshop, newsletters, journals, and websites. SCIRA encourages its members to continue to grow professionally by applying for the Mary A. Kelly and Florence Nelson Scholarships, Teachers as Readers grants, Elementary

and Adolescent grants, and Community Service Grant Awards. Schools are encouraged to apply for the Exemplary Reading Award. You can find more information about these opportunities at our website, www.scira.org.

Mark your calendar for the 38th annual SCIRA conference, Literacy: Putting the Pieces Together, scheduled for February 21-23, 2013 at the Sheraton Myrtle Beach Hotel and Convention Center. Melissa Nicholson and her committees are working hard to provide an outstanding conference program. Be sure to renew your SCIRA and IRA memberships to keep abreast of the latest trends in promoting literacy.

Letter from the Editors

Sarah Hunt-Barron & Jacquelynn Malloy

Dear Readers,

It matters. What you do in the classroom matters in the lives of your students. As we considered this issue of Reading Matters, we started asking questions about what matters in literacy instruction. Our conclusion? It all matters, and you'll see this reflected in Reading Matters' new format.

For our inaugural issue as co-editors, we added some new sections and revised some favorites. You'll find Jonda McNair's annual review of the latest children's books in the section titled Literature Matters. Tips for teaching and stories from the classroom are now in the Teaching Matters section, and in this issue you'll find articles focused on integrating the arts and literacy, implementing the Common Core State Standards, and guiding struggling and emergent readers.

Research articles continue to be a vital part of the journal as well. Research Matters is an opportunity for teachers and researchers to share their latest findings. In this issue, research articles discuss Kindles in middle school classrooms, the impact of grammar instruction on writing, and English learners' perspectives on effective literacy strategies.

As the demographics in our state continue to evolve and change, a section of the journal devoted specifically to English language learners seemed especially relevant. We added a new section, Language Matters, to meet this need and invited Ysaaca Axelrod to address the literacy instruction we offer ELs in our classrooms. Similarly, as the digital world continues to change at warp speed, we are introducing a section devoted to Technology Matters, and invited an article by Ryan Visser and Leah Evering to highlight technology for literacy instruction. As these two sections will likely continue to be relevant, we invite you to add your voice by submitting an article to a future issue on either of these topics. To aid you in



Sarah Hunt-Barron



Jacquelynn Malloy

this, we've added a final section that discusses the manuscript submission process titled You Matter, because you do.

As co-editors, we are thrilled to be taking on the challenge of putting together an online journal for the first time and the opportunities that come with this new format. We hope you'll take advantage of the "comments" section found under each article on our site. This is a place to share reactions, ideas, and ask questions about the articles you read. We hope conversations will continue long after the journal first appears online. You'll also see the use of hyperlinks to relevant resources in the Technology Matters article by Ryan Visser and Lea Calvert Evering. This is our first foray into providing online resources for journal articles and we hope to continue this feature as the journal moves forward.

It's been a distinct pleasure to put together this "2.0" version of Reading Matters. We hope you enjoy this 14th edition and as always, we welcome your comments and feedback.

Sincerely,
– Sarah and Jackie

Secondary English Language Learners' Views on the Effectiveness of Instructional Strategies: A Phenomenological Study

Risë W. Strickland
Rock Hill High School, SC

The majority of American public education systems are not prepared to meet the legislated educational needs of increasing populations of ELLs (Micklos, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). In addition to funding, obstacles to developing educational programs for ELLs include limited research data from which to develop programs and limited availability of teacher training to enhance learning results for ELLs. Secondary level ELLs are enrolled in a system that requires them to learn the English language while mastering course content in English to earn a state-endorsed high school diploma. Teachers are frustrated by the lack of training and limited research-based strategies proposed for use with secondary ELLs. Time constraints and the language barrier between teacher and ELL limit the feedback the teacher receives about the ELL learning process.

Multiple learning theories influence our understanding of how to best serve secondary ELL students: Cognitive constructivism (Bruner, 1983; Piaget, 1955, 1972); language acquisition (Cummins, 1981, Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2003; Ernst, Moore, & Maloney, 2002; Krashen, 1992, 2003; Thomas & Collier, 2002); social learning (Hausfather, 1996; McCaffery, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978), and; cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). While these theories support the use of selected instructional strategies with ELLs, little is known regarding the input or reactions from ELLs about the use of the varied strategies.

Methods

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon of being an ELL at high school in the southeastern US. The focus of the study was to research and present the perceptions of eight Hispanic ELLs regarding the effectiveness of the strategies promoted for instructional use at the secondary level. There were four female and four male participants. The four females were all aged 15; of the four males, three were 16 and one was 15. The country of birth for all participants is Mexico, and their first and preferred language is Spanish. None of the participants spoke English before coming to the United States when they were between 10 and 13 years of age. A phenomenological methodology (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2006) was employed because meaning was constructed from the study participant interviews and surveys. In this study, the voices of the ELL participants are used as the endorsers for which the effectiveness of instructional strategies is viewed at the secondary level.

Four audio recorded interviews, each approximately 15

minutes in length relating to a specific instructional strategy and one debriefing session, approximately 30 minutes in length, were conducted privately with each study participant (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviews were transcribed, and then analyzed using nine steps in Hatch's (2002) typological analysis. Survey responses from eight study participants were analyzed using Creswell's (2003) segmenting of information to find properties within each category that were counted to reveal the frequency of each response type by applying Mills' (2003) coding strategy for a quantitative analysis.

To validate and verify the quality of the research, methods of analysis included triangulation of different data sources, rich, thick descriptions, member checking, the use of two peer debriefers, and a presentation of negative or discrepant information when the findings revealed different perspectives of the effectiveness of an instructional strategy. Findings and interpretations were forwarded to all study participants and peer debriefers for review. Participants and peer debriefers responded that they agreed with the researcher's findings and interpretations.

Summary of Findings

In order to answer the research question, *What are ELLs' views about the effectiveness of the strategies proposed for use in their high school?* four typologies of strategies were generated for study (Hatch, 2002). These included the use of key words, tape-recorded lessons, establishing a peer buddy, and cooperative groups. Analysis of the data indicate that of the eight Hispanic ELL study participants, 100% believe that key words is an effective instructional strategy for understanding lesson content, 87.5 % believe that the use of cooperative learning is an effective instructional strategy for understanding lesson content, 75% believe that the use of a peer buddy is an effective instructional strategy for understanding lesson content, and 62.5% believe that tape recorded lessons are an effective instructional strategy for understanding lesson content.

Interpretation of Findings

This study explored how eight Hispanic ELLs functioned in an American high school where classes were conducted in English, without language acquisition assistance, and where course credit expectation levels to earn a high school diploma were uniformly maintained for all students. This study provides a reaction from ELLs about the perceived effectiveness of four research-based strategies promoted for use with secondary ELLs.

Key Words

Of the four strategies, key words had the highest perception rating as being effective for understanding lesson content among the ELL study participants (100%). Several participants expressed that key words on the board drew their attention to what is important about the content of the day's lesson while also identifying gaps in background knowledge and exposing new English vocabulary words. The summarization that it is a combination of English language knowledge, content knowledge, and the manner in which tasks should be accomplished that make up the major components of academic literacy is supported by Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006) and by Piaget (1955) who maintained that learners change new experiences to make them fit with their present concepts (assimilation), and adapt their concepts as they add new experiences (accommodation). Assimilation and accommodation are ongoing processes that help shape our understandings. These participant comments support the use of key words as an effective instructional strategy because it controls language with the use of key vocabulary that presents the concepts in a concrete manner (Freeman & Freeman, 2001), preserves the features of the text that convey meaning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996), and makes the content comprehensible (Pilgreen, 2006; Roit, 2006). The vocabulary and bulleted points allow learners to quickly assess their understanding of what is known and what needs to be learned. When students use key words to build vocabulary, understand new concepts or to consider new ideas, they are using cognitive structures to transform information and make decisions (Bruner, 1983). Learners continually build upon what they have already learned. Hausfather (1996) proposed that scaffolding information (key words) is an effective strategy to access Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development where a learner can perform a task under a teacher guidance that could not be achieved alone.

Tape Recorded Lessons

Of the four strategies, tape recorded lessons had widest difference in perception of effectiveness among the ELL study participants (62.5%). Three of the female participants reported using the tapes every day, one of the females and three of the males reported using the tapes most days, and one of the male participants reported that he never used the tapes. Among the study participants, gender and frequency of use appear to be distinguishing characteristics in views of effectiveness. The goal of using taped recorded lessons as an instructional strategy is to provide ELLs with an audio of the daily lesson that they may use to assist with improving comprehension of English as a language and with unlimited opportunities to listen to the twenty to twenty three minute lessons for comprehension of course content. Each study participant was provided with a cassette player and daily lesson cassettes. All the female ELL study participants (100%) support the use of tape recorded lessons to understand the important parts of a lesson, to take notes, to fill in gaps in notes, to review for tests, and to practice understanding English as a language. The perception by the female study participants that tape recorded lessons are an effective instructional strategy is reflected in Ernst, Moore, and Maloney's (2002) encouragement

of activities that focus on listening comprehension for content, Krashen's (1992) strategies to help ELLs become more comfortable with speech emergence, and Cummins (1981) insistence that ELLs must be able to move from conversational fluency to academic language fluency to achieve academic success.

Among the male ELL study participants, 25% never listened to the tapes, and 75% reported using the tapes most days, but only listening one time or to only a portion of the tape, instead of multiple times as reported by the females. Time constraints outside of school and the perception that because they had already heard the lesson before in class that there was nothing new to be learned from listening to the lesson tape again were the reasons that the male ELL study participants stated as why they did not view tape recorded lessons as an effective strategy.

Cooperative Learning Groups

Of the four instructional strategies, cooperative learning groups with a mix of native English speakers and ELLs is perceived among the study participants (87.5%) as being the second most effective instructional strategy for understanding course content. The participants in the study were assigned as members of cooperative learning groups with other members who represent a different gender, the same gender, an equal mix of genders, native English speakers, other Hispanic ELL, and a mix of both types of speakers to determine if these characteristics influenced the perceived effectiveness of cooperative learning as an instructional strategy.

With regard to gender, 75% of the study participants said an equal mix of males and females in the group works best while 25% said all or more females in the group works best. The female participants favored work ethic as the key characteristic for a successful cooperative group while for the males' preference for working with the females appears to be for social aspects.

When considering language of cooperative group members, 100% of the study participants agreed it is best to have an equal mix of Spanish and native English speakers in a cooperative group. It is better to place the ELLs with native English speakers who practice good English, have good work ethics, and are socially accessible. Vygotsky proposed that social interaction is the main influence of cognitive development. In his framework, Vygotsky focused on the connection between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences. Sabadie (2002), Hawkins (2004), and Au (2002) support the idea of creating a comfortable learning environment where students engage socially and academically to achieve success. The study participants supported this idea in interview statements relating to wanting to work with others who share in their desire to learn and do the work as being more important than a shared language, but when asked to make a choice, study participants perceived native English speakers as more helpful to them than other ELLs as members of cooperative learning groups. The preference to improve English skills through purposeful engagement in conversation is supported by Cummins (1981), Krashen (2003), and Thomas and Collier (2002).

Peer Buddy

Of the four strategies, peer buddy has the third highest perception among the study participants as being effective as an instructional strategy for understanding course content. The participants in the study were assigned peer buddies of a different gender, the same gender, native English speakers, and other Hispanic ELL students to determine if these characteristics affected the perceived effectiveness of peer buddy as an instructional strategy. The interview and survey responses of the study participants support that ELLs perceive female native English speakers as more effective peer buddies for understanding the content of the course than males or Hispanics.

Language acquisition and social theorists support the perception by 75% of the study participants that working with a peer buddy who is a native English speaker is an effective instructional strategy. Participants who stated that they preferred working with a native English speaker to improve their English language skills are supported by Krashen's (2003) theory that "subconscious language acquisition" occurs when the language learner is purposely engaging in conversation to improve language acquisition. The use of a peer buddy for improving language skills encourages conversational fluency and academic fluency (Cummins, 1981; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development theory supports the idea that social interaction is the main influence of cognitive development. It is the connection between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences that allow learning to take place. Au (2002) also supports that learning is the product of social systems. Hawkins (2004) expands the thought to include that students must negotiate both socially and academically in order to learn. In working with a peer buddy, students participate in English language, content, and social learning.

Recommendations for Action

One limitation of this study is that it reflects the views of eight Hispanic students at a southeastern High School. Future studies with larger numbers of participants who represent a wider range of characteristics may produce different results. The participants in this study revealed their views of what they believe are effective instructional strategies for use with ELLs at the high school level. In the interviews relating to the instructional strategies, the ELLs also shared their experiences of what it is like to be an ELL at the High School.

The phenomenological method used in this study to capture the essence of being an ELL in a high school is supported by the constructivist epistemology where researcher and participants work together to construct meaning (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002; Walker, 2002). The ELL participants in this study shared their perceptions of how four instructional strategies (key words, tape recorded lessons, peer buddy, and cooperative learning) help them in understanding course content and improving English language skills in high school classrooms. In discussing the strategies, the

participants share experiences and provide a glimpse of what it is like to be an ELL mainstreamed into high school courses taught by English-only speaking teachers and where the majority of the other students are also English only speakers.

The participants optimistically believe that their hard work in learning the English language and mastering course content will allow them to achieve their goal of earning a high school diploma so that they can have better job opportunities in their futures. Therefore, it is important that all educators become familiar with and use instructional strategies that are researched based and perceived by ELLs to be effective in secondary level classrooms. At the state and district levels, it is recommended that programs be developed to assist ELLs at the secondary level and to provide training for teachers on how to better engage ELLs in the secondary classroom.

In the interim, educators and students should work together to gain feedback on the "hows" and "whys" of student learning. Working together to find ways to improve learning will increase test scores and other performance indicators measured by NCLB, which will in turn reduce the stress placed on schools by legislative mandates. The biggest result would be increases in ELLs mastering course content and state assessments to earn high school diplomas.



Dr. Strickland is currently a National Board Certified English teacher at Rock Hill High School, South Carolina. She has 16 years of high school instructional experience that includes all levels of English for grades 9-12, AP English, and Early College (English 101 and English 102). Academic Recognitions include the following: SCIRA's Palmetto Reading Council STEP Teacher (1999), Palmetto Reading Council Distinguished Teacher of Reading (2003), and Rock Hill High School Teacher of the Year (2009-2010). Education achievements include: Ed.D from Walden University (2009), M.A. English from Winthrop University (1998), M.A.T. from Winthrop University (1996), B.S. (Corporate Communications) from Queens University (1993), and B.A. (Business Administration) from Queens University (1990). Her email address is rstrickl@rmail.org.

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Using Kindle Fires to Fuel the Flames of Reading Motivation: Eighth Grade Lumbee Students Read *The Hunger Games*

Angela Rogers, Heather Higgins, and Laura Staal
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Purpose

In the fall of 2011, faculty at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) were given the challenge of increasing their community involvement in Robeson County Schools, making the commitment to make one visit per week to work with teachers and students. Founded in 1887, UNCP was originally an Indian Normal school created for the specific purpose of training Native American teachers for local schools. The UNCP faculty members in this project developed a Literacy Partnership with a local K-8 elementary school, working with the school's principal to make literacy a top priority. While the partnership involved several different initiatives, all of which are being continued in the 2012 school year, this article will focus on the work from one 8th grade teacher's classroom.

The purpose of the project was to increase student motivation to read by incorporating interactive technology and a popular middle grades novel. The use of Kindle Fires was a regular part of weekly lessons as students read *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. The researchers and participating classroom teacher selected this book because they felt that it would appeal to students based on its adventurous themes, adolescent main characters, romance, and anti-government sentiments. It should also be noted that this novel was extremely popular at the time of the project, due to the release of the movie *The Hunger Games* during the middle of the research.

The K-8 elementary school in this project is a Title I, K-8 school with 966 students in 2011-12. The school's demographics include: 89% Native American (Lumbee), 4% White, 5% African American, and 2% Hispanic students ("Education Statistics Access System", n.d.). The school sits in the heart of a Lumbee-rich community, and students and teachers at the school tend to be closely connected through their family ties and churches. The school principal identified reading as a top priority for improvement for the 2011-2012 academic school year. According to 2009-2010 school report card, 60.5% of the all students at Prospect Elementary School passed their end-of-year reading assessment ("Prospect School Report Card 2009-10", n.d.). This observation underscores the impetus to address the reading needs of students in this Native American community.

According to the *National Indian Education Study 2011* (NIES, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students perform lower, in both mathematics and reading than non-AI/AN students in grades 4 and 8 (p. 2). Females AI/AN students

score higher in reading than male students in grades 4 and 8, while there was no such difference in math scores for males and females (p. 2). The gaps in reading appear as early as elementary school; AI/AN fourth grade students have been steadily losing ground in their reading achievement since 2005 (p. 3).

AI/AN students tend to have fewer resources that foster reading (p.2). For example, only fifty percent of AI/AN students at grades four and eight report having 25 or more books in their homes. This number is significantly different than other minorities, who report having 25 or more books in their homes at a rate of 65 percent or higher (p. 10). AI/AN students are also less likely to have a computer in the home than as compared to other minority groups (p. 10).

Our Approach

According to Reyner and Hurtado (2008), "education programs that work well for mainstream students may not work with other students with different cultural backgrounds" (p. 82). They cite evidence that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation, for instance, may be increasing the achievement gap for minority students, including AI/AN students. "Despite the stated aim of the NCLB legislation to improve the academic performance of all children, there are signs that the implementation of the Act may be increasing dropout rates, and this needs to be closely monitored" (p. 88). Indian students in particular might be disengaged by some of the curricula used in the wake of NCLB. The authors postulate that the legislation may enforce reading curricula that ignore the language differences of students from different cultural backgrounds. It is important for reading educators to understand that "one-size-fits-all" approaches are unfair to minority students because they have been designed for middle class White students. Reyner and Hurtado argue that "without adaptation or supplementation by teachers, these programs can turn off American Indian and other students to reading because the vocabulary and stories do not relate to their lives" (p. 88).

For this reason, the researchers in this study, who classify themselves as White, used the lens of critical race theory to approach the design of the curriculum for this project. The school site for this research has immense cultural ties and support from the Lumbee community. This project was a collaborative effort between the researchers, the Lumbee principal and teachers and Lumbee faculty at the university who expressed interest in the project. Based on survey responses, all of the

students in the two 8th grade classes who participated in the project also classified themselves as Lumbee. The participating 8th grade teacher, also Lumbee, became a co-researcher in the project, collaborating on all curriculum planning and ideas.

In addition to support from the principal and the participating teacher, the researchers listened to the voices of the students and asked them to become collaborators during this research. When students communicated an important issue, or needed additional time on an assignment, the researchers listened, communicated their ideas with the teacher, and explored how to best proceed keeping the needs and concerns of the students a priority. According to Hooks (1994), this type of “responsive pedagogy” is missing in today’s schools, especially given the difficulty of implementing it under national, standards-driven mandates.

Project Description

The fall 2011 semester was devoted to laying the groundwork for this project and to securing funding for the fifteen Kindle Fires that would arrive in the spring. While the researchers were involved with other literacy initiatives at the school, such as reading aloud to Kindergarten and second grade students on a weekly basis, they began searching for a teacher on the adolescent teaching level who was interested in adding new technologies and teaching strategies into the classroom (Smith et al., 2011). The principal recommended an 8th grade English teacher who matched the project based on teaching experience, personality, and student and parent feedback. This teacher agreed to participate, and together, the researchers and English teacher created objectives for the Kindle Fire-based/ *The Hunger Games* project, and worked together to develop the schedule as outlined in Table 1. Researchers then began visiting the classroom on a weekly basis and engaging in selected readings that activated interest in *The Hunger Games*. For example, students were introduced to the short story, “The Lottery,” by Shirley Jackson. This story accesses students’ prior knowledge about lottery-based selection systems to prepare students for reading *The Hunger Games* on the Kindles. During this initial time in the classroom, the researchers built a rapport with the students, allowing them to create an ethnographic assessment of the school, an understanding of the teachers, the overall school climate, and the students themselves.

Table 1
Spring Kindle Fire Project Schedule

January 2012	Meetings with principal and teacher
Late January 2012	Initial visits to classrooms
February 2012	Ongoing weekly visits/Pre-project interviews
March 2012	Ongoing weekly visits with Kindle Fires
April 2012	Ongoing weekly visits/Post-project interviews
June 2012	Final visits

Researchers purchased hard copies of *The Hunger Games* for students to have in the classroom on the days that they were not present in the classroom with the Kindles. Lessons were structured around three phases.

Phase I: Basic instruction on how to use Kindle Fires

Examples: (a) How to hold your finger on a word to get the definition, (b) How search within a book for all the instances of a word, and (c) How to go to the Internet to search for more information on a word you might not know, such as the word “blind” used in reference to hunting.

Phase II: Reading book chapters, developing rich discussions, and short writing assignments

*Examples: (a) How to use context cue to decipher the meaning of a word and other traditional reading strategies that work with the Kindle, (b) A class discussion on dystopias vs. utopias, and (c) Asking probing questions such as “For whom would you volunteer in *The Reaping*?”*

Phase III: Completing the final chapters of the book and completing mini-research projects with more advanced writing projects in the form of group posters/PowerPoint presentations (PPTs)

Examples: (a) Genetic Engineering, (b) Hunger in the World, and (c) Eating Disorders.

Student Perspectives

The researchers used the interview portion of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher et al., 2007), which is a two-part instrument for the survey and interview data. The conversational interview includes “scripted items that are open-ended to encourage free response and assess narrative reading, informational reading, and general reading” (p. 379).

Researchers interviewed sixteen students for pre and post interviews in which the same set of students were interviewed, eight boys and eight girls. Beyond the specification of asking for a certain number of males and females, the classroom teacher selected a heterogeneous sample of students based on reading performance based on both end-of-grade testing scores from the previous year and teacher observations.

Although analysis of the survey data is ongoing, the following themes have already emerged from the interview data at this point:

1. When it comes to choice of reading material, male and female students report that they are greatly influenced by their peers. They talk to one another about books, and when a friend recommends a book, it is important to read that book.
2. Female readers in this sample are often influenced by a female family member, such as a mother, when it comes to reading material. Participants mention sharing books with their mothers and discussing the plots/characters.
3. Despite the fact that the students in the survey claim that the library is a boring place to read, male and female students in this sample are influenced by the library’s displays.

4. For example, books are frequently chosen simply because the book has been displayed in a prime location in the library.
5. Both male and female readers are attracted to books that contain plots about survival and resilience.
6. Both male and female readers are deeply influenced by their teacher, who makes her classroom a reading haven. When they tell her they want books that she doesn't have, she figures out a way to get them in her classroom.
7. Both male and female students do not have much outside access to the Internet. Most of their reading outside of school is reportedly print-based.

Significance of This Study

While the sample for this study is small, the significance of the work is great. Our sample can shed light on numerous issues that are relevant to the larger Lumbee community. According to Jaime and Rogers (2010),

Critical race theorists argue that scholars must purposefully question the dominant culture process of conducting research with an eye toward its potential to reinforce injustice. For example, critical race theorists note that the emphasis on "scientifically based research" devalues the experience of minorities, individuals, and cultural or ideological outliers given its near-exclusive attention on quantitative methods (p. 189)

Native American populations are often overlooked in current educational literacy research, and the Lumbee culture, in particular, has barely been studied. This research takes a step to critically understand what motivates the reading behaviors of Lumbee students in middle school. Our findings indicate that in this population, print appears to still be the primary mode of reading due to lack of access to Internet outside of school. This is important to know because it means that these students need to have ample time in school to develop the skills they will need to read and communicate effectively in online situations. Furthermore, our findings show us the trust that these students place in their teacher and, for females in the sample, a female family member, in the selection of reading materials. To increase the motivation to read in this population, it is crucial to find creative ways to capitalize on this finding; perhaps parents who read frequently could help create displays in the library, which feature their recommended books. Furthermore, understanding exactly what it is that this particular teacher does to motivate her students in such a powerful way is key to understanding reading motivation in these students. For this reason, researchers will continue working with the teacher for a second year to study her techniques. In addition to this, researchers will be following select students from last year's project through their 9th grade year, to continue learning and understanding how best to increase reading motivation in Lumbee cultures. It is the hope of the researchers that this increase in motivation will

have positive effects on our participants' high school graduation retention rates, and, ultimately, on college acceptance rates.



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Research-Based Teachers Make Informed Decisions: A Case Study of Managing Grammar Curriculum with Evidence

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Legislation mandating research-based instructional practices has recently propelled the meteoric rise of research as a tool – even weapon – in the battle for what gets taught in classrooms. Some publishers of curricular materials tout evidence to tempt buyers; others claim scientific validation for their wares. Teachers now more than ever need to be active in the decision making process for how and what to teach the children in their classrooms. Simply put, teachers should be researchers, too. Duke and Martin (2011) define research as “the systematic collection and analysis of data to address a question” (p. 11). When teachers question the effectiveness of curriculum, research is the next logical step.

Action research is one valid approach for addressing classroom-inspired questions. As Duke and Martin (2011) argue, however, “The educational enterprise is far too complex for one type of research to answer all of our questions or meet all of our needs” (p. 19). Literature reviews and quantitative studies should also be included among the types of research that teachers regard as valuable. These tools can help teachers gain insight for making decisions in their own classrooms and schools.

This article discusses grammar curriculum through literature review and a small-scale quantitative inquiry. It is a case study of one teacher’s ongoing development as a literacy professional through the pursuit of scholarship and research. This example of one teacher’s experience with research is useful because it highlights the role of classroom teachers as effective leaders. Teachers should be encouraged to inquire, explore evidence, and cultivate lifelong learning in their own professional lives (Heydon, Hibbert, & Iannacci, 2005). We are better teachers when we choose to be students as well.

Case Study Context

Three years ago faculty from our small, private school for students with dyslexia decided that our curriculum needed a coherent approach to grammar and composition. We taught the English language and its patterns, structure, and relationships, but this instruction occurred mainly in an individualized tutorial format. Some tutors, uncomfortable with their own expertise in grammar, shied away from teaching grammar concepts. They were overwhelmed by the questions, “What to teach? How to go about doing it?” The faculty members reasoned that our middle school students needed a sequential, systematic introduction to grammar and composition as a class cohort. We began to select supporting materials – perhaps a student workbook that emphasized sentence writing?

During the first year, a stellar teacher with a deep knowledge of writing and grammar took charge of the curricular transformation. I was asked to team with her to support technology use in the classroom. The following year, family needs called my experienced teaching partner away from the classroom setting. I inherited the seventh and eighth grade classes—solo—and was commissioned to teach grammar, composition, and technology. I was given newly purchased teachers’ editions and workbooks from the textbook series used by our local school district. The implicit message was that the traditional English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum was best for our students. The textbook provided the comfort of prepared exercises, so I began there. Disaster soon ensued. Language was hard enough for these bright dyslexics; how did another layer of complex, abstract terminology help them? I next turned to materials developed by a colleague that emphasized writing and researching, with occasional forays into the workbooks for review. But would my students learn enough terminology to understand their high school English classes?

A year’s experience with these learners taught me much, but I still wrestled with lingering questions. How much grammar did dyslexic students really need to know? What instructional objective did grammar serve? How should I go about teaching it?

The following summer afforded me an opportunity to review professional literature. I eagerly jumped on the chance to search for answers that would inform my instructional decisions. Professionals in public and private school settings had already explored a shared, central concern: Among the host of curricular objectives in ELA, where should grammar fit among teacher priorities?

Literature Review as Professional Development

As a summer graduate school course challenged me to read about effective writing instruction, I wondered whether the characteristics of dyslexia would alter the suggestions made by researchers for students in general. I collected and reviewed professional literature. As I read and reflected, patterns began to emerge. I documented these patterns in a paper, and the effort of writing helped me organize my thinking, challenged me to support my findings, and led me to resources I could share with my colleagues.

The literature I reviewed indicated that the best grammar instruction for dyslexics uses a tailored curriculum scope

and occurs in the context of writing. The most valuable conclusion, as it turned out, was not the answers I found, but was instead the more effective questions I learned to ask.

Tailor the Scope of the Curriculum to Meet Student Needs

During the graduate class, the question, “How much grammar should I teach?” led to the more important question, “For what purpose am I teaching these students grammar anyway?” A study of grammar gives students language to talk about language because terminology attaches a handle to otherwise slippery concepts. Saddler (2009) warns, however, “[b]elaboring grammatical terminology will do little but confuse most students” (p. 29). Schuster (1999) asserts that teachers should stop teaching traditional schoolroom grammar altogether. He reserves as necessary, however, adequate instruction in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. These skills fall under the umbrella of language mechanics. An adequate grasp of language mechanics is essential because a writer’s style influences a reader’s perception and evaluation of the author’s message (Noguchi, 1991; Schuster, 1999). Noguchi advocates: “What is needed are not extreme positions but rather a middle ground where students can learn about the detection, consequences, and elimination of unconventional features without diminishing the desire to write and improve” (p. 14). Furthermore, Noguchi argues that traditional grammars equip students with faulty definitions that are nearly impossible to apply to their own writing.

Hargreaves and Brennan’s (2007) reference text specifically for dyslexics attempts to cover only the grammar needed for writing. Its treatment of parts of speech is organized into subgroups of content words and structure words. After reviewing a substantial body of research on grammar pedagogy, Hillocks and Smith (2003) conclude that all grammar textbooks should be viewed as reference works rather than curricular manuals:

Until we have far more knowledge, the grammar sections of a textbook should be treated as a reference tool that might provide some insight into conventions of mechanics and usage. It should not be treated as a course of study to improve the quality of writing. (p. 734)

In order to know when to refer to grammar texts, teachers must be informed observers of their students (Freppon & Dahl, 1998). Their observations should be valued by themselves and by their supervisors as a critical data for shaping their decisions about what to teach whom (Commission, 2004; Heydon, Hibbert, & Iannacci, 2004). One size does not fit all (Spiegel, 1998). Teachers, especially teachers of dyslexics, must listen to their students’ oral language. Some students’ spoken language patterns match their language environments. These students, to some extent, are able to form intuitively the rules that govern language. Other students who are not successfully learning by imitating will need an explicit, systematic approach. For example, students whose verb forms consistently and pervasively lack agreement may become successful when a teacher reveals the patterns for verb usage. Even those students

whose oral language follows normal patterns should also be taught grammar, although less intensively, so they can make conscious choices about when to follow and when to violate English conventions (Kolln & Funk, 2009). Once teachers have identified their students’ needs, teachers then reasonably ask how to improve students’ skills in grammar and language mechanics.

Teach Grammar in the Context of Student Writing

Success in writing, or the lack of it, has the potential to shape a student’s achievement over the course of a lifetime. Failure to master written language conventions may influence the reader’s perception of the author’s credibility (Schuster, 1999; Mason, 2009). This perception affects grading during the school years, but can also affect long-term goals for employment (Graham & Perrin, 2007). With such a pressing need for quality writing instruction, educational researchers are concerned by the time devoted to traditional school grammar commonly found in textbooks (Hillocks & Smith, 2003; Noguchi, 1991; Schuster, 1999).

To improve student writing, experts suggest using an intervention known as sentence combining (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks & Smith, 2003; Saddler, 2009; Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2010). Saddler and Asaro-Saddler report, “Consistently throughout more than 80 studies, sentence combining has positively influenced the ability of students with and without disabilities to create more complex sentences of higher quality” (p. 160). Hillocks and Smith find that sentence combining improves syntactic fluency and “[r]emedial or disadvantaged students especially benefit from sentence-combining instruction” (p. 732). When students have low fluency with syntactic skills, they find it challenging to manage the complex task of planning and regulating the flow and relationship of their ideas (Mason, 2009; Saddler; Saddler & Asaro-Saddler).

Sentence combining exercises usually begin with two sentences. The first one gives the kernel of meaning and provides a structural backbone. The second gives a modifying detail. Students identify the new information in the second sentence and experiment with ways to merge it into the first one. For example, the prompting sentences could be: “Bill and Juanita went to see a movie. It was about cars.” The combined result would be clearer and stronger: “Bill and Juanita went to see a movie about cars.” Teachers develop a tailored sequence of skills based on their observations of students’ writing and use their students’ own sentences whenever possible. The skills should progress from simple to complex. One possible sequence begins with inserting adjectives and adverbs before moving to producing compound subjects and objects, compound sentences, possessive nouns, adverbial clauses, and relative clauses (Saddler, 2009). As a warm up or bell-ringer activity, teachers may find the sentence combining exercise in Philips’ (2002) *Daily Grams* materials helpful.

Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2010) caution instructors to focus on one part of the complex task of writing at a time. During

sentence combining activities, for example, teachers should focus on creating better, more meaningful sentences rather than spelling or surface features (Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2010). Students with learning differences spend most of their mental energy at low-level writing skills including handwriting, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. The process of drafting one's own sentences is very complex, requiring the writer to manage "word choice, syntax, textual connections, clarity, and rhythm. Understandably, this process requires considerable effort" (Saddler, 2009, p. 27). Teachers can help students by separating the creation of content from the task of manipulating words to clearly express ideas. This scaffolding frees capacity in working and short-term memory. Students can turn their attention to comparing the text to their intended meaning and modifying or developing it further (Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2010).

As it turned out, the literature review led me back to the wisdom of my mentors: be flexible enough with your students to teach them what they have demonstrated a need to know. The sources reviewed provide some consensus: one should teach sentence patterns and types, conventions of punctuation, and parts of speech by form and structure. But all of this should be directly connected to student writing. Students must be taught to think about how best to express their intended meaning. Grammar does matter. It is a tool for repairing language so one's written communication is clear and effective. In short, dyslexics need explicit, recursive instruction that covers essential content in the context of writing.

Quantitative Inquiry to Inform Instructional Practice

During the same year that I taught ELA, our school implemented the use of *Daily Oral Language* (DOL) materials (Vail & Papenfuss, 2000). Homeroom teachers led students through correcting and discussing two error-filled sentences. DOL exercises aimed to improve students' ability to edit written sentences for capitalization, punctuation, and usage. We believed that brief but systematic review would help our students recognize conventional language.

Through my previous literature review, I now confidently know that professional literature supports the teaching of language mechanics. Yet in all the reading I have done, DOL is not mentioned as an effective instructional practice. I next asked a new research question: Do DOL exercises improve language mechanics performance for students with learning differences?

The following autumn another graduate school course offered an opportunity to design and conduct original research. One way to investigate DOL's effectiveness was to look at students' achievement on a standardized measure of language mechanics. I selected a quantitative experimental design to examine the effect of DOL on language mechanics performance for twenty students with learning differences. To begin the research process, I dove back into the professional literature; this time I focused on DOL and similar interventions to improve students' capitalization, punctuation, and usage.

Literature Review

Whittingham's (2007) study of DOL finds some improvement, although not statistically significant, for elementary students in regular education classrooms with respect to editing skills and writing samples over the period of one year. Would Whittingham's findings be similar or different when tested with a population of students with learning differences?

Not many studies directly investigate DOL. Instead researchers recommend many other instructional practices for improving students' language mechanics. As teachers emphasize the writing process, they should explicitly teach revision strategies (Saddler; MacArthur, 2007; De La Paz, 2007; Mason, 2009). Textbook exercises, writers' workshops, proofreading checklists, and editing drills are available for improving students' capitalization, punctuation, and usage (Kiestler, 1993; Mullen, 2003; Saddler, 2003; Quible, 2006; Whittingham, 2007). Clearly, the literature offers an abundance of options for helping students, even students with learning differences, become better writers. In light of the alternatives, should special educators choose DOL?

Methods

This quasi-experimental study evaluated the effect of DOL curriculum on performance in language mechanics of students with learning differences. Two null hypotheses were investigated. First, there was no significant difference among or between language mechanics performance of fourth through eighth grade students with learning differences for three consecutive years. Second, there was no significant difference in the rate of growth in language mechanics performance between years when students participated in DOL and years they did not.

Vail and Papenfuss's *Daily Oral Language* (2000) exercises provided two error-filled sentences for teachers to display each day on the classroom board or screen. These were designed to improve students' ability to edit written sentences for capitalization, punctuation, and usage. Students corrected these sentences then orally discussed the corrections with the teacher and classmates. The activity took about five minutes total and was completed during morning homeroom.

Study subjects were students identified with learning differences who attended a private, non-profit school in Greenville, South Carolina, during three consecutive years 2008-11. Individuals for whom complete data was unavailable were excluded from the sample. The researcher chose to maintain the same students in the sample for all three years in order to reduce the influence of initial differences in language or intellectual ability on results. The sample (N = 20) was composed of fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. There were 12 boys (60%) and 8 girls (40%). All were Caucasian and spoke English at home. Subjects were a convenience sample. For statistical purposes, a minimal sample size of 30 or more is preferred. Results must be interpreted with caution.

Each spring students completed the Stanford-10 Achievement Tests. Scaled scores from the language mechanics subtest were recorded in a spreadsheet for the years ending in 2009, 2010, and 2011. The DOL curriculum was implemented during the homeroom period in the 2010-11 school year. The difference in scores during the first two years served as a control condition. The difference in scores from the second and third years measured the impact of the DOL curriculum.

Data Analysis Procedures and Results

This study investigated two research hypotheses. First, it found that there was a significant difference among and between language mechanics performance of fourth through eighth grade students with learning differences for three consecutive years. The mean scaled score on the Stanford-10 language mechanics subtest increased each year: 2009 ($M = 620.2$, $SD = 30.7$), 2010 ($M = 638.2$, $SD = 23.9$), and 2011 ($M = 661.9$, $SD = 39.9$). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for three correlated samples showed statistically significant differences among mean scores, $F(2) = 20.96$, $p < .05$. A Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey HSD) test was then performed to determine between which conditions the significant difference(s) occurred. The observed increases represented statistically significant differences ($p \leq .05$) between all conditions. Average student scores showed significant progress on the language mechanics subtest each year.

Second, this study found that there was no significant difference in the rate of growth in language mechanics performance between years when students participated in DOL and years they did not. Pre- and post-test gain (or loss) was calculated for the year prior to DOL implementation and the first year of its use. A paired samples t-test was performed to compare the difference in 2010 and 2009 scores ($M = 18.05$, $SD = 24.85$) to the difference in 2011 and 2010 scores ($M = 23.65$, $SD = 27.78$). The result did not show a significant difference in the scores before DOL implementation and those after it, $t(19) = -0.61$, $p > .05$. No significant acceleration of student performance was observed as measured by the standardized language mechanics assessment.

Discussion

This study concluded that DOL did not accelerate student achievement in language mechanics as measured by standardized testing. This result for students with learning differences concurred with Whittingham's (2007) findings for students in a regular education classroom. Growth in language mechanics was occurring, but neither study attributed significant growth to participation in DOL exercises alone. In both cases, DOL was one component in a multi-faceted writing program. Whittingham suggests that some of the observed growth is due to natural maturation and experience gained from a year's worth of writing assignments.

Although DOL was not a unilateral solution for improving students' language mechanics, it did seem to offer benefits. This researcher noticed improvement in her classroom from all teachers using a common set of proofreading symbols. The

standardization of editing technique led to a shared vocabulary between teachers and students. Whittingham (2007) noted that students were more cognizant of common errors they made as they completed writing assignments. They were more able to recognize these errors in their peer's work than in their own, but the volume and complexity of their own writing increased. DOL provided a way to give necessary instruction in usage and mechanics. Time was a finite resource. DOL's daily five-minute exercises made it possible to introduce language mechanics concepts in a systematic progression without consuming large amounts of time. Effective teachers sought to make good use of every minute in the instructional day.

The present study's conclusions were limited by a small sample size. For statistical purposes, a sample with thirty or more participants ($N \geq 30$) was desirable. A further limitation was imposed by the degree of teacher autonomy regarding DOL implementation. Teachers' freedom to vary the presentation style and materials may have led to their inconsistent use.

Further quantitative research should be conducted with more rigorous experimental control. To ensure valid and reliable results, the DOL curriculum should be used with consistency across classrooms, teachers, and years. Research should also investigate the use of DOL activities over multiple years. Future years may show greater progress as students build skills over time and acquire habits due to continued practice. Alternatively, as the curriculum has less novelty, student performance may be sabotaged by boredom. No examples of longitudinal research were observed during this literature review.

This study does not examine the impact of DOL curriculum on student writing samples. Further research should use a qualitative design to examine student writing samples, document student behaviors and/or knowledge in class, and elicit student and teacher feedback regarding their attitudes and experiences with DOL exercises. It is very important to evaluate improvement in writing samples in addition to test scores because the chief concern of all language mechanics instruction is to improve how well students actually write, not merely their score on a multiple-choice test.

While awaiting further qualitative and quantitative research, educators should investigate additional interventions supported by existing literature. Mullen (2003) finds improvement when teachers provide a checklist and have students use different colors to indicate proofreading for different items. Students check capitalization with orange, interesting word choice with green, punctuation with purple, and spelling with blue. The combination of DOL exercises with editing checklists may prove more beneficial than either technique alone. Checklists can provide structure for self-editing and peer-editing sessions (Mullen; Saddler, 2003). Acronyms such as *CHOPS* can be used to remind students to check capitalization, handwriting, organization, punctuation, and spelling. In all cases students are more likely to apply and retain the targeted concepts when teachers embed mechanics instruction within student writing exercises. Generating creative stories (Kiester, 1993) for use with DOL may motivate students and

help them connect mechanics to meaningful written expression. Kiester weaves editing exercises into a humorous, ongoing story.

The task of revising one's own work, the end goal of language mechanics instruction, is not supported by DOL. Because the DOL procedure does not use student-generated work, it oversimplifies the task of revising one's own work. Revision is a complex process involving critical reading skills, peer interaction, knowledge of evaluation criteria, and self-regulation (MacArthur, 2007). Research points to the clear need for teachers to guide students to develop strategies for revision (Saddler, 2003; MacArthur, 2007). This need is more pressing for students with learning differences since they expend so much energy on handwriting and spelling that they tend to revise superficially rather than meaningfully (De La Paz, 2007; Mason, 2009). Students with learning differences need strategies for self-regulation – including goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement – taught alongside strategies for improving their own writing. Self-Regulated Strategy Development (De La Paz, 2007; Mason, 2009) teaches students to monitor and guide themselves through the learning process. It is especially helpful for students with learning differences, and it can be combined with lessons on revision or prewriting strategies. Mason uses the *POW* strategy to capture the general writing process as pick an idea, organize notes, and write and say more. She adds the acronym *TREE* to anchor the specific planning needed for persuasive writing: topic sentence, reasons – three or more, explain reasons, ending sentence. Strategies like these help students cultivate habits of mindfulness in their writing experiences.

In light of these alternative instructional practices, should my school continue to use DOL? Although this study did not observe a perceptible positive impact of DOL on standardized test scores, it likewise did not observe a negative impact of DOL on student achievement. We completed DOL activities during the homeroom period, so the cost encountered by many schools, losing instructional time during the ELA period, did not occur at our school. As long as other objectives for homeroom time are met, such as maintaining systems of organization and promoting positive social dynamics, then no harm seems to be done. DOL in every homeroom did seem to communicate school-wide value for use of conventional language mechanics.

Schuster (1999) concludes that of all grammar taught, mechanics and usage are the most worthwhile:

What's really important in grammar [students] already know, and neither we [teachers] nor our textbooks have ever successfully taught the rest through the traditional approach. And let's deal with usage and mechanics – which we must teach – in gentle, encouraging, nontechnical, innovative ways, showing students at every turn why it may be advantageous to be able to switch dialects and why it is important to write clearly, economically, and – when they are going public – correctly. (p. 524)

DOL may be a valuable part of my school's broader language arts curriculum because it helps us strike a balance between

the two unhelpful extremes of full-blown traditional grammar or inconsistent instruction in correctly written English.

Case Study Conclusion

This case study provides a view of a teacher as a researcher. If Duke and Martin are right that “[r]esearch is the systematic collection and analysis of data to address a question” (2011, p. 11), then we should become research-based teachers. Classroom teachers should seek opportunities to use researching and writing to inform their decisions about literacy curricula. Instead of accepting without question the latest research-based materials sold by publishing companies – or parroting what other teachers or administrators have said about these materials – we should ask questions and pursue thoughtful answers. Informed teachers are equipped to speak professionally. Armed with our own research, we can make thoughtful decisions about which practices are best for the unique students who come to our particular classrooms.

Research itself provides a means for ongoing reflection and improvement. The research process challenges us to inquire, explore, investigate, and articulate. As this case study shows, some of the best outcomes of research are new questions. For my school, teacher interviews and student surveys could provide the vehicle to include student voice in the curriculum. We train students to become self-advocates, but do we take seriously their value as agents in their own education? Teachers should continuously ask questions and seek answers systematically. When we are students ourselves, we more authentically show our students the joy of learning and growing.



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The Common Core as Common Practice

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Picture a classroom where students are truly independent, critical thinkers who critique, question, and solve problems. They read and write purposefully and understand that different disciplines call for different ways of reading, writing, and understanding. They value evidence, support their views, appreciate other cultures, and use digital media “strategically and capably.” In other words, picture a classroom where the demanding goals of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are common practice.

This article will give a brief overview of the English Language Arts (ELA) CCSS, highlight the significant changes they bring, and offer suggestions and resources for educators as they move ahead towards implementation.

Background

Launched in 2010, the CCSS for ELA were created through a state-led (not federal) effort to develop a common set of standards, built on the foundation of 10-years of standards’ development in the United States. The new Standards establish what students are expected to learn to prepare them for college and career, but they do not dictate what and how teachers and schools should help students meet the requirements of the CCSS. The Standards present a clear progression of learning from kindergarten to English 4. The vision for literacy, which is across subject areas, applies to reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Why is this CCSS initiative important? Previously every state had its own set of academic standards, which meant that students in the US were learning at different levels. Now all students across the country will be measured by the same criteria, and students who move across state borders will no longer have to contend with vastly different learning goals. Also, we know that all students must be prepared to compete not only with their American peers, but also with students from around the world. Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) call the Standards’ initiative a “wake-up call,” a challenge to close the gap that exists between how well our high school graduates can perform and the expectations they face in college and career (p. 8).

The Big Picture

If ever the old adage “you can’t see the forest for the trees” makes sense, it is now as we face implementation of the CCSS. The big picture, the big changes in instructional practice, must be understood and internalized before scrutinizing the Standards themselves, or so much of what the CCSS are intended to accomplish will be lost. If we jump straight to “unpacking the Standards,” drilling to the most basic level without fully understanding the intent of the CCSS, we run the

risk of turning to traditional methods of instruction that will be ineffective for developing the types of “college and career ready” students that the CCSS were designed to foster.

Before discussing instruction, let’s look at what the CCSS refer to as “Students Who Are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language” (ELA-CCSS, p. 7). These are the types of students the authors of the Standards envisioned as they created the CCSS. The Standards are not about a checklist of goals and objectives, but about developing individuals with the following characteristics:

Independence – Students are self-directed learners, able to comprehend, clarify, argue, evaluate, and question. They are critical thinkers across disciplines.

Strong content knowledge – Students develop a solid knowledge base across a range of subjects that enables them to research and study other areas as they “refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking” (ELA-CCSS, p. 7).

Responsive to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline – Students recognize that different audiences, tasks, purposes, and disciplines call for different types of communication; and, therefore, they adapt communication accordingly. They understand nuance in communication and how types of evidence differ according to discipline.

Comprehend and critique – Students are open-minded but discerning listeners, listening to both understand and question.

Value evidence – Students can support what they write and say through the use of specific evidence in a way that makes their reasoning clear, as well as evaluate others’ use of evidence.

Use technology and digital media strategically and capably – Students efficiently use technology and digital media in a way that enhances their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They recognize both the strengths and limitations of technological tools and mediums, and they understand which tools are best suited for their communication goals.

Understand other perspectives and cultures – Students recognize that they must learn to work together with people from diverse experiences and perspectives in both the classroom and workplace, actively seeking to understand other perspectives and cultures.

With these individuals in mind and the understanding that these Standards are aligned with college and career expectations, which sets the bar for success in the world beyond high school,

let's look at what the CCSS emphasize in order to accomplish their vision. As you read the Standards and the ancillary material, these emphases, often referred to as shifts, become clear: balance of informational and literary texts, content area literacy, a progression (or "staircase") of complexity, text- or evidence-based answers, writing from sources, and text complexity.

Balance of Types of Texts

Two sets of reading standards comprise the ELA CCSS, one for literary text and the other for informational text. The Standards include stories, drama, and poetry in their definition of literature; and literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts in their definition of informational text (See p. 31 and 57 of ELA document for specifics of each). The expectation is that students will be reading, writing, listening to, and speaking about a significant amount of informational or argumentative text. While literary genres are still important, informational text should comprise at least half of the material students encounter by fourth grade, and the balance should shift more to literary nonfiction, literature, and informational text in grades 6-12 (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012). The idea that high school English teachers will be giving up teaching literature is just not true.

Content Area Literacy

Specific literacy standards for 6-12 content area teachers are intended to complement their content standards. Social studies, science, and technical subject teachers are expected to provide expansive opportunities for students to engage with content-area specific texts. "Students must be able to read complex informational texts in these fields with independence and confidence" (ELA-CCSS, p. 60). The emphasis on shared responsibility means that teachers across subject areas will need to collaborate. The expectation is that students will be reading widely and deeply throughout the school day. That is, students should be reading (and writing, listening, and speaking) in every subject, often using more than one text to explore a topic and think critically about what they read.

Staircase of Complexity

The standards are written so that they gradually build upon each other. What students learn in one grade level informs what they learn in the next, so that each year students encounter increasingly complex material as they become gradually more independent. For example, in kindergarten, students "with prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text" (CCSS.ELA, RI.K.1.). By fourth grade, they "refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text" (CCSS.ELA, RI.4.1). Later, in eighth grade, students "cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text" (CCSS.ELA, RI.8.1). Until finally, in eleventh and twelfth grade, students "cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain" (CCSS.ELA, RI.11-12.1). Because of their spiraling nature, "the Common Core State

Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 3). This staircase design also applies to the writing, speaking, and listening standards.

Text- or Evidence-Based Answers

The CCSS insist on direct connections to the texts that students are reading. Reading becomes much less about personal response and much more about the text itself. Calkins, et al. (2012) describe the importance of text this way, "Readers need to get their mental arms around the text, to be able to retell it, to cite it, to ground anything they have to say about the text with textual references, to talk and think in ways that are confined within what you might call 'the four corners of the text'" (p. 39).

Writing From Sources

Three types of writing are outlined in the CCSS: narrative, informational or explanatory, and argumentative. The supplementary materials state that "[w]hile all three text types are important, the Standards put particular emphasis on students' ability to write sound arguments on substantive topics and issues" (CCSS, Appendix A, p. 24). Students are expected to be able to use evidence in written arguments and when providing information.

Text Complexity

If there is an umbrella standard in the CCSS, it is Anchor Standard 10, which talks about text complexity. Evidence shows that the complexity of the texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they must be able to do. Because the Standards are based on increasing text complexity, students are required to develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

Keep in mind that this list of changes is not exhaustive. The increased emphasis on technology and media literacy is an important aspect of the Standards; the focus on academic vocabulary; the increased focus on students' writing, especially writing that reflects real world application; and, perhaps most importantly, the need for more rigor, focusing on deep conceptual understanding, and the ability to solve problems are also all important changes.

Implementing the Standards

Keeping in mind the intent of the standards and the changes they bring, let's examine how we actually implement these standards. Currently, the 46 states that have adopted the CCSS have chosen their own timelines for implementation. Some states, such as Florida and Mississippi, began implementation during the 2011-2012 school year. Others, like North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama began their full implementation during the current (2012-2013) school year. Still others, such as South Carolina, will begin fully teaching under the CCSS in 2014-2015 (Anderson, Harrison,

& Lewis, 2012). The range of timelines for full implementation, as well as how each district/school chooses to transition to the CCSS, means that educators are at varying points in their understanding and use of CCSS. Our hope is that no matter where you are with the Standards, you will find something that you can use or that sparks a new idea, and we remind you, "As you align your curriculum to the Common Core State Standards, don't forget to pause and reflect on the big picture...Adjusting your lessons to cover the standards will take time and work" (Davis, 2012, p. 5).

Preparing for Implementation

Often the first thing we do as we approach a new unit, idea, or lesson is start with assessment. We need to know where our students are in order to tailor our instruction to their needs. The same is true about our schools as we begin our implementation of the CCSS. Schools must self-assess and decide which of the changes brought by the CCSS are most needed for their school, as well as where their strengths lie (Reading and Writing Project's Position Statements on the Common Core and Pathways to Achieving the Standards). Has your school focused primarily on literary genres? If so, you'll need to focus on including significantly more informational texts and how to effectively teach students to engage with those texts at increasingly complex levels. Has your school de-emphasized writing in favor of reading? Because of the expectations for students' writing, you'll need to develop a cohesive approach to teaching writing that includes addressing opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing. Do your students often respond to text purely by making personal connections that have little to do with their reading rather than actually citing textual evidence to support their understanding? Then your school will want to focus on helping students learn to ground their understanding in the text and spend time teaching students how to closely read chunks of text. Are students reading texts that are too simple or you're unsure of how to determine what makes a text complex? Spend time with colleagues to understand the idea of text complexity and how it is about more than a lexile level. As you look to where you need to make changes, don't forget to consider practices your school currently engages in that already meet the rigors of the Common Core. Seek out those experts in your school or district who engage in sound practices that align with the expectations of CCSS, those who know how to work with all types of students. We do caution, however, that implementation cannot mean business as usual. The CCSS are rigorous, raising the bar for all students, and, therefore, changes in instructional practice that push students to new levels will be essential. "The challenge of implementing the CCSS is not so much about curriculum compliance as about how best to accelerate student progress" (RWP Position Statement).

Resources

Once you and your colleagues have engaged in the process of self-assessment and are ready to forge ahead, remind yourself that you are not alone in this endeavor. In the past, changes in standards have meant that you were mostly confined to resources geared to your state. Now, nearly the entire nation is developing resources for educators to use as they implement

the CCSS. There are books, articles, webinars, and websites, even apps dedicated to the Common Core. Here we'll list a few that we've found to be useful, with the understanding that there will be so much more by the time this article goes to press:

Books. There are several recently published books that are helpful in understanding and implementing the CCSS.

- **Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement** by Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman - This book is particularly helpful in understanding the purpose, design, and implementation of the CCSS. A nice reference to have!
- **Best Practice: Bringing Standards to Life in America's Classrooms (4th ed) by Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde** – A classic book that has recently been revised for the fourth time and now reflects the Common Core. It is an excellent resource for understanding what are considered to be research-based best practices in teaching language arts.
- **Reading and Writing Genre with Purpose in K-8 Classrooms by Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin** - This book is a great resource for teaching writing through authentic audience and purposes. It is not a book specifically on the Common Core but was developed with regard to the new Standards. There are multiple classroom examples.
- **Meeting Common Core Standards for Reading Literature by Jago** – This book is a great resource for middle and high school teachers looking for how to develop independent readers who are actually engaged in the texts they read.
- **Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12 by Hillocks** – With the increased emphasis on the ability to write argumentative pieces, this book is a great source for understanding how to help middle and high school students write evidence-based arguments.

Websites. There are multiple sites dedicated to Common Core.

- <http://www.teachingchannel.org> – You will find multitudes of videos on teaching practice and lesson ideas designed with the CCSS in mind.
- <http://www.achievethecore.org> – This site has resources, research, and educator suggestions for meeting the Standards
- www.edutopia.org/common-core-state-standards-resources – Edutopia lists multiple sources of information that you may find useful.

Be sure to also check out the websites of various states' education departments. These groups are working diligently to offer resources for their teachers.

Professional Organizations. There are several excellent professional organizations that offer invaluable

resources for educators. We suggest you go to their websites and do a search for Common Core to see what they have available. Here are a few you don't want to miss.

- The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org)
- The National Council of Teachers of English (www.ncte.org)
- The International Reading Association (www.reading.org)

As you explore these and other resources, we hope you'll think critically about them, just as the CCSS asks our students to think critically. Not everything you come across related to the Standards will be worthwhile. As Routman (2012) cautions, be wary of becoming overly reliant on the many commercial products that will claim to be "aligned to the Common Core" (p. 27). Additionally, we reiterate the caution of the Reading and Writing Project that we don't "call off research and dialogue and experimentation into best practices in favor of institutionalizing one approach" (Positions Statement). Remember that the CCSS "define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach" (ELA-CCSS, p. 6, emphasis added).

Looking to the Future

We think Lucy Calkins and her colleagues say it best when they describe the work ahead

As challenging as it must have been to write and to finesse the adoption of [the CCSS], that work is nothing compared with the work of teaching in ways that bring all students to these ambitious expectations... In order to determine a pathway for implementing the Common Core, it helps to know the standards inside out, but it is even more important to know the resources you can draw upon in your own classroom, school, and district (Calkins, et al, 2012, pp. 13-14).

These are exciting and anxiety-ridden times, and we have to remember that we are all in this together.



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Enhancing Literacy Development Through the Social Environment of Early Childhood Classrooms

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The environment of the early childhood classroom is a crucial part of the entire learning experience for a young child. The classroom environment changes yearly because each new group of students brings differing personalities, interests and learning styles. The early childhood learning environment includes physical, social and emotional aspects of the classroom community. Within that environment, literacy skills can be vastly enhanced when the teacher understands the social practice perspective, as described by Barton (2007), as literacy within interactions between people and not a separate cognitive skill. The necessity of an intentional focus on literacy enhancement through the learning environment as a whole is supported by the National Research Council's (1998) recommendation that all children learn in environments promoting growth in language and literacy.

Prior to young children entering the classroom, the teacher makes decisions about the environment using knowledge of child development and learning theories. After getting to know the children and their individual learning styles, interests and abilities, the teacher makes more informed decisions about the classroom environment. The teacher sets the mood of the classroom through the choices made about schedule, structure, content, and physical space. All of these teacher decisions come together to determine if the whole environment is a safe, secure and resource-filled place for a young child to learn to read and write. The teacher is the facilitator of developing literacy through establishing the environment. During the time that children are in the early childhood classroom, their language skills are rapidly developing, their vocabulary is greatly increasing, and sentence structures become more complex (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). In order to enhance literacy development, the teacher should intentionally focus on all areas of the classroom environment; physical, social, and emotional.

Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory

Piaget and Vygotsky agree that children play an active role in the construction of their own knowledge. A focus on social learning opportunities and language acquisition through socialization, which influence development, set Vygotsky's work apart from Piaget's. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural perspective suggests that development can only be understood by reviewing the social and cultural setting in which the child lives. Like Piaget, he believed culture would influence the content of knowledge, but he believed culture also influenced the "nature and essence of the thinking process" (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 31). Vygotsky argued

that all cognitive construction was socially mediated, or influenced by present and past social interactions (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, children learn the names of certain objects or phenomena because a member of society teaches it to them within the social context. Often, this refers to signs or symbols agreed upon by a specific community, society or cultural group; for example, a red light means stop (Katz & Chard, 2000).

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) fits with a project approach with reference to the role of the teacher as facilitator. The teacher recognizes the relationship between the child's developmental level and learning ability (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). With that knowledge, the teacher's role is to "scaffold" learning experiences for children by providing support and assistance that allows them to work in the ZPD, which is slightly more difficult than they could achieve on their own (Katz & Chard, 2000). Teachers should determine what action or tool is needed to take children to the next level in their learning and ability, and then should provide that tool or modify the task (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). As the child and the adult work together through the ZPD on a particular task, there seem to be four stages; (a) performance is assisted by an expert peer or adult, (b) performance is assisted by the learner who uses self-directed speech to guide himself, (c) performance is developed and automatized (behavior done without thinking about the steps), and (d) performance is de-automatized and leads to a stage where the child must work through the ZPD again to improve or maintain performance (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Vygotsky states, "that which is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual developmental level tomorrow—that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (1978, p. 87).

Developing a Social Environment that Supports Literacy

Vygotsky's (1978) work in socio-cultural theory indicates that children learn from one another, and from more advanced peers and adults. Children with well-developed oral language skills will be more successful learners in general (Fey, Catts, & Larrivee, 1995). Competency in oral language has also been linked to improved literacy skills (Otto, 2010). Knowing this, teachers must create an environment that encourages children to have meaningful conversations, share interests and ideas, and read to one another. Classmates can be an encouragement and a model in all areas of literacy. Language, reading, and writing

develop in stages with children's supported efforts building upon one another. The teacher can do this through modeling and developing rules and schedules in the classroom that allow the children to talk and interact with one another while interacting with the physical environment and teacher developed activities.

A Positive Emotional Environment Supports the Social Environment

In an early childhood classroom, the social and emotional environments are closely tied together. Learning to read and write requires a certain amount of risk for a young child. The early childhood classroom must be a place where a child feels safe in taking those risks. The teacher facilitates the emotional environment by actions, rules, schedules and attitudes. Teachers should provide a safe and secure environment where encouraging words are often modeled and all efforts are appreciated. If the teacher is accepting of all efforts in reading and writing, the child can feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. The teacher can use this solid self-esteem to give the child the confidence to try something more difficult.

The schedule in an early childhood classroom should be consistent and predictable as much as possible. A child can focus on trying to figure out a new word more easily in an environment where they are not worrying about if there will be an unexpected transition or negative reactions from the teacher. The teacher's words should be encouraging and in a tone of voice that reflects the safety and security all students deserve. If the emotional environment is pleasant and safe, it provides the scaffold to move children through their Zone of Proximal Development (1978) and children will take risks in reading at a level higher than they can achieve alone.

Develop a Physical Environment that Supports Social Learning

The physical environment includes the materials provided in the classroom as well as the organization of those materials. Writing and reading materials should be accessible to children in all learning center areas of the classroom. Paper, pencil and tape in the block center can change towers of blocks into buildings with signs lining a city street. Dramatic play centers that include a pen and pad can become a grocery list or a restaurant order pad. Children will read and write together in meaningful ways throughout the classroom. Literacy materials can include all types of writing utensils, varying paper sizes, book making materials, quality children's literature, big books for shared reading, appropriate literacy iPad apps, Promethean board or SMARTBoard flip chart games, poetry posters, and the words to frequently sung songs. Teachers should include these items in the classroom and then encourage their shared use by children. Allowing students to socialize over the reading and writing opportunities in the classroom will make it a meaningful part of their educational experience that becomes second nature.

Celebrations of children's own writing and reading should be an integral part of the physical space. The environment should

be a print rich and serve as a model for developing readers and writers as well as a resource. If the class creates a list of vocabulary words in a group lesson with the teacher that focuses on the project topic currently being studied, then it should be hung on the wall at children's eye level to become a content related spelling list for students to refer to during independent writing or reading efforts. Teachers should model for students how they discuss literacy efforts with one another so that during free play, children will know that it is appropriate and encouraged to ask for help in figuring out how or what to write.

As teachers are creating a print rich environment, they need to consider both functional and environmental print. Functional print can include calendars, word walls, schedules, routines, class name lists, sign in sheets, morning meeting messages, and center labels. Functional print can give children necessary information or can be part of a discussion so they elicit a response from children. For example, the writing or discussion prompt "My favorite food is..." requires students to read the print and then respond to it with their own oral or written words. Environmental print is the recognizable print we see around us everyday, including restaurants, food labels and street signs. These can be posted in the classroom, made into a game, or collected in a student made dictionary for the writing center. The ability to recognize and read the print rich environment of the classroom builds children's confidence and they begin to see themselves as a reader and a writer.

Select Activities and Experiences that Allow for Social Learning to Occur

After a teacher has set the emotional tone for the classroom community and then made appropriate materials selections, more intentional decisions must be made about the type of activities and experiences the children will engage in. Simply reading a story aloud to children greatly enhances literacy development and is typically engaged in daily by early childhood teachers. Less often, teachers use oral storytelling. The benefits to literacy development through storytelling are different from read alouds and are significant. The practice of oral storytelling supports literacy development in a way that is clearly connected to Vygotsky's description of socio-cultural theory. When literature is shared through oral storytelling, children can become engaged in a story that presents a model of language, story structure, audience behavior and the nuances of characters and voice, which they can imitate as their own literacy abilities develop. Research conducted by Isbell, et al, (2004) suggests that children who were told stories demonstrated increased abilities in listening, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension and recall. During recall opportunities, these children also were better able to remember the characters, moral, and setting and to provide a formal ending to the story.

Ohlhaber (2001) suggests that in order for children to engage in oral storytelling, there must be a supportive environment where the adult is a model, makes efforts to understand children's ideas, and encourages them to experiment with words and ideas. Teachers need to know good stories, especially folktales. Reading folktales often will reveal their structure. Knowing the structure makes it easier to make up stories to be told to the class. Then

they can retell these stories using voice inflection and body movements to indicate the excitement of the plot of the story. Sturm (2008) suggests “making the story your own” by rereading it and intentionally thinking about why this story brings you joy and then reflecting that emotion as you are telling the story. Practicing reading the story aloud with emotion until memorized will make it seem as if the story is something personal, important, and part of the teacher. Creating stories to tell is an easy way for teachers to incorporate the abilities and the personalities of the students to make the time more meaningful. Knowing the students’ interests, learning styles and developmental levels will make the storytelling benefits even more appropriate.

After spending time in engaged listening, students need to have opportunities in the safe environment the teacher has created to begin to participate in storytelling. Teachers can ask open-ended questions and provide students with the vocabulary to describe the feelings they are expressing in storytelling. Teachers who are listening to children’s oral storytelling efforts will begin to hear complex thought processes and literary elements that are far beyond what children are able to write. Teachers should specifically praise these efforts and reveal similarities to written stories. Modeling increasingly advanced skills in their storytelling will continue to provide support for narrative development.

Conclusion

Humans are social beings who learn from one another beginning at birth. Literacy and communications skills are a crucial part of a satisfied life. The early childhood years are a significant time of developing language skills and literate behaviors. Teachers will greatly enhance a child’s future literacy success if those skills can be developed meaningfully within the social constructs of the early childhood classroom. The teacher is the facilitator of the social relationships that are developed in the classroom that will scaffold children’s literacy learning. Intentional decisions within the emotional and physical areas of the classroom must be made by teachers to enhance the social environment and focus it on learning literacy behaviors. The emotional environment should be safe, secure and where efforts and ideas are respected. The physical environment should be a resource and model filled space that the children have a vested interest in. Communication between students should be encouraged in all areas of the classroom. Activities and experiences should be driven by the teacher’s knowledge that children learn from their social encounters with other children and the adults in the room. Oral storytelling by the teacher and the children should become an important part of the children’s daily experiences. When teachers make these intentional choices and allow student growth to influence the evolution of the environment, literacy in the early childhood years will be enhanced.



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As Destinye Would Have It

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"Please help me! I don't know what to do!"

This cry came from a frazzled Julie, a bubbly second-year first grade teacher, as she flew into my room after school. Her plea was regarding Destinye, a new student in her class.

"Bethanie, what am I supposed to do with her? She didn't go to Kindergarten, but her mom wants her in first grade and she can't even write her name!"

Reading Julie's frantic plea may not seem out of the ordinary; but it was the first day of school and here's a teacher at my door having a meltdown about one of her children. I wanted to tell her to relax since I had my own issues to deal with. At the time, I was a brand new Reading Recovery® teacher. Why couldn't she approach the two seasoned Reading Recovery teachers? I had taught with Julie the previous year, so I guess that's why I was the chosen one. I couldn't be annoyed – here was a young teacher concerned about her most struggling student (and rightly so), and she was begging for help. She was begging me for help.

My colleagues and I began our fall Observation Survey (Clay, 2005b) testing, which involves six reading and writing tasks, the next day and made our selections for our first wave of Reading Recovery students. I chose to work with Julie's student, as fate would have it – rather, as Destinye would have it.

It was love at first sight. Destinye had the sweetest little six-year old face and the disposition to go right along with it. I can't picture her without seeing her smile because she was always wearing one. This child had never been to school before and all she wanted to do was please every adult she came into contact with. So why was I afraid of this delightful child? Here's why. What if I disappointed her mother, her teacher, my colleagues? Perish the thought – my Reading Recovery Teacher Leader! Worst of all, what if I couldn't help her?

This was my training year, so as I was learning how to teach Reading Recovery lessons in my weekly class, I was simultaneously putting it into practice – a true "baptism by fire." Kay, my Teacher Leader, assured me that I could work with Destinye and that she would be there to support me in that work. So, I analyzed Destinye's Observation Survey tasks and wrote my page-long Observation Survey Summary, which detailed everything I knew about her as a reader and writer.

Then we roamed.

The first ten lessons (days) in a child's Reading Recovery program are spent in an activity Dr. Clay calls "roaming around the known," some purposes of which are to "observe more

of the child's ways of responding" and "give the child the feeling that he is really reading and writing" (Clay, 2005b, p. 32). The crucial reason for engagement in roaming is "that it requires the teacher to stop working from preconceived ideas" (Clay, 2005b, p. 33). This is a lesson I would soon learn.

During this time, Destinye and I read and wrote an immense amount of text together. No texts were available to fit her oral language and reading vocabulary. I created a simple book for her about modes of transportation. One page included a picture of a boat and printed in large text with ample spacing at the bottom was "A boat." Even after my demonstration of the first couple pages, Destinye read, "There go a boat" and continued this pattern on each page.

I admit feelings of frustration at this juncture in time. Remember – I was a brand new Reading Recovery teacher, and I automatically began making assumptions about this child and what she was able to do. Thoughts of us still working in early level texts weeks later flooded my mind as I planned our work for the next day. Here was a child who desperately wanted to read and a teacher who was desperate for help. And fulfilling those needs weighed on me heavily and kept me up at night.

I had one choice - I tossed aside my anxiety and took on the creed that Reading Recovery teachers know so well: go into every child's lessons believing that she is a reader. When I picked her up the next day for our lesson, I had a new assumption – this child would graduate from her Reading Recovery program and, more importantly, would feel like a reader – starting now.

I immersed myself in the art of bookmaking and produced little readable texts for her that would interest her and contain clear pictures and language to pave her way toward more difficult reads. Before either of us knew it, she was zooming through the emergent book levels, with not just accuracy, but beautiful prosody and smoothness.

Around her eighth week of lessons, Destinye came bouncing in my room for her lesson. I had to step out into the hall for a couple minutes to visit with a teacher, so I gave her free range of the chalkboard while she waited. I returned to find that she had written (correctly) about 25 new words she had picked up. To say I was moved is an understatement. Destinye, puzzled at my astonished face, said, "Look what I did!" I knew before this event that she was making a ton of progress. I just hadn't realized to what extent. Again—more assumptions on my part.

The next day I called my Teacher Leader: "Kay, I think you need to come and test Destinye out of Reading Recovery. Things are clicking for her so quickly that I can't keep up!"

I probably don't need to tell you, the reader, how Destinye performed on her exit Observation Survey tasks in late fall of her first grade year, but I will. She read a level 22 text, around a beginning of second grade level, for Kay.

I don't take credit for Destinye's success. I coached her along the way, but she taught me a lesson that came four years too late in my teaching career – how to teach a child to be a reader.

What follows is a true story.

Since Destinye graduated from her program early, I needed another student to quickly fill her spot. Lo and behold, Julie barrels into my room that afternoon.

"Bethanie! I just got a new student and I have no idea what to do with her! Help!"

My reply? "Julie, I have no idea how to help her yet, yet I'm sure her Reading Recovery program is written into my destiny."



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The Music of Words: Paving The Way for a Student's Love of Literature

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A Prelude

Why do I love books? How was this road of literacy paved for me? The answer is where all answers tend to begin for me – with my mother. My mother read to me, read with me, and spelled words for me. I vividly remember sitting at our kitchen table doing homework, asking her how to spell a word. As she orchestrated a meal, she conducted my growth as a student with ease. She would spell the word willingly in a three-letter rhythm; the word was offered like a song. She never told me to just grab a dictionary. Instead of being directed to a heavy impersonal volume, I was privy to the aroma of cooking food and music of words.

"Mom, how do you spell 'remember'?"

"R-e-m, e-m-b, e-r."

"Thank you, Mom."

"You're welcome."

I was *welcome*. I had access to her knowledge and she was willing to share. Don't get me wrong; my mother was not one to let any of my siblings and me make excuses. We were taught to give our best effort, and her standards of cleanliness were far above what I've been able to master. Even so, when it came to books and the love of words, we sang that song together.

My mother did me a huge favor as a child. She had mail sent to me. I was a member of The Weekly Reader book club, and every month a new, crisp, paper-perfumed children's book arrived just for me. As an adult, I can still hear the crackle of the book cover. I can still conjure up the smell of new pages, all for me!

The Bridge

Unfortunately, many of our students are not given the gift of a love for words and literacy. There are so many reasons students hate to read, and those reasons can often overwhelm teachers who try to decipher why and how this dissonance with literacy occurred. One of the saddest phrases I hear is, "I don't read." That sentence sounds dead-end and final. These students have resigned themselves to a requiem of life without a love for literature. As a high school English teacher and life-long learner, I am filled with heartache each time I hear those words.

So, how am I, how are we, as educators supposed to combat negative influences on a child's love of literature? Common sense tells us that the more one practices something, the more one improves. In *Outliers: The Story for Success*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) states that world-class athletes, musicians, etc.,

practice about 10,000 hours in order to become exceptional in their particular area. If we know that practice leads us to a higher level, why should we not then allow children to simply practice the art of reading? In the classroom and at home, it stands to reason that the more students read, the better they will be able to read. The more students read materials they enjoy, the more they will enjoy the act of reading.

Therein lies the key to a love of literature – enjoyment of reading. No matter the backgrounds of children or their desires to embrace books or to throw them, we as teachers can foster a positive literary melody in our classrooms. That love of words must begin with choice. Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) can help every teacher create excitement about literacy in and out of school. Young children and teens are often given less choice because of age and maturity level. Even so, it is easy to see excitement in a child who is given choice. If children are taught that it is okay to choose what they are interested in reading, they will learn that the trip to the bookshelf is worth venturing out of the desk.

When Lou Labrant (1937) wrote, "The important matter for the educator is to realize that interest means a strong tendency to behave a certain way, and to understand that that tendency has a driving power which is better used than thwarted" (p. 30), she was encouraging teachers to combine literacy choice with the advancement of growth and literary experience. With choice comes enthusiasm and students are able to thrive under those circumstances.

Students are able to build enthusiasm for reading when SSR is presented without accountability. With enormous pressure to grade and test all aspects of learning, it is refreshing for students to choose for the sake of choosing their own reading material. Without the threat of testing, students can relax and enjoy SSR. Fortunately, many teachers are adept at informal assessment and can ask students about their reading. This simple process allows students to talk about their choices, what they liked or disliked about the reading, and to engage in conversation with peers and the teacher without the pressure of accountability.

Alfie Kohn (2010) discusses the importance of free reading choice and SSR:

The sad irony is that as children grow older and become more capable of making decisions, they're given less opportunity to do so in schools. In some respects, teenagers actually have less to say about their learning – and about the particulars of how they'll spend their time

in school each day—than do kindergarteners. Thus, the average American high school is excellent preparation for adult life...assuming that one lives in a totalitarian society.

When we prescribe certain programs to children or bribe them into reading, it is as if we are asking them to smile when they receive a shot at the doctor's office. No one enjoys shots or being told to enjoy something just because it's beneficial. We must instill a child-like wonder into reading, writing, and all forms of literature. Allowing students to choose what they'd like to read, (while still valuing the assigned curriculum) and then giving them actual class time to read, helps children and teens form positive bonds with words that are long lasting. Studies have shown that when students are allowed to self-select their readings in school, they have more positive attitudes toward reading and achievement increases (Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998).

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity." With children, we often prescribe too many programs, standards, and benchmarks to teach them to read, to test their ability to read, and to ensure that they are on grade level. We are complicating the simplistic beauty of books and we are losing students in a sea of reading resentment.

A Chorus Worth Repeating

How do we address this problem? Ideally we take my mother's attitude – we lovingly make no excuses. We as educators are often blamed and expected to fix problems that we did not cause, but instead of giving up, we press on to do what is right for our students. As individuals we must work together as professionals. Early childhood teachers can not only introduce children to the thrill of books, they can teach parents the importance of making reading fun at home. Elementary teachers can continue the journey through SSR and fostering the true magic of choosing books in the classroom to read purely for fun. Middle and High school teachers can certainly continue to carry that excitement on in their own classrooms by allotting time for SSR and stocking the room with various novels, magazines, comic books, graphic novels, and trips to the library. Ideally, our schools will help us fund these endeavors, but the reality is that may not be the case. This is where my mother's voice sings out. If one way isn't working, be smart and find a different way. Below are ideas to build a class library:

- Yard sales/flea markets
- Public Library book sales
- On-line sites that allow teachers to present projects for donors
- Use credit card points to buy magazines
- Ask for donations
- Ask students/parents to donate
- Ask a principal for special funds

We as educators must let go of the overwhelming need to pour our knowledge onto students. We should think of ourselves as conductors in a symphony. We can set the pace of the music, but they can play the instruments with or without us. It should be the goal of every educator to make each child feel welcome in a

classroom. Students should be welcome to our knowledge, not clubbed over the head with it. It is my hope that every student feels welcome in my room. They are welcome to my knowledge of English, they are welcome to all of my books, and they are even welcome to sit at my desk. Just as my mother and I always sang a mutual song on the road to literacy, I encourage my students to join that chorus too. Skeptics may call this process too open and say it doesn't address standards. My belief is that if we want students to be better readers, and by extension better students and test takers, we need to let them read freely.

One of the most outspoken supporters of SSR/independent reading is Stephen Krashen. He believes independent reading to be the most beneficial way to improve all areas of a child's reading ability (reading, writing, spelling, comprehension) (Fisher, 2004). Sprecken, Kim, and Krashen (2000) state, "[t]here are numerous controversies in the field of literacy, but there is firm consensus on one point: Reading is good for you. Moreover, there is an emerging consensus that free voluntary reading is especially powerful" (p. 8). It is imperative that teachers combine the benefits of reading with the power of choice in order to welcome students into rich literary classrooms. By giving students opportunities to love reading, we are opening the floodgates for learning, motivation, and engagement in education.

The Postlude

With our knowledge and love for our students, coupled with a willingness to let them explore the world of books uninhibited, we as educators can give them wonderful gifts. We are paving their way on the road of education and assisting them in paving that way for themselves. Just as my mother instilled in me an excitement for books and a love of words, so we as teachers can give that same enthusiasm to those who cross the threshold of our classrooms.

As a teacher, I believe that this beautiful song and dance about literacy is so simple. The song of literacy is truly a gift. My mother gave me gifts. Words were gifts, books were gifts; reading was a gift. Students deserve time to read and they deserve choices in their reading. Educators have the beautiful task of conducting an exciting symphony, ushering children into a world of words and literature that they can enjoy for a lifetime. We hold the music and magic of words.



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Using Digital Tools to Enhance Literacy

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Think, for just a moment, of the considerable expectations that are placed upon educators to use digital technologies in their classrooms. Expectations come from administrators with educational concerns (*research shows that technology can engage students and increase learning – let's make sure we use it*) as well as practical concerns (*we've paid a lot of money for this technology, let's make sure we use it*). Expectations come from students themselves, too (*why can't we use more computers and digital media?*). In addition, educators are expected to integrate technology into their classrooms according to state standards as well as shared standards such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS).

The CCSS include a number of standards related to the inclusion of real world technology to ensure that students are fully prepared for college, careers, and can be contributing members of a global economy (Common Core State Standards, 2012). In particular, the CCSS emphasize informational literacy and enhanced learning through the use of a variety of digital tools. For example, the 3rd grade Writing, Production and Distribution of Writing (W.3.6) standard states: *With guidance and support from adults, [students will] use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others*. While students may regularly use software programs such as Microsoft Word to produce writing and practice keyboarding skills, the added expectations that students will publish, interact and collaborate with others clearly sets a new expectations for sharing writing across digital platforms. In addition to the CCSS, the NETS, created by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), include a broad set of technology-focused standards designed to guide systematic change in schools that will help improve students' higher-order thinking skills and prepare them to be competitive in the global job market (International Society for Technology in Education, 2012).

Industry and businesses have also placed expectations upon educators, asking schools to produce students who are capable of thriving in their careers and leading the next generation. For example, one group leading this effort is the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2012), a national organization represented in part by businesses such as Adobe, Crayola, the Ford Motor Company, and the Walt Disney Company. Much like the goals of the CCSS, this partnership "advocates for 21st century readiness for every student," and has proposed a [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#) that includes many skills expected from the workforce. Suffice it to say, many of these skills are technology-focused, and therefore place substantial expectations upon our schools and educators to get our students ready. And don't forget about the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment, designed

to measure how well all of these expectations are being met. This national assessment covers content and skills related to design and systems; information and communication technology; and technology and society. It is coming our way in 2014!

The expectations for a technology-enhanced classroom are considerable indeed, but we hope you agree that the reasons for these pressures are justified. It is not hyperbole to say that technology is essential everywhere in our society; it has permeated industries such as banking, retail, engineering, and manufacturing to such a degree that many employers will not consider hiring employees who do not have adequate technology skills. Technology has changed the way we communicate and collaborate; its altered how we entertain ourselves from downloading music to ordering movies "on demand," and we even use it to track our exercise, eating, and spending habits. To be sure, there is an app for almost everything!

Despite the ubiquity of technology and the aforementioned expectations, we have not seen technology dramatically change the landscape of education as we have in other fields and industries (Sannier, 2012; Taylor & Fratto, 2012). Of course, there are pockets of success and well-documented incidents of individual teachers making strides in their own schools and classrooms, but by and large, there is still a lot of room for improvement in how our students are prepared. Today's students must be well versed in the digital world in order to have a successful tomorrow, thus implying that teachers must have enough understanding of the concept of digital literacy to impart it upon our students. Martin (2006) provides a general, and we think accurate, definition of digital literacy:

Digital Literacy is the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process.

The definition is broad, to say the least, but it has to be. Technology is so ingrained in our everyday life that in order to be considered a literate member of society, one must be digitally literate. In fact, it is our belief that the phrase digital literacy is somewhat out of date. *Literacy* should no longer be differentiated from *digital literacy*; instead, *literacy* should automatically encompass *digital literacy*. Educators who teach literacy skills, then, must be ready and willing to teach in a society in which technology is, according to Carrington & Robinson (2010, p.3) "changing the ways in which we make meanings and engage with each other." If you read this quote again, you will

notice that it offers two important considerations in today's understanding of literacy: one that pertains to the construction of knowledge and one that pertains to a social factor.

First, constructing knowledge, or making meaning, has changed with the advent of digital technology. No longer do students learn solely from printed text, nor do they expect or even want to. In fact, Larson (2009), in her article in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, suggests that today's readers expect and want to be "immersed in multimodal experiences" that combine a variety of "modes and media to receive and communicate messages" (p. 255). Richard Mayer, a cognitive psychologist who specializes in multimedia learning, has found an abundant amount of support for this so-called multimodal learning experience. In fact, according to his *Multimedia Principle*, "students learn better from words and pictures than from words alone" (Mayer, 2001, p. 63). In particular to the area of literacy, research has demonstrated that the images, videos, animations,... etc. found within multimodal texts can even improve the comprehension skills of struggling readers (Henry, L. A., Castek, J., O'Byrne, W., & Zawilinski, L., 2012; McKenna, Reinking, Labbo, & Kieffer, 1999). When discussing literacy, however, we cannot limit the conversation to multimodal learning; there is a second component to consider as well, the social factor.

A prevalent and relatively recent line of literacy research suggests that educators should "treat language and literacy as social practices rather than technical skills to be learned in formal education...and they...should be studied as they occur naturally in social life" (Street, 1997, p. 47). If we, as educators, consider our students' lives outside of the classroom (i.e., their 'natural' life), we quickly realize that much of their time is spent communicating, sharing, and collaborating in electronic environments such as email, chat programs, and especially through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Davies (2010) suggests that if educators want to broaden and strengthen their practices in literacy education, they should consider integrating online, social learning environments into their instruction. They can do so easily using "Web 2.0 spaces where individuals collaborate and socialize via online texts" (Davies, 2010, p. 29). As opposed to the first iteration of the World Wide Web, in which users consumed information, the second iteration, also called Web 2.0, enable users to produce information through a website or web-based tool. You can think of a Web 2.0 tools as web-based applications "which allow users to collaboratively build content and communicate with others across the world" (Butler, 2012, p. 139). Such spaces include blogs, wikis, and Google Docs, and with the growing prevalence of mobile devices, these spaces are more accessible than ever.

Mobile devices have become a popular type of technology owned by teachers and students alike. Students often own and skillfully operate handheld and portable devices including but not limited to tablets, smartphones, and digital readers such as Kindles and Nooks. But, while they possess many of the operational skills needed to use today's technologies, especially in social media platforms, they are not always literate enough to use technologies, be they mobile devices or Web

2.0 tools, for the purposes of learning (Bull, 2010). Educators, as previously stated, need to model and integrate these tools in order to impart upon students the understanding of literacy and how these tools can be used for communication, collaboration and learning. A significant obstacle in this effort however, is that many teachers, current and prospective, are not comfortable with these technologies (Carrington & Robinson, 2010; Taylor & Fratto, 2012). How can we get more comfortable? Read on as we provide concrete examples that can help teachers strengthen their comfort level, understanding and vision of (digital) literacy. We focus on several intuitive and user-friendly Web 2.0 and iPads tools, which can be used to teach and improve literacy, specifically, digital writing.

Web 2.0 Tools

Google Docs: The Collaborative Writing Relay

Writing Relay is an activity that ties together content knowledge, writing and technological skills. The activity is situated within Google Docs, a suite of Web 2.0-based productivity tools that one gains access to upon creating a *free* Google account. With Google Docs, you can create and store documents, presentations and spreadsheets online (or in "the cloud"), as opposed to on your computer's hard drive, meaning you can access your file from any computer that has an Internet connection, thus offering greater accessibility to the user. The Google Docs environment allows for collaboration and peer feedback as well as the ability to keep files private between students and teacher.

To begin the *Writing Relay*, we provide small groups of students a Google Doc containing a 2-column table that has an image in the left column and simple, self-explanatory instructions in the right column (see example below). Each student chooses an image and writes part of the narrative, based upon the preceding narrative and images. The group must work collaboratively in order to create a coherent and creative story

Images from Creative Commons	Narrative
	<p>In this cell, type an opening to a short story based on the picture in the left column. Once you are finished, find a new picture from a Creative Commons Search and insert it on the next row in the left column and pass it on to the next student.</p>
<p>Insert new Creative Commons image here</p>	<p>Narrative, based on preceding images and text, goes here</p>

This activity is always a successful one, from both the instructor and student's perspective. The students enjoy the activity because it is fun, creative, and collaborative, it utilizes multimedia, and it is different from traditional writing activities. From an instructor's perspective, while having students engaged in what they are doing is always desirable, there are other beneficial educational outcomes: (1) student acquisition of 21st Century skills; (2) improvements in student writing; and, (3) students' ethical use of digital information, each of which will be described next.

Many of the skills inherently required in this project are aligned with those purported to be essential for a successful career in the 21st Century: creativity, collaboration, media literacy, and information and communication technologies literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2012). Another positive outcome of the Writing Relay is improved student writing. When educators allow students to write for and with an audience of their peers, the writing experience becomes more social and authentic as well; therefore, this type of writing can lead to increased motivation and improved writing (Cohen & Riel, 1989; Magnifico, 2010). Lastly, as a result of the Writing Relay activity, students are exposed to ethical practices of using digital information. Rather than have the students perform a general Web search for their images, which may result in inappropriate or copyright-protected images (which most students ignore), students search for images using the [Creative Commons](#). Creative Commons is a website that minimizes restrictive copyright barriers and allows educators and students to find free-to-use images, texts and video, without having to worry about copyright issues. By discussing and practicing ethical behavior in the digital world, educators begin to impart upon the students the idea of digital citizenship. The standards for teachers ([NETS*T](#)) and students ([NETS*S](#)) each contain a standard that concerns Digital Citizenship, which states, for teachers (4.A) and students (5.A), respectively:

4.A. *Advocate, model, and teach safe, legal, and ethical use of digital information and technology, including respect for copyright, intellectual property, and the appropriate documentation of sources.*

5.A. *Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.*

Blogs – Enhancing literacy through social writing

Another Web 2.0 tool that can integrate literacy, technology, collaboration, and peer feedback is the web log, or “blog” as it is more commonly known. A blog is a digital space on the Internet specifically designed for writing. Blogs are often used as a means of personal reflection for the author(s) and a space for them to share their thoughts, ideas, experiences, documents, images and videos. In most cases, readers can respond to the author's posted blog entry via a public comment section. Blogging platforms like [Wordpress.com](#), [Edublogs.org](#), [Kidblog.org](#), and Google's [Blogger.com](#) allow users to easily create and contribute to blogs, public or private, for free.

A growing number of teachers are using blogs as a means to share ideas with other teachers, communicate classroom news and events to parents, and provide students with a

forum for literature discussion and response (Byrne, 2011; Zawilinski, 2009). Blogs provide students with a real-world context along with an authentic purpose and audience for their writing, beyond what traditional assignments typically require. Thus, blogs offer the potential to increase students' motivation toward writing, which can lead to improved achievement (Cohen & Riel, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 2002).

An excellent example is Mrs. Yollis' 3rd grade [classroom blog](#). Mrs. Yollis, a veteran teacher with 26 years of experience, has been recognized as a leader by her peers in the field of educational technology and has received several [Edublog Awards](#), including *Best Class Blog 2011*. As Mrs. Yollis' blog demonstrates, effective blogging can contribute to students' critical literacies and enhance their knowledge and use of Web 2.0 tools (National Writing Project with DeVoss, Eidman-Aadahl, & Hicks, 2010; Zawilinski, 2009). As a forum for discussion, blogs allow students extended “think time” to construct more thoughtful posts based on a given topic or reading (Byrne, 2011). In the comments section of a blog post, students are able to receive timely feedback from the instructor and peers (Light, 2011). Having access to timely, specific feedback as well as to the thoughts and writing styles of others can also help students to improve their own writing (Jester, 2010). The reciprocal nature of posting and commenting furthers this by providing the author with multiple perspectives and the opportunity to reflect on his or her learning (Hargadon, 2011; Hicks, 2009). By including hyperlinks, embedding media, and inviting others to provide feedback in the form of comments, students can begin to see connections to their learning and viewpoints that extend well beyond their own knowledge and understanding, thus offering a broader and richer learning experience (Hicks, 2009). These experiences are streamlined with 21st century literacies, in which the ability to use multiple new literacies simultaneously is advocated. Clearly, effective blogging is much more than writing; it is also creating, communicating, collaborating, thinking critically, and creating new meaning in a social manner.

Word Clouds – Bringing Visuals to the Forefront

Another practical, and free, example of a Web 2.0 tool is a word cloud generator, which creates pictures (called clouds) out of words that you insert into the generator. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the original text, thus appearing larger than the other, lesser used words (Wordle, 2012). There are many types of word cloud generators including [ABCya's Word Clouds For Kids](#) and [Tagxedo](#), and used in the example that follows, [Wordle](#).

A commonly used way to integrate word clouds into instruction is to copy the text from a famous or historical speech, paste it into a word cloud generator, and then analyze the resulting word cloud. For instance, take a look below at a speech presented as a Wordle. Sure, this word cloud would be a wonderful addition to a classroom wall, but imagine the discussion that could be gleaned from our students with minimal prompting. *What do you suppose the speech was*

Application name	Description	Strengths for classroom use	Limitations for classroom use (if any)
Storykit	All-in-one free app that allows users to create their own books.	Allows users to add their own images; upload or take with iPad. Allows users to create simple drawings, choose colored backgrounds for pages, record sound and voice to narrate, add their own text, and records the file for each image individually, which would be great for a class book (each child has his own page). Very easy to use and the final product looks great on the iPad.	
VoiceThread	All in one free app where users can create a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos.	Allows users to navigate slides and leave comments - using voice (with a mic or telephone), text, audio file, or video (via a webcam). It is easy to share a VoiceThread with friends, students, and colleagues for them to record comments too. Great for a class story or activity as seen here http://voicethread.com/about/library/Kindergarten_Storybook_from_Leanne_Windsor/	
Scribble Press	Allows users to create, publish and share their own eBook. This free app has won numerous awards including Apple Staff Favorite and 2010 Parent's Choice Award.	They can choose their own story or choose to add text to "story starters" from over 50 great templates. Makes storytelling super easy. Great selection of colored "markers!" Kids can even select the width of the marker tip and put a star, heart, etc. on the tip for "stamping." Users can choose from built in clip art or take their own pictures.	
Sock Puppets	Allows users to choose backgrounds, props and scenery to create puppet shows.	Users can record sound and add their own voice to the puppets. Puppet choices range from cartoonish to realistic.	Can be a bit busy; students might get carried away with all of the options.
iTalk	Full-featured recording app that allows users to email high quality recordings or upload to iTunes.	Oral storytelling; Language experience lessons; story retellings	Only allows for audio recording.
Dragon	Easy to use voice recognition app that allows users to speak and instantly see text. Up to 5 times faster than typing on keyboard.	Could be useful for students who would have difficulty with keyboarding; reinforces relationship between written and spoken words.	Words must be enunciated clearly.
QuickVoice	Full-featured recording app with a clean, easy to use display that allows users to make high quality audio recordings.	Oral storytelling; Language experience lessons; story retellings. Unlimited recording time; great sound quality.	Only allows for audio recording.
Toontastic	Allows users to draw, animate, and share cartoons.	Teaches the parts of a story. Also great for sequencing, cause-effect, etc. Allows the users to record narrative as well. Great features on the free version.	Students would need time to play and explore; also students who struggle with story sequencing or story grammar (setting, climax, etc.) might need extra support.

Conclusion

The iPad apps and Web 2.0 tools presented above represent only a small number of the digital tools that can be used for the purposes of teaching, learning, and enhancing literacy as it relates to reading, writing, and technology. We chose to spotlight tools that are intuitive, encourage creativity, and can be used across various content areas and grade levels. Furthermore, we emphasized Web 2.0 tools that promote collaboration and communication, thereby attending to the underlying social factors found within literacy development.

There are innumerable other Web 2.0 tools and iPad apps available to support or enhance literacy instruction and learning – far too many to include in a single article, and in order to discover more tools and apps, we encourage you to consider creating your own Personal Learning Network (PLN). A PLN is a “system of interpersonal connections and resources that support informal learning” (Trust, 2012, p.133). These connections are made predominantly online by subscribing to and engaging in educational communities, blogs, wikis, podcasts and social media-based sites such as Edmodo, Facebook and Twitter. For more information on PLNs, we suggest watching this short video that presents a [PLN overview](#). Visiting and subscribing to education blogs, such as Richard Byrne’s [Free Technology for Teachers website](#), and social media sites such as the [Educator’s PLN](#), will get you started towards building a meaningful PLN. So too, will Twitter. Twitter can be an amazing resource for teachers of all types, and we recommend reading [this Edutopia article](#) on how to do so. If you join Twitter, we suggest that you follow the following individuals, as they will give you more education-related information than you can imagine: [@rbyrne](#), [@coolcatteacher](#), [@web20classroom](#). Simply including these sites and people in your PLN will almost immediately further your understanding about not only technology and literacy, but you will also find a community of educators that is more than willing to share, interact and collaborate with you in order to improve your skills and education as a whole.



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More than Vocabulary: Strategies to Support Emergent Bilingual Readers

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Educators know that reading comprehension is a key component to reading development. We ask children to make connections between the text and their lives in order to support their understanding of the material. In her book *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3*, Taberski tells readers about the importance of children making sense of what they are reading. She highlights the ways in which children draw upon their own experiences in order to understand what they are reading:

The closer the content is to their own experiences or a subject they know a lot about, the more capable they are at anticipating what will happen next – even what words might be used – and drawing implications for their own lives (2000, p.3).

However, reading instruction, particularly with students who are labeled as low-achieving readers, continues to focus on word work and phonics instruction, ignoring key strategies such as making connections, drawing on prior knowledge, meaning making, that help children become proficient readers (Routman, 2003). This issue is often magnified when working with children who are emergent bilinguals, who are learning English in addition to their home language(s). The focus is often around vocabulary with the rationale that if the children do not understand the meaning of the words then they will not be able to comprehend the text. While vocabulary development is a key piece in supporting emergent bilinguals' reading development I would like to address issues of cultural knowledge and assumptions of prior knowledge that are often embedded in text, and how these might present challenges for students as they read texts. What are some of the references that are included in texts that assume that the readers have prior knowledge about the topic? How can teachers help to support children's reading comprehension by making explicit connections to cultural knowledge or what we often assume to be common knowledge?

The Little Red Riding Hood

The fairy tale of the Little Red Riding Hood is familiar to most of us; we have either heard the story or have read one of the multiple picture book adaptations that exist. There are variations of the tale, but most revolve around a little girl with a red cape who wanders through the forest to deliver food to her sick grandmother. On the way, she meets a wolf, who after finding out what she is doing, suggests that she pick some flowers so that he has time to get to the grandmother's house first. He then either eats or hides the grandma and then dresses up like her and lies in the bed. When the Little Red Riding Hood

arrives, she is surprised by her grandmother's appearance and asks her a series of questions commenting on different features (eyes, ears, nose, voice), finally her teeth. The wolf responds to all with "the better to..." finishing with "the better to eat you with." The wolf then eats the Little Red Riding Hood and falls asleep. A lumberjack comes by, notices the sleeping wolf and cuts him open to save the Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.

In the book *Wolves* (Ramsey, 1999), the author juxtaposes lines from *The Little Red Riding Hood* with facts about wolves. On one page there is a drawing from the *Little Red Riding Hood* with a line such as "'What big ears you have,' said Little Red Riding Hood" (p. 14), and on the opposite page there is a photograph of a wolf with a fact: 'Wolves can hear sounds up to a half-mile away?' (p. 11). The author mixes fiction and non-fiction in order to contrast the portrayal of the fictional wolf in the *Little Red Riding Hood* with information about wolves.

Rebeca sat at her table of four people, reading a mixed genre story, *Wolves* (Ramsey, 1999), which relies on an intertextual reference to the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*. After quite a few pages of her decoding, I asked if she knew the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and she did not. Together we found and read it. She exclaimed "Oh, no!" and interacted in an animated way with the text (Falchi, 2011, 147).

Rebeca is an emergent bilingual child in a dual-language (Spanish/English) second grade classroom. She is multilingual as her family speaks Mixteco (a Mexican indigenous language) at home as well as Spanish, and she has been learning English in school since she was 3 years old. In school she has been identified as an "at risk" reader and her written stories do not always follow a linear sequence, often including what seemed like random elements or out of order accounts.

In this anecdote, we can see how her lack of familiarity with what is assumed to be a well-known fairy tale affected her ability to comprehend a text and engage with it. Not knowing the story of the *Little Red Riding Hood* makes the contrasting of the illustration and line from the fictional story with the photograph and factual information seem almost nonsensical. Rebeca is able to decode the words on the page and understand their literal meaning, however, she is missing key information about the text in order to make sense of it in the way that the author intended.

Non-fiction is an important genre that is thought to lead to higher reading achievement and is often a favorite among

young children (Routman, 2003). When teaching non-fiction units in schools, teachers often focus on the contrast between reality and fantasy and use examples from children's books to help students learn how to differentiate between the two. Yet, teachers need to be aware of what is assumed to be prior knowledge for all children and how this might not be the case for children who are emergent bilinguals who might be less familiar with stories that are assumed to be well-known, such as fairy-tales, or other cultural knowledge such as U.S. holidays.

Thanksgiving and Turkeys

It is November in a 4-year-old Head Start classroom and the teachers have added some stories to the classroom library about Thanksgiving. At the end of the day, Estrella picks up *Albuquerque Turkey* (Ford, 2005) and reads it to her classmates by telling a story from looking at the pictures. Estrella's family speaks mostly in Mixteco at home with some Spanish and this is her second year in a dual language (Spanish/English) classroom. At this point of the year, she is speaking only in Spanish in the classroom; however, she is communicative both verbally and non-verbally, with very expressive facial expressions:

Estrella opens book and looks at page: *Está hablando con el pato, se entró, y se fue a su casa* (He was talking to the duck, he went in and he went to his house).

Estrella looks at the pictures before she tells story: *Su perro quiere ir* (His dog wants to go).

Teacher: *¿A dónde?* (To where?)

Estrella: *A caminar, está haciendo comiendo, esta haciendo comida para el* (points to turkey), *esta enojado porque va a corta* (picture is of man with knife), *está feliz, se subió a la bicicleta, esta caminando.* (To walk, he is making eating, he is making food for it [turkey], he is mad because he is going to cut it [turkey], he is happy he gets on his bicycle, it [turkey] is walking.)

Estrella: *Está dormido, se fue a casa.* (It [turkey] is sleeping, he went to his house)

(FN_Nov.16.2011)

In reading over the anecdote, it is difficult to understand what exactly has happened in the story. In part, this is because the words are of a song/poem and the illustrations do not necessarily correspond. Estrella, who is developing early literacy skills, is depending exclusively on the illustrations to tell her story. However, as we can see from her calling the turkey a duck, she seems to be missing some of the background knowledge to understand this story. Afterwards as her classmates were discussing the story, many of them were familiar with the holiday and traditions of Thanksgiving. Their responses to the story "We eat turkey on Thanksgiving, not Egg Foo Yong," demonstrated that they were making text- to-self connections and recognized that the story (through the illustrations only) was about the holiday. The teacher asked Estrella if she knew what a turkey was, and Estrella shrugged her shoulders and shook her head no. The teacher then asked if they celebrated Thanksgiving at home, and Estrella made a face as if to say "I don't know".

At this stage of her literacy development, Estrella is reading pictures to tell a story; however, her lack of familiarity with the images and how they connect to a cultural holiday made it difficult for her to access the story in the way that the author intended and comprehend the story. Because she was unfamiliar with the practice of eating turkey at Thanksgiving, the story, which tells how the man would rather keep the turkey as a pet and then goes to get items to make another meal for the holiday, doesn't make sense to her.

Making Connections

Rebeca and Estrella both have the skills to be able to read books in ways that are aligned with their stage of development as readers. Rebeca is in second grade and has mastered her letters and sounds and can decode texts. Estrella has mastered some book handling skills and knows how to read pictures in order to tell a story, important foundational skills in her reading development. Yet, both girls struggle with comprehending the text because of lack of prior knowledge that the texts assume and are built upon. The next question is: what are some strategies that teachers can implement to help support children who are learning a new cultural context at school? What are the ways that teachers can help to make explicit some of the prior knowledge that is assumed in texts in order to support reading comprehension and help support children's self to text connections?

Previewing Books

Teachers should be familiar with the books in their classroom and should, if possible, find a way to introduce children to books, either by doing read alouds or introducing books through picture walks. This might seem like a huge task, especially as children get older and there are perhaps more books in the classroom and books that are leveled readers that are less conducive to read alouds because of their style of writing. For example, the book *Wolves* (Ramsey, 1999) is for a beginning reader and probably not used as a read aloud because it is assumed that it is at children's reading level. However, perhaps while teachers do not need to preview all of the books with the children, it would be useful to figure out which ones, such as *Wolves* (Ramsey, 1999) assumes knowledge of another story which otherwise makes book difficult to comprehend. In the case of books around holidays, cultural or historical events, it is useful for teachers to introduce books to the children and perhaps explain their rationale for placing these books in the classroom, including sharing some of the "common knowledge" that exists around these events and the ways that these events are celebrated or discussed in society. We want to ensure that all the children in the classroom have access to the content of the materials and that we are not privileging some knowledge and assuming that it is universal.

Making Meaning-making Explicit

"Children expect text to make sense" (Taberski, 2000, p. 3), yet in the examples shown above, neither girl seemed to realize or did not express their confusion over the lack of sense in their readings. I would revise the sentence to say: Children who are familiar with texts and a particular story pattern expect texts to make sense. But

what about children who are unfamiliar with the kind of stories that we often read in school and therefore are not reading to make sense of text in the ways that we expect in school? We assume that children are familiar with the linear story structure (establish problem and context, problem, solutions, resolution) that is often found in children's picture books or in fairy tales. However, not all stories must follow this structure and depending on children's prior experiences with stories and story-telling, they might not assume that stories often follow this particular pattern. Similar to how we teach children book handling skills, how to open a book, where to start reading, I believe that we also need to familiarize children with the structure of stories. Through this, they learn that stories typically follow a particular pattern and flow so that they are then able to anticipate and self-monitor for meaning. On the other hand, we should also try to include texts and books in our classroom that do not use only a linear story structure so that children can have the opportunity to see texts that do not follow this model.

Conclusion

The strategies needed to help support emergent bilingual children as they develop their reading skills are not vastly different than those for any child; rather, I would argue they are strategies that are beneficial for all children. We need to be aware of the content of the text so that we can help readers access the text, not just through the skills of decoding and other mechanics, but so that they can access the information and the cultural cues that are often embedded in stories and necessary to comprehend the text. We need to be aware of our students' prior experiences and knowledge so that we can find texts that they can build upon and make connections to, as well as providing scaffolding to understand material that is less familiar. As Lindfors suggests, "[p]erhaps most enabling of all when a developing reader comes to a book is her language expectation that words belong within the context in which they occur" (2008, p. 62). We want our readers to feel like they have all of the tools necessary to comprehend text so that they are then able to make meaning and make connections to what they are reading.



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The N° 1 Book Spotter: A Review of Children's Literature for Teachers

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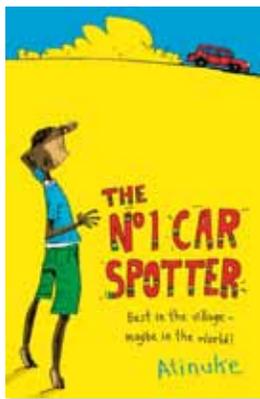
One of my favorite books in this column is titled *The N° 1 Car Spotter*, and it is about a young boy who enjoys spotting cars—shouting out their names as they drive by on the road next to the small, African village in which he lives. Spotting cars is, according to him, the only hobby in his village. He asks, “Who can help spotting cars when the road runs directly past the village? It is what we men do” (p. 13). I like to think of myself as the N° 1 Book Spotter since I enjoy spotting books. This is what I do. Spotting books is not my only hobby, but it is certainly one of my favorite things to do. This column features a selection of books across many genres and sub-genres about a wide range of topics including identical twins, a construction site, the letter “E,” the breakup of a romantic relationship between two teenagers, and Mexican wrestling. As usual, I made sure to include books written by authors from diverse racial backgrounds in the hopes of making readers of this journal familiar with children’s literature that is representative of the multicultural world in which we live. I am pleased to have written this column with several Clemson University students who participated in a Creative Inquiry project with me. Creative Inquiry is a program sponsored by the university that allows students and faculty to engage in activities and discovery across a range of disciplines. I welcome any feedback from readers about this column: jmcnair@clemson.edu. I hope that after browsing this column, you will at least spot two or three books that you are eager to read and share with your students. Perhaps some of you will even become N° 1 Book Spotters!

The N° 1 Car Spotter

Atinuke. (2011). Illus. by Warwick Johnson Cadwell. 111 pp. Kane Miller. 978-1-61067-051-7 \$5.99 (Intermediate)

-by Blair Harden

Imagine. You live in a small town with only one road. Close your eyes. You are sitting under a tree near that road with all of the men in the village. Open your ears. And just listen. What if you could just name a car that passed by on that road without being able to see it? Open your eyes. That’s the life of Oluwalase Babatunde Benson, also known as the N° 1 Car Spotter. N° 1 is the best car spotter in his village in Africa—maybe the best in the world. N° 1 lives in his small village with his family and friends. There is Coca-Cola (his best friend), Mama, Grandmother, Grandfather, Sunshine, Smile, Mama Coca-Cola, Beke, Bisi, Bola, Mama B, and Auntie Fine-Fine just to name a few. Car spotting is the hobby of the men in the village. All the cars travel on that one road, to get to the city,



which is where N° 1’s father lives and works to earn money for the family. In *Atinuke’s N° 1* book, N° 1 tells how he and Coca-Cola saved the citizens of their small village when their only means of transportation to the city had failed them. How N° 1 and Coca-Cola solved the problem will surprise you. Alongside the engaging story, Warwick Johnson Cadwell makes *Atinuke’s* unique book come to life with his illustrations. They are in black and white, which could be Cadwell’s way of letting readers be creative and fill in the colors and imagery they imagine while reading the book. Through N° 1 and Coca-Cola’s adventure, you will not only see how creativity and hard work pay off, but also how important family and community are in this small African village. The book, *The N° 1 Car Spotter* is a real “Na-wa-oh”-er. In N° 1’s terms, that means a real “wow”-er and a must read! Readers who enjoy this book will also want to read *Atinuke’s* latest title, *The N° 1 Car Spotter and the Firebird* (Kane Miller, 2012).

Hurricane Dancers: The First Caribbean Pirate Shipwreck

Engle, Margarita. (2011). 145 pp. Henry Holt and Company. 978-0-8050-9240-0 \$16.99 (Intermediate/Young Adult)

-by Elizabeth Ward

Newbery Honor-winning author Margarita Engle provides the historical context, the newly conquered Caribbean islands in the early 1500s, before unraveling the action and survival in this Pura Belpré Author Honor book. This captivating free verse novel tells the story of a shipwreck off the coast of Cuba and the subsequent survival of a Spanish pirate, his once-powerful hostage, and the ship’s slave-boy. Quebrado, Spanish for “broken one”, is a child of mixed heritage: Taíno Indian and Spanish ancestry. After his mother’s village is destroyed, Quebrado is abandoned by his father and left only with his horse. Quebrado has since been traded among ships as a translator between Spanish and the native languages, yet a shipwreck may finally set him free. He is rescued by natives who allow him to determine the fate of his former captors when they return amid another hurricane. Quebrado helps two young, forbidden lovers survive on their own while he decides how to live the rest of his life. A Cast of Characters page reminds readers of each character’s background and allows small groups to divide the reading like a play. The text, written as monologues from each main character, is poetically separated into phrases like poetry. Each line eloquently uses rhythm to portray the various settings: the swaying pirate ship, calm island coast, lively



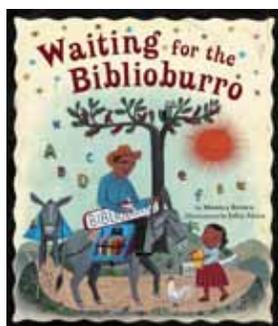
cave, dangerous swamp, and serene forest. Engle concludes the book with an informative Historical Note which addresses the characters and events, culture and language as well as literature. Those who enjoy this free verse novel might also want to read Engle's most recent title about a girl named Fefa who has dyslexia, *The Wild Book* (Harcourt Houghton Mifflin, 2012).

Waiting for the Biblioburro

Brown, Monica. (2011). Illus. by John Parra. Unpaged. Tricycle Press. 978-1-58246-353-7 \$16.99 (Primary)

-by Grace Bachewiig

This story takes place in the mountains of a South American country. A young girl sits at home bored, using her imagination to make up fun stories for her little brother. One day she hears the clicking of hooves, and she rushes outside. There she sees a man riding a donkey with a pack full of books. This man is a traveling librarian; he brings books to children in areas that are too small to have their own library. The young girl is overjoyed at his books and listens intently to his teaching. The librarian promises to return and the young girl rushes home to tell her family all about her day. While waiting several days for the librarian to come back the young girl writes a book of her own to share with other children. This book is written mostly in English, but some Spanish words are included. In the back there is a glossary of all of the Spanish words used as well as an author's note about the reality of traveling librarians. The use of fun onomatopoeia in this book makes it a great story to read aloud. This book tells of a young girl who can't wait to read new things and discover the world, a message that is very important for young readers. *Waiting for the Biblioburro* teaches children the value of books and how we should not take them for granted.



Job Site

Clement, Nathan. (2011). Unpaged. Boyds Mills Press. 978-1-59078-769-4 \$16.95 (Primary)

-by Grace Murphy

Job Site by Nathan Clement focuses on what happens at a construction site. The "boss" of the construction site tells each machine operator to do a specific task. For example, part of the text reads, "Boss says, 'Level that pile!' And the

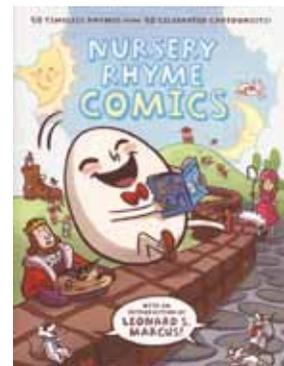
bulldozer lowers its blade and levels the pile of gravel. Boss says, 'Dig a hole!' And the excavator tops its bucket and starts to dig." This continues until the boss finally announces that the job is done and the machines leave and reveal the finished project—a park. The end of the book shows the boss with his family walking through the park that he helped to build. This book is an ideal choice for young readers because the pictures have bright, bold colors and provide close-up images of the machinery. Also, the text is somewhat repetitive, making it easier for emergent readers to follow along and predict what will happen next. Pair this with *Drive* (Boyds Mill Press, 2008), also by Clement. (GM)

Nursery Rhyme Comics: 50 Timeless Rhymes from 50 Celebrated Cartoonists!

Fifty Celebrated Cartoonists. (2011). 119 pp. First Second/ Roaring Brook Press. 978-1-59643-600-8 \$18.99 (Primary/Intermediate)

-by Maeghan Jewett

This playful book brings fifty classic nursery rhymes to new and old audiences in the form of comic strips by fifty of today's cartoonists. It creatively takes familiar, often oral, nursery rhymes and creates a visual representation of each tale, enabling readers to see the nursery rhymes in a new way. Each artist has a new approach to add to the rhymes, like Lucy Knisley's portrayal of "There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." Knisley's rendition features the old woman, named Ruth, who is a former rock and roller that holds a babysitting job in her house shaped like a shoe. This version features Ruth as a loving caregiver who, instead of whipping her children as the rhyme suggests, forms a band with them called the Whips. This book also creates characters that have conversations outside of the rhymes to enhance the story. The diverse story lines and illustrations create an experience that cannot be found in other nursery rhyme books. The illustrations take readers on a new journey of a conventional tale, eventually leading them into a new exploration and meaning of it. The reader is then able to take that nursery rhyme and build his or her own interpretation of it. *Nursery Rhyme Comics* includes an introduction by Leonard S. Marcus and an editor's note from Chris Duffy. Both of these pieces offer the reader insights into the reasoning behind this compilation of nursery rhymes. Also included, is a brief description of all fifty contributors to the book. This book can serve as a springboard for the readers to create their own versions of these beloved nursery rhymes.



Maximilian & the Mystery of the Guardian Angel: A Bilingual Lucha Libre Thriller

Garza, Xavier. (2011). 207 pp. Cinco Puntos Press. 978-1-933693-98-9 \$12.95 (Intermediate)

-by Jonda C. McNair

This engaging, bilingual novel is told from the perspective of Maximilian, an 11-year-old who is a Mexican wrestling aficionado. His favorite wrestler is the Guardian Angel and while attending one of his wrestling matches, he has a chance encounter with him. Maximilian discovers that the Guardian Angel is a long lost uncle. Garza's writing captures the excitement of the wrestling matches. While attending one wrestling match at which the main event will be a fight between the Guardian Angel and El Cavernario (prehistoric caveman) and "his tag team partner, the chain-collar wearing Dog-Man Aguayo" (p. 58), the text reads, "The lucha libre show begins with a series of opening bouts that whet our appetites for the main event action. The most memorable match can only be described as a virtual 8.9 on the Richter scale. This is a bout

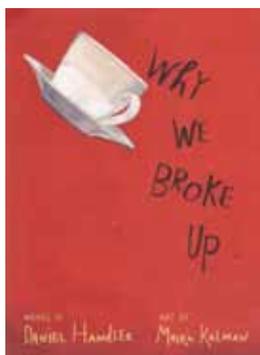
of gargantuan proportions that sees the irresistible 402-pound man known as the Ton Jackson go toe-to-toe with the immovable 405-pound Big Bad Tamba. Both huge men do the impossible and take to the air as if they were featherweights” (pp. 59-60). This book earned Xavier Garza a 2012 Pura Belpré Author Honor Award.

Why We Broke Up

Handler, Daniel. (2011). Illus. by Maira Kalman. 354 pp. Little, Brown and Company. 978-0-316-12725-7 \$19.99 (Young Adult)

-by Rachel Edelstein

Two bottle caps, a ripped poster, a protractor, a stack of post-cards, and one egg cuber. These and other relics of their relationship are packed into a big, blue box by protagonist Min Green and left on former boyfriend Ed Slaterton’s doorstep. As a strong, witty, but scorned ex-girlfriend, Min feels the need to cleanse her life of the boy she once loved. In *Why We Broke Up* author Daniel Handler (best known under the penname of Lemony Snicket) creates a story told entirely through an angry, loving letter from Min to Ed. The novel is interspersed with simple, yet captivating illustrations of each and every object of importance from Min’s time with Ed. While reading this book, I was always gripped with the surprise of what strange souvenir would appear next. As a realistic, coming-of-age novel, *Why We Broke Up* provides a glimpse into the mind of a teenage girl who is comfortable being herself, but who is struggling to work out the intricacies of love, loss, and friendship. With the first-person, stream-of-consciousness narration that the book employs, the reader easily feels a part of Min and Ed’s relationship. The box’s wild array of items, the spunky narrator, and the enchanting drawings make this novel a beautiful representation of a young woman facing a young man she used to love.



Just a Second: A Different Way to Look at Time

Jenkins, Steve. (2011). Unpaged. Houghton Mifflin. 978-0-618-70896-3 \$16.99 (Primary/Intermediate)

-by Jonda C. McNair

Steve Jenkins is one of my favorite authors of informational text. He makes science so much fun to read and learn about. In his most recent title, he explores the concept of time by focusing on what can happen during intervals such as one second, one minute, one hour, one day, and one week. For example, readers will discover that in one second a “rattle snake shakes its tail in warning 60 times” and that “A bat can make 200 high-pitched calls.” Readers will also learn that in one minute “An elephant’s heart beats about 30 times” while “A very chilly crocodile’s heart may slow to just one beat.” Pairings such as these are intriguing. Facts related to humans are also included throughout the book. Near the end of the book there are two sections titled “Very Quick . . .” and “Very Long . . .” As examples from these two sections, “The trap-jaw ant snaps

its jaws in 1/800th of a second—the fastest movement in the animal world” and “A French woman lived to be 122 years old.” Jenkins uses his signature collage technique to add texture and life to the images. The book concludes with a “History of Time and Timekeeping” chronology as well as a note about how the facts and figures in this book were determined. For other books by Jenkins with interesting scientific information, read *Biggest, Strongest, Fastest* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) and *Hottest, Coldest, Highest, Deepest* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

The Grand Plan to Fix Everything

Krishnaswami, Uma. (2011). Illus. by Abigail Halpin. 266 pp. Atheneum. 978-1-4169-9589-0 \$16.99 (Intermediate)

-by Jonda C. McNair

Dini loves watching Bollywood movies from India starring her favorite actress, the amazing Dolly Singh. “Dini is a Dolly fan. She has been forever, from the time she discovered that Dolly’s first movie, in which she was just a kid, came out the day—the very day!—that Dini was born. You can’t be more closely connected than that” (p. 1). Dini’s plans to attend a Bollywood dance camp for two whole weeks abruptly change when her mother receives a grant to work at a clinic for women in a town called Swapnagiri in India. Dini is upset to say the least about her family moving from Maryland—especially to Swapnagiri instead of Bombay where Bollywood movies are made and where Dolly Singh lives. The town of Swapnagiri is full of amazements and Dini eventually gets to meet the fabulous Dolly Singh while there. Although the book is somewhat predictable, still there is much to like about this appealing middle-grade novel.



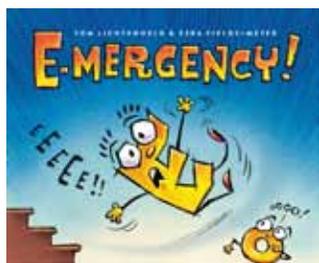
The Secret Box

Lehman, Barbara. (2011). Unpaged. Houghton Mifflin. 978-0-547-23868-5 \$15.99 (Primary)

-by Emma Jackson

The *Secret Box* is a unique type of children’s book. It is a book that has no words, only illustrations. It uses the pictures to tell the story, which allows children to use their imaginations when reading the book. The general story line is that a boy hides a box beneath the floor of the attic of his school. Eventually, the box is found by three boys in their attic bedroom. The box contains maps, clues, and pictures that lead to a magical place. The place is called Seahorse Pier and is a place that is not in normal time. The boys are welcomed by numerous people, from many different time periods when they arrive there. The book ends with two more boys finding the box after them, sure to go on the adventure. This book is good for young children because it fosters their imaginations and inspires them to explore. For children who are not adept at reading yet, this book would be a good choice because they can read it themselves independently. So for children that like

adventure and colorful, imaginative illustrations, this book will be perfect for them. Other outstanding wordless books by this author include *Museum Trip* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006), *Rainstorm* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007), and *Trainstop* (Houghton Mifflin, 2008).



E-mergency!

Lichtenheld, Tom & Fields-Meyer, Ezra. (2011). Unpaged. Chronicle. 978-0-8118-7898-2 \$16.99 (Primary/Intermediate)

-by Grace Bachewiig

How would the English language be different without the letter "E"? The

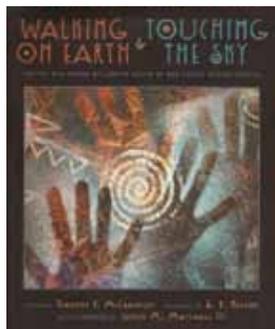
book *E-mergency!* sheds a little light on that question. The story starts with the tragic fall of the letter "E." She is unable to form words and must be taken to the hospital. The letter "O" step ups in her absence filling in everywhere there is an "E" missing. This book teaches children the importance of just a single letter and shows everyone, even adults, just how often we use the letter "E." This book is quite humorous; the jokes are witty, and it is fun to read aloud. Some of the jokes are geared more towards an intermediate audience, so this book can be read by a range of ages. The book is illustrated like a cartoon, with much of the text as a dialogue between the letters with minimal narration. On several pages line up to form a word or part of a word that relates to the story content. Searching for these hidden words can help encourage young readers to enjoy reading. The back endpapers of the book include a bar graph that shows just how often the letter "E" appears. *E-mergency!* demonstrates to readers the importance of every single letter and how without just one, our words would not be the same.

Walking on Earth & Touching the Sky: Poetry and Prose by Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Indian School

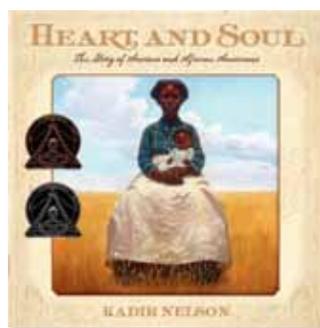
McLaughlin, Timothy P. (Ed.). (2012). Illus. by S. D. Nelson. 80 pp. Abrams. 978-1-4197-0179-5 \$19.95 (Intermediate/Young Adult)

-by Jonda C. McNair

The poetry and prose in this collection was written by Lakota youth in grades 5 through 8 at Red Cloud Indian School in South Dakota over a period of three years while the editor, Timothy P. McLaughlin, was teaching reading and writing there. The selections are divided into the following sections: 1) natural world, 2) misery, 3) native thoughts, 4) silence, 5) spirit, 6) family youth, and dreams, and 7) language. McLaughlin introduces "each section . . . with some essential facts about the experiences and teachings these Lakota youth are drawing on" (p. 13). S.D. Nelson includes an illustration at the beginning of each section that complements the theme. One poem by Dena Colhoff from the section on the natural world is titled "What the Roses are Saying," and it reads: "What the roses are saying cannot be heard through voice / but through beauty as you watch the rain slip / from their petals and hang from their edges" (p. 20). One piece of prose by Kathy McLaughlin



from the section on family, youth and dreams is titled "All My Relatives," and it reads: "All of my relatives are like the wild prairies, different sizes that are old and new. We are like the stars, there are a great many of us. We are like the sea, we have many voices. We are like the skies, always changing from beautiful to ugly to mean. Some of us are like the trees, very old and wise. The rest of us are like the flowers, still young and learning" (p. 60). The writing by these children demonstrates the power of words and that children are fully capable of expressing themselves if given the opportunity. I highly recommend this collection.



Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans

Nelson, Kadir. (2011). 108 pp. Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins. 978-0-06-173074-0 \$19.99 (Intermediate/Young Adult)

-by Emma Jackson

Heart and Soul is a moving story of African American history in America. The story is told by an anonymous

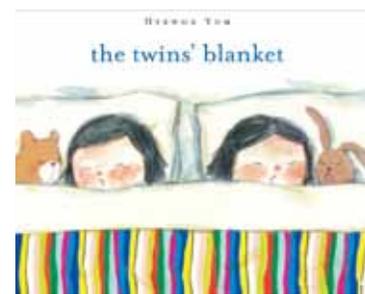
female narrator. The lack of credit given to African Americans for the way this country has turned out and developed is strongly emphasized through the whole story. The book is broken up into different sections, almost like chapters, that are a few pages long. Each section emphasizes a different point about history such as slavery, the civil war, reconstruction, the Great Migration, World War II, and the civil rights movement. The illustrations in the book, also done by Kadir Nelson, are beautiful and moving as well. There are portraits of famous historical figures like Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Martin Luther King Jr. This book could be used many different ways in the classroom. It would be a great book to read during social studies units on American history. It could also be read aloud to younger children to explain history to them in a way that is interesting. They will also enjoy all of the wonderful illustrations. I hope this review inspires you to read this book and pass it on to others. It is inspiring and moving and helps everyone appreciate the huge role that African Americans played in our history. For another exceptional title related to this subject, please read *Miles to Go for Freedom: Segregation & Civil Rights in the Jim Crow Years* (Linda Barrett Osborne, 2012, Abrams).

The Twins' Blanket

Yum, Hyewon. (2011). Unpaged. Farrar Straus Giroux. 978-0-374-37972-8 \$16.99 (Primary)

-by Grace Murphy

"We're look-alike twins. That means we look like each other. That means we share everything. We share toys, clothes, and a room. Once, we even shared Mommy's belly." And so begins this story of twin girls who have grown up sharing everything, including a striped blanket they have had since they were born. When the girls turn five though, they become too big to share the blanket. The rest of the book describes the solution



the girls and their mother come up with so they can both still have a part of their blanket. Their mother decides to make new blankets for the girls and she lets them both pick out the fabric. She uses a piece from the old blanket as a trim for the new blankets. There are double-paged spreads throughout the book and the clever use of the gutter separates the girls and gives each one their own side of the page. The endpapers are especially meaningful. They show the colors of the fabric that each of the girls chose for their new blankets—pink and yellow.



Jonda C. McNair is an associate professor of literacy education at Clemson University. She specializes in children’s literature with an emphasis on books written by and about African-Americans. Jonda’s email is jmcnair@clemson.edu.

Holding the Door Open for Others to Follow

Sarah Hunt-Barron, Converse College
Jacquelynn A. Malloy, Anderson University

As teacher educators, we preach endlessly of the power of reflection: What is working and what is not and how do we fix it? How can we reach the third grader who struggles with fluency or the ninth grader who can't seem to put words to paper? Reflecting on our practice is crucial to becoming the effective educators we aspire to be. And reflection is at the heart of finding the answers.

As teacher educators, we strive to transform our pre-service and graduate level teachers from reflective practitioners into researchers who lead by experience and example. But you don't have to be a graduate student to inspire others with the successes we are sometimes fortunate enough to realize in our teaching practices and methods. You just have to be willing to ask a question, try something that looks promising, and evaluate the effectiveness of your attempt. Effective teachers do this all the time, and sometimes, they share their ideas and successes with colleagues and grade level teams.

As the new co-editors of Reading Matters, the journal that is here to support you in your teaching as a member of the South Carolina Chapter of the International Reading Association, we hope to encourage you take that next step: share your research or teaching experiences with others as a submission to the journal. When you publish your hard work, you do more than change the literacy potential of the students you teach, you hold the door open for other teachers to follow. This article is designed to guide you in moving your teaching innovations to teaching inspirations.

Submission Guidelines: The submission guidelines for Reading Matters are included in the front matter of the journal and are also available on the web site at SCIRA.org. The guidelines provide information on types of articles, formatting, and submission deadlines.

Types of Articles: Reading Matters is interested in articles that will support our readership, literacy educators, in creating and maintaining effective literacy environments and practices for K-12 students. The articles can take several forms:

- A literature review researches a topic and presents a well organized synthesis and critique of the results, which should inform teachers in implementing best practices in some area of literacy.
- A commentary is a well-researched article that presents and supports an opinion after weighing all sides of the issue. This may look much like a literature review, but has a point of view or opinion to express.
- A research article should follow the American Psychological Association (APA-6) style and formatting for a research

paper. The research should be original, have a clear problem and rationale, include a literature review that supports the research question that is developed, and discuss the methods and findings of the research in a manner that provides conclusions and implications for teaching and for further research. A strong theoretical base for the research should also be clearly stated.

- A practitioner piece is a voice from your classroom. It is an anecdotal presentation of attempts, successes, frustrations, and triumphs in the classroom that you and/or your colleagues have experienced.

Formatting: In general, follow APA-6 guidelines for formatting your manuscript, particularly with regard to in-text citations and references. Articles should not exceed 12 pages, double-spaced. Please include a title page and complete references for your work. Supplementary materials, tables and figures should appear in the appendices. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, in Times New Roman font, have 1" margins all around, and use headings to clearly delineate sections. It is important that your title page include your name, affiliation, and an email address where you can be reliably reached.

After submitting your manuscript to the editors, you will receive an email that acknowledges the receipt of your work and provides you with a manuscript number for your piece. The editors will then 'blind' your manuscript by removing identifying information and send it to at least two reviewers. The reviewers are provided with information regarding the procedures for the review and will be given a period of time to consider your manuscript and provide feedback. Once this feedback is received, the editors will meet to make decisions regarding each manuscript.

You will receive a letter via email that informs you of the editorial decision. Your article may be accepted with a note that the editors will take care of minor editing before publication. If the article is promising but the feedback from the reviewers is substantive, you may be asked to revise and resubmit the article before a decision to accept it can be reached. In this case, you will be given clear guidance from the editors regarding the work that must be done on the manuscript to achieve a favorable decision. You will be given a set period of time to resubmit the article for consideration in the current issue. Lastly, the decision may be that your manuscript is not ready for publication for the current issue and a non-acceptance letter will be issued. However, recommendations and feedback will be provided for your future development of articles for the journal.

When a manuscript is accepted, either initially or through revision, you will receive an acceptance letter and two forms

that need to be returned to the editors: a consent to publish document that requires your signature, and a personal information form that leads to a personal biography that will be included at the end of your published article.

We encourage you to be a part of the solution in our literacy classrooms. SCIRA strives to guide classroom teachers, teacher educators, and literacy researchers to continually push the envelope regarding best practices in literacy and in meeting the needs of all of our students. By sharing your research, teaching practices, and informed commentary regarding how we teach, we hold the door open for others to follow and greatly improve our chances of being the professional educators we know we can be.