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LITERACY ASSOCIATION
OF TENNESSEE



OPEN THE MAGIC: LITERACY IS THE KEY

Letter from the Editorial Team

Dear Readers,

We are excited to share the first issue of the Tennessee Literacy Journal (formerly, Tennessee Reading Teacher) with you and your colleagues. In this issue, we bring together articles that address some of the current trends and questions in literacy research and practice. The article by Richard Allington highlights the importance of looking at recent attention to systematic phonics instruction and structured literacy. This is especially relevant today since the ‘science’ of reading and structured literacy has gained particular urgency.

The article by Rachelle Savitz and Mihaela Gazioglu discusses the importance of using children’s literature with English learners. Other articles take a close look at essential literacy assessments in early grades and how inquiry and self-selection of text can impact motivation to read. The teaching tips present an array of useful strategies for teaching reading, engaging English Learners with academic vocabulary, and teaching writing through graphic novels. We also include excellent professional

book reviews submitted by Robin Schell and Nora Vines.

New ideas and trends in literacy education demand that we, as a field, stay relevant, purposeful, and thoughtful. Our teaching should reflect best practices substantiated by meaningful research and practice. We hope that you consider submitting examples of your work to this journal. Looking forward to seeing you all at the LAT annual conference!

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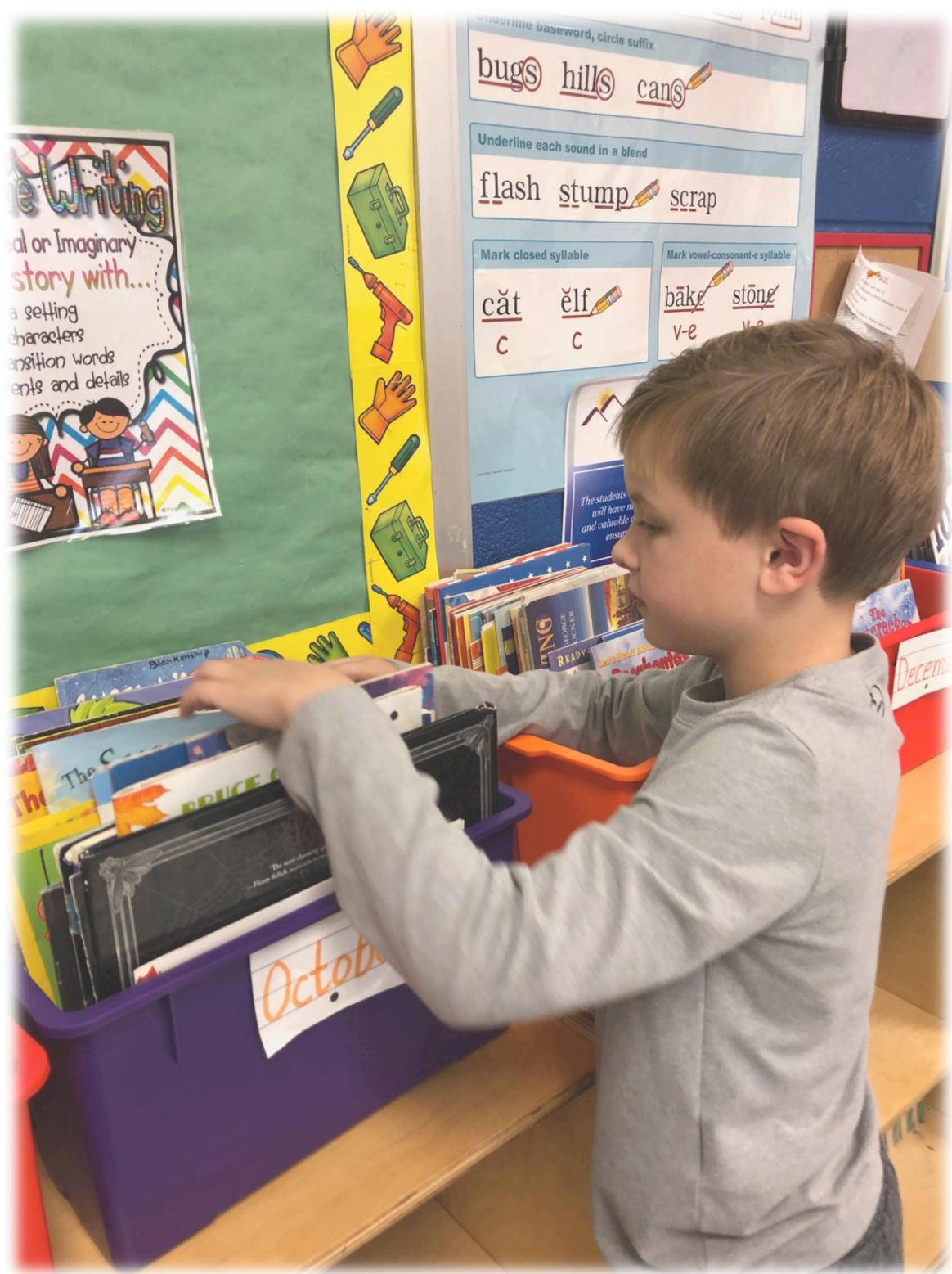
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Letter from LAT Chair, Susan Price

“Make a difference about something other than yourselves.”

Toni Morrison

Welcome to the first edition of the Tennessee Literacy Journal. We are so happy you chose to join a local chapter of the Literacy Association of Tennessee (LAT).

As 2019-20 LAT chair, my goal is to help literacy professionals become part of a growing and dynamic group of educators, along with writers, speakers, and readers, who want to raise up the banner of literacy excellence in Tennessee.

Our desire is to provide you with the best information and resources available to help in your literacy projects and teaching. In addition, we want you to utilize this state-wide network of professionals who are willing and eager to work with you. We have projects in the works, including a Speaker's Bureau and a possible Spring online

conference, to go along with the established benefits of grants, scholarships, awards, and, of course, our LAT Conference in December. This online journal is also one of the benefits of your membership, and we are thrilled that our new editorial board is dedicated to communicating research-based literacy initiatives and practices that may change the way we teach.

Now, it is up to you. Volunteer to help your local chapter with projects that can provide your schools with more books for kids. Fill out a grant application for a publishing center or a set of diversity books to use in your classroom. Ask your principal to finance your attendance at the conference, and be willing to come back and share what you learn with your co-workers.

Let's make a difference!



Table of Contents

Featured Articles

- The Hidden Push for Phonics Legislation**, Richard L. Allington, University of Tennessee 7
- Using Children's Literature with English Language Learners**, Mihaela Gazioglu and Rachelle Savitz, Clemson University 21
- Essential First Grade Reading Assessment: Classroom-based Tools**, Nora Vines, University of Tennessee 31
- Interest and Inquiry: Using Self-selected Topics to Encourage Student Inquiry**, Monica T. Billen, California State University, Fresno 43
- "I Get to Expand My Mind:" Creating Opportunities for Literacy Engagement and Discussion through ProjectLIT**, Arianna Banack and Amanda Rigell, University of Tennessee, Tiffany Fluharty, Knox County Schools 59

Teaching Tips

- Turning Metacognition into MetacogVISION: Helping Students Visualize their Thinking with Graphic Organizers**, Alycia M. Taylor and Rachael L. Ross, University of Memphis 69
- Graphic Novels: Supporting Students to Write Dialogue**, Rachel Hill, Knox County Schools, Jennifer Jordan, University of Tennessee 78
- Tips to Expand Vocabulary of English Learners**, Betty Thomason, Maryville City Schools 82

Book Reviews

- It's About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers** (Wood Ray, & Cleaveland, 2004), Nora Vines, University of Tennessee, Knoxville 86
- English Language Learners and the New Standards** (Heritage, Walqui, & Linquanti, 2015), Robin Schell, Miami University 87

The Hidden Push for Phonics Legislation

Richard L. Allington, University of Tennessee

Across the nation state legislators have been responding to an initiative by an organization known as Decoding Dyslexia. The goal of this organization's initiative is to create and support state chapters of Decoding Dyslexia in a quest to mandate rules and regulations concerning the preparation and certification of teachers who work with 'dyslexic' students. The Decoding Dyslexia (DD) website (www.decodingdyslexia.net/info.html) argues for enhanced emphasis on developing all teachers' awareness of dyslexia and also argues for presenting teachers with a single (non-existent) definition of dyslexia and mandatory remediation for dyslexic students.

Decoding Dyslexia is a "network of parent-led grassroots movements across the country concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for dyslexia within the public education system." This "parent-led" organization now has chapters in all 50 states plus several Canadian provinces (visit their website for Tennessee at www.DecodingDyslexiaTN.org). On the website of Decoding Dyslexia – Tennessee, you will see lots of photos of members in action at conferences and meeting with state legislators. There are also numerous photos of many with children wearing bright

red sweatshirts emblazoned with Dyslexics Untie (www.dyslexiauntie.com). Dyslexia Untie is a mother's website promoting the Say Dyslexia law. In addition, you will find hotlinks to other dyslexia instruction-themed websites.

The website of the Tennessee chapter of Decoding Dyslexia also promotes awareness of the Say Dyslexia bill that became Tennessee education law in 2016. That bill was promoted by the group and now sets forth the legal basis for advocating for additional legislation that would establish a legal definition of dyslexia as well as early screening for dyslexia and mandates for dyslexic children's access to "dyslexia remediation" and "assistive technologies" in schools for use by and with dyslexic students. You can read the legislation and note the requirements that schools provide all dyslexic children with "multi-sensory dyslexic-specific reading instruction".

You can read the Say Dyslexia law now in place in Tennessee (<https://dyslexia-untied.com>). The law sets up a state Dyslexia Advisory Council of 9 members which must meet quarterly. Members of the committee include one member from a dyslexia advocacy group, a special education teacher with an understanding of dyslexia, a speech pathologist, three general

education teachers, a parent of a dyslexic child and several members of the state education agency. This committee is required to submit an annual report to both the House and the Senate. What I find most disturbing about the recent Tennessee dyslexia law is the absence of any input from the Literacy Association of Tennessee (LAT) as well as the absence of members of the Dyslexia Advisory Council drawn from the membership of LAT.

Throughout the on-line information available from Decoding Dyslexia you will find assertions that “one of every four (or five) children is dyslexic”. That would mean that every third-grade classroom in Tennessee would have four or five “dyslexic” students! But the truth of the matter is quite different. The key characteristic of “dyslexic” children that virtually everyone agrees upon is that “dyslexic” children are extraordinarily difficult to teach to read successfully. Of course, for me and many others, no child could be identified as “dyslexic” unless they have had access to high-quality reading lessons both in their classroom and in whatever remedial reading program they participate in (Title 1, special education, English as a Second Language, etc.) and yet still have shown limited progress in their reading development (Pressley & Allington, 2014). Unfortunately, access to high-quality classroom and special program reading instruction

is rarely experienced today by children considered “dyslexic”, thus as it now stands, I argue that there are no “dyslexic” children. I argue that because there are literally no struggling readers (including those labeled dyslexic) receiving both high-quality classroom and special program reading instruction. The real conundrum for “dyslexia” advocates, however, is found in a book and an article by Rosalie Fink (1998; 2006). After interviewing 66 adults who had been labeled as “dyslexic”, Fink interviewed these adults about their schooling and how it was that they had become proficient readers. That is, 27 of these “dyslexic” individuals had earned an advanced degree (17 PhD, 6 MD and 4 JD) and 65 of the 66 “dyslexics” had earned at least a four-year degree (BS, MS, BFA, etc.). However, each of these “dyslexic” individuals “had failed to respond to validated interventions in reading” during their first years in school (p. 146), but between ages 10 and 13 they developed fluency in reading and became avid readers. Fink (2006) also notes that the success of these readers argues for a focus on silent reading because none found oral reading comfortable or rewarding. Two thirds of these individuals never mastered spelling, and one third of them did not master other phonological decoding skills, yet they all became skilled readers --scoring at the highest levels in

silent reading comprehension and vocabulary (Fink, 2006, p. 137). Central to her model for teaching “dyslexic” students is that reading instruction must focus more on each student’s interests, working towards a goal of fostering a deep knowledge in one or more areas for each struggling reader. This focus on each child’s passionate interest works to develop deep knowledge on one or more topics. This deep knowledge then facilitates using that expertise as a sort of “scaffolding” when reading. Ultimately, this focus on passionate interests supported the vocabulary development and comprehension of these “dyslexic” readers. Fink (2006) concludes that in designing reading instruction for children who have failed to learn to read by age 10, “the power of a reader’s passionate, personal interests cannot be overstated” (p. 136). Fink’s argument for a very different approach in developing the reading proficiency of students who are difficult to teach (or “dyslexic”) should serve to remind all of us that children differ and that there exist multiple ways that children learn to read. The problems struggling readers present is not likely to ever go away but intervening with very code-focused, multi-sensory lessons, as DD and IDA suggest, has no research support and has had little, if any, success after an almost 100-year trial and that alone should stimulate the search for effective methods for developing the reading proficiencies

of struggling readers.

The actual problem, then, presented by most struggling readers (including children identified as “dyslexic” students) is that there is little evidence the struggling readers get any appropriate reading instruction. The classroom where they would be expected to receive at least 90 minutes daily of high-quality reading instruction rarely provides struggling readers either 90 minutes of classroom reading instruction or any minutes of high-quality reading instruction (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989a, Vaughn, Moody & Schumm, 1998). In these observational studies, equal numbers of children enrolled in either Title 1 or special education programs were observed across whole school days. These students were drawn from low-income families and enrolled in schools in multiple school districts. Neither study found that either group of struggling readers actually received more minutes of either reading instruction or more minutes of reading activity than did other students. In fact, the usual case was that struggling readers in these two supplementary programs received far less reading instruction every day than did their classmates who had developed on-level reading proficiencies. Central to this problem was that for both programs the time that Title 1 and special education students received their ‘special’

reading services was almost always scheduled during the same time as was classroom reading instruction. However, federal legislation governing these program designs includes a ‘supplement and do not supplant’ clause concerning special program and classroom reading lessons. That is, federal rules were designed to increase the amount of reading instruction that struggling readers received. It would always be greater than the amount of reading instruction other students receive. Since participating in the remediation programs available in either Title 1 or special education classes typically involves moving to another classroom and to a different teacher, the transition time to move to a different location and once again participate in a reading lesson simply ate up minutes that could have been available for instruction (Allington, 2010). In addition, in too many cases pupils with disabilities only participated in reading instruction in the special education site (and many students went to their special education site but were then never exposed to any high-quality reading instruction).

Unfortunately, Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989b, Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2003), Vaughn, Moody and Schumm (1998), Croninger and Valli (2009) and Valli-Croninger and Buese (2012) reported the situation described above such that it almost seems to be the ‘normal’ routine that

struggling readers experience in American schools. In far too many cases the special education teacher has received no, or very minimal, preparation in teaching children to read. Then there are the paraprofessionals who often are charged with delivering the reading instruction in both remedial and special education programs. Of course, most paraprofessional have received no preparation in teaching children to read. This is the sad state of affairs for struggling readers in most schools – the most instructional needy children are getting fewer minutes of reading instruction than other students and what reading instruction they do receive is of significantly lower quality than the reading instruction offered other students by their classroom teachers. The current reading instruction that struggling readers receive is a huge problem and a cause for concern. It is the academically struggling students who must receive both the highest quality instruction as well as the greatest amount of reading instruction if we hope to create literate individuals. Thus, we must ask what are the defining features of high-quality reading instruction?

Characteristics of high-quality reading instruction

Space precludes a full description of high-quality reading instruction. That is because there are multiple book-length treatises on high-quality reading instruction and all are much longer than this article. Thus, I will focus on four research-based features that are absolutely essential aspects of high-quality reading instruction.

The first key element of high-quality reading instruction is simply sufficient time is allocated such that all children receive at least 90 minutes of high-quality reading instruction every day (Bloom, 1974, Kiesling, 1978). Students who have been unable to attain grade level achievement need more and better reading instruction. Let's say that 120 minutes of daily high-quality reading lessons would be sufficient for struggling readers to attain on-grade-level reading proficiency. Since most of these children participate in Title 1 remedial education or special education reading instruction besides the 90-minute daily classroom reading lesson it would be possible to provide them with 120 minutes of daily reading lessons. This model follows the general federal guidelines for Title 1 remedial students and special education students—that is, federal program dollars purchase additional instructional time. It will also require that supplemental reading instruction, such as that provided in the two program types noted above, be provided 30-45 minutes outside the classroom reading

instructional period. Thus, all children having difficulty acquiring reading proficiency would be expected to participate in both a 90-minute classroom reading lesson and 30-45-minute supplementary reading lesson outside the classroom.

But it takes more than just minutes of reading lessons to produce high levels of reading achievement. High-quality reading instruction requires that children are engaged in actual reading activity from 60 to 75 minutes daily – or roughly two-thirds of each reading lesson finds children engaged in actual reading activity. In far too many classrooms and pull-out instructional settings, children are lucky if they spend more than 15 minutes actually reading during classroom reading lessons (Brenner, et al, 2009). There are several reasons for this unfortunate achievement. First, it is in only a few schools where Title 1 and special education reading instructional services are scheduled outside the classroom reading instructional period. Second, there seems not to exist any commercial curriculum framework that can be purchased that provides more than 15 minutes of daily reading but almost all provide 75 minutes of diddy work (think seatwork here). Third, few special program teachers seem

even aware that the children they serve experience fewer minutes of high-quality reading instruction than anyone else in the building. Fourth, almost no special program teachers are aware of the research that indicates that time spent doing worksheets or other skill and drill activities is largely wasted time. Wasted, in that the number of minutes children spend doing worksheets or skill drills has no function in developing better readers, at least I have found no study where the time spent on seatwork has had a positive effect of reading achievement. Time spent actually reading during reading lessons, on the other hand, has been identified as the only aspect of reading lessons linked to higher reading achievement (Allington, 2014a, Foorman, et al, 2006).

This second key element of high-quality reading lessons, actual reading volume, is difficult to achieve for a number of reasons. First, no basal reader provides sufficient material that would have children reading for an hour or more every day. A recent study of the amount of reading during the No Child Left Behind era (Brenner, Hiebert & Tompkins, 2009) found that children averaged 18 minutes of daily reading activity during their 90 minute reading lesson, but a quarter of the children were also observed on days when they read nothing during their reading lessons. Now 18 minutes a

day of reading is better than no actual reading, but not much better, if your goal is all children becoming proficient readers. As long as school systems and teachers consider following basal reader lesson designs as adequate, we will have few good readers, as is the case today.

A third key element of high-quality reading instruction is the opportunity for children to talk to each other about what they have read. In way too many classrooms you will not observe children engaging in discussions of anything they have read. In a classic study of the use of discussion in classrooms, Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran (2003) found little opportunity for student discussion in any of the 64 classrooms they visited in 5 states. In addition, it was when teachers were teaching the better readers that discussion was observed. In the better reader lessons, discussions occurred more often and they tended to last almost 15 minutes when they occurred. In lessons for poor readers however, fewer discussions were observed and those discussion opportunities that were observed were far shorter than those of good readers (15 mins. vs. 4 mins. of average length of discussion). Because having children engage each other in discussion was linked to higher achievement in both reading and

and writing for both higher and lower achieving students, Applebee and his colleagues (2003) noted that increasing opportunities for discussion should be a central feature of plans to enhance reading (and writing) achievement.

Finally, a fourth feature of high-quality reading lessons is doing less oral guided reading and more guided silent reading (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2010). Let me note that I wonder why teachers have anyone above first grade reading aloud and why silent reading doesn't make up 2/3 of all first-grade reading. I worry that the emphasis we see on oral reading in so many reading lessons for struggling readers is one of the factors that has slowed their progress towards proficiency. Teachers have told us they rely on students' oral reading to monitor their reading accuracy. Perhaps, but since good readers read aloud far less frequently than poor readers should one assume that accuracy is not a concern with good readers?

What reading instruction for poor readers sounds like

Reading aloud requires one to focus attention on the performance aspect – that is, on “sounding good” when reading. Besides, once our children gain a few years in age, oral reading almost vanishes as a manner of reading. Reading aloud also allows

others (other students primarily) to also focus on whether the reader sounds good when reading aloud. Almost 40 years ago I published a paper comparing oral reading errors made by good and poor readers while reading aloud during one of their reading lessons (Allington, 1983). Audio recordings were collected of good and poor readers reading aloud during a reading lesson. The focus of that study was on teacher responses to the oral reading errors. What we found was stunning. Basically, teachers rarely responded at all when good readers made an oral reading error. When they did respond to an error that good readers made their most common point of interruption was at the end of the sentence and their most common response was simply, “Will you read that again?” (Allington, 2014b).

But when poor readers made an oral reading error, the teachers almost always immediately interrupted. The most frequent teacher responses that occurred when poor readers made an oral reading error was quite different from their responses to good readers. Comments basically focused on elements of the word that had been misread as in, “Should that be a long or short vowel sound?” Or, “What letter does that word begin with?” Or the teacher simply said the correct word and the students read on. I argued all those years ago that the almost constant interruptions of poor

readers created children who never self-corrected (because the teacher did that) and who learned to read in a word-by-word manner (so the teacher would have a ready space for the interruption). I also noted that poor readers almost never had the benefit of knowing what the words that followed the misread word were and so they were penalized because the constant and frequent interruptions by their teachers made self-correction almost impossible.

Two other factors seemed important also. First, constant teacher interruptions created word-by-word reading patterns which then created children who read dysfluently – they read word-by-word. Second, the constant array of interruptions, especially interruptions focused on words or word parts, created children who typically had low comprehension of what they had just read (or just tried to read) and low self-correction of reading errors. Clay (1969) found that when reading aloud it was the children who self-corrected oral reading errors that became good readers. Children who experienced the teacher or another child interrupting them became poor readers. In other words, day after day struggling readers whose teachers were responding to oral reading errors in a very different way than they responded when good readers read aloud were creating children who read slowly and too often simply stopped reading when

they came to a word they didn't recognize and then they raised their eyes and looked at the teacher. In other words, the most common reading environment experienced by struggling readers maintained their inefficient approach to reading and fostered a reliance upon the teacher to provide the word or useful hints.

I should also note that the other children in both reading groups seemed to reflect their teachers' responses when they interrupted another child's reading. That is, good readers rarely offered any response when another good reader made an oral reading error. This was perhaps because their teacher had often responded to their interruption of another child by saying simply, "Jerome, who is supposed to be reading right now? Not you, right? So, let's allow Maria to read without any interruptions." What seems to be at work here in American schools is a subtle, but effective, strategy for assuring that struggling readers will never read proficiently. Put another way, what one can observe in almost any school is poor readers being treated quite differently from good readers. And yet, the teachers we interviewed told us they intended their responses to both groups to be 'helpful.' Almost none of the teachers had noticed how differently they responded to good and poor readers.

The different reading environments experienced by good and poor readers every day results in some children who know how to read silently with comprehension and other children who are simply barking at print. I will note that the teachers we studied did think that their interruptions of poor readers was a good idea. A good idea, because the poor readers were making errors and not self-correcting themselves. They did not appear to understand that it was the timing, as well as the content, of their interruption behaviors were the central reason poor readers did not self-correct (Allington, 2014b).

I write all of this in the hopes that you will see that most struggling readers are involved in reading lessons that are unlikely to produce reading proficiency. In addition to the differences noted above, there is also the fact that good readers get to read much more during their reading groups. Much of this is related to the fact that poor readers are much more likely to be asked to read aloud, while good readers are most likely asked to read silently. During an oral reading performance only a single child is actually reading while during a silent reading performance all children are reading. Because poor readers read aloud, they read fewer words each session than do the better readers in their classrooms. The difference in the number of words read each day is substantial and given that the volume of reading children do is the best predictor of how well they read (Allington, 2014a,

Foorman and colleagues, 2006), and yet we continue to offer struggling readers far fewer opportunities to read thereby ensuring they continue to struggle.

What decoding Dyslexia should focus their efforts on

Readers should have noticed by now that I have not mentioned phonics instruction as I have attempted to characterize high-quality reading instruction. This is not because phonics is not important to the development of reading proficiency. But the role that phonics and phonemic awareness instruction play is rather small and of rather short-term duration. What we learned from the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) is that “phonics instruction appears to contribute only weakly, if at all, in helping [the students in the studies assessed] apply these [decoding skills] to read text and to spell words” (2-108). More recently, Foorman and her colleagues (2006) found that once the number of minutes of actual reading during over one hundred first and second grade classrooms’ reading lessons was entered into the data set the time allocated to text reading loaded positively on its own factor while time spent in preparation to read and giving directions loaded negatively on reading growth. Only time

allocated to text reading explained any of the variance on any of the outcome measures including word recognition, decoding and passage comprehension. No other time factor, including time spent on phonemic awareness, word recognition or decoding were related to reading growth.

Recall also the outcome of the phonics emphasis under the Reading First program of the No Child Left Behind legislation (Gamse and colleagues, 2009). Minutes spent on phonemic awareness and phonics in grade 1 were negatively correlated with test scores while minutes spent on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension were positively associated with test score increases. Same in grade 2 except that time spent on fluency was also negatively related to test score gains (p. 55). While teachers in schools participating in the Reading First program were found to have spent more time teaching reading and spent more time teaching the five elements of the Reading First program, none of this improved the reading achievement of children attending high-poverty schools. One might wish that adding a greater emphasis on decoding instruction would have improved reading achievement, but in this large-scale and federally funded effort the shift in that direction produced no positive effects on the reading achievement of participating children (Gamse, et al., 2009). If

anyone wonders why Congress defunded both NCLB and Reading First I would simply point to the federally funded evaluation findings. It seems that what the evaluation actually shows is that virtually all American primary grade teachers know that decoding is important and most have developed instructional plans that support the development of decoding proficiency. Thus, imposing a greater emphasis on developing decoding skills had little to no effect on reading achievement. In other words, what you get with higher scores on the DIBELS assessments is higher scores on an unimportant aspect of beginning reading.

Now having written all that, let me note that children do need to acquire effective decoding skills. But also note that the time teachers allocated for actual reading during their reading lessons was, in fact, powerfully related to reading achievement. Effective decoding skills have rarely, if ever, been developed with any of the numerous decoding curriculum materials currently available (What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), 2010).

I will also note that the WWC provides summaries of the research available on instructional programs for developing readers and every primary grade teacher should visit the WWC website (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid1/4528>) and read each of the summaries for the multitude of programs marketed to improve reading performance. If you visit the WWC website, you will find a summary of the research on the Orton-Gilligham reading program recommended by Decoding Dyslexia and the International Dyslexia Association (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_ortongill_070110.pdf).

The WWC concludes that while they reviewed 31 studies of the Orton-Gilligham approach, none of the studies were found to be acceptable because they failed to meet the WWC standards for reliable research. In other words, none of the programs marketed as ‘structured literacy’ have any acceptable research base. I use the term ‘structured literacy’ following Hal Malchow’s president’s column that appeared in an issue of Perspectives on Language and Literacy (Malchow, 2015), a journal from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). I thank the Lord that the government created the WWC under the NCLB Act because both the Decoding Dyslexia and the IDA continually argue that “structured literacy” is a research-based

phenomenon. Structured literacy is a decoding emphasis method that has a “multi-sensory” component. The method has been around since Orton and Gillingham published the first paper on multi-sensory reading instruction in the 1930s, and yet no one has ever conducted a reliable study of the effects of structured literacy instruction on the reading achievement of children. No one. There are published papers that are typically identified as the research supporting the use of structured literacy programs, but if you go to the WWC website you can find out why each of these studies were rated as unacceptable with or without reservations.

Conclusion

Rather than attempting to promote unproven instructional tools (structured literacy or multi-sensory programs), both the IDA and DD should be pursuing the funding to establish a research base for first identifying “dyslexic” children and then research evaluating the multiple approaches for teaching “dyslexic” children to read (Gabriel, 2018). An ideal research base would include well designed studies of the effects of structured literacy programs as well as studies of the most appropriate methods for developing teacher’s knowledge of effective literacy instruction and the effective delivery of high-quality reading instruction.

I will continue to argue that until such a research base is available. Everyone must treat “structured literacy” as one possible way to serve the needs of struggling readers, but one of the many ways that has no research base supporting its use. We know much about effective reading instruction (Allington & Johnston, 2002, Taylor, Pearson Peterson & Rodriguez, 2003), but the DD websites and the IDA websites and journals provide not even scant attention to instructional methods that multiple rigorous research studies have demonstrated as effective and necessary components of high-quality reading instruction. Until everyone has actually read the reliable research available, children would be better if DD and IDA cleaned their houses and supported research that might tell us whether their recommendations make any sense to implement.

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Using Children's Literature with English Language Learners

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"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

Dr. Seuss, I Can Read with my Eyes Shut!

We live in a golden age of publishing where beautifully illustrated books are widely available, allowing readers to engage with well-crafted stories. Yet, these books are often not used with English language learners (Jalongo, 2004). By offering access to relevant books and content, teachers will ensure equity for their English language learners (ELLs) in literacy education and better efficiency in English language acquisition.

Numerous specialists in the field (Carter & McRae, 2014; Collie & Slater, 1990; Heath, 1996; Lazar, 1996) acknowledge the advantages of using children's literature as a way to provide an engaging and natural language experience. The challenge may be to select the best text for each age and language level (August, et al., 2010; Geva, 2006) and to devise effective, entertaining activities for particular texts (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005).

Anything can be taught through a literary text that is relevant, interesting and at the appropriate language level for the students. For instance, teachers could use *The One and Only Ivan* written by K.A. Applegate for purposeful instruction on vocabulary, grammar, all four language skills, communication, comprehension, creative writing and even drawing or painting to demonstrate knowledge.

We all want our ELL students to engage in meaningful instruction and our pedagogical aspirations are the driving force for our teaching imagination and dedication that would take us to our ultimate goal: to help our students communicate meaningfully in English. By using literature and supplemental extensions with text, teachers can bring their students into the realm of enchantment through participation, discussion, collaboration and play

instead of being absentminded and unengaged with constant repetition of vocabulary and grammar, which are often banal and distracting. This paper challenges teachers to try new approaches to teaching the English language to ELLs using children's literature by providing specific examples with accompanying descriptions.

English language teachers often tend to focus on teaching academic English skills, improving students' grammatical structure, vocabulary and other standard forms of linguistic expression. Thus, authentic literary texts are seldom introduced to the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, because most teachers see literature as difficult or inappropriate for teaching English (Savvidou, 2004). However, mastery of English language skills means much more than just linguistic accuracy. Freeman and Freeman (2014) state that, "The teacher's job is to make language understandable, not to teach the grammar of the language" (p. 11). ELLs should be given opportunities to develop cultural sensitivity as well as language skills.

What Does Theory Say about Second Language Acquisition and Text?

Traditionally, psychologists and linguists believed that the primary role of language was to transmit

information, which was stored and processed in the heads of speakers. However, now there is broad agreement that students' ability to learn languages and their emerging reading and writing skills are affected by their social environments (Donato, 2000; Moll, Amanti, & Gonzales, 1992; Nieto & Bode, 2018). Learning a new language is an extensive and complex process that has generated numerous learning theories and approaches to properly explain and design the best instruction. Language and literacy are perceived as being a symbiotic system.

Theories regarding second language acquisition (SLA) have undergone many changes over the years, influenced by new discoveries in linguistics and new developments in the field of SLA research. A social perspective regarding language acquisition and learning was highlighted in the 1970's - sociocultural theory was greatly influenced by the paradigmatic research of Vygotsky's developmental psychology. In his seminal work *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (1978) Vygotsky posited that development is different in every child, closely connected to his or her social and cultural context, and driven by input coming from others around the child. However, his views were not applied to SLA education until the nineties when language researchers (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 1994) became interested in his concept

of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in learning.

Zone of Proximal Development

ZPD refers to the range of student ability to either work independently or needing support, guidance, and assistance from adults or more-skilled peers. Thus, the lower limit of the ZPD is the level of skill reached by the student working independently while the upper limit is the level of additional responsibility the child can accept with the assistance of an able instructor (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

However, when working within ZPD, the successful accomplishment of the task is not as important as “the higher cognitive process that emerges as a result of the interaction” (Lantolf & Appel, 1994, p. 10). This social interaction helps the expert internalize the strategic processes he needs, to examine what is easy or difficult for the novice to comprehend, guided by “a long-term sense of direction and continuity, a local plan of action, and a moment-to-moment interactional decision-making” (van Lier, 1996, p. 199).

In the context of SLA, the original concept of ZPD was expanded beyond novice-expert interaction by SLA researchers (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). For example, Donato (1994) examined the

scaffolding behavior of students during peer interactions and showed how learners mediate each other in their ZPDs in order to collaboratively construct the linguistic forms they require to complete a second language(L2) task. He concluded that students through this type of collaborative peer guided support of L2, expanded upon “their own second language knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers” (p. 52).

Comprehensible output

In connection to sociocultural learning theory and contributing to discussion about advantages of social interactions in SLA, Swain (1985) argued that ‘comprehensible output’ in classroom meaningful conversations with and between ELLs promote successful SLA. Her research proved that by consistently talking in L2, ELLs become aware of the gap between what they can express and what they want to say. At this point, they are predisposed to adjust their discourse, become aware of language structure, and internalize the way L2 works. ELLs learn from each other and the teacher in purposeful interactions while receiving feedback from peers.

In his theory of SLA, Krashen (1985), advanced five central hypotheses: acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, natural order, input, and affective filter hypothesis. The acquisition-learning hypothesis is still used today; the main difference between the two terms is that a learner acquires a language without realizing it as is the case of young children growing up in multilingual environments, whereas learning is a conscious process employed mainly by adults or older children. Hence, the difference between the classroom environment and the naturalistic one and their connections with meaningful communication. The learner acquires fluent and correct language in a natural way and then uses it in his/her speech without realizing it, but when certain language rules are learned consciously then the ‘monitor’ comes into play correcting speech that is not proper for L2. Thus, communication is, in fact, initiated by acquisition whereas monitor alters it one way or the other. The monitor theory attempts to connect and explain a variety of processes in language learning such as effect of age on SLA or the uneven consequences of instruction (VanPatten & Williams, 2014).

Using Children’s Literature to Support English Language Acquisition: Instructional Activities

Literature provides students with an extraordinary rich source of

authentic material over a wide range of registers. As highlighted by sociocultural theory and Swain’s comprehensible output, children learn more from a text when they are actively engaged in collaboration and discussion about the literary piece (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). Teachers using children’s literature with ELLs provide a highly motivating, engaging, fun, and lively class. Inclusion of activities that provide ample practice in discussion, collaboration, and play instead of focusing on specific grammar and vocabulary instruction devoid of text or content opens horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. However, teaching literature in today’s classrooms needs consistent thought and reflection. Choice of appropriate literature, preparation of lessons that access main themes and meet standards, strategies that make the works accessible to everyone, differing proficiency levels of ELLs, or brainstorming for creative teaching ideas should all be considered carefully when planning for a literature lesson.

Activity #1 - “What you see is what you get!”

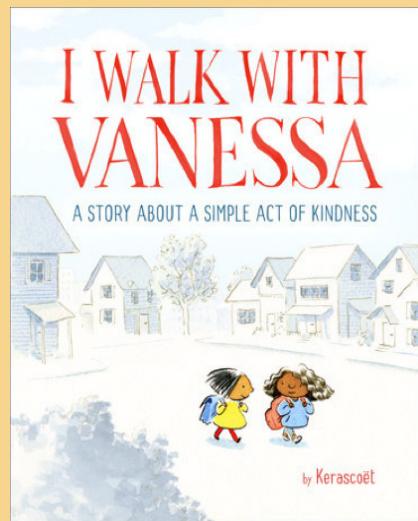
Purpose: This activity either introduces or re-acquaints students with characters from a text or film. It provides a social context that encourages development of prior knowledge, vocabulary, and

writing/speaking skills for all ELLs. The text or video clip can be either in English or in the majority's first language in order to enhance comprehension.

Step 1: Play either a recording of the chosen story or a very short video of the film version of the book. If not available, simply show students some still images or pictures of the characters/events in the stories. In this case, offer explanations to students regarding the images/videos/recordings.

Step 2: Ask students to write down on a slip of paper what the images/video/recording makes them think of, using simple words or sentences in the case of advanced students. For example, the classroom in *I Walk with Vanessa* authored by Kerascoët may evoke words like bullying, friend, community and brave, while the mall in *The One and Only Ivan* may evoke words like cage, attraction, captive.

Step 3: Then, as a collaborative activity, the teacher collects the slips of paper with words and sentences and randomly distributes them around the room. The teacher asks students to mingle and talk with their peers to discuss additional descriptions, comparing and contrasting the information to their own original description.



Activity #2 - "And the winner is..."

Purpose: This activity focuses on imagination and collaborative writing, helping student's critical thinking of a text simultaneously becoming more familiar with purpose, structure and linguistic features of dialogue. It is vital that teachers first model this activity with students and ample time is provided to practice with one another in collaborative groups. For instance, the teacher could choose a selected piece of dialogue from a known text, draw a picture representing an alternative ending, and then write new dialogue to illustrate the new ending. It is important to note that conventions of written dialogue must have been previously taught.

Step 1: Choose (almost) wordless picture books such as *Wolf in the Snow* written by Matthew Cordell or *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña which lend themselves to a variety of interpretations and connections to other stories.

of text to figure out and complete missing dialogue by integrating all four language skills. Students use their own experiences and prior knowledge to complete this activity, building a better understanding of the text and characters. It can be either a wrap-up or follow-up activity.

Step 2: In small groups or as a whole class, students brainstorm ideas for alternative endings.

Step 3: Divide students into two groups: one group will draw an alternative ending as the other group constructs new dialogue aligning with the new illustrations. Students may first focus on using action verbs inferred from the illustrations prior to writing character dialogue. For more advanced students, flip roles. Have one group create new dialogue with the other group drawing illustrations as the new plot unfolds.

Optional Extension: Provide space either within the classroom or in hallways to display new alternative endings and dialogue. Other students can “judge” the best new alternative ending. This promotes additional speaking and listening as groups share their process, decisions, and new ending.

Activity #3 - “Oh...something’s missing”

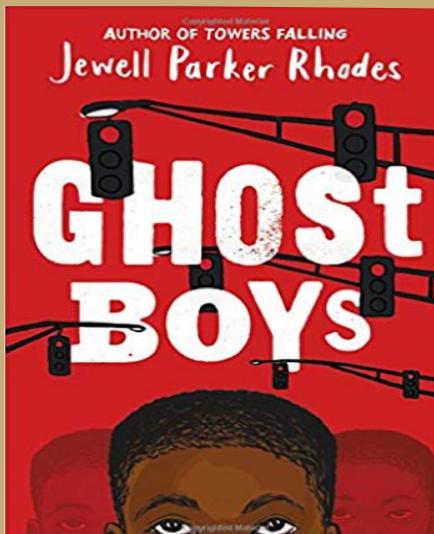
Purpose: This partner or group activity requires student knowledge

Step 1: This must be modeled first by the teacher - the teacher purposefully chooses a children’s literature book familiar to students and modifies it by removing specific and important dialogue from the story. For example, in a conversation between Jerome and Sarah from *Ghost Boys*, the teacher might exclude Jerome’s responses and use her own words to complete the missing section. Then, the teacher shows students where she filled in her own words and compares with the author’s original wording. Teachers may consider completing a few examples with the class, having students brainstorm together what may “fit” in other spots prior to them working with partners.

Step 2: Prior to introducing this activity for the first time, the teacher will have deleted dialogue from a chosen known story. Students will then work with partners to complete the “missing” dialogue, either using their knowledge of the book or their own personal thoughts.

Step 3: Students will read and act out the dialogues they wrote together.

Optional Extension: Students choose their own stories and delete dialogue for partner groups.



Activity #4 - “Who am I?”

Purpose: This activity practices speaking and listening skills simultaneously focusing on character knowledge and story elements within a children’s story. Students choose a character from a children’s story to act out for the class, attempting to use language from the text. As one student is impersonating a character, the other students predict the character being impersonated.

Step 1: Each student chooses a character to impersonate.

Step 2: Students either use sentences/ passages from the story to act out or they use story elements from their memory.

Step 3: Students have time to practice their impersonation.

Step 4: Volunteers are selected to act out their character with classmates making guesses.

Conclusion

Literature is not only a tool for developing written and oral skills of L2 but it also contributes to students’ “thoughtful reasoning and higher literacy” (Langer, 1997, p.1). Heath (1996) posited that “Literature has no rival in its power to create natural repetition, reflection on language and how it works” (p.776). Moreover, literature opens up “horizons of possibility,” prompting students to ponder ideas, raise questions, identify problems, search for answers and, most importantly, make connections (Langer, 1997, p.607).

It is important for teachers to first identify students’ language level and then modify suggested activities or provide additional support based on desired ZPD. The suggested activities align with SLA theories and sociocultural learning theory, as each activity supports collaboration

through discussion of literary texts in English and use of language for meaningful and purposeful communication. Teachers have access to a variety of ready-made instructional activities but by merely extracting them and using with ELLS is comparable to “building a house without understanding the basic principles of construction” (Carrier, 2005, p. 5).

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Essential First Grade Reading Assessment: Classroom-based Tools

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Introduction

Since 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has greatly influenced, and continues to influence, how American children are assessed and how they are taught to read in the early elementary grades. A main goal of NCLB was to reduce the number of children identified for special education by way of effective classroom literacy instruction. In order to identify literacy learners at risk for reading failure, evaluation tools are, of course, essential. However, the resulting, well-intentioned, adoption and implementation of many assessment tools (e.g. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Good et al., 2011); TNReady end of grade testing) left classroom teachers with tools which do not provide the diagnostic insight necessary for them to make informed instructional decisions. For example, many assessment tools are group administered. While the results of group tests can be informative, according to McKenna and Stahl (2015), "...individually administered tests tend to provide more dependable results than group assessments

because the teacher can command the mental engagement of the student to some extent, during the testing process" (p. 24).

While group assessments are more efficient to administer, the results of individual assessments tend to be more reliable (McKenna & Stahl, 2015). Additionally, teachers do not have the opportunity to gain diagnostic insight which is so crucial for informing instructional decisions such as grouping strategies; differentiating content (e.g. foundational skills; comprehension strategies); and choosing appropriate materials. The argument is not necessarily that assessments currently in use should be replaced, but that teachers need more naturalistic tools that are both efficient to administer and provide the dependable data teachers need to plan effective, differentiated literacy instruction.

As a former first grade teacher, I acknowledge the importance of background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and knowledge of comprehension strategies for engaging

successfully in reading tasks. However, the focus of this article will be on assessments of foundational skills—sight word recognition and orthographic knowledge, in addition to running records. As automatic word recognition is the cornerstone of fluent reading (Chall, 1983; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974), first grade teachers must use effective assessments to inform instruction for students before most even have the opportunity to “struggle”. Sight word vocabulary and knowledge of the orthographic system are key components for accurate and automatic word recognition in and out of context. Teachers must also evaluate the application and transfer of these two skill sets to contextual reading. As reading acquisition begins in the earliest grades, I aim to make the case for first grade teachers to utilize three essential assessments throughout the school year—sight word knowledge; orthographic development; and running records.

One key difference between assessments such as DIBELS and these essentials is the actionable information the teacher can utilize in planning instruction. Teachers can identify how robust an individual student’s sight word vocabulary is. A student’s specific developmental stage and spelling feature(s) (e.g. short vowels; inflected endings) can be identified for instruction and practice. Varying reading levels can also be determined, ensuring learners are

engaging with appropriate levels of texts across contexts—guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, for examples.

Review of the Literature

Grounded in a rich history of clinical work, informal measures of children’s reading acquisition (e.g. automatic word recognition; spelling) have long been used to determine instructional needs (Betts, 1946; Durrell, 1937; Gillet, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2012; Morris, 2015; Stauffer, Abrams, & Pikulski, 1978). The theoretical work of Chall (1983), Ehri (1998), and Henderson (1981; 1990) offer support for the continued use of informal assessment tools. The consistency across the experiences of clinicians working side-by-side with literacy learners (e.g. Betts, 1946; Durrell, 1937; Henderson, 1981; 1990), findings from longitudinal studies with school children (e.g. Morris et al., 2013), and models proposed by cognitive psychologists (Ehri, 1998; Perfetti, 1985; 1992) points to the dependability of individually-administered assessments which mirror the real reading tasks we are ultimately preparing students to engage in.

A sight word reading task can provide teachers with insight into the individual words a child can read accurately and automatically. A spelling inventory can capture

a child's orthographic knowledge development. The reciprocal development of sight word and orthographic knowledge is necessary for readers to utilize prior knowledge of words in order to derive new word knowledge during authentic reading tasks (Share, 1995). Measures of contextual oral reading, such as running records (Clay, 2000), can be used to determine instructional and independent level(s).

These past findings continue to be reinforced by more contemporary research. Morris and colleagues (2013) conducted a longitudinal study with a cohort of elementary students beginning in their kindergarten year and following them through third grade. The study validated the use of assessment tasks born of clinical practice, including those that measure alphabet recognition, spelling, sight word reading, pattern word reading, and contextual oral reading. Data analysis indicated that the more naturalistic assessments were better predictors of reading achievement at the end of third grade than the commercial assessments that were being used in the classroom. Based on my classroom and clinical experience administering these assessments, interpreting the data, and planning instruction based on that data, the following section will describe what I believe are the three essential assessment tools—what they measure, when to administer them, and how to

use the data.

Essential Reading Assessments

As Johnston (1987) posited, "The most fundamental goal of all educational evaluation is optimal instruction for all children and evaluation practices are only legitimate to the extent that they serve this goal" (p. 744). The assessments described next, all of which I used in my own classroom and continue to use in clinical practice and teaching graduate students, serve the goal described by Johnston. The sight word task and running records are administered one-on-one while the spelling inventory can be administered whole class. However, the time involved is quite minimal, especially when considering the rich insight to be gained.

Sight Word Task

It is important to note that the term sight word refers to a reader's own personal store of words they recognize accurately and automatically, or "on sight." Reading real words in isolation is a measure of automatic word recognition. Considering the difficulty of beginning reading material, if a child has a fairly large sight word vocabulary (thirty or more words), he or she can successfully engage with late kindergarten and early first grade reading material (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

For this task the child has 60 seconds to read through a list of high-frequency words. The list gets increasingly more difficult and consists of a combination of decodable words that follow regular spelling patterns (e.g. cat; big) and words that do not (e.g. again; said). This task is included in the Morris Informal Reading Inventory (Preprimer to Grade 8) (Morris, 2015), my preference, but the teacher can also use other well-known lists such as the first grade Dolch sight words in Figure 1. As the child reads (left to right; top to bottom), the teacher marks on their own copy by circling or slashing through the words the child does not read accurately or automatically. The teacher should also avoid coaching the reader in any way.

The sight word task is appropriate to use at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of first grade. As students acquire greater literacy knowledge and skill, the teacher may need to utilize more difficult lists. The ability to differentiate assessment materials is yet another strength of classroom-based evaluation tools. Most children acquire sight word vocabulary through exposure to and successful interactions with print. Therefore, if this assessment reveals an under-developed sight word vocabulary, the teacher should be sure to provide more opportunities for interacting with a variety of texts such as shared writing, shared reading,

guided reading, and self-selected reading at the child's independent level.

Spelling Inventory

Orthographic knowledge, as measured by a spelling task, can give insight into the decoding ability of an early reader (Morris, Bloodgood, & Perney, 2003). As discussed previously, word reading and spelling develop in tandem and reciprocally. For the spelling inventory, the teacher may first have the child or group of children practice writing a familiar word (e.g. cat) to establish expectations. If the child has difficulty, the teacher can model the word. To begin the assessment, the examiner reads the target word (e.g., bed), provides a sentence containing the word (e.g., I sleep in my bed), and repeats the word a final time (e.g., bed). This continues for ten words, which follow regular letter-to-sound phonics patterns (e.g., thin, dish). There are available published inventories (e.g. Morris, 2015; Schlagal, 1992), but the author has not found one that is as nuanced as the ones found in Words Their Way (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston, 2016). Words Their Way provides several levels of spelling inventories along with useful scoring guides, spelling lists, and other resources that are quite accessible for all classroom teachers.

This task is scored in two ways; words correct and qualitative points. Qualitative points are awarded for spelling features (letters/sounds) represented, regardless of whether or not the word is spelled conventionally as a whole. Taking note of the features the child does not attend to, attempts, or represents conventionally can provide insight into phonemic and phonological awareness development as well as where targeted spelling instructions should focus. Orthographic knowledge in a first grade classroom can, and often does, span several developmental stages.

As with the sight word task, the spelling inventory should be administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Often, teachers will administer the inventory more often to monitor progress and make instructional grouping decisions as groups should never remain static based on one assessment. Once the instructional focus (e.g. initial consonant; word families; long vowel patterns) has been identified, teachers can use a variety of engaging activities such as word sorts, word hunts, and word building to encourage automatization of orthographic features and transfer to contextual reading and writing.

While organizing, planning, and implementing instruction for several groups can seem overwhelming, I found in my own classroom that

differentiated word

study was much more effective for all learners. I recommend Words Their Way (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2016) as an accessible resource for classroom teachers at any grade level. See Image 1 for an example word study schedule. It is important to note that while the schedule and routines are for all learners, the word lists students are working with are differentiated. Appendix A includes another example word study schedule.

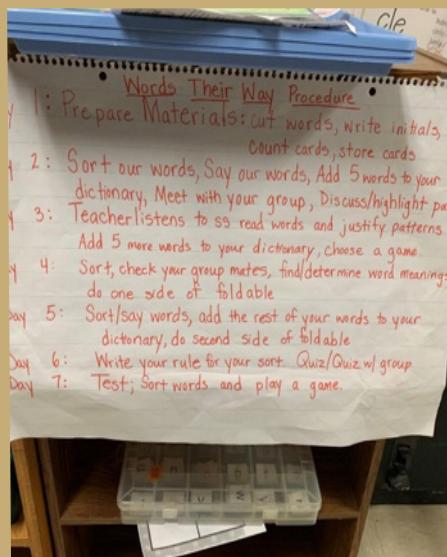


Image 1: Word study schedule from an elementary classroom

Running Records

This task is used to measure oral reading accuracy, rate, and comprehension, all three important indicators of appropriate level(s) of text. Even when accuracy remains consistent, the teacher may observe diminished reading rate as the child exerts more and more effort to print-processing. This occurs as texts become increasingly more complex. Comprehension is also an important measure as the goal of reading is to make meaning. There are oftentimes underlying print-processing issues impacting comprehension, or the child may not have adequate linguistic or background knowledge to make sense of the text. Either way, the teacher gains insight into where to target instruction and practice. Classroom teachers can utilize a variety of published running records (e.g. Fountas & Pinnell; Leslie & Caldwell, 2017; Morris, 2015), but they can also create their own by simply typing a 100-word passage from texts in their own classroom or school library. The level of the text will need to be determined for identifying instructional and independent levels. Reading conferences are an opportune time to administer these as the typed text can be used or the teacher can informally check with the student as they read aloud from a self-selected text. Taking note of errors (percent correct out of 100), rate (words read in 60 seconds), and asking the student to

retell what they read can provide diagnostic insight at any point in the year without the need for scheduling formal assessment sessions. In addition to text-specific information (e.g. rate; accuracy) running records yield for determining reading levels, these one-on-one assessments provide teachers with opportunities for much more.

During running record administration, the teacher has precious opportunity for building rapport with individual students—gaining insight into specific interests and areas of expertise, in addition to making targeted text recommendations. Teachers can also determine which foundational skills a reader may need more instruction and practice with. For example, does the child decode letter by letter? Are they chunking parts of words as they read, perhaps by onset and rime? Is the child automatically recognizing most words with little effort spent on decoding? Listening to a child read also gives insight into their knowledge and utility of comprehension strategies. I once had a child explain to me during a running record that he prefers books with a lot of pictures because he has difficulty “making the pictures in my head”. This particular reader was self-monitoring, reflecting on his literacy needs, and sharing them with me so he could receive the instructional support necessary for his continued development! These are

just a few examples of the information a teacher cannot gather solely administering whole group and/or prescriptive assessments such as DIBELS.

Interactions such as these can be highly motivating for young readers (Gambrell, 2011). These conferences can be integrated quite easily into any literacy block structure. As students are engaged in literacy practice, whether in centers, stations or independent seat work, the teacher can check in with a few students. There is no need to conference with every student daily, but a weekly schedule to informally assess each student is an achievable goal. The teacher can also take advantage of small group instructional time, such as guided reading, to listen in as students read, making note of strengths and areas to strengthen.

Although some may still argue the case of efficiency for group administered assessments, consider Johnston (1987) once again, “To suggest that individualized evaluation is efficient may seem counterintuitive... Efficiency is the ability to produce the desired effect with minimum, effort, expense, or waste. Current evaluation procedures have been designed to produce efficiently the sort of objective data which can be compared across individuals and groups, but they are singularly inefficient at helping attain

the goal of optimal instruction for all children.” (p. 746)

The reader may find Figure 2 useful in considering each essential assessment.

Conclusion

Classroom teachers must use efficient and effective assessments to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulty. Assessments which mirror the real reading tasks students engage in for long term reading success are crucial, and teachers must use them to develop appropriate balanced instruction for all learners. While I acknowledge the time and effort in the initial administration, especially when used in addition to required assessment tools, classroom teachers will find the information collected well worth the work. Similar to the time allotted to teaching and practicing classroom rules, procedures, and routines resulting in more instructional time on task and reduced behavior issues, both instruction and learning are more effective when the teacher has taken the time to identify what students know, what they need to learn, and the most appropriate and engaging materials to utilize.

These assessments must be accurate and easy to use, and should be administered as early as possible. The sight word task, spelling inventory, and running records cannot only be administered early in the first grade year, but they are efficient and informative enough for classroom teachers to administer at various other points throughout the school year. Teachers can quite easily use the essential assessment tools to reflect on instruction; to monitor growth and development; to make instructional grouping decisions; and to keep all stakeholders informed of student performance. Determining student instructional needs is a step in the right direction, but the assessments outlined here can provide the information necessary for teachers to make the journey from assessment to effective instruction.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. Dolch First Grade list. This list is alphabetized, but can be rearranged in a variety of ways for administration. There are lists specific to other grades the teacher may also consider using.

after	again	an	any	as	ask	by	could	every
fly	from	give	giving	had	has	her	him	his
how	just	know	let	live	may	of	old	once
open	over	put	round	some	stop	take	thank	
them	then	think	walk	were	when			

Figure 2. Assessments, data collected, and the uses of data.

Assessment	Data	Instructional Use
Sight Word Task - Individually administered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Phonological/phonemic awareness development -Sight word knowledge -Can indicate decoding ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine print-level skill needs -Gives insight into a child's need for more contextual reading opportunities as reading connected text is the most effective strategy for developing sight word knowledge

Spelling Inventory-individually or group administered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Phonemic/phonological awareness development-Orthographic Knowledge-Decoding ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Determine stage of orthographic development-Determine specific spelling features for instructional focus-Determine print-level skill needs-Data for strategic instructional grouping
Running Record-individually administered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Accuracy-Rate-Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Determine reading levels (frustration; instruction; independent)-Determine print-level skill needs-Determine comprehension strategies for instruction-Data for strategic instructional grouping-Opportunities for goal setting with students-Opportunities for student input in material choices

Weekly Routines for Word Study

For the first couple of weeks after you have assessed and placed students in instructional groups, I use the words of the group in the earliest developmental stage to teach the routines and activities you will be using throughout the year. Once students have learned your rules and routines for this instructional time, then begin differentiating word lists.

Monday: (I have words cut out for students as opposed to wasting instructional time for cutting.) Introduce word sorts to groups. Work with your earliest group while your others are attempting to sort on their own. Once your first group has determined the patterns and you have sorted through once with them, they can work on sorting independently as you check in with your other groups and assist them as needed.

Tuesday: Have students sort their words independently as you monitor for support. Once students have sorted their words correctly and practiced reading them, they write their sorts in their word work journals. As you check in with students who are finished, have them read the lists to you. Offer assistance and redirecting if students have misplaced words.

Wednesday: Buddy sort or Concentration. Students work with a partner or group of 3 (they must all have the same word lists) to sort together or play concentration to match words that have the same spelling features/patterns.

Thursday: Word Hunt. Provide books students are familiar with or are on their independent reading level that you have screened for words that match their patterns. Students can read independently, with you, or with a partner as needed or desired and write words that are on their lists or that have the same patterns/features in their word work journals.

Friday: Assessment. Based on how students perform on their assessment, you will either create new lists with patterns from their instructional stage or continue working on the same patterns for mastery.

Interest and Inquiry: Using self-selected topics to encourage student inquiry

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“I had to take my child out of that preschool because of their curriculum,” Janiel lamented to me while our children played at the park on a particularly beautiful day. “Oh? What did you notice about the curriculum?” I asked, although I felt I knew what her response might be. “I guess I should have said lack of curriculum. They weren’t teaching my child anything. They just played ‘all day, worked on weird projects, and I never saw them do a worksheet once,” Janiel explained. I knew this concern was coming because of previous conversations I had participated in with local parents over the years. “Oh, interesting,” is what I said in response. However, internally I was having the same debate that I always had when this sort of conversation came up—should I just listen and nod my head or should I provide a different viewpoint by defining project approach and explaining student directed learning? Janiel continued, “I want my daughter to be prepared for kindergarten and I know that her choosing to do what she

wants all day is not going to prepare her.” “Ah, I see. So, it sounds like you were looking for more curriculum-based instruction?” I asked. “Yes. Her new school is great. It has the curriculum all planned out for the whole year. And it has specific skills that they work on each week and they send all of the same worksheets for us to practice at home, too.” “So, children shouldn’t have input in their own learning?” I asked, genuinely interested in the response.

It seems as though similar conversations to the one I had in the park have been brewing for quite some time. Over a century ago, in 1902, Dewey introduced two different sects or schools of thought in education. One sect believed curriculum to be paramount and the starting point. In this school of thought, Dewey posited, individuals focus on the content to be learned and devise a plan on how children can master the content through small steps. While the other sect believed that education should focus on the child as the “starting point, the

¹Janiel is a fictitious character conceived from multiple conversations with many parents over the past five years.

center, and the end" (Dewey, 1902, p. 13). In other words, rather than focusing on content, individuals should focus on the child. Dewey (1902) stated, "To possess all the world of knowledge and lose one's own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion" (Dewey, 1902, p. 13). Should the focus of education be on skills and curriculum or should children be the heart of education? Dewey (1902) argued that a heavy focus on curriculum negatively impacts learning and has "Three typical evils . . ." (p. 31). The first evil is the curriculum lacks organic connection to the child. The second evil is the child has no internal motivation to learn the material; ". . . there is no craving, no need, no demand" (p. 32). The last evil is the idea that curriculum lacks quality as adults reduce significant ideas for step by step menial tasks. "This is the contradiction: the child gets the advantage neither of the adult logical formulation, nor of his own native competencies of apprehension and response. Hence the logic of the child is hampered and mortified . . ." (p. 34).

While I would like to think we have better addressed the evils presented in Dewey's seminal work, a simple scan of recent news articles shows that we are still steeped in similar debates in 2019 (see Helena, 2019; Wexler, 2019). As a former elementary school teacher, an educational researcher, and a teacher educator, I have witnessed the

three evils in my own teaching which have led me to align with Dewey's latter sect—the child is the starting point. I have found that I am in good company in this belief. For starters, Jean Piaget, (1972) touted that learning occurs through individual active construction of meaning rather than passively receiving information. He posited that individuals should be "capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition" (Piaget, 1972, p. 20). Additionally, John Dewey and Maria Montessori believed in and suggested that learning occurs through self-directed learning (Ültanır, 2012). Others argue that child centered approaches are paramount (Lerkkanen et al., 2016), and some refer to similar notions as student centered (Williams, 2014) or child-initiated (Marcon, 1999; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1988). Additionally, some use project-based learning (Polman, 2000) as a way to center the classroom on the learner.

While different terms are used, the idea that the student should be considered as a "starting point" (Dewey, 1902, p. 13) in education is common. Yet, what does this actually look like in practice? As an elementary teacher, I believed that education should avoid the three evils by creating learning experiences that are (a) connected to the child, (b) are interesting and motivating to the child, and (b) maintain quality learning. To me, the answer to the first

two evils is to give students choice. Through choice, children will find something that is connected to their lives and is interesting to them. In regards to the third evil, Dewey (1902) stated that quality is lost in curriculum and “Those things which are most significant to the scientific man, and most valuable in the logic of actual inquiry and classification, drop out” (p. 33). So rather than engaging children in curriculum-based lessons where inquiry “drops out”, we can immerse children in their own inquiry. This is the foundation for the present article. The purpose of this article is to provide an example of how teachers can incorporate student choice and inquiry through project approach into the literacy classroom. Many have suggested that self-selected reading that incorporates students’ interest as a starting point is crucial for children (Allington et. al., 2010; Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Krashen, 2005; Scharlach, 2008). Likewise, engaging children in the process of inquiry has been touted as a necessary component of education (Crawford, 2012; Edelson, Gordon, Pea, 1999) and some use project approaches to guide inquiry (Helm & Katz, 2016). Yet, generally self-selected reading is saved for independent reading time during the Language Arts block and inquiry-based learning is saved for the science block. The practical implementation of incorporating student selected texts and inquiry-based instruction has

rarely been addressed. While self-selected reading is generally a focus of literacy scholars and science educators discuss the importance of inquiry, bringing the two scholarships together can be beneficial for children.

Student Interest

The idea that children should have choice and should read material that they find interesting is not a new idea. In 1977, Allington argued that if children are going to “get good” at reading, they must actually spend time reading. This, the notion that children should actually spend time reading, became Allington’s crying anthem for over thirty-five years. And of course, it is more likely that children will spend time reading if they have a choice in what they read and if they are interested in the topics (Allington & Gabriel, 2012).

Oldfather (1993) studied fifth and sixth grade students in a whole language classroom and wrote specifically about the students’ motivation to engage in literacy. “Students said that having choice was one of the main reasons they felt so motivated to learn” (Oldfather, 1993, p. 678). Concluding that, “Ultimately issues of student motivation for literacy have to do with empowerment. For students to take personal ownership of their literacy learning, they need to feel that they have been able to have some say about what happens in their classrooms;

; they need to choose personally interesting and relevant books, projects and writing topics" (p. 680).

Much has been written about literacy motivation (Gambrell, 1996; Gambrell, Palmer, & Codling & Mazzoni, 1996; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Turner, 1995). Motivation can be described as "voluntary use of high-level self-regulated learning strategies" (Turner, 1995, p. 413). In a study of eighty-four first grade students, Turner (1995) found that children's literacy motivation is "situated in the child's encounter with reading and writing" (p. 437) as children in this study understood the purpose of literacy to be connected to the literacy examples that were used in the classroom and were modeled by teachers. Additionally, Turner (1995) argued that literacy tasks in which children participated in the classroom influenced their motivation. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) agreed, as they explained that what "happens in school affects how children feel about reading" (p. 366). It seems as though what happens in school is crucial to children's learning.

Literacy tasks that scholars have posed are motivating to students include "just plain reading" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 350), choice in reading material and writing about personally meaningful topics (Allington & Gabriel, 2012), and literacy tasks where students pursue their own

interests (Turner, 1995). Gambrell (2011) identified seven factors that promote literacy engagement including (a) reading tasks are relevant to students' lives, (b) students have access to a wide range of reading materials, (c) students have opportunities to engage in sustained reading, (d) students have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in literacy tasks, (e) students interact with others socially about what they are reading, (f) students have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts and (g) incentives reflect the value of reading.

Motivation in literacy is important because we know that students who read more are better readers. In a landmark study in 1998, Anderson, Wilson and Fielding found that just plain reading was the best indicator of many measures of reading achievement. In this study, the authors sought to better understand children's reading growth and how they spend their time outside of school. Children had a wide range of minutes read per day but the authors estimated that children who read books for over an hour per day may read over 4.3 million words in a year. While children who read three minutes per day might encounter 200,000 words in a year. Likewise, reading books outside of school had the strongest association with children's reading achievement. And interestingly, teachers seemed to

influence student's out of school reading. In classes where students read more at home, the teachers read books aloud to students, allowed time for reading in class, and made sure students had access to interesting books. A major takeaway from this study is that children who spent more time reading books was related to the child's reading level. While Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1998) argued that out of school reading affects children, Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama (1990) found that time spent engaged in reading in school contributed significantly to students' reading achievement. From this research, we can assume that the type of activities children engage with in school influence their reading achievement, and influence whether or not they read in and out of school, which again is important based on what we know about the positive impact just plain reading has on children.

It seems clear that "Children will value the activity of reading more if they have opportunities to read texts that they are interested in, that their friends are reading, or that are of some practical use to them" (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018, p. 26). As mentioned in this section, children's teachers and in school experiences can influence their literacy motivation and abilities. One of the major purposes of the practical strategy discussed in this paper is to increase children's time spent engaged with texts and allow

students choice in their school engagements.

Inquiry

To inquire is to ask a question and seek information or to make investigations (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Thus, inquiry in education is the practice of using questions in a learning process. Inquiry-based learning is gaining popularity in education, and more specifically in science education classrooms. The reason for this is because inquiry-based learning seeks to model real life practices of scientists. "Inquiry-based learning is an educational strategy in which students follow methods and practices similar to those of professional scientists in order to construct knowledge" (Pedaste, et al., 2015, p. 48). The real-life practices of scientist are generally duplicated in education through the use of inquiry cycles. While multiple versions of inquiry cycles exist, there are similarities in the content. In a review of 32 articles, Pedaste et al., (2015) identified similarities among inquiry cycles. They grouped the inquiry cycle similarities into four categories, (a) orientation, (b) conceptualization, (c) investigation, and (d) conclusion. After orienting students to the topic, conceptualization of the topic can be done through questioning or forming hypotheses. Investigation can include exploration, experimentation, and data interpretation. Finally, the inquiry concludes with a comparing

the conceptualization with the investigation. For more in depth description and visual representation see Pedaste et al. (2015). Inquiry in education and the four categories presented above are used in this practical strategy and frame the ten steps to Interest and Inquiry presented toward the end of this paper.

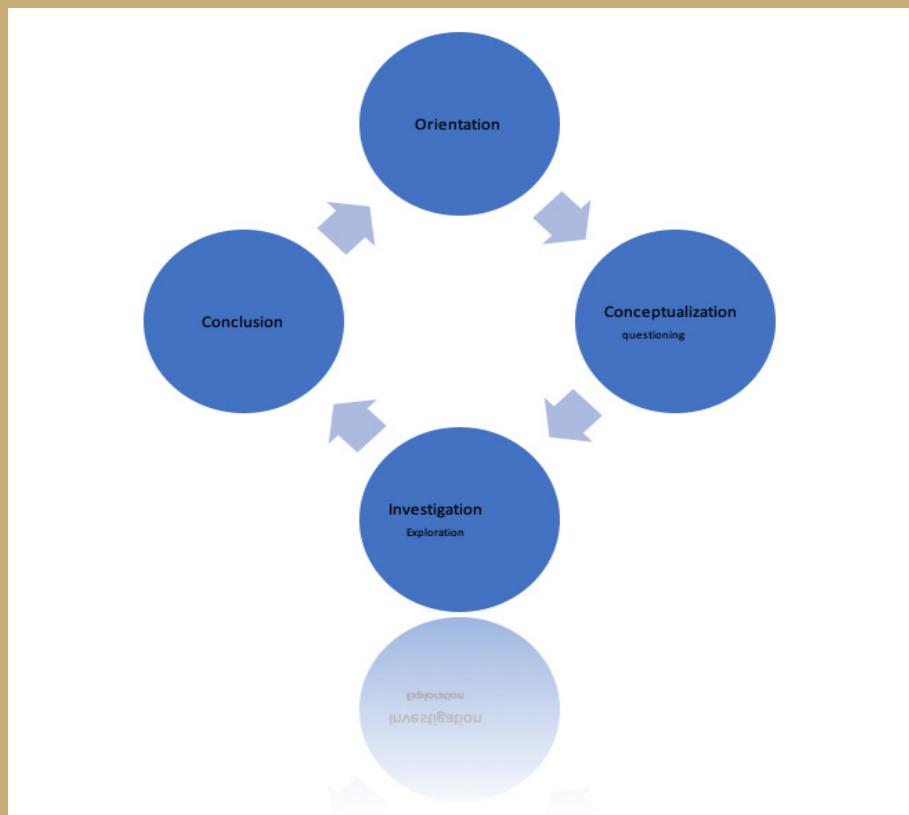


Figure 1 - Inquiry Cycle Adapted from Pedaste et al., (2015)

Project Approach

Both the project approach (Helm & Katz, 2016) and Project Based Learning (Polman, 2000) or PBL (Barrell, 2006), guide this work. “A project is an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about . . . The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions . . .” (Katz, 1994, p. 1). In projects, the work is child initiated and encourages autonomy as children construct personally meaningful artifacts. PBL is a child-centered approach “that empowers learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem” (Savery, 2006, p. 12). Through this process, students become “engaged problem solvers . . . and in the process [become] self-directed learners (Savery, 2006, p. 12). Project approach is generally discussed with younger children and PBL is generally touted as an approach for older children. Additionally, PBL highlights the importance of solving a real-world problem while project approach seeks to learn more about a topic. Focusing on child-initiated projects is different than teacher directed thematic units with a project attached, wherein a teacher chooses a topic and activities that the teacher deems as important. Through child-initiated projects, children can grow academically, socially and emotionally, and their literacy and problem-solving

skills can improve (Helm & Katz, 2016). Like inquiry in education, project approach is used in this practical strategy as a foundation, as the students immerse themselves in an in-depth investigation of a topic.

The purpose of this practical strategy has three goals (a) to show children they are the “starting point” in education and empower children to take ownership of their learning (b) encourage children to increase their time spent reading through self-selected texts and (c) encourage children to continue through inquiry cycles and develop problem solving skills. In the following section, I describe this strategy.

Interest and Inquiry in Practice

Imagine walking into a classroom full of first graders standing by desks excitedly presenting unique projects about pizza, Pokemon, dinosaurs, Jojo Siwa, ice cream, dogs, soccer, Minecraft and tamales. On one desk you see a trifold poster with a large map on it with push pins, flags, and labels. At the top of the poster, it reads, “How is pizza different throughout the world?” You go to the next desk and see a student made encyclopedia of Pokemon characters. Moving to the next desk, you see butcher paper taped to the wall that reads “Agility Course for Dogs” and blueprint plans for a course that includes drawings and labels for, tire jumps, teeter boards, eave poles, and tunnels. Flashing on

a nearby computer screen is a PowerPoint with the question, “How do you make tamales?” with subsequent steps and pictures. Then a child comes to you before you reach the next desk and passes you a brochure all about Jojo Siwa- the history, song information, and upcoming tour dates. For the past several weeks, the students have been studying a topic of their choice, researching, reading, writing, collaborating and creating. At the culmination of their inquiry, they disseminate their knowledge to their peers and learn about various topics. Over the course of their interest-based inquiry, the students also covered a variety of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for first grade including R.L.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. R.L.1.4 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its...events. R.L.1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories. W.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts W.1.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects. W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (National Governors Association, 2010).

For a moment, juxtapose this imagination with another view of a first-grade classroom where each child is sitting quietly in their seat

completing a worksheet about key details in a teacher provided text about honey bees. This lesson is part of the scope and sequence for their curriculum and every first-grade classroom in this school is working on this lesson today. This worksheet will also help prepare the children for their assessment on Friday and the content they will be covering next week. This type of classroom seems to fit Dewey’s (1902) three evils presented earlier in this paper. Rather than creating classrooms with curriculum that is disconnected from students, discourages motivation, and lacks quality, we can incorporate student’s interest and guide them through inquiry with the following steps.

Ten Steps to Interest & Inquiry

Earlier in this article I laid out reasons why I implement Interest and Inquiry in my own classroom and why I find it to be a worthy endeavor. I believe that children should be the center of education and that they should direct their learning. I also believe that children should have ample opportunity to read texts of their choosing. Additionally, I view the process of inquiry as quality and worthwhile. Before implementing or encouraging others to implement a process in their classroom, it is important to reflect on your own views of teaching and learning to see if this aligns with your views. Additionally, I have immersed kindergarteners up to post-baccalaureate and Master’s

Degree students through this process. However, depending on age, adjustments and scaffolding is needed.

Step One: Get to Know Your Students (teacher directed)

It is important to spend time getting to know your students- their culture, language, interests, hobbies, and favorite books. I also engage in kidwatching (Goodman, 1985) as I seek to better understand the literacy development of my children. In this first step, I pay attention to what children are talking about at recess, in the classroom, and at lunch. I confer with students in reading conferences (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007). I may also implement an “all about me” experience where children can create an artifact that represents their culture, language and interests.

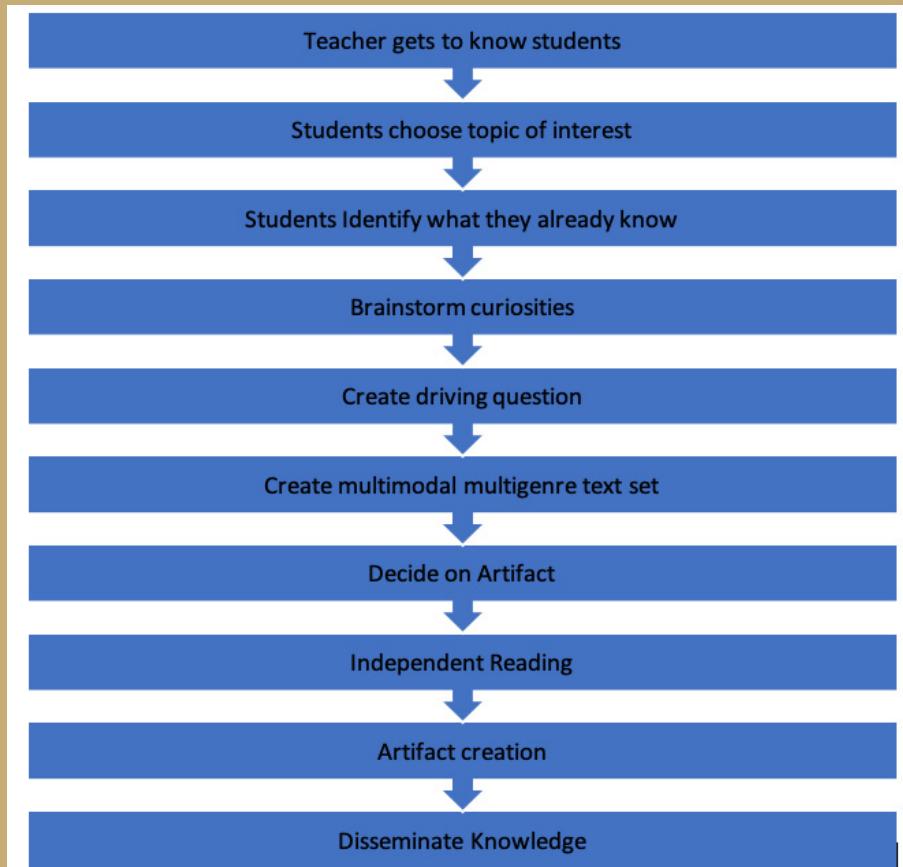


Figure 2 - Ten Steps to Interest & Inquiry

Step Two: Choose Topic (student directed)

After getting to know my students better, I can be more successful in guiding them toward a topic that they will be reading about, researching, and creating for several weeks. This is where you will decide if students will be working individually, in small groups, or a combination of both. Based on your knowledge of students, you will be able to make wise decisions. I ask children to choose a topic that they are very interested in and something they could talk about for an extended period of time. I explain to the children that they will be studying this for a long time, so they will want to choose something that excites them! To form groups, I often have children write down (without peer pressure) their number one interest on a sticky note. We then bring all of the sticky notes to the board and see if like groups can be formed. For example, if there is a sticky note that says, “Netflix”, one that says “movies”, and one that says, “TV”, we may form a “media” group.

Step Three: Identify What You Know (student directed)

When topics have been chosen and groups have been formed, I give my children ample time to talk as much as they want about their topic. In my experience, it is fascinating to watch children with a similar interest get together and discuss something they love. After some time for open discussion, I ask my students to

identify everything that they already know about the topic. I generally have children record or dictate their information to an adult. When possible, I continue to engage in kidwatching and take anecdotal notes about the students’ development. At this point, I ask students to share with the class their topic and everything they already know about this topic.

Step Four: Brainstorm

Curiosities (student directed)

After brainstorming what students know about the topic, students will then brainstorm curiosities that they have about this topic. Depending on the literacy development of the children, I ask students to record their curiosities via audio recording or written notes. I steer them toward thinking about curiosities that may require research.

Step Five: Create a Driving Question (collaborative)

After creating a list of curiosities, the children pick one curiosity that they are most interested in that they would like to learn more about. The student’s task is then to turn their curiosity into a driving question for their inquiry. This stage is generally collaborative as the teacher facilitates the discussion about what makes a good inquiry question. I ask students to find a question that, (a) you actually care about (b) is open ended, (c) can spark research, (d) is manageable and (e) specific, (see McTighe & Wiggins, 2015)

After questions are written, I allow students to partner with other groups and review peers' questions and give feedback on the question specifications listed above. I again emphasize that the question should excite them. If the students are not excited by their question or it does not seem to follow the five guidelines, they will go back to their list of curiosities and create a new question.

Step Six: Create a Multimodal Multi-Genre Text Set (collaborative)

A text set is a set of texts that center on one theme or concept (Cappiello & Dawes, 2013). In order to research the driving question, the teacher and students collaboratively create a multimodal multigenre text set that is connected to both the topic and driving question. The teacher can facilitate this research process. The texts should be connected to the driving question. For instance, if the students created the question, "What is the history of nail polish?" a book about the many vast colors of nail polish may not be as helpful as an online timeline explicating the history of nail polish. However, that does not mean that a story about nail polish should not be included in the text set for independent reading. However, a major purpose of the text set is to gather research to help answer the driving question.

Step Seven: Decide on Artifact (collaborative)

After deciding on a driving question and finding resources, children must decide the best artifact to represent the knowledge gleaned from their inquiry. The artifact should align with the students' driving question. For example, if the driving question is, "What can individuals build with legos?" a video presentation of the various lego creations may be more helpful than choosing to write a story about a lego character.

Step Eight: Sustained Engagement in Texts (student directed)

After identifying the artifact to be created, students should be encouraged to increase the time spent reading and engage with as many texts for as long as possible. Earlier in this article, I posited the positive affect that just plain reading may have. In this step, specific time should be set aside for students to engage with texts that were self-selected and connected to their inquiry topic.

Step Nine: Design Artifact (student directed)

In step seven, the students decided on an artifact that would best summarize their findings from their inquiry. After engaging with these texts, the students will begin to design and create their artifact, whatever that might be. While designing the artifact it seems helpful to continue to engage with the text set.

Steps 7-9 may continue in a cycle until the completion of their project. This stage should take several days if not weeks, if a well thought out driving question and artifact were created.

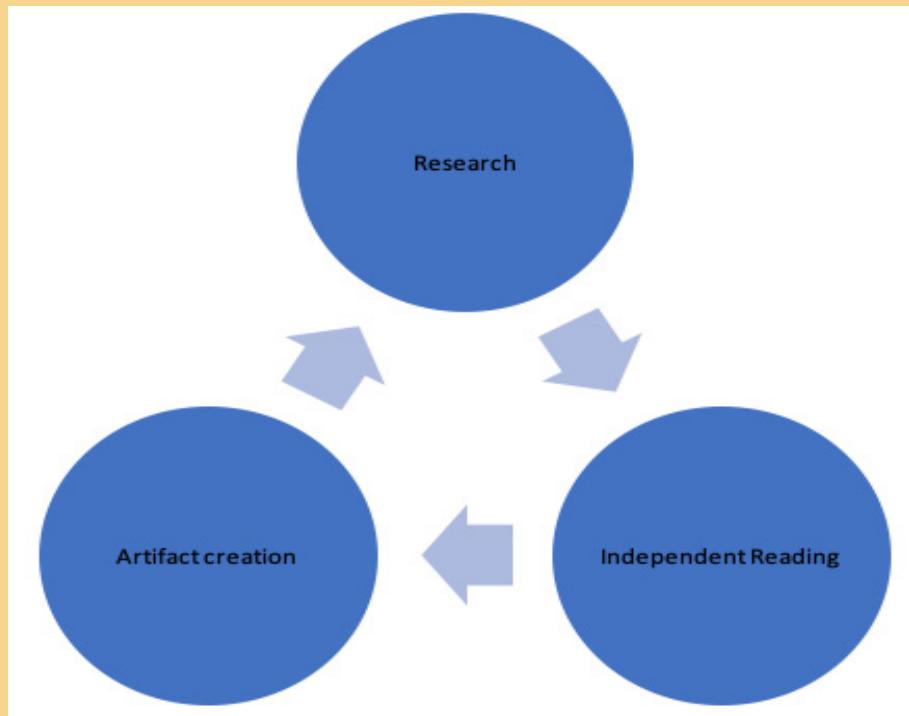


Figure 3 - 7-9 Cycle

Step Ten: Present, Perform, or Teach

After weeks of work, students should both celebrate and disseminate their work. I have done this through delivering presentations or in a session that mimics a research poster session. We may invite other classes, teachers, administrators, or community members. In this session, students can also celebrate the work of others. Students will be introduced to multiple curiosities and inquiries, multiple modes and genres of texts, and different inquiry processes.

Interest and Inquiry Examples

Example #1

Topic:	YouTube	Artifact: Bridge made of balsa wood with accompanying labels and paragraphs explaining the structure
Question:	What is the history and future of YouTube?	
Text Set:	YouTube video, YouTube Statistics Articles, YouTube Timeline	
Artifact:	Timeline Prezi explaining the history and projections for future.	

Example #2

Topic:	Engineering	Conclusion In this article, I argue that education should more readily view students as resources rather than objects (Carlson, 2006) by implementing practices wherein the students shape instruction rather than a curriculum written by an unknown adult living in a far-off state. One way to move toward student driven instruction is to incorporate the interests and background of children into your teaching. If we aim to provide an education that takes the individual into account, this practical strategy seems to be a more promising avenue than following a curriculum that does not know the individual. As Dewey said many years ago—“The case is of Child. It is his present powers which are to assert themselves; his present capacities which are to be exercised; his present attitudes which are to be realized” (Dewey, 1902, p. 40).
Question:	How do you build a strong bridge?	
Text Set:	Picture book about engineering, YouTube video, Blueprints for bridge, Online article about bridges	

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“I Get to Expand My Mind:” Creating Opportunities for Literacy Engagement and Discussion through ProjectLIT

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In an era emphasizing scripted curricula and high-stakes testing, reading engaging young adult literature (YAL) to motivate our students can sometimes seem out of reach. However, engaged readers tend to have higher rates of comprehension, stronger reading outcomes, and promoting motivation can increase students' reading competency (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011; Melekoglu, 2011). Through increasing students' motivation to engage with reading, teachers may accelerate and sustain reading improvements (Reed, Wexler, & Vaughn, 2012). As educators search for innovative ways to provide access to interesting texts, ProjectLIT—a national, grassroots literacy movement—can provide some hope.

ProjectLIT, founded in Nashville by Jarred Amato, now has more than 850 chapters in 48 states (Amato, 2019). The organization provides a community for educators who seek to motivate, engage, and improve literacy attitudes of students through access to culturally relevant middle

grade and young adult literature. ProjectLIT works to bring a culture of reading to classrooms and communities by empowering readers, increasing access to diverse books, and making space for students to develop authentic reading identities (Amato, 2019). ProjectLIT leaders can establish their chapter as a book club or as a component of their English language arts (ELA) curricula. Chapter leaders from around the country come to a consensus on 20 books each for middle grade and young adult readers, creating a vetted book list each school year to be read in ProjectLIT book clubs or classrooms.

This article details how the authors of this article, Arianna, Amanda, and Tiffany, started a book club chapter of ProjectLIT to promote a love of literacy and reading engagement at a local middle school. As former secondary ELA teachers who are currently full-time doctoral students, Arianna and Amanda missed interacting with students around texts. Determined not to lose touch

with students and armed with research about reading engagement, motivation, and book clubs, we reached out to Tiffany, the library media specialist and literacy coach at a local middle school, to see if she'd be interested in co-sponsoring a ProjectLIT book club chapter at her school. After a year of running our ProjectLIT chapter, we reflect on what worked, what needs improvement, and how other educators can bring ProjectLIT to their school community.

“I love to read the many different books I wouldn’t have picked otherwise”: Research Supports ProjectLIT’s Goals

One of ProjectLIT’s core goals is to “celebrate books that make our students feel seen, heard, affirmed, and valued” (Amato, 2019), aligning with Rudine Sims Bishop’s (1982) metaphor of using literature as “mirrors and windows” for students. Bishop (1982) explains:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined... however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (p. ix).

ProjectLIT provides a space for students to read books in which they see themselves reflected, as well as discussing potentially unfamiliar cultures, through a diverse book list featuring titles such as *Amal Unbound* (Saeed, 2018), *Blended* (Draper, 2018), *The Crossover* (Alexander, 2014), and *Ghost* (Reynolds, 2016). The middle grades titles selected for ProjectLIT share many qualities with YAL, which appeals to many students because it is literature that is “written about teenagers, for teenagers, and within contexts that mirror the world of teenagers” (Brown & Mitchell, 2014). While middle grade literature and YAL appeal to a wide variety of readers, they are also theorized to increase student engagement and motivation (Bull, 2012). Groenke and Scherff (2010) posit that these texts honor “teens’ lives and their experiences... showing teens as capable, smart, and multidimensional” (Groenke & Scherff, 2010, p. xii). These definitions of YAL make it easier to understand why students could be more motivated and engaged while reading the ProjectLIT book titles. The selected texts are ones that students can draw connections to, see themselves in, and find issues in that are closely related to their own lives.

Our ProjectLIT chapter serves a Title I school that is racially and culturally diverse, with students living in both rural and urban settings in a large

county school zone. We sought to select ProjectLIT books from the national list that would provide our students both “window” and “mirror” experiences as readers.

In addition to using literature as a way of experiencing new worlds and reflecting on their lives, doing so in a weekly book club has its own benefits for students. Lapp and Fisher (2009) found that students in organized book clubs “were intrinsically motivated to read and participate in these readings and subsequent discussions because their voices and interests were driving the text selections and conversations” (p. 560). Their year-long study of an adolescent book club “highlight[s] the importance of interaction. Students have to interact with one another... about the texts they are reading” (p. 561). ProjectLIT supports the importance of interaction through asking club sponsors to host regular meetings to encourage thoughtful discussion around literature and to make “reading, which can be a very solitary thing, a shared one and [celebrate] reading all the time” (Riddell, 2018). During our weekly ProjectLIT meetings, we focus on giving students time to interact with us and their peers around the selected reading.

“I love being with my friends and reading:” Beginning ProjectLIT
When planning our ProjectLIT chapter, we decided to choose one day

each week we could meet with students to host our club during the school’s homeroom time. While homeroom only afforded us thirty minutes with the students, we decided it would allow more students to attend than an after school meeting would, because arranging transportation other than the school bus is challenging for many families. We asked the school’s ELA teachers to recommend students whom they thought might benefit from spending time with other adults and peers talking about engaging books. The librarian also identified avid readers who often visited the library and showed leadership potential. We then sent individual invitations to students asking them to join us in the library during their homeroom time. We initially invited roughly 40 students. With non-responses or early attrition, our core group of around 15 regular attendees was both manageable and fun. At our first meeting, we brought snacks to welcome the students, encouraged them to bring their friends to our next meeting, and introduced our first ProjectLIT title.

The Crossover: Our First Shot

After reviewing the 2018-2019 middle grade titles selected for ProjectLIT chapters, we were excited to see *The Crossover* (Alexander, 2014) listed, as Amanda had purchased a class set to use when she was teaching at the middle school. During our first meeting, we brought copies of

The Crossover with us and read the first ten pages aloud with the group. We concluded by giving each student a copy of *The Crossover* and having the students vote on how many pages they should read before our next meeting. During our first two months of meetings with students we tried a variety of activities to engage and empower student voice. We would often ask for volunteers to read sections of prose aloud that they enjoyed; we brought a rack of basketballs in to reenact a scene from the novel; we brought in hummus for the students to try as the characters in the novel tried hummus for the first time. During each meeting we provided snacks for the students, reviewed club norms, and had students vote on the amount of pages they wanted to read each week. We worked hard to honor student feedback, give them space to make suggestions, and create space for authentic discussion rather than question and answer. We noticed some patterns in reading and discussion engagement (or lack thereof), and we reflect on those in each section below.

When the students finished *The Crossover* we book-talked several of the other middle grade titles on the ProjectLIT book list and asked the students to vote on our next title. We received a majority rule vote for *Amal Unbound* (Saeed, 2018) and encouraged others who weren't interested in *Amal Unbound* to read

another title they were interested in and still attend the meetings. We made an effort to read all the titles the students were interested in so we could have discussions with any student regardless of what they were reading.

Amal Unbound: Reaching Out

While a majority of the students voted for *Amal Unbound* as our second ProjectLIT title, we did not have enough copies for every student. Because ProjectLIT is active on Twitter (@Projectlitcomm), we decided to create an Amazon Wishlist for copies of *Amal Unbound* to share on Twitter with the ProjectLIT community. We tweeted out the Amazon Wishlist link on our personal twitter accounts, tagged @ProjectLITcomm, and the author of *Amal Unbound*. Within a couple of weeks, we had 40 copies of the book through donations. When we handed out copies of *Amal Unbound* we informed the students it was their personal copy to keep, in hopes of creating a sense of ownership. The students were noticeably excited that it was "their" copy of the book and many students wrote their name inside the front cover.

During the meetings we had around *Amal Unbound*, we learned that our ProjectLIT members discussed the books more freely while engaged in activities around the texts, rather than sitting in a circle for a whole group

book club discussion. We brought in chai and pomegranates for taste-testing, because they're both mentioned in the book, and noticed students having conversations based around these sections of the text. We photocopied pages of the book for students to create blackout poems, which inspired them to create artifacts based around the themes in the text (see Figure 1). When students asked about the henna tattoos mentioned in *Amal Unbound* we showed YouTube videos of henna tattoo designs, which led to the students creating designs for their hands (on paper, though we had hoped to be able to host a henna party). Additionally, as we read the book, we tweeted about our students' work annotating as they read on their own, and the author acknowledged her excitement, so we were able to report to our club members that the author knew we were reading her book in real time.



Figure 1 - Student examples of found poetry from photocopied pages of *Amal Unbound*.

Ghost and Blended: Ending the Year with Intention

In the spring, the school hosted an Arts and Academics Night, during which the school was open to parents and community members. Teachers displayed student work, school clubs and organizations set up information booths, parent engagement funds provided a meal for families, and every student who attended was given their own copy of a middle grade novel: Alan Gratz's (2016) *Projekt 1065*, Sharon Draper's (2018) *Blended*, or Jason Reynolds' (2016) *Ghost*. Our chapter of ProjectLIT set up an information booth to encourage other students from the school to join. Two of our ProjectLIT students created a tri-fold board with pictures from our club meetings, copies of the books we read, and examples of student-created work. The two students took on leadership roles as they spoke to every "customer" who stopped by our booth for information. They encouraged the students to choose one of the ProjectLIT titles being offered at Arts and Academics night: Sharon Draper's (2018) *Blended*, or Jason Reynolds' (2016) *Ghost*.

For the final two months of our club's meetings, we asked students to split into two groups by choosing the title that most interested them between Reynolds' (2016) *Ghost*, the first in a series of four character-centered novels about a youth track team, or Draper's (2018) *Blended*, a middle

grade novel about a girl with a White mother and Black father who are divorced. As we faced the very real disruptions of statewide testing, spring break, and countless year-end field trips, the students were left to read these books largely on their own. We reconvened for an end-of-year carnival with "graduation" certificates for the eighth graders who were leaving us, pizza, and activities based on the books, including a relay quiz game. We also used that afternoon to conduct informal, 30-second interviews with students about the best part of ProjectLIT. Some of their responses became the headings for this article.

"We get to read and learn": Reflections and Suggestions

After one school year of ProjectLIT meetings, we believe our chapter will be even stronger next year. Three takeaways for educators who may want to start their own chapter stood out to us as we reflected on our first iteration of the project.

Be consistent

What was most remarkable about our experience is that the core group of students in our chapter were spread widely across a spectrum of reading ability and reading motivation. However, readers at all levels continued to show up week after week, whether they had read the books or not. They continued to participate in activities and to bond with each other

and the chapter leaders, week after week. When Arianna and Amanda returned after two missed sessions because our spring breaks weren't aligned, we were surprised at how many students gave us welcome back hugs and asked what we'd been up to in the two weeks we hadn't seen them. In our year-end interviews, one student referred to ProjectLIT as "an escape" (from the "drama" and angst of early adolescence), and we believe our efforts to show up consistently and to be accepting of readers at all levels of dedication helped foster this sense of community. After our first year, in order to honor and respect the notion of ProjectLIT as this kind of haven, Tiffany redesigned and designated a physical space in the library just for ProjectLIT to ensure we always have a meeting space, as the library is a school hub often used for other club meetings and district-wide PD sessions.

Get hands-on

Our club members were more engaged when we had activities for students to choose from. We believe that encouraging students to sit in small groups with activities in front of them took pressure off of them to think of what to say in a large group discussion. Discussion appeared to evolve organically among students and sponsors as they were creating blackout poems and telling their peers why they made certain choices or reading their poem aloud to the small group. Students were also able to show

off some of their personal talents, like drawing, through us incorporating more hands-on activities. Many of the students felt pride in the artifacts they created during our ProjectLIT meetings and would often ask to take their creations home to finish or to share with family. At the conclusion of each meeting, we gave suggestions for our next week's activity and asked for student input. We let our students tell us, within reason, what they would like to do each week and we would plan our next club meeting around their needs. We would encourage future club sponsors to be flexible in the design of their club, ask for student input, and to plug into ProjectLIT's vast online community via Twitter, Facebook, and Padlet for ideas and suggestions from other chapters.

Give them (and yourself) time

We were excited to start our club meetings, and we expected our club members to hold the same enthusiasm as us and be ready to jump into passionate conversations about the novels. However, as in a classroom setting, it took time for us to establish relationships with the students which allowed them to open up and share their opinions in an accepting environment. The more we got to know our club members and their interests, the easier it was to engage in meaningful conversations relating the texts to their lives. Setting a list of club norms during the first meeting and reviewing the norms before each novel

or anytime a new member joined, helped our students feel like they had a space they felt safe sharing in. Next year we will review the norms with our students and ask them to edit the list to give them a sense of leadership and agency in our club. Along with asking students to generate club norms, we would suggest future ProjectLIT chapter leaders take time at the beginning of the year to engage in community building activities to create a strong foundation of trust.

In addition to giving students time to trust us and express themselves, give them time to develop a love of reading. Although some of our students entered ProjectLIT with an established love of reading, many of our other members did not come to the club with positive experiences around texts. For several months, we felt our members fell into loose categories: serious readers, potential readers, and “snack kids” (kids who came to meetings every week to partake in snacks). The students were there for a variety of reasons: their friend was in the club, we had free snacks, they enjoyed reading, they didn’t enjoy homeroom, or they had an existing relationship with Tiffany. At our year-end celebration, several students told us they first attended the club for the free snacks, but by the end of the year they were attending because of the books, discussions, and the snacks. It took two books, many snacks, and over half a school year for a student named

Bruno² to say he transitioned from being a “snack kid” to a “book kid.” Bruno attended our ProjectLIT meetings every week throughout the year and admittedly did not read any of the texts until he ran into one meeting after spring break, excited to tell us he read Ghost (Reynolds, 2016) and wanted to discuss major plot points with us and his peers. As we reflect on Bruno’s transition from non-reader to striving reader, it reminds us to give our club members time to develop an authentic reading identity, to listen to passionate conversations about books, and to be persistent in finding the right book.

As former classroom teachers, we (Arianna and Amanda) found ourselves in a unique position with the ProjectLIT student members. We were familiar to the students after a few meetings, but we weren’t their teachers. We had to be patient with ourselves as we transitioned from the role of classroom teacher tasked with standards-mastery to the role of reading mentor choosing to simply love books alongside middle graders. We encourage fellow chapter leaders to allow themselves time to feel comfortable in this facilitator role.

² Name changed for anonymity

Additional information about launching a ProjectLIT chapter in your school or district is provided here:
<https://jarredamato.wordpress.com/2019/05/17/project-lit-mailbag-book-lists-tips-and-reminders/>.

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Turning Metacognition into MetacogVISION: Helping Students Visualize Their Thinking With Graphic Organizers

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Reading comprehension is a popular topic among researchers (Egan, 1999; Snyder, 2008) as students face challenges in comprehending and organizing information from text (Gajria, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007). Students tend to encounter greater difficulty at the advanced reading stages because there is an increase in the amount of information in the content areas that they are expected to master (Gajria et al., 2007). It becomes increasingly important for students to develop metacognitive skills and the ability to think about their own thinking.

Some students struggle making sense of vocabulary, text patterns and structure, and finding meaning in text and content. Therefore, researchers have investigated successful strategies teachers can use to help students increase their reading comprehension. Graphic organizers (GOs) are one of the most successful strategies used to assist both teacher and students (Egan, 1999; Dexter, 2011; Gajria et al., 2007; Miller, 2011). Graphic organizers help students put their thoughts on paper

and allow them to visualize their thinking. This teaching tip highlights how GOs can be used as a tool to aid in increasing reading comprehension. The authors introduce a common graphic organizer, the Venn Diagram, and offer alternatives to this well-known diagram to add variety to the classroom.

Graphic Organizers

A GO is defined by Egan (1999) as “a visual representation of knowledge, a way of structuring information, and of arranging essential aspects of an idea or topic into a pattern using labels” (p. 641). Miller (2011) notes that GOs “can be effective in helping students categorize, connect, synthesize, and remember information” (p.73). These flexible instructional tools help to improve students’ comprehension of stories, organization of their own written stories, and understanding of difficult concepts (Fisher & Schumaker, 1995). They also help students make a conscious effort to identify key concepts in new knowledge, and relate them to concepts in their

existing knowledge structures (Kinchin, et.al. 2010). GOs are effective tools for all learners and have been shown to improve reading performance of students with learning disabilities (Gajria et al., 2007).

There are a wide variety of GOs that teachers can choose to use in their classrooms (i.e. Circle Map, Venn Diagram, Flow Chart, Tree Map, Attribute Web, etc.). However, amid the myriad of choices, teachers often default to the most commonly used GO - the Venn Diagram.

Venn Diagram

The Venn Diagram (see Figure 1.1) as defined by Camp (2000) is “a [GO] constructed by ‘overlapping circles to indicate features common or unique to two or more concepts’ (Harris & Hodges 1995, p. 271)...The non-intersecting parts of the circles are used to record information unique to each concept” (p.402).

While utilizing Venn Diagrams, the circles typically represent concepts that can be compared and contrasted. For example, these concepts could be characters in a story. In this manner, the character traits of specific characters are placed in the circles. The traits that the characters share are put in the overlapping portion of the circles while character traits distinctive to one character are put in the non-overlapping portion of the circle. An example is provided in Figure 1.1 indicating the distinctive

qualities of crocodiles and alligators.

Although, “the Venn Diagram has proven to be effective in helping students improve comprehension” (Miller, 2011, p.71), critics of this diagram suggest using alternatives for comparing and contrasting. These alternatives may be even more useful than this commonly used chart.

Alternatives to Venn Diagram

The following are variations of compare and contrast charts, allowing students to compare and contrast different concepts. As they begin thinking about their thinking, students can use these resources independently or with a partner.

Differences Within Chart. The Differences Within GO (see Figure 1.2) separates the similarities of two concepts from their differences. Certain concepts may be similar, but within those similarities are differences. Take fruit for example. Although apples, oranges, and grapefruit are fruits because they contain seeds (similarity), the only fruit that has a peel that can be consumed is the apple (difference within similarity). While this is a simple example, students will have to use higher order thinking skills to determine similarities in text and the differences that exist within them, especially with more rigorous, complex text.

The Differences Within Chart takes the Venn Diagram a step further. Not only are students asked to showcase similarities and differences, they are now asked to compare the similarities and look for smaller, minute differences. This takes a higher level of critical thinking and problem solving.

Comparison Alley

While using the Comparison Alley GO (see Figure 1.3) students will write differences in each corner of the chart, and write similarities in the center, or the “alley.” If students were to compare two stories, this particular GO provides more structure than the traditional Venn Diagram and requires more writing from students as they can document essential elements of a story (characters, setting, plot). Take for example the two versions of the Three Little Pigs story in Figure 1.3. Rather than the student listing their observations, they are forced to create full sentences to fill the lines provided in the chart. Using this chart is also a good way for teachers to ask students to demonstrate their knowledge and proper usage of vocabulary taught during a lesson. Because of the level of detail required in this graphic organizer, students are also hitting on other key comprehension skills like retelling and summarizing.

T-Shirt Compare/Contrast Graphic Organizer.

Completing a T-shirt Compare/Contrast GO (see Figure 1.4) is a fun and unique way to engage artistic and kinesthetic learners as they compare and contrast concepts. This GO can be coupled with art and design work and allows for creativity from students. The differences among concepts are written in the sleeves or arms portion of the shirt, while the similarities are placed in the bottom section. As displayed in Figure 1.4, T-shirt GOs are useful for comparing and contrasting characters such as Batman and Robin. As students decorate and personalize their t-shirts, they can also draw their version of what each character looks like, forcing them to use their imaginations and be creative thinkers.

With the inclusion of the artistic element of this GO, some reluctant students may be more engaged with this activity because of their ability to express their knowledge, thoughts, and ideas in more creative ways. This is a great GO to begin with so that students begin to associate a sense of fun and creativity with their comprehension work.

Compare & Contrast Matrix.

The Compare and Contrast Matrix (see Figure 1.5), is an evidence based tool that can be used to chart the differences and similarities of several concepts at one time (Graney, 1992). The main goal of the matrix is to compare concepts and coordinate concept relations (Robinson & Kiewra, 1995). Contrary to the limited space provided in a Venn Diagram, the Compare and Contrast Matrix is versatile and gives students ample space as they document characteristics in a table format. The Compare and Contrast Matrix can be designed to fit as many rows and columns as needed. The concepts to be compared are listed on the x-axis, while the categories of comparison listed on the y-axis. The specific details are listed beneath each concept. Simply designing an appropriate Matrix takes critical thinking from students. They first have to decide how many concepts they are comparing and contrasting. This initial brainstorming activity requires students to think about their thinking to determine how they will design their chart and then begin to fill it in.

Conclusion

As students get older their literacy lessons become more rigorous. This challenges students to become independent thinkers who are able to connect, compare, and contrast concepts. In many higher level texts, concepts are interrelated and this type

of content can be overwhelming to students. Because of the magnitude of concepts students face, many educators struggle with presenting these ideas, especially in an interesting way. Research supports the idea that GOs help engage older children, but they must be implemented correctly. Graphic organizers are not effective instructional tools unless they are clear and straightforward (Boyle & Weishaar, 1996). The most effective GOs should also be integrated in creative and engaging ways (Kohler, 2009). Dye (2000) noted that older readers become more motivated, demonstrate faster short-term recall, and greater long-term achievement when GOs are being effectively used. Dye (2000) cautions that GOs must not be overused because they can create boredom. To avoid this, teachers can vary the use of graphic organizers in their classroom instead of overusing the traditional Venn Diagram. Using different strategies has been highly encouraged to keep students interested (Dye, 2000). Graphic organizers can serve as a motivational tool that gets students actively involved in the learning process. Graphic organizers help students make their thinking visible turning metacognition into metacognition!

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Figure 1.1 - Traditional Venn Diagram

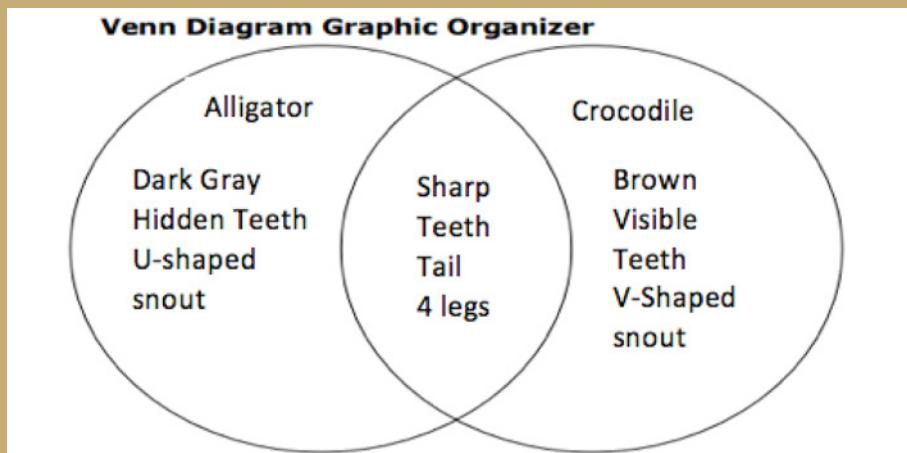


Figure 1.2 - Differences Within Chart

Differences Within Chart

This chart compares apples and oranges. It features two main sections: one for 'Apples' and one for 'Oranges'. Each section has a 'Similarities' row and a 'Differences' row. The 'Similarities' row for apples includes 'Apples _____' and 'and _____ Oranges _____. Are alike because _____ they are fruit with seeds.' The 'Differences' row for apples includes 'But _____ apples have an edible peel.' and 'While _____ an orange's peel is inedible.' The 'Similarities' row for oranges includes 'Oranges _____' and 'and _____ grapefruit _____. Are alike because _____ they are fruit with seeds.' The 'Differences' row for oranges includes 'But _____ oranges are sweet.' and 'While _____ grapefruit are tart.'

Figure 1.3 - Comparison Alley

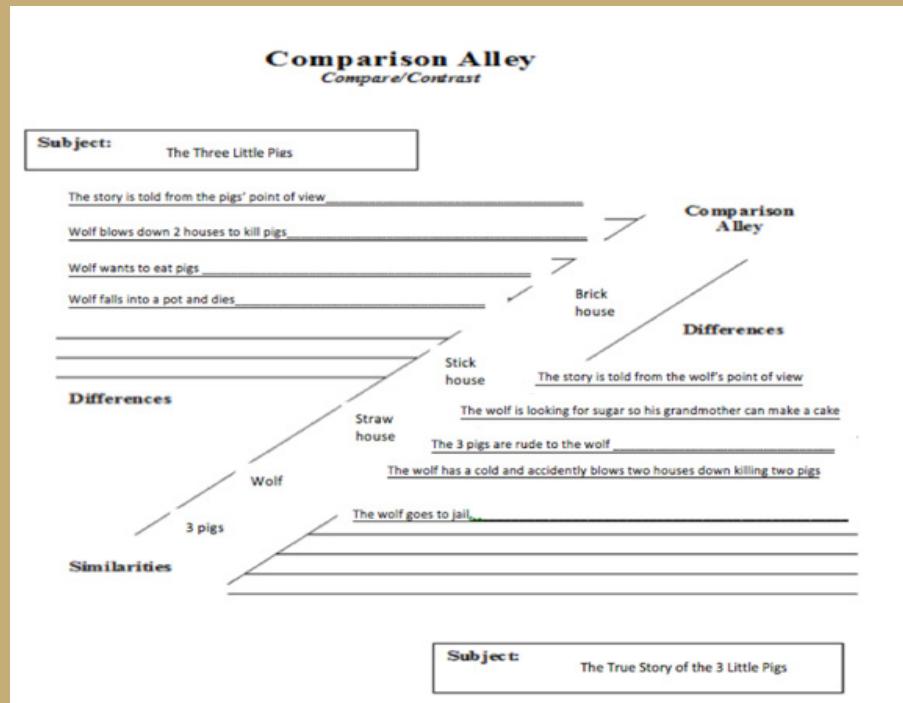


Figure 1.4 - T-Shirt Compare/Contrast Graphic Organizer

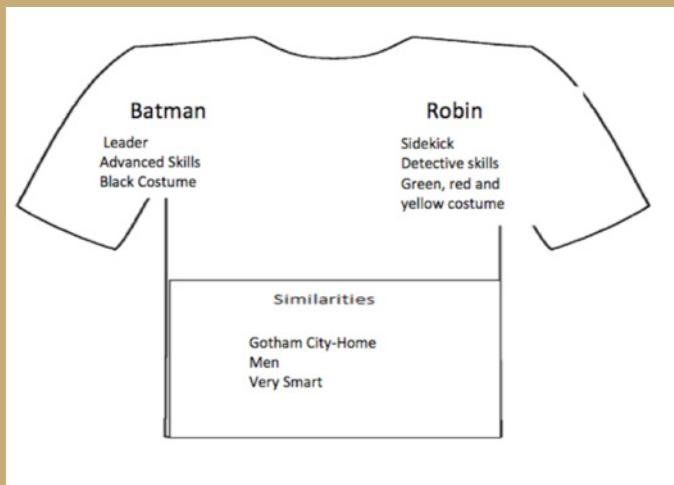
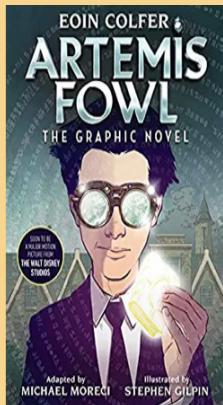


Figure 1.5 - Comparison and Contrast Matrix

Comparison/Contrast Matrix			
Categories of Comparison	Names/Things/Events	Names/Things/Events	Names/Things/Events
	Soccer	Hockey	Football
Equipment	Black and White Ball Goal	Puck Stick Goal	Brown oval shaped ball
Clothing	Cleats Jersey and shorts Shin guards	Skates Helmet Padded jersey Goalies' face mask	Cleats Padded jersey Helmet
Playing Area	Grass Field	Ice Rink	Grass Field

Graphic Novels: Supporting Students to Write Dialogue

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Jennifer Jordan, University of Tennessee*



Graphic novels can be used in the ELA classroom in many ways and for many reasons, including increasing student engagement, accessing

important reading comprehension strategies such as visualization, illustrating complicated concepts like theme in a more relatable way, and simplifying challenging writing skills, such as writing narrative dialogue. Graphic novels are essentially extended comic books, and the structure of the dialogue is different than that of a traditional novel. While the dialogue in graphic novels appears in text bubbles, in literature it also includes quotation marks, commas, and speaker tags. All of the formatting rules involved in correctly writing dialogue can be overwhelming for young writers. Using graphic novels to introduce this

skill during a narrative unit makes writing dialogue practice fun and engaging for students.

When I first start teaching writing dialogue, I present students both a page from a graphic novel and one from a traditional novel side by side on the overhead projector and ask them what they notice. When possible, we examine two different versions of dialogue from the same story, such as *The Golden Compass*, *The City of Ember*, *The Quizard of Oz*, or many others (Figure 1). When looking for new graphic novels for the classroom library, I search for versions of stories many students already know or have access to in the classroom or school library. Having different versions of the story allows for comparing and contrasting opportunities as well as providing students of varying reading abilities access to the same stories for discussion. As students study the two different versions of the dialogue, hopefully some will notice that it is presented in totally different ways. As we look and discuss, I prompt them to

notice how we as readers know who is talking in each format. In the graphic novel, we are given the visual cue because the character is right there on the page with the speech bubble nearby. When we discuss how that is different from the novel, students usually notice that sometimes there is a speaker tag, but not always. This observation can also aid in reading comprehension, since many students struggle to keep up with who is speaking during dense sections of dialogue and they must pay close attention to indentations as well as speaker tags.

After discussion of the differences in the format, I hold the pen while students help me label the different parts of a sentence containing dialogue. Together, we make sure they notice all the different punctuation, and I illustrate how the sentence would look with the speaker tag at the beginning, middle, and end as well as how each changes the punctuation in the sentence. Discussion facilitates understanding that this aspect of writing takes a lot of precision and attention to detail, but that it is worth it for the character development and excitement that good dialogue can add to their story. Once our sentence is labeled, I model how it might be presented in a graphic novel. This modeling includes a very quick sketch of the character (probably a stick figure), and a drawn text box which includes the spoken text. Next,

students discuss what they notice; they clearly see the speaker tag, quotation marks, and extra commas are gone from the sentence in this format. This is a visual way of getting across the concept of using quotation marks around the narrative text spoken by individuals. The students now begin to internalize that each time they see a text box, it means the text inside is spoken by the character and needs to be placed in quotation marks.

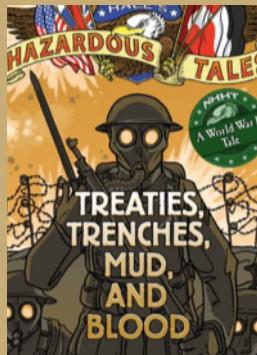


For guided practice, students choose a blank graphic novel template with two different characters (choices include monkeys in a tree, kids skateboarding, or astronauts

floating in space). The page only has one frame, so each character will only speak once for this first practice round. Students are challenged to compose one complete sentence for each character as I walk around monitoring their progress. Once they complete both of the text bubble sentences, they use the lines below the frame on their paper to re-write their sentences as they would appear in a traditional novel. They are reminded that a speaker tag is

required, so they will have to give each of their characters a name as well as remember to indent and add quotation marks and commas. As I circulate, monitor, and correct misunderstandings, I record anecdotal notes about which students are struggling and make plans to pull them back for small group

instruction.



At this point in the lesson, students who need re-teaching and more support work directly with me, while other students work in groups

together to complete another dialogue sheet with more frames and characters than the first. Once students are successful with the multiple frame sheet, their independent practice allows for even more choice. They are challenged to find a section of dialogue in a graphic novel and “translate” it into the traditional literature format. A possible extension activity, especially for artistic students, could be to find a section of dialogue in a traditional novel and show what it would look like in a graphic novel. I have had many students who enjoyed it so much that ask me if they can repeat this

extension activity throughout the rest of the school year.

Using graphic novels in the classroom is about harnessing students’ natural interests. They allow for a fresh, creative, artistic perspective that can give students access to otherwise challenging reading and writing skills. When I use graphic novels in my lessons, I watch my students’ eyes light up, and I can feel their engagement. I have seen the evidence that this engagement leads to increased learning, especially when I begin noticing an influx of correctly-written dialogue in my students’ narrative writing pieces. As educators teaching today’s children, we need to take advantage of every learning opportunity to engage our students in a way that acknowledges the highly visual world in which they live.

Figure 1 - Traditional Texts Aligned with Graphic Novels

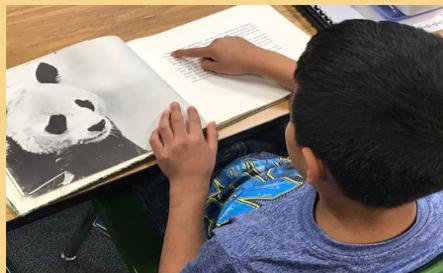
TRADITIONAL TEXT	GRAPHIC NOVEL
Colfer, E. (2001). <i>Artemis Fowl</i> . NY: Hyperion Books for Children.	Colfer, E., Donkin, A., Rigano, G., & Lamanna, P. (2013). <i>Artemis Fowl: The graphic novel</i> . NY: Scholastic.
Montgomery, L.M. (1976). <i>Anne of green gables</i> . NY: Bantam Books.	Marsden, M., Thummel, B., & Montgomery, L.M. (2017). <i>Anne of green gables: A graphic novel</i> . Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing.
<i>Black Beauty: The autobiography of a horse</i> .	Brigman, J., Richardson, R., & Sewell, A. (2005). <i>Black Beauty: The graphic novel</i> . NY: Puffin.
<i>Coraline</i> .	Gaiman, N. & Russell, P.C. (2008). <i>Coraline: Graphic novel</i> . London: Bloomsbury.
<i>The wonderful Wizard of Oz</i> .	Mann, R. (2011). <i>The wonderful Wizard of Oz: The graphic novel</i> . NY: Campfire.
<i>The city of ember</i> .	DuPrau, J., Middaugh, D., Asker, N., Ashi, B., & Dickey, C. (2012). <i>The city of ember: The graphic novel</i> . NY: Random House.
<i>The golden compass</i> .	Pullman, P. (2017). <i>The golden compass graphic novel</i> . NY: Knopf Books for Young Readers
<i>A wrinkle in time</i> .	Larson, H. (2012). <i>A wrinkle in time: The graphic novel</i> . NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Tips to Expand Vocabulary of English Learners

Betty Thomason, Maryville City Schools

“The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without a teacher.”

- Elbert Hubbard



To cultivate students who are able to function successfully in school and in life is the goal of every teacher. For English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, this target comes with an extra layer of complexity since English Learners (ELs) must master general academic subjects like math and science while learning English language and culture. There are many theories and classroom strategies that underpin teaching ELs based on current research in the field Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Weimer, 2002). The purpose of this article is to highlight several meaningful research-based instructional practices that advance ELs' acquisition of English and thereby support their learning of all academic subjects.

Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary learning is the most important component for learning a language. Without vocabulary, there is no communication. Therefore, vocabulary instruction must be a top priority. Vocabulary can be taught through both direct and indirect instruction. Direct instruction can take many forms. One type of direct vocabulary instruction is the selection of words within a context such as a story or event for in depth study.

For beginners, focus on basic vocabulary from their lives, which provide a foundation for the development of students' Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). These words are essential for rudimentary conversation and writing. For instance, it was necessary for Elias, an eighth grader from Guatemala to acquire the word 'snow' and the concept of 'snow day' in order to know when he should expect the school bus on snowy days. In addition, the definitions of higher-

level vocabulary are based on foundational words. For example, in the book *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989), one chapter is devoted to the discussion of a ‘meadow’. To understand the definition of ‘meadow’, Nako, an eighth grader from Japan, must previously have acquired words like ‘grass’ and ‘flowers’. ELs should work with these words using all forms of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Activities such as academic conversations discussing the word, writing sentences or paragraphs that contain the specific vocabulary, or drawing pictures that connect to the word are some techniques for acquiring these words. Ayato from Japan connected the vocabulary word ‘ingredient’ from shampoo to food when reading the novel *Frindle* (Clements, 1996) to write this sentence, “The main ingredient in sushi is rice.”

As ELs move into the arena of acquiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) vocabulary, words should be selected from texts that assist in the understanding of the main ideas. Often words that are compiled into lists for vocabulary study are not connected to any particular context or are of a more esoteric nature and are not fundamental for the overall understanding of a text. Strategic selection of vocabulary means choosing vocabulary to focus on that is essential for understanding the text.

The following paragraphs are found in Chapter 5 of *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* (Sachar, 1987):

It was drizzling the next morning as Bradley walked to school. He wore red rubber boots and a yellow raincoat. He stamped in every puddle along the way, making big splashes.

He suddenly stopped when he saw Jeff standing next to the school, under the overhang. Bradley's right foot remained in the center of the puddle as his one and only friend.

The vocabulary in these paragraphs sets the mood and setting of the subsequent paragraphs. “Drizzling” describes the weather, a literary device used to set the mood. When ELs recognize that “drizzling” means “raining”, they will appreciate the dark mood of the text. “Puddle” is another essential word in this passage for several reasons. First, “puddle” is used twice in two sentences and therefore was important to the author. Second, it describes the action that the main character takes. ELs can imagine or have themselves splashed in puddles and can relate to splashing in a puddle. Third, ELs can visualize the character standing frozen in place with his foot in a puddle. This is a good topic for oral discussion as to why Bradley stops with his foot in the puddle. Choosing these types of strategic vocabulary move the plot of the novel, provide ELs with opportunities to acquire

new vocabulary, and supports ELs' comprehension of the text.

After strategically selecting vocabulary, teachers should give ELs multiple opportunities to practice with high-level words. Activities include writing definitions and sentences using complex vocabulary; incorporating them in graphic organizers and paragraphs; drawing pictures of the vocabulary in student-created personal dictionaries; connecting vocabulary with other academic subjects or their lives outside of school; reading multiple texts that embed the same vocabulary. For example, 'typhus' is discussed at length in the book *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989). Melissa, a tenth grader recognized 'typhus' from health class and Jianjun from China had studied typhus in social studies class. These students connected the vocabulary with other academic studies for a deeper understanding of the literary text. Through classroom discussion and integration of many types of texts, connections can be made that will provide ELs with more than one way to think about the vocabulary and enhance the likelihood of their acquisition of the word.

Studying English Morphology, Synonyms and Antonyms, and Parts of Speech

Studying English morphology is an important strategy that can enhance students' vocabulary development, as

they learn how to derive meaning of words from analysis of their parts. Recognizing prefixes and suffixes and memorizing their definitions provides ELs with a tool to understand the meaning of an unknown word through its parts. For example, Junior from El Salvador did not know the definition of 'motionless'. After studying suffixes, he learned that the suffix 'less' meant 'without' or 'no' and he comprehended 'motion', so by using his knowledge of suffixes, he could define 'motionless' as 'without motion'. Teachers can also draw parallels from English to students' home languages by showing or inquiring how words are formed in languages around the world. For example, many English prefixes like pre-, ante, and bio- are based in Latin and Greek and have the same meaning in Spanish, French, and Italian. In addition, thousands of English words are Spanish cognates including: Abbreviate/abreviar, calculate/ calcular, communicate/comunicar, and celebrate/celebrar. Noticing similarities between Spanish and English words allows Spanish-speaking ELs to rapidly expand their English vocabulary. (Rapid/rapido is another cognate.)

Furthermore, synonyms and antonyms expand ELs' vocabulary by grouping and connecting words in a context. For instance, during a study of antonyms when Elkin acquired the word 'little', he immediately understood 'big'. One activity to

enhance vocabulary through the study of antonyms is for ELs to compose original sentences using the word and its antonym. Hazuki, a 9th grader from Japan wrote, “The sun rises at dawn and sets at dusk.” There are several computerized games available on the internet that support learning synonyms and antonyms such as *Fun Antonym Matching Game*, *Synonyms and Antonyms Word Toss* and *Word Frog*.

Conclusion

Vocabulary is the building blocks of language. For ELs to be successful in school, they must acquire English vocabulary as quickly as possible. Some have said that in order to learn a term, ELs need between 7 and 30 exposures; therefore, all activities in the classroom should include vocabulary study of a multitude of vocabulary words in as many contexts as possible. To quote Mrs. Granger of *Frindle*, “Clear thinking requires a command of the English language [which includes the acquisition of] an expanded vocabulary (Clements, 1996).

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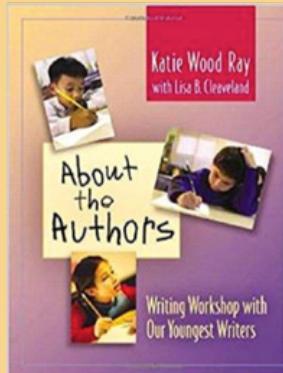
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Book Review - About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers

Nora Vines, University of Tennessee



If you are in search of an accessible resource for implementing

effective, student-centered writing instruction, the dynamic duo responsible for *About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers* (Wood Ray & Cleaveland, 2004) has delivered just that. A practical manual for beginning teachers and veterans alike, *A Teacher's Guide to Getting Started with Beginning Writers: Grades K-2* is part of the new Classroom Essentials series from Heinemann.

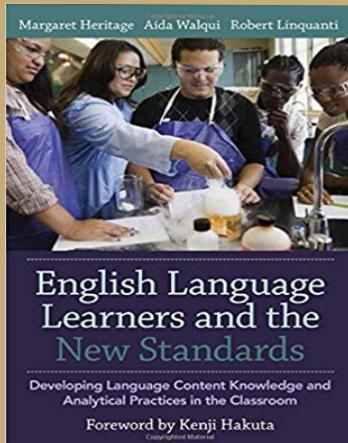
The text is organized in a visually appealing manner that guides the reader step-by-step in introducing and setting up writing workshop in the earliest grades. Included are online videos and additional resources that highlight *real* teaching with *real* beginning writers. Additional features include a "Bookshelf" with curated professional resources organized for teachers to explore for continued learning about the reciprocal

relationships of all literacy components (e.g. language; reading); text features with reminders such as, "Their writing looks the way it does because they're five", which most early grade educators can agree are always reassuring!; and "Tips" which serve to not only distill the pertinent information from the section, but also serve to help the reader make connections to their own classroom.

Especially appealing for use with teacher candidates is the accessibility of research-based practices in writing instruction. That is, the authors masterfully provide clear, explicit strategies for implementing writing workshop which incorporate the gradual release of responsibility instructional model, encourage differentiation, integrate authentic writing and reading tasks, and allow for student choice. As with their article in which Wood Ray and Cleaveland (2004) explained "why Cauley writes well", this is another well-crafted text that makes me want to dash back into the classroom and be a better teacher of writers!

Book Review - English Language Learners and the New Standards

Robin Schell, Miami University



Preparing English Language Learners (ELLs) for the new college and career ready standards can be a daunting task, and many teachers have no idea where or how to begin. *English Language Learners and the New Standards* takes this topic from the micro level of the individual classroom to the macro level of educational policy in this visionary, yet practical guide for teachers. The authors challenge not only English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, but all teachers, to reformulate their practices to involve ELL students in the use of academic language in content areas which will enable them to be successful throughout their

formal education.

The authors utilize vignettes to clearly illustrate how teachers can simultaneously scaffold and challenge ELL students in developing academic language, conceptual understandings, and analytical skills. They also acknowledge that even though “the goals for ELLs are equivalent to those for their English-proficient peers . . . their pathways to attaining the standards may not be” (p. 5). The basis for each suggestion and corresponding vignette is the notion that language learning is an interactive and cooperative endeavor. Students portrayed in the vignettes are encouraged to build proficiency in English through authentic and meaningful communicative practice in content area activities.

Moving from practical ideas for teaching to the underlying theories of pedagogy and second language acquisition, the authors outline a series of shifts necessary to the successful education of ELLs under college and career ready standards. For example, they suggest moving from approaching language

acquisition as a solitary process to approaching it as a social process and from a linear, progressive process to a non-linear, complex process. The authors also assert that formative assessment “for learning” rather than summative “assessment of learning” (p. 89) is powerful for both the student and teacher. Formative assessment, showing what a student can and cannot yet do, should inform a teacher’s instruction. The authors give practical examples of types of formative assessments that teachers can utilize in their classrooms immediately.

Finally, the authors address the implications of their ideas for educational policy, making the bold statement that “ ‘teacher-proof’ materials . . . and high-stakes test-based accountability . . . are incompatible with what the new standards - and indeed life and work in the twenty-first century - require of educators and students” (p. 141). They employ a constructivist viewpoint that is aligned with their ideas about pedagogy and assessment. The authors advocate for policies that build on interactive and cooperative forms of teacher professional development, preparation, and evaluation in order to strengthen pedagogy.

English Language Learners and the New Standards offers teachers powerful advice on aligning instruction and assessment to meet

the new college and career ready standards, without being overly prescriptive. The book addresses educational theory in accessible language and challenges teachers to be aware of the theoretical bases behind their practice in order to be intentional about their teaching. Incongruities between educational policy, pedagogy, and the new standards are also highlighted in this concise, yet cogent work. This book offers a deeper look into how and why to engage ELL students in academic discourse and would be an asset in any teacher education course addressing ELL students. It is also highly recommended for teachers desiring to move beyond a functional linguistic approach.

TLJ Submission Guides

Appropriate Submissions for Peer Review

Tennessee Literacy Journal welcomes well-written, original descriptions of research-based instruction that improves literacy learning of children, adolescents, and young adults. Manuscripts must provide an appropriate blend of practical classroom application and solid theoretical framework and, where appropriate, include graphics (e.g., tables, charts, figures, photographs) that emphasize key ideas and add visual interest. The journal editors will not consider endorsements of commercial products/services, previously published works, or manuscripts under consideration elsewhere. The journal is published online twice per year, in the fall and in the spring, and contains a balance of various types of submissions.

Types of Submissions

Full-length Article: full-length articles should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words and should provide the journal's practitioner audience with classroom ideas for literacy development, based on sound theory and research.

Teaching Tip: teaching tips should be about 700-1,000 words in length and focus on a single, research-based application for improving literacy that can be readily implemented by readers.

Professional Book and Multimedia Reviews: book and digital multimedia reviews should be under 300 words in length and focus on a single, research-based application for improving literacy that can be readily implemented by readers.

Original Creative Works

Poetry: We will accept up to two original poems with a maximum thirty lines each. Poems should be well-crafted and connect readers to the world of teaching and learning.

Photography: Teacher photographs of classroom scenes and individual students are welcome. Photographs may be received in any standard image format at 300 dpi or greater. Photos should be accompanied by complete identification: teacher/photographer's name, location of scene, and date photograph was taken. If faces are clearly visible, names of those photographed should be included, along with their statement of permission for the photograph to be reproduced in the journal. An optional accompanying description of up to 100 words may be included.

Artwork: Artwork produced by students or readers should depict scenes or ideas related to texts being read by students or readers and should be appropriate for the journal's readers. This artwork may be used within the article and/or on the journal cover. Artwork may be received in any standard image format at 300 dpi or greater. Artwork should be accompanied by complete identification: teacher/illustrator's name, location of artwork, and date artwork was created. A statement of permission for the artwork to be reproduced in the journal should be provided. An optional accompanying description of up to 100 words may be included.

Manuscripts and creative efforts will be judged on their contribution to the field, timeliness, freshness of approach, and clarity and cohesiveness of presentation, as well as immediate utility to Tennessee literacy educators. Manuscripts will be subjected to double-blind peer review.

How to Submit? Make sure to submit two files: title page and your anonymized manuscript. The title page should include the following information: name(s) and order of authors, position(s), institution(s), e-mail address(es), and a brief biographical statement of each author (maximum 50 words), title of your submission, submission type, total word count, and a brief summary of submission content. Files should be emailed to tnliteracyjournal@gmail.com.



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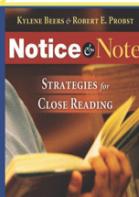


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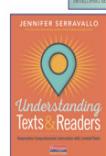
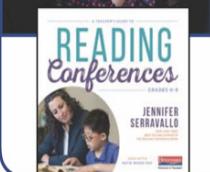


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