Literacy and Social Responsibility

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Volume 7

Literacy and Social Responsibility Mission Statement

The Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (LSR SIG) is comprised of members of the International Reading Association (IRA), who study and promote practices which foster literacy development *and* social responsibility in students of all ages. We invite members of IRA to join our SIG (and if interested in our group but not yet a member of IRA, please consider joining so you can also join our group). There are no dues to be a member of this SIG.

Literacy and Social Responsibility
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What we do

This Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association provides a forum for educators, authors, researchers, and the public to present their insights and to interact with others who share similar concerns at our annual meeting at the IRA convention as well as online on our website and through our eJournal.

Visit our website at

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LITERACY and SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OFFICERS
2012-2014

Message from the Editors

Dr. Tynisha D. Meidl
St. Norbert College – Wisconsin

Dr. Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell
Louisiana State University

Welcome to volume 7 of the *Literacy and Social Responsibility e-Journal*. As the editors of this volume, we want to formally welcome our new editorial assistant, Dr. Leah Katherine Saal, an assistant professor at Loyola University of Maryland. Leah has been an invaluable team member for volume 7. WE also want to thank Dr. Kaye West, web manager, for her unfailing help.

Dr. Margaret-Mary Sulentic-Dowell has served the Literacy and Social Responsibility e-Journal faithfully for 5 volumes. Following founding editor, Rebecca Kaminski, she was the sole editor for three years and provided the scholarly community with manuscripts that used rigorous research methods, challenged policy, and provided alternative pedagogical viewpoints. She has a heart and passion for developing those new to the field. As co-editor for this volume, I cannot adequately thank Margaret-Mary for the mentoring she has provided to me over the past two years to ensure the quality of manuscripts and the *e-Journal*.

The five articles that comprise this volume present an array of research including peer reviewed manuscripts, an invited manuscript, and, for the first time, a "Call to Action" manuscript - a new feature of the *e-Journal,* inspired by the invited article for volume. As co-editors, we hope that you enjoy this volume.

Bonnie Johnson, an eminent scholar in the literacy field, provides the lead invited article in this volume. Examining poverty from a sociocultural perspective, she explores her own learning of vocabulary from her former students' situated lives and examines how teachers can address the social inequalities that affect vocabulary development and thus comprehension of text in the Common Core State Standards era.

Angela Webb, Estanislado Salazar Barrera, IV, and Paula Summers Calderon's research describes the design of a teaching simulation of science content in two different languages as a

means for pre-service teachers to gain first-hand experience of being a student whose primary language is not the language of instruction. Using video analysis and other methods, the authors articulate the need for ongoing development of pre-service teachers' ability to effectively teach English Language Learners.

Kathy Brashears and Queen Ogbomo use service-learning as a pedagogical approach to understanding pre-service teachers' developing sociocultural knowledge. Using survey data, they have begun to explore the effectiveness of a service-learning project pairing teacher education students with adult English Language Learners to co-develop *Where I am from* poems.

Julie K. Kidd, M. Susan Burns, and Leslie La Croix explore teachers' discourse around children's writing viewed as more than scribbles but decodable messages allowing readers to gain insight into who they are as people and students. The authors conclude that teacher articulations of young children' writing development, particularly those who are from socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, is a largely untapped area of pedagogical inquiry. This asset-based approach to pre-school and kindergarten writers demonstrates the need for more research in the area of early writing experiences.

Robert Rutter serves as our first "Call to Action" author. He argues for a waiving of the white flag to stop the war on teachers. He critically argues against recent policies that have devalued teaching as a professional endeavor and challenges us to become active voices in the fight. Adapted from a college address, his words remind us that advocating for the profession is essential.

Joanna Simpson, the author of the poetry submission, *Questions,* challenges us to question and reflect on the implications when we choose to remain silent. Thank you Joanna for reminding us that our silence is hurtful.

We hope that this volume's content spurs dialog, reflection, and action around literacy and social responsibility. We are grateful to authors who consider the ejournal as a outlet for their work.

Ty & MM
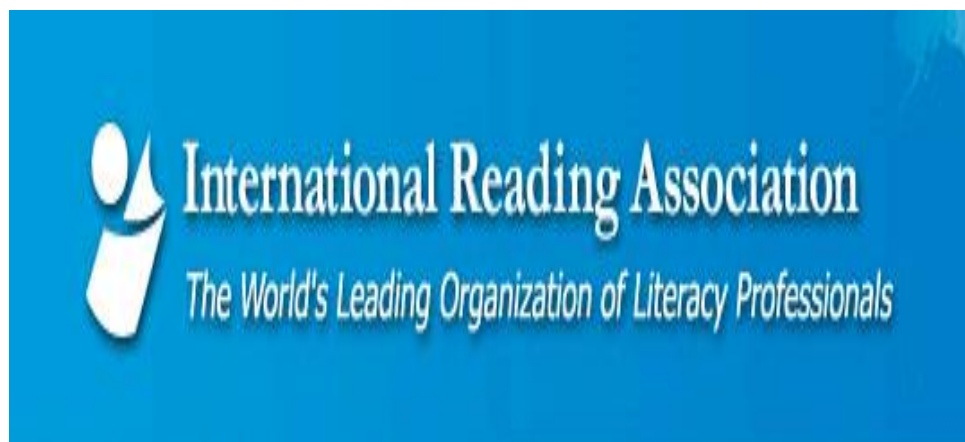
Feature Article

Poverty, Vocabulary Acquisition, and the Common Core State Standards

Bonnie Johnson, Ph. D.

Bonnie Johnson currently teaches courses in the Teacher Education Division of Social Sciences at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin. She has held professorial positions in Louisiana, Texas, Iowa, and New York. Dr. Johnson has taught at all levels from Title I preschool through graduate school. She was a full-time public-school classroom teacher for 14 years and was a recipient of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Distinguished Teacher of Teachers Award for her work with student teachers assigned to her classroom. Dr. Johnson has coauthored more than 200 instructional texts for elementary, middle school, and high school students as well as for adult learners. She has published widely in scholarly journals. Her most recent authored and coauthored books are *Wordworks: Exploring Language Play; High Stakes: Poverty, Testing, and Failure in American Schools; Trivializing Teacher Education;* and *Stop High-Stakes Testing.* Dr. Johnson earned her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is pictured here with her co-author and husband of many years, the late Dr. Dale Johnson.

Abstract

This article addresses the essentiality of background knowledge in vocabulary acquisition. The complex language component of synonymy is examined in relation to the K-3 Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2009-2010). The author points out how the acceptable vocabulary of the school, and that which will be measured by standardized tests, favor those who have access to pertinent vocabulary-building experiences in their daily lives.

Keywords: *vocabulary acquisition, semantic system, Common Core State Standards, achievement gap, low-income schools, social injustice*

Poverty, Vocabulary Acquisition, and the Common Core State Standards

When I was an elementary school classroom teacher in public schools that enrolled a significant number of children identified as low-income, my pupils enlarged my vocabulary. I thought, for example, that *roast* meant *to cook with little moisture, a cut of meat, to become overheated,* and *to poke fun at someone in a good-natured way.* I will *roast* the meat and vegetables; Grandma cooked a beef *roast;* it was so hot in that room, I thought I'd *roast;* the press will *roast* the politician at the gala. My third-graders taught me another meaning of *roast*: *to get hit with a long, wide, thick strap hard enough to cause bruising.* He got *roast* last week.

As a part of a drug awareness program, my elementary pupils created posters. I was asked by one of my eight-year-old students how to spell *blackmoll*. When I asked what *blackmoll* meant, many volunteers answered, "It's a scraped out cigar with weed put back in. It has a white plastic tip on the end." Other vocabulary words that appeared on children's posters included *elastic tie-off, Premoe joint,* and *joint lighter.* All words were accompanied by illustrations.

The Persistence and Spread of Poverty

It is a disconcerting fact, some might say a shameful fact, that many literacy researchers and public speakers, perceived as personalities, have not addressed the social inequalities that affect vocabulary development and thus comprehension of text. If "poor kids" are mentioned in live presentations, YouTube segments, or written pieces, they seem to be afterthoughts— something tacked on as obligatory nods to do-gooders. Poverty is not glamorous and does not attract publishing contracts or speaking gigs on topics such as implementing and assessing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2009-2010). As Harrington (1962) stated decades ago, no corporation "is attracted by the smell of defeat" (p. 32).

Since America's Great Recession, which started with the housing bubble in December 2007 and "officially" ended in June 2009, consumer spending and business investments plummeted; job loss was the worst since the U. S. Great Depression (Economic Policy Institute, 2014). Poverty spread its tendrils to the suburbs; vans that delivered free food to those-in-need

now were seen on the streets of attractive suburban villages (Linn, 2013). Unemployment was creeping into the middle class years before the Recession hit, however.   Moyers, in 2005, explained:

> [But] now we see poverty where it was not supposed to be: among people
> who have followed the program to the letter—families with two parents,
> a full-time worker, and a head of household with more than a high school
> education. These are the newly poor, whom our political elites expect
> to climb out of poverty on a downward-moving escalator. (p. 3)

In not addressing the impacts of poverty on reading development and assessment, those who hold the inner-power of literacy organizations and appear regularly on-stage at literacy gatherings do a disservice to a larger group of children than those they curtly label "poor kids." To keep their positions in the limelight, however, they eventually will have to address poverty's impact on literacy acquisition, because it affects so many more children than in previous years.

The reluctance to address poverty's effects on literacy acquisition is also a disservice to teacher education professors and their graduates, and more trouble for the professors is just around the corner. Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2005) wrote that those whose interests are served by the myth of poorly trained teachers have ignored poverty's influence on pupil achievement. They stated that the "mantra is continuous and clear: *Poorly trained teachers produce students with poor academic achievement…*[and] underachievement can be corrected by 'achievement' of standards. This deflects the argument away from the real problem of the existence of social injustices" (p. 103).

In 2004, Noell developed a test-score tracking system that could link pupil achievement (i.e., test scores) to teacher preparation programs. A few politicians and commissioners praised the system (see Gannett Capital Bureau, 2004). Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2005) warned:

> If the Noell plan uses fourth-grade test scores, for example, to track back to
> a fourth-grade teacher's institution, does his plan account for the fact that
> each fourth-grader has had a minimum of four teachers before fourth grade?
> If those four teachers had been weak but the fourth-grade teacher strong, the
> fourth graders might fail the test. Then which university gets the blame—the
> fourth-grade teacher's?....There are countless confounding variables, home and
> school, across a classroom of children that affect test scores. Adequacy of
> teacher preparation is but one. (p. 223)

In one underfunded Louisiana elementary school where I taught, a fourth-grade class had 14 different teachers during the school year. Which university's teacher education program would be responsible for the children who did not pass the state test? Would a percentage of each university be held accountable? If Noell's system seems unworkable and unfair, so did the practice of high-stakes testing over a decade ago. Now high-stakes testing is commonplace.

The Noell plan has made a comeback. Simon (2014) reported that Education Secretary Arne Duncan plans to "reward teacher training programs that produce teachers who routinely raise student test scores—and to drive the rest out of business" (p. 1). Simon wrote that the goal of the "revival" is:

> To ensure that every state evaluates its teacher education programs by
> several key metrics, such as how many graduates land teaching jobs, how
> long they stay in the profession and whether they boost their students'

> scores on standardized tests. The administration will then steer financial aid, including nearly $100 million a year in federal grants to aspiring teachers, to those programs that score the highest. The rest, Duncan said, will need to improve or "go out of business." (p. 1)

If Duncan's program is realized, and according to Simon, he "aims to enact it within a year" (p. 1), teacher education programs will be reluctant to send their students to low-income schools. Teacher education graduates will not stay long in such dilapidated buildings that house vermin and lack adequate supplies. Students' scores in these schools usually remain stagnant or creep up only a few points because the sources of students' "failures" cannot be pinned solely on a teacher. The failure is societal neglect, and those who disagree with this premise have not had the shattering, wearing experiences of teaching in low-income schools. The money that Duncan has earmarked for his "crack down on poor teacher training" (Simon, 2014, p. 1) would be better spent on feeding children who lick their free-breakfast and free-lunch trays when they are finished eating, as my pupils did, because they are hungry.

The Home Environment

Over 50 years ago, Michael Harrington's *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* was published, and his book was given credit for initiating the War on Poverty. Harrington, who worked for the St. Louis Board of Education as a social worker, saw the conditions in which students lived, and remarked that despite the admirable work of the teachers, "The school had the children nine months a year, six hours or so a day. The home and the neighborhood possessed them the rest of the time. It was an unequal battle…" (p. 98). It still is.

In my years as a classroom teacher in low-income settings, I encountered situations where the children seemed to have more sense than the adults with whom they lived. One child was not sleeping because he worried about his new stepfather moving in with the family. The child told me that the man watched "war movies" and shouted, "They got him! They got him!" when someone was "blown to bits." The boy thought that kids "shouldn't watch that stuff." When I asked him if he couldn't read a book instead, the nine-year-old replied, "He don't want me to read."

Another of my elementary pupils was having difficulty with his schoolwork. I asked him if he could get some help from his mother. The child said, "No. When I get home, she drunk." I asked him if this happened daily. He responded, "Every day she drunk or gone." When I reported the situation to the assistant principal, she told me that the child's mother was a "dopehead" and now is a "drunk" and that the child would get no help from her.

For many of the students with whom I worked, parents and guardians who worked outside the home—and that was the majority of them—often had two part-time jobs to make ends meet. They came to school events in their work clothes, usually fast-food uniforms. The parents and guardians arrived late from their first job or had to leave early to get to the next job. There was little time for interaction with teachers or administrators. Kahlenberg (2005) referred to a National Educational Longitudinal Study in 1996, which reported that children's school achievement improves when there is a high level of parental participation in school activities. He wrote that low-income parents cannot take time off from work and feel "intimidated by educators" (p. 61). The intimidation some parents or guardians feel in school is noticeable. Many of the parents or guardians with whom I worked did not have much formal education, due to a variety of circumstances, and some appeared nervous in the school environment.

The Development of Literacy Skills

Farenga, Ness, Johnson, and Johnson (2010) wrote that the home environment was a primary contributor to the development of literacy skills. The researchers found that verbal interaction frequently is minimal in low-income families.   Also noted was the fact that resources that facilitate literacy such as books, whether print or electronic, are absent from many low-income homes.

Johnson and Johnson (2005) also reported that the development of literacy skills, such as vocabulary acquisition, depends on the literacy environment of the home. They stated:

> The most important factor in the home is the quantity and quality of verbal interactions between parents or caregivers and children. It is through these interactions that vocabulary and oral language facilities develop. Shared conversations and reading to and with children make a large difference. Children reared in homes without such verbal interactions and without a value placed on literacy (e.g., reading materials in the home, parents or caregivers who are readers), therefore, are at a disadvantage throughout their elementary school years. (p. 709).

Johnson and Johnson also pointed out that if children speak a language or dialect that is different from the language used at school, they will have to learn a second language or nearly the equivalent of a second language when in school. This further complicates children's vocabulary acquisition.

My former colleagues and I conducted several informal vocabulary studies with children from low-income homes and children from one of New York City's wealthiest suburbs. None of the children from the upper-income homes could define *food stamps,* but all of the children from low-income homes could define the term accurately. Students from wealthy homes easily defined *passport, boarding pass,* and *orthodontist;* students from low-income homes could not define any of the three terms. On a practice test that I had to administer as a part of a reading program my elementary school was using, none of my pupils could define *harp*. They could "sound the word out," but they had not heard of this instrument. Children whose parents could afford concert tickets and children who heard music at home where a harp was played would have been familiar with the instrument. *Harp* would be a part of their vocabularies.

A Living Lexicon

The meaning system of a language, its *semantics*, is comprised of the language's *lexicon,* that is, its *vocabulary*. The American English lexicon is estimated to be two million words, but they would be difficult to count because of our vocabulary's fluid nature. We can be certain that, as Johnson (2001) wrote, "No one knows all the words of English, but every word is known by someone" (p. 18).

The semantic system includes the denotative or literal meanings of words, although one's background can cause confusion even with denotative meanings. *Gift* means *a present* or *a special talent* in American English, but it means *poison* in German. Connotative meanings (e.g., *cool, chilly, nippy*), idiomatic expressions (e.g., *to ride the gravy train, to pass the buck*), polysemous or multiple-meaning words (e.g., *crane, bark*), proverbs (e.g., *Too many cooks spoil the broth, Haste makes waste*), onomastics (i.e., names), initialisms, (e.g., *FBI, ER*), acronyms (e.g., *FEMA, NATO*), and slang (e.g., *gooey, rust bucket*) also are elements of the system.

Noah Webster began a dictionary of American English words in 1800. Webster was disliked by most who knew him because of his bad temperament (Haugen, 1995). Webster's snarly disposition becomes understandable, however, when we learn that it took him 28 years to

compile and write definitions for 70,000 entries in the first American dictionary. Entries such as *raccoon, moose,* and *skunk* were words learned from Native Americans and words such as *corn* took on a different meaning from its British meaning (i.e., *the main grain crop regardless of grain type*).

J. E. Lighter (Rawson, 2003) stated, "No word is utterly stable" (p. 72). In 1755, for example, *lunch* meant as much food as could be held in one's hand, a *glossary* was comprised of only antiquated words, and a *go-cart* was a device that helped children learn to walk without danger of falling (Johnson & Johnson, 2011). *Geek* originally was a circus word for "someone whose act consisted of biting the heads off live chickens and snakes" (Ostler, 2003, p. xii). By the 1980s, Ostler noted, *geek* referred to someone who was adept at working with computers but socially awkward. Today's *geek* still works with computers or in scientific or mathematical fields but is making or will make a respectable salary and probably can get a date outside a geek social circle.

The semantic system of American English is not static but a survival-of-the fittest environment. Some words have become obsolete. *Hie* (to go quickly) and *hight* (named; called) were entries in a 1952 children's dictionary (Johnson & Johnson, 2011). Other words show promise but are quickly dropped. *Plutoed* (to devalue) was named Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society in 2006 after Pluto was no longer considered a planet. The word is rarely seen or heard these days. Words formerly thought of as slang (e.g., *road rage, brown bag lunch*) have worked their way into "respectable" American English. *Dashboard* (a panel in a vehicle with controls, dials, etc.) now has a new meaning related to a control panel in software applications.

Psycholinguist Eve Clark (1993) found that although a two-year-old child could produce 477 words, two-thirds of those words referred to objects such as people, toys, animals, food, and clothing. This makes sense because the objects are concrete items. One can point to them and say their names: *baby, block, button, bed*. Young children expand their vocabularies by learning words for activities (*eat, fall down*) and attributes (*big, hot*), and oral interaction with adults nurtures this expansion. Less oral interaction with adults, not uncommon among economically poor children (Johnson & Johnson, 2006), means a more limited vocabulary when the children enter school. Their teachers must try to fill this void—a daunting task—to bring the children to entrance-level vocabulary expectations.

Teaching "New" Words

Johnson (2001) examined the research of Clark (1993), Aitchison (1997), Crystal (1995), Miller (1996), and others to develop his guidelines for vocabulary expansion. Perhaps the most common method for teaching new words in schools is through direct instruction of passage-critical vocabulary. Johnson wrote that this method is most used when the text does not hold sufficient clues for the readers to make inferences about the new words' meanings. Direct instruction of words means that the words must be introduced by the teacher, discussed by the teacher and students, and used in different contexts by the learners—a time consuming process when a teacher is under high-stakes testing mandates. Another guideline suggested by Johnson was to actively involve learners with new words through word games, using the words in literature circles, illustrating new words, and using a thesaurus to find related words. Johnson emphasized that when new words can be related to learners' prior knowledge through class discussions, the meanings will become more memorable.

Perhaps the most essential guideline that Johnson proposed was that of repeated

exposures to new words. All learners, regardless of age or experience, need to see and use a word many times before it becomes part of their lexicons. We see or hear a word repeatedly, finally take the time to "look it up" in a dictionary, and then quickly forget its meaning. We must "look it up" several times or hear it used many times for us to store its meaning in our lexicons.

Johnson's strategies for vocabulary expansion that are not passage-critical include wide reading and oral communication between students and their teachers. Free or independent reading and the reading of children's books to pupils has all but disappeared in many classrooms due to test pressures. I was able to squeeze in some time for reading to my pupils, but the sessions were erratic and had to be abandoned when the test week drew nearer. When I was able to read to the children, they did not hesitate to ask what a word meant, and I was able to give them a rich contextual definition and refer to the word numerous times throughout the story.

Johnson (2001) stated that lessons in phonic analysis, structural analysis, and contextual analysis can serve learners' vocabulary acquisition throughout their lives. He wrote, "The purpose of phonics is to help readers pronounce words they do not recognize in print….Phonics does nothing more. It can't teach anyone new words, only those whose meanings they already know. But that is quite enough" (p. 48). Children have many more words in their mental lexicons than they can read. Clark (1993) found that a six-year-old knows about 14,000 words. They cannot read 14,000 words, but if they can "sound out" a word and they already know its meaning, passage comprehension will be facilitated. When children from economically impoverished backgrounds decode words but the meanings are unfamiliar, their phonics instruction is of no value in passage comprehension, and their teachers must try to compensate for these vocabulary deficiencies.

The purpose of structural analysis is to teach readers to look for meaningful parts within words—parts that will give clues to the unfamiliar word's meaning. *Antebellum,* for example, is composed of *ante-* meaning *before* and *bellum,* Latin for *war* (c.f. *bellicose, belligerent*). Students adept at structural analysis will have an easier time in determining many word meanings, but the meanings will be more readily retained if students can relate the words to past experiences. Pupils who have toured Nottaway, an *antebellum* home (circa 1859) in White Castle, Louisiana or Dunleith, an *antebellum* home (circa 1856) in Natchez, Mississippi will have a deeper understanding of the word than those who have not toured the mansions. Their American history schemata also will be enlarged by learning how slave labor erected these palatial homes for wealthy planters. Pupils whose parents and guardians cannot pay for trips outside their neighborhoods will not have such vocabulary-enriching and schemata-building experiences.

The use of contextual analysis to determine a word's meaning depends on the robustness of passage clues and again, prior knowledge aids in these analyses. *Henry will pick up two bags of curds if they're squeaky.* My New York City/Long Island college students did not know what *curds* are; my Wisconsin college students do. Bags of cheese curds, "squeaky to the bite," meaning the curds were made that morning, are arranged on small tables near the entrances of most Wisconsin grocery stores.

It becomes clear that a rich prior knowledge, developed through conversations, reading, and personal experiences is a key component to vocabulary acquisition. Different learners have different vocabularies, however, and some vocabularies are considered more appropriate for school learning and testing. It is unlikely that a reader will encounter *blackmoll* or the lesser

known meaning of *roast* on standardized tests and more likely that *antebellum* will appear.

Those who have pinned their hopes on the Common Core State Standards for "closing the achievement gap" should not be surprised if these Standards do no more than widen the gap in vocabulary acquisition. As of this writing, I know of no provisions—well funded or even skimpily funded—to boost enrichment activities for children in low-income schools in states that have adopted the Standards. In the following section, one CCSS vocabulary element, shades of meaning, will be examined. What seems like a rather straightforward language element is complex and requires sophisticated knowledge about words. Those children who have only rudimentary familiarity with school-and-test words will fall further behind without additional resources—and that means human resources in the classroom and out-of-school educational activities that incorporate vocabulary development.

Common Core State Standards (2009-2010)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS LANGUAGE KINDERGARTEN

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.5 With guidance and support from adults,
 explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.5d Distinguish shades of meaning among
  verbs describing the same general action (e.g., *walk, march, strut,*
  prance) by acting out the meanings.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS LANGUAGE GRADE 1

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.5 With guidance and support from adults,
 demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.5d Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs
  differing in manner (e.g., *look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl*) and
  adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic [*sic*]) by defining
  or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS LANGUAGE GRADE 2

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.5 Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and
 nuances in word meanings.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.5b Distinguish shades of meaning among
  closely related verbs (e.g., *toss, throw, hurl*) and closely related
  adjectives (e.g., *thin, slender, skinny, scrawny*).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS LANGUAGE GRADE 3

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language,
 word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

  CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.5c Distinguish shades of meaning among
  related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty

<center>(e.g., *knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered*).</center>

Synonymy

What superficially appears to be a somewhat simple language element actually requires seasoned experience with language in various settings. *Synonyms* are more than "words that mean about the same thing." Johnson (1999) wrote:

> Each adjective for *funny* has a different connotation—a different shade of meaning. *Hilarious* connotes side-splitting humor. *Witty* connotes a quicker and more intellectual sense of humor. If one is a *silly* person, one might seem goofy or immature. A *zany* person could be capable of absurd, prankish behavior. (p. 122)

Word usage is situational even when the words are related, reflecting regional and sometimes cultural language differences. When I was a resident of Manhattan, *cop* was an acceptable synonym for a New York City *police officer*. *Cop* is not viewed as respectable as *police officer* in other places where I have lived. If there is an emergency, one might yell, "Somebody call the cops—call 911." If one is stopped for speeding, one might say, "This is the first time I've been stopped by a police officer" not "This is the first time I've been stopped by a cop." Clark (1993) wrote that related words differ in "emotive coloring." She used the synonyms *statesman* and *politician* as examples and noted, "the former is laudatory and the latter not" (p. 73).

Although it is important to teach shades of meaning to children, it is a challenging task that requires time and a certain amount of sophistication with the language. The CCSS ask that kindergarteners be able to distinguish shades of meaning among verbs such as *walk, strut, and prance* and apparently demonstrate the differences among these synonyms by "acting out the meanings." A kindergarten teacher probably can teach the synonyms for *walk* to the children so that they understand the differences among the verbs. Other verbs known by most kindergarteners are *jump, run, talk, sing,* and *hide.* I did not consult a word list for these verbs, I know this from my years of teaching Title I prekindergarten. What are some synonyms for *jump*? *Leap, spring, hop, vault, pounce,* and *bound* come to mind. How will kindergarteners— even with the teacher's help—"act out" the differences between *spring, vault,* and *bound*? How many adults could act out the shades of meaning? Synonyms for *run* include *bolt, dash, sprint,* and *dart. Communicate, converse, prattle, express, state, utter, relate,* and *convey* are synonyms for *talk; warble, croon,* and *serenade* have different shades of meaning for *sing. Obfuscate, harbor, conceal, veil, eclipse,* and *shroud* are just a few synonyms for *hide.* This is an example of where critics of the CCSS can hit pay dirt if they scrutinize those Standards listed above and if they know any early childhood teachers. How many adults, even with "guidance and support" from another adult, could act out the shades of meaning between *utter* and *state*, between *conceal* and *harbor*? Would those who deliver and support the edicts on what our students must know— and this group includes some politicians—be able to perform such charades?

In Grade 1, *look, peek, glance, stare, glare,* and *scowl* are used as examples. These words, according to the Standards, can be defined or chosen or acted out by first graders. The children would have an easier time with adjectives ("e.g., large, gigantic"), but even those proficient in the language might have difficulty defining or choosing or acting out the nuances among *huge, enormous, massive, mammoth, gargantuan,* and *immense.* The same argument could be made for the above CCSS in Grade 2 (i.e., *toss, throw, hurl; thin, slender, skinny, scrawny*) and Grade 3 where eight-year-olds are expected to distinguish shades of meaning

among related words that describe "states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., *knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered*)." At least the third-graders aren't expected to "act out" these states of mind or degrees of certainty.

The teacher can assist pupils in acting out words ad infinitum, but children who hear the vocabulary of the school, the vocabulary of school instructional materials, the vocabulary the standardized test, the vocabulary of children's literature, and the vocabulary used in well-off homes have tremendous advantages over children whom I have taught who came to school and didn't know color names, had no computers or books in their homes, and never had been outside their neighborhoods, many of these locales characterized by violence.

It is irksome and tiresome to repeatedly read or hear that teachers in economically depressed areas have "low expectations" for their students. A handful of these teachers might not expect great things from their pupils, but one does not stay in such a school for long unless one believes in the students. The job is too wearing physically and mentally, and there are a lot of goodies such as clean buildings, up-to-date materials, school libraries, and more pay just across town.

Practical Alternatives

The *Mayo Clinic Family Health Book* (2003) stated that "overall health" and "emotional comfort" are two factors that affect learning (p. 191). Teachers in low-income schools know that many of their pupils lack the proper nutrition, dental care, and emotionally or physically safe homes or neighborhoods. As children go without these foundations for learning, one wonders how much money has been spent on the accountability and standards movement. In a 2004 *Education Week* article, Olson wrote that testing requirements would cause states to spend between $1.9 and $5.3 billion by 2010. These estimates came from the federal Government Accountability Office. How much more has been spent since 2010?

When I was teaching in a low-income school, the children would have to pay their own way if they wanted to participate in the yearly field trip. Most could not come up with the money, so if their teachers didn't pay for them, they stayed behind in school doing "schoolwork." The bus trip was to a mid-sized city to see a play in a renovated theatre. The pupils who attended learned about parts of the theatre that would increase their vocabularies and prior knowledge: *chandeliers, box seats, orchestra pit, box office, understudies* and more. The cost was $11.00 per child—peanuts in the age of testing and standards.

In addition to more life experiences, the children need to be read to more often. I am not an opponent of teaching skills, but I am an opponent of teaching skills that pertain only to tests and do not transfer to other learning episodes. Children need to hear more stories. Hillman (1979) wrote:

> To have stories of any sort in childhood—and here I mean oral stories, those told or read (for reading has an oral aspect even if one reads to oneself) rather than watching them on a screen—puts a person into a basic recognition of and familiarity with the legitimate reality of story *per se.* It is something given with life, with speech and communication, and not something later that comes with learning and literature. Coming early with life it is already a perspective on life. One integrates life as story because one has stories in the back of the mind…as containers for organizing events into meaningful experiences. The stories are means of finding oneself in events that might not otherwise make psychological sense at all. (p. 43)

Field trips and stories cannot make up for all of the social injustices that some children face, but they can help. Simply put, additional experiences equate to expanded vocabulary.

I have an old children's thesaurus in my office. A section in the book gave advice to young readers. The authors of the section wrote, "What makes words important? How much you can do with them—that's what. If you can talk well, write well, you have a real advantage over other people….The better you are with words, the more money you're likely to make" (*Roget's Student Thesaurus,* 1994, p. 418). My last class of low-income pupils never would see statements such as these. The school had no library and did not provide thesauri.

Experience with "school words" not only expands mental lexicons, but it spurs learners to delve into topics that might influence future livelihoods and pastimes. Schools, parents, and guardians who can afford enrichment activities will make the world less intimidating and more understandable to children. Perhaps most readers have picked up a book and viewed a Web site and promptly closed them. There was no interest, no prior knowledge, and the words used were unfamiliar and seemed difficult. Some readers, for example, might not rush to read about or ask questions of a chiroptologists who study the categories of sheath-tailed, smoky, sucker-footed, horseshoe, disk-winged, and more. A chiroptologist could introduce vocabulary such as *frugivores, torpor,* and *membranous.* Schools that can pay for field trips or guest speakers will help teachers build concepts associated with chiroptologists' knowledge: threats to wildlife, effects of wind turbines, and myths about "scary" animals, and that could lead to additional word journeys. A visit with a chiroptologist probably would result in students' increased interest in bats—creatures who can eat 1,000 mosquitoes an hour.

Even having time in a classroom for a teacher to read to children about topics that perhaps are outside the prescribed curriculum will expand mental lexicons. Until these types of experiences can be provided for children who do not have access to them because of financial limitations, little will change in the realm of vocabulary acquisition. The joke-cracking personalities at podia or studious-looking authorities pictured on dust-jackets, who tell us that vocabularies will expand if only we follow a set of standards, need to go back to school—an underfunded one.

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Teaching Responsively: Developing an Awareness of Responsibility to English Language Learners in Pre-service Elementary Science Teachers

Abstract

Teaching requires a constant awareness of the social responsibilities associated with meeting the learning needs of each child. One way to accomplish this is through developing educational responsiveness awareness in pre-service elementary teachers (PSETs). This is especially true in regards to responding to the needs of English language learners (ELLs). Issues of effectively teaching them are especially paramount in science, a discipline with specific, complex vocabulary that resembles a foreign language for students to grasp and master.   Using second language learning experiences, this study sought to impact PSETs' perceptions and foster the development of educational responsiveness in their teaching. By taking on the role of second language learners, PSETs gained a deeper understanding of the role of appropriate scaffolding to ensure that each student has a teacher prepared to respond to his or her linguistic and cultural needs.

Keywords: English language learners, pre-service elementary teachers, educational responsiveness, elementary science

Many teacher education programs have developed courses to prepare pre-service elementary teachers (PSETs) to be 21st century educational responders. They have been taught they will have a social responsibility to meet the needs of each human being who will be a contributing individual in their classroom community (Greene, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c). PSETs have developed a working knowledge regarding the standards and objectives of the subjects they will teach. Through differentiated instruction, PSETs have been instructed on how to meet the needs of each student's uniqueness with scaffolds, support, and instructional strategies. However, what many teacher education programs fail to address and what many PSETs fail to realize is that not all of their students will be English speaking. Narrowing the lens on this issue, it is evident that this lack of knowledge of teaching English language learners (ELLs) is especially significant for content area teachers because they are often ill-prepared to meet the language demands of ELLs in the core content areas. For example, in science, with specific, complex vocabulary that amounts to learning a new language, the knowledge and ability to meet the challenges of teaching ELLs are paramount.

Both of these deficits found in most teacher education programs create opportunities for PSETs to struggle in their field-experiences because they lack the skills and resources necessary to respond to the educational rights of ELLs (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Zeichner, 2003). In fact, current data report only 3% of the 1.8 million elementary teachers have ESL/ELL

certification (USDE, 2014). With this small number of certified ESL/ELL teachers, it is imperative that we begin to address ELL strategies in the preparation of all PSETs in order to provide access to highly skilled teachers and a quality education.

Problem Statement

In the past, at Louisiana State University, preparing PSETs to teach science to ELLs consisted of reading and discussing a chapter in the science methods textbook. Though this resulted in PSETs naming various supports and considerations appropriate for ELLs, there was shallow application of this information as PSETs planned and discussed their teaching. This led the researchers to consider the learning opportunities that might result from having the PSETs take on the role of second language learners, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the role of appropriate scaffolding and ensuring that each student has a teacher prepared to respond to his or her needs.

Educational Responsiveness Theory

Because teachers must be able to respond to the needs of their students, we must begin to address these criteria in teacher education programs. Current policy and sociopolitical contexts have resulted in what Cadiero-Kaplan and Rodriguez (2008) have identified as an "unresponsive" educational climate. Instead, they argue that an educational responsiveness approach is more in line with being socially responsible educators. "Educational responsiveness is an approach to and implementation of practices that promote equity and excellence in education through the recognition, understanding, and utilization of student's linguistic and cultural assets" (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008, p. 374). Through this valuing of diversity, PSETs will develop the ability to relate to students and respond to their individual linguistic and cultural needs.

Since this theoretical framework promotes valuing each student's linguistic and cultural assets, it fosters the creation of cultural interconnectedness (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). This theory aligns with the work of Cummins and his colleagues, who are the imminent researchers in the field of ELLs. They found that language and culture are closely tied to identity and recognize the advantages of the home language and of being bilingual (Cummins, 1989; Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2006). Overall, this theory of educational responsiveness calls for teachers to be attuned to and engaged with the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of their students, thus promoting learning and high achievement by responding to the needs of each stakeholder involved (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; García, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Research Questions

Given the issues highlighted thus far and the points raised by the theory of educational responsiveness, we posed the following research questions:

1. How does assuming the role of a language learner while participating in a science lesson impact PSETs' perceptions of teaching science to ELLs?
    a. What shifts in perception occurred among the PSETs as they first experienced a science lesson without language learner supports and then experienced the same science lesson with language learner supports?
2. What benefits can occur from PSETs assuming the role of language learners while participating in a science lesson that will foster the development of educational responsiveness in their teaching?

Review of Literature

Teachers of ELLs

Being responsive to the needs of ELLs necessitates teachers who have an awareness of, are authentically engaged with, and identify the responsibility of acknowledging the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of those whom they teach (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; García, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, for many teachers and more specifically, pre-service teachers, their lack of experience as a language learner can create barriers for understanding and responding to ELLs' needs, which are two key components of educational responsiveness. Instead, misconceptions of learning difficulties and socio-economic status limitations become the scapegoat. This disconnect is compounded by the fact that most pre-service and in-service teachers also lack a strong understanding of the content areas—especially science and math (August & Hakuta, 1997; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Villegas, Clewell, Anderson, Goertz, Joy, Bruschi, 1995). Pre-service teachers who are unprepared or become alternatively certified are not equipped to meet the distinct instructional needs of ELLs—this is especially true in low-income schools (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Ferlow, 2002; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Sheilds, Humphrey, Wechsler, Riehl, Tiffany-Morales, Woodworth, 2001). With growing diversity among our student populations, we must ensure that teachers are prepared to be responsive to the linguistic and cultural needs of each student they encounter. This can only be achieved through "the recognition, understanding, and utilization of students' linguistic and cultural assets" (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008, p. 374).

Language Supports for ELLs

In designing instruction for ELLs, teachers need to give specific attention to objectives for both language development and the content area(s) being taught (de Jong & Harper, 2005; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007). "Through the lens of educational responsiveness, this might be revealed by the use of particular best practices that yield high levels of success in meeting ELL students needs" (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008, p. 375). First and foremost, teaching ELLs should involve attending to language progression, language demands, language scaffolds, and language supports (Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012). Explicit instruction of vocabulary is also strongly recommended and has proven to increase reading ability among ELLs (Yesil-Dagli, 2011). For example, providing terms and definitions in the students' first language of concepts being taught in the content area(s) can support making connections to prior knowledge. Goodwin's (2002) research also recommends differentiating instruction because each ELL is unique and has individual linguistic and cultural assets that can be utilized to achieve learning. According to research by Bell and Bogan (2013), ELLs benefit from peer interaction and cooperative learning opportunities such as Think-Pair-Shares. Small group and one-to-one instruction should also be implemented by the teachers of ELLs to preview instructional materials before whole group instruction, provide scaffolding during independent practice, and as a form of re-teaching for those who need further instructional assistance.

Teaching Science to ELLs

As previously discussed, issues of effectively teaching ELLs are especially paramount in science, a discipline with specific, complex vocabulary that resembles a foreign language for students to grasp and master. This fact raises unique issues for science learners:

> All students face language and literacy challenges and opportunities that are specific to science; such challenges and opportunities are amplified for ELLs and for other English speakers with limited standard English language and literacy development… [W]hen students, especially ELLs, are adequately supported to 'do' specific things with language, both science learning and language learning are promoted. (Lee, Quinn, & Valdes, 2013,

p. 224)

Doing in science is two-fold. Not only should students engage in doing science (i.e., engagement with the practices and processes of science), they should also engage in doing specific things with language related to science. This "language of science," then, extends beyond science vocabulary to encompass not only the language use and demands of science (i.e., talking and writing) but the nature of science as well (Lemke, 1990, 2003). From this perspective of science education,

> More emphasis [is placed] on the role of the teacher as someone who can model for students how scientists talk and write and diagram and calculate, how scientists plan and observe and record, how we represent and analyze data, how we formulate hypotheses and conclusions, how we connect theories, models, and data, how we relate our work and results to those of other researchers (Lemke, 2003, "Language & Concepts in Science," para. 4).

However, pre-service and in-service elementary teachers are often unprepared for this pedagogical approach (Buck, Mast, Ehlers, & Franklin, 2005; Carrier, 2013; Davis, Petish, & Smithey, 2006; Lee, Maerten-Rivera, Buxton, Penfield, & Secada, 2009; Shaw, Lyon, Stoddart, Mosqueda, & Menon, 2014).

Particularly concerning PSETs—the focus of our study—effective strategies for teaching ELLs in a mainstream, content-area classroom involve complex considerations for planning, instruction, and assessment that are typically underemphasized or excluded in teacher education programs (Buck et al., 2005). In a recent national study, 82% of elementary teachers felt well prepared to teach science; yet, only 15% of elementary teachers considered themselves well prepared to teach science to ELLs (Banilower et al., 2013). Responding to the needs of ELLs entails providing several types of scaffolds (e.g., linguistic, conceptual, social-cultural) within the content-area classroom (Pawan, 2008). In the elementary science classroom, inquiry provides the authentic and focused context ELLs need to develop both science understanding and language proficiency (Shaw et al., 2014; Zwiep & Straits, 2013). At times, effective inquiry-based science instruction is constrained by PSETs' lack of understanding and inappropriate use of science vocabulary, causing apprehension for science instruction to ELLs (Carrier, 2013).

Even as teacher education programs insufficiently prepare PSETs to teach science to ELLs, the typical professional development of in-service elementary teachers also lacks emphasis on teaching science to ELLs (Banilower et al., 2013). With this study, we both acknowledge and aspire to address this prevalent scarcity of training on teaching science effectively to ELLs.

Methods

This qualitative case study explored PSETs' experiences and perceptions of learning science as second language learners. While there are numerous definitions of 'case study,' "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). PSETs' preparation to effectively teach science to ELLs was a practical problem arising from everyday practice. Therefore, this case study of PSETs' perceptions of engaging in science lessons as second language learners aligned with Merriam's (2001) characterizations of case study in the following way: it focused on the practical and important phenomenon of PSET preparation, specifically related to teaching science to ELLs. Resulting in a rich, thick description of an experience designed to have PSETs assume the role of second language learners, this case study illuminated our understandings of how we can begin to teach PSETs effectively related to teaching science to ELLs responsively. In focusing on

PSETs' perceptions of teaching science to ELLs by having them assume the role of second language learners, we defined the case in this study as the second language learner experience itself since it served as the context of PSETs' learning about teaching ELLs.

Context of the Study

Designed to teach PSETs about instruction and assessment strategies for working with ELLs in science, this experience put PSETs, albeit unknown to them at the onset, in the role of second language learners during two brief, back-to-back science lessons (Aguilar-Valdez, 2011, 2012) on circuits. The researcher coordinated with a foreign language educator, who undertook the role of the teacher, and over the course of five consecutive semesters, 180 PSETs assumed the role of the students in this second language learner experience (Table 1). The first lesson was taught in French but lacked supports for language learners. The second lesson, also taught in French, incorporated research-based supports for language learners that accounted for students' cultural and linguistic diversity. Following the two brief, back-to-back science lessons, PSETs reflected on their experiences of trying to learn science concepts while being language learners by answering and discussing the following guiding questions:

1. What were your impressions of the first science lesson and assessment?
2. What were your impressions of the second science lesson and assessment?
3. What supports during the second lesson facilitated your learning of the science concepts?
4. What did you gain from these lessons with regard to teaching science to English language learners?

Table 1

Numbers of Participating Pre-Service Elementary Teachers (PSETs) by Semester

Semester	Sections presented to	Number of PSET participants
Spring 2012 (pilot)	1	34
Fall 2012	1	25
Spring 2013	2	56
Fall 2013	1	34
Spring 2014	2	31
Totals	7 sections	180 pre-service teachers

The first lesson and assessment. Before the lesson began, two or three students were secretly asked to smile and nod along (later referred to as "pleasers") with the teacher as if they understood everything that was being said and asked. This initial lesson on series and parallel circuits was conducted in French with the teacher periodically checking for understanding, *Vous comprenez, oui?* (You understand, yes?). The pre-selected students began to nod and say *oui* (yes) in response. The teacher scribbled a few rough pictures and diagrams on the board, checked for understanding again, and then distributed the assessment. [Click here to link to video of the first lesson.]

The assessment for lesson one had a high language demand and asked students to write a paragraph describing series and parallel circuits and draw one of each in the box provided. After waiting an appropriate length of time for someone proficient in French to answer the assessment questions, the teacher walked around the room drawing red sad faces in marker on everyone's quiz. This was done to simulate ELLs' experiences and emotions when time considerations are not given on assessments for their developing language proficiency and ELLs' work is

immediately evaluated along with their English speaking peers.

      The second lesson and assessment. The same lesson on series and parallel circuits was again conducted in French. This time, the teacher used an interactive word wall and included more gestures and actions. For example, when describing how a light bulb illuminates, the teacher repeated the terms for illuminated and not illuminated while turning on and off the classroom lights. Then, using the word wall, the teacher placed pictures next to the French words for battery, wire, bulb, danger, bright, etc. [Click here to link to video of the second lesson.]

      Continuing in French, the teacher then instructed the students to get into groups of four or five for the next activity. Bags containing two bulbs, six wires, and a battery were distributed to the groups. With the word wall and diagrams still displayed, students were instructed to illuminate their bulbs in a series circuit, then in a parallel circuit. The teacher walked around to assist and offer *Bravo!* (Well done!) or *Très bien!* (Very well!) as the light bulbs began to glow.

      Once all groups successfully created the series and parallel circuits, students returned to their seats for the assessment. This time, the language demand of the assessment was lessened even though the same science content was tested. Unlike the first lesson, students were asked to draw series and parallel circuits instead of having to write a paragraph describing the circuits as in the first assessment. In keeping with the goals of this second language learner experience—to have PSETs take on the role of language learner and experience learning from this perspective—it was important to the researchers that the lessons varied in both instruction and assessment. Though the assessment in the second lesson demanded less language proficiency, it is important to note that neither lesson assessment was used as a source of data for this study. As students completed the assessment, the teacher rewarded correct diagrams with a red smiley face in marker on everyone's quiz.

      Over the course of five consecutive semesters, PSETs in seven sections of an undergraduate elementary science methods course engaged in this experience. The initial second language learner experience during Spring Semester 2012 served as a pilot, enabling researchers to tweak lesson delivery, revise guiding questions, and develop methods of data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

      PSETs' responses to guiding questions were the primary data source for this study. As previously mentioned, guiding questions were discussed following PSETs participation in the full second language learner experience consisting of two brief, back-to-back science lessons. For each section of elementary science methods that engaged in this experience, the researchers served as scribe, writing key phrases from PSETs' spoken responses during whole-group discussion of the guiding questions on a SMART Board®.

      In scribing whole-group responses to each guiding question, those responses recorded (i.e., written) on the SMART Board® were distinct, unique ideas or contributions to the discussion. When reflecting on their perceptions of the experience, several PSETs may have answered one or more of the guiding questions in similar ways. In those cases, similar responses were scribed only one time per class section. For example, during discussion of the first guiding question on impressions of the first lesson, one PSET may have said, "That was frustrating!" Another PSET may have shared, "I was frustrated because the first lesson was difficult to understand." A third PSET may have said, "I was so frustrated that I just zoned out during the lesson." The researcher, serving as scribe, would have recorded these responses as the following unique contributions: *frustrating, difficult to understand,* and *zoned out*. (See Appendix A for

PSETs' unique responses organized by guiding question and semester.) The annotated presentations were then saved as PDF files and secured under password protection.

As a moderate participant observer, researcher observations (Spradley, 1980) and summary notes from peer debriefings with a colleague (Merriam, 2002) served as additional data sources and allowed for triangulation of findings (Table 2). Semi-structured peer debriefings occurred following presentation of the experience to separate sections of elementary science methods as well as at the end of each semester to reflect on past presentations and anticipate future ones. Internal validity and reliability were established through triangulation among multiple researchers and across multiple data sources as well as through peer debriefings to discuss plausibility of emerging themes (Merriam, 2001, 2002). Further strengthening internal validity, continued engagement in the research situation over the course of five consecutive semesters allowed researchers to establish an in-depth understanding of the second language learner experience (Merriam, 2001, 2002). External validity, or generalizability, was established by the thick description given previously of the second language learner experience, allowing readers to determine how closely this research context matches their own and, therefore, whether findings could transfer to their context (Merriam, 2001, 2002).

Table 2

Data Collection by Semester

	Data Sources		
Semester	Unique responses shared during discussion	Observations as moderate participant observer	Peer debriefings
Spring 2012 (pilot)	0	1	2
Fall 2012	8	1	2
Spring 2013	49	2	3
Fall 2013	37	1	2
Spring 2014	56	2	3
Totals	150	7	12

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) within responses to each guiding question. Researchers constantly compared responses within and across data sets (resulting from delivery to different sections of the elementary science methods course across semesters) to develop tentative categories, or themes. Then, themes were compared to each other and across data sets. From this, themes were revised, combined, and ultimately named from participants' experiences.

Findings

How do we, with a growing diverse population, begin to develop educational responsive awareness in our PSETs that prepares them to meet the needs of ELLs? To answer that larger question, we must first address our research questions. We initially considered PSETs' impressions of the two brief, back-to-back science lessons separately; then, we focused on language learner supports from the second lesson that specifically facilitated their science learning. Finally, the impact of this experience on PSETs' future teaching of science to ELLs was considered. Here, we present findings for Research Question 1 on PSETs' perceptions of teaching science to ELLs through discussion of their experiences in and impressions of each brief science lesson. Research Question 2 is addressed by unpacking what PSETs gained through their participation in this experience.

Impressions of Lesson 1: "What the Heck!"

Analysis of PSETs' impressions of the first lesson revealed three overarching themes: feelings of frustration, reasons for feelings of frustration, and coping strategies for limited language proficiency—or as one PSET surmised, "What the heck!" Above all, PSETs reported feeling confused and frustrated by the first lesson and its lack of language learner supports. Other emotions expressed included feeling annoyed, intimidated, discouraged, and dumb, emphasizing the disconnect PSETs experienced during the lesson. Primarily, these sentiments of frustration and inadequacy were because PSETs did not understand much of what occurred during the lesson. Either they did not understand the direct instruction (done rapidly and in French), they did not understand the assessment (with its high language demands), or both. The first lesson lacked any visuals beyond scientific drawings of series and parallel circuits, and these drawing were difficult to understand for some PSETs. Though there was little pause to check for understanding or reinforce concepts, some PSETs claimed to have understood the essence of the lesson even though they missed some information. Others shut down as learners during the lesson, assessment, or both.

PSETs who tried to understand the lesson concentrated on vocabulary, drawing from prior knowledge and context clues in order to cope with their limited language proficiency. Some recognized that several vocabulary words were similar in both French and English and chose to pay special attention to those familiar terms. The teacher's tone, enthusiasm, and body language seemed to communicate that *oui* (yes) was the expected answer whenever she paused briefly to ask if PSETs understood the main concepts of the lesson. This expectation enabled PSETs to respond satisfactorily despite not understanding the question or knowing the answer. As previously mentioned, researchers planted two or three pleasers in each class. These few PSETs were instructed to respond, "Oui" and nod whenever the class was asked if they understood. During each presentation, the numbers of PSETs who then began to nod and respond, "Oui" spread throughout the class as the lesson progressed. Nodding in agreement was not the only way PSETs coped with their limited language proficiency by seeking to please the teacher. On the assessment, some also copied diagrams or words from the board in order to

please the teacher.

Impressions of Lesson 2: "Better"

Analysis of PSETs' impressions of the second lesson revealed two overarching themes: an increased sense of satisfaction and reasons for an increased sense of satisfaction. PSETs agreed that the second lesson was better than the first for them as science learners. Though the second lesson still seemed fast paced, PSETs found it less wordy and, therefore, easier to understand. This more expressive lesson was interactive and interesting, with PSETs readily engaged in guided practice using the interactive word wall and willingly answering questions, though the questions were asked in French.

PSETs discussed numerous scaffolds for language learners as reasons why the second lesson was better, more easily understood, and, thus, more satisfying from the perspective of a science learner. The scaffolds they discussed related specifically to whole-group instruction, the investigation activity, and the assessment.

During whole-group instruction, PSETs discussed the interactive word wall as the primary scaffold making the second lesson easier to follow and understand. As described above, the interactive word wall included key vocabulary (written in French) and movable pictures representing each vocabulary term. Not only were the visual representations of the vocabulary terms helpful, but so too was interactively associating each vocabulary term with the appropriate picture. Labeled series and parallel circuit diagrams and realia (i.e., tangible D-cell batteries, wires, and light bulbs) were also beneficial scaffolds during whole-group instruction. Likewise, PSETs appreciated various demonstrations of the concepts, such as quickly turning on and off the classroom lights to demonstrate *allumer* (to light), and real-life connections to lights on an *arbre de Nöel* (Christmas tree). The hands-on investigation activity itself was named as an important and beneficial scaffold, serving to illustrate concepts and helping PSETs make connections between concepts. During this small-group activity, the opportunity to work with same-language peers was also helpful. Related to the assessment, all sections of elementary science methods that participated in this experience recognized the lessened language demands of the second assessment, commenting that the assessment actually tested science content knowledge as opposed to language proficiency. Furthermore, PSETs realized that the hands-on investigation activity prepared them for the assessment.

When asked which language learner supports provided during the second lesson facilitated their science learning, PSETs emphatically discussed the interactive word wall and its accompanying pictures. The next most frequently discussed support was the demonstration of specific ideas and concepts, followed by the hands-on investigation, group work facilitated by the teacher, and the repetition of key vocabulary terms. Teacher interaction with small groups, realia, and diagrams were also cited as useful for facilitating science learning, though less frequently.

Benefits from Assuming the Role of Language Learners: "It Put Us in ELLs' Shoes"

From participating in this experience, PSETs gained a unique perspective related to teaching science to ELLs. Analysis of PSETs' responses to the final guiding question revealed two overarching themes: empathy for ELLs' experiences of learning science as language learners and instructional considerations that should be made for teaching science to ELLs.

Having PSETs assume the role of language learners, albeit briefly, demonstrated to them how difficult it is for ELLs to simultaneously learn science content *and* develop language proficiency. PSETs grasped an idea of what ELLs experience as science learners, making them more empathetic. Specifically, PSETs discerned the difference between talking at ELLs (i.e.,

telling them information) and working with them (i.e., providing them appropriate scaffolds for language learners), noting that without appropriate scaffolds ELLs become frustrated and shut down as science learners.

Acknowledging the importance of providing language learner supports to ELLs, PSETs recognized that there were supports and strategies they could implement to help ELLs, despite language differences. In implementing these supports, PSETs identified instructional responses that should be made for effectively teaching science to ELLs. Fundamentally, these concerned verbal and nonverbal communication. Based on their participation in the two brief, back-to-back science lessons, PSETs experienced the aid provided by visuals, including pictures and diagrams. This highlighted the importance of modes of communication beyond verbal. In fact, PSETs believed that ELLs needed to be provided additional supports and scaffolds beyond full immersion in a mainstream, content area classroom. With regard to nonverbal communication, PSETs picked up on the importance of being aware of their body language. For example, does their body language imply a desired action or response, as the teacher's did in the first lesson? Subtle teacher actions, even those of which we are unaware, can have an impact on ELLs.

Specifically related to science instruction, PSETs highlighted the importance of prior knowledge. Without accessing and building on ELLs' prior knowledge, they may be left behind during a science lesson. Additionally, as is good practice, PSETs saw the benefit of differentiating instruction within science lessons, and acknowledged that numerous scaffolds for ELLs were effective strategies for teaching science to native English speaking students as well.

Discussing the influence of the pleasers' nodding and noting the spread of nods and affirmations around the class, PSETs were adamant that nodding did not necessarily indicate understanding, calling for more meaningful ways to check for understanding. Likewise, they distinguished that assessments for ELLs should have lessened language demands to ensure the evaluation of science content knowledge, not language proficiency. From the frowns and smiles we put on PSETs assessments during each lesson, PSETs also recommended that assessment scores be explained to students in order for students' science knowledge to improve.

Discussion of the Findings

PSETs' shallow knowledge and application of appropriate scaffolds for language learners was the impetus for this study. Though they read about teaching ELLs generally and teaching science to ELLs specifically in various courses throughout their teacher education program, actually supporting language learners in the classroom did not extend beyond naming a handful of scaffolds, much less reach the standard of recognizing, understanding, and utilizing ELLs linguistic and cultural assets as outlined by educational responsiveness theory. Having PSETs assume the role of second language learners while participating in science lessons led them to consider *why* scaffolds were important for ELLs and *how* various scaffolds could be implemented in the elementary science classroom. Most of the PSETs were never in the position of acquiring a second language. Prior to their participation in this second language learner experience, the unique intersection of science content learning and language development was abstract to PSETs; now, it is more concrete. This experience was one step toward fostering an educational responsiveness approach, benefitting ELLs, in PSETs' planning, instruction, and assessment in science. The PSETs recognized both the linguistic and cultural assets they had during their second language learning experiences, and they understood the value of having them as a foundation as they attempted to construct meaning during both lessons. Finally, this experience will hopefully allow them to utilize what they encountered to relate to the linguistic and cultural needs of each of their students when they have classrooms of their own.

Conclusion and Implications

Our nation's schools are becoming ever more diverse, drawing attention to our current "unresponsive" educational climate (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). To be socially responsible educators, "today's teachers need a broader array of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students" (Buxton, Lee, & Santau, 2008, p. 509). Unfortunately, this broader preparation is frequently lacking in teacher education programs (Buck et al., 2005; Davis et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2009), and our future teachers are left without a foundation for implementing an educationally responsive approach in their teaching (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Engaging PSETs in this experience offered a viable way of facilitating their development of educational responsiveness and an awareness of the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity their future students will represent. In fact, this study represents our responsiveness to the needs of our PSETs with respect to them not being prepared to teach ELLs. We understood their culture(s) and recognized that they possessed knowledge that could be used to improve their teaching of ELLs. Then, in keeping with the educational responsiveness theory, we had them utilize their knowledge by participating in the lessons.

Engaging PSETs as second language learners in a science lesson demonstrated an effective way to foster understanding, recognition, and utilization—tenants of educational responsiveness—through the consideration of the need and importance of including language scaffolds in their science teaching. Participation as language learners positively impacted PSETs' investment in supporting ELLs in the science classroom, since this experience forced them to have similar emotions and reactions, if only momentarily. As a result, PSETs were more empathetic to the dual challenge facing ELLs as they concurrently learn science through a developing language. This empathy could not have been fostered solely by reading about best practices for teaching ELLs in a textbook.

Although PSETs were more empathic to the learning experiences of ELLs and more aware of scaffolds to better support ELLs' science learning, we acknowledge that this experience is an isolated occurrence in the elementary teacher education program. For PSETs to become better attuned to and engaged with the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of each student (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; García, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994), more purposeful, systematic attention needs to be given to integrating issues of equity across PSETs' coursework and field experiences. Without such and if relying only on textbooks to prepare PSETs to teach ELLs, our future elementary teachers will be left ill-equipped to promote the learning and high achievement of *each* student in educationally responsive ways.

When viewed through a lens that focuses on educational equity, where all students are given the same opportunity to learn, it becomes imperative that we provide adequate education to our PSETs in order to prepare them for each student they will teach and make them aware of the socio-cultural context that will inform their approach to teaching. Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriquez (2008) argue that "teachers not only need, but deserve, to learn and develop processes that enable them to better understand and value languages and cultures their students bring with them and the pedagogical practices" utilized in the classroom environment (p. 384). This is important because PSETs and in-service teachers not only need to be responsive when teaching science, but also when teaching all content areas.

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Note regarding the following appendix

[1] For semesters during which more than one section of elementary science methods engaged in the second language learner experience, unique responses to the guiding questions might have been repeated among sections. If so, those unique responses are listed more than once per semester.

Appendix A

Data: PSETs' Unique Responses by Guiding Question

1) Impressions of 1st lesson:

Spring 2013 (2 sections[1]; 56 PSETs)

Frustrating	Difficult to understand	Zoned out
Concentrated on vocabulary	Used context clues	Felt dumb
	Felt confused	Dragged on
Felt annoyed	Didn't understand	Could respond even if didn't
"What the heck?"		know question/answer

Fall 2013 (1 section; 34 PSETs)		
Little check for understanding	Missed what was important	Hard to understand
Confusing	Intimidating	Only comprehended a few words
Didn't understand assessment so didn't try	Few context clues on assessment	High language demand on assessment
Got gist of lesson but still missed information	Fast-paced	Copied answer from board to please teacher

Spring 2014 (2 sections; 31 PSETs)		
Confusing	Hard to follow	Scattered
Didn't understand much	Didn't know vocabulary	Felt frustrated
Felt discouraged	Difficult assessment with high language demands	Assessment with high language demands
Shut down as learner during lesson and assessment	Very confusing	No visuals
Prior knowledge helped	Didn't understand drawings	Picked up on familiar words
Used body language (that influenced student responses and feelings)		

2) Impressions of 2nd lesson:

Spring 2013 (2 sections; 56 PSETs)		
Better	Demonstrations helpful	Visuals helpful
Word wall helpful	Repetitive	Labeled circuit was easy to follow
Investigation was helpful	Actual objects (realia) was helpful	More scaffolding
Pictures helped	Real-life examples	Demonstrations helpful
Doing it helped	Actual objects (realia) helpful	Not as wordy

Fall 2013 (1 section; 34 PSETs)		

Easier to understand	Visuals helped	Group activity was helpful
Peers could help (because we spoke the same language)	Hands-on activity was helpful	Directions on assessment were simple
Assessment included pictures	Lower language demands on assessment	Assessment mirrored what we did
Pictures were helpful	Examples were helpful	

Spring 2014 (2 sections; 31 PSETs)		
Went over vocabulary with pictures	Hands-on activity showed concepts	Demonstrations/models were helpful
Interactive	Interesting	Inquiry-based
Still quick	Lower language demand on assessment	Activity prepared us for assessment
More expressive	Pictures helpful	Hands-on activity helped to make connections
Assessment with lower language demands	Word wall helpful	Easier to follow with word wall
Easier to follow with demonstrations	Actual objects (realia) helpful	Seemed at faster pace

3) Supports during 2nd lesson that facilitated science learning:

Fall 2012 (1 section; 25 PSETs)		
Less reliance on text	Actual objects (realia)	Group work
Repetition	Actions/gestures	Individual help
Diagrams	Pictures	
Spring 2013 (2 sections; 56 PSETs)		

Group members Hands-on investigation Word wall Drawings/examples	Word wall with pictures Teacher facilitating Demonstration with lights	Demonstration Investigation Repetition of vocabulary

Fall 2013 (1 section; 34 PSETs)		
Visuals Hands-on activity Group work facilitated by teacher	Pictures Repetition of vocabulary	Actual objects (realia) Demonstrations/simulations

Spring 2014 (2 sections; 31 PSETs)		

Word wall with pictures
Hands-on experience
Group work
Demonstrations
	Repetition of vocabulary
	Relating science concepts
	  to real life
	Visual aids
	Guided practice (with
	  interactive word wall)
		Demonstrations
		Class wrap-up
		Teacher interactions with
		  groups
		Word wall

4) Gained from participating in presentation with regard to teaching science to ELLs:

Spring 2013 (2 sections; 56 PSETs)		
Important to provide supports to ELLs Realize that students can learn from each other during hands-on activities Gave an idea of what ELLs experience Need other ways to communicate (than just verbal)	Put us in ELLs shoes Important to incorporate different learning styles Subtle teacher actions have an impact Strategies/scaffolds work with students other than ELLs	More empathetic to ELLs' experiences Need to explain assessment scores so students can improve Talking at students is different than working with them More empathetic
Fall 2013 (1 section; 34 PSETs)		
How much we can help ELLs by including visuals How we should consider what we show and say Be sure assessments test content, not English proficiency	Shows how difficult it is for ELLs to actually learn content Difference between lecture and hands-on learning	Without proper supports ELLs shut down Keep instructions for assessment simple
Spring 2014 (2 sections; 31 PSETs)		
There are things to do to help ELLs, even though language is different More empathetic Be mindful of body language Need to provide other aids/supports other than just full immersion	Shows that ELLs are frustrated too Double check for understanding Without prior knowledge ELLs might fall through cracks	Nodding doesn't necessarily indicate understanding Talking at students is different than working with them Nodding doesn't necessarily indicate understanding

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of
Teaching Responsively: Developing an Awareness of Responsibility to English Language Learners in Pre-service Elementary Science Teachers

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The Effects of a Service-Learning Project: Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Knowledge and ESL Instruction

Abstract

This paper investigates the effects of a service-learning project on the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their knowledge level of cultures and English as a second language (ESL) instruction. In the service learning-project, pre-service teachers met and worked with ESL adult learners on three different occasions. A poetry format created by George Ella Lyon (1999) was used to promote conversation between pre-service teachers and adult ESL learners. To determine the effects of the service-learning project, the pre-service teachers completed a pre and post survey. It is hoped that any positive results can be transferred to situations in which pre-service teachers work with ESL elementary students.

Keywords: service-learning, elementary education, pre-service teachers, ESL

Being from different backgrounds, Queen, a content instructor and I, a literacy instructor, in an elementary teacher education program have enjoyed the last two years getting to know each other and learning about each other's culture. At first glance, Queen, originally from Nigeria, and I, from the Appalachian region, may look as though we have little in common. However, through hours spent planning, meeting, and attending conferences, we have discovered that we have a great deal in common and have thoroughly enjoyed learning more about our differences. In fact, we believe that by learning about each other we have established a stronger working relationship and, thereby, a more productive one as well.

Last year, after our students, pre-service teacher candidates in literacy method courses, wrote and shared their poems based on George Ella Lyon's (1999) poem, *Where I'm From*. (Lyon, 1999), Queen and I decided it would be beneficial for us to write our own poems (Figures 1 & 2) based on Lyon's poetry format and share them with each other. This action prompted conversation about education, family, and traditions. We learned of similarities: Our families both stressed the importance of education, our grandmothers were our families' matriarchs, and burial customs were of the utmost importance. We also learned of our differences: Queen followed in her father's footsteps in earning a university degree, and I am a first generation college graduate. Queen called her grandmother "Nene" and I called mine "Gigi". Queen's family has burial plots under the floors of their house and my family decorates graves every year on Decoration Day.

Figure 1. Kathy's Where I'm From Poem

Where I'm From

I am from gravel roads and rope swings
from Mayfield's milk and Kern's bread.
I am from the single-wide trailer and the wood planked house, dad's old recliner, the Kimball
piano, and mother's avacado-green stove
I am from the heartbeat of the grandmother clock in the still of the night
From the whistle of the quarry train and pink marble slabs
I am from the milkweed and the kudzu, the wild rose by the carport

I am from camp revivals, Granddaddy's banjo, and one droopy eye
from Nona and Floyd, Charles Homer and Margaret Joyce, and Griffitts and McCollums
I am from stubbornness, hard workers, and grace before meals
From "bless your heart", "I hope it's fit to eat" and "Lord willing and the creek don't rise"
From "education is the one thing that can't be taken away" and "Say what you mean and mean what you say"
I am from cold river baptisms, hymns of redemption, dinner on the ground and Decoration every May
I'm from East Tennessee, tobacco and hayfields, See Rock City on the side of old barns, fresh, warm eggs, and hand-stitched quilts
I'm from John Deere tractors, old stray dogs, Avon bottles, and Lunden's Cherry cough drops
I'm from sorghum molasses and Cecil's beehives
From the weather predictions of the Crab Orchard Lady and planting garden by the signs
I am from the bottom drawer of momma's china cabinet and the top of granny's chiffarobe
old photos, faded certificates, spurs from a Civil War soldier, brothers against brothers, handwritten letters
tangible, tentative pieces of the past
irreplaceable treasures in old greeting card boxes

Figure 2. Queen's Where I'm From Poem

Where I'm From

I am from wrapper, from Dutch wax,
Hollandis and big scarfs
I am from brick houses painted brown,
I am from palm trees, the pawpaw and
lime tree in my Nene's yard
I am from going to weddings and funeral wakes,
from Wilfred and Edline and Onoriobe
I am from the hardworking women and
love for my family
From Respect your elders and always looking
out for your brothers and sisters
I am from extended family, where everyone
looks out for each other
I am from older sister, to Aunty and mom of
three kids I am very proud of and Onaiwu
I am from Red wrapper I inherited after Nene
left this world
I am from the adventures of Mama Ghana to
stories from Mama Albert
I am from Warri, the Oceanside city, from rice
and stew to Ukodo, Ogwo and pepper soup.
From empowering of women and believing in
yourself, and from the adventures of Mama Ghana
I am from Mommy's trunk boxes and the attic of

Nene's house where all the fine jewelry and clothing
are kept
From all girls school and Nuns to Obokun and Ekpoma
I am from Canada, to New York, to North Carolina, to
Pennsylvania, to Illinois and Michigan, now Tennessee
I am from the adventures I have had and many more to come.

We believe that sharing our cultures with each other helped us to be more knowledgeable regarding the other person's perspectives and more effective in our communication with each other. Therefore, we decided that our students would benefit from not only reading poetry written by people from different cultures, but also from talking with the authors themselves. We believed this to be particularly true because we noticed that many of our students come from the same geographical location and have had limited experiences with people outside their own culture. We decided to use Lyon's (1999) *Where I'm From* poem as a template in our service-learning project because our pre-service teachers shared that they found the format helpful in deciding what to share about themselves and their own cultures.

Review of the Literature

Because the primary purpose of the service-learning project was to better prepare our pre-service teachers to more effectively work with English as a second language (ESL) learners, Queen and I consulted the literature. We investigated reports of the growing ESL population in the United States (U.S.), and its direct impact on teachers. We also considered the literature advocating meaningful experiences via service-learning projects and fostering cultural awareness through poetry.

Need to Educate Pre-service Teachers

Increasing the cultural awareness of pre-service teachers and their knowledge of ESL instruction is particularly important when considering that five million school-aged students in the U. S. are identified as ESL learners (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Perhaps unsurprisingly, "the ELL population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the U.S." (McKeon, 2005). In fact, according to the 2012 U. S. Census Report, the home language of approximately 21 percent of school-aged children in the U.S. is a language other than English (U.S. Census Report, 2012).

However, reports indicate that the teacher population in the U.S. is not reflective of the diverse makeup of the U.S. student population (Wong, 2008). Instead, most U.S. teachers are middle class, White females. Such a discrepancy between student and teacher populations highlights the possibility that some teachers may be unfamiliar with the cultures of their students whose backgrounds differ from their own (Neito, 2009).

Service-learning

Fitts and Goss (2004) point out that utilizing a service-learning project is a typical approach in the preparation of teachers and Pappamihiel (2007), as well as Riojas-Cortez & Flores (2009), report favorable findings of service-learning projects that allow for the sharing of diversity. More specifically, Bringle and Haster (1996) advocate that successful "Service learning is a course-based, credit bearing educational experience… where students reflect on their participation in a planned activity" (p. 222). Taking this to heart, Queen and I adopted this definition of a service-learning project for our project and, therefore, made student participation in the service-learning project a part of the work requirements for the ESL course.

We found additional support for our service-learning project in Pappamihiel's (2007) work where he suggests that service-learning projects "…offer more meaningful ways to help pre-service teachers develop professional competence than do traditional field experiences…" (p. 57). Because of our shared belief that this type of experience may be particularly important when elementary schools have few or no ESL students readily available to work with pre-service teachers and that "Teachers who are not prepared for cultural diversity may experience difficulty as they try to administer the needs of these children" (Lowers, 2003, p. 50), we decided to consult the community college instructor of adult ESL students. After speaking with him, it was obvious that asking the adult ESL learners to write *Where I'm From* poems could not occur without scaffolding. It was then that we decided upon a service-learning project, providing opportunities for our pre-service teachers to share their newly penned poems and to assist adult ESL students in writing their own poems. This service-learning plan seemed worthwhile when considering that "Direct contact allows future teachers to see ELLs as individuals, and it gives the teachers-to-be a sense of the diversity among ELLs—diversity of languages, cultures, native countries, personalities, and academic backgrounds and abilities" (Lucas et al., 2008, p. 12). Next, Queen and I would collect the poems, bind them together in a book, and, finally, at the end of the service-learning project, present each adult ESL learner and their instructor with a copy of the book. We ultimately believed that by providing our pre-service teachers opportunities to converse with ESL students, they would better understand the perspectives of ESL students and then, hopefully, be better prepared to work with them.

Poetry

The literature is replete with information on using poetry in language arts classes, but less so when using poetry to teach pre-service teachers about ESL instruction. However, the literature does suggest that poetry is a highly appropriate avenue in promoting cultural awareness (Sator & Hill, 2012/13; Webster & Walters, 2008) and specifically with pre-service teachers (McCall, 2004).

Because interest is often piqued when writers use their own writings for text and because such writings are considered authentic text (Berardo, 2006), the *Where I'm From* poem format provides a strong basis on which to build pre-service teachers' knowledge about culture. In essence, sharing information from their poems not only allows writers to share their own culture, but also, for some students, sharing provides a source of motivation (Nicholas, Rossiter, & Abbott, 2011). Although Nicholas et al. (2011) explicitly suggest that using "…authentic texts can lead to enhanced motivation and positive affect for ESL learners" (p. 251), based on our own experience, Queen and I believed that this finding could also apply to teachers of ESL learners.

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Research Questions

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To determine the effectiveness of the service-learning project on our pre-service teachers' perception of their knowledge levels regarding other cultures and ESL instruction, we crafted questions to direct our study. We not only wanted to determine how helpful pre-service teachers viewed the service-learning project in terms of the growth in their knowledge of cultures and ESL instruction, but also how the service-learning impacted their perceptions of other cultures and ESL instruction. With all this in mind, we determined that the following three questions would guide our study.

1) How helpful did pre-service teachers view the service-learning project?
2) How will working with adult ESL learners impact the perceptions of our pre-service teacher regarding their knowledge about different cultures?

3) How will participation in a service-learning project effect the pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding their knowledge of ESL instruction?

Methodology

Setting

While Queen and I are both employees of a four-year university, we have offices and teach classes for our university on a community college campus. This campus, approximately one and half hours away from the university, provides the setting for our project. Together, the community college, located in a city of about 400,000 people, and our university provide a program allowing students to complete their first two years of college at this local community institution. If students' applications to the university are accepted, they may complete their junior and senior years as university students while remaining on the community college campus. As university students, they become members of a cohort. One of these cohorts, a group of 19 pre-service teacher candidates, composes the participant base for this particular study.

Participants

Representative of the majority of teachers in the U.S., the 19 pre-service teachers in this study are all White females. While 19 of the pre-service teachers completed the end reflections, only 18 (due to absences) completed both the pre and post surveys. On the post survey, 11 of the 18 pre-service teachers indicated that they were from the Appalachian area while the other seven hailed from various regions across the U.S. Although the participation period occurred during their first year as university students, they were all considered to be college juniors.

On the other hand, only three of the 10 adult ESL learners were female and all were originally from China, Saudi Arabia, or Mexico. These adult ESL learners were also all students at the community college at a freshman or sophomore level.

Intervention

For this study, the intervention was a service-learning project, providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to assist adult ESL students in writing *Where I'm From* poems. While designing the service-learning project and working with the instructor for the adult ESL learners, we decided upon two working meetings that took place on Thursday afternoons. For each meeting, we utilized a face-to-face format, believing that this would best provide our students with opportunities to engage ESL learners in conversation. During the first meeting our pre-service teachers shared their own *Where I'm From* poems and, using a template (http://www.swva.net/fred1st/wif.htm), began the task of assisting the ESL learners in writing their poems. The focus of the second meeting was helping the ESL students complete their poems. The third meeting was designated as a celebration, an opportunity for the ESL students to share their poems and for each ESL learner to be presented with a book of their collected poems. At this final meeting both groups, pre-service teachers and ESL learners, met in our classroom and brought foods that best represented their culture.

Assessment

In the spring of 2014, the outcomes of the service-learning project were determined by the results of a pre-survey, post survey, and end reflections completed by the pre-service teachers. The questions on the pre-survey and post survey asked students to identify their level of knowledge about other cultures and ESL instruction. They were also given opportunities to share information about their knowledge of specific cultures and strategies to use when instructing ESL learners.

Queen administered the pre-survey in class approximately three weeks into the spring semester and at the start of the service-learning project. In like fashion, she also administered the

post survey in class within a week of the completed service-learning project. In addition, the pre-service teachers wrote their end reflections in class at the close of the third and final meeting with the ESL learners.

Analysis of Data

Because of the nature of the service-learning project, it seemed natural to use a mixed method approach with emphasis on qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). When analyzing quantitative responses in the pre and post surveys, we analyzed the data using descriptive statistics. For the qualitative responses to the questions as well as end reflections, we coded the data as suggested by the qualitative researchers, Miles and Huberman (1994). Code patterns were determined and themes identified.

Quantitative data is represented in table form and further explained through the three themes, which emerged after qualitative analysis. The first strand highlighted the reflections of pre-service teachers on the experience of participating in service-learning. The second represents their understandings of new knowledge and former misconceptions of culture. The last strand focused on perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their knowledge of ESL instruction. This particular strand consisted of how participation in the service-learning project affirmed the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the need for appropriate learning environments and teaching strategies for ESL learners. During the course of the service-learning project, pre-service teachers also identified areas for their own professional growth.

Limitations

Although acceptable in case and qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012), the limitations of this study include a small participant base of 19 pre-service teaching candidates. Also, the amount of time the pre-service teachers engaged with the ESL students is a limiting factor. Because of the schedules for both our pre-service teachers' class schedules and the adult ESL learners, only three meetings were planned. In addition, exposure to cultures was limited to only the cultures represented by the ESL students enrolled in the ESL community college course.

Findings

Targeting a service-learning project implemented by pre-service teacher candidates with adult ESL learners, this study focuses on the pre-service teachers' perceptions of their knowledge level of other cultures and ESL instruction. The three research questions guiding this study include a focus the pre-service teachers' perceived efficacy of the service-learning project and their insights of how their participation impacted their knowledge level of other cultures. Also included is a question that targets the perceptions of the pre-service teachers' knowledge of ESL instruction and the impact of the service-learning project on it.

Reflections of Pre-service Teacher Candidates on the Service-learning Project

In their end of course reflections, 100% of the 18 pre-service teachers indicate that the service-learning project provided a positive experience. One pre-service teacher asserts, "I just really thought this experience was so informative and eye opening. I've not had much interaction with an ESL student before..." Another pre-service teacher comments, "I felt it was useful and enlightening." Still another student shares, "I loved working with the… ESL students."

With pre-service teachers perceiving the service project as beneficial, it is perhaps unsurprising that 11 of the 18 pre-service participants mention in their end reflections that they would like more time for interactions with the adult ESL learners and/or to continue the service-learning project with incoming pre-service teachers. While reasons are somewhat varied, most

agree that they could learn more about other cultures through additional interactions with the ESL adult learners.

The perceived value of the service-learning project by the pre-service teachers may be best summed up in the words of one of their own: "I would recommend this [service-learning project] to others. Even if they are not going into the educational field, it is important for all of us to know about different cultures." Such a statement demonstrates that at least one pre-service teacher sees the value of service-learning projects in fostering an appreciation for cultures both in and out of school environments.

Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on their Knowledge Level of Other Cultures

While 16 out of 19 pre-service teachers comment that the service-learning experience helped them learn about cultures different from their own, few details were shared. When considering the details in the pre-service teachers' overall reflections, their insights mostly fell within two areas. First, by interacting with the ESL learners, some of the pre-service teachers believe that they acquired new knowledge about cultures that differed from their own. Secondly, some pre-service teachers, when faced with input from the ESL learners, recognize that they held misconceptions about other cultures.

New information. While details provided in the end reflections centered mainly on food and celebrations, the most serious conversations reflected talk about religion. One student says that she discovered that people in Saudi Arabia did not eat pork while another pre-service teacher relays that her ESL learner cautioned her not to mention religion when working with students from Saudi Arabia.

While details were sparse in what was learned about the cultures of the ESL students, in the pre-survey, with a Likert scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), interestingly, 100% of the pre-service teachers mark their knowledge of the Arabic culture at a level 1 or 2, only four students indicate that they were at this same level at the time of the post survey (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Perception of Knowledge of Arabic Culture

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Pre-survey	11	7	0	0	0
Post-survey	1	3	3	7	4

Also, while no pre-service teacher perceives her knowledge level of the Arabic culture higher than a level 2 on the pre survey, 14 pre-service teachers mark their knowledge level at a 3 or higher on the post survey. In fact, seven pre-service teachers rate their knowledge of the Arabic culture at a level 4 while four pre-service teachers mark a level 5 on the post survey. While this particular information does not address the other cultures represented, perhaps the following quote from a pre-service teacher best represents the feelings of her cohort: "I was fortunate to learn about a new culture from someone who has experienced it rather than from a book."

Misconceptions. Not only did pre-service teachers learn new information about other cultures, they also addressed misconceptions. For example, one pre-service teacher indicates that she believed that Saudi Arabia was just desert: "I had no idea that their towns and cities are like

ours, and it is not all desert." Another pre-service teacher, trying to make a connection with an ESL learner from Saudi Arabia, shares the following vignette:

I was going on and on about how my favorite animal is a camel…my student informed me that in Saudi Arabia they eat camels. That was a huge surprise for me, and a great reminder that we are all different, and to remember that and stay respectful.

Although the pre-service teacher later shared that she is appalled that some people eat camels, her favorite animal, she demonstrates, through her end reflection, her willingness to be open minded when confronted with cultural differences.

The Perceptions of Pre-service Teacher Candidates on ESL Instruction

The results of the post survey reveal that at least some of the pre-service teachers believe that they gained knowledge about ESL instruction (see Table 2). Once more using the Likert scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), no one rates their knowledge of ESL instruction at a level 5 and only two pre-service teachers indicate a level 4 on the pre-survey. Most of the pre-service teachers, 11, indicate that they were at a level 3 on the pre-survey. In the post survey, however, only one pre-service teacher marks her knowledge level at midrange, level 3, while most of the pre-service teachers, 17 out of 18, mark a level 4 or 5, indicating a high level of perceived knowledge about ESL instruction.

Table 2
Participants' Perception of Knowledge of ESL Instruction

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Pre-survey	1	4	11	2	0
Post-survey	0	0	1	10	7

While the results of the survey indicate positive growth in how pre-service teachers perceive their knowledge level of ESL instruction was impacted by participation in the service-learning project, there may be several mediating factors. For example, the pre-service teachers were simultaneously taking an ESL class during the time of the service-learning project. It seems reasonable therefore to conclude that the experience of working with ESL students in the service-learning project and their involvement in the ESL class jointly contribute to our pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding their ESL knowledge, and to the efficaciousness of the experience.

Areas to Strengthen

Some pre-service teachers share that interacting with ESL adult learners brought their attention to areas for personal and/or professional growth. For example, one pre-service teacher states that she needs to "brush up" on how to explain tasks to ESL learners. Other pre-service teachers make general comments attesting to their perception of learning about ESL instruction. One pre-service teacher explicitly acknowledges skills that she perceives that she needs to further develop and strengthen:

I learned a great deal about ELL learners and about myself as an educator…I learned [that I need] to be patient, flexible, and to be willing to explain things in different ways and more than once.

Another pre-service teacher writes that interacting with the ESL learners heightened her awareness: "Being able to experience…[a] language barrier opened my eyes to what it will be like to deal with language barriers." Finally, one pre-service teacher reflects openly about a misconception she held regarding the instruction of ESL learners.

> I always assumed that ESL speakers would probably be Spanish speakers…This experience taught me that I need to be well equipped with teaching strategies for ESL students because there will be some languages that I am completely foreign to.

Because she is able to acknowledge her misconception, she is also able to recognize the need to know of and use teaching strategies that she had previously disregarded.

Recommendations

While this study indicates the general effectiveness of service-learning project on the perceptions of a cohort of pre-service teachers regarding their knowledge level of other cultures and ESL instruction, it must be noted that the study does not address actual learning, just perceptions. Additional studies are needed to investigate what pre-service teachers learn and how their learning was enhanced through service-learning projects. Moreover, this study sheds light on the need to determine how pre-service teachers can best learn about cultures and ESL instruction when few, if any, elementary aged ESL students are available to work with. Last, studies are needed to determine if dispositions and techniques fostered by service-learning projects with adult ESL learners can be successfully applied to situations where pre-service teachers work with elementary aged ESL students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate positive effects of a service-learning project on the perceptions of one group of pre-service teachers regarding their knowledge level of other cultures and ESL instruction. In this study, pre-service teachers generally indicate that they learned about food, religion, places, and celebrations associated with cultures outside their own. Misconceptions about cultures are also addressed.

The pre-service teachers in this study also perceive that participation in a service-learning project positively impacted their knowledge of ESL instruction. First, some believed that the service-learning project affirmed the importance of establishing an appropriate learning environment and caused them to rely on or use their previous knowledge of ESL instruction. Next, their interactions with ESL learners helped some of them identify areas for their own professional growth as a teacher of ESL students.

Although the pre-service teachers in this study may have few opportunities to work with people of cultures other than their own, because of the rising ESL population in the US, there is a strong possibility that our pre-service teachers may one day have opportunities to work with ESL learners. Due to the changing demographics of the population, providing pre-service teacher candidates with opportunities to learn about other cultures and ESL instruction through application is necessary. Based on the results of this study, one effective way to accomplish this goal may be through service-learning projects. Confirming this supposition, one pre-service teacher writes in her end reflection: "When I was growing up, there wasn't very much cultural diversity in my classroom. By completing this assignment, I got to see how much cultural diversity there really is…I will forever be grateful for this [service-learning] experience."

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Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Teachers in High-Poverty Schools Speak About Young Children's Authoring (and We Need to Listen)

Abstract

Although there has been a call for school reform that puts more focus on writing in the early years (NCWAFSC, 2006), the need for effective writing instruction in preschool and kindergarten settings is often overlooked (Burns, Kidd, & Genarro, 2010; Juzwik et al., 2006). In this study, we explore on-going professional dialogues between researchers and 20 prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers to illuminate the pedagogical practices teachers employ to support young authors. In our discussions, we found these teachers focused on four themes: (1) authoring to communicate, (2) handwriting, (3) writing conventions, and (4) authoring processes. The teachers confirm that young children living in low-income households can and do draw and write to communicate their feelings, thoughts, stories, and information. By privileging the teachers' observations and interpretations of what children did and said while drawing and writing, we reveal how these teachers sought to promote young children's authoring experiences.

Keywords: writing, prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, young children, high poverty

Although there has been a call for school reform that puts more focus on writing in the early years (NCWAFSC, 2006), the need for effective writing instruction in prekindergarten and kindergarten settings is often overlooked (Burns, Kidd, & Genarro, 2010; Graham & Harris, 2005; Juzwik, Curcic, Wolbers, Moxley, Dimling, & Shankland, 2006). From a study conducted in 65 preschool classrooms, Gerde, Bingham, and Wasik (2012) concluded that "writing was not only an underrepresented activity in preschool classrooms, in some instances, writing was non-existent" (p. 351). They indicated that classrooms were equipped with writing materials; however, teacher support of writing in their classrooms was limited. In a study of 177 kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers, Simmerman, Harward, Pierce, Peterson, Morrison, Korth, & Shumway (2012) found that teachers perceived there was not enough time in the school day for writing. However, Simmerman et al. (2012) contend, "In order to survive and thrive, young people must become proficient in their ability to think clearly and express their thinking" (p. 293). Despite evidence that suggests attention to developing young children's literacy skills, including oral language, reading, and writing, is important for children's future success (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009; Gerde et al., 2012), it appears very little authoring, which includes drawing and writing, occurs within early childhood classrooms. Therefore, a focus on what prekindergarten and kindergarten classroom teachers say about young children's authoring is warranted.

In addition to limited authoring opportunities for young children, researchers have also expressed concern about the lack of research focused on young children's writing (Juzwik et al., 2006; Simmerman et al., 2012). In an overview of research on writing, Juzwik et al. (2006) reported, "The least studied age group is children preschool aged and younger" (p. 465). When discussing development of language and literacy skills in young children, Cunningham et al. (2009) noted, "The associations between teacher knowledge, teacher practice, and student

success have yet to be explored in the early childhood community" (p. 494). Simmerman et al. (2012) suggest finding out the reasons teachers are or are not providing instructional writing opportunities for young children. Clearly, there is a need for more research focused on young authors.

Another concern researchers raise is the need for teacher professional development. Cutler and Graham (2008) and Simmerman et al. (2012) suggest teachers may not possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and beliefs about writing to promote young children's writing in effective ways. They point out that not only prekindergarten teachers but even primary grade teachers receive little preparation in how to teach writing and often rely on in-service training to inform their work with children in the classroom (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Simmerman et al., 2012). The teachers in the Simmerman et al. (2012) study indicated professional development is important. Cunningham et al. (2009) contend:

> Because preschool teachers have such a tremendous opportunity to promote children's literacy development, it is imperative that the teacher education field reflect upon and reassess standards of professional development to ensure that preschool teachers are able to capitalize on that opportunity. The first step in doing so is delineating what it is that preschool teachers need to know. (p. 489)

It is our contention that while designing professional development opportunities for prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, it is important for researchers to understand how teachers structure writing opportunities for children and respond to children as writers. To that end, we believe literacy researchers have a responsibility to engage in professional dialogues with teachers in the field, especially with teachers who work with children from low-income households. On-going professional dialogues between researchers and teachers illuminate the pedagogical practices teachers employ to engage students in learning. Examinations of practice and explorations of teachers' rationales informing these practices are even more constructive when the instructional routines of teachers are identified and their observations about children and learning are taken into account. Arguably, capturing the strategic practices employed by teachers serves as a counterbalance to assessment statistics that often imply what is happening in the classroom is not sufficient to support young learners' academic needs.

Our experiences with prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, who work with children from impoverished households, suggest that they know much about engaging children as authors that might not be captured in previous research using surveys and observations. Based on our experiences, this study examines what prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers say about their children's drawing and writing. Through the teachers' voices, we gain insight into the reasons young children draw and write within school contexts. We also were interested in what teachers noticed about what children could do when authoring. Finally, we use these dialogs to gain a deeper appreciation of what prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers do to promote young children as authors. Broadly we question: For what reasons do teachers believe young children author, and what do teachers say about what children are able to learn and do?

Theoretical Framework

For preschool and kindergarten-aged children, the world of writing encompasses acts of drawing, invented spelling, and the world of socially sharing out their compositional endeavors with peers (Dyson, 1986). Writing is a complex interplay of cognitive, social, and environmental factors (Coker, 2006; Graham, 2006; MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006). While young writers are seeking to develop a working knowledge of writing processes that work to support them in their efforts to communicate with others, they are also learning to master skill-based

processes of transcription including handwriting, spelling, and conventions of print (Bissex, 1995; McCutchen, 2006; Schickedanz, 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

Children's sociocultural environment influences their understanding of the communicative power of the written world (Heath, 1983; Tolchinsky, 2006). Purcell-Gates (1996) suggests children's observations of family members and caregivers reading and writing within their daily routines influences a child's understanding of the "nature of print and the many ways in which it can function in the lives of people" (p. 422). As children gain a deeper appreciation of the role of writing within their local community, they begin to write themselves into the world by engaging in symbolic drawing, scribbling, letter writing, invented spellings, and conventional word writing to communicate their ideas to others (Neves & Reifel, 2002). Children's perceptions of writing for purposes across environmental contexts are formulated at an early age (Freeman & Sanders, 1989) and are revealed when constructing for target audiences (Buell, Burns, Casbergue, & Love, 2011; Burns, Love, Buell, & Casbergue, 2012; Casbergue, Burns, Love, & Buell, 2013). For instance, children's understanding of writing is demonstrated in Burns et al. (2012) where children intentionally negotiated content, concepts of print, and pictures to convey personal messages for targeted audiences while co-constructing a letter with their parents.

From children's earliest attempts at scribbling, they gain a sense that writing is a vehicle for visibly representing their ideas. Children write to learn the alphabetic code, take notes to remember, and communicate with others (Burns et al., 2010). Children's concepts of writing and skills continue to develop as teachers and caregivers provide them with opportunities to write and to explore written text (Brenneman, Massey, Machado, & Gelman, 1996; Clay, 1988; Levin & Bus, 2003). Research suggests that this attention to developing children's writing in the early years enhances children's writing knowledge and results in their becoming more effective writers (Burns et al., 2010; Graham & Harris, 2005; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). Moreover, some research indicates the writing experiences teachers elect to embed within the contexts of their classrooms contribute to children's literacy performances (Clark & Kagler, 2005; Cruikshank, 2001; Connor, Morrison, & Slominski, 2006; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Teachers play a central role in orchestrating the early writing environment for young children. When teachers immerse students in environments that invite young children to engage in authoring, young children produce more writing-related artifacts (Newman & Roskos, 1991; Stroud, 1995). Additionally, observational research indicates when young children are immersed in environments that afford them the opportunities to write by embedding writing materials strategically into writing centers or play-based centers, children will write for a variety of communicative purposes (Neves & Reifel, 2002; Rowe, 2008; Schrader, 1989). Ultimately, research focused on young children's writing within the early childhood classroom is vital for advancing teachers' understandings of the diverse number of rich writing experiences children need to develop their writing. There is more to learn about the reasons young children write, the contexts within which they write, and the types of opportunities teachers provide that promote young children's writing endeavors. Teachers' voices are central in research exploring young children's writing practices and affordances. Therefore, we focused on the following research questions:

- What do prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers believe young children learn about authoring when provided opportunities to draw and write in school?
- What do prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers say children do as they author?

- What do prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers report they do to support children as authors?

Method

Participants and Setting

Seventeen teachers and 177 children from two different schools participated in the study. The children ranged in age from four- to six-years-old. Twelve teachers, seven prekindergarten and five kindergarten, worked in an inner-city public charter school focused on early education, prekindergarten through second grade. Ninety-five percent of the students were African American, and 56% received free or reduced lunch. In the last year, no children were suspended or expelled. This school had an enhanced emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. An additional five teachers worked with four- and five-year-olds in a prekindergarten program outside a large metropolitan area that included Head Start, state funded prekindergarten, and early childhood special education. All students in the program received free lunch. Fifty percent of the students identified as Caucasian or White, 33% identified as African American, 11% identified as bi-racial or multi-racial, 3% identified as American Indian, and 1% identified as Asian. Seventy-six percent of students designated English as their primary language, and 20% designated Spanish as their primary language. Notice, both schools included children in Head Start, and all purposefully included children with disabilities in their general education classrooms. All students were publically funded. Both schools utilized a developmental curriculum across all academic areas.

Fourteen of the teachers were African American, and three were White. Collectively, these teachers had an average of 12.6 years of teaching experience, ranging from 18 months to 30 years. Nine of the teachers held a bachelor's degree, seven possessed a master's degree, and one had completed some college coursework. Seven held teaching certificates, and one of these teachers was provisionally licensed. The rest did not indicate that they had a teaching certificate/license.

Procedures

Our main data source draws on transcripts of focus group discussions held with teachers over four or five sessions. Discussions were held from the spring of the 2011 academic year through 2013. Teachers met with two of the researchers for approximately one hour each time. For each meeting, teachers were asked to bring two pieces of children's writing: one from a structured activity and one from an unstructured activity. The teachers took turns sharing the writing they brought with them. For each sample, the teachers explained (1) the context from which the writing artifact came, (2) the reason the children produced it, and (3) what they noticed about the sample. The teachers also discussed their role in providing the opportunity for the authoring experience.

As the teachers shared, their peers contributed thoughts about the writing sample and made links to their own observations of children's writing. The researchers facilitating the focus groups participated in the discussions by asking probing questions like the following: "As far as you know, what did the child intend to communicate in this writing, if anything?" "Do you think the child included anything in this writing for the purposes of remembering something?" "Do you think the child learned anything about how print works in doing this work?" These questions encouraged the teachers to elaborate or to think more deeply about the children's reasons for writing, the context of the writing, and what the children were able to do in their writing.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data were collected over three years. In Year 1, the focus groups included prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers. In Year 2, the focus groups included only kindergarten teachers, and in Year 3, the focus groups only included prekindergarten teachers. During the discussions, we took notes and audio-recordings using Livescribe™ pens that connect the audio to our written notes. At the conclusion of the discussion, the children's writing samples were scanned and saved. Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) transcribed all of the audio-recorded conversations.

We employed constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to coax themes from across the focus group discussions. The first round of coding included independent open coding of the first prekindergarten teacher discussion. Independently coded transcripts were then shared and discussed until coding consensus was achieved for any codes that differed. Utilizing agreed upon themes, we then analyzed the transcripts from the third and fifth prekindergarten discussions. (See the first box in Figure 1 for this set of codes.) As open coding of transcripts continued, emerging categories for future examination were noted. After completing analyses of the prekindergarten discussions, we repeated the process with the transcripts from the first, third, and fifth kindergarten teacher discussions. (See Figure 1 Box 2 for these codes.) Coding of transcripts continued until all discussions, kindergarten teachers in Year 2 and prekindergarten teachers in Year 3, were coded and consensus across the analysis team was achieved.

Figure 1. Three-Year Progression of Codes/Themes

Box 1: Familiar w/ Writing Materials, ID/Form letters, Copy Writing, Express/Comminucate, Show Understanding, Conceptual Meaning of Writing, Features of the Code, Writing to Learn

Box 2: Drawing, Familiar w/ Writing Materials, ID/Form letters, Copy Writing, Express/Comminucate, Writing, Express/Comminucate in Deatail, Examine Features of Code, Grammar, Sentences, Mechanics, Show Understanding, Writing to Learn, Conceptual Meaning, Self Talk, Peer Talk

Box 3: Authoring, Conceptual Meaning of Writing, Identify/ Form Letters, Regulatory, Representing/Not Authoring, Writing Conventions, Writing to Learn

Box 4: Authoring to Communicate, Handwriting, Writing Conventions, Authoring Processes
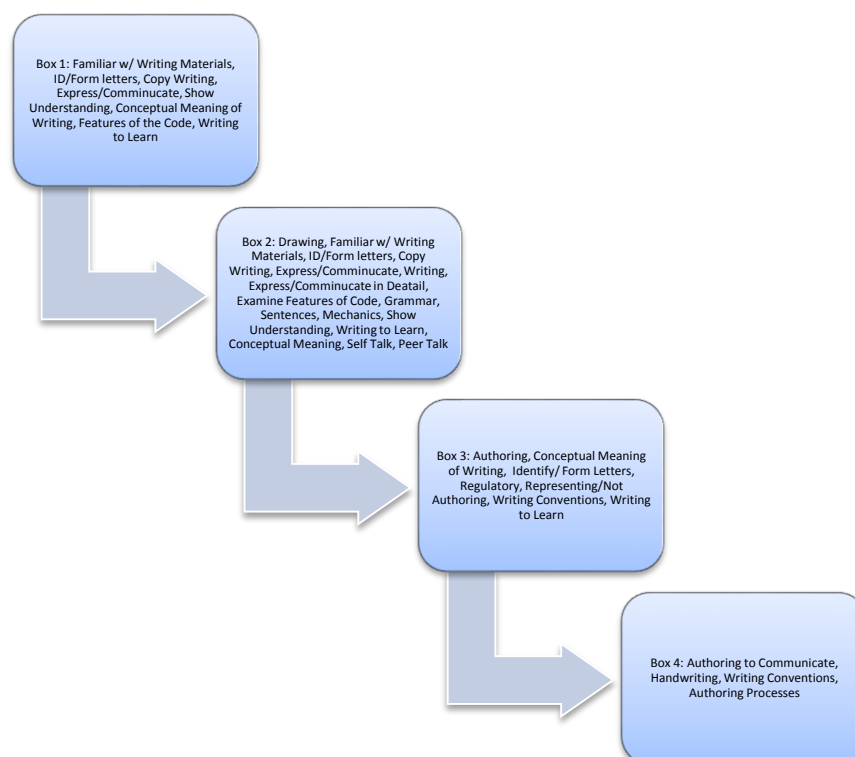
Figure 1. The coding process model of how codes were collapsed over time. Specifically, the model highlights how participants' descriptions privilege the practice of writing in young children.

Findings

The collective voices of the 20 prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers described previously illustrate the wealth of information teachers possess about young children's authoring. Their words coupled with samples of children's drawings and writings show that prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers believe children draw and write in school to develop their understanding of multiple facets of authoring. In our discussions with the teachers, we found they focused on four themes: (1) authoring to communicate, (2) handwriting, (3) writing conventions, and (4) authoring processes. In the following sections, we share their insights on each of these themes through the samples they brought to the discussions and the words they used to show us what their children do when representing their thoughts through drawing and writing. Specifically, we use the voices of Diane, Ella, Faye, Gloria, Helen, and Irene and their children's samples to illustrate the collective messages shared by the prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers. All teacher and child names are pseudonyms.

Authoring to Communicate

For these prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, authoring to communicate takes place as children draw and write to represent their thoughts and ideas. Their collective message is that through drawing and writing, young children express feelings, share stories and events, relate information, and show their understanding of what they have learned. They believe that through teacher-initiated (e.g., structured and free-choice journal writing, responses to prompts, and content area activities) and child-initiated activities (e.g., writing in centers, children have access to materials and decide to write), children learn what it means to author to communicate and how to represent their ideas through drawing and writing. These teachers, as is evident in Diane's, Ella's, and Faye's narratives, see their support as crucial to this learning.

Diane, a prekindergarten teacher, gives voice to teachers' beliefs that children's drawings and writings are representations of children's thoughts and a means to share stories and events. Jacob's sample (see Figure 2) was authored on a Monday morning when Diane instructed her prekindergarten children to work on a journal entry focused on what they did "over the weekend." Diane noted, "I asked him after he finished drawing and writing right here what was it that he was trying to write. He said…The sentence he was trying to write was "I bake some cupcakes with my mommy." She continued by saying, "He's an excellent drawer…You could tell everything he said he was drawing." When asked why she does this responded, "For them, the expression, you know, to see what's going on in their head."

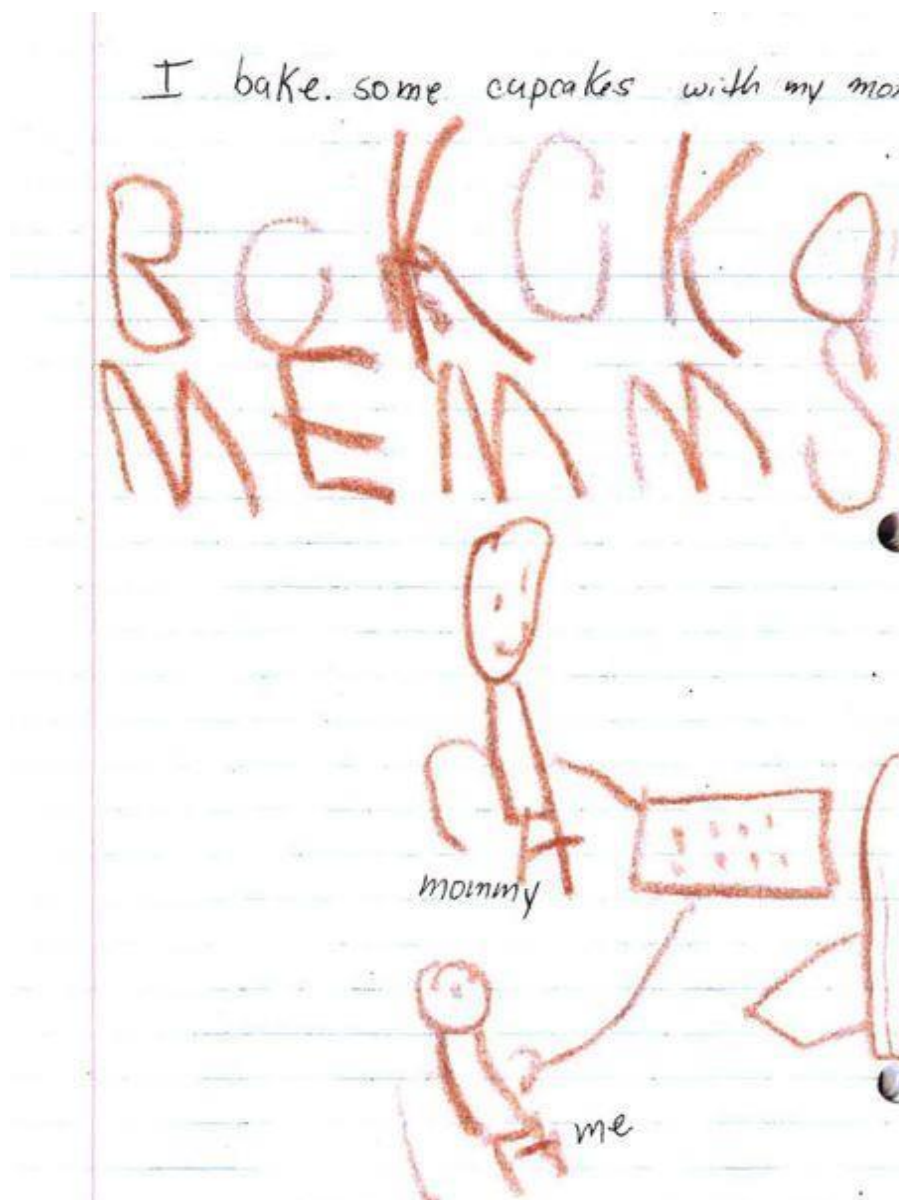**Figure 2. Jacob's "Over the Weekend" Writing**

Figure 2. Jacob and his mommy baking cupcakes.

As Ella, a kindergarten teacher, talked about Sophia's sample (see Figure 3), she reinforced Diane's thoughts shared above related to children communicating through drawing and writing. In addition, her conversation about Sophia's efforts illustrates the ways teachers discussed how children use drawing and writing to show what they know and their understanding of what they have learned. Ella shared: So, this is her free writing on, the topic was, what can you do to um less pollution or take care of the Earth…. We had read a story about what another class did and activities they did. They [the children] can probably get ideas from that to say what they will do. For her sentence, she drew herself having the um the broom here sweeping up and have the [room] clean. So, that's the broom in her hand and that's the pile of garbage she has to clean: "I am helping by cleaning up."

Figure 3. Sophia's "How I Take Care of the Earth"

Writing

Ella points out how this sample provides insight into what Sophia learned from the story that was read and specifically what she learned about ways to take care of the Earth and reduce pollution. In addition, her description of the drawing linked to the writing further makes the point that children author using drawing and writing to communicate.

Faye's words are a reminder that not only do children draw and write to show what they know, but also to express feelings by sharing what is important to them. In this sample (see Figure 4), Faye gave prekindergartner Ethan an opportunity to write about a topic of his choice. When talking about the sample, Faye indicated that Ethan's father is important to him. She pointed out that Ethan "tends to speak about his dad." She went on to say:

His mannerisms, everything is like his dad. He tends to focus on his dad. He said, "This is my dad." And I was walking by when he was drawing it, and then I saw him doing that [counting on his fingers], so I stopped and I looked. He was actually counting fingers….He counted the hand and then he counted the toes.

Faye pointed out that at the same time Ethan communicated the importance of his dad, he also conveyed knowledge he gained about seeds. Faye related what happened after he drew his dad:

He drew something else. And I said, "What is this?" He said, "Oh. Remember when we

Figure 4. Ethan's Choice Topic

Figure 4. Ethan combines the recently learned topic of seeds and his favorite topic, his Dad.

planted seeds? I was writing that my seed was going to change into a flower, and this is my seed."…So, I don't know how seeds and dad came together. But they're the two current things going on. I don't know. I mean maybe he wanted to talk about his seed and his dad has to be included.

Diane, Ella, and Faye give voice to thoughts shared by the other prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers that whether children are telling a story, sharing information, showing what they've learned, or expressing their feelings, children's authoring to communicate is a critical facet of young children's drawing and writing. As can be seen across these three examples, the teachers who participated in our discussions understand that authoring is personal, especially at this young age. Jacob is baking with his mom, Sophia is cleaning up pollution, and Ethan inserts his dad in all his pictures. In addition, their narratives illustrate the important role they believe their interactions with children play in supporting children as they draw and write to communicate. For example, Diane asked Jacob "what he was trying to write," Ella linked the activity to Sophia's learning about pollution, and Faye talked with Ethan to find out more about what he was doing and why. All three teachers, as well as most others in our discussions,

believe their interactions with children support children's understanding of authoring to communicate.

Handwriting

According to the prekindergarten teachers and several of the kindergarten teachers, developing handwriting is a key facet of writing. Many of the teachers believed that part of their responsibility is to help children become familiar with writing materials, teach children to form letters of the alphabet, and assist them in using proper spacing. We selected Ella, a kindergarten teacher, and Gloria, a prekindergarten teacher, to represent those who talked about handwriting because their discussions were typical of points raised across teachers at their grade level. In addition, Ella, like many, talked about handwriting in the context of authoring to communicate and writing conventions; whereas, Gloria, like some, talked about handwriting at the exclusion of discussing other components of authoring.

Ella's discussion of kindergartner Sophia's sample (see Figure 3) included a brief note about the need to focus on teaching children to space properly as they write. She explained, "I see them [the children] making a general effort to have the space between their words. I see some of them getting carried away and putting space between their letters. They are working on the space between the words." In this case, it was clear that the emphasis was on spacing rather than on children's grasp of the concept of word. It is also important to note that although Ella did not talk about letter formation, other kindergarten teachers did. For example, one teacher explained how she helped a child turn what looked like an 'r' into an 'n'.

Figure 5. Aiden's Name Writing

Unlike Ella, Gloria discussed handwriting in depth. Through two samples discussed on the same day (see Figures 5 & 6), Gloria shared her insights on children's fine motor control and their efforts to form alphabetic letters. In the first sample, Gloria (see Figure 5) discussed name writing. Gloria explained, "If we would have done anything structured, he would just kind of scribble, which was fine. We were encouraging him to take risks….And it got to a point, for instance, on his name you can see the 'D' and I think that's the 'n'….So, as we go along, we're just encouraging him."

Figure 6. Aiden's "Jack be nimble" Writing
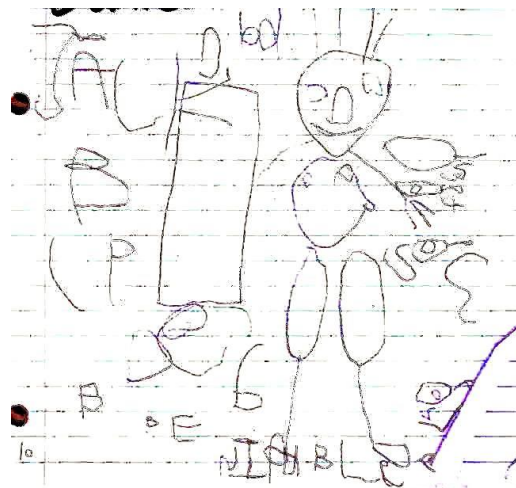
Later in the conversation, Gloria explained how her class had been studying Nursery Rhymes and all the children had been Jack jumping over the candlestick. In the sample (see Figure 6) Aiden copied the phrase "Jack be nimble" off the teacher's dry erase board. She went on to analyze the sample by saying, "But we have Jack, which is interesting because Jack in the room is lowercase. He converted the lowercase j to uppercase." Later Gloria continued, "And again, he substituted uppercase 'I', so he's able to look at lowercase and know that he can stroke uppercase. Isn't that interesting? So, that's what he did." As the discussion of the two samples concluded, Gloria explained, "The writing portion [of the prekindergarten assessment] isn't considered expression. It's considered fine motor, so fine motor stroking. So, that's not so much of the creative aspect or expression aspect of writing."

Like Gloria, the prekindergarten teachers discussed skills related to handwriting in more depth than the kindergarten teachers. The focus on forming lowercase and uppercase letters and developing the fine motor skills to form alphabetic letters clearly permeated the discussions. In addition, teachers often linked letter identification with letter formation thus discussing naming letters along with children's attention to forming letters. The prekindergarten teachers seemed to see themselves as playing an important role in children's fine motor control, the forming of alphabetic letters, and identifying letters. The kindergarten teachers, on the other hand, did not discuss handwriting nearly as frequently.

Writing Conventions

In the teachers' discussions, writing conventions emerged as another critical facet of writing. All teachers, except one prekindergarten teacher, shared the importance of developing children's writing conventions, including sentence formation (i.e., types of sentences, varied styles, structure, and length), spelling, grammar, and mechanics. As we listened to Diane, Ella, Faye, and the other teachers explain what young authors do as they move toward use of conventional spelling, grammar, and mechanics in their written sentences, it became apparent that they believe children are capable of learning about writing conventions as teachers provide

opportunities and support to do so.

One aspect of writing conventions discussed by most teachers was spelling. When discussing spelling, many mentioned children's use of resources in the room, such as the word wall, picture cards, and environmental print, to copy the spelling of words. This type of copy writing that does not rely on sight word knowledge or the relationship between phonemes and letters of the alphabet is described in more detail in the discussion in the next section related to authoring purposes. In this section, we focus on the conversations teachers had about children spelling sight words (i.e., words children could spell without copying) and children's use of features of the code to approximate spelling by connecting phonemes to letters of the alphabet.

We found that teachers' descriptions of children's examination of features of the code to spell were prevalent in their discussion. For example, Diane noted when talking about Jacob's prekindergarten sample (see Figure 2), "He's one that always asks me, 'Now, how do you spell this'? And I tell him just try first, just sound it out. If you hear buh-ake, sound it out. And then I just write at the top." This example is typical of the descriptions shared by other prekindergarten teachers, and was also noted in many of the kindergarten discussions. For example, Ella made the following observation about the sample in Figure 3: "Now her 'cleaning' is spelled…She has the 'e' but because she doesn't know the rules of the silent 'a', that's why. But for me this shows that she has it."

When listening to the teachers, we also discovered that although the kindergarten teachers discussed sentence formation, mechanics, and grammar in addition to spelling, the prekindergarten teachers rarely discussed this aspect of written conventions. When they did, their comments tended to be global statements like this teacher's: "I was trying to reinforce sentence structure, punctuation, and high frequency words." On the other hand, the kindergarten teachers tended to discuss these aspects of writing conventions in detail. As shown in Ella's conversation, kindergarten teachers tended to emphasize the different types of sentences (i.e., statements, questions, and exclamations) and the associated punctuation as well as sentence style, structure, and length. Their discussions on mechanics included detailed descriptions of children's use of punctuation and capitalization. Overall, they discussed grammar in relatively vague terms. However, several mentioned specific aspects of grammar, such as parts of speech, tenses, and prepositions.

Ella's analysis of the sample in Figure 7 illustrates the multiple aspects of writing conventions that teachers emphasize with their children. She began by discussing spelling sight words:

She [Sophia] is one of my students who has good sight word knowledge….And her idea of making sentences is trying to include as many sight words in one sentence as possible to make sense. That's what she does. She deliberately sits and tries to put more than one. I ask her to use one, and she wants to use as many as she can….

She continued with an emphasis on mechanics:

"I am good" [read from sample]…I have a student-created rubric in the classroom for them to guide them for their punctuation. So, she [Sophia] is working on ending punctuations, which [she] really has none. She hasn't gotten just yet.

She then focused her attention on sentence formation. She first referenced types of sentences when stating that Sophia had written a question:

"Must I do this?" [read from sample] That is her question. And she would have that look [teacher makes face] on her face. And she would say, "I used four sight words!" So, she's trying to use all sight words in her sentences.

As she continued, she pointed out that Sophia had an incomplete sentence:

> "Can you find" and I say, "Find what?" [Mimics student] "Ohhh, I'm not done!" So, this was, this is an incomplete sentence here but she, because she's trying to pick another

Figure 7. Sophia's Sight Word Sentences
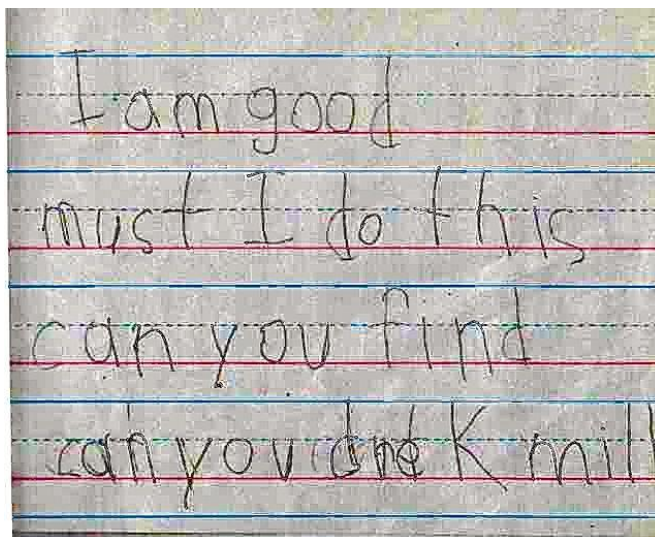
> sight word here, she could not fit another sight word here [in the space left on the paper] that's why the sentence is incomplete.

She concluded the discussion by discussing examining features of the code to approximate the spelling of words:

> "Can you drink milk?" [read from sample] And her drink, this is how it is spelled [points to the sample where 'drink' is spelled 'drek'], and she's really trying to sound it. But she has the 'k' and I notice she is having the, the um, the, it's not a misconception. She is using the 'e' and the 'i' so that's where she's still working on that. And I'm guessing she's still trying to fit some more sight words in but she's not quite finished.

Ella's discussion is typical of the conversations we had with the kindergarten teachers. They may or may not have discussed each of these elements in a single conversation like Ella. However, across time, the teachers each made similar observations. Some discussions reveal how teachers supported children's writing conventions in structured activities, like Ella's description of Figure 7. Other discussions show teachers attended to aspects of writing conventions presented in authoring to communicate experiences like Ella's discussion of Sophia's writing in Figure 3 and her description of Ramona's sample in the next section (see Figure 8).

Authoring Processes

Although not discussed as frequently as the other facets of authoring, teachers' focus on authoring processes was an important theme that emerged. All of the kindergarten teachers and just over half of the prekindergarten teachers shared their belief that as children draw and write they engage in authoring processes. The teachers articulated authoring processes were influenced by children's self-talk and peer interactions. The teachers noted the children

developed a sense of ownership as they engaged in planning, revising, and editing for an audience. They also discussed ways children utilized classroom resources, such as word walls and picture cards to help them spell, when writing and representing.

Peer interactions and self-talk.

As Ella's kindergartners returned from spring break, she capitalized on their recent experiences away from school to set the stage for a writing activity that exemplifies the authoring processes some teachers discussed as they shared their insights on their children's writing. Ella described the way she set up the activity:

> I know that when they come back from a break, they always want to talk, talk, talk about what they did, so I made an allowance this morning. Instead of reading a story… they had peer discussion. I said, "Tell your partner three things you did over the break."... Then I went around and asked each person to tell me one thing that they want everybody to know that they did.

Like Ella, several other prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers recognized the influence peers have on children's writing. For example, one teacher shared a story about a group of children relying on a particular child to help them when they were writing. One teacher summed up the influence peers have on each other when she said, "Like I said, they [peers] challenge the other kids to do something because the other kids see them and they want to do it, too." Another teacher talked about the influence older siblings have on children's writing. In addition, several teachers noticed that children engaged in self-talk - noting they observed children talking to themselves before writing or as they wrote.

Planning, revising, and editing for an audience.

Ella continued her discussion by explaining that planning or thinking about what an author wants to draw or write is an aspect of the authoring process. Her discussion of Ramona's sample (see Figure 8) shows that she, like several others, believes children develop a sense of the thinking involved in writing when teachers make this thinking explicit:

> Then I shared. Then I went ahead and I did a think aloud about what we [did] over the break. So, what's the first thing we're going to do when we write? And one girl was quick enough to say, "We think first." Yes, that's exactly right. So, let's do that. Let's think about what it is that we want to show that we did.

She then talked about drawing as a vehicle for representing thoughts and planning what to write:

> So, I went ahead and I drew my picture and I am talking through it and while I'm drawing, I am talking about why I am putting these three people here. This is where we went. This is what we saw. So, we did it step-by-step and then wrote about it. That example was there for them. And this is what [Ramona] produced [pointing to the sample], and she said, "I went to 7-Eleven."

Ella then proceeded to talk about the writing conventions Ramona used as she wrote about going to the 7-Eleven and is apparent in the corrections made to the sample in Figure 8 (i.e.,changing the uppercase "G" to a "g," changing "sum" to "some," etc.).

In addition to planning processes, several prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers pointed out the ways children revised and edited their samples. Revisions could be seen in children's drawings when children erased or crossed out what they originally drew. Some teachers noted that children would tell them that they were originally going to draw and/or write about one thing, but changed their minds and decided to draw and/or write about something else. Teachers also talked about erasures or cross outs to text. Several talked about children adding to their drawings and/or writings like Faye when she discussed how Ethan added the seeds to his

drawing.

Figure 8. Ramona's "What I did over the break" Writing

Helen's discussion of Paige's sample (see Figure 9) provides an example of the authoring processes some teachers noticed. Helen explained that the children were to cut out a barn and draw pictures of farm animals. Paige began by accessing resources in the room. According to Helen, Paige "got the word cards and drew animals to match the words." Drawing attention to the sample, Helen pointed out the planning Paige undertook when she matched "the color of the ink for the animal to the color of the ink for the word." Helen continued by describing the changes Paige made to her text and drawing:

Figure 9. Paige's Barn Animals

And then she had C-h-i-c-k-e-n. Yeah maybe, it looks like she tried to cross one "s" out. And then she has an "a" down here. Oh, you know what it was? It looks like she was going to do "a chicken" and then she decided to do "chickens." "A chicken" and then she decides, "No, I'm going to do one more chicken." Almost like she realizes now so she puts chickens and puts the "s" right here.

Watching children engage in the authoring processes described above left a few teachers with a sense that young children develop a sense of authorship, meaning they gain an

understanding that they have ownership of their work and have the ability at times to make decisions about when to engage in authoring, what to draw and write, what resources to use to support their authoring, and what to change in their authored pieces.

Several teachers also mentioned that children begin to develop a sense of audience. Children realize they can communicate with others through drawing and writing as in the case of Simone, who spontaneously created a card of fondness that she gave to her teacher (see Figure 10). Her teacher, Irene, described Simone as "full of love—the hearts."

The thoughts Ella, Faye, Helen, and Irene shared illustrate what some prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers noticed about their children's authoring processes. For example, Faye and Helen shared their observations of children's revising and editing processes. The card Irene shared from Simone pointed out that developing an understanding of authorship and a sense of audience begins to develop at an early age. In addition, Ella's narrative not only provides insight on children's planning and the influence of peer interactions, but also highlights ways teachers foster children's authoring processes.

Figure 10. Simone's Card

Discussion

When asked to talk about their students' writing, prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers provided valuable insights into what they believe young children do and learn when provided opportunities to represent their thoughts, stories, and information through drawing and writing. These discussions also shed light on what teachers think about and do as they guide their children's authoring efforts. In initial teacher presentations of their students' work, we did not always believe the instructional approaches they described represented best practice. For example, at times, we left the discussions discouraged by the heavy emphasis some prekindergarten teachers placed on letter formation, including name writing and copying words, to what appeared to be at the exclusion of other facets of authoring. We were also disheartened by some approaches the kindergarten teachers took, for example, to developing children's use of written conventions. However, we found that their discussions of the children's work often led to a more nuanced account of their instructional goals.

We were intrigued by what they chose to discuss, what they noticed about their children's drawing and writing, and what teachers said they did to support their children's authoring efforts. We left the conversations convinced that teachers are a relatively untapped source of information for developing an understanding of children's drawing and writing endeavors as well as teachers' roles in promoting children's authoring. Given the lack of research focused on prekindergarten and kindergarten writing (Juzwik et al., 2006) and the wealth of knowledge teachers possess about children, we believe it is imperative that their voices be heard and considered when identifying what children, especially children from low-income households, do and learn as they engage in opportunities to draw and write in the classroom. Teachers' perceptions are equally

important when making decisions or recommendations about instructional practices, teacher professional development, and future research.

These particular prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers provided a window into their classrooms and young children's authoring experiences. Their words, coupled with the children's writing samples, underscore much of what research has previously revealed are instructionally sound writing practices for young children (Baghban, 2006; Graham, Bollinger, Booth Olson, D'Aoust, MacArthur, McCutchen, & Ollinghouse, 2012). We learned these teachers believe prekindergarten and kindergarten students draw and write to communicate their feelings, thoughts, stories, and information (Baghban, 2006; Burns et al., 2010; Mackinze, 2008). They also showed us that children, at a young age, engage in authoring processes that include planning, revising, and editing for audience (Graham, 2006; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Roberts & Wibbens, 2010). They confirm children rely on a variety of resources when they draw and write, including environmental print (Wingate, Rutledge, & Johnston, 2014), self-talk, and peer interactions (Dyson, 1986; Kissel, Hansen, Tower, & Lawrence, 2011). In addition, they shared their belief that handwriting (Berninger , Vaughan, Graham, Abbott, Abbott, Rogan, Brooks, & Reed , 1997; Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000) and writing conventions (Cruikshank, 2001) are important facets of early writing instruction.

We find it particularly compelling that these teachers' discussions focused predominately on what young children from low-income households can do rather than what they cannot do. The stories Diane, Ella, Faye, Gloria, and Helen shared about each sample highlighted the strengths children bring to their authoring efforts. In some cases, like in Helen's discussion of Paige adding the "s" to represent two chickens (see Figure 9) and in Ella's whole group discussion explaining, "We think first" before engaging in authoring, teachers' understandings of what children do as they draw and write could be overlooked by researchers relying solely on analyses of written products or on teacher surveys. By privileging the teachers' observations and interpretations of what children did and said as they drew and wrote, we reveal the purposeful actions and evaluations of these teachers as they worked to promote young children's authoring experiences.

Although these findings are limited to these particular prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers and children and may be influenced by our participation in the discussion groups, we believe there are significant implications for understanding young children's authoring efforts. Our findings indicate that young children living in low-income households can and do attend to multiple facets of drawing and writing, including authoring to communicate, authoring processes, handwriting, and writing conventions. This suggests that when given opportunities to draw and write, prekindergarten and kindergarten children develop not only their handwriting skills but also strategies and skills that enhance their ability to communicate with others.

The knowledge and beliefs expressed by these prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers as they talked about their children's samples is also significant. Even though we saw variations in the types of samples teachers brought to the discussions and what they chose to focus on when they talked, we were struck by the knowledge they possessed from their own educational experiences as well as from their intimate work with children as they author. Although Cunningham et al. (2009) contend that the first step in promoting young children's literacy development is to determine what teachers need to know, the findings of our study suggest that a complementary part of this process is to listen to what teachers say - as they already possess a wealth of knowledge. We suggest future professional development scaffold new learning by layering evidence-based practices upon what teachers already know, believe, and value as

important aspects of children's authoring. By first honoring what teachers understand about supporting young authors, teachers may be encouraged to embed additional evidence-based research practices into their regular routines.

Although we gained insights about what teachers say about children's authoring and the approaches they employ to support children's drawing and writing development, we would like to know more about the teacher beliefs and instructional practices that influence children's authoring efforts. We are also curious about what else can be learned if we examine in more depth what teachers, who are considered to be effective teachers, do to promote children's authoring. In addition, we wonder what influence the discussions had, if any, that might help inform future professional development practices.

Conclusion

By encouraging teachers to explain exemplars of their own students' work, we gained valuable insight into how teachers promote children's authoring. The early writing discussion forum afforded teachers in the field a platform for articulating what they knew about young children's authoring practices. Just as the teachers examined each child's writing product for evidence of what they understood about the world of writing, we examined the teachers' descriptions of the samples for evidence of what they knew about supporting prekindergarten and kindergarten writers. Through our discussions with the teachers and careful analyses of the transcripts paired with the children's writing exemplars, we came to understand that teachers know a great deal about developing writing opportunities for young authors. This research amplifies teachers' voices by revealing the intentional writing practices teachers expressed as critical for supporting the diverse needs of young authors in their classrooms.

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Call to Action

Call to Stop the Escalating War on Teachers

Robert A. Rutter is an Emeritus Professor of Education and Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at St. Norbert College, DePere, WI. This *Call to Action* was originally delivered as an invited address to outstanding graduates and their faculty at the annual Academic Awards Dinner, April 23, 2013.

Increasingly, the public is becoming engrossed in what some are now calling "an escalating war on teachers." This escalating war on teachers concerns me deeply, and it should concern every educator, parent, student, taxpayer, and policy-maker. This assault is grounded in weak data, and has become an enabler of bad public policy. It has undermined teacher performance and cultivated disrespect, it is changing student learning in ways we scarcely understand, and it may be making it less likely that those who should teach, the best and brightest among us, ever will. Educators need to push back and set the record straight. One example of educators pushing back is documented in the lead article of *Literacy and Social Responsibility, Volume 6,* authored by Richard J. Meyer (http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/ejournal/issues/eJournal_5(1)fall2012.pdf)

In *The Politics of American Education* (2011), educational historian, Joel Spring suggests that since publication of A Nation At Risk we have been taught to believe that teachers and schools are failing. Spring's argument is that the media (reacting to criticism from the Brookings Institution and others and with resources too limited to cover the complexity of most educational issues) merely mouth the claims of politicians, who espouse the human capital paradigm and find that attacking schools is good politics. Thereby, the media reduces the public's understanding of complex issues and prepares them to accept simple solutions. The late Gerald Bracey (2009) made the same point, *"Americans never hear anything positive about the nation's schools and haven't since the years before Sputnik in 1957"* (p.21). The assault on schools and teachers is ubiquitous.

In a local context, Wisconsin, when Act 10 stripped teachers and other public employees of their collective bargaining rights, teachers were portrayed as selfish, careless, and unprofessional. Proponents of Act 10 and the media focused on wages and benefits in spite of the fact that the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) had already accepted a

larger employee contribution to the State Teacher Retirement System, resulting in an $8,000 cut in an average teacher's take-home pay (http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/acts/10.pdf).

Lost in the coverage of Act 10 was the fact that teachers also lost rights even more central to their role, including input into curriculum, working conditions, and methods of evaluation - all significant issues related to academic freedom. These were the real issues teachers protested in Madison. When teachers tried to explain that this wasn't about salaries, they were further vilified with comments like, if those teachers really cared about kids, they would have been in their classrooms teaching, not in Madison protesting.

What happened in Madison, Wisconsin is happening all over the country. According to the Citizens Research Council (2012), similar legislation is being debated or has already been passed in Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana, Idaho, and Tennessee. At the local level, boards of education, like the one in Reynolds, Oregon, want the ability to fire teachers based on a single anonymous written or verbal complaint. They want to eliminate all planning time from student contact hours, eliminate professional development days, forbid teachers from taking emergency leave, ignore seniority as a factor in layoffs, prevent teachers from seeing student information concerning safety, behavioral infractions, or criminal behavior, and reopen teachers' contracts at any time (Alternet, May 24, 2012). Further, states such as Louisiana, North Carolina, and California have also experienced their assaults on teachers with the recent abolishment of tenure (Legislative Digest, April 29, 2011). In a provocative book entitled W*hy Great Teachers Quit and How We Might Stop the Exodus* (Farber, 2010), Katy Farber, author and award-winning career science teacher, describes the annual and very public "throttling" of teachers that occurs every year around budget time. During March, she says, "it is hard for teachers to even open up the editorial section of their local papers. Negative letters target teachers with misinformation, personal insults, and an evident lack of understanding of what teaching entails and how schools work. Our system of school finance, according to Farber, creates a "contentious relationship between parents, community members, and teachers; and it creates a culture of disrespect*"* (p. 84).

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The effects of Act 10 and similar legislation in other locales pale in comparison to the hijacking of the curriculum and the marginalization of teacher expertise and experience that has occurred under the rubric of accountability and standards. Educators throughout the United States (U.S.) are familiar with the claims of a failing education system. Claims which, after 30 years, have been embraced widely by both political parties and treated as true: 1) public education as a whole has been declining rapidly, falling behind other industrial nations economically and 2) this decline was caused by bad teaching and lack of uniformity, and could be fixed by introducing standards, mandatory statewide tests aligned with those standards, and punishment or rewards for schools and teachers based on students' test scores (Watkins, 2012).

However, the evidence for these claims is far from conclusive. In *The Assault on Public Education—Confronting the Politics of Corporate School Reform*, Watkins (2012) cites both Berliner and Bracey's response to these claims.

> U.S. students appear to have mediocre scores when compared with students from other industrial nations—until the data are broken down by poverty level and by race. When the data are stratified by income level, the average score for schools with more than half their students above the poverty level is above the U.S. average score and far above the international average score. These results have been shown for multiple studies of math, reading, and science scores (Berliner, 2006; Bracey, 2004). (p.102)

Simply put, poverty is the enemy, not teachers, and not the entre educational system.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (http://nccp.org/topics/childpoverty.html), 22% of all children living in the U.S. are living in poverty and about half of those 22% live in extreme poverty, defined as half the federal poverty guideline or an annual income of about $12,000 for a family of four. Poverty is associated with low birth weight and a host of associated learning disabilities, high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition, less preventative care, more serious illness and accompanying absenteeism, greater exposure to violence, trauma, and various stress disorders, low grade lead poisoning and PCB exposure (Rothstein, 2008; Berliner, 2009). 30% of children from poor families will attend at least three different schools before 3rd grade (Berliner, 2009). By the age of four, a child from a middle-income family has heard some 45 million spoken words, compared to about 16 million for a child in poverty (Hart & Risley, 2004). Considering all of this, is it any wonder that 40% of children living in poverty aren't prepared for primary schooling? (Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006, 2012).

Richard Rothstein, Research Associate at the Economics Policy Institute, along with Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder in their most recent book *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right* (2008) pointed out,

> Decades of social science research have demonstrated that differences in the quality of schools can explain about one-third of the variation in student achievement. But the other two-thirds is attributable to non-school factors . . . making teacher quality the focus distracts us from the biggest threat to student achievement in the current age: our unprecedented economic catastrophe and its effect on parents and their children's ability to gain from higher-quality schools. (p. 1-2)

So, by what or whose measure are teachers failing? Today, teacher competence is measured by student performance on standardized tests. And the public (and many educators) accepts this in spite of the fact that the tests are often poorly aligned to the curriculum, and that many children have little motivation to perform well on a meaningless task (Berliner, 2012). Even more importantly, many educators, the public, and politicians accept the pretense that these tests are minimum competency exams, when they are not. Testing companies invest millions of dollars in developing, testing and perfecting test items that discriminate performance (Kumashiro, 2012).

In *Bad teachers: How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture* (2012), Kevin Kumashiro discussed the process of test construction in great detail.

> If too many students answer a question incorrectly, a question or a test is thrown out. But if too many students answer a question correctly, that question is also thrown out. In addition, if certain questions are not correctly answered by the students who are doing well on the tests, then they are not retained as future test questions, thereby ensuring that the test produces a distribution of scores that mirrors the current distribution. There exit all sorts of questions that could be asked, including questions that reflect different cultural referents and different learning styles, as well as different ways of answering questions" (p. 6)

In other words, if the test makers and publishers have done their job, the expectation that every child should perform at the highest level on the test is absurd.

Yet, in Wisconsin for example, according to data published on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website, more than 80% of students are rated proficient or advanced (http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/). I ask again, by what measure and whose measures are teachers failing? Wisconsin teachers, like those in every other state, are failing because they haven't

achieved the 100% pass rate codified by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001). Stanley Karp, an editor of *Rethinking Schools* says this about NCLB,

> Imagine a federal law that declared that 100 percent of all citizens must have adequate health care in twelve years or sanctions will be imposed on doctors and hospitals. Or all crime must be eliminated in twelve years or the local police department will face privatization. (p. 8-9)

Disproportionately represented among the "failures" are English language learners, students with disabilities, and children yet to overcome the debilitating effects of poverty. Is it reasonable to expect classroom teachers to wipe away the cumulative effects of poverty, or overcome an identified learning disability, or teach students enough English in a year or two to perform well on a standardized test designed to discriminate performance? Is it reasonable to do all of this while working with groups of 25-30 students for as little as one hour a day while simultaneously challenging every student to grow, develop, and achieve at their full potential.

As you read this, I don't want readers to get the wrong idea. I'm not an apologist for teachers. There are many things that teachers and schools can do better. Teachers should be held to very high standards and incompetent teachers should not be re-hired. But widespread incompetence is not what I see in schools. When I visit schools, with few exceptions, I see hard-working, capable, competent, and dedicated professionals doing their best to help children and young adults grow and develop in a myriad of different ways. And apparently, in spite of widespread efforts to portray teachers as failures, that's what the public sees as well.

In 2013, more than 70% of respondents to the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the State of American Education gave their local schools a grade of A or B, a pattern repeated over many years. Over 70% also said that they have trust and confidence in the men and women who are teaching children in the public schools. When asked to describe those teachers, the most common responses were caring, encouraging, attentive, believed in me, strict, challenging and dedicated. In a 2013 Gallup poll rating professions based on honesty and ethics, teachers are ranked third with 70% approval.

Nevertheless, the perception of failed schools and teachers prevails. According to the same PDK/Gallup Poll (2013), school ratings decline steeply when the public is asked about our nation's schools. In other words, the public appears generally satisfied with the schools their children attend, but appear convinced that everyone else's schools are terrible.

A 70% approval rating looks pretty good, but we can do better. I've built a career on critiquing teacher practice, encouraging teachers to learn from the extensive literature on teaching and learning, and to adopt best practices. What I'm suggesting is not that we lower our expectations of and for teachers, but that we return to more nuanced and thoughtful efforts to improve our schools. We must return a modicum of sanity to our discussions about education and the role, function, and expectations of our teachers. And perhaps most importantly we should proceed no further with current reforms until we all have a better understanding of the consequences of our current war on teachers.

Time doesn't permit me to fully explore why there is an escalating war on teachers, but I don't want to ignore that important topic either. So I ask you to consider one frightening possibility. Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin (2012) explained,

> One goal of a market-driven approach to education is to de-professionalize the teaching profession, and its pay, by making teaching a routinized job rather than a field that requires a comprehensive education and ongoing professional development. Rather than being public intellectuals who teach young people how to think critically, solve problems

> creatively, and engage deeply with ideas, teachers will only need to follow a scripted curriculum geared toward passing standardized tests. In this scenario, teachers will be trained quickly, paid little, and burn out, thus maintaining a revolving door of educators. Low salaries will help cut costs. (p. 19)

The current war on teachers is transforming our educational system, but not always in good ways. First, it is altering the curriculum. "Seventy-one percent of the nation's 15,000 school districts have reduced the hours of instructional time spent on history, music, and other subjects to open up more time for reading and math" (Center on Education Policy, 2006, p.vii).

Secondly, it has confounded test performance with intellectual skill and achievement. In *Why Great Teachers Quit (Farber, 2010),* a veteran teacher says,

> The students take five tests each week, and that is only in reading. This is all in preparation for the end-of-the-year tests. These kids have at least one test every single day. No wonder they act out! They have no creativity left. They are master test takers, but they can't think. (p. 125)

Third, the war on teachers is re-directing resources in ways that exacerbate inequities. School districts now spend 5-6 times more on tests than they did before No Child Left Behind, (Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin, 2012), but this only begins to describe the damage. According to Kumashiro (2009),

> When schools do not meet Annual Yearly Progress, they must divert a significant amount of time and resources away from teaching in order to meet new requirements, including increased reporting requirements. Teachers also change their teaching, devoting more time to testing and test preparation, which often involves narrowing and refocusing the curriculum. What results is a lower percentage of teachers' time focused on teaching, and a lower percentage of class time focused on a rich and encompassing curriculum. (p. 9)

Last, and most importantly, the de-professionalization of teachers is causing our very best teachers to re-evaluate their career choice. A few months ago, I had a long conversation with a bright, dedicated teacher of students with special needs who loves teaching, but hates his job. He teaches students who are cognitively and behaviorally challenged and is considered a miracle worker by his peers. "He gets more out of students than anyone we've ever taught with," offered a colleague during a momentary pause in the conversation. But the flexibility, the creativity, the artistry this teacher uses so skillfully to get the most out the district's most challenging students is all but gone now, constrained by committee written curricula and buried by mountains of paperwork documenting how standards are (or are not) being met. This talented teacher, who works a second job in order to provide for his very young family, is tired of hearing that teachers are failing, he's tired of having to re-design his lessons every year to accommodate the whims of non-educators who have never set foot in a classroom like his, and he's offended when his neighbors think he doesn't have to work very hard.

I encountered a second teacher a few weeks ago, one I've known for some time and whom I'm convinced will be the Wisconsin Teacher of Year in the not too distant future. She's having a very difficult year because she is being second-guessed every step of the way by a student's mother. This exemplary teacher approaches spelling holistically. On Monday, the class builds an imaginative paragraph incorporating the week's new words. Over the ensuing days, the children learn the meaning of the words, discuss and perfect the paragraph's grammar, and yes, learn to spell the words correctly. When Friday comes, the students are tested and they do well, but one student is pulled out of spelling time every day by her mother, because spelling, in Mom's view, is best learned by memorizing lists. I submit Mom's triumph over best practice

can only happen in a climate where teachers are assumed to be failing.

These two examples illustrate how current practices "undermine teachers' judgment and knowledge; they deny the most important source of data that we have, the perceptions and understandings of those closest to the action" (Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin, 2012, p. xi). In short, the de-professionalization war on teachers robs teachers of the challenges that most attracted them to the profession in the first place; the opportunity to share what they are passionate about, to create activities and lessons that address the needs of students holistically, and to nurture and inspire. And we have to wonder. Will the two teachers I just described still be in their classrooms five years from now? And, will we be better off if they are not?

Each year, St. Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin, recognizes one or two faculty for excellence in teaching with an award named for a graduate and long-time high school science teacher. The donor established the Award for Excellence in Teaching to redress "the overlooked fact that excellent teachers have enormous impact on countless individuals and the society in general, to recognize the raw opportunities—the power that a teacher has to change things," to acknowledge that teaching, at its best, is so much more than the mechanical pursuit of passing test scores and to ensure that teachers, who work hard to reach and inspire every child, are honored, not vilified.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said, "Teaching, in short, should be one of the nation's most revered professions." I agree, and I want to extend to all educators a call to action. Let's stop this escalating war on teachers before current policies result in irreparable harm. Let's embrace this vision by re-discovering and acknowledging all that teachers are and can be. Let's take into account all the data and build on the vast knowledge base about teaching and learning we already have. Most importantly, let's give teachers the support they need to be successful. And finally, let's elevate teachers rather than denigrate them and give our children the teachers and the education they deserve.

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Questions

Joanna Simpson

I'm not here to make the educational process easy on you.

I'm here to ask questions
that may cause you to question
and one day lead us to answers that are
sorely
needed.

And sometimes, many times, that's ugly and that's okay.
I can't save you from "them"
or you,
but I understand why you want me to.

I'm not suffering the abuse.
And I refuse to be used and have words misconstrued
Because you may not realize this but literature is my food.

There is good work being done all around me
and I have the open mind to see.
That excites me because my roots grow deeper with every bloom on
my tree
of knowledge that I continue to feed
and water and grow with the literacy
that causes me
to
ask
"those questions".

So that smooth sailing easy ride you were expecting?
It's gonna have some bumps and if those bumps are
uncomfortable
then I have to tell you,
my friend,
that growing pains do hurt and if the questions
are deep
enough
then that growth will not end.

And that's okay.
It's good.
It's necessary.

Haha and I think we are both lucky
you chose me
to "save you" from the hypocrisy
that you so clearly caused when you refused
to question.

About the Author

Dr. Joanna Simpson is a Program Director at Grand Canyon University in sunny Phoenix, Arizona. Joanna taught high school English to inner-city students for ten years before she moved into higher education. She has spent the last several years teaching literacy, reading and gifted education courses to pre-service and continuing teachers. She has extensive experience in writing curriculum for initial certification programs and advanced degrees and served as a director of urban and reading programs. Her areas of research and expertise include gifted education, adolescent literacy, critical literacy and differentiated instruction with a focus on marginalized populations. When she is not reading or writing, Joanna can be found in the swimming pool with her children, husband, and dogs. Joanna can be reached at Joanna.simpson@gcu.edu.

The Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group
2nd Annual Social Justice Literature Awards
Carolyn L. Cook

The Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (SIG) awarded the annual Social Justice Literature Awards, at the International Reading Association's 2014 meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Award was given to three books: Best Picture Book - Elizabeth Suneby (author) and Suana Verelst (illustrator) for *Razia's Ray of Hope: One Girl's Dream of an Education,* Best Non-Picture Book - Farhana Zia for *The Garden of My Imaan,* and Best Nonfiction Book - Deborah Ellis for *Looks like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids.*

The Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG created this award to highlight children's and young adult literature that illustrates qualities of social justice. The main categories were Picture Books, Non-Picture Books and Nonfiction Books. The award committee selected the top 10% of the nominations received from publishers. In reviewing texts, the committee considered two principles: recognition of the literary and artistic qualities of the text, as well as the reader response. With respect to literary and artistic qualities, texts were evaluated on how they fostered respect and understanding of diverse populations, promoted social responsibility (including equity, justice, and peace), presented social issues in their complexity, and addressed social responsibility towards individuals, communities, societies and/or the environment. With respect to reader response, books were evaluated for the extent to which the text invites reflection and socially responsible action by the reader. Furthermore, in the reader response the committee judged how the text encourages the analysis of past injustices showing possible alternatives and/or challenges and how the text opens the reader's imagination to other possibilities. Lastly, the committee considered the appeal of the text to the targeted readers.

Selected Picture Book

Razia's Ray of Hope: One Girl's Dream of an Education by Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst. Kids Can Press, 2013, 32 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1554538164. Age Range: 8-12. Grade Level: 3-7. Lexile Measure: 680L.
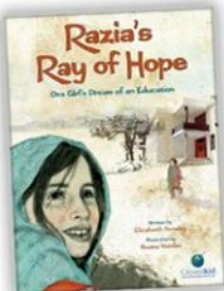
In *Razia's Ray of Hope: One Girl's Dream of an Education*, Razia dreams of learning to read and write. There are no schools for girls so she listens and watches her brothers as they do their studies; she has already learned her letters. She must convince the men in her family that it is worthwhile for her to have an education too. The story is based on the true stories of students from the Zabuli Education Center for Girls just outside of Kabul. The back matter found in the book includes historical notes on girls and education around the globe as well as activities about a typical day in Razia's school in Afghanistan.

Selected Non-picture Book

The Garden of My Imaan by Farhana Zia. Peachtree Publishers, 2013, 192 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1561456987. Age Range: 8-10. Grade Level: 4-8. Lexile Measures: 550L.
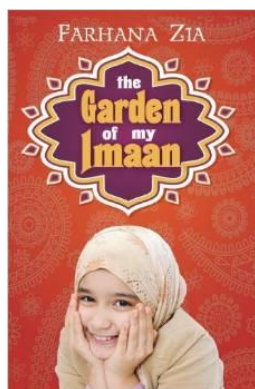
In *The Garden of my Imaan*, Aliya, a Muslim girl, in an American middle school is trying to fit in and understand herself. The story is about her school adventures and misadventures but the core is about the role Aliya's culture and religion play in discovering who she really is. The reader learns about the Muslim faith while Aliya reflects on her friends, enemies, family, and faith while writing letters to Allah for a Ramadan activity at the Islamic Center. This insider's story helps the reader gain authentic perspectives of many misunderstood ideas and traditions.

Selected Non-fiction Book

Looks like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids by Deborah Ellis. Groundwood Books Publisher. 2014, 256 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1554981205. Age Range: 12 and up. Grade Level: 6 and up. Lexile Measures: 780L.
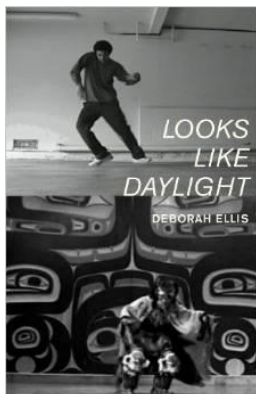
For two years, the author traveled in the United States and Canada interviewing indigenous young people ages 9-18. The result was *Looks like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids* with each chapter sharing someone's story told in the first person. Some stories are heartbreaking, but most are filled with pride and hope. Throughout the book, there are quotes from Native leaders. Chief Arvol Looking Horse said, "Each of us is put here in this time and in this place to personally decide the future of humankind. Do you think you were put here for anything less?" The stories show the accomplishments of young people to make a difference for others and themselves by overcoming many obstacles.


2015 Social Justice Literature Committee and Award

The Committee is currently taking nominations from publishers for the 2015 award. Please contact Carolyn (**cook@msmary.edu**) or Kenny (**varner@lsu.edu**) with book submissions or questions. The 2014-15 committee will consist of Sarah Harrison-Burns, Patricia Dean, Aimee Rogers, Zanthia Smith, Bethany Stetson, Denise Stuart, and Joyce Wheaton. Nominations for the 2015-16 committee are open. The committee will proceed with members rotating off after a three-year commitment.

For more information about

Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association,

visit our website @

http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Literacy and Social Responsibility
An eJournal of The International Reading Association
Volume 8
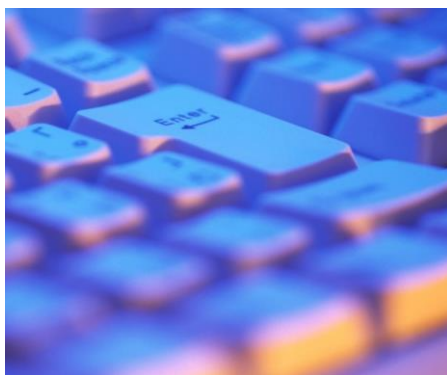
As we move as an organization to focus on transforming lives through literacy, this independent, peer-reviewed eJournal provides an open forum for presenting practices promoting literacy development that fosters social responsibility for learners of all ages. The co-editors seek manuscripts highlighting research that addresses community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, the transformative power of literacy, and/or stewardship. Manuscripts highlighting an appreciation for sociocultural and/or linguistic diversity of participants and teacher/researchers are encouraged. Book reviews of professional literature and children/adolescent literature as well as relevant poetry submissions are also considered.

Deadline for submissions is:

May 1, 2015
Next issue's publication date is October 2015.

Submit electronically, attaching a *Word file* to <u>both</u> co-editors:
Tynisha D. Meidl @ **tynisha.meidl@snc.edu** *and*
Leah Katherine Saal @ **lksaal@loyola.edu**

For more information about Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of IRA, visit our website @
http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/

Submission Requirements

Literacy and Social Responsibility
An eJournal of The International Reading Association

As we move as an organization to focus on transforming lives through literacy, this is an independent, peer-reviewed eJournal providing an international forum for educators, authors, and researchers at all levels to present practices promoting literacy development that fosters social responsibility for learners of all ages. Manuscript's focus should highlight research that addresses community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, the transformative power of literacy, and/or stewardship. Manuscripts highlighting an appreciation for sociocultural and/or linguistic diversity of participants and teacher/researchers are encouraged. As an electronic journal, interactive submissions with active links are particularly sought.

Full-length manuscripts should not exceed 5,000 words excluding all references, figures and appendices (approximately 20-25 pages) and should not be published or under consideration for publication or public dissemination by another entity. Submissions should be blinded: 1) remove author names and affiliations from bylines, 2) references to your own and to coauthors' published work can remain in text and in reference list, 3) mask any city, state, institutional affiliation, or links to personal websites. All submissions should conform to the style outlined in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Text should be presented double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font, in Microsoft Word; images should be submitted in jpg format. Authors of accepted manuscripts must also provide written permission/ releases for use of material from another source (including student's writing samples, text or figures excerpted from another published work, etc.). Releases must also be provided for use of any person's words, likeness, or images. Accepted authors agree to submit a current photo and bio.

Book reviews of professional literature and children's/adolescent literature are typically 1,500 words and can focus on a single text or multiple, related texts. Reviews of children's/adolescent literature should suggest themes relating literacy instruction to community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and/or stewardship.

Relevant poetry submissions will be considered.

Deadline for submissions is: May 1, 2015
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