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College of Education
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READING HORIZONS:
A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Editor: Karen F. Thomas
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Teachers Role in Providing Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

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Abstract

Every elementary classroom has children of varying intellectual ability, social or cultural background, language facility, and physical attributes. Today, more than ever, all teachers must be prepared to meet the varying educational, social, and emotional needs of all children. The culture of many students, while different from that upon which much of the U.S. educational system is based, is neither inadequate nor deficient; rather, the problem lies in the educational system. An educational system that bases its expectations, delivery, and curricular content on the norms of the mainstream population is insufficient for students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1994; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). As a result, students from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds often experience a mismatch between home and school expectations (Faltis, 1997;

Nieto, 1996). This cultural discontinuity often results in a misunderstanding between teachers and students in the classroom. Thus, to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students, the educational system must be transformed so that all students have an equal chance to succeed.

When culturally and linguistically diverse students enter school, a major challenge for service providers is meeting the unique needs of each child. Many children bring with them experiences and socialized patterns of behavior that have not traditionally been valued in public school contexts (Banks & Banks, 1997). Multicultural school reform challenges educators to design and implement culturally enriched and educationally sound instruction from a strength perspective as opposed to one that is based on the traditional deficit model of instruction (Delpit, 1995). The growing and changing demographics in classrooms throughout the United States requires that educators develop and construct culturally responsive instruction (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Culturally and linguistically diverse students are on the same reading and learning continuum as other children; however, they often have experiences that are different from the mainstream. Culturally responsive reading instruction bridges the gap between the school and the world of the student. Culturally responsive instruction is consistent with the values of the students' own culture aimed at assuring academic learning. This type of reading instruction encourages teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. Without culturally congruent reading instruction, different emergent literacy experiences and exposure to literature from their own culture or from traditional American literature may inhibit their success in early literacy instruction. Also, culturally and linguistically diverse students may have literacy experiences that are different from what is expected by the school and traditional early literacy programs do not adequately prepare them for beginning reading instruction (Stahl, 1990). Sometimes well intended early reading activities fail with linguistically and culturally diverse students because they benefit from early reading activities that build on their strengths rather than concentrate on eliminating their weaknesses.

Constructing literacy experiences for all learners

Reading instruction provides the foundation for school development in all content area subjects and subsequent learning experiences. Students who belong to historically marginalized groups (i.e., African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Native American) are rarely included in research paradigms that describe and assess the academic impact or reading instruction from a cultural perspective. While the field is persistent in documenting how these groups fall behind their European American counterparts, it does little to assess the academic growth and development from a culturally contextualized perspective.

Historically, reading instruction has been based on European American paradigms that have defined appropriate socialized academic behaviors. The curriculum mirrored majority society with significant focus on reading experiences that often reflected middle income suburbia with mom, dad, two children, and family pet as constant models. While that paradigm includes many that are indeed members of society, the experiences, for example, of culturally diverse people who may be intricate parts of extended or low-income families, and single headed households, are often neglected. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988) predicts that by the year 2020 that one of every two young people will be of diverse background therefore changing the definition of majority society (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989). While literature patterns have begun to change, instruction in schools has been slower in implementing such changes in materials chosen by teachers. What is most promising about multicultural school reform however, is the potential for its impact on all children and youth. If educators are to strive toward successful academic reading outcomes for “all” children, it may be important to develop instructional strategies that empower all children to prosper. Exposure to a variety of reading experiences will enrich the lives of everyone.

Effective Reading Strategies for Diverse Learners

A significant body of literature exists related to students who are placed “at risk” for reading acquisition and development failure (Kunjufu, 1993). Often, students placed “at risk” are found in lower socioeconomic conditions and area part of non-mainstreamed culture. Approaches to teaching such students who are having difficulty in reading must address at least two areas. First, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may miss important ideas and focus on details associated with their cultural experiences rather than ideas presented by the author. If cultural discontinuity appears between the text and the students’ concept of important content, the students’ success in learning key information is jeopardized. Teachers using culturally compatible reading instruction can help the diverse student identify his or her own cultural individualism while they simultaneously learn more through literacy instruction (Au, 1993). Second, they may not use processing strategies that can help them learn and remember content. While many students think strategically to solve problems outside of school (Holiday, 1985), such reasoning does not always find its way into the classroom of students who experience difficulties with reading. Most children are strategic learners; they just are not able to recognize that the strategies they use in their home cultural context can and should be applied to learning and solving problems at school. Combining activities such as reciprocal teaching and retellings can help increase students of diverse needs ability to recognize the important and less relevant information.

Several case studies have addressed the problems of students placed “at risk” and the use of metacognitive strategies to improve reading comprehension in academic settings. Studies have emphasized reading improvement through the implementation of contextual instruction, reciprocal interactions, ReQuest, ReQar, interactive and dynamic assessment, characteristics of competent readers and co-listing reading classes (Brozo, 1990; Coley & Hoffman, 1990; Davis, 1990; Peresich, Meadows, & Sinatra, 1990). These studies also provide examples of strategies that are culturally responsive because they are deeply steeped in activities highlighting social relationships.

While highly socialized interaction strategies have proven beneficial to the teaching of reading for culturally and linguistically diverse students, additional challenges still face students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Krashen (1993) notes that when possible, developing literacy skills in a students' primary language enables them to transfer these skills into English at the appropriate time (Cummins, 1988; Krashen, 1993). In terms of developing their English reading skills, many educators feel that students with limited-English proficiency (LEP) need to understand and speak English before they can begin to read it (Brisbois, 1995). Other educators, on the other hand, feel that it is not necessary for students with LEP to master the oral language before they are introduced to the written form (Fitzgerald, 1993; Gonzales, 1994). It needs to be emphasized, however, that even though the research seems to be divided on whether students need to proficiently speak English before they can read it, the majority of the research seems to be in agreement that students with limited-English proficiency will learn to read better if the initial reading instruction is in their native language (Allen, 1994; Krashen, 1993; Schifini, 1994). Teachers should be responsive to the student's home language by allowing the students' cultural language to exist in the classroom and build upon this first language.

Although students should not use their first language as a crutch, they should have the opportunity to experience the connection between their language and the mainstream language. Helping students recognize the important connection between vocabulary and word development of the native and mainstream language improves languages development, especially through the use of concept webs and vocabulary. In addition, Gonzales (1994) and Brisbois (1995) determined that students could learn to read in their native language and English at the same time if teachers use strategies that are mutually reinforcing and provide adequate vocabulary instruction in both languages.

Second-language learners benefit from reading programs that incorporate a range of contexts, both social and functional, and in which reading begins, develops, and is used as a means of communication. Adapting several reading approaches can help linguistically diverse students become effective, efficient users of written English. For example, the dual language reading approach makes use of native

language and literacy skills to strengthen the reading process of speakers whose English is limited. Primary language reading materials, tradebooks, basal texts, and other instructional materials can help strengthen bilingual reading programs when combined with instruction that encourages students to see the connection between their native language and the language to be learned.

Direct Instruction Combined with Literature-Based Activities

Perhaps the most radical procedures for helping culturally and linguistically diverse students get off to a successful start in literacy instruction are found in academic early reading programs. Some of these programs concentrate on the direct teaching of specific language and reading skills in which the teacher presents stimuli designed to elicit language responses. Integrating specific language activities that encourage student involvement is critical for early intervention of language development, especially for students who have limited opportunities to experience literacy outside the classroom. A wide range of literature-based activities combined with such a program can enrich students' early reading experiences. Skill activities associated with direct explicit instruction are considered the sole focus of this program. Skills are taught throughout the school day by engaging students in meaningful language that focuses on acquisition of each goal. For example, Mr. Goetz, a fifth grade language arts teacher, purposefully engages in conversation with various culturally diverse students. Mr. Goetz explains that the focus of the lesson is to use the magazines placed on their desks to individually create a collage of words that they have been learning from their vocabulary list. The teacher walks over to the desk of a Hispanic student and engages him in a conversation to incorporate meaningful language related to the collage instructions. He asks, "Miquel, I noticed that that you do not have a pair of scissors. Where are the scissors in the classroom?"

Miquel is encouraged to respond in a language manner that describes where the scissors are. Miquel answers, "The scissors are on the big table, Mr. Goetz."

While the primary focus of the lesson is vocabulary development using functional text, the secondary purpose is to engage students in meaningful language exchanges.

Brisbois (1995) discusses the importance of vocabulary instruction, and word recognition instruction in the second language. Word recognition begins with the production of isolated words in the clarification of meaning as related to the learner. Mr. Goetz prints the word *man* on the chalkboard. As he points to the word, he explains the rule, "This is a word."

He then follows his statement with an identity statement, "This is the word man." He encourages the students to respond with complete identity statements. Mr. Goetz begins by asking questions such as, "Is this the word dog?" Ina raises her hand and responds, "That's man, not dog." Mr. Goetz responds by recognizing Ina's correct answer but encourages Ina and other students to respond to the answer by using complete identity statements. "Good job, Ina. That's correct. Could you answer the question with the sentence structure that I suggested earlier?"

Ina answers, "Okay. No, that is not the word dog. That is the word man." Mr. Goetz responds, "That's exactly right, Ina!" Gestures are used to illustrate action words and students are invited to suggest other words they wish to learn. If no one volunteers a word the teacher supplies another word that has meaning for the students.

Word identification exercises can help students to acquire a sight vocabulary useful for developing simple sentences. As students learn to recognize their own names, they then receive instruction on recognizing other children's names. New sets of words (such as *is not* and *big*) can be added to construct sentences. Meaning is stressed in sentence reading by having students answer questions about their reading.

Mr. Goetz implemented this approach during his literacy instruction. "Now that we've completed the reading about Joe, here are some questions I want you to think about. First, could someone tell me this? Is Joe big?" Amy, a Native American student, answers, "No, he's not." Mr. Goetz responds to Amy, "That's correct. Can you tell me a

little more about Joe using the words we have covered in our vocabulary list?" Amy tries again this time answering; "Joe is not big." Mr. Goetz then asks the rest of the class, "Is Joe little?" Rashim raises his hand and responds, "Yes, Joe is little." After students progress with such basic tasks, they then apply their capabilities to read from teacher-prepared booklets.

A variation of this technique is the key word or word bank approach, (Ashton-Warner, 1963; McCracken & McCracken, 1979; Weaver, 1994). With this approach, each student develops a personalized set of word cards. To do this, the teacher asks each student which word he/she wants to learn for the day and writes the word on a card for the student. The student then illustrates the other side of the card. The student can make a drawing of the word on a separate sheet of paper accompanied by either a student written or dictated sentence. Each day, students read their word cards either individually or in pairs in association with a variety of activities. For example, words can be categorized by similarities or differences. Students can develop oral language skills by describing a word and having a classmate identify the word. Thus, with this technique students construct reading vocabularies based on words of interest to them.

A beginning reading program can serve as an extension of the language development program. It can be designed to help students become familiar with letter names, associate pictures visually with their naming words, recognize and produce rhyming words, and learn and use a limited number of sight words. Cognitive-embedded tasks can help relate these activities to real-life experiences.

Another way to provide students with positive literacy experiences in early reading programs is to use predictable reading materials that involve choral reading. Patterned books have stories with predictable features such as rhyming and repeated phrases or refrains that promote language development (Norton, 1995). Patterned books frequently contain pictures that may facilitate story comprehension. The predictable patterns immediately involve beginning second language readers in a literacy event in their first or second language. Books with patterned structure can provide modeling as a reading strategy, challenge students'

current level of linguistic competence, and provide assistance in comprehending difficult concepts.

Comprehension through the repetition of a simple sentence pattern can motivate second language learners to continue trying to learn to read. The process is important for developmental purposes and teaches students to use contextual and syntactic features of the text to identify the repeated words or phrases. These fully illustrated stories repeat simple patterns that second language learners can use to begin the reading process. Students become familiar with the story and language patterns and soon begin to create their own text with their own illustrations. In the early stages of second language acquisition, the use of the first and second language is critical for conceptual development. Later, as the second language proficiency develops, the student will focus on learning English. Patterned books' most important function is to offer immediate access to meaningful, enjoyable literacy experiences, which facilitates life long readers.

Choral reading has also been used successfully in promoting language learning for linguistically diverse students. The benefits of using choral reading to enhance children's acquisition of a second language are that it: (1) creates a low-anxiety environment, (2) provides repeated practice, (3) is based on comprehensible input, and (4) incorporates drama (McCauley & McCauley, 1992). Implementing choral reading for second language learners begins with identifying poems and adapting them for the students. Poems should cover familiar topics for the students. For second language learners, the poems can contain a lot of action and allow lines to be added to help clarify vocabulary and emphasize meaning. After the poem has been selected and adapted, McCauley and McCauley (1992) suggest the following general procedure:

1. Give quick, interesting introduction. Focus on getting students involved in talking about the poem;
2. Read the poem aloud to students. Use expression, sound effects, and movements that the poem could represent;

3. Make copies of the poem available to the students;
4. Read the poem again to the students as they follow along;
5. Read the poem with the students slowly at first, and gradually increase the speed of reading. Appropriate movements and sound effects also should be included; and
6. Give lines to the students when they feel comfortable with the words and movements. Students who want solo lines may be given them.

Practice reading the poem with assigned parts.

Recognize a job well done with applause, verbal praise, or both.

Basal Reading Programs

Basal reading programs are still used throughout the United States, and teachers of linguistically diverse students often choose to use them to teach reading. However, teachers should be aware of special considerations when using basal readers as the primary method of teaching reading. Among these considerations are (1) special attention to developing background concepts and vocabulary in depth before reading, (2) skillful questioning during silent reading to identify and clear up misunderstandings and to enhance the students' comprehension, and (3) specific emphasis on listening to and understanding the communicative function of language, rather than fluid oral reading.

Today many of the basal series have integrated a literature approach to teaching reading and have become more sensitive to teaching reading skills in the context of the literature (Elderedge, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1996). They have also shifted their design to include more shared reading approaches, rather than just teacher directed reading approaches (Hoffman, McCarthey, Abbot, Christian, Corman, Curry, Dressman, Elliot, Matherne, & Stahle, 1993). However, an alternative to using only a basal reader program for instruction is to use basal readers and literature together in teaching literacy. Some individuals (Delpit, 1991) have indicated that culturally and linguistically diverse students may need a bridge from the basal series to a more process-focused

literature-based program. Combining features of direct instruction with literature of the home culture of students from diverse backgrounds may benefit students.

Morrow (1992) conducted research in second-grade classrooms on how an integrated basal and literature-based reading program affected the literacy achievement of culturally diverse children. The features of her integrated program included:

1. Literacy centers within each classroom providing students access to a variety of books and literacy materials such as multiple genres of children's literature, comfortable seating, and manipulatives (felt stories, roll movies, and taped stories);
2. Teacher-guided activities helping students understand what they could do and should do. Activities included teachers' use of modeling and scaffolding, the use of the directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA), and retellings using both books and props (felt stories, puppets, and roll movies); and
3. Independent reading and writing periods to allow students to choose between working alone or with others, and to select from a variety of activities ranging from retelling to dramatizing stories. The basal reader portion of the literacy instruction continued with the inclusion of the literature-based reading instruction.

Morrow's study showed that students from diverse backgrounds had improved literacy achievement. Concerns about whether students from diverse backgrounds would benefit from integrating the basal reader approach with a literature-based approach were unfounded. Components of the program that might account for its success involved teachers demonstrating, facilitating, and participating in literature activities with high expectations for their students. In addition, the program featured literature reflecting the various cultural backgrounds found in the classrooms.

Integrating Culturally Responsive Reading Strategies

Diverse cultural literature is one means to move closer toward becoming a nation that is accepting and tolerant of all cultures. For our country to develop an understanding and acceptance of others, we will have to become educated about the cultural heritage of many groups. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this task is to incorporate multiethnic and multicultural literature into our classrooms. Multiethnic literature helps students discover the intricacies of a language, as well as the people's history and culture (Bieger, 1996; Godina, 1996). In addition, when students read literature they encounter a multitude of characters that are both similar to and different from themselves. Each character of a story is driven by certain emotions and must deal with the problems and joys of life in various ways. How the heroes and heroines react and cope provides students with insights and information well beyond their own personal experiences.

According to Banks (1994) there are four levels that teachers can use to integrate ethnic content into the curriculum. The lowest levels of integration are the "contributions approach" and the "ethnic additive approach." Teachers who use only the "contributions approach" have their students read only about the contributions of ethnic groups such as reading only about ethnic holidays, heroes, and customs. The "ethnic additive approach" does add content, concepts, and themes that reflect diverse cultures, but it does not integrate it into the existing curriculum. Instead, it may become a unit that is taught for a month out of the year and then forgotten. Teachers should be encouraged to use the two highest levels of multicultural integration ("transformation approach" and "social action approach") when designing curriculum. Use of the "transformation approach" completely reconstructs the curriculum in order to allow students to view concerns, themes, problems, and concepts from the perspective of diverse groups. This is not a unit that lasts a month, but instead is a commitment to culturally responsive instruction throughout the whole year. The highest form of cultural integration is the "social action approach." During this approach teachers select literature that allows students to identify social problems and concerns and to read about how the main character made decisions and took action to solve the problem. Through the modeling of the character's actions students learn how to identify and resolve problems related to cultural differences.

Teachers can integrate a social action approach into their curriculum by using literature based reading instruction. Literature-based instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students can feature stories from various cultures and languages displayed around the classroom; writings of students covering the walls like ribboned wallpaper; portfolios showing drafts of creative writing pieces, such as journals of all kinds, letters, and poetry; and field notes of student activities. Integrating multiethnic literature into a school curriculum for second language learners helps students realize that all ethnic groups have roots in the past and a strong heritage that is a part of their culture (Bieger, 1996). Knowing about others from a similar culture encourages a sense of pride that builds a positive self-concept for students. They may discover by reading, that others from their own culture made significant contributions to society. Students encountering multiethnic literature as a part of their reading curriculum benefit academically and learn the social values and behaviors of people in society (Bieger, 1996; Godina, 1996).

Existing reading programs can easily integrate multiethnic literature for explicit reading instruction. Teachers can share stories both orally and in written form, and instruction can coordinate language arts exercises such as vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language development in both the first and second languages. The use of literature is an excellent way to increase cultural awareness, build vocabulary and language, develop comprehension skills, and provide writing opportunities. Multiethnic literature can provide teaching opportunities for creating lessons on figurative language, examining the story's symbolism, and integrating context with idiomatic expressions. Such explorations help students understand meaning and enhance the development of language while stimulating interest in reading.

Using instructional strategies that create a culturally affirming perspective in the classroom to support reading instruction can be effective with culturally diverse learners. Examples of such strategies that can be implemented in K-8 reading environments where students may be experiencing difficulty with critical reading comprehension skills are Inventionisation and Footsteps in the Hall of Fame.

Inventionisation uses yearlong thematic units as its foundation of discovery in order to create a transformative approach that focuses on all cultures' contributions to scientific inquiry. Inventionisation begins by having students begin reading biographies of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans who are often not included in instructional delivery involving the work and inventions of Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Benjamin Franklin. Sharing with students the contributions of individuals like Lewis Latimer, who worked initially as a chief draftsman for Edison and Bell, provides an excellent foundation for discussions of the time period, inventions, and the critical reading skills necessary to assist in building a knowledge base. Sharing the diversity of people who have contributed to making our society more efficient and convenient can also be used as a vehicle to promote critical reading skills. Studying, for example, the development of the contact lens, the Bing Cherry, the Polio vaccine, blood plasma, government, and marital property rights will open the world of discovery from an Asian, European, African, Native, and Hispanic American perspective, while providing students the opportunity to engage in critical reading. Informational text such as *African-American Inventors* by McKissack & McKissack (1994) can be extremely beneficial while planning for Inventionisation units.

Footsteps in the Hall of Fame is a social action approach that examines the leadership of all Americans who contributed to the development of the United States regardless of their cultural heritage. Genres of biography and historical fiction can become the foundation of critical reading development during this type of activity. Study of people and periods from a socio-political and personal perspective allows students the opportunity to study the historical period and its people. Opportunities for generating gender consciousness can also be explored as all students are provided exposure to research and the study of men and women who are also culturally diverse at different time periods throughout our history. This culturally responsive activity can also be framed from an interdisciplinary perspective so that collaboration among teachers, parents, and students is a targeted goal in reading development. As students learn about each aspect of a person's life they earn footsteps into the Hall of Fame that highlights their development as a reading scholar of the period and of the person. Other projects can evolve from

this initial reading activity to highlight a variety of language arts within the classroom context (e.g., drama, writing, oratory, and media presentations).

Summary

The ability to deal effectively with student differences is crucial to teaching reading. Teachers must address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the regular classroom. The traditional methods of literature instruction are now challenged to adapt and evolve to the ever-changing young adult population. Although current methods of reading instruction are effective, they are based mostly on European American paradigms. Therefore, educators are also challenged to find innovative techniques that reflect the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Culturally responsive reading instruction offers exciting changes to traditional curriculum. Overall, culturally congruent instruction provides an educationally compatible avenue for all students to benefit and excel.

Creating successful opportunities for students with limited proficiency in English requires an understanding of nonstandard dialects, characteristics of foreign languages spoken by the students in the classroom, and students' cultural values. Speaking with a dialect or a primary language other than English presents the need for special consideration for culturally and linguistically diverse students in learning to read in a traditional general education classroom. A sensitive and knowledgeable teacher who uses culturally responsive reading instruction can address these needs. The ability of teachers to handle differences effectively translates into instructional practices providing self-respect and security for all students in the classroom. Teachers who tailor reading instruction enhancing the needs of all students truly transform the literacy paradigm for students who have historically belonged to marginalized groups and thereby speak to the needs of all students.

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Reading in the Zone of Proximal Development: Mediating Literacy Development in Beginner Readers through Guided Reading

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Abstract

Because the term *direct instruction* has been and is used broadly, it has come to define all types of explicit teaching. Thus, a traditional basal approach – where children are grouped for instruction by their abilities (high, average, and low) and where the teaching is often predetermined or scripted – is unwittingly compared to *guided reading*. The major objective of this article is to demonstrate that the fundamental difference between the two approaches lies in pitching instruction to the child's literacy level and the need for dynamic grouping of children for instruction. This objective is achieved through an exploration of the theoretical foundations of *guided reading*. More specifically, the reader is given a Vygotskian perspective of the transactions that occur between the teacher and the student that lead to learning how to read.

No one will debate the maxim that the school's first mission is to guide students in their efforts to become literate. However, the discussion on literacy becomes emotionally charged which sharply divides educators as well as the public when the conversation turns to the best approach to teach beginning reading. Why has this topic become one of the most politicized issues in the field of education? Becoming a fluent reader by the end of the first grade "is the key to

education, and education is the key to success for both individuals and a democracy” (Adams, 1990, p. 13).

While there are many reasons for this ongoing debate, there have been sweeping changes in literacy instruction that have led to major reforms in reading instruction. Such changes have compelled more teachers to use children’s literature in their reading instruction rather than relying solely on the traditional basal readers in teaching children how to read. Further, more teachers are working to integrate reading and writing instruction within the curriculum areas of math, science, and social studies. Another major improvement led teachers to vary the grouping patterns for literacy instruction rather than placing children in fixed ability groups, where many young children are learning to read within the context of whole-class instruction.

While numerous literacy reforms are indeed excellent, one result is confusion centering on instructing young children to read. The one major problem that has emerged is the move from direct instruction with small groups of children to a whole-group approach. This shift away from intentional teaching in a small-group setting probably occurred when teachers began to eliminate the three ability-grouping format in the primary grades and started to use varied grouping patterns.

Traditionally, beginner readers, students who are learning to read in grades one through three, have been taught how to read in a high-, middle-, or low-ability group. Being assigned to a group in September, meant that students remained in that same group for the rest of the school year (Juel, 1988; Shannon, 1985). Further, children who were in the low-ability groups received the kind of instruction that focused on isolated skills, while spending very little time actually reading (Allington, 1983). The consequence was obvious; low-ability grouped children were low performers for the rest of the school year. In most instances, these students remained at the bottom of their class for the rest of their elementary school years. For this and many more reasons, the traditional model of direct instruction that uses the fixed ability-grouping pattern has not been successful, especially for the low-ability group. It is no wonder then that many teachers turned to whole-class reading instruction as an alternative to traditional small-group instruction.

However, for most young children, direct instruction in how print works when learning how to read is indeed critical (Juel, 1988; Stanovich, 1990). This is even more critical for first graders who

come to school with fewer literacy or book experiences from home (Adams, 1990). The kind of grouping and the nature of teaching offered by the traditional basal approach, wore a disguise of "teaching to the child's literacy level." However, the instruction was scripted and pre-determined, paced for each group, and rarely responsive to the individual literacy needs of the child. The traditional approach held literacy was out of their reach for most children.

An alternative to the traditional model of direct instruction is **guided reading**. This approach in teaching young children to read is **more** than direct instruction of how print works. In **guided reading**, the explicit goal is to enable children to develop and to use efficient literacy strategies, independently and creatively. Children not only learn how print works, but they develop the critical strategies needed to become fluent readers, strategies for detecting and correcting errors, for word-solving unknown words within the text, for making predictions, for making personal connections to the text, and more. At all times during instruction, meaning is central to reading which becomes internalized by the students. Thus, the children learn more than just how to read a story; they learn how to read on their own by applying the strategies learned in **guided reading**. This kind of direct instruction in reading is possible when children are grouped for literacy or skill needs of the children.

Thus the instructional activities and the literacy strategies taught by the teacher within the context of **guided reading** are directed and shaped by the children's literacy needs. There are fundamental differences between the grouping procedures used in **guided reading** and the ability-grouping patterns used in traditional approaches. The procedure for grouping students for instruction in **guided reading** is based on each child's literacy development, that is, their literacy needs at variable points in the school year. Because a child's development is constantly changing, never static, the grouping procedure in **guided reading** is dynamic. Children are grouped for their specific literacy skill needs and their needs change at different rates. Thus, on-going observation and informal assessment practices of children's literacy strategies by the teacher is a critical element embedded in guided-reading instruction, since it informs the teacher in grouping children for instruction.

Therefore, the major goal of this article is to provide a strong rationale for direct instruction at a child's level of literacy development, demonstrating why this approach is needed for most

children who are becoming independent readers. This objective is achieved by explicating the theoretical foundation of the practice of **guided reading**. My intention is to demonstrate the need for the teacher to consider carefully the children's literacy development while planning instruction as well as the equally mandated need to teach children to read within their zone of proximal development, achieved through the proper grouping of children based on their specific literacy needs. To those who view direct teaching in traditional approaches and in **guided reading** similar, they will discern that their fundamental differences are quite dissimilar

Guided Reading: The heart of a literacy program

Guided reading is the indispensable component of a well-balanced literacy program within the primary classroom. Indeed, it has been described as the "heart of the literacy program" (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). Within any well-balanced literacy program, each element is integrally related, supporting the goal of the literacy program in varied ways. **Guided reading** serves to assist students in becoming fluent and independent readers early in their school years so as to reap the benefits and rewards that reading brings throughout their lives. As students become strategic readers, their levels of participation in all other literacy events increase as well.

The Procedures Used in Guided Reading

Following is an overview of the essential elements of guided reading supported by a discussion of how the fundamental components are related to Vygotskian theory. That is, the essential procedures for the teacher and the students during guided reading will be described and explained through Vygotsky's theory. For a thorough description and a complete guide to this approach, see Fountas and Pinnell (1996),

The following are brief descriptions of the essential components that are characteristic to teaching guided reading:

Book introduction. Before children are directed to read the book independently, the teacher "walks the students through the story." The book introduction is "a way that gives children access to [the story] while leaving some problem solving to do" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 135).

Children's reading of the whole text by themselves. After the book introduction, the children are asked to read the story by themselves. While they are reading, the teacher listens in order to assist anyone who solicits or needs help. During this time, she observes and documents children's strategy use as well as their performance on other reading behaviors.

Selection and use of appropriate leveled reads. Students learn to read with texts that are appropriate to their specific literacy needs. The teacher selects, from many small leveled books, a text that is supportive of the beginner reader and poses a few problems to solve to practice learned literacy strategies.

Dynamic grouping procedures. Guided reading is founded on the major assumption that changes in children's development is a continuous process. However, their development may not have the same qualitative change, nor do changes take place at a specified rate or the same time for each child (Vygotsky, 1986). Therefore, within a first-grade classroom, literacy concepts are developing continuously but emerge at different times; a concept may take longer in one child to develop than in another; and a literacy concept's appearance may have qualitative differences as well. Thus children are "grouped by specific assessment for strengths in the reading process and appropriate level of text difficulty" and the grouping is "dynamic, flexible, and changeable on a regular basis" (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 101).

A Vygotskian Perspective of Guided Reading Clinic

Three major themes from Vygotsky's work provide very specific support to the framework for ***guided reading*** instruction: (1) learning is social and occurs in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978); (2) learning is mediated by language (Vygotsky, 1986); and (3) learning or the development of concepts and higher mental functioning takes place within a student's zone of proximal development (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). These basic ideas will be discussed as they relate to the essential elements and procedures of ***guided reading***.

The Book Introduction

Before the children read the story independently, the teacher will provide considerable time and thought in preparing her students for that task. This occurs within the context of the book introduction.

The small group of children hold their own books as “they walk through the story” assisted by the teacher. The teacher’s support is in the form of a discussion of the story which is determined by the specific needs of the children related to the text to be read. The purpose of the book introduction is to mediate the text before the students read it independently. Being sensitive to their specific literacy needs, she poses questions about the story to be read, prepares them for the structure of the story, provides word work on specific words she knows will pose difficulties, and makes them familiar with the language of the text. She may help them with text patterns, or alert them to the pictures that will serve as cues for comprehension and decoding while they are reading. Student responses to the questions posed demand “on-the-spot” teacher actions as she hopes to further the student’s development of a concept. This teacher-lead dialogue, or curricular conversation, within the context of the book introduction is the direct or intentional assistance to the children’s literacy performance within their zones of proximal development.

The teacher is able to teach and prepare further teaching to their development through on-going observation and assessment of the children while reading independently. Here the teacher is acquiring knowledge of their performance with respect to literacy specific concepts and strategy use. Having garnered an understanding of the children’s literacy development, the teacher may prepare for the book introduction more effectively and know how to respond to each child during this strategic interaction. When instruction like this is pitched just slightly beyond the capacity of the children, the teacher is then assisting them in their *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*. What is the *ZPD*?

Teaching in the Zone of Proximal Development: The *zone of proximal development* is a way of thinking about learning and development. Vygotsky (1978) has defined the zone of proximal development as the “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving” and the “potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.81). For the teacher, this means knowing the children’s level of development and shaping their instruction slightly beyond their development. Besides providing the appropriate instructional activity to further the development of the specific concepts that are being learned, the teacher also mediates and scaffolds the performance of the students until they can function independently.

For Vygotsky, development and learning was not an “either-or” situation, you know or you don’t know. Rather, he viewed learning or the development of a concept on a continuum, as a series of growth points or degrees of maturing. When a child is learning within a *zone of proximal development*, he/she is learning a concept that is close to emergence. That is, once the child receives appropriate instruction, the child will be able to use the concept independently or without adult assistance.

Thus, Vygotsky’s (1978) description of learning in the *zone of proximal development* is further developed by Gallimore and Tharp (1988, 1990) who have studied and explained the *ZPD* extensively. They have defined good teaching in relation to development which “consists of assisting performance through the *zone of proximal development*. Teaching can be said to occur when assistance is offered at points in the *ZPD* at which performance requires assistance” (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988, p.45). The teacher then needs to be aware of the level of support and assistance that can foster learning. The model of the *ZPD* developed by Gallimore and Tharp provide a guideline to those who are shaping instruction at the child’s development. According to their model, there are four stages within the *zone of proximal development*, each stage requiring varied levels of support. At the first stage, the teacher assists the child in performing the task. At the beginning stages of the *ZPD*, and for young children, the teacher may model the task, provide explicit directions with much direct response and feedback to the child’s performance. The teacher is always responsive to the specific learning needs of the child.

During the book introduction, the teacher mediates the text for the child. Much of the assistance she gives to the child in the context of the book introduction is similar to that which occurs in the first and second stages of the zone of proximal development. For example, the teacher may be working on a specific literacy strategy such as using the title and the illustration on the cover to make a prediction about the story. The teacher may point to the title of the book to see if anyone can read it. If not, she will point to each word as she reads the title. She will then ask the children to look at the cover to see if they can tell what the story is about (modeling the strategy). Then a discussion about the title and the picture will ensue. What the teacher is doing is assisting the children in developing a prediction strategy that they will eventually be expected to independently.

Within this type of interaction, the teacher may employ such instructional techniques as modeling, questioning and thinking aloud. At first the children's responses are more imitative, and there is a heavy reliance on the teacher for assistance or scaffolding of the targeted literacy strategy. This will probably occur many more times before the children will be able to use, with little or no assistance, this literacy strategy, that is, the title and the picture to make predictions about the story. As the child proceeds through this beginning phase, Stage I of the *ZPD*, the teacher's teaching techniques will change. Depending upon the children's development of the strategy that is being taught, she may no longer model where the title is and her questions may become fewer to evoke a discussion around the picture.

Later, when the children have reached Stage II in the *ZPD* of this specific literacy strategy, the teacher may not ask the question about the title nor the picture. The teacher knows from observing the children that they are in the second stage of the *ZPD*, because they are using the title and the picture to make a prediction about the story. As the teacher distributes the books, she notes how the children begin to read the title themselves and search for picture cues to discuss the story that they will be reading.

The teacher assistance and support that is given in Stage II is quite different from the support given in Stage I. Because the children's concept of making predictions about a story is more fully emerging, the mediation given by the teacher is in the form of feedback and guidance to further develop this concept. Thus, when the children have reached Stage II, they are self-regulated; that is, they direct themselves to find the title and study the picture on the book's cover to participate in the discussion about the story. As a result, the book introduction is different. Because the children's literacy concepts are developing, the assistance that the teacher provides has changed, at least for this literacy concept. "However, this does not mean that the performance is fully developed...Regulation may have passed from the adult to the child(ren) speaker(s), but the control function remains with the overt verbalization in the form of self-directed speech" (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, p. 185). The teacher may hear a child using self-directed speech in finding the picture or in analyzing the picture for clues. The function of his/her speech is self-guidance, a characteristic of Stage II in the *ZPD*.

In Stage III, the child's "performance is developed, automatized, and fossilized" (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, p.186). This

is where the child has emerged from the *zone of proximal development*. When observing the children during the book introduction, the teacher notes that when they make their predictions about the story, the students are performing at a higher level. Now their performance is smooth and integrated; they do not need any assistance from the teacher, and they no longer use egocentric or overt speech to direct their strategy use to solve a problem.

In the Stage III, the need for help by the learner vanishes: Assistance from the teacher or from oneself is obtrusive in task execution. Vygotsky referred to a concept that was developed and to performance was automatized as “fossilized,” now the child has emerged from the *ZPD* for this literacy concept, making predictions about the story from the title and the picture.

Since learning is a life-long process, Stage IV of the *zone of proximal development* describes the child as he learns many new concepts and strategies. Stage IV describes the recursive nature of learning, where *ZPD* sequences are similar for the development of new capacities. For example, while a child has learned many strategies and concepts related to the reading process, there are many more that need to be developed.

Language is a tool for learning and thinking: Vygotsky postulated that an “indisputable fact of great importance (is that) thought development is determined by language” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 94). Within the context of the book introduction, it is obvious that language plays a critical role in learning, that is, in mediating the literacy strategy.

At first, in Stage I of the *ZPD*, the teacher demonstrated the use of the title and the illustration to determine the nature of the story. Modeling how to use this literacy strategy through gestures, she supported each aspect of her demonstration by language. The children were not passive recipients, they were encouraged to take an active part in the discussion about the story: They were pointing to the title, and as they searched the illustration, they talked about it in relation to the story and to their own lives. Language is the tool that was used to assist the children in making predictions.

When children were more familiar with that literacy strategy, that is, when their development was in Stage II of their *ZPD*, they used their own speech to guide their actions, as their performance became self-regulated. Their speech has its origins in the shared discussion

between the teacher and the group. That is, they may have used their egocentric speech to assist themselves, but carefully listening to them reveals that it bears resemblance to the teacher's direction or the group discussion. It is clear that the language that the teacher uses in direct teaching, becomes the inner voice of children in self-regulatory behavior. Thus, as the children progressed through the *ZPD*, when the literacy strategy was fully developed, their speech turned inward, and the curriculum conversation that took place within the context of the book introduction became their tool for learning. The teacher who knows this chooses the strategy language very carefully, because eventually it becomes the tool that the children use on their own to regulate their own learning.

Within the context of the book introduction, language was discussed as a "tool for learning," and indeed it is. The book introduction is a shared activity that offers another learning opportunity for language growth and development.

Within this rich curriculum conversation, children appropriate the language they experience as they participate in the book discussion. Bakhtin (1973) assures us that language is not learned from dictionaries, rather "language is activity, an unceasing process of creation realized in individual speech acts" (p.48). According to Vygotsky, (1986) "word meanings evolve. When a new word has been learned by the child, its development is barely starting; the word at first is a generalization of the most primitive type; as the child's intellect develops, it is replaced by generalizations of a higher and higher type" (p.149).

This occurrence of semiotic mediation occurs as shared activity. While the teacher's and the children's word meanings may differ qualitatively, their interactions about the story lead the children to restructure their personal meanings of the words that they are using. Such sustained curriculum conversations will help children's language grow and develop, bringing their personal meanings of words closer to the conventional cultural meanings.

Learning is social and occurs in social contexts: Vygotsky claimed that higher forms of mental functioning is rooted in social life. An individual's development cannot be understood without accounting for the child's social milieu. Aside from the larger society, the children are participants within their immediate communities, families, and the community of learners within the classroom context, where each group supports each child's cognitive

development in different ways. In other words, our intellect is shaped by our participation in our social worlds. That a child's development is derived from his/her social context appears in Vygotsky's (1986) general claim about the sociality of learning: "Any function in the child's development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category" (p. 163).

The book introduction in *guided reading* is an example of the social nature of learning. At first, the teacher assists the children in their performance of the literacy strategy. The teacher provides support, feedback, and directs the interaction. The appropriation of the literacy concept and strategy used by the children appears first on the social plane, outside of the learners as an interpsychological category, which is made possible through language. It is obvious that learning first occurs outside the children, on a social plane, as the teacher mediates and assists their performance.

When concepts and strategy use are developing at a point where students begin to self-regulate their own performance, as in Stage II of the *ZPD*; or when students have fully developed the concepts and strategy so that performance becomes effortless, as in Stage III of the *ZPD*, learning appears within the learner as an intrapsychological category. The child in Stage III no longer needs the assistance from others because the strategy is fully developed within the child, no longer appearing in the social plane. In the book introduction, we see learning occurring first on a social plane, between at least two people, then on a psychological plane, within oneself. Thus, learning is social in nature, and has its origins in social contexts.

Reading the Text on Their Own

Children read the book independently after the book introduction, which is an essential element of *guided reading*. The book introduction prepares students to read text on their own. Here they are using strategies that they have learned to solve problems in the text and to gain control over text as they work towards becoming fluent readers.

The teacher's role at this point is one of observer and coach. She listens to each child as he/she reads the story. During this time, she uses prompts to facilitate strategies that the children are developing. These prompts appear in the form of questions,

constructed on language that encourages strategy development and use. The role of strategy language, in the form of questions, is to assist the children to internalize the language as their support in strategy use and development.

This type of teaching for strategies is mediating children's reading performance within the *zone of proximal development*. Consider the child who is reading a story and makes a mistake by inserting an extra word in the sentence. Because s/he was tracking the words with a finger, when s/he came to the end of the sentence s/he found there were not enough words. Not knowing what strategy to use to detect this error, the child stops reading. Because the teacher was observing this child's reading behavior, she is able to use the following support prompt that is constructed on strategy language: "Did you have enough words? Did you run out of words?" So the student tries once more, again tracking the words as s/he reads, but this time noting the extra word that did not fit. This is a checking strategy that the teacher hopes the child will develop.

At this point, the child appears to be in Stage I in the *zone of proximal development*. The teacher is providing assistance that helps to regulate the behavior of the child. When the child eventually learns to use this question, "Did I have enough words?" to check errors, or to self-regulate reading behavior, s/he will be in Stage II. Now the children are developing strategies that they need to read fluently. They work at self-monitoring, searching for cues and checking varied sources of information in the text to solve problems that occur in the text as they read. *Guided reading* is unlike direct instruction in a traditional basal reader, where the teacher instructs all of the children in a set of sequential objectives, one at a time. In *guided reading*, assistance is provided to each child who is helped in the development of a system of strategies. Such is a "self-extending system...that works together so that by reading, readers learn more about the process," and in "strategic ways they problem solve their way through many books" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 157).

While reading, the children are developing strategies as they use and practice them under the guidance and with the assistance and support of their teacher. The strategies that were once difficult, become easier to the beginner readers who are now able to shift their attention to more complex operations. After reading the story, the teacher may conduct a mini-lesson with the students who have just read. This lesson is directed at the specific needs of the children who were reading the story. The teacher may decide to draw their

attention to a word or a group of words that was especially difficult for the group. The lesson will be strategy based, showing them how to figure out a word based upon the surrounding contextual cues. The teacher often includes a phonics lesson embedded within the context of the story-based lesson. Finally, the children will be asked to practice the strategy that they have just learned by reading the relevant text once again. The teacher's support, guidance, and feedback continues until the students emerge through the *zone of proximal development* as fluent readers.

Dynamic Grouping

One method of preventing the damaging effects associated with ability grouping, yet maintain the practice of grouping children for effective reading instruction, is to use dynamic grouping for *guided reading* instruction. At the same time, the grouping patterns for other literacy events conducted throughout the day should vary. Dynamic grouping for reading instruction differs from the traditional groups in reading on a number of factors: Traditional groups employ general ability as a factor to determine membership in a group, whereas, in dynamic grouping, the determining factor is the ability of the children to use varied sources of information to read and understand text. Traditional groups are static in that once children gain membership in a group, they remain in that group until the end of the year. However, dynamic grouping assumes that development is continuous and that the quality and rate of change vary from child to child; therefore, membership in the group is flexible and changes on a regular basis, determined by the specific needs of the children.

In order to identify the specific needs of each child for appropriate instruction in *guided reading*, the teacher must know each child's capability for processing the text. Therefore, dynamic grouping is dependent upon a carefully designed program of assessment. Because change is continuous and occurs at different rates and degrees in each child, assessment should be on-going, and it should occur within the context of *guided reading* instruction. Using multiple data sources from daily observation as well as from other informal tests, such as, running records, the teacher will be able to group each child for specific needs. Remembering that a child's *ZPD* is the distance between what the child is capable of doing independently and what the child can do with assistance from the teacher and that *guided reading* instruction is based on mediating learning, dynamic grouping has become a prerequisite to this approach.

Conclusion

Guided reading offers an alternative to the traditional teaching of reading where direct instruction using ability grouping is offered to beginner readers. Direct instruction denotes a transmission model of teaching: The teacher uses a “one-size-fits-all” approach, where lessons are taught not on need but on the basis of where the skill appears within the sequence of the objectives in the curriculum. Further, there is a focus on skills instruction which appears outside the context of reading and fortified by unlimited practice on worksheets, that may or may not be needed by each student.

Guided reading is referred to as mediated learning or assisted learning because of the nature of instruction. It can easily be described as an apprenticeship model of teaching (Rogoff, 1990.) Children receive instruction based upon their capacity for learning to read; that is, they receive instruction within their *zone of proximal development*. Rather than transmitting knowledge that the teacher possesses, students construct their own knowledge through transactions about the text where language is an important tool in learning. The teacher pitches her instruction at the specific development of each child; and practice on skills occurs within the context of reading whole texts, several times, that are carefully selected for the children’s capacity for processing text. **Guided reading** rests upon sound principles of learning that have provided a framework for Vygotsky’s theory of instruction. Indeed it is “good first teaching for all children” (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996).

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You Can't Pass It On If You Don't Have It: Encouraging Lifelong Reading

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Abstract

Teachers need to demonstrate a love of reading in order to pass it on to their students. This article discusses ways to encourage this love of reading through book groups, reading goals, daily oral and silent reading, and sharing the impact of reading with students.

Encouraging students of all ages to read is an important part of our mission as teachers, whether we teach elementary school or secondary science. When we demonstrate the delight and inspiration that we get from reading, we send students a strong message; reading matters. If we want reading to matter to our students, it must matter to us and we must show this. We must also talk about it and reward it.

This article gives various suggestions for doing just that – showing students how reading matters to all of us and ultimately encouraging students to be lifelong readers, too. In this technology-rich information age, more than ever before, knowledge is power. She who reads, leads, or can if she so desires. This is the power of lifelong reading.

Who We Are

So that the reader might understand the context of this article, it is important to introduce ourselves. We are sisters, who happen to also be professors of literacy at the same institution. We teach undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy instruction. We are also both parents and lifelong readers and writers.

Book Groups

One of the ways we show that reading matters to us is by belonging to a book group. Started nearly three years ago, our book group includes six members: two of us (college professors), two classroom teachers (5th grade and 7th grade), a retired health care provider, and a person employed with a local newspaper. We meet every month to discuss the book we have all read for that month. We also make food that fits the book, which is often challenging, but a fun extension of the book. We talk about why we did or didn't like the book, author, and characters. We share what the book reminded us of. We often share our favorite quotes in the book. In doing so, we find out who we are and how we are connected to the world within the context of a book. We share lively literary discussions that spark more reading. Sharing this book group experience enriches our teaching. We share our book group list with students when they ask for good adult books (see Appendix A). We show our lifelong love of reading by showing that we make reading a true priority in our lives. In turn, many of our students become readers themselves. In fact, several teachers, former students, e-mail us for what our book group is reading. They further share that their students want to know what they are reading.

Something teachers might consider is starting their own book groups (see appendix B for suggestions on starting a book group). This could be done with other teachers, or with some parents as well. Perhaps the group would like to read books about teaching or parenting, or books from the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. What is read is not nearly as important as the reading itself. By modeling a love of reading and talking about books in a book group, teachers show that they love to

read, too. They might also have parents who defend the professionalism of teachers, instead of the alternative.

Teachers might also extend the idea of book groups into classroom practice. Students could form book groups based upon their reading interests. Students could spend time weekly meeting in their book groups to discuss commonly read books and to plan future book group choices. The habit of lifelong reading could thus be established early on for students.

Reading Goals

Each semester we have our students set reading goals. These goals are individual in nature and fit the special needs and interests of the diverse readers we have in classes. We model this process by first sharing our goals with our students. Often our goals are to read as many books as possible from a variety of genres including adult fiction, adult nonfiction, professional educational books and journals, and children's books. Students are then required to write their own goals for reading. These goals vary from reading award winning children's books, to reading the daily newspaper, to reading a book for pleasure (which many indicate that they have not done for years). At the middle of the semester we do a midterm assessment of our goals with our students. We ask what they have done and what they need to do yet to meet their goals. We also ask students to think about how they might document their reading for their portfolios. (See Appendix C for goal setting and midterm assessment examples.)

Documenting reading goals takes many forms. We have started to write down quotes and how this book had an impact on us in our reading records. Some students photocopy of the cover of the books they have read and write a response to the book on the back. Other students do an annotated bibliography of the books they have read. Still others create websites or Hyperstudio stacks where they link related titles, related topics, and author information. What truly matters here is that students are reading and documenting in various forms which make sense for them.

Teachers might like to set reading goals as well. First, write some goals of your own. Maybe your goal is to read all the Newbery Award winning and honor books for the year, or to read all the children's books nominated for the state reading award. Maybe a goal is to read the professional journal articles you have sitting in a pile on your desk. Encourage students to set their own reading goals for the quarter or semester, too. Maybe they love Tomie dePaola (a popular children's book author and illustrator) books, so that their reading goal might be to read as many of his books as they can in a two month period. Or maybe they have a strong interest in horses and want to read as many nonfiction books about horses as they can. Again, the reading goal itself doesn't matter as much as the routine of reading being established. When the routine of reading is established at school, this often spills over to reading at home as well. Students who are enjoying reading at school are often motivated to read for pleasure at home also.

Teachers can enhance students' comprehension of this reading by extending students' schemata. Mediating students' reading is one way to do this. Two teacher actions associated with mediating are: 1) asking questions; and 2) gradually releasing responsibility to students (Roehler, Duffy & Warren, 1988). Asking students about their reading and then eventually giving students the responsibility for initiating the discussion is an important step. As students learn to ask each other questions about their reading, they not only deepen their own comprehension, but they also learn about other books that they might want to read in the future.

Daily Reading – Oral and Silent

We read aloud to our students in every class. Reading aloud motivates others to read. It increases their vocabulary and is one of the most powerful ways to enhance their learning. By reading aloud, we model fluency and enjoyment of reading. We expose students to quality writers, multicultural texts, and a variety of genres. When students look for books to read, they often choose those authors with whom they are familiar from our read aloud choices. Reading aloud then has a big impact on student reading choices.

We also provide time for voluntary reading in our classes, which often transfers to time spent reading at home. For elementary students there is a consistently positive relationship between the amount of voluntary independent reading completed at home and gains on standardized reading achievement tests and reading achievement in general (Greaney & Hagarty, 1987; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). Additionally, extensive reading of material of many kinds, both in school and outside, results in substantial growth in the vocabulary, comprehension abilities, and information base of students (Allington, 1994).

Giving students time to read books of their own choosing sends a powerful message that reading matters. We honor reading by giving it time in our classrooms.

Providing students with a variety of materials from which to choose is also important. Children's access to quality school library media centers, staffed by professionals, has an impact on reading achievement and attitudes about reading. Books need to be available through both classroom collections and school-wide libraries. Classroom libraries give students immediate access, a factor likely to increase the amount of voluntary reading students do in and out of school (Routman, 1996).

Demonstrating How Reading Impacts Us

We recently read the book *The Long Road Home* by Jim Harrison. In the book, one of the characters learns that she is dying and begins to write a list of "Things I Have Loved About Earth." Both of us were prompted to start our own lists after reading this book and to share the impact that this book had on us with our students. As a result, some of our students are keeping such a list, while others have asked to borrow the book. Reading affects our behaviors, perspectives, and outlooks. It moves us to reflect and consider who we really are as people.

Anna Quindlen has written a book about this, called *How Reading Changes My Life* (Quindlen, 1998). In it she says:

All of reading is really only finding ways to name ourselves, and, perhaps to name the others around us so that they will no longer seem like strangers. Crusoe and Friday. Ishmael and Ahab. Daisy and Gatsby. Pip and Estelle. Me. Me. Me. I am not alone. I am surrounded by words that tell me who I am, why I feel what I feel (Quindlen, 1998, p. 21).

Reading often moves us to write ourselves. We have written several books together (*Teacher Portfolios* and *Literature Connections Day-by-Day*). Anna Quindlen argues that often readers are writers:

. . . I still reread that way, always have, always will. . . I think I know who we are, and how we got that way. We are writers. We danced with the words, as children, in what became familiar patterns. The words became our friends and our companions, and without even saying it aloud, a thought danced with them: I can do this. This is who I am (Quindlen, 1998, p. 52).

Reading not only leads to more reading for some of us, but it also encourages us to write ourselves, to play with those patterns of language as we figure out who we are.

The first step then in getting students excited about reading is to demonstrate our own love of reading as teachers. We can't *teach* enthusiasm for reading, students must *catch* it from us. If we want to pass on this love of reading to our students, we must show students the impact that reading has had on our own lives and encourage students to feel that power as well.

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APPENDIX A: BOOKS READ IN BOOK GROUP

- Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. 1997.
- Ambrose, Stephen. *Undaunted Courage*. 1996.
- Barrett, Andrea. *The Voyage of the Narwal*. 1998.
- Benitez, Sandra. *Bitter Grounds*. 1997.
- Berendt, John. *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. 1994.
- Evans, Nicholas. *The Loop*. 1998.
- Flagg, Fannie. *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!*. 1998.
- Forbes, Leslie. *Bombay Ice*. 1998.
- Frazier, Charles. *Cold Mountain*. 1997.
- Gaffney, Patricia. *The Saving Graces*. 1999.
- Godwin, Gail. *Evensong*. 1999.
- Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha*. 1998.
- Gowdy, Barbara. *The White bone*. 1999.
- Graham, Janice. *Firebird*. 1998.
- Gutschon, Beth. *Five Fortunes*. 1999.
- Harr, Jonathan. *A Civil Action*. 1995.
- Harris, Thomas. *Hannibal*. 1999.
- Harrison, Jim. *The Road Home*. 1998.
- Haruf, Kent. *Plainsong*. 1999.
- Hegi, Ursula. *Stones From the River*. 1994.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *True At First Light*. 1999.
- Junger, Sebastian. *The Perfect Storm*. 1997.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible*. 1998.
- Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air*. 1997.

- Lamb, Wally. *She's Come Undone*. 1992.
- Lamott, Anne. *Traveling Mercies*. 1999.
- Lennon, Robert. *The Light of Falling Stars*. 1997.
- McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*. 1996.
- McNeal, Tom. *Goodnight, Nebraska*. 1998.
- Mendelsohn, Jane. *I Was Amelia Earhart*. 1996.
- Mitchard, Jacquelyn. *The Deep End of the Ocean*. 1996.
- Moore, Byran. *The Magician's Wife*. 1998.
- Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. 1997.
- Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*. 1985.
- Norris, Kathleen. *The Cloister Walk*. 1996.
- Quindlen, Anna. *Black and Blue*. 1998.
- Reichs, Kathy. *Deja Dead*. 1997.
- Reynolds, Sheri. *The Rapture of Canaan*. 1995.
- Robers, Monty. *The Man Who Listens to Horses*. 1997.
- Schindler, Emilie. *Where Light and Shadow Meet*. 1996.
- Schine, Cathleen. *The Love Letter*. 1999.
- Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. 1991.
- Smiley, Jane. *The All-True Travels & Adventures of Lidie Newton*. 1998.
- Wells, Rebecca. *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*. 1996.
- Wells, Rebecca. *Little Altars Everywhere*. 1992.
- Yen Mah, Adeline. *Falling Leaves*. 1997.

APPENDIX B: SUGESTIONS FOR STARTING YOUR OWN BOOK GROUP

Identify some people you know (and like) that read a lot, or would like to read more.

Invite them to an informal gathering to discuss forming a book group.

At the first meeting, discuss what everyone wants and needs from the group. Also discuss what you don't want or need.

Decide what kind of books you would like to read, and who will decide what to read next. Perhaps you will take turns choosing the books?

Discuss where to meet. Some groups like to meet at schools, libraries, bookstores, people's homes, or restaurants.

Choose your first book. Make certain everyone agrees with the selection.

At your first reading, ensure that everyone has a chance to share his or her opinions, feelings, and thoughts. Encourage individuals to feel comfortable sharing even unpopular responses. We all approach each new book differently because we all have had different prior experiences.

Open your mind to other people's interpretations.

Our book group also brings food that "fits the book" to each of our sessions. Maybe this would work for your group?

READ and ENJOY!

APPENDIX C: READING GOALS

What are your strengths as a reader?

In what ways do you need to grow or stretch as a reader?

What are your weaknesses as a reader?

What are your reading goals this semester? Why?

Midterm Assessment of Reading Goals:

What was your reading goal?

What have you done so far?

What do you need to do yet?

Process comments – what have you learned from this?

What are some possible artifacts to include in your portfolio to show how you met your goals?



Interactive Bibliotherapy as an Innovative Inservice Practice: A Focus on the Inclusive Setting

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Abstract

Interactive bibliotherapy (IB) warrants greater attention in the pursuit of innovative inservice education. This paper presents the findings of a study that explored IB as an inservice practice to help prepare educators for the roles and responsibilities associated with inclusion. Data collection concentrated on a questionnaire (open-ended) regarding IB's impact on participants' professional and personal development. Discussion of findings, which involved a content analysis of participants' responses, concludes with considerations for practice and research.

Interactive bibliotherapy (IB) is a practice that warrants greater attention in the pursuit of innovative inservice education. IB refers to the interactive and critical reading of written materials for fostering professional and/or personal growth. In particular, IB can play an important role in inservice preparation for today's inclusive setting, where students with disabilities learn in the regular classroom. According to Ellis and Larkin (1995), the variety of academic, physical, social, and emotional needs that students bring each year results in new roles and responsibilities for teachers. Such complex demands require educators who possess a critical understanding of their own educational beliefs and behaviors. Although valuable initiatives that help educators achieve more effective participation in inclusive settings have emerged (Carey, 1997; Hasbrouck & Christen, 1997; Quigney, 1997), Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) emphasize

that there is still a critical need for inservice innovations that nurture professional and personal development.

This paper presents the findings of a study that explores IB as an inservice practice to help prepare educators for the roles and responsibilities of the inclusive setting. The focus of the methodology's implementation was *Somebody Else's Kids* (Hayden, 1981), which participants independently read and collaboratively examined as part of a graduate course on "learner in difficulty." Data collection and analysis concentrated on participants' responses to an open-ended questionnaire regarding the impact that IB had on their related professional and personal development.

Background

In its simplest form, "Bibliotherapy refers to the guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's therapeutic needs" (Riordan & Wilson, 1989, p. 506). Although references to the healing power of books appear throughout time and across cultures, the term "bibliotherapy" first surfaced in an *Atlantic Monthly* article in 1916 (Lehr, 1981). Lenkowsky (1987) noted that bibliotherapy has been a formal part of the literature of the social sciences for well over a half century. For example it has played an important role in a variety of educational areas such as family counseling (Sheridan, Baker, & de Lissovoy, 1984) social skills development (Nickolai-Mays, 1987) and curriculum planning for the gifted (Hérbert, 1991).

Interactive bibliotherapy refers to the specific type of bibliotherapy used in this study. More specifically, IB emphasizes the interactive process in which at least one other individual, usually a teacher or other professional, facilitates a participant's involvement through written materials and related activities such as group discussions or journal writing. Interactions with bibliotherapy can contribute to overall cognitive and affective growth (Jalongo, 1983).

The application of IB for facilitating such growth in educators for the inclusive setting finds support in the research literature. Hunsburger (1985) and Hildreth (1992) advocated the use of books, including juvenile literature and biographies, to help teachers experience reading development and learning difficulties from the perspectives of credible characters. According to Hunsburger, "the question of what it is like to be a student in...class is one that

[educators] need to take seriously. Reflection upon experience...of others we know or find in literature, is of utmost importance" (p. 12).

After presenting a case for the humanities in medical and preservice teacher education, Wear (1989) claimed that novels can act as springboards for inquiry and self-examination regarding teacher-student encounters. She emphasized that the literary text can complement, enlarge, and personalize the issues contained in the professional textbook. Tiedt (1992) recommended the use of literature with preservice teachers as a way of understanding the behavior of children. He stated that "literary gems describe human behavior overlaid by a web of feelings, a reality that the reader readily understands" (p. 803).

Bibliotherapy has also concentrated on the important reality of multiculturalism. Chevalier and Houser (1997) studied preservice teachers' multicultural understanding, which grew by the reading of adolescent fiction. They found that the process of using bibliotherapy with multicultural novels "facilitated cognitive and emotional dissonance, heightened awareness and the modification of sociocultural perspectives, and a willingness to contemplate alternative plans for future action" (p. 434). The researchers concluded that the preservice teachers would be in a better position to create genuine cross-cultural understanding and appreciation within their classroom communities that would support the unique talents and gifts of culturally diverse students.

The teaching narrative, a complement to the student story portrayed in literature, also emerged as an important vehicle for teacher preparation associated with inclusion. Isenberg (1994) emphasized the value of narrative for personal and professional development when she examined her own growth continuum in relation to five well-known novels about teaching. She stated that "it is now more crucial than ever to actively engage aspiring and developing teachers in productive thinking about the nature of their own teaching, and that of the schools" (p.130). Narratives, which contain a wealth of material for learning, can contribute to the voices and experiences of teachers in many ways. In particular, narratives provide educators with mentors that can sustain them as they critically inquire into their current beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to the complexities of the instructional process (Isenberg, 1994).

Employing three different school-based novels, Griffith and Laframboise (1998) also focused on teacher narratives for activating affective and cognitive growth. They concluded that the characters' vicarious experiences provided preservice students with valuable knowledge for making real-life connections to course content. As a result, the students were able to examine various issues such as retention, self-esteem, and motivation within meaningful contexts.

The present study explored IB as an innovative method to help prepare educators for the demanding roles and responsibilities of the inclusive setting. The implementation of this method consisted of participants' independent reading and collaborative examination of the teaching narrative entitled *Somebody Else's Kids* (Hayden, 1981). The part that IB plays in the development of educators' practical and theoretical knowledge as well as the critical examination of their related beliefs and behaviors received special emphasis.

Method

Participants. Thirty-one educators, enrolled in a course on "learner in difficulty" as part of their Master's program at a Canadian Faculty of Education, participated in this study. The group produced twenty-three usable questionnaires. Five of the students were not present in class at the time of the questionnaire's administration while three other students chose not to complete the questionnaire. The majority of the twenty-three educators were teachers or school counselors working at the elementary, secondary or post-secondary levels while one was a speech-language pathologist and another a child therapist in private practice.

Procedure

Book and related activities. Participants independently read the novel *Somebody Else's Kids* (Hayden, 1981) for the course. This book centers on the true story of a special education teacher (Hayden) and the numerous challenges that she faces in meeting the complex needs of her students. In particular, it offers authentic situations and characters that could help to facilitate personal and professional growth. The voice of the special education teacher is of particular importance. Throughout the novel she generously shares the affective and cognitive details of her teaching story filled with various issues such as student violence, collegial disagreement, and parental concerns. Participants received a list of questions (Appendix A) to guide their reading and supply a common focal point for small-group

and whole class discussions (Morawski, 1997). These discussions acted as catalysts to provide an ongoing interchange of thoughts and emotions that would motivate participants to examine their current views as well as modify their related behaviors in connection with the study of the book.

First, the course instructor reorganized participants into smaller groups in which they responded to the questions. Next, the instructor provided each group with the opportunity of sharing their answers with the whole class. Participants initially addressed the questions in sequence. As the whole-class session progressed, however, a more constructivist approach emerged. This change encouraged the discussion of other topics related to personal and professional growth. For example, a number of participants questioned the teacher's (Hayden's) high level of involvement with her students throughout the book. Realizing the value of these questions for personal and professional development, the course instructor initiated a discussion of the motivating factors behind an educator's behavior. The discussion first focused on examining Hayden's behavior in specific situations in the novel. Questions and comments arising from the discussion centered on issues such as the fulfillment of Hayden's own emotional needs through her work and Hayden's inner strength and perseverance to uncover the hidden talents of a discouraged student. Next, the course instructor redirected the discussion by asking participants to voluntarily share relevant situations at work that they wanted to explore with the class. Possible reasons for their actions as well as alternative behaviors received consideration in relation to these situations.

At the completion of the whole-class activity such as the above example, participants returned to their smaller groups and debriefed on the details of the session. They also identified new avenues for reflection and investigation. For instance, participants formulated discussion questions for the last class that involved revisiting the issues raised throughout the course. In addition to professional interests, participants included personal concerns such as the development of their own self-efficacy in the questions for this upcoming class.

Administration of questionnaire. Toward the end of the term, participants voluntarily and anonymously completed an open-ended questionnaire regarding the use of IB in the course (Appendix B). A trained research assistant administered the questionnaire, which took

approximately thirty minutes to complete. The course instructor was not present at this time.

Data Analysis. A content analysis involved the meaning units that related to the product or outcome of the IB process. Initially, the authors grouped the list of product meaning units (N=80) into emergent categories. To consolidate the emergent categories, the authors then grouped them into higher order categories adapted from Riordan, Mullis and Nuchow's (1966) study of bibliotherapy in the counseling environment. Both authors reviewed this list and then made minor changes. The authors then conducted an intercoder reliability test with 25% of the meaning units (N=20). Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that most researchers' first attempt at this test usually result in a score not greater than 70%. The authors' first intercoder reliability test yielded a score of 60%. They attributed this low score to the fact that several meaning units could fit into more than one theme as currently defined. As a result, the authors further clarified their thematic definitions and did another intercoder reliability test. The authors then achieved a score of 90%. The following section includes an examination of the five identified thematic categories related to the outcomes of the participants' participation in IB. The main focus involved participants' educational beliefs and behaviors concerning the inclusive setting where students with various disabilities learn in the regular classroom.

Results and Discussion

Enlighten by reading materials and/or reflecting upon experiences that increase awareness about self and others. A total of 53.8% of the meaning units qualified for the enlightenment category. This outcome revealed that the process of IB provided participants with opportunities to enlighten themselves concerning teaching and learning in an inclusive setting. According to Wildman and Niles (1987), educators need to be more reflective and in control of their own professional lives rather than recipients of technical details. In this study, reading the book and engaging in related activities allowed participants to critically reflect on their current educational beliefs and practices with respect to inclusive education. For example, one participant reported that "It brought my own feelings and opinions on learner in difficulty to the forefront." Another participant remarked that, "It allowed me to reflect on the work I do with autistic children." A different participant commented that the book raised several issues of which teachers of special needs children need to be aware. These include the self-contained special education setting, and staff views on

special needs children, specifically the belief that, "As long as you keep them under control and we don't see them in the office, you're doing a fine job." There seemed to be an underlying element of risk-taking for one participant as she or he remarked that "it was confirmed for me that it is appropriate as a teacher to take an unconventional approach and to make mistakes." In Wear's (1989) view, the complexities of instructional choices that we make are often unexpressed because of guilt or shame. The narrative, unlike the professional text bound by form and intent, can help educators review and justify their beliefs and behaviors in the classroom setting. This also seemed to be the case for the participants in this study.

Some participants found that they recalled earlier experiences in their lives as they reviewed their current beliefs and practices. One participant noted that IB "challenged me to look at my own experiences as a learner." Another participant reported that "Examining my answers to the questions made me reflect on my own education experiences." Research supports the position that the exploration of early life events such as elementary school, can supply individuals with valuable insights about their present perceptions and actions (Colton & Sparks-Langer 1993; Morawski, 1995). Rosenblatt (1978) and White (1995) emphasized the important role that literary texts can play in contemplating prior feelings and experiences to construct current responses. The narrative, unlike the professional text bound by form and intent, can help educators review and justify their beliefs and behaviors in the classroom setting. In her study on narratives for teacher education, Weber (1993) observed that teacher stories "made me ponder my own actions in a different light" (p. 73) and put into perspective the current instructional models and jargon. This also seemed to be the case for the participants involved in this study.

Reading the novel reinforced and extended the learning that occurred in the related small-group and whole-class activities. Participants stated that the experience of sharing produced by IB allowed them to consider alternative positions on inclusive education. As stated by one participant, "It was nice to hear others' experiences not being a teacher in the traditional sense, it was a good learning experience." Another participant found IB to be an effective tool because "as educators it is very helpful--therapeutic--perhaps, to listen to other educators' perceptions, views, solutions. Exposure to educators, parents, counselors and specialists is particularly rewarding. Everyone brings in unique experiences." As observed by still another

participant, IB "allowed us to share and learn [about inclusive learning and teaching] from one another."

According to Tiedt (1992), cases found in literary works offered teachers "an opportunity to engage in life with other human beings, to emphasize, to understand, and to share responses with others (p. 805). This kind of productive sharing, generated by IB in the current study, also emerged in the related literature. For example, Negin (1979) concluded that group activities as a part of IB allow individuals to learn from each other, since a successful group openly shares feelings and insights. When support groups for battered women used IB, collaborative discussion helped them identify deterrents to their growth and make recommendations for accepting personal responsibility (Hynes, 1987). In another case, a major benefit of using IB with mental health patients was their sharing of experiences and memories with staff and other patients. In particular, some of the least verbal patients opened up and explored issues that they had previously avoided in other therapies (Rossiter & Brown, 1988).

Enhance by reinforcing specific points and life-style changes being addressed in inservice education. The second largest category, which accounted for 16.3% of the product meaning units, related to enhancement. This enhancement occurred by reinforcing life-style changes, particularly with respect to the reading process. According to pertinent research, teachers as a group don't seem to read very much (Dillingofski, 1993; Otto, 1992/1993). In particular, Williamson's (1991) study on teachers' reading attitudes and habits, revealed a low amount of fiction reading undertaken by Master of Education students who may have devoted all the time available for reading to the pursuance of their studies. The current study, however, provided the participants with an opportunity to read a novel, which for many reinforced an enjoyment of reading and a personal connection to text. As noted by one educator, "This book initially satisfied my frustration at not usually having the time to just read a good book." Another participant commented that "On a personal level it was refreshing to read something that was not all theory." Another participant commented that he or she could clearly recall very specific details of the book even though several months had elapsed since reading it. She attributed this outcome to the fact that the book had "a profound effect on me both personally and professionally." Only one participant expressed dissatisfaction with the enjoyment level of the book. This comment originated from an adult educator who could not relate to a book about special education children. According to the research literature, incompatibility between a reader and a text can be

influenced by a variety of factors such as resistance to required readings (Zaccaaria & Moses, 1968), feelings of inadequacy in comparison to a highly competent character (Negin, 1979) and difficulty in confronting issues present in readings (Cornett & Cornett, 1980).

One participant made an additional comment on personal learning style relating to reader response. In particular, the participant discovered that "I process my learning through writing". This statement reinforces the notion that an inservice course requires the application of various kinds of learning activities that accommodate and expand teachers' reader response repertoires. The growth as readers that participants experienced in IB supports Frager's (1987) conclusion that teacher education programs can help teachers grow as readers by including the use of at least one trade book in every class.

Educate by filling in basic knowledge and gaps. This third category contained 12.5% of the meaning units. Participants in the current study claimed that they had gained valuable knowledge and insight regarding working with special population children. One participant stated that, "The book itself helped to 'gel' the information [about special needs children] we were receiving through classroom discussion and readings. It provided a framework for my work in this course." Another participant shared that he or she "gained new perceptions of what a learning disability is." Another explained his or her newfound knowledge this way:

The book has provided me with very concrete examples of learners in difficulty. I knew little about autistic children as well as about what goes on in a special education class and this book has helped me understand those better than any manual could.

As noted by still another educator, "As someone who has not yet taught in a classroom, the book was effective in portraying what really can go on in a special education classroom. It was practical rather than theoretical, which we don't get enough of." According to Stroud (1981), "teachers have at their disposal an excellent way of instilling understanding and acceptance of others--literature" (p. 49). In the specific area of disabilities, Richardson and Boyle (1998) concurred with Stroud's assertion that read-alouds can enhance educators' awareness and acknowledgment of disabilities. In another study, when future teachers read novels about teenagers with disabilities as part of

their course work, they began to comprehend both the special concerns of these students as well as the ways in which they were just typical adolescents (Stover, 1988).

Encourage and empower through the reading of inspirational and motivational materials. The fourth category, which represented 11.3% of the meaning units, pertained to the encouragement and empowerment that the book provided for gaining and applying relevant knowledge and skills. According to Weimer (1988), "teaching narratives positively effect instructional quality because they inspire" (p. 49). The results of this study support this notion as many participants made points about the inspirational value of the book. In particular they expressed that the book helped to further their knowledge about special needs students as well as apply their knowledge in their own work situations. For example, one participant commented that the book "provided inspiration" while another observed that it "served as an inspirational source for many class members." A different participant stated that "I have also noted the titles of the other books T. Hayden has written...I will try to find these books and I am excited to learn more about learners in difficulty." This is consistent with Cohen's (1994b) study on self-guided reading. Results showed that reading increased the participants' confidence to acquire further information about health care as well as make decisions about their well-being.

In addition to acquiring knowledge about special needs students, the reading of the novel encouraged and empowered participants to consider and/or try learned techniques in their own classrooms. As noted by one participant, "A few of the techniques in the book prompted me to try them out in my own classroom." A second participant noted that he or she felt empowered to "consider untried strategies with learners in my classroom" and pondered the importance of "life-changing events and how they affect the learner." The same participant wondered how emotions and feelings brought to the classroom affect the teacher and other learners." In her study on self-directed bibliotherapy, Cohen (1994a) discovered that reading about others who had found solutions to problems gave participants the self-confidence to confront their own life challenges. Boorstein's (1983) case study, which involved a severely depressed unemployed male who grew up in a culture that discouraged self-introspection, revealed a similar theme of empowerment. By reading psychological and spiritual materials combined with meditation, this individual gained in self-esteem, expanded his own spectrum of thinking and

feeling, and found positive ways to use his pains to grow spiritually (Boorstein, 1983).

Engage the student with the social world through fiction and other social mentoring materials, techniques and methodologies. A total of 6.3% of the meaning units comprised this category, which focused on the role models that vicarious experiences related to the novel provided for the participants. As noted by one participant, "Reading the book provided me with a role model--we as teachers often operate in isolation (your own classroom) and do not get enough opportunity to observe other professionals." Another participant stated that, "It addressed the practical issues that educators have to deal with--so I felt I could relate to many of the incidents, emotions and people involved." The literature supports this notion. In a study that concentrated on the social and moral implications of teaching, Tama and Peterson (1991) found that teachers cultivated richer insights about the meaning of teaching when they read and viewed fictional and authentic teachers' stories.

Summary and Considerations for Practice and Research

Wear (1989) affirmed that "With the content provided by literary texts, readers might acknowledge their beliefs and behaviors with greater reflection than before and with a full range of responses" (p. 54). The responses of the participants in the current study contained numerous indications of personal and professional development, which they attributed to the interactive reading of *Somebody Else's Kids* (1981). Some specific signs of such growth were an increased knowledge of special needs students, a deeper self-awareness relative to inclusive education, and a desire to implement new instructional strategies. Various issues ranging from teacher self-efficacy to literacy habits supplied the working material for these outcomes. Participants cited vicarious experiences such as critical reflection, and collegial collaboration in the form of small-group and whole-class discussions as key factors in the processing of this working material.

Although the limited number of educators who participated in the current study precludes us from reaching firm conclusions, the content analysis of the data revealed important findings for future application and investigation of IB for inservice preparation related to inclusive education. When incorporated into existing inservice programs or individual courses concerning inclusive education, IB can help to enrich educators' understanding of their related beliefs and

behaviors. For example, during small-group discussions that focus on the instructional expressions of the educators in the novel, teachers can explore their ambivalence toward welcoming students with special needs into their classrooms. Regular classroom teachers, who feel a sense of isolation stemming from their commitment to students with special needs, can find personal strength and professional confirmation for their actions from IB. In particular, the voice of the teacher in the novel as well as other class members' own responses in whole-class discussions can provide the necessary encouragement. In both of the above cases, various practices such as reflective dialogue journals, literature response methods, and teacher support networks and study groups would help to facilitate the processing of the teachers' emerging personal and professional awareness.

Further studies that involve other research methodologies and data collection procedures would play an important part in the development of IB as an inservice practice. For example, focus group sessions, interviews and participants' use of reflective journals to record the application of IB to their work settings would provide opportunities to investigate the longer-term effects of educators' participation in IB. Narrative inquiry would supply information on the course instructor's experience and perceptions regarding the application of IB to the inservice area, particularly regarding inclusive education. Future studies would also want to consider extending the application of IB to other related areas such as math education and student counseling as well as preservice education, where teacher candidates are already being challenged to make informed decisions in the classroom regarding inclusion.

Concluding Comments

Personal and professional growth is essential for inservice preparation related to the diverse nature of the inclusive setting, where theoretical and practical challenges occur daily. More specifically, educators need to feel empowered, inspired, informed, and motivated in their roles. Their beliefs and behaviors need examination, expression, and validation. Literary texts like *Somebody Else's Kids* (Hayden, 1981) that "articulate with clarity and poignancy what the teaching-learning enterprise is all about and why it matters" (Weimer, 1988, p. 49) can provide opportunities for such balanced growth. The findings of this study have illuminated the innovative potential of IB for inservice education that addresses the inclusive setting. In sum, IB can provide the vehicle by which educators' intrapersonal growth becomes an integral part of the construction of their knowledge and practice.

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Appendix A

Guiding Questions

1. Identify at least three critical incidents (positive or negative) that occurred in this book and explain the importance of each one.
2. What emotions, images, etc., did you associate with each incident? Explain.
3. Within the context of each incident, address your current perceptions and practices related to learning and teaching. Did they change? Did they remain the same?
4. If you could change one incident in this book, what would it be? Explain how this change would have affected the characters and events in the book.
5. Many significant issues related to different kinds of learning and teaching practices are addressed throughout the book. Examine one of these issues in relation to different contexts (e.g., the cases in this book, your own professional situation, your own learning experiences, etc.). Consider class discussion, presentations, and recommended readings.
6. What was your general reaction to reading this book?

Appendix B

The Questionnaire - The Use of Bibliotherapy in the Course

In order to explore the appropriateness and effectiveness of bibliotherapy for the professional and personal growth of educators, your comments on the use of bibliotherapy in this course would be greatly appreciated. Here, bibliotherapy refers to the interactive and critical reading of written materials for professional and personal growth

1. Gender F___ M___

2. What is your current position (e.g., teacher, full-time parent, counselor)? _____

3. Into which division or divisions do your primary responsibilities fall? Circle your answer below.

Grades K, 1-3

Grades 7-10

Post-Secondary

Other _____

Grades 4-6

Grades 11 and above

(Specify) _____

4. Teaching subject major (e.g., Special Education, History, English, Mathematics, Computer Science, etc.), if applicable. Specify the one that you consider to be your primary responsibility. _____

5. As part of your work for this course, you were asked to read the book entitled *Somebody Else's Kids* by T. Hayden. A set of guiding questions for reading this book

were given to you as well. Your feedback would be very helpful for obtaining information about the appropriateness and effectiveness of (i) the book, (ii) guiding questions, and (iii) the whole-class and small-group discussions for facilitating your own personal and professional growth in this course. Please provide your comments on each one of the above items (i, ii, iii) as it pertains to your own personal and professional development in relation to this course. Please be as specific as possible.

(i) the book

(ii) the guiding questions

(iii) the whole-class and small-group discussions



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