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**There is no more crucial or basic skill
in all of education than reading.**





Using Picture Books with Adolescent Readers to Enhance Literacy Instruction

Gwyn W. Senokossoff

Abstract

This article discusses the benefits of using picture books with adolescent readers, describes strategies that can be taught with picture books, and provides examples of books the author has used. Some of the topics discussed include: reading comprehension, visual literacy, interactive read-aloud with facilitative talk, literary elements, and content-area reading. The advantages and disadvantages of using e-books and picture books that can be accessed online are also discussed. An annotated bibliography with more than 50 picture books is included in Appendix A. The books that may be accessed as e-books or audio CDs are also identified. Appendix B contains a list of books and websites where print, digital, and online resources can be found.

Introduction

For those who have spent any time studying children's literature, picture books are a familiar and well-loved tool for teaching reading. Many of us have spent hours poring over the most recent arrivals in the children's section of our local bookstore or library. We continue to collect picture books, fondly remembering the times we shared bedtime stories with our own children. However, if you have spent anytime reviewing picture books recently, then you know that many of today's picture books are not written for young children. Publishers now offer an assortment of picture books that deal with topics like interpersonal relationships, physical abuse, peer pressure, drug abuse, teen violence, and psychological issues such as suicide, cutting, and eating disorders (Lightsey, Olliff, & Cain, 2006). Picture books can be found in digital as well as traditional format, and in fiction and non-fiction. The vivid artwork engages visually-oriented youth who are used to learning through technology (Ammon & Sherman, 1997). Because there is less text for these students to read, and illustrations to support the story, these books work well with delayed readers, ESL students, and students with special needs (Carr, Buchanan, Wentz, Weiss, & Brant, 2001; Henry & Simpson, 2001). Yet, based upon my experiences and earlier research (Duchain & Mealey, 1993; Megyeri, 1993), I have not seen many middle or high-school teachers using picture books in their classrooms. Perhaps these teachers have not been taught how to use picture books with older readers or they do not know how to locate books that are appropriate for older students. Regardless, I believe these teachers are missing a great opportunity to supplement the materials they use in their classroom and support the needs of all their students. In this paper, I will discuss the benefits of using picture books with adolescent readers, describe strategies that work well with picture books, and provide examples of books that I have used. I will also discuss the use e-books and picture books that can be accessed online. An annotated bibliography with more than 50 picture books is included in Appendix A. I have also identified which books may be accessed as an e-book or audio CD. Appendix B contains a list of books and websites where print, digital, and online resources can be found.

Benefits of Using Picture Books

Reading Comprehension

Twelve years ago, many researchers concluded that adolescent students were being short-changed by literacy educators across the curriculum (Moore, et al., 1999). Little research had been done in adolescent literacy and many of our students were in trouble. In their 2012 position statement on Adolescent Literacy, the International Reading Association (IRA) is more positive. An abundance of research has been done since 1999 and our adolescents are making some progress. However, these students still need comprehension and study strategies that can be used across a range of both print and non-print materials in all disciplines (IRA, 2012). Literacy instruction today must include skills like activating prior knowledge, predicting, questioning, summarizing, synthesizing information from multiple sources, and understanding key vocabulary (IRA, 2012). Biancarosa and Snow (2006) recommend that teachers teach comprehension explicitly, motivate students, include discipline specific literacy strategies, and use diverse texts.

Think-Aloud

Middle and high-school teachers can use short texts like picture books, to explicitly model comprehension strategies through “think-alouds” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2002). “Think-aloud,” a process where the teacher states exactly what she is thinking out loud, permits students to see how an expert reader processes text. These comprehension lessons can serve as “anchor lessons,” because once a strategy is modeled with a memorable picture book, the teacher can refer students back to the lesson to recall and apply the strategy in other reading situations (Harvey & Goudvis, 2002).

Interactive Read-Aloud with Facilitative Talk

In an interactive read-aloud, the teacher reads a text aloud and both the students and the teacher discuss and respond to the text. A carefully planned interactive read-aloud can deepen students’ understanding of the text and help them become more analytical (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The teacher guides and shapes a conversation around the text through comments, demonstrations, and questions (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). In preparation, the teacher becomes familiar with the text and plans a series of questions for the students. The teacher uses the questions as a guide to sustain the conversation and makes adjustments to keep the students actively involved. Following is an example of an interactive read-aloud using the text, *Gleam and Glow* by Eve Bunting (2001). In this story, a family must flee their

home when enemy troops come to their village. In an effort to save the family's pet fish, the boy releases the fish into a nearby pond. After the war, the family returns home to find that the fish have survived and multiplied.

Teacher: Today, I am going to read the book, *Gleam and Glow* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Peter Sylvada. This story is about family who flees their home and leaves everything behind during war. It's also about what happens after the war. Listen to how the story begins.

When Papa left to join the underground, Marina cried. To be truthful, Mama and I cried, too.

"I don't want Papa to be underground," Marina sobbed. "Shh, little one," Mama said. "It just means he's fighting secretly with many of our men. On doesn't know much. I'm eight and I know a lot.

Teacher: What's happening in this scene?

Ethan: The father is leaving to fight in the war. He's joining the underground.

Nathalie: Everyone is very sad.

Teacher: What do you think "the underground" is?

Sophie: It's a group of people who hide and fight for a cause...like the Underground Railroad that helped slaves escape to the north during the Civil War.
Teacher: Danny, what makes you say that?

Teacher: Sophie, great answer! You are exactly right and I like the way you connected this story to the Civil War.

Teacher: Sophie, great answer! You are exactly right and I like the way you connected this story to the Civil War.

Teacher: [Teacher reads the text.] *Before he left, Papa had tried to explain things to Marina. "Why don't those people like us?" she'd asked. I didn't know why either, but I rolled my eyes and pretended I did. "We're different from them," Papa told her. "They think this is their country and they don't want us living here. But this is our country. I will fight with the Liberation Army to stop them from pushing us out of our land."*

Teacher: Where do you think this story is taking place?

Danny: In Egypt or Libya.

Teacher: Danny, what makes you say that?

Danny: I remember hearing about the rebellions and I think one of the rebel forces had a Liberation Army.

Jose’: I think it takes place in Germany...you know, the Nazis...because the picture in the book shows a man in a long coat wearing a hat or cap and it looks like he’s in the woods.

Teacher: Okay, great answers! Danny, you made some great connections with recent world events and Jose’, you made a great inference using the illustration. The author actually has a note at the end of this book explaining that this story came from something that happened to a family in Bosnia, but she makes the story ambiguous so that it might represent any family’s experience in war.

Visual Literacy

Another important skill that supports students’ reading comprehension is visual literacy. Visual literacy is the ability to recognize and understand ideas conveyed through images (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2012). Readers learn to interpret illustrations by looking at the color, line, shape, size, and style of the picture (O’Neil, 2011). Certain colors, for instance, black may convey strong or dark emotions. Harsh and jagged lines may imply danger. The focal point of a picture or the size of a character in an illustration sometimes conveys importance or the lack of importance. Illustrations reinforce or enhance the meaning of the text, or even communicate part of the story not described by the text alone (O’Neill, 2011).

For example, on page 18 of the book, *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni (2005), illustrated by Bryan Collier, Collier creates the image of a city sidewalk, shops and storefronts towering over the street, with signs labeled, “White Entrance.” In the forefront of the lower right side of the illustration is a woman standing on the sidewalk with her head bowed slightly and her eyes cast down. At first glance, one might think that she is being submissive, except that she has her left fist raised in the air. Some of the text reads:

She sighed as she realized she was tired. Not tired from work but tired of putting white people first. Tired of stepping off sidewalks to let white people pass, tired of eating at separate lunch counters and learning at separate schools.

At this moment in this story about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa is waiting for the police after she refuses to give up her seat on the bus. While she knows her actions might cause trouble, she refuses the unfair treatment. She takes a stand. The combination of this illustration with the text invites students into the story. Shared viewing and discussion of picture books like this one is a wonderful way to help students develop visual literacy skills in an increasingly technological

world (Lightsey, et al., 2006). When teachers explain how to “decode” or interpret illustrations, they support students’ reading comprehension (O’Neill, 2011).

Vocabulary

Children’s picture books are also an excellent source for vocabulary development. They contain more rare words per thousand words than adult prime-time television or the conversations of college graduates (Hayes & Ahrens as cited in Lightsey, et al., 2006). Children’s picture books have 32 rare words per thousand compared to prime-time television scripts with 22.7 rare words per thousand. When college graduates talk with one another, they use only 17.3 rare words per thousand. One of the hallmarks of an educated individual, a large, rich vocabulary, is built through the context of what one reads (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Students must read widely to come across a sufficient number of new words, but the context in which they encounter those words is also important (Beck, et al., 2002). A directive context, one that provides enough information to derive meaning, is the most supportive for the student (Beck, et al., 2002). While students may encounter new vocabulary in a variety of texts, many texts do not provide enough information for the student to figure out the meaning of the word. The rich, succinct language in picture books can support this type of vocabulary development (Ammon & Sherman, 1997; Carr, et al., 2001).

For instance, in the book, *Coolies* by Yin (2001), illustrated by Chris Soentpiet, Yin writes:

The bosses hired by Central Pacific did not believe the Chinese could endure the building of the railroad—on average they were skinny and looked upon as mere weaklings. The bosses made fun of their straw hats, pajama-like clothes and even their long queues, braids which they wore down the center of their backs.

In this example, the reader is led to the definition of the word “queues” through the phrase, “braids which they wore down the center of their backs.”

In another example from the same text, readers learn the meaning of the word “ancestor.” In this example, two characters, a grandmother and her grandson, are talking at the beginning of the story. The grandmother begins to tell the story of her great-grandfather.

“Yes, your ancestors!” she says. “Let me tell you of two we do not forget. Of my bokgong—my great-grandfather—and his brother.”

In this instance, the reader learns the definition of “ancestor” through example with the words, “my great-grandfather—and his brother.”

Delayed Readers

The treatment classrooms used the High Scope approach to early childhood (HohYoung children, who have a “limited vocabulary, syntax, and world knowledge,” use the illustrations in picture books as “mental scaffolds” to facilitate their understanding of written text (Fang, 1996). Many older students, who are delayed in reading, also lack the skills to create mental images while they are reading (Beers, 2003). Their focus on decoding the words prevents them from visualizing what they are reading, and they are unable to draw inferences or make predictions (Hibbin & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). Often, these students read well below grade level and do not have age-appropriate reading materials. Picture books can be a great alternative for them. These books are well-written and include supportive illustrations that make the reading experience more enjoyable (Henry & Simpson, 2001; Hibbing & Erikson, 2003).

Furthermore, a number of picture books contain mature and interesting topics that older readers would not be embarrassed to read (Henry & Simpson, 2001; Huck, Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2004). For example, in Maurice Sendak’s (1993) book, *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*, Sendak takes two nursery rhymes and pairs them with illustrations that lead the reader into a story about poverty and homelessness (Henry & Simpson, 2001).

English Language Learners

Picture books can also be suitable for students who are learning English as a second language (Hashim, 1999). They offer simple, repetitive sentence patterns, authentic dialogue, uncomplicated plots, and stunning illustrations. The “visual-verbal connection” or the act of associating pictures with text supports second language learners and builds their reading confidence (Henry & Simpson, 2001, p. 1). Furthermore, picture books are short, between 24 and 48 pages, and can be read in less than 30 minutes (Giorgis, 1999; Henry & Simpson, 2001). This is useful in middle-school or high-school classrooms where students change classes every 50 minutes.

Literary Elements

Many of the themes and issues in picture books are universal and easily understood by older readers (Carr, et al., 2001; Henry & Simpson, 2001). Picture books are also effective tools for teaching writing, because many include strong story structure and literary language. Examples of literary elements (e.g., point of view, character, setting, theme, plot, and tone) can be introduced through picture

books by middle or high-school teachers. Figurative language or strong story leads may also be found in picture books.

For example, in the book, *A Boy Called Dickens*, by Deborah Hopkinson (2012), illustrated by John Hendrix, Hopkinson begins the story as follows:

This is old London, on a winter morning long ago. Come along, now. We are here to search for a boy called Dickens. He won't be easy to find. The fog has crept in, silent as a ghost, to fold the city in cold, gray arms.

In the example above, the author introduces the story with a strong lead and draws in the reader. She also creates a great metaphor about the fog which can be used to teach older readers about writing.

In a second example, author Margaret Wise Brown (1999) writes the following in her book, *The Important Book*:

The important thing about a daisy is that it is white. It is yellow in the middle, it has long white petals, and bees sit on it, it has a ticklish smell, it grows in green fields, and there are always lots of daisies! But the important thing about a daisy is that it is white.

In this book, Brown provides readers with detailed descriptions of ordinary things. Teachers can use these descriptions to teach students about adding detail or elaborating when they write.

Some picture books also offer great examples of “pattern writing,” where the writer uses a particular pattern to reveal the story (Henry & Simpson, 2001, p. 2). For instance, in Helen Kettman’s (2001) book, *Heat Wave*, illustrated by Scott Goto, Kettman writes this story as if she is creating a tall tale.

Then we heard a commotion in the pasture. We raced over. The cows were hopping around like rabbits. The ground had gotten too hot, so we herded them inside the barn. They still looked miserable, though. Pa figured their milk had gotten too hot, so we set to milking. As it turned out, the cows had jumped too much, they'd churned their milk to butter. It came out melted. We'd milked the last of the butter when I had an idea.

After reading her book, older readers might enjoy creating a tale of their own.

Content-Area Reading

Much of the reading middle and high-school students do in school is in the content-areas. According to the International Reading Association (IRA), teachers must support content-area reading instruction, differentiate instructional approaches to meet students’ content literacy needs, and build diverse content-area classroom libraries that include traditional print and digital or online resources

(2010). Picture books are an excellent resource for content-area reading because they are short and often provide more depth on a single topic than textbooks (McLaughlin, 2010). The writing is less dense and the information provided is more current. Furthermore, picture books can improve students' comprehension in the content areas (Landt, 2007). Teachers

Picture books also come in several forms; fiction, non-fiction, and "faction," a combination of fiction and non-fiction. One great example of "faction" is the picture book, *Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles (2005), illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue. In this book, the author creates a story about two fictional boys, one black and the other white, and their experiences in Mississippi in 1964 after a law is passed forbidding segregation.

Picture books can be used in the content-areas to introduce a new concept or topic. Once the topic is introduced, it may be followed with an assignment in the textbook. In some picture books, diagrams explain math concepts (Murphy, 2000) while in others images paired with content vocabulary, scaffold students' comprehension (Landt, 2007). Older readers often find the narrative structure in picture books more interesting (Landt, 2007).

Benefits of Accessing Picture Books with Technology

Reading Online

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), "technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, [demanding] that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, [or] many literacies" (2008). Students today must be able to read and comprehend vast amounts of text online at high levels (International Reading Association, 2009) and strive for multiple ways of knowing (NCTE, 2005). Many picture books can be retrieved in a variety of digital formats and these books provide strong reading comprehension and fluency support (NEIRTEC, 2004). However, reading online requires a different skill set than the one used to read traditional texts. When students read traditional texts, the experience is static; the text is created by someone else, and each time the student reads, the text remains unchanged (McLaughlin, 2010). When students read a digital text, the experience is dynamic; the reader is able to create his/her own original text (McLaughlin, 2010). For instance, when the text has "hot spots" or links that the student may select, the student is taken to a new web page with more information. Often, digital texts include features where key vocabulary is highlighted and if selected, will provide a definition for the student.

Many digital texts also offer students the option of having the text read. Each time the student reads a digital text, the experience is unique.

Problems with Reading Online

Digital texts or e-books are not new. They have been around since 1997 when *Stellaluna* was published by Living Books; however, until about two years ago most e-books were textbooks or adult titles designed for the Kindle, Nook, or Sony e-Reader (Guernsey, 2011). Since the advent of Apple's iPad, and then, the Nook Color, an increasing number of children's picture books and novels have become available (Guernsey, 2011). Sites like Tumblebooks, Scholastic's BookFlix, One More Story, Big Universe, Disney Digital Books, and MeeGenius are available by subscription. Storyline Online by the Screen Actors Guild Foundation and the International Children's Digital Library at the University of Maryland at College Park are also available at no cost (Guernsey, 2011).

Yet, not all e-books are the same. Some e-books are merely PDFs while others include animated characters, interactive games and puzzles, and text that can be "played" while the words are highlighted (Brueck as cited in Guernsey, 2011). Finding the best e-books for literacy instruction is still a challenge. While there are several resources available, there is not a single source where teachers might go to access the books and even with the best of sites, there is no guarantee that the e-books on the site are high-quality. Furthermore, some researchers are skeptical about whether these books should be called books at all (Guernsey, 2011). One researcher downloaded a copy of *Toy Story* by Disney (2010) on his iPad and described it as 25 percent book and 75 percent movie (Bederson as cited in Guernsey, 2011). Much more research is needed in this area. An annotated bibliography of picture books that can be used with older readers is provided in Appendix A. A list of books and websites where print, digital, and online resources can be found is included in Appendix B.

Conclusion

With the focus on adolescent literacy over the past ten years, middle and high-school teachers remain under pressure to increase their students' reading achievement. While the dropout rate in America has decreased from 14% in 1989 to 8% in 2009, our high school students still rank ninth internationally in literacy (NCES, 2011). According to the Commission on Adolescent Literacy (1999), some of our teens need specialized instruction to succeed, others need "extensive opportunities

with comfortable materials” to learn, and almost all of our students will need support with the unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter in the content areas (Moore, et al., p. 4). “Authentic literacy experiences should occur across the disciplines with varied types of text that are inclusive of print, audio, and fixed and moving images” (IRA, 2012). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2006) describes a reading curriculum that focuses on selecting, reading, responding to, and analyzing a wide range of literature. They also call for literature that is accessible to all students, literature that represents a variety of topics and degrees of difficulty (NCTE, 2006). Since most classrooms include children reading at various levels of proficiency, materials like picture books, considered inappropriate for whole-class instruction, might be suitable for small-group or individual use (NCTE, 2006). To increase students’ reading achievement, teachers must use as many resources as possible. Picture books can be a great instructional tool for teachers of adolescents.



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Appendix A

Examples of Picture Books for Older Readers

American Revolution

Frandon, D. B. (2005). *Let It Begin Here!: Lexington and Concord: First Battles of the American Revolution*. Walker & Company.

This is an account of Paul Revere's ride to warn Americans that the British are invading.

Sobel, S. (2001). *The U. S. Constitution and You*. Barron's Educational Series.

Kindle Sobel explains the U. S. Constitution and what it is meant to do.

Bullying

Shamblin, A. (2002). *Don't Laugh at Me*. Random House Children's Books.

Kindle

This is a picture book version of the song, "Don't Laugh at Me," by Peter Yarrow. It is appropriate for elementary and middle-school.

Civil Rights Movement

Bausum, A. (2005). *Freedom Riders. John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement*. National Geographic Society. **Audio CD**

This book describes the experiences of two young college students, one black and one white, as they participate in the Freedom Bus Rides during the Civil Rights Movement.

Bridges, R. (1999). *Through My Eyes*. Scholastic, Inc.

This book shares the story of Ruby Bridges, the six-year old black child who was one of the first children to attend a white elementary school after desegregation.

Giovanni, N. (2007). *Rosa*. Square Fish.

Author, Giovanni retells the story of Rosa Parks, an African American woman on her way home from work who refuses to give up her seat on the bus, during the Civil Rights Movement.

Loribiecki, M. (2000). *Sister Anne's Hands*. Penguin Group. **Audio CD**

In this book, Loribiecki tells the story of an African American nun in a Catholic School who educates her second graders about racism during the Civil Rights Movement.

Wiles, D. (2005). *Freedom Summer*. Aladdin.

In this story, Wiles tells the story of two friends, one black and one white, who are excited to go to the community swimming pool when segregation is abolished, but it is 1964 in Mississippi.

Civil War

Adler, D. (2004). *Enemies of Slavery*. Holiday House.

This book includes profiles on 14 famous individuals, from Abraham Lincoln to Denmark Vesey, who fought against slavery.

Levine, E. (2007). *Henry's Freedom Box*. Scholastic, Inc. **Audio CD**

The story of a slave child who mailed himself to freedom.

McDonough, Y. Z. (2002). *Who Was Harriet Tubman?* Penguin Group.

This book describes the life of Harriet Tubman and her contribution to the Underground Railroad.

Polacco, P. (2009). *January's Sparrow*. Penguin Group.

This is the story of a family of slaves, the Crosswhites, who flee to the North through the Underground Railroad.

Polacco, P. (2011). *Just in Time, Abraham Lincoln*. Penguin Young Readers Group.

This book describes the adventure of two boys who visit a Civil War museum and end up going back in time to meet Abraham Lincoln.

Polacco, P. (1994). *Pink and Say*. Penguin Group. **Audio CD**

In this story, an African American Union soldier finds a young white union soldier lying injured in a field and takes him home for medical care. When the two teens try to return to duty, they are captured by rebel soldiers and sent to prison.

Drug Abuse

Taylor, C. (1992). *The House That Crack Built*. Chronicle.

Taylor uses the nursery rhyme, "The House That Jack Built," to create a poem about the problems associated with cocaine.

Ecology

Van Allsburg, C. (2011). *Just a Dream*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This story is about a boy, Walter, who is a litterbug. Then, one night he dreams about what will happen to Earth if people like him do not change.

Famous People

Bolden, T. (2008). *George Washington Carver*. Abrams Books. {illustrated with photos}.

This book describes the life of George Washington Carver.

Capaldi, G. (2008). *A Boy Named Beckoning: The True Story of Dr. Carlos Montezuma, Native American Hero*. Carolrhoda Books.

This story describes the life of a Native American boy named Wassaja, or "Beckoning," who was kidnapped from his people and sold as a slave. He is adopted by an Italian photographer in 1871 and travels throughout the West. Later he becomes a doctor and a leader for his people.

McDonough, Y. Z. (2005). *Who Was John F. Kennedy?* Penguin Group.

This book describes the life of John Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States.

Tanaka, S. (2008). *Amelia Earhart: The Legend of the Lost Aviator*. Abrams

This book describes the life of Amelia Earheart.

Thompson, G. (2004). *Who Was Eleanor Roosevelt?* Penguin Group.

This book describes the life of Eleanor Roosevelt.

Waldron, A. (2009). *Who Was Claude Monet?* Penguin Group.

This book describes the life of famous painter, Claude Monet.

Fitting In

Moss, P. (2010). *One of Us*. Tidbury House Publishers.

Moss describes the problems a young girl experiences on her first day of school as she moves from group to group trying to find out where she fits in.

Foreign War

Bunting, E. (2005). *Gleam and Glow*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This story describes a family that flees their home when enemy troops invade their village during war. As the family gets ready to leave, the son lets his goldfish go in a nearby pond. After the war when they return home, the family finds that the fish have survived and multiplied.

Garland, S. (1997). *The Lotus Seed*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This is the story of a Vietnamese-American grandmother and her journey from Vietnam to America. When she comes to America, she has a lotus seed that she brought as a reminder of her country.

Sis, P. (2007). *The Wall. Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

This is the story of Sis' experiences growing up in Prague prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and his experiences when he moves to America after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Stamaty, M. A. (2004). *Alia's Mission: Saving the Books in Iraq*. Random House Children's Books.

This is the story of an Iraqi librarian and her determination to save the books in the library when she finds out that her country will be going to war. This book is illustrated like a graphic novel.

Guns in School

Loribecki, M. (1996). *Just One Flick of a Finger*. Penguin Group.

This is the story of a young boy who takes a gun to school to scare the bully who has been tormenting him. The gun is fired accidentally and his friend is shot.

Immigration

Bunting, E. (1997) *A Day's Work*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. **Kindle**

This is the story of a Mexican-American boy who helps his grandfather find work. The grandfather does not speak English.

Garland, S. (2002). *My Father's Boat*. Scholastic.

Garland tells the story of a Vietnamese-American father and son fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. As they fish, the father tells his son stories of his childhood in Vietnam and of his grandfather.

Polacco, P. (2001). *The Keeping Quilt*. Aladdin. **Kindle**

Polacco tells the story of a quilt her Russian mother makes from several family member's clothing. The quilt helps them remember their family back in Russia.

Los Angeles Riot

Bunting, E. (1999). *Smokey Night*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bunting tells the story of several families' experiences during the Los Angeles riots.

Marginalized People

Tingle, T. (2006). *Crossing Bok Chitto. A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom*. New York, NY: Cinco Puntos Press.

This story takes place in Mississippi during the 1800's. A Choctaw girl breaks her family's rules and crosses the Bok Chitto in search of blueberries. She becomes friends with the slaves on a nearby plantation and eventually helps a family escape to freedom.

Williams, S. A. (1997). *Working Cotton*. Sandpiper.

This is the story of the life of a migrant family who pick cotton in California.

Yin. (2003). *Coolies*. Penguin Group.

This story chronicles the experiences of two Chinese brother who come to America and work to help build a railroad in 1865.

Poverty

Baylor, B. (1998). *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. Aladdin.

In this story, Baylor describes the lesson a young girl learns about her family's way of living. Her parents do not possess many material things, but they teach their children about the richness of their surroundings and their relationships with each other.

Bunting, E. (1993). *Fly Away Home*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This is the story of a homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father.

Park, F. (2000). *The Royal Bee*. Boyds Mills Press.

In this story, an impoverished young boy who works in the Governor's palace is offered a chance at an education and he ends up competing in a national education competition, The Royal Bee. This story is set in Korea in the late 1800's.

Sendak, M. (1993). *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*. HarperCollins.

Sendak pairs two nursery rhymes with his illustrations to tell a story about homeless children, kittens, and a baby.

Power to Effect Change

Nivola, C. (2008). *Planting the Trees of Kenya. The Story of Wangari Maathai*. Francis Foster Books. {Nook Book}.

This is the story of Kenyan activist, Wangari Maathai, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her achievements in the environmental movement and human rights.

Rylant, C. (1996). *An Angel for Solomon Singer*. Scholastic, Inc.

In this story, Solomon, a lonely, impoverished man, finds friendship in a restaurant and learns to enjoy his life more. Children learn that small gestures can make a difference.

Role Models

Robbins, T. (2007). *Bessie Coleman: Daring Stunt Pilot*. Coughlan Publishing.
This is the story of the female, African-American stunt pilot, Bessie Coleman, who achieved her dream of flying in the 1920's. This book is illustrated in graphic novel format.

Stone, T. L. (2008). *Elizabeth Leads the Way. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote*. Henry Holt and Company.
This book describes the life of Elizabeth Stanton who fought for women's right to vote.

Scientists

Sis, P. (2000). *Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Sis describes the life of famous astronomer, Galileo Galilei.

Sis, P. (2003). *The Tree of Life: A Book Depicting the Life of Charles Darwin: Naturalist, Geologist, and Thinker*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Sis describes the life and work of Charles Darwin.

September 11th

Brown, D. (2011). *America is Under Attack*. Roaring Book Press. **Kindle**
Brown explains the events of September 11, 2001 when the terrorists attacked America.

Deedy, C. A. (2009). *14 Cows for America*. Peachtree Publishers, Ltd.
An American diplomat travels to Kenya to visit his home after the terrorists attacks of September 11th and shares the story of what took place. The Maasai decide to send a gift back to the grieving Americans.

Suicide

Garland, S. (1994). *I Never Knew Your Name*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
In this story, a teenage boy narrates the story of his neighbor, another teenager, who commits suicide.

Veterans

Raven, M. T. (2005). *America's White Table*. Sleeping Bear Press.
This story describes the tradition of setting an empty place at the dinner table to honor family members who have died, are missing in action, or being held captive during war.

Vietnam

Bunting, E. (1992). *The Wall*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. **Audio CD**
In this book, Bunting shares the story of a father and son who visit the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in to find the son's grandfather's name.

World War II

Adler, D. (1995). *Child of the Warsaw Ghetto*. Holiday House.
This is the story of the Warsaw Ghetto told through the eyes of an orphaned boy.

Adler, D. (2002). *A Hero and the Holocaust: The Story of Janusz Korczak and His Children*. Holiday House.

This is the story of Janusz Korczak, who was the director of a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw, Poland during Nazi rule, and the children for whom he cared.

Bunting, E. (2009). *So Far From the Sea*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. **Kindle**

In this story, a family returns to Manzanar, where thousands of Japanese-Americans were imprisoned during World War II, to pay their respects to their grandfather.

Judge, L. (2007). *One Thousand Tracings. Healing the Wounds of World War II*. Hyperion Books for Children.

This book tells the story of an American family after World War II who contacted a family in Germany and began to send them supplies, particularly shoes. Soon, families from all over Europe began to send tracings of their feet so that they, too, could receive new shoes from America.

Mochizuki, K. (2003). *Passage to Freedom*. The Sugihara Story. Lee & Low Books.

This book describes how Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania, uses his connections to help Jews escape the Nazis during World War II. He was later imprisoned for his actions.

Polacco, P. (2009). *The Butterfly*. Penguin Group.

In this book, Polacco tells the story of two girls who become friends during World War II. One girl and her family are part of the French Resistance and the other is Jewish.

Writing

Brown, M. W. (1990). *The Important Book*. HarperCollins.

In this book, Brown describes her observations of everyday objects like apples, spoons, and daisies.

Hopkinson, D. (2012). *A Boy Called Dickens*. Schwartz and Wade.

In this book, Hopkinson describes author, Charles Dickens, childhood. Many of the things that happened to him as a child inspired his writing.

Ketteman, H. (2000). *Heat Wave*. Walker Books for Young Readers.

In this story, a family deals with the exaggerated events on their farm caused by a heat wave.

Van Allsburg, C. (1986). *The Stranger*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

In this story, Van Allsburg tells the story of a farmer who brings home a stranger he finds in the road. The stranger lives with the farmer and his family until he gets his memory back and leaves to go south. Van Allsburg leaves the identity of the stranger a mystery. His writing style and mysterious ending make this a great book to use to teach writing.

Van Allsburg, C. (1991). *The Wretched Stone*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

In this story, unusual things happen to the crew of the ship, the Rita Anne. Van Allsburg leaves readers with another mystery to solve, making this a great book to use to teach writing.

Van Allsburg, C. (1993). *The Sweetest Fig*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

In this story, a sadistic dentist is given two magic figs in payment for dental work he has done on one of his patients. The figs can make one's dreams come true. In the end, the dentist's dog eats the second fig and makes his own dream come true.

Appendix B

Sources for Finding Appropriate Picture Books

Print Sources

- Ammon, B. & Sherman, G. (1997). *Worth a Thousand Words: An Annotated Guide to Picture Books for Older Readers* (**available as an e-book**).
- Culham, R. (2004). *Using Picture Books to Teach Writing with the Traits*. Scholastic, Inc.
- Hall, S. (2007). *Using Picture Story Books to Teach Literary Devices: Recommended Books for Children and Young Adults*, (4th ed.). Libraries Unlimited. (**available on Kindle**)

Web Sites

Big Universe. www.biguniverse.com.

This site offers hundreds of fiction and non-fiction books for children in grades K-8. Many of the informational texts could be useful for content-area reading and the books are written like graphic novels. However, picture books for older readers did not seem to be available.

Children's Books Online. www.childrensbooksonline.org.

This site is sponsored by the Rosetta Project and it includes the largest collection of illustrated antique books on the internet (Adam & Mowers, 2008).

BookPALS Storyline at www.storylineonline.net.

This site offers many great picture books (mostly for younger readers) that are read aloud by celebrities. This site is sponsored by the Screen Actors Guild.

Project Gutenberg. www.gutenberg.org.

This site offers a large collection of free e-books for all ages. The books are free because their copyright has expired and they are part of the public domain.

Storia by Scholastic. store.scholastic.com.

Storia is an app that may be loaded on iPhone, iPod, or iPad. There is a large collection of picture books for young children and chapter books or novels for older students. The site listed above is the Scholastic store and other picture books may be found there.

Storynory. www.storynory.com.

This site offers e-books read to the reader by storytellers, mainly Natasha Gostwick. Most of the stories are for young children, but they do offer myths and fables that might interest older students. They also offer original stories as well.

The International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) . www.icdlbooks.org.

This site offers a collection of outstanding historical and contemporary books from around the world. The ICDL Foundation's goal is "to have every culture and language represented so that every child can know and appreciate the riches of children's literature from the world community" (ICDL website, 2012).

TumbleBooks www.tumblebooks.com.

This site offers many well-known contemporary books for children of all ages. They also offer National Geographic Videos and audio books. This site does require a subscription and the prices vary depending on the type of subscription one signs up for (Adam & Mowers, 2008).

About the Author

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Inviting Teacher Candidates into Book Talks: Supporting a Culture of Lifelong Reading

By Janine Bixler, Sally Smith and Susan Henderson

Abstract

This article describes our collaborative inquiry, three teacher educators/researchers of literacy from different institutions who shared a concern about how few teacher candidates in our programs neither viewed themselves as readers nor possessed a love of reading, qualities we view as key to supporting all children as lifelong readers, writers, and communicators. In this paper, we share how we took action and studied the use of book talks in our programs to support a culture of lifelong reading among our teacher candidates and to offer possibilities for candidates' future teaching experiences. The study took place over two years. In phase one, we studied groups of our candidates from our literacy/ language arts methods courses as they engaged in book talks. In phase two, we followed-up with nine of the participating candidates, three in each institution, during student teaching or their first year of teaching to explore how the book talk experience influenced their early teaching efforts. Findings show that book talks and the culture created in reading for pleasure and purpose made a positive impression on the way candidates viewed what it means to be a reader and their role as future teachers of literacy. In addition, we found many challenges that impeded candidates' efforts to act on their visions of using book talks and developing independent readers in their classrooms.

Inviting Teacher Candidates into Book Talks: Supporting a Culture of Lifelong Reading

"I truly didn't realize the significance of it until I was a member of this club. Books are meant to be discussed and to be

delted into and enjoyed and I need to teach my students how to do that before they will be able to do it on their own.”

(Nina, Teacher Candidate)

Nina was a participant in our study that examined how teacher candidate book talks and opportunities to engage in pleasure reading might support our teacher candidates’ knowledge and experience with promoting lifelong reading with their future students. As literacy educators, we often initiate conversations with our teacher candidates to think beyond the importance of modeling and supporting literacy strategies to consider how vital it is for teachers to *be* readers and writers and demonstrate a love of reading and writing (Ruddell, 1995). We open these conversations because ironically, despite the heavy curriculum focus on reading and language arts, many of our teacher candidates do not love to write or read. At the beginning of each semester, when we survey candidates, at least fifty percent of our candidates will admit that they rarely read for pleasure, do not like to read, or have a hard time “getting into” or “sticking with a book.” Similarly, Applegate & Applegate (2004) have surveyed hundreds of their preservice teachers, also finding that, 51.5 % of their participants were “unenthusiastic readers.” These results are of concern for us as many have asserted that the most effective teachers are those who demonstrate a love for reading (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000). Our experience with what differentiates a teacher as effective and influential concurs with this assertion.

We (the teacher educators/researchers of this study) share a philosophy that literacy instruction needs to include a balance of explicit teaching of word study and comprehension strategies, with opportunities to engage in reading real texts for pleasure as well for information.

Many states have adopted the Common Core Standards, which cover literacy in language arts and the content areas. These new standards are noteworthy for their emphasis on close, critical reading of fiction and nonfiction. Yet we, along with other practitioners, have noted in reviewing the goals and practices, that the Standards consider meaning to reside in the text itself (CCSS, 2010; Calkins,

Ehrenworth, Lehman, 2012). The understanding of the personal and pleasurable aspects of reading, the transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978), the importance of the reader's construction of the text's meaning (described more fully in this paper) is missing. Based on our understanding of the importance of modeling how vital it is for teachers to experience and model reading for pleasure, this paper advocates an emphasis on pleasurable, personal reading, alongside a close reading of a text's content. While we agree with and already model most aspects of the literacy standards in the Common Core Standards, we continue to incorporate the type of literature discussions discussed in this paper.

Readers need to engage in conversations (McIntyre, 2007; Peterson & Eeds, 2007) and share their own unique responses to literature (Rosenblatt 1978). The current emphasis on guided reading groups often places too great of a focus on strategic reading, with no or limited opportunity to engage readers in sustained and meaningful discussions about literature (Short, 1999), nor the opportunity to develop a reading life (Cooper, 2009). Other studies indicate that most fifth graders rarely read for pleasure outside of school, placing the formation of life-long reading habits on teachers in classrooms (McKool, 2007). In addition, the report, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* (NEA, 2007) raises concerns that pleasurable reading is on the decline as children enter their teenage years and throughout adulthood. As a result, trends have shown a drop in comprehension scores as well as a decline in civic and social engagement in adults (Gambrell, 2008). Recently, psychologists and neuroscientists have given greater attention to how fiction enriches our lives, concluding that narratives expand readers' experiences and influence beliefs and behaviors, such as reducing prejudice and stereotypes (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Consequently, if we neglect to address our own preservice teachers' limited reading habits, our candidates may not engage young learners and give them a purpose for reading, both for pleasure and information (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

This paper will describe our study on how teacher educators might engage teacher candidates in book talks and independent

reading to provide contexts that 1) explore their identities as readers and how they define what it means to be a reader, 2) invite them to have meaningful discussion about books, and 3) offer possibilities for promoting lifelong reading and book talk in their future classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of readers' engagement in personal response, the literary transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978) that prepares them to understand and analyze their own experiences and experiences and histories of others, is an underlying theme of the study's framework. According to Rosenblatt, the content of the mental images the text sets off will be colored and influenced by the personal experiences of the reader. The facilitated literature discussion group greatly enhances support for extending this transaction.

The ways in which talk helps to confirm, extend, or modify individual interpretations, creating a better understanding of the text, is explored and documented in the studies and theories of Douglas Barnes (1993). Barnes described exploratory talk in small or large groups as talk that includes hesitations and changes of direction, tentativeness, assertions and questions, and maintained that, "in the course of the talk (readers) are in part exploring their responses to what they have read, but in an important sense they are also constructing them. And the construction is being done collaboratively" (1993, p. 27). Other researchers looking at the response of small, facilitated groups of students have documented increased participation, sophistication in reading strategies, and deeper comprehension (Almasi, 1995, Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003, Eeds & Wells, 1989). Although these studies and others (e.g. Maloch, 2004; Pierce, 2006) feature teachers as experienced readers and facilitators in scaffolding meaningful conversations about texts, our study aimed to exam ways to promote meaningful literature discussions with teacher candidates who may have limited experience with reading and discussing books. We believe, based on our own experiences with teachers, that although there are many rich examples in the research on book discussion in elementary and middle school classrooms, these opportunities are not frequent. Research indicates that even practicing teachers underestimate children's ability to comprehend and discuss complex issues in literature (Baker, Leftwich, & McDermott, 2001). From our past classroom discussions about books with candidates, we knew that our preservice teachers were

somewhat naïve in their expectations about how children think and the possibilities for engaging children in conversations about books.

Methods

Participants and Context

To explore the possibilities for engaging our childhood/elementary teacher candidates in children's literature book talks, each of us created a book discussion experience that fit our programs, candidates, and current teaching contexts. The sites included a liberal arts college in a small, diverse city in the northeast (NEC), a large university located outside a northeast metropolitan area (NEU), and a liberal arts college in a small, diverse city in the southeast (SEC). After we agreed to study the influence of engaging teacher candidates in book talks as part of their preparation in literacy and language arts, each of us identified an opportunity for inviting representative groups of candidates to participate in our book talk study. Six book groups were formed, two at each site, which included a total of 30 candidates during the first phase of the study. The participating candidates were typical of teacher preparation programs, mostly white and middle class, with the exception of an African American male and female in the southeast college, one Latina female in the northeast college, and one in the northeast university. Also, one participant in the northeast university was an older, returning student who was a parent. Additionally, these candidates represented the range of readers, identifying themselves as unenthusiastic to avid readers. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study.

The instructor/researcher at the northeast college conducted book talks with childhood education candidates outside of class time as an informal book club/extra activity. These candidates were invited to participate in book talk at the beginning of the semester, as a result of a discussion of the Applegate & Applegate (2004) article about the Peter effect with reading habits, which posed the question, how do you foster a love of reading with learners, if you do not practice a love of reading yourself? The southern college instructor/researcher also conducted a book group with her early childhood/elementary candidates outside of class time. She invited her candidates to participate, with a similar conversation, based on their readings of Trelease's (2006) *Read Aloud Handbook*, specifically, "If Adults Are Supposed to Be Role Models, How Much Should Teachers Read?" In particular, they focused on his words, "book talks work only when the person talking has actually read the

book. And the harsh reality here is most teachers don't read much" (p. 100). The instructor/researcher of the northeast university involved her candidates in literature discussions during her language arts class, as a non-graded experience. She and her candidates read Peterson & Eeds (2007) *Grand Conversations* and were introduced to the theories of Louise Rosenblatt (1978) regarding literature response.

The book groups met for 4-5 sessions during the semester, for a total of 25 recorded/transcribed sessions across all groups. The participants in all sites ranged in their ratings of themselves as unenthusiastic to avid readers. In addition, most of the candidates had limited experiences in reading children's literature. See Table 1 for participant numbers by site.

The instructors/researchers collaborated on books to be read and discussed, which included a mixture of award-winning picture books and young adult novels, diverse by culture and theme. Although some common texts were chosen across sites, there were variations in the complete selection to adapt to the interests of the book talk participants. See table 1 for a list of books read by each book group.

Table 1

Books Read and Discussed

Site	Participants	Books
Northeast College	5	<i>La Mariposa, Ruby Bridges, Shiloh</i>
	6	<i>The Friendship, Silent Music, Alia's Mission, La Mariposa, Ruby Bridges</i>
Northeast University	5	<i>Pictures of Hollis Woods</i> (discussed over 4 sessions)
	6	<i>Shiloh</i> (discussed over 4 sessions)
Southeast College	5	<i>Elijah of Buxton, La Mariposa, The Friendship, Ruby Bridges</i>
	3	<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond, Frindle, Shiloh, Pictures of Hollis Woods</i>

In the second phase of our study, we each followed up with three of our candidates through student teaching observations and/or semi-structured interviews after graduation to explore what we might learn from our candidates about their growth as readers and teachers of readers to inform teacher preparation programs and instruction in literacy and language arts. We aimed to examine their words and actions after the book talk experiences as student teachers/new teachers and compared these results to what we learned about them during their book talk experiences with us. A total of nine candidates, three from each site, participated in the follow-up phase of the study. The participants ranged in their ratings of themselves as unenthusiastic to avid readers, and were candidates we had the most contact with after the book talk experiences to either observe in schools and/or correspond with about their practice as student teachers and first year teachers.

Data Sources

A teacher candidate reading survey, adapted from Applegate & Applegate (2004), was created and administered to the participants to learn about our candidates as readers. During the book talks, multiple data sources were used to triangulate findings. All participating teacher candidates in the book talk kept a journal on both their readings and their post-reflections on the discussions. Book discussion sessions were audio taped and transcribed. In addition, the researchers/facilitators kept field notes on the discussions. Post-book talk interviews were used to determine what candidates thought about the book talk experience and to serve as member checks for confirming findings. Some of the sites also used a blog, email correspondences, and videotaping as other data sources. A year later, each instructor/researcher chose three candidates to interview who were either completing student teaching or their first year of teaching, with structured questions designed by us, in response to the findings of the first part of the study.

Data Analysis

Data were coded throughout the study to identify emerging patterns on the nature of the discussions, the participants' written responses to books and discussions, and their responses to our follow-up interviews after book talks and during their first teaching experiences (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative guidelines were employed to ensure study rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, we created tables to organize our data and look for patterns across data sources, then referred back to our raw data to confirm the appropriate context of the incidents we identified as representing a pattern. In addition, we consulted a peer debriefer who had expertise in literature discussions but was not a part of the context of our study. Analysis of candidate responses were shared across sites for ongoing analysis, and for auditing of themes/patterns, often involving our participants in the research process.

Findings

Our impetus for doing this study was to confront the dilemma, faced by literacy teacher educators, that approximately half of the enrolled candidates, future teachers of our youth, are unenthusiastic readers, and rarely engage in the act of life-long reading that we teach in our classes. This factor potentially limited their ability to model pleasurable, consistent reading. By studying our endeavor to engage our teacher candidates into book talks, we learned that book talks became a context

for candidates to explore their identities as readers and how they defined what it means to be a reader. In addition, the opportunity became an authentic space for challenging their ideas about the significance of pleasurable reading beyond strategy instruction for comprehension, and for embracing literature discussions as a context for promoting a culture lifelong reading and learning. Candidates were invited into a world of literature that made them think about their world and considered what engaged young minds. Unfortunately, challenges occurred when candidates attempted to apply their visions of promoting reading and talk during their initial teaching experiences. In this section, we will share our findings for the following research questions:

- 1) How did our teacher candidates define what it means to be a reader?
- 2) How do their definitions compare to their actions as readers engaged in book talk?
- 3) Did our candidates' visions of what it means to be a reader, their actions as readers, and their role as teachers to support lifelong readers evolve over time/experience?

What Does it Mean to be a Reader?

When we interviewed our nine teacher candidates, a year after book talks, to follow-up with them after student teaching and during their first teaching experiences, most of our candidates defined being a reader as one who *enjoys and chooses to read*, and goes beyond understanding the author's message, to *make connections, ask questions, and discuss big ideas and themes*. Also, they stated that readers *read for pleasure and read to learn about his/her world*. For example, Nina (NEC) shared,

Not only can they read the text for what it is, they can take it a step further. They are able to make connections to their own lives, to determine themes and larger ideas from the text and connect to those things they see in themselves or in the world around them. They are able to grasp what is written between the lines of a text, and apply it to their own life or to recognize issues in the world around them.

Zora, from the NEU site who on the initial survey characterized herself as not liking reading, also emphasized making connections to both one's own life and to other books, adding, "you read for both enjoyment and knowledge...anyone can be a reader if they really want to." Michelle, another candidate, from that site said, "You enjoy it and look forward to (reading)," and similarly Latika (SEC), an avid reader, believes, "to be considered a reader, someone must go beyond reading out of

obligation. Readers choose to read even when it is not asked of them. So, basically, to be a reader, you must be a person who reads beyond requirement.”

Beyond seeing reading as something chosen and enjoyed, candidates also learned that close and engaged reading is something that teachers need to model and provide opportunities for students to do. As Nina admitted, “I truly didn’t realize the significance of it until I was a member of this club. Books are meant to be discussed and to be delved into and enjoyed and I need to teach my students how to do that before they will be able to do it on their own.” These participants indicate an understanding that engaging with challenging texts with multiple interpretations can create a joyful interaction in the reading experience (Barthes, 1975).

Two of the candidates, Kelly and John, both from the SEC site, had definitions that included a greater emphasis on comprehension strategies, which were very different from their interviews after the book talks in the first year. Kelly was now in a reading interventionist position and John was in a school that used a mandated literacy curriculum for upper grade readers who struggled with the most basic texts. Their definitions mentioned that students needed “strategies to read every word and comprehend.” Yet, when (SEC author’s first name) asked Kelly about how the teacher candidate book talks supported the way she prepared children as readers, Kelly responded, “I learned that when reading, people interpret books differently, based on their life experiences and knowledge. [The book talks] supported my learning and understanding of different points of view, to help me understand my students’ points of views and encourage them to do the same as they discuss with classmates.”

How Do Candidates’ Definitions Compare to their Actions as Readers in Book Talk?

When we revisited the data on our candidates engaged in book talk and compared this to their interviews and discussions with us on how they define a reader, we learned *that the book talk experience provided them with a vision for teaching reading*. When our candidates discussed how the book talk experience influenced the way they hoped to prepare children as readers, they talked about the importance of *modeling engaged reading, listening to other readers’ points of view to explore themes and big ideas, and creating a community of learners where everyone can share ideas and disagree*. It was also clear to us that our candidates valued the book talk as a *model for student agency*. The experience of talking together in literature groups, exploring themes and social values, and contesting texts and ideas enables learners to share responsibility for learning in a collaborative social context,

fostering participants' sense of agency (Brevig, 2009; Short, 1999). Participants' comments reveal an understanding that they, and their students, should be able to make their own decisions and feel empowered in their ability to act (Cambourne, 1995; Johnston, 2004) For example, Rose from the NEC site shared her vision for teaching reading,

I would love to head my own book club. I think it is a very relaxing environment for anyone. No one is being criticized for their ideas, whereas in the classroom, the teacher may look for an exact right or wrong answer. You are always learning something new from someone else or creating new answers on your stories for yourself. Books give children a new entrance to a whole different world.

Rose often talked about how much she loved the book talk context as a space for readers to explore and expand their minds and often thought about stories through other points of view. For example, when some candidates engaged in book talk questioned the appropriateness of the book, *The Friendship* by Mildred Taylor (1998), for elementary students, Rose asserted,

I think the opposite—I think the place where we grew up—one black kid in the whole class, would be a good thing to open your eyes to something out of your own norm and this is what actually goes on in the world in other places like (names local cities surrounding the college). We should address this—in my town we have the projects, where all of the Black people live and we're told not to go there, because it's dangerous. My sister is 8 and if she read this it would have a great impact on her because she would want to help people like that and befriend people because she would look at it as not right—and wouldn't want to be treated like that.

Another aspect of agency that emerged was our candidates' understanding of the power of asking their own questions and working together to make meaning of their reading. Reflecting on her experience of being in a literature group, Elizabeth (NEU site) commented,

The whole idea of not having someone over you, watching you and trying to guide your discussions, it was kind of organic in a sense. I hate that word but I feel like it was natural...I believe these literature groups were so successful because of the removed role that (Name of NEU author) played throughout the weeks. Without having a body next to (you) listening in over your shoulder throughout an entire group discussion helps create a more relaxed and natural atmosphere that promotes discussion. The

members of our group were really great. I mean in general we all kind of meshed nicely. Like there was really no power (outside of our own).

In her response to the interview question, To what extent has participating in the *book club supported the way you prepare children as readers*, Elizabeth stated: “It helped me realize that...by allowing students to come up with their own questions and guide their discussions around points of their choice gives students ownership of their learning.” From the same site, Zora’s response similarly recognizes the importance of peer agency:

As a teacher I see that I should encourage my students to work together and discuss what they read and learn about because by talking with one another and bouncing ideas off of one another they can become stronger learners and readers.

Zora’s recognition that book talks provide opportunities for students to talk and bounce ideas off of one another, is the type of agency discussed by Johnston (2004), in which teachers provide a context for students to problem solve and create their own meaning. He uses Cazden’s (1992) description of “revealing,” as different from telling, since students are given a space to figure things out, rather than teachers telling students something and then having them try it. Our candidates embraced this notion that book talks provided agency in that ideas were revealed through their own dialogue, than told. We saw our candidates problem solve and create their own meaning together in every book talk. For example, SEC candidates questioned the way the illustrator portrayed people in Ruby Bridges:

Hillary: I’ll say something about the illustrations because those people don’t look white to me.

Brittany: No they don’t, that’s what I said.

John: They look black - they keep them looking black.

Kelly: I was like, look! (All of these voices are on top of each other, chatting furiously.)

Hillary: It’s kind of hard to distinguish

Brittany: Like is that police officer white or...

Hillary: Because all of these people are supposed to be white

Cathy: Because they all look...

Brittany: They don’t look like the teacher

Cathy: right

Hillary: different

(First name of SEC author): Do you think that’s on purpose?

Cathy: I don't know. Because I had to do a double take at her because I was like, Wow! And then I got to reading it and I was like, Wow! I felt like even the children looked kind of questionable.

John: I guess if you look at it from a child's point of view, they don't really seem like—

John & Hillary: —Black or white

Others: Yeah! That's true. I didn't think of that.

John: Because I guess racism is caused. It's not something that kids...

Kelly: Exactly

John: Because if you look at it from the child's point of view, I guess that's probably why I'm like, that they aren't black or white, you know.

Participants in the *Pictures of Hollis Woods* group (NEU) bounced ideas off one another as well, as they began to make sense of the structure of the novel:

Alexis: The book has a lot of letters, the chapters have letters.

Elizabeth: Yeah, it starts out with a W,

Nancy: So each picture is a letter in her mind? Mother, M.

Elizabeth: There's an X, it talks about that. The first picture, with her friend.

Alexis: Next one, second picture, it says Steven

Elizabeth: So each picture is a picture in her mind. Chapter 2, fishing on the Delaware. What does that mean, pictures?

Alexis: I think they're mental pictures of her past. She doesn't have any physical evidence of these things in her mind? So she has these pictures.

Elizabeth: Yeah, they're mental pictures, 'cause she doesn't have real pictures or evidence of the past.

Lara: Part of what she wants of her life? That's what the mental pictures are?

Becky: (Reads a section from back of book.) Cause look, on the back- "*with pictures she'll never forget.*"

These students worked together to make sense of their novel as they began their reading, helping each other clarify the author's and illustrator's imagery and meaning. In the last session of the *Shiloh* (Naylor, 2000) book discussion (NEU), book club members bounced their emerging evaluations of the main character and the novel's ending off one another:

Sonya: I really liked how Marty's character became strong- and like the fact that he didn't hold back.

Chad: Right. The meeting with Shiloh changed him as a person. I really liked that.

Yeah, he says what are you going to do, shoot me? Judd's character really changed too - he went out and got him a collar. "It's your dog now. Have fun."

Zora: I like the very last page of the book - it's like a really good ending how it says look at the dark closing in...

Sonya: Like the curtains are closing.

Zora: Yeah, like the end, like across of the screen. I just like that, cause the good part is - I saved Shiloh and opened my eyes. That's ain't bad for an 11 year-old.

Yellie, another group member, then reflects,

I think children would really enjoy this story. It would be a great way to get children engaged in responsibility. They could see how someone their own age is able to make some changes in some else's life...

The candidates at the SEC site reveal a sense of agency in their discussion and evaluation of the teacher's actions in *La Mariposa* (Jimenez, 1998) as they sense the teacher is not doing all that she can do to best teach an English Language Learner in the class. They are quite engaged and opinionated in the following discussion:

Cathy - I feel like in general that this book goes against everything that we are taught in education classes - like, the whole book.

Hillary- Like being culturally aware!

Cathy- Yes! Like he [the student] just sat there the whole time. And she [the teacher] knew he wasn't paying attention and she didn't care. There wasn't anyone who tried to help him or explain anything to him. He was just like a loner. And the teacher never took the initiative to do anything, and it was just like, oh well.

Kelly - There was such a long period of time where instruction was lost because she wouldn't take the time.

Cathy - It's because...

Kelly - She knew, she could tell him. I mean, she understood.

Cathy - She could have gradually been building him along, slowly, on a lower level. But she did nothing. I was like, this is like totally wrong!

Buffy - She let him sit there and color.

John - Y'all were talking about how no one in the school was willing to learn the boy's language or nurture him. That goes on really today in the schools.

Hillary - um hm

John- Because I was in an internship freshman year and this teacher had two Hispanic kids and she never really (helped them) and I was like, was it their fault that their parents came to America and they're in this school system, and they don't really know the language?

Kelly- I haven't really seen that yet, I mean *I don't* want to see it.

After further discussion on various scenes in the book, the candidates discuss what they would do in their future classrooms:

Kelly - I guess my thing is...as a teacher, we're supposed to accommodate the needs in our classroom and ...you call those parents and you try to see if you can communicate and you find people. You take that extra effort.

These candidates discussed *La Mariposa* and showed agency by voicing their opinions of teaching; together they revealed their belief that a teacher's role is to teach *all* students.

Examining Candidates' Visions and Role as Teachers

We wanted to know how our candidates acted on their visions while student teaching and in their first year of teaching. We found many challenges that prevented our participants from implementing their visions of readers and the instructional spaces they would like to create for students as competent language users. What candidates cited as school practices that inhibited a love of reading and student agency included, *school mandated programs*, *teacher or text created questions*, *lack of engaging materials that connected to students' lives*, and *no choice*. Nina (NEC) shared, "We teach them how to pass a test, not how to develop their minds and become readers that engage and change." NEC student teacher Melissa used multiple copies of *Alia's Mission* (Stamaty, 2010), a short graphic story based on an Iraqi Librarian who helped save thousands of books from the library in Basra before being bombed, to teach a required theme of courage. During the planning of her lesson, Melissa noted that her students were unenthusiastic about the stories in the required basal. She received permission from her cooperating teacher to use the story, which Melisa selected because we discussed the book in our book talk and she thought the story would engage her sixth graders and fit the theme of courage. Unfortunately, her perceptions of the expectations of daily literacy practices of the classroom of her student teaching placement inhibited her from having an engaging conversation with students about the text after reading, beyond posing two questions that only two students responded to with short statements.

Melissa: Do you think Alia was courageous?

Sixth grade girl: Yes.

Melissa: What made her courageous?

Sixth grade boy: She saved all of those books, during the war.

This was contrary to the discussion she participated in during our teacher candidate book talks. For example, in that context, Melissa initiated a dialogue on the looting that occurred:

Melissa: Reading about the looting, made me think—wow I don't know if I would have included that in the story, but it's important to talk about and a really good way to talk about (how people react)—there's such great vocabulary...

(NEC author's First Name): That sometimes happens as a result of a disaster—hurricanes, black outs.... I wondered why they took everything except the books? Was it out of respect, were they too heavy to carry, or did they not realize the value of the books?

Melissa: I thought it was kind of weird how they put it—because I took it at first that the books were meaningless—no one took the books, no one cares.... Then all of a sudden she said, "We have to save them." It made it seem like oh they are just books—I wouldn't have played that up as much.

Nina: I feel like too when people are going to steal things, they're thinking—oh I could really use a couch right now, I'm going to take a couch. Whereas like – since the books preserve the culture, they are not necessary to survival. So she had the bigger picture in her mind of – we have to save this history, whereas everyone else is caught up in the moment—I need a couch, I need a lamp...they're not going to see the value aspect.

This exchange, which caused candidates to think about why the author included the looting event and why people loot, was one of many ideas raised in that session. Other topics they initiated were the ironic similarities to September 11 and how the book challenges how we define a hero. Although it was this rich discussion that made Melissa love the book and think of it to share in her 6th grade class, her student teaching placement operated under a very different culture from what we did as readers in a book club.

Other candidates faced different challenges. During her student teaching experience, Becky (NEU) noted that, "while students may have their boxes of books at their desks, but so often there isn't any time to read during the day, and the teacher doesn't ask about the reading or monitor it." Zora (NEU) reported that her student teaching classrooms portrayed negative models:

For the first graders I worked with, they had 15 minutes every day they must read, but most of the time they just stared at one page the

whole time or quickly fanned through books, but never really displayed the interest to read. The same held true when I was in fourth grade, except there was not even a portion during that day when they had to read. Some students would take the opportunity on their own during snack time, but it was no way enforced or guided by the teacher.

The increasing pressure of preparing students for standardized tests, as well as the move to assess teachers' competence based on their students' test scores, tends to push meaningful, monitored independent reading and authentic discussion of literature to the margins of our former students' classrooms.

John, a first-year teacher from the SEC site who admits that he does not "actively pursue reading (nor) spend as much time reading," finds the school-required ELA scripted lessons as a school practice that inhibits children from developing as readers. He also states that this mandated program "hinders my creativity." John states that a majority of his students come from backgrounds where reading is not valued or is even ignored, and he claims that

It would be awesome to use book clubs with my students because it would give them the opportunity to share information that they found important to them as they read the selected book.

In his interview, John asked (SEC author's first name), "How do I incorporate reading into a district mandatory program that I must teach in my class? How do you help students that are reading on 1st and 2nd grade reading levels in 6th grade to read more?" His poignant questions, and other data from our teacher candidates, lead us to consider implications for our teacher education programs.

Although current school practices and regulations appeared to inhibit our candidates from implementing their visions of teaching reading, there were a few instances that showed our candidates making small but significant action towards engaging students as lifelong readers.

In the example shared earlier, Melissa (NEC) showed agency during student teaching by attempting to expose her sixth grade students to engaging literature, with a real book, rather than a perceived school text/basal reader. She often shared with (NEC author's first name) how frustrated she was with having to teach the basal series in sixth grade. She hated how the students groaned when it was time for English Language Arts, and asked to borrow the multiple copies of *Alia's Mission*. It was a book discussed in our book talk the previous semester and she wanted to share it with her sixth graders since it fit the theme of courage, and in her mind, it was more engaging to sixth graders than the stories in the basal. After receiving permission from her cooperating teacher to use the book, Melissa obtained more

copies through interlibrary loan at the local public library to make sure that students had enough copies to share in pairs.

Latika (SEC) also demonstrated agency during her first year teaching in a predominantly low SES school, when she modeled by example. She took her class to the school book fair where she bought “a good bit of books” and the students “laughed at my excitement over the new books.” She continued,

I explained to them that books are definitely something to get excited about. Each one contains a little get away for the reader [who wouldn't want that?]. They didn't get it, but when I gave them the opportunity to choose some of the new books for the classroom, they really got into it. I even noticed they seemed more enthusiastic when it came time to choose books to read.

Elizabeth (NEU), another respondent, - one who is an enthusiastic reader herself - is an assistant teacher in an elementary science class. She shared with (NEU author's first name) that she is able to take agency in her classroom by having her students participate in nonfiction book discussions, and in her interview, cited above, reinforced that she saw that when students are given the time and opportunity to generate their own discussion topics and direct their own learning deeper comprehension takes place.

As teacher education programs are scrutinized in terms of how well they prepare teachers, we wonder how we, as teacher educators, can help our candidates keep the vision and the agency they experienced as part of our study. As we reflected on our study, we consulted the work of Kosnick and Beck (2008), who studied how their teacher education program prepared their graduates for teaching literacy during their first years as teachers. Similar to our findings, they found that their candidates appreciated learning a vision for teaching literacy, but fell short in enacting many of these practices. It caused them to reflect on how much to cover and whether to expose candidates to approaches that may be “beyond their abilities” as beginning teachers (p. 127). One of our original goals for this project was to provide spaces for our teacher candidates to engage in a pleasurable reading experience: how can we balance the need for teachers to see themselves as readers with the exigencies of today's scripted and test-based literacy curricula?

Implications

This study aimed to address challenges teacher educators face— preparing candidates who have limited experience in reading for pleasure and discussing books, and supporting candidates within and beyond the methods courses to develop their understanding of language arts practices to support competent

language users. Sharing effective practices for reading and discussing books may not be enough if we do not provide opportunities for candidates to explore their own reading identities, to address challenges they may face in schools, or to give our candidates opportunities to try book talks with actual students during field experiences and student teaching. In listening to our candidates, we learned many lessons that can inform teacher preparation programs. Although only one of the candidates implemented a book talk to date, many discussed having a designated independent reading time in the classroom. Often, we talk about this practice in our classes, but do not give candidates an opportunity to go beyond setting aside time for students to discuss how teachers need to engage students as readers (Miller, 2009). In addition, read alouds are prominent in the classrooms; we must have candidates do more to engage students in talk and authentic questioning during whole group discussions and discuss how this modeling can lead to peer-led discussions. We have these Grand Conversations in our college and university classes; we must help them transfer these experiences into the classroom as well.

We also thought how our candidates might have had trouble implementing book talks in the classroom because they forgot how to scaffold this—after they became more natural in engaging in their own talks. In the ELA methods courses of our teacher education programs, candidates are exposed to Harvey Daniels' Literature Circles (2002) and participate in book discussions using role sheets. Candidates learn how those role sheets are a temporary scaffold as they will have their future students use open-ended journals and possibly sticky notes. As book clubs continue outside of class, candidates are able to sustain their own meaningful discussions; perhaps when in their own classroom, they do not remember effective ways to help students learn how to discuss literature. Sometimes opportunities enable students to work outside the mandated literacy block where they can practice what they learned. For example, Elizabeth, mentioned above, who is able to discuss nonfiction literature in groups in her class.

Last, we recommend that candidates need to engage in opportunities beyond the methods classes, to engage with faculty and other students as readers beyond what they do for "school reading." We must help candidates continue to read and explore children's and adolescent literature, more than the literature they read for their education classes, so that they will truly know books to recommend to their future students so to help promote a love for reading. Literacy faculty at the NEU site has spearheaded a read-aloud of a notable children's novel, inviting all elementary education candidates and in-service masters students to take turns reading along together in the school lobby. Choosing award-winning novels such

as *When You Reach Me* (Stead, 2010) to highlight creates a community of readers. At the NEC site, (NEC professor's first name) and some of the teacher candidates in the last book talk group created an official student club on campus to read and discuss children's literature.(SEC professor's first name), at the SEC site, designated a "hot read" display on her desk of a book recently read. She and several candidates heard the idea from Steven Layne (2009) at a reading conference where he discussed his book, *Igniting a Passion for Reading*. (SEC author's first name) hopes that graduates will display their own "hot reads" in their classrooms to model personal reading and to open the door for discussion with their own students. Keeping in touch with our former students through online blogs or the department's face book page with children's and young adult literature reviews and recommendations may enable us to continue to scaffold a vision of pleasurable reading for our teachers. We encourage you, the reader, to continue the conversation on how we may foster a culture of life-long reading in teacher preparation programs, our schools, and our communities.



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Who Educates Teacher Educators About English Language Learners?

Zaline M. Roy-Campbell

Abstract

With the increasing numbers of English language learners (ELLs) in schools across the United States, most teachers will have these students in their classrooms in the near future if not already. Due to the wide diversity of ELL students, all classroom teachers must be equipped to work with these students. This study presents the findings of a survey on the preparation of teacher educators in the literacy field for preparing general education English language arts teachers to work with ELL students in their classrooms. Since part of the preparation includes access to academic journals that address the teaching of ELL students, the survey also identified the general education journals which these teacher educators utilize and the coverage of ELL students in these journals. This article considers the implications of these findings for teacher educators and researchers in the literacy field.

Recently a teacher shared with me that while she was working on a graduate degree, the administrator in the school where she worked asked her to teach a high school class of English language learner (ELL) students. The administrator then went on to add that it should not be a lot of work as it would be similar to a study hall. I have heard countless stories of teachers giving ELL students things to color or draw, or worksheets which they could not complete, while proceeding with their lesson for the rest of the class. These classroom teachers did not know what to do with the new ELL students with whom they could not communicate. With the increasing numbers of ELL students in schools across the United States (U.S.) these scenarios may be more common than we would like to admit, as increasing numbers of general education teachers are likely to have ELL students in their classrooms at some point (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008a). Consequently, the need to prepare classroom teachers to effectively work with this population of students is imperative.

Several studies have highlighted the inadequate preparation of general education teachers for teaching ELL students (Abbate-Vaughn, 2007; Curran, 2003; Karabenick, & Noda, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Roseberry-McKibbin, & Brice, 2005). One of the reasons for this insufficient instruction would appear to be that educators who prepare these teachers do not provide them with this knowledge because they themselves have not received this preparation. Howard's (2006) contention that teachers can't teach what they don't know could also be applicable to teacher educators.

This article focuses on literacy educators, in particular teacher educators who prepare teachers of English Language Arts (ELA). It provides a window into how literacy educators who have not been formally prepared for teaching English language learners (ELL) prepare their students in teacher education programs for working with ELL students. It reports on the findings of a survey about what literacy educators know about working with ELL students, how they have come to know it, and their perceptions of how they prepare students in their programs to meet the literacy needs of ELL students. Additionally, positioning academic journals as a viable resource for preparing teachers for this responsibility, the study identifies journals these educators identified as ones they use in their work and considers the extent to which these journals include articles that address the needs of ELL students.

I begin this article with an overview of the context of the study, the heterogeneity of the expanding English language learner school population, which implicates the conceptual frame of this study. Next, I provide a brief discussion of

literature that addresses the importance of teacher preparation for meeting the needs of ELL students and the inadequacy of general education teachers' preparation for this responsibility. I, then, describe and present the survey findings, with a consideration of academic journals' attendance to the topic of ELLs. Finally, I discuss the implications of the findings for the literacy field.

Overview of the English Language Learner Population

English language learners (ELLs) refer to students who enter schools with a first language other than English and therefore need to increase their proficiency in English in order to meet the academic demands of schools. They are learning English language and developing English literacy skills while using English to access school-based knowledge. Between 1998 and 2009 there was a 51% increase in the number of ELL students in U.S. schools—from 3.5 to 5.3 million—representing about 10% of the student population. In some states the increase was by more than 200% (NCELA, 2011, 2008), as the ELL population has spread in large numbers beyond the six states and major urban areas where the majority of this population has typically resided. In North Carolina, for example, the ELL population increased by 500% between 1993 and 2003 and more than doubled in states such as Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, Oregon, Georgia, and Indiana (Perkins-Gough, 2007). ELL populations have also spread to Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming (Flynn & Hill, 2005) as well as other states.

Diverse Backgrounds

English language learners are a linguistically, culturally, and educationally heterogeneous population; currently there are more than 450 languages spoken by English language learners in U.S. schools (Payán & Nettles, 2006). The broad groupings of ELL students include children of: immigrants who have relocated to the U.S. for a variety of reasons; refugees who have fled their countries due to political or economic strife, including war; sojourners, who have come to study or work in the U.S. for a specified period of time; and migrant workers who move from one place to another depending on where the work is located. These important distinctions highlight ELL students' reasons for and related dispositions about being in schools in the U.S. (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002). There are also differences based on social class, education, and cultural backgrounds and families' differing capacity

to provide academic support for their children at home. Some students have had prior exposure to English as they came from countries where English is spoken as one of the official languages and used as a language of instruction in schools, while others may have studied English as a subject in school. For these students English may not be a new language, but they will have varying degrees of English proficiency. Other students may not have had any prior exposure to English but may be literate and on grade level in their home language. Additionally, some students' languages use the Roman alphabet, and may have words with common etymological origins (termed cognates), so they are able to recognize some English words, while other students' languages (e.g. Chinese and Arabic) employ a different writing system. There are also students whose languages do not have a formalized written form, making it difficult for them to develop literacy in their first language.

Educational Backgrounds

Educational background is a crucial factor, as some students have had schooling in their home country, commensurate with their age, while others may have had interrupted or minimal formal schooling. This latter category—Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)—present particular challenges for teachers, as these students need additional support and instruction in basic English language skills (Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education, 2008), and classroom teachers often do not know how to provide the necessary support (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; Freeman et al., 2002).

A persistent grouping—termed long term English Learners—are students who have been in U.S. schools and have received English language support services for more than six years but have not developed proficiency in English as measured by designated language proficiency tests, such as the New York State English Language Assessment Test (NYSELAT) or multi-state assessments such as the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners test (ACCESS for ELLs) which is currently administered in 23 states (WIDA, 2012). Some long term English learners (LTELs) were born in the U.S. or have been in U.S. schools since kindergarten (Menken & Antunez, 2001). The increasing numbers of LTELs in middle and high schools is one indication of the consequences of inadequate attention to the needs of ELL students in elementary schools (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011; Menken & Antunez, 2001; Menken & Kleyn, 2010). More than 80% of the ELL students in middle and high schools were

born in the U.S. (NCELA, 2008) and there has been a high rate of academic failure among these students (Calderón, 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Recognition of this vast heterogeneity of English language learner students in U.S. schools accentuates the complex challenges that general education teachers may face when they have these students in their classrooms. It is predicted that by 2015 the enrollment of English language learner (ELL) students in U.S. schools will reach 10 million and, by 2025, they will comprise more than one quarter of the student population (NCELA, 2007). Educators at the K-12 levels across the U.S. will increasingly encounter students in their classrooms who do not appear to speak any English or who do not have adequate proficiency in English to follow general classroom instruction.

School-Based Services for English Language Learners

Students designated as ELLs are typically identified by an English-language placement test as not being proficient in English. Those who score below a state-designated proficiency level are deemed eligible for English-language instruction and support mandated by the U.S. Department of Education (NCELA, 2006; NCLB, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This support is typically provided by teachers certified to teach English to speakers of other languages (typically referred to as ESL teachers) who either pull these students out of their regular classrooms daily for a specified period (the pull-out model) or push into classrooms where there are ELL students (the inclusion model). In schools with large numbers of ELL students, the pull-out model is more common; however, English language learner students spend most of their school day in general education classrooms, and, as such, their academic success is dependent upon classroom teachers meeting their linguistic and academic needs (Hite & Evans, 2006). The next section considers teacher-education policy regarding ELL students.

Teacher Education Policy

At the policy level, teacher-education programs in the U.S. address the needs of ELL students in a variety of ways. Aside from certification programs that prepare specialized teachers to work with this population, there are five categories of requirements as specified by different states (Ballantyne et al., 2008b, p. 120):

- States with specific coursework or certification requirements for all teachers (4 states: Arizona, California, New York, Florida),

- States where teacher certification standards for all teachers contain reference to the special needs of ELLs (17 states),
- States in transition, which use the standards published by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (7 states),
- States where teacher certification requirements for all teachers contain reference to “language” as an example of diversity (8 states),
- States where there is no requirement that all teachers have expertise or training in working with ELLs (15 states).

From the above information, it is clear that while 70% of the states require some preparation for general education teachers to teach ELL students, only 4 states, less than 8%, have explicit certification requirements for all teachers. This is despite the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education’s (NCATE) stipulation that specific standards be applied to teaching ELL students, including:

- teachers should acquire **pedagogical content knowledge** which addresses ELLs,
- candidates should understand the range in **diversity among ELLs**, and
- the unit should provide **qualified faculty and sufficient resources** to support teachers’ learning about ELLs. (Ballantyne et al., 2008a, p. 12)

The bolded words highlight the importance that the authors ascribed to the specific aspects of these standards.

Since, as the above overview indicates, the actual preparation general education teachers receive for teaching ELL students varies widely across teacher-education programs in the U.S., this study considers how a cross section of literacy educators prepare students in their teacher education programs to work with ELL students. Several studies (Abbate-Vaughn, 2009; Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005) highlight the need for preparation of general education teachers to work with English language learners. Taking these studies into consideration, this article seeks to provide insights from educators in the literacy field into how they are prepared and, in turn, prepare their own students to teach English language learners in general-education classrooms. In this vein, I conducted a survey of literacy educators in a literacy-based organization to ascertain how they approach this issue. My focus is on literacy educators because they prepare elementary and secondary classroom teachers of English Language Arts through their teaching and research. The teachers whom they prepare are charged with teaching all students how to utilize reading and writing, as well as the other literacy skills, to access and produce knowledge across the curriculum. This article examines the results of this survey within the context of what it means to teach

students who are learning English as a new language while learning how to use English to access knowledge in and across the disciplines.

Conceptual Frame

There are a myriad of factors which impact students' development of literacy in schools (Grant & Wong, 2003). This section outlines the theoretical framework which I utilize to study and analyze this issue.

The Cultural Dimension

Drawing on sociocultural theory (Hawkins, 2008; Rogoff, 2003) this study acknowledges that students who come to the classroom with languages other than English bring with them cultural understandings that can impact how they receive instruction from teachers who are not aware of the interplay between language and culture (Farr, Seloni, & Song, 2010). Educators need to identify and draw upon students' existing literacies, or funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005), to "open a window to students' multiple language and literacy abilities" (Farr et al., 2010, p. 17) as a means to assist ELL students in developing academic literacy.

Students who attended school regularly in their home country may have a well-defined literacy background in their first language, though not in English, and, as Bernhardt (2003) noted, their cognitive and social literacy processes may differ from that of American students. For example, the literacy-based, cultural understandings they bring to a text in English may elicit from them representations of memory that differ from those assumed by the text or what the teacher expects students to take from the text (Bernhardt, 2003). A teacher who does not recognize this difference can negatively impact ELL students' achievement in developing proficiency in English (Farr et al., 2010). Students must agree to learn from a given teacher (Kohl, 1993) and this assent can be related to how students feel they are perceived by the teacher based on the teacher's engagement, or lack thereof, with the students' culture.

The Linguistic Dimension

Adequacy of the instructional program can also affect the length of time ELL students take to develop English language proficiency in schools (Calderón, 2007; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 2000). General-education teachers' inadequate understanding of the language and literacy progression for ELL students and the frustrations ELL students might experience in performing content-based literacy

tasks can negatively impact students' attitudes and motivations (Roy & Roxas, 2011) and create a barrier to effective instruction for English language learning. These factors may be particularly helpful in understanding the persistent category of long term English learners.

The sociocultural lens dovetails with theories of second-language acquisition and extends Cummins' (2000, 2007) constructs of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to provide an understanding of what ELL students need in order to successfully navigate schooling. Classroom teachers' attitudes towards ELL students are often based on an inadequate understanding of what it means to learn a new language (Yoon, 2008). When ELL students do not speak in the classroom, teachers who do not have an awareness of second-language acquisition may assume that the students do not understand English have a disability that prevents them from speaking. These teachers may be unaware that students, at varying ages, go through a silent period for up to a year, or more, when learning a new language (Krashen, 1981). During this period, students actively process the language they hear but may be reluctant to speak. Some classroom teachers, though, may interpret this refusal to speak as a language delay (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

Teachers' attitudes towards ELL students which influence the relationship they have with the students (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Olson & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Pennington & Salas, 2009; Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004; Walker-Dalhouse, Sanders, & Dalhouse, 2009) can impact the students' affective filter (Dulay & Burt, 1977; Pappamihel, 2004). Krashen (1981) has defined the affective filter as the students' level of comfort with the language which can determine whether or not students actively participate in the classroom. The lower the affective filter, the more likely students are to engage in oral communication in the classroom. The silent period that some ELL students experience may be attributed to a high affective filter; although the students may process the input they receive in the classroom, they may be reluctant to respond orally. Through their interactions with ELL students, teachers may inadvertently contribute to this silent period if their classroom is not a welcoming environment for the students (Krashen, 1981). Brown (2003) observed many instances in an elementary classroom where there was a complete absence of interaction or verbal communication between the teacher and the ELL students with the lowest English proficiency.

Alternatively, a teacher may hear the students speaking fluently with their peers outside the classroom and, then, become surprised when the students do not appear to understand the classroom instruction. Unaware of Cummins' (1979,

1981) distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) the teacher may assume students are pretending not to understand or are being inattentive. Furthermore, many teachers believe that ELL students should be able to learn English in two years (Reeves, 2004). They are unaware of the research indicating that ELL students tend to develop language associated with social skills (BICS) in two years or less, while academic language (CALP), which is needed to negotiate classroom instruction, can take seven or more years to develop (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Skills linked to academic reasoning, which are often context-reduced and occur in limited time-frames, are an essential part of academic language and must be explicitly taught to ELL students (Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 1996; Cummins & Yee-Fun, 2007; Short & Echevarría, 2004).

The Instructional Dimension

Hawkins (2004) describes classrooms as “complex ecological systems, with multiple, complex and often interdependent components and characteristics that students must negotiate (socially and academically) in order to come to participate” (p. 15). Because ELL students are encountering academic language as a new language while developing proficiency in English, teachers must be aware of the necessity for providing comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) for these students. If ELL students do not understand their teachers’ explanations, they cannot be expected to learn what is being taught (Brown, 2003; Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2004). Although this is true for students in general, it becomes even more crucial for ELL students because they do not have the range of vocabulary and background knowledge of many of their native English-speaking peers. Some ELL students have become skilled at waiting until their peers complete the work then copying from them (Brown, 2003), leading the teacher to believe that they have understood the work.

An additional problem impacting comprehensibility may be the teacher’s rate of speech, as many teachers may speak too rapidly for ELL students to understand when they are giving directions or explaining essential concepts related to lessons (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2000). Teachers may also use idioms and other colloquial expressions that are unfamiliar to some ELL students. Since this is the teachers’ natural way of speaking, they may be unaware that ELL students do not understand these colloquialisms or reduced forms of the language, and, in some cases, not cognizant of how much they are using them (Hite & Evans, 2006).

While some teachers may define effective instruction for ELL students as simply ‘good teaching’ (de Jong & Harper, 2005, 2007), this view fails to recognize that teaching English to speakers of other languages is more than a “menu of pedagogical tools” (Harper & de Jong, 2004, p. 157). It requires a deeper understanding of cultural and linguistic dispositions that ELL students bring to the classroom, as well as how students learn an additional language (He, Prater, & Steed, 2011), what de Jong and Harper (2007) refer to as “good teaching plus” (p. 127). The ‘plus’ include the cultural, linguistic and instructional dimensions, outlined above, which frame this study. This theoretical lens provided the orientation for developing the survey and analyzing its findings. The next section considers literacy educators’ perspectives on how they prepare general education teachers for these tasks as well as their own preparation for assisting teachers in this regard.

Description of the Study

The central question of this study is: How do literacy educators prepare general education English language arts (ELA) teachers to teach the ELL students in their classrooms? Two related questions are: 1.) How are literacy educators prepared to provide general education teachers with understandings of how to work with ELL students; and, 2.) To what extent does academic research, as represented in academic journals, provide the opportunity for teacher educators and general-education teachers to gain an understanding of ELL students’ needs? This latter question highlights literacy educators’ role as researchers who publish in refereed journals—which I contend are a venue for presenting information and research-based strategies that address students’ needs. This study drew on two sources of data: 1.) a survey of literacy educators; and 2.) an examination of academic journals which literacy educators identified as those they utilize in their teaching and research.

The Survey

To obtain information from a wide cross section of literacy educators and researchers, I focused on subscribers to the Literacy Research Association (LRA) listserv. Although there are other listservs directed towards literacy educators that could have been included in this study, I selected the LRA listserv as a data source because, as member of that listserv, I have noted that its subscribers, comprising approximately 900 members, address a range of pedagogical and policy issues related to literacy instruction. My observation of the contributions to this site has indicated that many of these educators prepare teachers for general-education classrooms. Since there are increasing numbers of ELL students in these classrooms, I was

curious about how these educators prepare teachers to address the distinct needs of the ELL students apart from the rest of the students in the classroom. My particular focus was educators who had not specialized in bilingual education or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) since these educators should be knowledgeable about teaching ELL students.

To recruit participants for this study, in a posting to the listserv I explained the purpose of my study and invited members of the listserv to respond to a survey. They could access the survey by clicking on the link included in the listserv posting. Therefore, the sample on which the data are based was self-selected and completely anonymous. Although the responses to the survey were lower than I expected, 50 respondents, they included a wide cross section of literacy educators: 12 full professors, 14 associate professors, 15 assistant professors, 5 adjunct faculty and 4 graduate students. The majority of the respondents, 36, have been teaching for more than 10 years, 20 of these more than 20 years, and only 1 for less than 3 years. Participants prepare teachers for a range of levels, Pre-K to adult, though most of the participants focused on either K-6 (40) or 7-12 (20). Although the number of responses was low, they included a cross section of literacy educators as well as institutions and, as such, I deemed them sufficient to provide a window into how these educators prepare teachers to work with ELL students.

Survey questions. The survey included nine questions. Three questions requested general demographic information: current educational status, number of years teaching, levels on which they focus (e.g., K-6 or 7-12) to determine if the responses represented a cross section of literacy educators. Four open-ended questions were posed to gain an understanding of how these teacher educators address the needs of ELL students in general-education classrooms, including their own education in this area:

1. How do you prepare teacher-education candidates for working with K-12 English language learner students in general-education classrooms?
2. Which academic journals do you use to gain information about working with English language learner students?
3. Which journals do you recommend or select articles from for your students?
4. Where have you received preparation for working with English language learner students?

Two questions attempted to discern the participants' perception of what teachers of ELL students and educators who prepare them need to know:

5. How do you think teacher-education candidates should be prepared for working with K-12 English language learner students in general education classrooms?
6. How can faculty members be prepared for assisting their teacher-education candidates in working with English language learner students?

Question 1 sought information on what educators currently do, programmatically, while question 5 was concerned with how they think teachers should be prepared. Three options were offered with respect to how these educators were prepared: no formal preparation, conferences and/or workshops, other. The 'other' category allowed for respondents to indicate coursework or other sources as part of their own teacher preparation, graduate degree program, or professional development. Recognizing that some faculty members in general-education programs have received very little, if any, formal preparation for working with ELL students, question 6 sought to explore their views on how they and their colleagues could be prepared to assist pre-service and in-service teachers with this responsibility.

The Journal Review

Two questions related to the journals that these respondents use for their own research and understanding, and recommend to their students. These questions were based on the recognition that academic journals are a source of information on research-based practices and conceptual thinking with respect to educational issues. I was particularly interested in identifying common journals which these educators typically utilize and, then, to what extent these journals have included articles pertaining to ELL students.

I examined volumes of the identified journals over a 10 year period, between 2003 and 2012, to ascertain how many of them included articles focusing on ELL students and what topics they address. This 10 year period represents the most recent timeframe during which there was a considerable increase in the number and diversity of ELL students, so one might expect publication of numerous articles concerning this population in literacy and general education journals. I identified the journal articles by keywords in the title, e.g. English language learners, immigrants, linguistically diverse, bilingual.

Findings

Educators' Perspectives

Preparation. The respondents' preparation varied, as indicated in Table 1, with some indicating more than one form of preparation. Only 12% completed degrees in TESOL or Bilingual Education certification programs and 18% had coursework related to ELLs. More than half the respondents (61%) revealed that they had been exposed to issues pertaining to ELL students at conferences or as part of professional development workshops. Some faculty members indicated that they had participated in departmental level professional development sessions and study groups, with 2 indicating instruction in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) models. Several, 16%, indicated they had no preparation, although 2 of these also specified conferences/workshops and 1 noted personal experiences (teaching in the Peace Corps and ongoing tutoring of refugees) as their source of preparation. Independent or professional reading was indicated by 5 of the 17 who stipulated that their preparation was through conferences or workshops, while 12 specified independent reading and research as their source of information about working with this population.

Table 1

Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners	
Type*	n
None	8
Conferences/workshops	30
Independent Reading/Research	12
Graduate Degrees in TESOL/Bilingual Ed	6
Graduate Course work	9

*May include more than one

Methods of Preparing Teachers. Table 2 indicates the various ways in which they prepare and think teachers should be prepared for teaching ELL students. Less than a quarter of the respondents who were not part of TESOL or Bilingual Education Programs stated that their teacher preparation programs required all education majors to do a course or module that provided understandings of issues related to ELL students. Some of the courses they listed were: second

language acquisition, U.S. language policies, teaching ELL students across the curriculum, pedagogical knowledge, and programming for ELL students.

Table 2
Preparation of Teachers for Working with English Language Learners

Currently Prepared	n	Should Be Prepared	n
Dedicated courses	6	Specific courses	7
Incorporate into existing courses	20	Incorporate into methods courses	43
Include topics that address diversity	9	Both specific courses and incorporate into methods courses	40
Include readings that address ELLs	7	Practicum/internship/clinic	12
Infuse in all classes	5	Incorporate strategies in all courses	3
Practicum/Tutoring ELL students	4	Case study	1

Some faculty members (40%) indicated that they include in their ELA methods—or other courses—topics, readings and/or strategies that address ELL students’ needs. Some noted that they may spend one or two days on the topic in a whole semester while others indicated that they read a couple of articles and have discussion about the contents. Use of textbooks with explicit emphasis on how to differentiate instruction for ELL students, requiring students to do classroom observations of ELL students, and one-on-one or small-group tutoring of ELL students are other strategies that individual faculty reported utilizing. A few respondents indicated that they infuse information addressing the needs of ELL students throughout their courses. Table 3 provides respondents’ comments about how they prepare teachers. Several of them noted that they assign specific readings and assignments, while others indicated that they assign readings from practice-oriented journals that address this topic specifically, or review research-recommended practices. One participant admitted “not enough, but I do my best.”

Table 3
Specific Comments on How Educators Prepare Teachers

“They [the students] are exposed to the SIOP model for language and content instruction.”
“We talk about diversity in our class, and a few strategies for working with ELL students, but not in depth.”
“I raise consciousness about it and talk about it.”
I teach similar strategies for struggling readers and writers.”
“I present current research and trends and issues;”
“I teach SIOP.”
“The preparation I offer is very limited. We read a couple of articles from the <i>Reading Teacher</i> and have a discussion about the contents.”

Responding to how faculty members could be prepared for assisting their teacher-education candidates in working with English language learner students, the majority of the respondents (43) stated that information about working with ELL students should be incorporated into methods courses. A few recommended that there be specific courses, while 40 proposed that there should be specific courses as well as incorporation into methods courses. Only 3 suggested that attention to this population be infused through all courses. Nearly half (23) indicated that preparation should be provided through professional development; this response included study groups, courses and workshops. A quarter of the respondents recommended practica, internships, and clinics for offering students hands-on experiences working with ELL students as part of a certification program. Collaboration with other faculty who know about TESOL and mentorships were additional suggestions. Reading articles and research was another recommendation from respondents, with one stating that there needs to be “more research articles on teacher preparation in literacy journals, teacher-education journals” and others specifying: “Encourage more authentic research with students.” and “Education faculty should conduct more research in this area.”

Journals as a source of preparation. Mention of journals as a source of their preparation of teachers along with the finding that some educators engage in independent reading and research as a source of information about ELL students affirms my contention that journal articles are a utilized resource. Participants listed a wide range of journals, including those beyond the literacy field, that they typically use and those that they have recommended to their students. Table 4 lists the specific journals and identified the number of respondents who indicated that they utilize them. The distinction between those used by faculty and researchers versus those they recommended to students was based on the understanding that faculty consult more journals for their personal knowledge and understandings, as well as research, than they recommend to their students in course syllabi. Information gleaned from these references may also be included in course lectures and notes for students. Fewer than five respondents indicated using TESOL and bilingual education journals. I did not examine articles in these journals, as all of the articles address issues of English language learners.

Table 4
Journals Identified by Literacy Teacher Education Faculty

Journals	Used by Faculty	Recommended to Students
Reading Teacher	24	24
Reading Research Quarterly	18	6
Language Arts	17	18
Journal of Literacy Research	16	4
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy	11	10
American Education Research Journal	9	3
Research in the Teaching of English	6	2
Educational Researcher	3	0
English Journal	1	0
Journal of Education	1	1
Journal of Educational Psychology	1	0
Middle School Journal	1	0
Phi Delta Kappan	1	1
Reading Psychology	1	0
Teachers' College Record	1	0
Speech, Learning and Hearing Services	1	0
Theory into Practice	0	1
Voices in the Middle	0	1

Journals listed as most commonly utilized were: *Reading Teacher*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Language Arts*, and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, each publishing at least 1 article per year over the 10 year span. All of the identified journals published several articles dealing with English language learners during this time span. Table 5 indicates the number of articles that were published in each journal annually during the ten year period. Whereas some included a single article in specific editions, others had two or more articles in a given edition of the journal. Several journals had special editions devoted to ELLs and included multiple articles. For example, *Educational Leadership*—Volume 66, No. 7, 2009— contained 18 of the articles. There was also a special issue of *Language Arts*—Volume 83, Number 4, 2006—with the theme “Multilingual Kids in the Monolingual World of School,” that contained 6 articles addressing ELL students. This issue also included 2 annotated reading lists for working with multilingual children. *Theory into Practice*—Volume 49, Number 2, 2010— with the theme “ Integrating English Language Learners in Content Classes,” included 8 articles, while Volume 48, Number 4, 2009, with the theme “The Policies of Immigrant Education: Multinational Perspectives,” included 9 articles. *Teacher's College Record* devoted two of its issues to the topic of English language learners, Volume 111, Number 3, 2009, with the theme— Educating immigrant youth: The role of institutions and agency— included seven articles addressing the topic, while Volume 108, Number 11, 2006, included ten articles. Beyond the

special issues of those journals, other volumes of the journal included very few articles during the 10 year span.

Table 5

Number of articles addressing ELLs between 2011-2002

Journal	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	Total
Reading Teacher	2	3	6	4	4	2	4	4	4	1	34
Reading Research Quarterly	2	3	3	3	7	4	1	2	6	2	33
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy	1	1	7	5	4	2	2	4	3	3	32
Language Arts	3	3	2	5	3	6*	4	2	1	1	28
Journal of Literacy Research	3	0	3	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	11
English Journal	2	3	6	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	20
Research in the Teaching of English	0	4	3	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	13
Literacy Research and Instruction	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	8
Educational Leadership	1	0	18*	0	1	2	4	16*	4	0	46
Teachers' College Record	3	1	11*	1	3	12*	0	1	1	1	34
Theory into Practice	2	11*	9*	7*	1	1	0	0	1	0	33
Middle School Journal	1	2	0	0	3	1	3*	0	0	1	11
Educational Researcher	1	4	1	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	9
American Education Research Journal	1	0	2	4	2	1	2	0	0	0	6

*These volumes of the journals had special issues dedicated to ELLs during the given years.

It is not the intention of this article to review these articles, as this will be done in a future study. This article identifies the wide range of issues addressed. Many offer concrete pedagogical strategies for working with either elementary school or adolescent ELL students or examine strategies, assessment and models through longitudinal, ethnographic, or experimental studies. A few address adult ELLs, working with parents of ELLs, teacher education programs, and professional development for teachers. There were some case studies of ELL students that provide a window into the thinking and behavior of some of these students as they tackle academic tasks. In addition, some articles considered cultural issues, social justice, and policies related to ELL students. Though they were not all literacy related, the articles provided insights into ELL students which could increase general-education teachers' awareness of issues impacting this population in classrooms.

Discussion

Returning to the central question of this article, the findings of this study are twofold. The insights which the survey provides into how literacy-teacher educators prepare teachers for working with ELL suggest that there is a need for more formal preparation for teacher educators to meet the needs of ELL students. This reinforces the existing literature cited on this issue. Costa, McPhail, Smith and Brisk (2005), in their description of a faculty institute in a teacher-education program that sought to infuse scholarship on ELLs, maintained that “Teacher educators need to learn and to assimilate knowledge of language and culture into their disciplines to pass it on to their students” (p. 117). Faltis, Arias and Ramírez-Marín (2010) identify competencies secondary school teachers of English language learner students need to be successful with this population. Several other studies have described additional means of preparing teacher education faculty to infuse knowledge about the needs of ELLs throughout their curriculum (Brisk, 2008; Meskill, 2005; Nevárez-La Torre, Sanford-DeShields, Soundy, Leonard, & Woyshner, 2008). Two research-based instructional models that focus on helping general education teachers make content comprehensible to ELL students through strategies developed for teaching English to speakers of other languages are the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), developed by Echevarría, Vogt, and Short (2000, 2007) and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), developed by Chamot and O’Malley (1987, 1996). Both models, which could be considered “good teaching plus” (de Jong & Harper, 2007) were indicated by participants as forms of professional development they have received.

In addition, this study highlights academic journals, an important component of teacher educators’ professional life, as one resource for providing knowledge about ELLs to pre-service and other educators. Although the study does not provide empirical evidence of the reach and usage of these journals by teachers and teacher educators, it recognizes that publication in refereed journals is an important component of the work of teacher educators. Since teacher educators are required to conduct research and publish in these journals, this study challenges teacher educators to consider broadening their research questions to include the teaching of ELL students. Literacy educators’ investigations into how the issues they research impact ELL students in general-education classrooms will increase the knowledge base about ELLs as well as increase these educators’ understandings of these issues. These educators could consider the implications of their specific research topics for ELL students in general education classrooms or include ELL students in their research sample as a comparative group. This would provide them with a greater awareness

of the needs of ELL students which they could, in turn, share with their students. One important benefit of this added dimension to literacy educators' research may be an increased understanding of the importance of addressing the needs of ELLs in their teacher education courses.

Publication of this research in a range of academic journals will provide an increased knowledge base for other literacy educators—teachers as well as their students. The paucity of articles in general-education journals addressing the needs of ELL students provides a compelling argument for the need for more articles in these journals. Although there are many such articles in TESOL and Bilingual Education journals, most general educators typically would not go to these journals, so making these articles available in journals they would typically utilize would provide greater awareness of these issues.

Conclusion and Implications

The intent of this article was to place the issue of preparing general education ELA teachers, and by extension the educators who teach them, for meeting the needs of ELL students in their classroom high on the agenda. Although the sample for this study is small and does not specify particular teacher education programs, the study provides a window into teacher educators' preparation for teaching ELL students. It does not seek to generalize but rather to add to those voices that call for more research on the needs of ELL students in general education classrooms conducted by literacy educators outside of the TESOL field.

August and Shanahan (2006) emphasized the need for an “ambitious research agenda” with respect to providing effective instruction for ELL students. One means of addressing the needs of the changing demographics of schools across the United States is for educators and researchers in the literacy field to increase their research and publication of articles in general-education journals about issues of educating ELL students. Further research could examine in greater depth how the question of meeting ELL students' needs is dealt with in specific general-education literacy courses and how it could be done more effectively. There could also be analyses of articles in literacy and other general education journals that address the literacy needs of ELLs so as to identify which topics have been investigated and which require examination. Although the focus of this study was literacy educators and researchers, the implications could be extended to teacher educators in other fields, as this is an issue that impacts all educators, since all teachers are teachers of literacy. These studies would provide focused information for teacher education courses, professional development and other workshops, as well as other sites for

preparing general-education teachers to effectively meet the literacy needs of ELL students in their classrooms. This is a challenge for educators and researchers in the literacy field and beyond to be able to effectively address the changing demographics of schools.



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THE BIG 5: TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL ACQUISITION IN EARLY LITERACY

Joanne P. Vesay and Karen L. Gischlar

Abstract

In this study, the investigators surveyed 215 early childhood educators throughout New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania to determine teacher knowledge and training in early literacy instruction, with a focus on The 5 Big Ideas in Reading as identified by the National Reading Panel: phonological awareness, accuracy and fluency, alphabetic principle, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). The survey response totals indicated that of the five literacy domains, early childhood teachers were most likely to have had training in phonological awareness and least likely to have had training in the domain of vocabulary. Across all critical domains of early literacy, professional development was the most common training format and mentoring was the least common training format.

The Big 5: Teacher Knowledge and Skill Acquisition in Early Literacy

The National Reading Panel classified precursor skills into five critical domains of reading to include: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Pufpaff & Yssel, 2010; Rowe, 2005). Hsieh, Hemmeter, McCollum, and Ostrosky (2009) also include skills in listening, speaking, and writing in the foundations of emergent literacy. To ensure all children have the critical foundations in literacy prior to kindergarten, developers of preschool curricula are focusing their efforts on early learning standards, including emerging literacy outcomes (Hsieh et al., 2009). “Balanced” approaches to emergent and early literacy instruction take into account both the foundation skills for later decoding (including learning the alphabet, awareness of phonological/sound units, and sound/letter correspondence) as well as reading comprehension, vocabulary, and semantic-syntactic skills at the sentence level. The next logical step is to ensure that teachers have the necessary skill set within the critical domains of early literacy to effectively teach reading to preschool students. These skills are particularly warranted for teachers who work with struggling readers.

The research highlights specific precursor skills for educators to support effective literacy instruction. Early childhood educators need to have an understanding that speech is composed of phonemes or individual sound segments of speech and that the alphabet represents those phonemes (i.e. phonological awareness and alphabetic principle). Adequate skills for phonological processes instruction requires a teacher to make a conscious disassociation of sound from spelling if they are to think of words and their component sounds as children do before they read and spell. Teachers also need knowledge of linguistic structures beyond letter-sound correspondences. Teachers must demonstrate implicit knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences and their relation to English word structure (i.e., phonics). Fluency/decoding instruction would require teachers to possess explicit knowledge of the rules and conventions of the English language and how recognizing words easily and accurately is essential for rapid decoding. Instruction of vocabulary, facilitated by adequate skill in phonological awareness, requires an understanding of semantic structures, rules of grammar and word structure relationships. Comprehension instruction requires a thorough knowledge of linguistic concepts and complex sentence structures (Cunningham et al., 2004; Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001; McCutchen, Abbott et al., 2002; Moats & Foorman, 2003).

A key area of content knowledge in reading for teachers involves understanding English word structure (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003). This knowledge is vital for effective teaching of word identification, word decoding, and spelling (Mc-

Cutchen, Abbott et al., 2002; Moats, 2000; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2004). Research addressing teacher preparation and teacher knowledge in early literacy skills has indicated that despite high general knowledge, many literate adults, including preservice and experienced special and general educators, do not possess adequate knowledge of English phonology and orthography (Bos et al., 2001; Cunningham et al., 2004; McCutchen, Abbott et al., 2002; McCutchen, Harry et al., 2002; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003; 2004). Teachers' descriptions of their instructional strategies also indicate concerns with explicit instruction for vocabulary knowledge (O'Leary, Cockburn, Powell, & Diamond, 2010); however, through effective training and professional development, teachers can increase their understanding of vocabulary, phonology and spelling patterns to positively influence their instructional practices and effectiveness (McCutchen, Abbott, et al., 2002; Moats & Foorman, 2003; O'Leary et al., 2010).

Cunningham et al. (2004) focused their study on three domains of knowledge of early literacy: children's literature, phonological awareness, and phonics. These specific domains are considered critical to literacy development, especially for children with language and reading difficulties (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The results of the study indicated that the knowledge base of many K-3 teachers is not adequate and therefore the results do not align with the large body of research demonstrating the vital role that the component processes of phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge play in learning to read. These results were consistent with the findings of Bos et al., (2001).

The combination of teacher preparation, support and collaboration appear to be key elements for increasing reading performance (Bos, Mather, Silver-Pacuilla, & Narr, 2000). Teachers trained in early literacy skill instruction are more likely to have students who show cognitive gains that are maintained well into Kindergarten (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002).

The challenge is to identify effective teaching strategies that optimize children's literacy achievement (Justice & Pullen, 2003) and are grounded in evidence-based practice. Justice, et al. (2008) suggest high quality literacy instruction should include explicit direct instruction that incorporates phonological and print structures. Unfortunately, few teachers deliver high quality instruction even when using specific literacy curricula (Hsieh et al., 2009). Brown, Molfese, and Molfese (2008), found that when comparing a teacher's level of education to their teaching experience, education had the stronger influence on a young child's letter development skills. Furthermore, teachers' descriptions of their instruction emphasized more

explicit planning strategies for phonological awareness skills than for development of vocabulary (O'Leary et al., 2010). Landry, Swank, Smith, Assel, & Gunnewig (2006) found that intervention differences were most significant with higher levels of teacher training combined with the use of early literacy curricula. Several national reports have suggested the benefits of phonics instruction for the development of early reading skills; however the familiarity with concepts of linguistic features of the English language remain inconsistent across early childhood educators (Joshi et al., 2009). Many early childhood teachers have poor or minimal skills in segmenting sounds, or differentiating phonemes from graphemes. In addition, many teachers function from an orthographic (letter-based) level rather than from sounds within words (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2004). Bos et al. (2000) suggest that struggling readers should participate in early literacy programs that balance instruction supporting language development and comprehension with instruction of basic skills that include phonological awareness, word recognition, spelling and fluency. Attainment of phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge, and language are the precursors to success in reading. There is a need to determine what instructional strategies are most effective in supporting children's acquisition of these concepts and expand teacher preparation programs to include focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension (Catts, Fey, Tomblin, & Zhang, 2002; Jackson et al., 2006).

The need to improve early educator's knowledge and skills related to literacy instruction is evident (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Pufpaff & Yssel, 2010) and those essential skills to structure instruction will optimize the literacy achievements of young children (Justice & Pullen, 2003).

In this study, we were interested in learning whether early childhood teachers have acquired the necessary skills to support early literacy skill acquisition and how they acquired that knowledge. Four questions guided the present study:

1. Are early childhood educators trained in the five identified critical domains of early literacy: phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary?
2. Do early childhood teachers differ in their knowledge base across the early literacy domains and do differences exist between early childhood teachers in general education, special education, and integrated class rooms?
3. How do early childhood teachers acquire and/or develop their own knowledge base in the critical domains of early literacy (e.g., preservice or in-service training) and do differences in training exist between early childhood teachers in general education, special education and integrated classrooms?

Method

Participants

The study involved ($N = 215$) early childhood educators from both public ($n = 153$) and private school settings ($n = 62$). The teachers were mostly women (98.1%) and Caucasian (93.0%). The majority (42.3%) was 50 years of age or more (see Table 1). Seventy-four (34.4%) of the teachers had 21 years or more of teaching experience and the majority were in their current positions at least ten years (see Table 2). Of the 215 participants, 211 had earned college degrees: 114 earned a Bachelor's degree; 96 earned a Master's degree; and one teacher earned an Associate's degree. Many of the teachers reported working with multiple ages groups; however, 72.6% indicated the four to five age group as the most common (see Table 3). One hundred, twenty-eight (59.6%) of the teachers were in general education classrooms, 31.6% ($n = 68$) were in integrated classrooms and the remaining 8.8% ($n = 19$) were in special education classrooms.

Table 1

Demographics for the Teacher Respondents

Demographic	N = 215	
	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Women	211	98.1
Men	3	1.3
No Response	1	<1.0
Age		
20-24	1	<1.0
25-29	21	9.8
30-34	24	11.2
35-39	31	14.4
40-44	19	8.8
45-49	26	12.0
50+	91	42.3
No Response	2	<1.0

Ethnicity		
Caucasian	200	93.0
Black/AA	3	1.4
Hispanic/Latino	5	2.3
Native American	1	<1.0
Asian or Pacific Islands	0	--
Mid-Eastern	2	<1.0
No Response	4	1.9

Table 2

Training/Teaching Experience for the Teacher Respondents

Demographic	N = 215	
	<i>n</i>	%
Total years experience		
0-2	2	<1.0
3-5	18	8.4
6-9	27	12.6
10-15	59	27.4
16-20	33	15.3
21 or more	74	34.4
No response	2	<1.0
Years at current position		
0-2	20	9.3
3-5	48	22.3
6-9	56	26.1
10-15	59	27.4
16-20	21	9.8
21 or more	11	5.1
No response	0	--

Table 3

Education Level and Classroom Type for Teacher Respondents

Demographic	N = 215	
	<i>n</i>	%
Highest Level of Education		
High School Diploma/GED	0	--
CDA	0	--
Some college (Non-degree)	2	<1.0
Associates	1	<1.0
Bachelors	114	53.0
Masters	96	44.7

Doctorate	0	--
No response	2	<1.0
Classroom Type		
General education	128	59.6
Special education	19	8.8
Integrated (General and Special education)	68	31.6
No response	0	--
Age Group of Students *		
2-3 years	5	2.3
3-4 years	114	53.0
4-5 years	156	72.6
No response	2	<1.0

**Teachers could indicate more than one age group.*

Description of Measure

Data were collected via electronic survey which was deployed to early childhood educators throughout New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. Market Data Retrieval (MDR) research services were used to identify the target population and for survey deployment. The limiters for the school database search included teachers working with children two to five years of age in general education, special education, and integrated (combined general and special education) classrooms. The search resulted in over 1900 potential respondents (1400 from New Jersey and 525 from eastern Pennsylvania). A total of 222 teachers responded to the request for participation. Two hundred fifteen agreed to participate and completed the survey via electronic format.

A descriptive survey (see Appendix), designed by the researchers, was based on the literature of children's acquisition of early literacy. The National Reading Panel classified precursor skills into five critical domains of reading to include: phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Pufpaff & Yssel, 2010; Rowe, 2005). The researchers developed questions for the survey with the goal of differentiating among the five aforementioned critical areas of early literacy. For this study, teachers were asked to describe the training they received in each of these literacy domains. The teachers were able to select from the types of training commonly used by teachers to acquire knowledge and instructional strategies in literacy instruction: preservice coursework, on-the-job training, professional development, mentoring/coaching, and self-taught. Teachers indicated for each of the five critical areas the types of training they received. The teachers were permitted to indicate any choices that applied. If they had no training in a particular area they were asked to indicate that as well. If a respondent didn't want to answer a question, they were permitted to leave it blank.

This survey was distributed to a pilot group of teachers using a national school database service. The researchers provided the following limiters: early childhood teachers of students two to five years of age, public and private school settings, and all classroom settings and private schools inclusive of general education, special education, and integrated classrooms. The survey was initially distributed in late fall with a secondary deployment to the same pool of teachers in early winter of the same school year.

The geographical region for this pilot study was in close proximity to the researchers. All the counties of New Jersey and the eastern counties of Pennsylvania were used in preparation for subsequent national distributions.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were analyzed to address the similarities and contrasts across the respondent groups in regard to the following questions. First, do all the respondents have training regarding the five critical domains of early literacy: phonological awareness, fluency, alphabetic principle, comprehension, and vocabulary? Second, how do educators vary based on training/no training across the critical domains and do differences exist across general education, special education, and integrated classrooms? Third, how do early childhood teachers acquire and/or develop their own knowledge base in the critical domains of early literacy (e.g., preservice or in-service training) and do differences exist across training for early educators in general, special, and integrated classrooms?

To address all the questions, the responses and percentages for each group were computed and visually examined. For the first question, respondents were separated by training in the domain areas. By comparing responses across type of preschool classroom, general education ($n = 128$), special education ($n = 19$), and integrated classroom ($n = 68$), we were able to address the second question. For the third question, we compared the same respondents across type of training. These data are displayed accordingly in Tables 4 and 5.

For the fourth and final question, the individual literacy domains were grouped and compared across preschool classroom settings by type of teacher training: pre-service coursework, on-the-job training, professional development/in-services, self-taught skills, and mentor teaching (see Table 5).

Results

The results reported address training in specific reading skill instruction. The results from the companion to this paper (i.e., Gischlar & Vesay, in preparation)

address preschool teachers' use of general or literacy specific curriculum and the training the teachers received to implement the curriculum. Questions pertaining specifically to training in the teaching of early literacy skills areas are addressed in this study.

General Knowledge and Comparisons of Early Childhood Educators Across Early Literacy Domains

The first question focused on educators' general training of the critical domains in early literacy. On the critical domains of early literacy, 95.6% of respondents indicated they received training in phonological awareness, 91.3% indicated training in listening comprehension, 89.8% indicated training in phonics instruction, 90.8% reported training in reading comprehension, and 85.9% indicated training in vocabulary.

Comparisons of Early Childhood Educators Across Type of Preschool Classroom

General Educators. On the critical domains of early literacy, 94.3% of general educators indicated they received training in phonological awareness, 87.7 % indicated training in listening comprehension, 86.9% indicated training in phonics instruction, 90.2% reported training in reading comprehension, and 82.8% indicated training in vocabulary.

Special Educators. On the critical domains of early literacy, 94.7% of special educators indicated they received training in phonological awareness, 100% indicated training in listening comprehension, 89.5% indicated training in phonics instruction, 78.9% reported training in reading comprehension, and 77.8% indicated training in vocabulary.

Integrated Classroom Educators. On the critical domains of early literacy, 98.5% of teachers in integrated classrooms indicated they received training in phonological awareness, 93.9% indicated training in listening comprehension, phonics instruction, and reading comprehension, and 92.4% indicated training in vocabulary.

Comparative results (see Table 4) for preschool classroom type were noteworthy. Educators in integrated classrooms expressed the most consistent responses for training across four of the five domains. All of the special educators indicated they received training in listening comprehension, as compared to 87.7 % of general education teachers and 93.9% of those in integrated settings.

Table 4

Training in Critical Domains – Across Type of Preschool Classroom

Demographic	General Education <i>N</i> = 128	Special Education <i>N</i> = 19	Integrated Classroom <i>N</i> = 68	Response Totals <i>N</i> = 215
	%	%	%	%
Literacy Domains				
Phonological awareness	94.3	94.7	98.5	95.6
Listening comprehension	87.7	100.0	93.9	91.3
Phonics	86.9	89.5	93.9	89.8
Reading comprehension	90.2	78.9	93.9	90.8
Vocabulary	82.8	77.8	92.4	85.9

*9 survey participants did not respond to questions

Teacher Training in Literacy Domains for Early Childhood Educators

Across all critical domains of early literacy, professional development (79.7%) was the most common format for training of early childhood teachers. Pre-service coursework, self-taught skills, and on-the-job training were of secondary importance and percentage scores and rankings were similar across the five domains. The least common training mode for all five domains was mentoring and the results were consistent across classroom type (see Table 5).

Teacher Training in Literacy Domains and Comparisons of Early Childhood Educators Across Type of Preschool Classroom

General Education Teachers. Across all critical domains of early literacy, professional development was the most common format for training of general educators, with responses ranging from 61.5% (vocabulary) to 80.3% (phonological awareness). Pre-service coursework, on-the-job training, and self-taught skills were of secondary importance and percentage scores and rankings were similar across the five domains. General educators reported the least common training mode for all five domains was mentoring, ranging in scores of 12.3% for listening comprehension and vocabulary to 17.2% for phonological awareness (see Table 5).

Special Education Teachers. Professional development was the most common training modality for special educators across four of the five literacy domains, with responses ranging from 63.2% (reading comprehension) to 89.5 % (listening comprehension). The domain of vocabulary had the most variation compared to the other domains. Fifty percent of the special educators indicated they relied on pre-service coursework and self-taught skills to acquire training in vocabulary instruction and 44.4% indicated they use on-the job and/or professional development training (see Table 5).

The special education teachers also indicated that 50% utilized pre-service training in the domains of listening comprehension, phonics, and reading comprehension. Mentoring was used minimally across four domains with no instance of use with acquiring reading comprehension (see Table 5).

Integrated Classrooms. Similarly to the general education teachers, professional development was the most common training modality for school teachers in integrated classrooms across all five literacy domains, with responses ranging from 68.2% (phonics) to 78.8% (phonological awareness). Almost 50% of the integrated classroom teachers also indicated that they received preservice coursework in all five literacy domains. Though mentoring was also reported as the least common training type across all five domains (range of use was reported from 13.6% for phonics and up to 24.2% for listening comprehension), teachers in integrated classrooms clearly used mentoring more frequently than general educators and special educators and these results are consistent across all five literacy domains (see Table 5).

Table 5

Training in Critical Domains of Early Literacy – Across Classroom Type

Demographic	General	Special	Integrated	Response
	Education	Education	Classroom	Totals
	%	%	%	%
<i>Phonological Awareness</i>				
Pre-service coursework	41.0	52.6	47.0	44.0
On-the-job training	36.9	42.1	42.4	39.1
Professional development	80.3	78.9	78.8	79.7
Self-taught	46.7	42.1	50.0	47.3
Mentoring	17.2	10.5	22.7	18.4
<i>Phonics</i>				
Pre-service coursework	41.8	52.6	48.5	44.9
On-the-job training	36.1	47.4	31.8	35.7
Professional development	68.0	73.7	68.2	68.6
Self-taught	35.2	36.8	40.9	37.2

Mentoring	13.1	10.5	13.6	13.0
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Listening Comprehension

Pre-service coursework	45.1	47.4	48.5	46.4
On-the-job training	34.4	42.1	39.4	36.7
Professional development	67.2	89.5	69.7	70.0
Self-taught	37.7	36.8	54.5	43.0
Mentoring	12.3	5.3	24.2	15.5

**9 survey participants did not respond to questions*

Training in Critical Domains of Early Literacy – Across Classroom Type

Demographic	General	Special	Integrated	Response
				Totals
	%	%	%	%

Reading Comprehension

Pre-service coursework	47.5	42.1	50.0	47.8
On-the-job training	38.5	36.8	37.9	38.2
Professional development	71.3	63.2	71.2	70.5
Self-taught	39.3	36.8	43.9	40.6
Mentoring	16.4	0.0	19.7	15.9

Vocabulary

Pre-service coursework	36.1	50.0	51.5	42.2
On-the-job training	35.2	44.4	33.3	35.4
Professional development	61.5	44.4	74.2	64.1
Self-taught	35.2	50.0	47.0	40.3
Mentoring	12.3	11.1	21.2	15.0

**9 survey participants did not respond to questions.*

Discussion and Limitations

This study builds on previous research in early childhood teacher training and the critical skills related to literacy instruction (Burchinal et al., 2000; Pufpaff & Yssel, 2010; Walpole et al., 2010). Research has demonstrated that phonological awareness is a precursor to literacy and includes the understanding that speech is composed of phonemes or individual sound segments of speech and that the alphabet represents those phonemes. Teachers need to make a conscious disassociation of sound from spelling if they are to think of words and their component sounds as children do before they read and spell. Teachers also need knowledge of linguistic structures beyond letter-sound correspondences. A teacher's pedagogical knowledge for phonics instruction must include implicit knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences and their relation to English word structure. Teachers must also possess explicit knowledge of the rules and conventions of the English language (Cunningham et al., 2004).

Results from this study show that early childhood teachers do receive training in the critical areas of phonological awareness, phonics/decoding, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and vocabulary; however the amount or consistency of training varies across those critical areas. For example, our results indicate that early childhood teachers overall are more likely to have training in phonological awareness and less likely in vocabulary development. Differences across type of classroom were noted when comparing literacy training for teachers in general education, special education, and integrated classrooms. Training in vocabulary development was the least likely skill for the teachers in all three classroom settings. General education and integrated classroom teachers were most likely to have training in phonological awareness. Special educators were most likely to have training in phonological awareness and listening comprehension.

The results from this study indicate that teachers' acquisition of knowledge and skill in all five literacy domains is obtained primarily through professional development. Though mentoring/coaching is gaining in popularity as an effective mode for teacher training, it was still the least utilized according to the survey results. These results were consistent when making comparisons across classroom type (e.g., general, special, integrated). It was also noteworthy that early childhood special educators indicated preservice coursework was the second most common modality for training in all five early literacy domains.

Implications for Practice

A well-developed early literacy curriculum can offer evidence-based ideas and strategies to teach young children concepts for beginning reading. However, the greatest impact on children learning to read is the quality and skill of the teacher who is implementing the curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The present study emphasizes the need for early childhood educators to have comprehensive training across all emergent literacy and early literacy skill domains. These skills are particularly critical for teachers who work with children who are at-risk for language and literacy deficits. Although the literature doesn't indicate a specific order or ranking of importance for The 5 Big Ideas, the research indicates that teachers are most likely to have training in phonological awareness when compared to the other key literacy skills. Further, the phonological awareness knowledge and skill of educators is commonly linked to student outcomes (Spencer, Schule, Guillot, & Lee, 2008). Unfortunately for many teachers, previous training in phonological awareness may not have provided them the explicit and necessary phonemic awareness skills that are required for high quality literacy instruction (Justice et al., 2008). Future research should attempt to define a specific skill set and level of phonological skill required of teachers to ensure they achieve a sufficient knowledge of language structure which in turn will contribute to instructional effectiveness (Spencer et al., 2008).

Although the research clearly indicates the importance of vocabulary training, the literature explaining how to transfer this knowledge to classroom practice is very limited. How teachers initially introduce new words and use them purposefully throughout a lesson or entire theme will impact how the children hear, comprehend, and ultimately add those words to their own repertoire. Teachers need to be skilled in integrating new vocabulary into meaningful and functional language experiences and require explicit guidance regarding language development (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Wasik, 2010).

Limitations

Several limitations of the present study warrant comment. Because the survey distribution included teachers in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, the sample size was limited geographically. The respondents were also primarily experienced teachers (98% had three or more years of experience) and almost half were in the 50+ age bracket. This may reflect that teachers with more experience and education were more likely to participate and, thus, not necessarily representative of New Jersey or Pennsylvania teachers. Additionally, similarities and differences in teachers' knowledge and skills may be reflective of the state policies that drive preprofessional

training. Though the response rate of 11% was below the targeted 30% average for an online survey (Hamilton, 2003; Sheehan, 2001), the focus of this investigation was not to make generalizations but to gain insight. Further study to include a national distribution of the survey may provide more generalizability of results.

The demographic data obtained from the survey indicated that 98% of the teachers had earned college degrees of which 53.0% earned Bachelors, 44.7% earned Masters and <1.0% earned Associates. However, the participants were not required to specify their majors or program of study which may have obscured the data, especially when considering the recent changes to early childhood certification requirements, preservice training, and the differences in job/teacher qualifications across classroom settings. Further investigation of professional training specific to the undergraduate and graduate degrees of early childhood educators may highlight the differences in pedagogical and background knowledge across the current early childhood workforce.

The survey data were dependent on teacher self-report and teachers were given the option to skip any question without responding which occurred most frequently with regard to the questions on teacher training. Further study on teacher training specific to determining preferences for professional development and the related efficacy of the various training models in early literacy might address these considerations.

Summary

It is clear that the research in language development and early literacy has had a positive effect on ensuring children have the precursors to reading and writing. Further, current trends clearly indicate that literacy “instruction” provided prior to kindergarten is critical to ensure optimal opportunities for young children to develop early literacy skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002). This study of early childhood educators had two primary foci. First, this study explored early childhood educators and the early literacy skills they possessed. The findings suggested that although the majority of early childhood educators received training in all the critical areas of early literacy, 95.6% of the teachers indicated training in phonological development (most common domain), and 85.9% of the teachers received training in vocabulary instruction (least common domain). Although a number of the teachers reported “no training” in the five key early literacy elements, the teachers in the integrated classrooms had the most consistent training across all critical early literacy areas. Future research should be conducted to explore early literacy

curricula and the models of high-quality instruction. Additionally, early literacy teachers across all classroom settings must receive systematic instruction on how to implement the strategies within those models and be provided appropriate fidelity instruments to ensure effective implementation. Finally, the study sought to survey early childhood teachers to determine how they acquired their knowledge and skills in early literacy. The findings suggest that although professional development was the primary mode of training across all domains, preservice coursework, on-the-job training, and self-taught skills were heavily favored modes of instruction for teachers. Future studies should be conducted to explore the efficacy of the various models of preservice and in-service training to maintain and sustain high-quality instruction in emergent and early literacy instruction.

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Appendix

Participant Survey

1. Gender
 - o Female
 - o Male
2. Age
 - o 20-24
 - o 25-29
 - o 30-34
 - o 35-39
 - o 40-44
 - o 45-49
 - o 50+
3. Race/Ethnicity
 - o Caucasian
 - o Black/African American
 - o Hispanic/Latino
 - o Native American
 - o Asian
 - o Pacific Islands
 - o Mid-Eastern
4. Highest level of education completed
 - o High school diploma/GED
 - o CDA (Child Development Associate)
 - o Some college (non-degree
 - o Associates
 - o Bachelors
 - o Masters
 - o Doctorate
5. Total years teaching experience
 - o 0-2
 - o 3-5
 - o 6-9

- o 10-15
- o 16-20
- o 21 or more

6. Years at current position

- o 0-2
- o 3-5
- o 6-9
- o 10-15
- o 16-20
- o 21 or more

7. Age group of student you teach

- o 2-3 years of age
- o 3-4 years of age
- o 4-5 years of age

8. Describe your preschool site

- o Public
- o Head Start
- o Private

9. Describe your preschool classroom

- o General education
- o Special education
- o Integrated classroom (combined general and special education)

10. What general early childhood curriculum are you currently using?

11. What training did you receive in order to use this general early childhood curriculum?

- o None
- o Preservice coursework
- o On-the-job training
- o Professional development
- o Self-taught
- o Mentor/Observed others

12. What early literacy assessments do you currently use?
- o Standardized assessment
 - o Teacher-made tests or screening instruments
13. What training did you receive in order to use this/these early literacy assessments?
- o None
 - o Pre-service coursework
 - o On-the-job training
 - o Professional development
 - o Self-taught
 - o Mentor/Observed others
14. Do you use specific literacy curriculum?
- o Yes
 - o No
15. If you answered “Yes”, please list the literacy curriculum below:
16. What training have you had regarding Phonological Awareness (e.g., rhyming, blending)?
- o None
 - o Pre-service coursework
 - o On-the-job training
 - o Professional development
 - o Self-taught
 - o Mentor teaching
 - o
17. What training have you had regarding Listening Comprehension?
- o None
 - o Pre-service coursework
 - o On-the-job training
 - o Professional development
 - o Self-taught
 - o Mentor teaching
18. What training have you had regarding Phonics/Decoding Fluency?
- o None

- o Pre-service coursework
- o On-the-job training
- o Professional development
- o Self-taught
- o Mentor teaching

19. What training have you had regarding Reading Comprehension?

- o None
- o Pre-service coursework
- o On-the-job training
- o Professional development
- o Self-taught
- o Mentor teaching

20. What training have you had regarding Vocabulary Comprehension?

- o None
- o Pre-service coursework
- o On-the-job training
- o Professional development
- o Self-taught
- o Mentor teaching

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History, Philosophy, and Mission of Reading Horizons

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