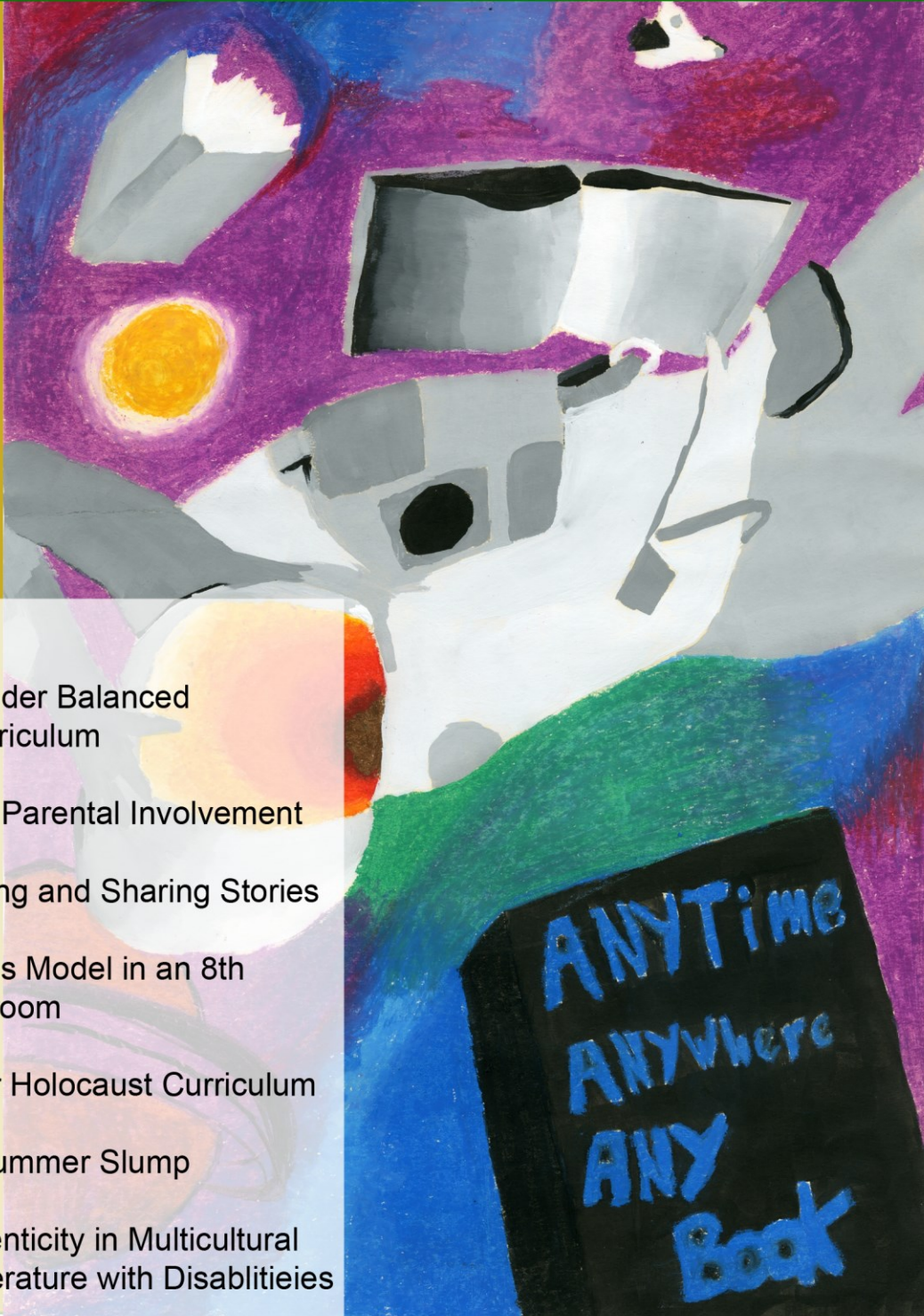


The FLORIDA Reading JOURNAL



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Toward a Gender Balanced
Literature Curriculum

The Power of Parental Involvement

Families Writing and Sharing Stories

Nancie Atwell's Model in an 8th
Grade Classroom

Resources for Holocaust Curriculum

Slaying the Summer Slump

Cultural Authenticity in Multicultural
Children's Literature with Disabilities

A Publication of the Florida Reading Association

Volume 51, Number 2, Spring 2016

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The Literacy Landscape for Millennial Students Volume 51, No. 2, Spring 2016

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The FLORIDA Reading JOURNAL

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Letter from the Editors

Maryann Tobin, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University

Lina Chiappone, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University



Dear Readers,

The theme for this issue is “Diverse Teaching for Diverse Populations.” This may seem obvious in hindsight, but when we first put out the call for articles that address the daily challenges in instructing and motivating learners with diverse needs, we had no idea we would have such a tremendous response. To that end, this is the first of **two** issues on the topic. Call this one “Diverse Teaching for Diverse Populations: Part 1.” Articles in this edition focus specifically on parental issues related to reluctant readers, motivating those with learning delays and other challenges, and issues of gender in curriculum. We also included submissions geared toward helping teachers prepare for the new school year, and we hope you find these resources helpful.

In 2000, the International Reading Association in its position statement, *Making a Difference Means Making it Different: Honoring Children’s Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction*, took a strong stance and set the bar high for reading professionals to provide quality reading instruction for all. In this position statement, the IRA asserted:

We believe that all children have a right to:

1. Early reading instruction that meets individual needs
2. Reading instruction that builds skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials
3. Well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date
4. A variety of books and other reading material in the classroom, and in school and community libraries
5. Assessment that identifies strengths as well as needs and involves students in making decisions about their own learning
6. Supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading
7. Instruction that involves parents and communities in students’ academic lives
8. Instruction that makes meaningful use of first-language skills
9. Equal access to instructional technology
10. Classrooms that optimize learning opportunities

Sixteen years later, meeting our obligation to provide the excellent instruction as described above, means specific emphasis on *all children* – and the myriad cognitive, cultural, linguistic, physical, psycho-emotional and other needs they bring to today’s classrooms.

Mason and Schumm (2003) write: *How to make those rights a reality for children who attend overcrowded urban schools, for children who do not have access to technology, for children of poverty with limited family resources, and for children of cultural and linguistic backgrounds that are different from the mainstream are the challenges for education students in the new millennium. The United States, its educational system and its professional organizations have a moral obligation to make those rights a reality for all children in this country and beyond.* (p. iv)

We must continue to embrace the use of multicultural literature, the involvement of families and communities, the recognition of varying abilities, the challenge of re-engaging students, gender differences, religious persecution ... which all speaks to the urgency of taking on topics in our classrooms that meet the needs of student populations that have grown increasingly diverse.

We look forward to continuing this discussion in our next edition, as well.

With reading and writing for all,

Maryann & Lina

Editors, *The Florida Reading Journal*
frjeditor@flreads.org

Reference:

Mason, P. A., & Schumm, J. S. (Eds.), *Promising practices for urban education*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



From the President...

Jeanne Petronio
Florida Reading Association President



Dear Friends of FRA,

It seems like only yesterday that I began my presidency of Florida Reading Association. These two years have quickly flashed by and it is now time for me to pass the torch over to our new FRA President, Kathy Fontaine. As I reflect on the past 24 months, a feeling of pride overwhelms me. We have come so far in such a short amount of time.

I am proud of the work of our publications committee. They have worked diligently this year to get our journals back on track. Maryann Tobin approached me last summer with a plan in mind, requesting to be given the chance to become the editor of Florida Reading Journal. She, along with Lina Chiappone (her co-editor) have spent countless hours soliciting manuscripts from scholars all over Florida and beyond. They selected the best of the best and worked with the authors on editing, making each article as near to perfect as possible. Once everything was in place, they sent the entire work folder to Terry Cavanaugh (our technology guru) who then spent many hours formatting the journal into what you see today. The dedication these individuals have to FRA is amazing. I am so proud to have been able to work with them and get to know them.

Although my time as President is rapidly coming to an end, I know that FRA will continue to grow and strengthen. In the immortal words of Dr. Seuss,

And will you succeed?

Yes! You will, indeed!

98 and $\frac{3}{4}$ percent guaranteed.

FRA will be that voice for literacy in Florida. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve as your President for the past two years. Thank you for your continued support. See you at the conference!

In anticipation,

In anticipation,

Jeanne Petronio

FRA President

The logo for The Florida Reading Journal. The word "The" is in a black serif font. "FLORIDA" is in a green sans-serif font, positioned above the letter "R" in "Reading". "Reading" is in a large black serif font. "JOURNAL" is in a green sans-serif font, positioned below "Reading". A green palm tree silhouette is integrated into the left side of the letter "R".

The FLORIDA Reading JOURNAL

Call for Manuscripts

The editors invite submissions of manuscripts for *The Florida Reading Journal*, the refereed journal of the Florida Reading Association. We invite submissions geared toward improving literacy instruction and innovation at all levels with a firm grounding in current theory and research. Suggested topics include literacy project descriptions, research or theoretical pieces with pedagogical implications, or issue-centered pieces addressing timely literacy topics of local, state or national interest. Preference is given to articles that most directly impact Florida learners. While theoretical and research articles are invited, please keep in mind that this is a journal primarily for FRA members, who are predominantly practicing teachers and literacy specialists. We encourage articles from PK-12 and adult-level practitioners, literacy researchers and doctoral students, as well as articles written by other experts in the field.

The Florida Reading Journal's audience is largely composed of PK-12 practitioners in the state of Florida. The FRJ editors are interested in exploring topics of interest to Florida educators and valuable in their daily literacy practices. We welcome submissions from researchers as well as PK-12 teachers. The thematic calls listed below are not intended to be exhaustive, but merely meant to be helpful to authors as they consider topics for publication. Please review the submission guidelines before submitting a manuscript.

Submission Guidelines are online at: <http://www.flreads.org/Publications/quarterly/call.htm>

Ongoing Annual Theme: Florida Standards in Action

FRJ has an ongoing interest in submissions related to the implementation of the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) across K-12 classrooms. Manuscripts that highlight how individual teachers have adapted their instruction to integrate the arts, technology, and the content areas are of particular interest. We also have interest in articles that discuss how districts have addressed the challenges and lessons learned related to the implementation of LAFS and the Florida Standards Assessment.

Ongoing Call for Book Reviews

FRJ has an ongoing interest in reviews of professional texts related to teaching and the themed calls for 2015-16. Reviews should be between 750-1000 words and should offer an overview of the book, not a detailed synopsis or an in-depth essay. Examples of published book reviews can be found in previous editions of FRJ.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS?: TOWARD A GENDER-BALANCED LITERATURE CURRICULUM

Nalani Gordon

University of Central Florida

Sherron Killingsworth Roberts

University of Central Florida

Abstract: : In this article, the authors address the common adage that “boys will be boys” in relation to the possible effects of gender stereotyped children’s literature on young boys and girls. In an attempt to surpass these negative effects, the argument is made for a Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum (GBLC) that includes children’s books portraying children in a range of positive, non-stereotypical roles. Based on related literature and experiences with books, the authors provide an annotated bibliography of suggested books as well as a GBLC checklist to assist in future selections of appropriate literature for students.

Introduction

For over 40 years, researchers have studied sex role stereotypes and gender issues in children’s literature. Surely in 2015, the gender issues that perpetuated males as stronger, rowdy, and rough, and females as weaker, softer, and more emotional have been eradicated and corrected. We approached this collaborative project as a young professional and as a seasoned teacher of over 30 years. When Gordon, first author and a graduate student, wanted to work together on a project to find children’s books reflecting a balance in gender for her future classroom, Roberts, the second author, was intrigued. Particularly because, earlier in her career, Roberts studied sexist portrayals of male and female protagonists in Newbery books (Roberts, 1987). Therefore, revisiting gender roles in today’s children’s literature was an eye-opening experience for each of us. In our research meetings each week, and in co-authoring this piece, we were struck over and over again that 30 years later, essentially the same questions, worries, and irritations were new so long ago, still lingered. Because little seems to have changed, younger professionals with these earnest yearnings for change find it curious, and even disheartening, that educators and researchers decades before advocated for the same gender equality. In particular, that strong message that “boys will be boys” was

frustrating to both of us as we examined the problem of finding books that show boys and girls in equal light. This manuscript will first discuss research regarding the developmental impact of gendered and stereotypical images in children’s literature on boys and advocate for educators to offer a Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum (GBLC). Also, specific guidelines for implementing a GBLC will be outlined, along with an annotated bibliography that lists high-quality, gender-balanced literature which may be used in the elementary classroom.

Debunking the “boys will be boys” myth

“Boys will be boys” is an excuse that has been traditionally used to explain boys engaging in obnoxious and/or aggressive behavior. For example, when young boys engage in physical fighting, toughened exteriors, ignore emotions, use curse words, or harass other people, one may hear the phrase: “Boys will be boys.” But what does this phrase imply? Are boys naturally rowdy and aggressive; or are boys socialized into expected gender roles?

Before discussing how children’s literature may feature aggression in young boys, the notion that boys are naturally more aggressive and active than girls will be addressed. Lehr (2001) asserts that, many of the behaviors which Western culture considers to be naturally associated with sex are actually

results of socially-constructed gender roles. Medical research also supports Lehr's contention. Researchers compared the hormone levels of a group of pre-pubescent boys, ages 4 to 10 who screened negative on aggression scales, to a group of institutionalized boys who scored higher than the 98th percentile on aggression scales (Constantino, Grosz, Saenger, Chandler, Nandi, & Earls, 1993). The researchers found no significant difference between the testosterone or androgen levels of aggressive and nonaggressive boys in this study. As a matter of fact, the researchers state that males and females have the same levels of testosterone prior to the onset of puberty. Age, race, and demographic region were not confounding factors in this study, since the control group of nonaggressive males was statistically matched to the aggressive group. These findings suggest that aggression in young boys is not necessarily related to biology.

Some who read these findings may think that the research addresses only young males, but does testosterone play a role in aggression once puberty begins? On the contrary, researchers suggest that high testosterone levels in aggressive males may actually be a result of aggression, not a cause. The "boys will be boys because of their biological nature" excuse is inaccurate, and, as Lehr points out, ignores the causes of aggression and violent behavior in boys. Aggression in young boys should not be taken lightly. Consider this fact: Many males with lifelong aggression issues began to display very aggressive behaviors between the ages of 4 and 7 (Constantino et al., 1993). With this in mind, aggression in boys should continue to be of concern to parents and educators, since this behavior may be a contributor and an indicator of future aggression. As parents and educators, we must work to prevent aggression in boys. Therefore, considering the portrayals of males and females in the children's books teachers provide to young children, in particular boys, is made all the more important.

The impact of stereotypical images in children's literature on boys.

The impact of children's literature on young boys is significant for a couple of strong reasons. First, young children develop gender role expectations at a very young age. Children between the ages of three and five are already forming their perceptions of appropriate gender roles based on the ideas to which they have been exposed (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). According to Chick (2002), preschool-aged children readily and fully accept the information presented in books as true. Young readers do not usually have an adequate level of solid background knowledge to independently debunk any stereotypes to which they are exposed in books (Diekman & Murnen, 2004).

Second, children's literature is instructive for young children, modeling and teaching socially acceptable gender roles and behaviors (Chapman, 1997). According to researchers, the characters in children's literature serve as representations of feminine or masculine behavior for children (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006). Even the fictional experiences of characters in children's stories inform the gender identity development of children. Children learn about acceptable gender roles vicariously, one of which is through reading about the behavior and consequences received by male and female characters in the books they read. While the research does not suggest that the images in children's literature *cause* aggression in young boys, children's literature is a contributing factor in the development of children's gender identity, serving as one source of cultural norms that likely inform children's gendered beliefs. Therefore, children's books that glorify aggressive, entitled, or chauvinistic male protagonists may promote similar behavior or attitudes in young boys.

In researching this point, the researchers wondered if the stereotypical images found in children's literature of the 1970s and 1980s were still a relevant issue in 2016. Recent research suggests that boys and girls continue

to be depicted in stereotypical roles in popular and recently published books. In Crisp and Hiller's (2011) study of Caldecott Award winning picture books from 1938 through 2011, the researchers found that only about 23% of the books featured a female protagonist. Newer books were not necessarily more representative of a continuum of gender nor were they more gender-balanced than older books. In their analysis of characters, Crisp and Hiller concluded that female characters were portrayed as submissive and sensitive. Even female protagonists, who were not portrayed in stereotypical roles, were still dependent upon males to solve their problems. Male protagonists, on the other hand, were still found to be independent, assertive, and dynamic. Gender stereotypes and binary frameworks are still present in children's literature and, therefore, continue to merit the attention of educators and researchers.

Toward a Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum: Instructional decisions

Given the recent and somewhat startling research on possible ramifications of aggressive male stereotypes in children's literature, the authors worked toward naming and defining a Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum (GBLC) for all students. Today's educators have the opportunity to offer literature to meet the curricular and gender needs of students. Therefore, a GBLC promotes the idea that one's gender does not dictate one's behaviors or opportunities. Teachers of young children need to establish a learning environment in which students are engaged and able to express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism. In a GBLC, ideally teachers and students are trained to recognize inequity and stereotypes in literature. Note that the authors do not feel it necessary to ban or omit books that contain sex role stereotypes since these books may be used to facilitate useful conversations about gendered myths and sex role stereotypes (Mullen, 1994). The authors set forth the following as essential elements in

considering a GBLC in any elementary classroom.

Consideration of personal assumptions.

The first step on the journey toward a GBLC actually involves an examination of the educator's own assumptions. Teachers need to reflect upon their own gender role expectations and preconceptions (Mullen, 1994). Rather than a biological approach to boys and girls as gendered, tidy binaries, we feel educators should recognize the complexities of the social construction of gender that likely runs along a continuum (Martino & Kehler, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Most importantly, the texts in a GBLC expose students to male and female characters who span the continuum of gender rather than portray traditional gendered binary boundaries. Chapman (1997) notes that all of us, as humans, are inevitably affected by our engrained cultural values and backgrounds. As educators, we must ensure that we do not allow our own biases to negatively impact our literacy instruction.

Making space for classroom conversation.

To implement a GBLC, ongoing conversation is key. Avoiding a discussion of gender stereotypes in literature is simply an irresponsible approach for an educator, because as previously mentioned, students may not be able to independently recognize gender stereotypes in literature. Lehr (2001) asserts that students should engage in open discussions of ideas presented in texts. In order to engage in these critical classroom discussions, teachers must promote an open and respectful classroom environment, so that students feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Without imposing a viewpoint on students, teachers may call students' attention to stereotypes in a text through open-ended questioning strategies. Students should be asked to consider who is represented in a story and if a pattern exists in how different types of characters are represented (Chapman, 1997). In order to spur critical conversations about books, teachers

need to model how to discuss a book (see Daniels, 2002; Peterson & Eeds, 1990/2007). Also, teachers should ask probing questions to spur a deeper and more intensive reflection on gender roles (Chapman, 1997; Chick, 2002).

The elementary language arts classroom would be enhanced by the higher-order thinking strategies involved in a GBLC. The critical conversations foster critical thinking, reflection, and consideration of multiple perspectives. For example, students may compare and contrast traditional fairy tales to modern retellings, write bio poems, chart character growth and story development, and discuss how literary devices impact the depictions of characters, particularly along the gender continuum in texts. Martino and Kehler (2007) suggest pushing the traditional boundaries of maleness and femaleness in order to challenge the notion of gender binaries.

Providing for balanced content across a continuum of gender.

Additionally, early in their lives students need exposure to balanced books which challenge male and female stereotypes (Chick, 2002). Chapman (1997) discusses an ideal, “transformed, balanced curriculum,” in which the experiences and contributions of people from all backgrounds are viewed in relation to one another, with appropriate consideration of the implications of gender, socioeconomic status, and race. Teachers should include a variety of perspectives in the literature they read aloud and that they offer their students. A balanced literature program should include books that portray both male and female protagonists as powerful and competent, caring and reflective. Considering the reading preferences of students is important, but students also need to be exposed to a variety of reading experiences (Lehr, 2001).

In order to aid teachers in the journey toward a GBLC, we created a checklist which educators may use as a guideline to quickly and easily select gender-balanced literature for the classroom. Also, in order to provide beginning

exemplars for the classroom, we follow the checklist with an annotated bibliography of quality, gender-balanced literature for use in today’s elementary classroom.

Gender-Balanced Literature Checklist

This checklist is designed to help teachers select children’s literature that does not promote stereotypes along gender lines. The recommendations or indicators in this checklist are based upon salient and current research regarding a gender-balanced literature curriculum. Teachers have the power to select books that will challenge traditional gender boundaries. In a GBLC, both teachers and students should be familiarized with these indicators, so that conversations can ensue and observations can be validated with each other. Overall, students need to be exposed to a variety of characters and human experiences (Chapman, 1997). Therefore, we created a checklist to depict priorities in gender-balanced books for children. The instructions are to “Check a degree from 1= not present; 2= somewhat; 3= definitely” (See Table 1). (For permission for use the GBLC, please contact sherron.roberts@ucf.edu). In order to provide exemplars of the GBLC Checklist created, the books listed at the end of this article afford teachers and students a positive start toward a GBLC in their classrooms. All of the books are award-winning, quality texts that defy traditional gender boundaries. In addition to meeting the GBLC Checklist’s indicators above and containing a variety of races and ethnicities, books are included that feature girls and boys as friends, female characters who are active and enterprising, male characters who are nurturing or emotional, women and men in nonstereotypical professions, women or girls in inferior power positions who are unhappy, strong females in accurate, historical contexts, and use gender inclusive language. All of which may be used to promote a Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum. These books also feature characters from a variety of races and ethnicities. In addition to current books, we

Table 1: Gender-Balanced Literature Checklist

Textual factors to consider:	1=not present	2=somewhat	3=definitely
<u>CHARACTERS</u>			
Girls and boys are depicted as friends or collaborators (Mullen, 1994).			
Female characters are portrayed as active and enterprising (Mullen, 1994; Chick, 2002).			
Male characters are allowed to be emotional and nurturing (Mullen, 1994).			
The book displays women in a range of careers (Chick, 2002). Males cross traditional career boundaries as well.			
<u>ACCURACY</u>			
Books need to be accurate and realistic, in terms of historical context (Chick, 2002). For example, a book which portrays a woman as the President of the United States in the year 1800 may be empowering, but it is historically inaccurate.			
If girls (or boys) are portrayed in a stereotypical role, they are portrayed as unhappy with their inferior position (Mullen, 1994).			
<u>LANGUAGE</u>			
Texts use gender-inclusive language (Mullen, 1994): Instead of using the generic pronoun he, the text may read she or he, he or she, or omit gender-specific pronouns entirely (NCTE, 2002).			
Neutral terms are used when referring to professions. Gender-balanced texts do not include terms such as stewardess (flight attendant) or waitress (server) (NCTE, 2002).			
<u>ILLUSTRATIONS</u>			
The text’s illustrations do not promote traditional gender stereotypes (Mullen, 1994).			
Colors: Specific colors, such as pink, not associated with one gender. (i.e., boys wear blue or green and girls wear pink).			
Clothing: Illustrations feature stereotypical outfits/garments, such as aprons for women. Female characters are not depicted as wearing skirts or dresses only.			
Activity: Girls and boys are both portrayed as active and/or passive.			
<u>Any notable observations about the book:</u>			

included some classic touchstones because we find that current authors and publishing houses are not producing many books that fit our GBLC Checklist. Therefore, some of the texts are classics, while others are contemporary works.

Conclusion

Today’s students and many elementary teachers are unaware of both the struggles for gender equality in the past as well as the perpetuating imbalances in children’s literature,

particularly when portrayals of young boys in stereotypical roles are present. To conclude, aggressive behavior in boys is not innate. To some extent, these behaviors are learned through socialization, the social construction of gender, and children's literature (Newkirk, 2002; Young & Brozo, 2001). Since children's literature is such a powerful, often daily, source of gendered information for children, the portrayals of balanced characters and of images that span and include a continuum of gender in children's literature must be introduced and examined in order to move classrooms towards a GBLC. In order to encourage open-mindedness, critical thinking, and egalitarian mindsets, today's educators should strongly consider making use of the Gender-Balanced Literature Curriculum Checklist and accompanying bibliography in the elementary classroom.

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- Hoffman, M. (2008). *Princess Grace*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Hoffman, M. (2011). *Bravo, Grace!* London, UK: Puffin Books.
- Hoffman, M. (2011). *Encore Grace*. London, UK: Puffin Books.
- Hoffman, M. (2011). *Grace at Christmas*. London, UK: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.
- Howe, J. (1990). *There's a monster under my bed*. New York, NY: Aladdin Books.
- Howe, J. (1990). *Pinky and Rex*. New York, NY: Simon Spotlight.
- Howe, J. (1990). *Pinky and Rex get married*. New York, NY: Simon Spotlight.
- Howe, J. (1991). *Pinky and Rex and the spelling bee*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (1991). *Pinky and Rex and the mean old witch*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Howe, J. (1992). *Pinky and Rex go to camp*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Howe, J. (1993). *Pinky and Rex and the new baby*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Howe, J. (1995). *Pinky and Rex and the double-dad weekend*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (1996). *Pinky and Rex and the bully*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (1997). *Pinky and Rex and the new neighbors*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (1998). *Pinky and Rex and the school play*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (1999). *Horace and Morris but mostly Dolores*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (2001). *Pinky and Rex and the just-right pet*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Howe, J. (2006). *Houndsley and Catina*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Martin, B., & Sampson, M. (1997). *Swish!* New York, NY: H. Holt.
- McCully, E. A. (1992). *Mirette on the high wire*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Munsch, R. N. (1980). *The paper bag princess*. Toronto, CA: Annick Press.
- Munsch, R. N. (2001). *Up, up, down*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Murphy, C. R. (2011). *Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the fight for women's suffrage*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree.
- Pinkney, A. D. (2000). *Let it shine: Stories of*

black women freedom fighters. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Pinkney, B. (1995). *Jo Jo's flying side kick*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Waber, B. (1972). *Ira sleeps over*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Yolen, J. (1987). *Owl moon*. New York, NY: Philomel Books.

Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. New York, NY: Trumpet Club.

Annotated bibliography of suggested books for GBLC

Books which feature girls and boys as friends or collaborators.

- James Howe's *Pinky and Rex* series
 - Rex (girl) and Pinky (boy) are best friends. Pinky is not athletic or interested in participating in stereotypical male behavior. This series is a "Ready-to-Read" series with three reading levels.
 - *Pinky and Rex* (1990). New York, NY: Simon Spotlight.
 - *Pinky and Rex get married* (1990). New York, NY: Simon Spotlight.
 - *Pinky and Rex and the spelling bee* (1991). New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
 - *Pinky and Rex and the mean old witch* (1991). New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
 - *Pinky and Rex go to camp* (1992). New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
 - *Pinky and Rex and the new baby* (1993). New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
 - *Pinky and Rex and the double-dad weekend* (1995). New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
 - *Pinky and Rex and the bully* (1996). New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- James Howe. (1999). *Horace and Morris but mostly Dolores*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
 - Dolores loves adventure. Horace, Morris, and Dolores are all friends. When their cohorts decide that boys and girls should go to separate clubhouses, Dolores decides to quit the clubhouse and asked the boys if they wanted to go explore. The boys and girls made their own "Frisky Whisker Clubhouse."
- James Howe. (2006). *Houndsley and Catina*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
 - Male and female best friends. Houndsley and Bert (male characters) bake a cake for their friend, Catina.

Books which portray female characters as active and enterprising.

- Patricia Lee Gauch. (1971) *Christina Katerina and the box*.
 - Christina uses a refrigerator box to build many different things (castle, clubhouse, race car, mansion, ship). Collaborates with male friend.
- Robert Munsch. (1980). *The paper bag princess*. Toronto, CA: Annick Press.
 - This book features a smart and active princess who defeats a dragon and rescues a prince, only to find that the prince is unhappy with her paper bag dress.
- Lenore Blegvad. (1985). *Anna Banana and me*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
 - Anna Banana is active, adventurous, and fearless. We read about Anna Banana from the perspective of her

- friend, a presumably male (based on the illustrations) character.
- Mary Hoffman's *Amazing Grace* series. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
 - Grace crosses traditional gender boundaries and is shown as active and enterprising.
 - *Amazing Grace* (1991). New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
 - *Boundless Grace* (1995). New York, NY: Puffin Books.
 - *Starring Grace* (2000). New York, NY: Puffin Books.
 - *Princess Grace* (2008). New York, NY: Dial Books.
 - *Bravo, Grace* (2011). New York, NY: Puffin Books.
 - *Encore, Grace* (2011). New York, NY: Puffin Books.
 - *Grace at Christmas* (2011). New York, NY: Scholastic.
 - Emily Arnold McCully. (1992). *Mirette on the high wire*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
 - Mirette trains with the Great Bellini and learns to walk the tight rope, or high wire.
 - Brian Pinkney. (1995). *JoJo's flying side kick*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
 - JoJo, a Tae Kwon Do student, is up for promotion to yellow belt and must master the flying side kick. JoJo conquers the kick and her fears.
 - Bill Martin Jr., & Michael Sampson. (1997). *Swish!* New York, NY: Henry Holt.
 - This picturebook portrays an intense game between two girls' basketball teams. The girls are skilled players and have a female coach.
 - Sheila Hamanaka (1999). *I look like a girl*. New York, NY: Morrow Junior Books.
 - The protagonist compares her personality to wild, powerful, active animals. "For if you look twice, past the sugar and spice, the eyes of a tiger you'll see."
 - Robert Munsch. (2001). *Up, up, down*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

- Anna, the protagonist, climbs things and finally climbs the tall tree in her yard against her parents' wishes.
- Marie-Louise Gay. (2010). *Roslyn Rutabaga and the biggest hole on earth!* Toronto, Ontario/Berkeley, CA: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.
 - Roslyn is active and tries to dig the biggest hole on earth in her family's yard.

Books which portray male characters as emotional and/or nurturing.

- Bernard Waber. (1972). *Ira sleeps over*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
 - Deals with boys who sleep with teddy bears in a de-stigmatizing manner.
- Charlotte Zolotow. (1972). *William's doll*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
 - William would rather play with a baby doll than the "gender-appropriate" toys which his father buys for him. William's grandmother purchases a doll for William to allow him to practice being a good father.
- Tomie dePaola. (1979). *Oliver Button is a sissy*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
 - Oliver is teased by classmates for not engaging in "gender-appropriate" behavior, such as playing football. Oliver's amazing tap dance performance at a talent show changes the minds of his classmates, and he trades his titles as "sissy," for "star."
- James Howe. (1990). *There's a monster under my bed*. New York, NY: Aladdin Books.
 - The main character is afraid of a monster under his bed. His brother comes and sleeps with him so that he will not be afraid.
- Mem Fox. (1994). *Tough Boris*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.
 - Boris a tough, fearless pirate who cries when his parrot dies.

- Barbara Cain. (2000). *I don't know why...I guess I'm shy*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.
 - Features a shy male protagonist who loves butterflies and his dog, "Sparky."
- Harvey Fierstein. (2002). *The sissy duckling*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
 - The "sissy" duckling is taunted by the other ducklings because he is not like other male ducklings. The "sissy" duckling becomes a hero when he survives the winter on his own and saves his father by nurturing him back to health.
- Mem Fox. (2005). *Hunwick's egg*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
 - Hunwick, a male bandicoot, loves and cares for egg which turns out to be stone.
- Amy Hest. (2012). *Charley's first night*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
 - A little boy nurtures and cares for a dog.
- Anna Grossnickle Hines. (1986). *Daddy makes the best spaghetti*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.
 - This book shows a father in a nurturing role. He cooks spaghetti, bathes his son, and puts his son to bed.

Books which portray women and men in a range of non-stereotypical professions.

- Kathleen Krull. (2000). *Lives of extraordinary women: Rulers, rebels, (and what the neighbors thought)*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
 - The lives of 20 women in non-stereotypical professions are presented in this text. The women in this text are historical figures who held great power and political influence.
- Andrea Davis Pinkney. (2000). *Let it shine: Stories of black women freedom fighters*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
 - This text presents the achievements of 10 black American women who fought

for equal rights and crossed career boundaries.

- Mem Fox. (1997). *Whoever you are*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
 - This book exhibits individuals from all over the world and points out differences and similarities. A female doctor is depicted in the illustrations.

Books with gender-inclusive language

- Jane Yolen. (1987). *Owl moon*. New York, NY: Philomel Books.
 - Set in the winter, a child and a father go into the woods to observe the Great Horned Owl.

Books which accurately portray role of women in historical context

- Murphy, C. R. (2011). *Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the fight for women's suffrage*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers.
 - A young girl describes the experience of meeting and marching with Susan B. Anthony. The author provides biographical information on Susan B. Anthony.
- Mildred D. Taylor. (1976). *Roll of thunder, hear my cry*. New York, NY: Dial Press.
 - This novel tells the story of a land-owning, black American family in the Mississippi during the 1930s. The women in the family are realistically portrayed as working inside and outside of the home. The men in the family perform the manual labor and work outside of the home.

Books which portray women/girls as unhappy in a position of inferiority

- Anthony Browne. (1986). *Piggybook*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
 - Mrs. Piggot must cook and clean for her ungrateful husband and sons. Piggot becomes disgusted with the unfair

treatment and leaves. The males turn into pigs and the house falls into disarray. In the end, the males help with chores and Mom fixes the car.

- Murphy, C. R. (2011). *Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the fight for women's suffrage*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers.
 - A young girl describes the experience of meeting and marching with Susan B. Anthony. The author provides biographical information on Susan B. Anthony.
- Andrea Davis Pinkney. (2000). *Let it shine: Stories of black women freedom fighters*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
 - This text presents the achievements of 10 black American women who fought for equal rights and crossed career boundaries.

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THE POWER OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: ENHANCING PARENT ENGAGEMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT LITERACY SKILLS

By Vicki Luther
Mercer University

Abstract: Parental involvement is a critical component of today's classrooms. Research shows that parental involvement positively affects children's overall school performance and is an important indicator of school success, especially in the comprehension of English language arts. Although many parents are actively involved and work collaboratively with teachers to instill a strong language arts foundation for their children, other parents may not be as engaged in the academic process. This article focuses on the role of the teacher in helping parents to recognize the importance of their educational contributions, as well as highlighting various strategies to enrich home and school connections for the benefit of student success. The term parental involvement is multifaceted; there are various ways that parents can enhance the learning that takes place in the school environment. Therefore, it is essential that parents have a clear understanding of best practices. In this age of rigorous standards, teachers must constantly develop new and inventive methods for increasing parental involvement and enhancing student understanding of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Ask fellow educators what they find deficient in current educational structures, and you will likely find that at least some, and perhaps even many, consider parental involvement to be lacking in their own schools and classrooms. Teachers desire parent involvement and understand the tremendous benefits of caregivers who work with teachers to help ensure academic success for their children. Collaborative relationships between home and school are essential; while many parents are greatly engaged in a variety of ways, there is also a population who is not as participatory and may seem disengaged.

There are vast and varied reasons as to why some parents choose to take a minimal role in their child's educational journey. Yet with all of the possible reasons, research is very clear on why parent engagement is so pivotal. One of the biggest benefits of parental involvement is the positive effect on a child's overall school performance (Fan & Chen, 2001; Pattnaik & Sriram, 2010). In addition, research also shows that the earlier parents show an interest in their child's education, especially in English language arts components, the more intense the results of such involvement (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille, Ritchson, & Sullender, 2004).

Caregivers have the ability to make powerful contributions in young children's abilities to learn to read (Paratore, 2003), but not all parents realize their potential influence and often underestimate their own value and importance (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2012).

The term *parental involvement* has wide and varied connotations; while parent involvement can consist of physically going into the school environment to support teachers through volunteerism in the classroom or to attend school-sponsored events such as parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school nights, the term can also include positive attitudes and actions that occur in the home. Adults who ensure that homework is completed to proper specifications, consistently review and practice children's academic skills at home, make reading an essential part of daily routines, limit the number of school absences, and who truly value and respect the need for and power of education have a tremendous impact on student success. It is perhaps difficult to generate only one specific definition of parental involvement, as the very term encompasses such varied dimensions (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). Research also shows that cultural beliefs and patterns often dictate the definitions and

structures of parental involvement (Lee & Bowen; Patel & Stevens, 2010).

If you think back to your preservice preparation, you can remember the many education courses that were required to successfully graduate and become certified as a teacher of record. No matter if your education journey began through a traditional path or if your trajectory was nontraditional in nature, you were given a “blueprint” for teaching. Of course, as all teachers know, we learn much more through real-world experiences than we ever could in a brick and mortar (or online) college setting, but those course requirements helped us to prepare for the real world: our classrooms. However, most of the parents we encounter have probably never taken such education courses and are often unfamiliar with the acronyms that we throw around daily and for which the world of education is so well known. Parents often struggle to appreciate the procedures necessary for student progression, especially in a subject as multifaceted as reading, and are often “unaware of the challenges” students face (Barone, 2006, p. 8).

Although teaching is an extremely demanding profession, we do a tremendous disservice to parents and caregivers when we underestimate the challenges they may face and the confusion they often encounter. That is why we must support, not thwart, a healthy and positive home-school connection. It can be frustrating when we see the absence of parental involvement and we tend to place blame on the family unit. However, it is vital to consistently seek to support and value parents rather than resort to judgment (Barone, 2006). The familial structures from which your students come may not be something to which you are accustomed, but it is important to work with all caregivers for the benefit of the students.

Be Teachers of Students *and* Parents

Several years ago, educators throughout the nation began to hear about a new educational reform that would change the way we think about student expectations and

delivery of instruction: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This reform was designed as the “culmination of an extended, broad-based effort to fulfill the charge issued by the states to create the next generation of K-12 standards in order to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 3). While these are lofty and respectable goals if we intend for today’s students to have the skills necessary to compete in a global society in the future, parents often do not understand the rationale for such rigors, especially in the younger grades. Often parents do not understand why their children are expected to learn information that they themselves learned much later in school. It is not uncommon to hear parents lament that they learned in *upper elementary* what their children are now learning in the *early primary grades*. Therefore, we must educate the parents on the “whys and hows” of state and national standards.

Neuman and Roskos (2013) believe that while “many of us recognize that ‘parents are our children’s first literacy teachers,’ we often fail to communicate new reforms with parents” (p. 9). Parents, teachers, and students should be working together, and when parents have a greater understanding of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, it allows them to engage in learning opportunities outside of the school. As educators, our job is to prepare students to become career and college ready (Neuman & Roskos, 2013) while also educating parents on the importance of preparing their children for future success. As teachers of language arts, we must help parents understand that in order to become skilled communicators, students need solid and substantial experiences in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It is imperative that we keep parents informed and updated on the CCSS, as well as all new initiatives and reforms at local, state, and national levels, and that we share how such modifications will impact the learning that takes place in the

classroom. It is equally imperative that parents are given such significant information as early as possible so that they are well-equipped to support student learning (Shanahan, 2015).

Teachers of Young Children Must Help Parents Go for the G.O.L.D.

Just as Olympians must train for years before they reach the pinnacle of success, children should be in “academic training” years before they ever step into the formal school environment. While the ultimate goal of an Olympian is the coveted gold medal, our goal must be that all children will have the basic early literacy skills needed for academic success. Therefore, both parents and teachers must understand the importance of going for “G.O.L.D.”: The **Gift of Literacy Development**. This truly is a gift, because if we begin the process of literacy development early, we are giving an indisputable foundation. This, in turn, will benefit children as they progress throughout their formative years and beyond.

The foundations of oral language development are developed in the pivotal first few years of a child’s life (Biemiller, 2006). Young children who are engaged in meaningful conversations are more likely to have better vocabulary and comprehension skills in later years (Hart & Risley, 1995). Parents who talk *with* their children, and not just *at* their children, are helping to cultivate future literacy skills. Talking with children about their day, during play activities, at mealtime, and during daily vehicular commutes can greatly enhance language development.

In addition, Straub (2003) believes that parental read-alouds are a particularly excellent and effective practice for developing oral language skills in children. This exercise, when made habitual, also shows the importance of the printed word and print concepts early on and can positively impact student motivation. Further research indicates that the foundations of reading comprehension must start to be developed well before a child even enters school (Dougherty-Stahl, 2014). The

implications are far-reaching: Parents who provide opportunities for children to become higher-level thinkers at an early age help to unlock that gift of literacy development.

Yet while these foundational practices are valuable components in the development of early literacy skills, the truth remains: Not all parents read to their children when they are babies, toddlers, or preschoolers, nor do all spend time truly conversing with their children in ways that enhance oral language development and vocabulary skills (Reutzel & Cooter, 2013). Although we cannot change prior educational experiences, or a lack thereof, it is important to reiterate to parents that it is not too late to begin such practices in the home. Teachers of the primary grades have the responsibility of helping families understand that even if literacy development was not a strong focus in the first few years of a child’s life, such skills can still be honed during those early school years.

Parents who have developed a routine for reading aloud to their young children may not be aware of all the nuances associated with an efficient read-aloud, which can cause uncertainty for making home story time more of an interactive experience. Collaborative, text-based discussions can allow for greater text-to-self and text-to-world connections and for deeper understanding (Giroir, Romero Grimaldo, Vaughn, & Roberts, 2015). We can encourage parents to utilize the dialogic reading approach so that children are given ample opportunity to not just listen to text, but also to respond to text and become an active participant in the storytelling process (Whitehurst, et al., 1988). Parents may forget the importance of using questioning to enhance a story’s concepts. Discussing and demonstrating effective read-alouds and research-based best practices during back-to-school events, literacy nights, or parent-teacher conferences can help caregivers better understand the significance of read-alouds and the importance of rereading the same text multiple times to advance comprehension and vocabulary (Roskos & Neuman, 2014).

Improving the time spent on practicing reading skills through critical thinking and discussion can help students to make great gains in reading and in other components of language arts. Caregivers do not necessarily need to spend *more* time on honing reading skills at home, but can take the time they have and use it more effectively.

Sending home lists of higher-order thinking questions to be used during nightly reading time may be beneficial for families. As educators, we can use such lists to reinforce to parents the importance of using questioning techniques to boost comprehension skills; higher-level questions encourage students to justify their thinking, while simplistic “yes” and “no” questions do not. Such questions or points of discussion may include:

- Why do you think this book is called _____? (Why do you believe the title of this book is ____?) Do you like the title of this book? What would you name this book if you were the author?
- What do you believe is going to happen next?
- If you were [the main character], what would you do/what would you have done?
- Do you agree with [a character’s emotions, decisions, actions, etc.]?
- What was your favorite part of the story? Why was that your favorite part?
- What did you like most about the story?
- What was your least favorite part of the story?
- Does [the main character] remind you of anyone you may know?
- What new words did you learn in this book? Can you point to any words that you recognize?
- Describe the setting.
- Is this story similar to another story you’ve read? How are the stories similar?
- What questions do you have about this story?

- How would you describe [a specific character or characters]? What are some good descriptive words you can use for [that particular character]?
- Why do you think [a particular event] took place?
- What did you learn from this book?
- Did you like the ending of the book? What would you change about the ending? Why do you think the author chose to end the book as he/she did?
- Do you give this book a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down”? Why?
- Is this a book that you would like to read again? Why?

Such questions can be used as parents are reading to children and can also be used with older students who are reading independently at home. When students read, parents can use questions to engage in a dialogue about the book, thus creating a *book talk* or a *grand conversation*, which allows the student to elaborate about the text (Tompkins, 2006). Giving parents guidance and clear directives for such literary ideas allows for greater learning opportunities at home.

Basic language and reading skills are paramount to a child’s development and growth. Without such skills, a child is destined to struggle in language arts and in a wider variety of subject areas as they move into upper grades. Therefore, it is essential that we give parents insight into reading strategies and processes utilized in the classroom. For example, while we strive to teach students to closely read in the classroom in order for them to better comprehend the passage and the vocabulary and key concepts associated with the passage (Boyles, 2012/2013), we must inform parents of such language arts approaches to enlighten them on the importance of analytical thinking.

There are countless ways that we can make literacy connections between the home and school environments. For example, reading logs can encourage reading for a detailed

amount of time each night. Literacy backpacks that are sent home filled with high-quality children's books can serve a tremendous purpose for those parents who do not have access to developmentally-appropriate reading materials. Multicultural literacy backpacks can provide books in both English and in the families' principal languages (Rowe & Fain, 2013). Sending home writing paper and implements, sight-word flash cards, and age-appropriate language arts games and activities can allow students to make reading, writing, listening, and speaking connections and can give parents the tools necessary to work with their children at home (Reutzel & Cooter, 2007).

While these may be ideas that are commonplace and are possibly already being utilized in your own classroom, the reality is that some teachers stop the practice of sending home materials when there is little evidence to show that such items are being used by students and parents. This practice can have extremely negative effects for many children, such as those from impoverished homes who have little resources at home with which to work. Research completed by Chavkin and Williams (2015) shows that low-income parents want to be active participants in their children's education and desire to guide and tutor their children at home. However, a lack of time, often due to work schedules, can prevent parents from practicing skills with their children as frequently as perhaps they, and we, would like. Therefore, while parents may be unable to reinforce skills on a daily basis, it is vital that we not "give up" in our quest to support students' learning outside of the realm of the classroom.

Home-School Connections Often Take Time...and Ingenuity

To be a highly-qualified teacher means being a highly-efficient teacher. This often constitutes great ingenuity, especially when it comes to creating positive and lasting home-school connections. The last thing that any teacher should want is to become complacent in

the pursuit of stronger liaisons between classroom and home. It is critical, then, that we help parents understand the great impact they have on their children's education and work to discover the underlying causes of nonparticipation. While this undertaking can be a daunting task, it is definitely worthwhile. It is imperative that teachers ask *why* parents are disengaged and reflect upon underlying causes that may keep caregivers from being the staunch educational supporters that children need.

Today, adults seem to be busier than ever before. In addition, many were left reeling after the economic downturn and are still struggling financially. The economy has forced some individuals to take on second jobs in order provide for their families, and other parents find themselves unemployed and without a source of steady income (Fass & Cauthen, 2007). In such pecuniary situations, finding the means or opportunity to frequent their child's school and keep up with school events and happenings may prove to be quite difficult, and those living in poverty often have life stresses that not everyone can comprehend. Parents who have limited English language skills, feelings of insecurity and academic inadequacy, or who themselves had negative school experiences as a child often determine that it is best to not become involved in their child's schooling. As well, parents often do not know what to do to help their child, so they simply do nothing, believing that the role of educating is reserved exclusively for the teacher. Hence, our job must be to look for reasons as to why caregivers are not engaged. Are parents uninvolved because they themselves have limited reading skills and do not feel confident in helping at home? Do such limited academic skills cause parents to miss school functions due to intimidation and fear? Is English the parents' second language? Is information that is sent home difficult for parents to comprehend? Are parents unable to help with homework or to attend school functions because they are working two (or more) jobs? Are there young siblings in the

household, thus minimizing the amount of one-on-one time that can be given to helping school-aged children? Do parents understand the importance of helping their child outside of the classroom? Questions such as these can often be insightful in trying to understand parents' lack of engagement.

Teachers might also creatively reward families for helping to foster a positive partnership by giving parents, and students, incentives for practicing skills at home. While "bribing" parents and children is not the goal, when done ethically, motivational tactics can be extremely helpful in getting families more involved. Administrators and school parent-teacher organizations may be able to help supply incentives when skills are reinforced in the household environment or when parents and caregivers attend school-sponsored events; therefore, it behooves teachers to ask if monies or supplies are available to help improve parental involvement and home-school connections. In addition, many local businesses happily donate items to teachers and schools when they know that such items will be used for educational purposes. Inducements can motivate students and parents to work together to reach reading goals, practice sight or vocabulary words, and continually review and reinforce the literacy skills taught at school. Community organizations are also often willing to donate the use of their facilities for parent trainings and school meetings; this can be beneficial for parents who feel uncomfortable in the school environment but want to be involved in the education of their children (Padak & Rasinski, 2010).

Teachers must continually find ways to engage parents, and this means going above and beyond as never before. In a society of constant busyness, those little "extras" can often go a long way. For instance, we have known for years that it is critical to plan parent-teacher conferences around caregivers' work schedules, as many cannot attend during teachers' planning times or immediately at the end of the school day. However, while this is

good practice, a low number of participants of parent-teacher meetings may tell us that we need to do even more. This is when educators must think of new ways to enhance parental involvement. Such ideas may include providing coffee and doughnuts to busy parents who are willing to meet prior to the start of their workday, or supplying meals from the cafeteria for parents who attend school meetings during their lunch breaks. Parents sometimes feel less intimidated and more willing to converse with educators when the venue is somewhat less formal; this is especially true of low-income parents (Chavkin & Williams, 2015). Discussing students' work over a cup of coffee might very well break down barriers. Although education is serious business, the goal is to ensure that parents and teachers are on the "same team" and are working together for the sake of children. A more relaxed and inviting environment can help parents feel more comfortable in our classrooms, so we must go above and beyond to make parents feel as at ease as possible. A simple gesture may make a tremendous difference, and creative strategies must be used to help reluctant parents become more involved in the educational journey (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Continually Use Technology to Help Parents

Technology has enhanced our lives and created ways for us to be more efficient and for us to communicate faster than ever before. Parents can now check grades and student progress online, go to websites for updates on assignments and reading lists, get text messages concerning school and classrooms happenings, and take part in podcasts and webinars that give explicit information about what students are learning and how such skills can be reinforced at home. Parents can also find that technology allows them to receive feedback from teachers quickly and permits them to stay connected in ways never before possible. Educators, including teachers and administrators, can use Facebook and Twitter as effective means of

communicating with busy parents (Pakak & Rasinski, 2010). Digital apps are now available to help students improve in reading skills, and teachers have a tremendous opportunity to share such advancements with families. Pakak and Rasinski (2010) suggest having a “parent corner” on the school website (or classroom website) that “provides tips and ideas” for enhancing students’ reading skills (p. 296). In addition, parents should be informed of website locations for state and national standards, school system policies and procedures, grade level expectations, and volunteer opportunities within the classroom and school. Sending home a list of educational websites and resources at the beginning of the school year can also prove to be beneficial for parents.

There are many programs that give online reading tutorials to help students improve upon reading components (Smeets & Bus, 2013). As well, teachers can set up online study session modules or practice scenarios to help improve both student knowledge *and* parental involvement. In addition, schools can give online English tutoring to the parents of English language learners; such workshops could be conducted in a school environment or in a public setting, and the modules and tutorials could be completed at the family members’ own pace. So many technological resources are now at our fingertips, and these resources can easily become available and beneficial to parents. We must ensure that caregivers are aware of assessable and research-based technological tools that can be great supports to their children.

The Bottom Line

As educators, we are well aware that parents will not always attend school functions and some may never even enter the school building. A percentage of caregivers feel that the responsibility of educating students rests solely on the teacher while still others may feel ill-equipped to become involved in their child’s academic process. Some of the caregivers who we encounter may have had negative school experiences and now look at all teachers in an

adverse manner. While we cannot change past experiences, we can do our part to make parents feel more comfortable by engaging in meaningful conversations and striving to maintain positive relationships. We must do what we can to help parents recognize the contributions they bring through parental involvement.

Now more than ever, it is essential that parents are cognizant of grade-level expectations. It is much easier for parents to assess progress when they are regularly apprised of their child’s academic strengths *and* academic needs. There is a tremendous need to foster constructive and beneficial home-school relationships, and there may be far-reaching implications if such ties are severed. Having strong literacy skills is essential for students to become productive members of society, and we must encourage parents to work alongside of us for optimal student success.

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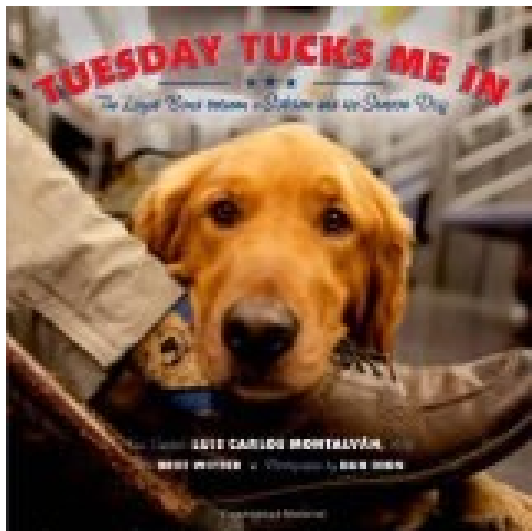
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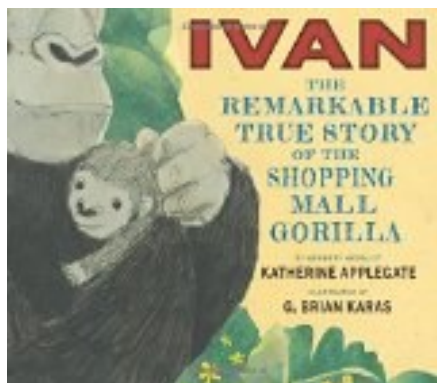


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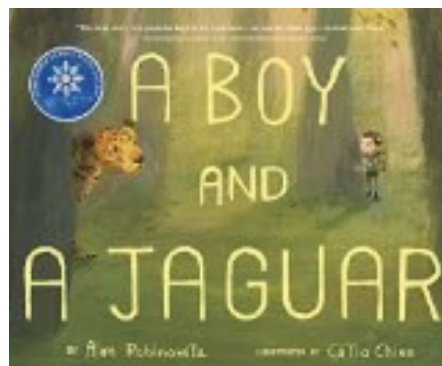
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A RECIPE FOR AN ALMOST DISASTER: FAMILIES WRITING AND SHARING STORIES AROUND A KITCHEN TABLE

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Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways that an after school Family Writing Project affected grades K-6 students' attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward writing and parents' attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward creating an environment that enabled their children to become skillful writers. The third space theory undergirded this study. Several themes emerged; one was "writing is a social act." One major implication is for school districts to work to increase their state writing scores, to create literacy opportunities that bring parents and children together, and to show parents how to help their children.

Niki excitedly watched from the kitchen door for her mother, Ms. Nikita, to arrive at the Family Writing Project, a National Writing Project (NWP) site. First grader Niki arrived by bus with the other children after school, and Ms. Nikita was to meet her there at 5:00 for the writing project, when she got off her shift as a prison guard. Their town, Piney Woods, was a small town in East Texas that served as the headquarters of the state prison system. Many of the children in the town's five elementary schools had parents who either worked for the prison system or were incarcerated there. Ms. Nikita was intrigued by the idea of helping Niki grow as a writer, and she had enthusiastically been joining the group after her shift every Tuesday. This Tuesday, she carried a small satchel as she entered the Boys and Girls Club and headed back towards the kitchen. Niki skipped towards her mother, gave her a quick kiss, and then took Ms. Nikita by the hand and led her to the long, steel kitchen table, where they took their places beside the others. Ms. Nikita pulled two brightly colored hand-drawn maps from her satchel. She and Niki had made them as their homework from the week before, for which they were each supposed to draw a map of their neighborhood. Niki beamed from

ear to ear as she and Ms. Nikita began to share their maps with the group.

In 2014, Piney Woods Independent School District (PWISD) performed well below average compared to other schools on the new state mandated STAAR test. In particular, fourth-grade writing scores were below the state's average by double digits. Sylvester Elementary scores declined in 2013 from 63% to 61% in 2014. M.H. Elementary declined from 70% in 2013 to 54% in 2014. Piney Woods Elementary scores increased from 48% in 2013 to 67% in 2014. S. J. Elementary declined from 77% in 2013 to 70% in 2014. Nonetheless, no elementary school in PWISD scored above the state's average. The authors of this article are three university professors in the college of education at a university in the town of Piney Woods. As we looked over the writing scores for the school district, we began to brainstorm ways to help the children improve their writing. One of the researchers is the director of the Writing Project at the University, and she suggested we work with the children and parents in the Boys & Girls Club to help the children become more proficient writers.

The purpose of this study was to highlight the Family Writing Project, which was housed at the Boys & Girls Club of Piney Woods. The research questions were the following: 1) In what ways does participation in the writing project affect student writing? 2) In what ways does participation in the writing project affect student attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward writing? 3) In what ways does participation in the writing project affect parents'/guardians' attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward creating an environment that enables their children to become skillful writers? 4) What sense of community can develop among family members as they write together? This article will explore the effects of participation in the writing project on students' attitudes toward writing and parents'/guardians' attitude toward writing and discussing writing with their children.

Theoretical Significance

The concept of third space has been used to explore how home and school can be brought together in educational settings. In this conceptualization, home is one discourse space, school is the second discourse space, and the classroom is the third discourse space in which home and school cultures meet. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (1999) defined what he named as third space theory as an area “for elaborating strategies of selfhood... that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (pp.1-2). Undergirding Bhabha’s concept of third space theory is the idea that oppressed people can define themselves and their identities in productive ways because they are able to “create a new space within official space that functions under rules more beneficial to them” (Benson, 2010, p.555). Third space allows people to explore more fluid notions of themselves as opposed to defining themselves in stark contrast to a dominant discourse or set

of expectations (McKinney, Lasley, & Holmes-Gull, 2008).

Moje et al. (2004) re-envisioned Bhabha’s concept of third space, arguing that third space should be introduced into classrooms “in ways that challenge, destabilize, and ultimately, expand the literacy practices that are typically valued in school and in the everyday world” (p.44). In accordance with Moje et al. (2004), Pahl and Kelly (2005) argue for a recognition of “the way in which ‘discursive practices actively’ produce space” (p. 92). Pahl and Kelly examined the ways space can be created by a discourse community, such as a family literacy class. Pahl and Kelly defined a family literacy classroom as a “threshold space” where children’s texts can move, from home to school and back again. According to Pahl and Kelly, the family literacy classroom can act as a threshold space where both home and school discourses are recognized and validated. In this threshold space, the material reality of both discourses, of home and school, are superseded by the context; and as a result, the family literacy classroom becomes a third space where both discourses are present and recognized within both parents’ and children’s text making.

McKinney, Lasley, and Holmes-Gull (2008) used the concept of third space to describe the ways a Family Writing Project changed the nature of classroom writing instruction and rejuvenated elementary, middle, and high school teachers. More recently, Weih (2013) found in his research on Hispanic families writing and sharing writing together that family literacy programs provided opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard. According to Weih, family literacy programs share the notion that all family members can contribute valuable funds of knowledge.

We believe the theoretical framework of third space offers a perspective about rural families writing and sharing writing together that challenges societal assumptions that

parents and family members either lack the ability or the interest to help their children with their writing. This research study explored the ways an after-school Family Writing Project affected student attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward writing and parents'/guardians' attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward creating an environment that enabled their children to become skillful writers. The next section captures several family writing projects that brought families together in spaces that allowed them to express themselves through writing.

Literature Review

In 2007, the Eastern Michigan Writing Project, a National Writing Project site designed a Family Literacy Initiative (FLI). This initiative started as a one-session workshop for parents of elementary students who wanted to know what they could do in the summer to keep their children writing. Upon completion of the first workshop, Eastern Michigan Writing Project found the ways they taught writing were different from the ways most of their students' parents learned to write. As a result, most of the parents were confused about the terminology of writing instruction and about the best ways to help their children with their writing. Based on this observation, we created a family writing project that brought parents and children to a space that allowed them to express themselves, write outside of school, and discuss writing with other students and parents/guardians. We believe providing a space afforded opportunities for parents and children to grow more comfortable engaging in conversation about the importance of writing. The space we provided for the children was non-traditional and was a world away from the brick-and-mortar of the traditional classroom. The participants had many conversations around the kitchen table, and they felt that it changed the way they interacted with their family. Tasha, a third grader, stated, "When I go home, I talk to my family about the writing activities." Another child, Rosa, an English language learner, seemed to believe that the

project helped her to create more of a dialogue with her family. She reported, "We talk more than we used to because we didn't talk that much before." Rosa's grandmother came to pick her up from the club on a day that we discussed name origins. Her grandmother did not speak English; she spoke Spanish. Rosa wanted to show her grandmother what her name meant during the "Name Stories" activity. Rosa borrowed one researcher's cellphone and asked if she could go to Google Translate to enter the meaning of her name, so it could translate for her. She entered the information and held it to her grandmother's ear, so she could hear the audio read the sentence in Spanish. After hearing it, her grandmother looked at Benita and smiled. She stated, "Gracias" to thank her.

In addition, the participants created a family among themselves. The older children helped the younger ones. Brandi, a sixth grader told us that she helped Anika, a second grader, with understanding the word, "relationship," which was mentioned on the final interview questionnaire. During the group poem session, Tasha chose to work with Sondra, Rosa, Camilla (college student), and Kinsley (college student). Sondra volunteered to write. Each line represented something mentioned during each person's artifact sharing. While writing, Tasha reminded Sondra that she should change the pronoun "I" to "We" so that the group poem included all.

Weih and Shaffer (2013) conducted a study that investigated a family writing project, exploring how family members used writing to learn about each other and develop a sense of community between family members and across families. In this particular study, four families, connected through an urban community school, met together to write and share. In a family writing project, Weih and Shaffer noted that it was important to include all family members, even the very young. They argued that it was imperative for the older family members to participate in the family writing project because it provided a space for them "to allow whatever markings the younger

children made and not expect their writing to look like adult writing” (p.3). In our writing project, we had not only a parent, but also a grandparent who was a legal guardian to one of the participants. Various college students who were volunteering for the Boys & Girls Club also came to help with the project at different times. They worked one-on-one with the children and sometimes took the place of the parents that could not be there.

In 2014, Arizona State Writing Project, a National Writing Project site developed writing workshops for children in grades K-2 and their parents to practice and develop their literacy skills. The premise of this institute was to improve early school success by developing academic literacy program models focused on supporting English learners and their families by teaching parents effective strategies to support their children in their writing development. Flores (2014) described this particular workshop model as one that created a space to share stories and take risks in reading and writing. Art Kelly (2008) described it best: a family writing project is a space that strengthens the home and school connection. The following family writing activities are based largely upon Art Kelly’s seminal piece, *Writing with Families*.

Methods

Setting

The Family Writing Project took place in the kitchen of the Boys & Girls Club of Piney Woods. The walls in the kitchen were painted beige, and a long stainless steel table located in the middle of the kitchen limited the space we needed to conduct the Family Writing Project. Acoustics made it difficult to hear in the kitchen, and a variety of children came and went seemingly through a revolving door. Many children longed to participate, but some parents opted not to participate in the program. Therefore, many children left before it began. We met every Tuesday from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in the kitchen. This project almost did not happen due to the lack of support by parents and the

local community. To recruit participants, we stood outside the Boys & Girls Club and approached parents as they arrived to retrieve their children. Many signed the consent forms for both their children and them to participate, but only a few returned the following week ready to participate. For six weeks, eight children, one parent, and a grandparent diligently lined up to enter the kitchen. Due to final exams and graduation, the college students participated for only three weeks.

Pahl and Kelly (2005) examined the ways space can be created by a discourse community, such as a family literacy class, which can act as a threshold space. In this threshold space, the kitchen became their own special world where they wrote. Despite the limitations of being placed in a kitchen, the participants made it come alive.

Participants

The participants in the Family Writing Project included eight children: Rosa, 5th grade; Juan, 4th grade; Sondra, 6th grade; Niki, 1st grade; Anika, 3rd grade; Tasha, 3rd grade; Jackie, 5th grade; and Anna, 5th grade. Also included in the study were Ms. Nikita, Niki’s mother, and Ms. Denise, Juan’s grandmother and guardian. Rosa, Juan, and Sondra were Hispanic and were English language learners. Niki, Anika, Anna, Jackie, and Tasha were African American. Ms. Nikita was African American, and Ms. Denise was Hispanic. The parents and children volunteered to be in the Family Writing Project and seemed enthusiastic from the first day.

Data Collection

This was a qualitative study. Data included writing samples collected at each workshop; pre and post student and parent questionnaires; informal interviews of the Family Writing Project participants-both students and parents/guardians., artifacts, and field notes.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) asserts that “data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research” (p.151). Analysis occurs after each observation, each interview, and after the collection of each document. Because qualitative research is emergent, analysis that is done after collecting each piece of data determines the direction in which the study will proceed. Merriam states, “Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformulation of questions, and so on” (1998, p. 151). We used the constant comparative method of data analysis, in which the researcher constantly compares different incidents in the same set of data in an attempt to see connections from which categories can evolve.

Participants’ Perceptions of their Writing before the Project Experience

On the first day of the Family Writing Project, we asked children and their parents to fill out an interview questionnaire about their perceptions of themselves as writers. According to her responses on the questionnaire, Tasha felt that although writing was a way to express herself and share her ideas, it was sometimes frustrating and was something that was done for a grade. She stated that she did not save her writing pieces. Ms. Nikita, who has a bachelor’s degree, stated, “When Niki finished completing her 10 spelling words, she writes sentences or uses sentences utilizing the words from her spelling words.” She also stated that they read together daily. After completing the interview questionnaire, the participants were ready and eager to start on a new writing adventure.

The Experience

Each week, we had various activities planned for the children and their parents. We provided snacks and a journal for each participant, along with pens, pencils, markers, colored paper, and poster paper that we were

able to purchase with an internal research grant that we received for the project. The group gathered around the kitchen table, either standing, sitting on stools, sitting on counters, or sprawling across the table. Each created a personal workspace. The kitchen was abuzz with activity and excited voices. Although acoustics were not ideal, and we could hear what was going on outside the kitchen, participants were eventually able to tune out the outside world and focus on what was happening around the kitchen table. Over the weeks, many writing activities happened, including the following.

Artifact Sharing

On the first day, we asked participants to bring an item that was sentimental to them or something that represented them to share with the group. Though not all of them remembered to bring something that day, they brought their items in the weeks that followed. They all shared something with the group at one time or another. We also let them draw a picture of their artifact when they forgot to bring it. Most children brought pictures of their families, one brought a beautiful picture of an owl she drew, and one brought her baby book.

Thirty-Second Interview

On the first day we also did the 30-second interview. Children stood on one side of the table, and their parent, grandparent or volunteer partner stood across from them. We called out a question for them to ask each other and gave 30 seconds to ask and discuss the question. At the end of 30 seconds, the children rotated, so that everyone had a new partner. We then asked another question, and followed the same procedure until seven questions had been asked and discussed. Everyone seemed to enjoy the activity, as they got to know one another. Afterwards, they wrote a journal entry about what they learned about the members of the group, and a few people shared their journal entries out loud.

What’s in a Name?

On one particular day, we asked the participants to find out what their name means and why their parents named them the name that they did. Anika brought her baby book to share and opened it up to a page that told the meaning of her name. One boy immediately knew that he was named after a football player. Another girl called her grandmother to find out what her name meant, and several students started Googling their names on smart phones. Ms. Nikita was the only parent there that day, and she told us that Niki's name was a combination of her name and her husband's name. After everyone had shared what each found out about their names, they wrote a journal entry about where their name came from. This activity was one of their favorites.

Future Letter

For our culminating activity, we asked the children to write a letter to their future selves in 10 years. We also asked the parents to write a letter to their child in 10 years. They all seemed to be very excited about this activity, and we told them they could read their letters on the stage at the Author's Celebration, which was on the final day. Following is Jackie's letter to her future self.

*Dear Future Jackie,
I want to be a pediatrician to help kids to live their dreams just like I am going to live mine. I just can't think about myself. I have to think about others. Sometimes I forget other people can't afford things that I can. So, I want to help kids who are raised with different types of personalities, different types of hair and color. I want to change a little person's life so they can be anything they want to be in a good way. They may not be like me, but I want to help, and only kids!*

Love, Jackie

Participants' Perceptions of their Writing after the Writing Experience

As part of the final interview questionnaire, we asked children how they felt about themselves as writers. Sondra reported that she really liked writing, and that it is something she is likely to do outside of school. She said about writing, "It feels great." Not only did Rosa reveal she liked writing, but she also described herself as a good writer. At the beginning of the program, Anna stated that she writes about topics of her choosing only monthly, and that she discussed writing with her classmates weekly. At the final interview questionnaire, she reported that she chose her writing topic weekly and talked to her classmates about writing daily. In addition, she stated after participating in the Family Writing Project, "I write with more expression and feeling," and "It makes me want to write more." On her final interview questionnaire, Rosa stated, "I feel confident now, because I used to be shy," and "I revise my writing so that I can be a better writer." Anika stated at the final interview, "I thought writing was frustrating, but now it's not," and "When I go home I tell my mom and dad what I do here." It seems that all the children felt that the Family Writing Project had a positive impact on them as writers.

Discussion

The excitement we could see in the children's eyes each week as they scurried up to us when we entered the Boys & Girls Club, asking when it would be time to go to the kitchen, told us that the children enjoyed having us there. They worked hard and put much energy into the writing activities we had prepared for them. We believe the children and the parents learned about themselves and each other as writers, and we, in turn, learned from them. One finding was that participation in the family writing project affected student attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward writing in a positive way. According to their responses on the final interview questionnaire,

many felt that they had improved as writers during the project. In the first interview questionnaire, Jackie stated that she really liked writing, but she never saved her writing or witnessed her teachers sharing their own writing in the classroom. In the final interview questionnaire, Jackie revealed that she saved her writing weekly, and that she observed her teachers sharing their writing with students on a weekly basis. Perhaps her teachers were sharing their writing all along, but Jackie wasn't interested in writing before and did not pay attention. Now that she is excited about writing, she views her teachers and herself as writers. She stated, "I know I can write at any time and in any subject. I now know it is not all about spelling." Ms. Denise, Juan's grandmother and legal guardian stated, "I have a different a journal for every aspect of what Juan enjoys – comic journal for gaming, leather bound for visits and activities with his Paw Paw, and plain black for what he wants to do in his future." She also stated that she used technology with Juan and explained things in ways that relate to real life. She shared during the artifact sharing that she has always been a writer and has always loved writing. She remarked that she used a lot of pictures in her writing, and that she shared her writing with her grandson. At times, he thought she was too much of an authoritarian, but other times he thought she was cool. Participating in this project enabled her to explore other avenues relevant to writing. She exclaimed, "It's words of the heart that scream in my mind about how I feel about the music in my mind." It is evident that writing on the kitchen table created an organic opportunity for parents and children to realize what writing meant to them and the impact writing had on their lives.

Conclusion

The Family Writing Project brought to life the children's imaginations and helped them express those imaginations by writing in their own, unique voices. It also provided parents with tools to help their children with writing throughout the school year. This

endeavor confirmed for us there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to writing. Parents and children, particularly those located in rural areas, need more opportunities to write together. Writing creates a dialogue between parents and their children. If districts want to increase their state writing scores, it is imperative that educators create literacy opportunities that bring parents and children together, and show parents how to help their children. For instance, educators from different content areas need to create workshops that model for parents and children how to write memoirs in the English/Language Arts classroom, how to write autobiographies in the social studies classroom, how to write and respond to word problems in the mathematics classroom, and how to write lab reports in the science classroom. The Family Writing project affords opportunities for educators to expose children and parents to writing in meaningful ways. In the era of College and Career Readiness Standards, there is a call for children to demonstrate their ability to express their ideas clearly in writing. It is evident from this Family Writing project that writing mattered to all who participated. In the near future, the Boys & Girls Club will have a computer lab that will allow our next Family Writing project to incorporate collaborative activities involving digital writing. Families will move from the kitchen table to the computer, where they will have opportunities to write their digital world and call it their own.

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CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY IN MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE WITH DISABILITY: WHO IS THE PEN?

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Abstract: The importance of children's literature in teaching children to read and learn about the world is well established in the literature. Children's literature is what our learners encounter as the main literacy corpus in U.S. schools. From such reading, learners begin their process of discovery not only about the world of literacy, but also, and more importantly, their identity as individuals. This paper explores the importance of using quality children's literature with characters with disabilities to support learners' awareness of disability as an integral part of diversity in the U.S. sociocultural landscape.

Introduction

The importance of multicultural children's literature in a global and complex society is well established in the literature (Landt, 2011). Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001, p. 810) claim, "When children read books that are interesting and meaningful to them, they can find support for the process of defining themselves as individuals and understanding their developing roles within their families and communities."

Gopalakrishnan (2011) points out that

Multicultural children's literature is about the group's experiences of previously underrepresented groups. It validates these group's experiences, including those occurring because of differences in language, race, gender, class, ethnicity, identity, and sexual orientation. In other words, multicultural children's literature has the main purpose to validate all children's experiences by proposing books that are from "many different sociocultural backgrounds (p. 5).

The idea of multicultural children's literature as a place where underrepresented groups find a voice and visibility in the diversity landscape is paramount for educators and students in a society that is more diverse, global, and complex. Teaching diversity via multicultural literature in the curriculum is crucial in an era where schools are becoming more and more culturally, linguistically and racially diverse. Multicultural children's literature gives students the opportunity to see

themselves in the characters represented in the text. Also, multicultural children's literature can support students in vicarious experiences by in-depth engagement with the book.

Shor (1999) clarifies this point by maintaining that the ways in which we speak and act in the literate world determine our identity and positionality as individuals. Authors of multicultural children's books aim to represent multicultural characters in children's books as authentic as they can in order to avoid stigmas, stereotypes, and essentialism in the different groups represented (Sims Bishop, 1982).

Sims Bishop (2003) writes that authors of multicultural children's books should strive for depicting the cultural traditions, languages and ethnicities of diverse groups of people in a voice that is authentic from an insider's perspective. What Sims Bishop (2003) is contending here is that authors of multicultural children's books should write as insiders of the culture represented because they come from that culture and they can feel it under their skin and ink. Cultural authenticity is crucial when writing children's books, since oftentimes in the past, diverse groups in the United States have been misrepresented or essentialized in multicultural children's books.

Cultural authenticity is not, however, an easy concept to define and has stirred controversy in the literature – controversy that still goes on today. Fox and Short (2003) instead of attempting to define cultural authenticity in their seminal work on the subject, pose a series of important questions to

help educators, scholars, and professionals in the field of multicultural children's books to find directions for a serious reflection on the importance of authentically represent cultures in children's literature that do not belong to the mainstream: (a) Can outsiders write authentically about another culture? (b) Does an author have a social responsibility, and, if so, how does that responsibility relate to authorial freedom? (c) How do criteria for cultural authenticity relate to literary excellence in evaluating a book? (d) What kinds of experiences matter for authors in writing culturally authentic books? (e) What are an author's intentions for writing a particular book? (f) What are the criteria beyond accuracy for evaluating the cultural authenticity of the content and images of a book? (g) What is an insider perspective on cultural authenticity?

The above questions will lead the discussion on the topic on cultural authenticity and representation of characters with disabilities in children's books from a multicultural perspective in this article. I propose this topic for two reasons: (a) cultural authenticity has been developed around important issues related to multicultural children's books without taking into account disability as an important component of the multicultural landscape in children's books; (b) if only insiders can write about certain topics related to cultural authenticity in multicultural children's literature, the question is : who is the pen when writing about characters with disabilities in multicultural children's books?

This paper is an attempt to open a debate on an area of multicultural children's literature that has been neglected and where no literature exists to research who and with what authority that person can write about characters with disabilities in multicultural children's books. The lack of research existing on children's literature and disability does not address the issue and complexity of cultural authenticity in children's books from a multicultural perspective (Williams, Inkster, & Blaska, 2005; Dyches, Prater, & Cramer, 2001;

Seale & Slapin, 2005). Therefore, this paper is an invitation to begin a journey to explore an uncharted terrain in multicultural children's literature, a journey to discover why it is important to become aware and understand who the pen is when writing about characters with disabilities in multicultural children's books and who has the authorial privilege to do so.

In order to set the stage for the debate, this paper is divided into three parts: (a) a review of the most recent scholarship on cultural authenticity; (b) the need and urgency to include disability in the discussion on cultural authenticity as an important part of diversity in multicultural children's literature; (c) an action plan to stimulate critical thinking and a pro-active agenda for a better and more systematic inclusion of characters with disabilities in multicultural children's literature reflecting the cultural perspectives of the people writers are representing in multicultural children's books (Sims Bishop, 2003). In doing so, I hope that the field of multicultural literature and education in particular will begin to see the missing link and authors, scholars, and educators in the field of multicultural children's literature will begin to consider disability as part of the diversity landscape in a complex and global society in the new millennium.

Cultural Authenticity: The Current Debate

Fox and Short (2003) write that cultural authenticity is at the center of the debate on multicultural children's literature since issues of representation of diverse cultural groups is of vital importance for proposing quality literature to learners. Fox and Short (2003) also write

Cultural authenticity in children's literature is one of those contentious issues that seems to resurface continuously, always eliciting strong emotions and a wide range of perspectives. Authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, educators,

librarians, and scholars all have different points of view about authenticity that they each feel strongly about based on their own sociocultural experiences and philosophical views (p. 3).

Fox and Short (2003) offer a picture of cultural authenticity in children's literature kaleidoscopic in nature. The object, cultural authenticity, is not monochromatic since its colors and nuances depend from the sociocultural experiences and philosophical views of the observer. Barrera, Liguori, and Salas (1993) maintain that the importance of cultural authenticity is found in the very nature of multicultural children's books. This is due to the important issue of representing a culture without distortion and to communicate a positive sense of belonging to that culture to the readers who see their experiences validated in the literature. Hade (1997) also contends that multicultural children's literature should help learners to access culturally authentic literature that brings to the fore important issues of social justice and validation of a particular cultural experience for underrepresented groups.

Rosenblatt (1995) relates literature to the very essence of a democratic society. According to Rosenblatt (1995) literature has the potential to foster an in-depth debate on what it means to live and interact in a democratic society. Therefore, debates on cultural authenticity in children's literature "matter because they foster the dialogue that is essential to democracy and to the struggle for social justice" (Fox & Short, 2003, p. 23). Cultural authenticity in multicultural children's books is intertwined to a philosophy of education and learning that sees literacy and learning as not just tools to read and write, but as lenses to read a complex world around and among us (Levin, 2007).

The intertwining topics of literature and diversity provide an opportunity to connect students' academics with vicarious learning processes to support students' acquisition of academic language and ability to grow as

individuals. Students who read quality multicultural literature for children are intellectually engaged and acquire and develop analytical skills to delve into complex issues of diversity, social justice, and democratic choices in society. Also, quality multicultural literature for children creates the opportunity to develop a more profound connection with language, experience and identity in students (Denicolo & Franquiz, 2006). This means that the words, concepts, or events in a narrative can be pivotal moments in a students' intellectual and emotional growth when engaging with diverse topics and issues in multicultural children's book.

Sims Bishop (2003) complicates the picture on cultural authenticity in multicultural children's books by analyzing the topic from the following overarching questions: (a) what does it take to portray the essence of a people? (b) Can it be done by writers who are not of those people? The answers to Sims Bishop's questions are not easy and further complicate the tapestry of cultural authenticity in multicultural children's literature since it is not an easy matter to draw a hard line between insider and outsider of a culture. Yarbrough (1989) as cited in Sims Bishop (2003) proposes an answer to those questions by asserting that, "A people's story is the anchor that keeps us from drifting, it is the compass to show the way to go, and it's a sail that holds the power that takes us forward" (p. 21).

Sims Bishop (2003) writes that cultural authenticity is controversial by nature due to the very content of children's books that represent non-mainstream cultures, stating:

The controversy around cultural authenticity is related in part to the notion that the messages-the underlying values, images, and themes-in books by outsiders may not be those most valued by a given group. If a people view their story as anchor, compass, and sail-functioning to bind members to the group, to guide, to empower, then passing the story on to children becomes an important

responsibility for the group's literary artists. Given our society's strong traditional belief in the power of books to influence children's minds and transmit cultural values, it shouldn't be a surprise that people who identify as members of parallel cultural groups, who have felt themselves discriminated against and marginalized by the larger society, maintain a desire to tell their own stories (p. 35).

Cultural authenticity is therefore found on a sociocultural and sociopolitical terrain as well as a subjective and emotional dimension of the groups and authors who are involved in the production and reception of multicultural children's literature in educational contexts and beyond. However, a question that remains is, who the pen is for the representation of disability in multicultural children's books and holds the importance of addressing such issue from a cultural authenticity perspective?

Gaps in the literature on cultural authenticity and disability

What emerges from an extensive search in the literature about cultural authenticity in children's books is that the debate is along the continuum of race-ethnicity-language-gender (Aronson, 2003; Banks, 2003; Horning, Kruse, & Schleisman, 2002; Nikola-Lisa, 2002; Woodson, 2003). Even though the continuum is important to understand cultural authenticity as a main component of children's literature from a multicultural perspective, it leaves out disability as a crucial element of diversity in the genre of multicultural children's literature.

The lack of attention on this important part of diversity in multicultural children's books needs to be reframed in order to begin to rethink cultural authenticity within a continuum where disability is part of the rich array of diversity in multicultural children's literature. Disability must become part of that compass (Sims Bishop, 2003) in the debate on cultural authenticity to show educators, parents, and

other interested in multicultural children's literature that to represent individuals with disabilities in children's books by being authentic or at least by lowering the bias and stigmas in the books must be systematically part of the agenda on cultural authenticity. Authenticity of children's books representing characters with disability is not just in relation to the illustration-pictorial representation. It is also how language socially constructs disability and how language supports students' ability to see and represent the world through the words used. Students know the world via the language they are exposed to and they construct their identity by the same language they acquire and use in their lives. The next section will propose a framework for beginning this paradigm shift in cultural authenticity and provide that compass (Sims Bishop, 2003) to analyze disability from a cultural authentic perspective in multicultural children's books.

A paradigm shift

The paradigm shift proposed in the present article is based on Blaska's (2003) work in using children's literature that includes characters with disabilities in the curriculum. In particular, four major components will be taken into account: (a) choice of high-quality literature for children that includes characters with disabilities in different cultural and social contexts written by individuals who have experience with the disability represented in the book or live that disability as part of their daily lives; (b) the children's books must present characters with disabilities as positive role models and help students transfer this knowledge to real-life situations to explore what disability means and does in the larger social and cultural context; (c) teachers and educational professionals must begin to explore children's literature that includes characters with disabilities by taking into account the 13 Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) categories to expose students to different aspects and degrees of disabilities and not only the most visible such as physical ones;

(d) develop inclusive teaching practices where students have the opportunity to generate critical questions that deal with disability as part of the diversity landscape in our society and culture.

Choice of quality literature and representation of disability within the diversity landscape begins by applying the elements for the analysis of children's books to assess the quality of children's books with characters with disability: (1) theme; (2) characterization; (3) setting; (4) plot and (5) literary style. Quality of literature also entails that individuals with disabilities should be represented without any pictorial stigmatization of the disability, a non-discriminatory language, and always positively interacting with nondisabled peers in a positive and constructive way. In turn, the character with disability should positively contribute to the story and the events in it and not being marginal in the book (Prater & Dyches, 2008).

Another important component of the paradigm shift introduced above is to cultivate a more in-depth awareness of disability in children's books. What I mean here is that teachers and parents should do more extensive research and assessment of books that are important for the socioemotional growth of their children. More awareness leads to more knowledge and understanding of what a quality book with characters with disability must possess in order to be used for quality instruction in the classroom and at home (Prater, 2003).

The use of quality children's literature with characters with disability leads to an acceptance of self and others by actively responding to the text and its content. Educators know that a powerful and engaging book has the potential to provide the conditions for change as our students come to realize and understand on a deeper level their feeling in relation to those individuals who are different in physical or mental abilities (Levin, 2007).

The education to read diversity through multicultural children's book with characters with disabilities also educates our students to criticize and dismantle ableist attitudes, which

encourage privileging of able-bodiedness, resulting in discrimination against people with disabilities. The idea that individuals with disabilities are different and not able to live a constructive and positive life is part of that ableist culture, the non-exposure to disability as part of our experiences in life as social and cultural individuals. Cherney (2011) claims that language and representation contribute to the social construction of disability in society and such social construction is internalized by individuals who develop an ableist culture.

If rhetoric of discrimination and exclusion is present in our society, we must begin to introduce disability within the diversity landscape via critical analysis of disability using quality literature with our children. It is not enough to be aware of this ableist culture, it is also more important to address it in the curriculum with engaged teachers who know how to choose, analyze, and discuss and develop critical understanding of disability in the classroom with their learners.

The importance of the above paradigm shift in cultural authenticity in multicultural children's books that include characters with disabilities is due in order to look at diversity and differences in abilities in our society from a new and more inclusive perspective where disability is part of what we think and see as an important component enriching our daily lives. According to Blaska (2003) much has been done in the last decade but more is expected from educators and professional in the field to address and implement an anti-bias curriculum in K-12 schools. Blaska (2003) argues that:

Schools are making every effort to have bias free programs that use anti-bias curricula. An anti-bias curriculum reflects diversity of race and ability and non-stereotypic gender activities. This bias free philosophy is reflected in the materials used by having a balance among different groups of people, and a balance of men and women doing a variety of jobs that do not stereotype by sex. People with

varying abilities are depicted as doing work and participating in recreational activities with their families being careful not to create images of dependency and passivity (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p. 8).

It is this ability to develop an inclusive curriculum where the culture of disability is authentically depicted or portrayed as not deficient that is the starting point of a paradigm shift in cultural authenticity and multicultural children's books in K-12 schools. Cultural authenticity in multicultural children's books representing characters with disabilities must delve into the complexities and controversies of what it means to have a disability in our contemporary society and what kind of challenges, struggles, and achievements individuals with disabilities accomplish to live a full and rich life. It is imperative to look into disability in multicultural children's books to remove the last layers of ableist attitude in K-12 curriculum towards individuals with disabilities and propose a literature where disability is part of the rich diversity landscape in a global and complex society.

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READING AND WRITING WORKSHOP: IMPLEMENTING NANCIE ATWELL'S MODEL IN AN EIGHTH-GRADE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: My journey to the reading and writing workshops came from a feeling that I was missing something big in my teaching. I was teaching from the book, dragging students through reading, writing, vocabulary, and spelling lessons. I could see the lack of engagement from my students, and I knew the frustration I was experiencing. After reading *In the Middle* and attending a presentation by Nancie Atwell, I incorporated the reading and writing workshops allowing student choice in text selection and writing topics. My classroom transformed into a community of readers and authors eagerly and passionately sharing novels and stories. But most importantly, the reading and writing workshops shaped and refined my teaching on what my students need to become life-long readers and authors.

I remember the day when my teaching took a 180-degree turn. It was an early December morning and in a few minutes my eighth grade students would enter my language arts classroom excited and anxious to start our new unit over a classic piece of literature. The classroom was ready: a textbook sat on each student's desk, sticky notes were stacked in reach for close reading, and my document camera displayed a short biography about the author. The bell rang three long tones for first period, and I could already hear the rush of shoes squeaking and laughter flowing from the hallway. With only a four-minute time limit to arrive to class, my thirty-one students piled in and found their seats. Anxiously, I waited for a few students to glance at what we would be reading today as I made my way to the front of the classroom. But few did glance at their textbooks, as most were busy discussing their weekend or busying themselves rummaging through their backpacks. Instead, I tried my teacher magic. I started class announcing the title of literature we would read and shared a short bibliography of the author. I even shared a humorous story of how the author came up with the story. And as my students read and discussed our short story, I still did not feel the enthusiasm or student engagement that I was hoping for. Class came to an end and as students gathered their materials I asked a few students what they thought of the reading.

Several mentioned that the reading was interesting and some mentioned that it was just okay. Ben, a student known to give his opinion on every topic, blurted out that even though he liked the story his mind was on a novel he was currently reading. And he pulled *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie and Ellen Forney. Kathryn anxiously stated that she read it and asked Ben what part he was at. The two left the classroom; heads huddled together, engaged in a deep conversation. I was boggled. What took an entire period to get my students to enthusiastically discuss a short piece of literature, which never actually happened, only took a few seconds for Ben and Kathryn. In confusion and a little frustrated, I watched the two stroll down the hallway in heavy discussion oblivious to the raucous noise of a middle school passing period.

At the end of the day after unsuccessfully trying to get each period engaged in our literature piece, I understood I was missing something big in my teaching. I craved for students to become enthusiastic about what we were learning and I wanted their discussions from class to carry over into the hallways. I wanted them to see themselves as readers and writers. Deep in thought trying to solve my dilemma, I checked my school mailbox and found a brochure announcing that Nancie Atwell was presenting her book, *In the*

Middle, in my city. Reading the brochure, I discovered Atwell's presentation would focus around writing and reading from the inside and recognize teachers' potential to influence their students' literacy for a lifetime through building and maintaining a writing-reading workshop. I was curious enough to purchase the book on my way home and read it that week. Upon finishing the book, my mind swirled with ideas that would change my teaching in a 180-degree turn. I needed to know more. I immediately signed up to attend Atwell's presentation that month.

I changed things up in my classroom immediately. As my students entered that morning they did not find textbooks at their desks waiting, instead they found a pile of novels of different genre spread about the room. Instantly my students picked up the books. Some flipped through the pages, others read the backs, and conversation started over who has read what and what novel looked really good. "What's this about?" Ben asked the others. And that is when I started my first book talk ever. I held up *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner and read the first three pages of the novel where Thomas is trapped in a rising metal elevator only knowing his first name and not much more. My students were mesmerized as I showed them the book trailer. I read the book in two days so I proceeded to give them an extra hook...the entrance to the maze closes every night as the walls move and grievers roam around. My students fought over who would get the book to read first. I asked them to write down the title, author and a short summary in their folders so they would remember that this was a good book to read. I then turned the book talking over to my students. I asked them which books they have loved in their past or now? The rest of the period was an enthusiastic discussion over great novels my students have read. They were advertising the books they read to others but most importantly they were becoming excited about reading. With 20 minutes left of the period we ventured to the library and I explained to my students that they should pick

a book of their choice to read in class the next day. Three copies of *The Maze Runner* were grabbed and checked out as well as many others as I hopped from one student to another helping them to find books of interest. After similar classes, I left that day with a renewed feeling in my teaching. I knew I made a difference in letting my students have choice in their reading. I also knew I was just in the very beginning stages of tapping into Nancie Atwell's reading and writing workshops. I was anxious to attend the presentation over the weekend.

Nancie Atwell's Presentation

The overhead projector stood out in the front of the conference room and by its side was a bulging binder of transparencies, no computer or laptop in sight. The room was packed with teachers from all over. Nancie Atwell approached the overhead projector and introduced herself as a middle school teacher at the Center For Teaching and Learning, founded with the proceeds from her publications. She expressed her beliefs that students become better readers and writers if they are given ownership of what they are reading and writing and, perhaps, most critical, opportunity for long uninterrupted blocks of time to read and write. She described teaching mini-lessons on issues that have arisen in previous workshops or in pieces of students writing, such as process, technique, how to show rather than tell, or to introduce different writing modes and genres students may want to try (Atwell, 2014). But for the rest of her class period students read and write. Throughout Atwell's presentation, seven principles arose that guide teaching and student learning.

1. Readers and writers need regular chunks of time. Students need time to think, read, write, confer, change their minds, and write some more. Readers and writers need time they can count on, so even when they aren't reading and writing, they're anticipating the time they will be. Readers and writers need time to read and write well.
2. Readers and writers need choice. Right from the first day of kindergarten students should

- have choice in their reading and use writing as a way to think about and give shape to their own ideas and concerns.
3. Readers and writers need response. Readers need to confer with others about their reading to analyze the author's craft and develop their interests. Helpful response for writing comes during, not after, the composing. It comes from the writer's peers and from the teacher, who consistently conferences and models the kinds or restatements and questions that help writers reflect on the content of their writing.
 4. Readers and writers learn mechanics in context. Students learn from teachers who address errors as they occur within their own individual writings and how it is modeled in novels, where rules and forms will have meaning.
 5. Readers and writers need modeling. Teachers need to read and write, share their reading and writing with their students, and demonstrate what experienced readers and writers do in the process of reading and composing. They need to see teacher's think aloud during reading and their own writing drafts in all their messiness and tentativeness.
 6. Readers need to write and writers need to read. Readers and writers need access to a wide variety of text, prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.
 7. Teachers need to take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching. Teachers must seek out professional resources of recent research into children's writing and must want to become readers, writers, and researchers learning from their own and their students' writing.

My Journey

My journey to the reading and writing workshop came from a feeling that I was missing something big in my teaching. I was teaching from the book, dragging students through reading, writing, vocabulary, and spelling lessons. I could see the lack of engagement from my students, and I knew the frustration I was experiencing. Implementing the reading and writing workshop was a heady experience. When my students were given the ability to decide what they would read and

write about, they frequently surprised me with their contributions and I got to know them better than I ever thought I would. Everything wasn't all rosy, though. Keeping the consistency and structure of the workshops was difficult. For the reading workshop I instantly knew I needed a classroom library after a few visits to the school library discovering many must read novels were already checked out by others. Students were dismayed at not finding the book they were "dying" to read. And in the writing workshop, handling over 150 papers, three or more times a quarter was a daunting task that I needed improvement on. I discovered that to effectively deal with the sheer volume of paper, I needed to make excellent use of my time conferencing with students, and I needed to increase the responsibility on the students with regard to organizing, peer revising, and editing (Caulkins, 1994; Graves, 1994). However, what I thrived on was how the workshops created a community in my classroom where students respected and interacted with each other and worked together. My students discussed and shared novels. Reading was "cool" in my classroom! Authentic writing that was personal and meaningful to my students helped them to grow and see themselves as writers.

Over the years, I have modified the reading and writing workshops to meet the needs of my students, thus each year is a little different in the structure and routine of the classroom and the teaching of strategies in mini-lessons. However, the goals of the workshops stay the same. Independent reading is the heart of the reading workshop and occurs daily. It is where I have the opportunity to confer with students on their progress reactions to their reading. This is the time when my students practice strategies taught and modeled in the mini-lessons. The mini-lessons teach concepts strategies, and techniques for reading and comprehension while encouraging students to read and interact with good literature. The mini-lessons give me the opportunity to give direct instruction to my students and model the

lessons using authentic literature. Mini-lessons can include procedures for reading workshop, comprehension strategies, reading strategies and skills, literary elements, and literary techniques. I teach readers for a life time where I introduce new books and old favorites, tell about authors and genres, read aloud, talk with our students about their reading rituals and plans, and how to tell if a book is too hard, too easy, or just right, and why the only way to become a strong, fluent reader is to read often and a lot (Atwell, 2007).

In writing workshop, each student in my class is a working author on their choice topics, and I am a writing professional and mentor coach, guiding authors as they explore their craft. I start with the status of the class as a quick way of finding out what each student is working on in their writing. My students spend most of their time writing on their own choice topics and manage their own progress as they work through a wide variety of writing pieces. Focus is on teacher and peer conferencing and editing, and on the collection of a variety of writings in a writing folder. I teach mini-lessons on writing when a need occurs among my students. My mini-lessons tend to focus on what real writers need to know. They are taught in a timely way for my students to tackle their challenges as writers and to explore new writing tasks and genres. I often share my own writing in the early drafts and model my thinking and revisions with the class. We refer to our favorite authors and study their reasoning and purposes for their own writing craft. Conferencing individually with my students can be overwhelming especially if I see many errors that I want to fix in their writing. But I know that correcting each error will not be effective for my students to develop as writers, therefore, I often ask myself, "What is the one single problem that I am trying to help this writer solve?" This frees my students to focus on one topic at a time to develop their thoughts and ideas, and I know that I will have many more conferences with them to guide them in their writing. My students learn to write their best when they write habitually, for

prolonged periods of time, on topics of their own choosing (Murray, 1968; Taylor, 2000).

My Students Say

What my students think and what they have to say about what is happening in our classroom is always important to me. I often ask my students to write quickwrites about their feelings and opinions and I did so in asking how they felt about our reading and writing workshops. This provided great feedback on my students' needs and any modifications to implement in the reading and writing workshops to meet their needs. During my first year of implementing the workshops in my classroom, Ben mentioned that he enjoyed how the entire class revolves around student choice. In a quickwrite response to our workshops he wrote:

I was a reader at home but not a reader at school. I mean that at school if we had to read a novel, I would just read the chapter summaries on the Internet or listen to class discussions to get the gist of the book. But at home, I love to read my own books that I like. I am happy that I can read books that I choose in class because I am able to share with my friends what I am reading and find out what they are reading. I have a long list of books I want to read this summer! I also like learning about what my favorite authors do in their writing and sometimes I try their style in my own writing.

Throughout my years teaching in the workshop style, many of my students agreed that student choice motivated them to become readers and writers and how it gave them a freedom to grow. Allyson was a new student just learning about the workshops. She transferred from a boarding school and had trouble making new friends because of her shyness. Our class watched her voice develop over the year. Allyson commented on how she grew as a writer.

Writing about my experiences in living at a boarding school let me see how what I

thought was a horrible situation actually made me who I am today, a stronger person able to stand up for what I believe in. I never knew I had so much to say, so much to write about. Each piece of my writing is comes from my heart and is personal and meaningful. I found myself in my writing and I realize that my writing can help others discover who they are.

One student really sticks in my mind, Alan. He was a struggling reader and often sat hunched over in his chair barely participating in class discussions. He was never excited about the learning occurring in our classroom and just waited for the minutes to pass by so he could leave class. He was also reluctant in the beginning of the year with the reading and writing workshops and let us know that he did not like reading. I worked with him to find his interests and books that he might like but Alan was stubborn and often rejected any books offered to him. During writing, he would create silly poems or nonsense stories. No matter what I did, Alan seemed to hunch further and further in his chair. Throughout several conversations and observations with Alan, I found his reading level to be a few grades behind. I needed a high-interest, low-level novel for Alan. I decided to book talk *Skeleton Creek* by Patrick Carmen to the class. I told my students how I mistakenly read this book at two in the morning and was too scared to go back to sleep. I played the book trailer and told them to make sure they look real hard toward the end for a surprise and as a scary figure jumped on screen, I yelled, "Boo!" making the students jump in their chairs with fear. After the class settled down and we started our day, I discretely left the book on Alan's desk. Alan left me a letter on my desk the next day:

I want to thank you for leaving Skeleton Creek on my desk. I waited until two in the morning like you to read it. If you have the next book I would like to read it too. I think I will try writing a mystery-horror fiction during writing workshop.

And Alan was hooked. During reading workshop, I often conversed with him and we discussed the writing craft of Patrick Carmen. Alan was true to his letter and started his first piece of writing on his mystery-horror fiction. Engaging Alan in reading and writing to grow his confidence was the first step. This enabled me to work with him and see him grow as a reading and writer.

Conclusion

I have to be honest and say that it took me about five years to fully feel comfortable with the reading and writing workshops in my classroom and confident about the changes I see as my students become lifelong readers and writers. The workshops are forever growing and changing with each new class entering every school year. Organization and structure is key to success as well as tailoring the mini-lessons around students' needs. My students keep a reading log, poetry folder, and two writing folders: writings in process and completed writings. The folders show evidence of my students growing as readers and writers. My students took notes on mini-lessons in their folders, a method I learned from Linda Rief's book *Seeking Diversity* (1992). And sometimes I typed clean copies of documents we create together to pass out to the class. This provided useful information in a usable form that my students can refer to throughout the year of reading and writing workshops and as they leave my classroom. I give my heartfelt thanks to Nancie Atwell who changed me as a teacher to make a difference in my classroom to help my students to become lifelong readers and writers. Nancie Atwell was awarded the first Global Teacher Prize for her contributions.

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K-12 RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING FLORIDA'S HOLOCAUST CURRICULUM

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Abstract: : The purpose of this article is four-fold: (a) to provide an overview of the mandated Holocaust Education curricular standards in the State of Florida; (b) to discuss literacy resources offered by Florida Holocaust Education task force sites that support teachers' and teacher educators' integration of these standards into K-12 classrooms, including Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS); (c) to highlight specific resources available to educators through the Florida Holocaust Museum, as well the Florida Center of Instructional Technology website *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust*; and (d) to discuss integration of Holocaust Education curriculum and resources into literacy teacher education coursework..

"I never knew that we were responsible for a Holocaust curriculum."

This is the response of many of my conscientious and engaged graduate students, most of whom are K-12 classroom teachers, when we talk about Florida's Mandated Holocaust Curriculum (Holocaust Education Bill, 1994). Florida is one of five states that have laws requiring the teaching of the Holocaust; the other states are New York, California, New Jersey, and Illinois. As a teacher educator and former classroom teacher, I can understand how these standards might be overlooked amidst the increasing demands of standardized testing, professional training, and maintenance of accountability systems in K-12 teaching environments.

Several studies provide evidence that even teachers who are aware of the Holocaust curriculum requirements may reduce or entirely omit this subject matter because they are uncomfortable or lack expertise with the topic (Ali & Horne, 2010; Donnelly, 2006). Therefore, the purpose of this article is four-fold: (a) to provide an overview of the mandated Holocaust Education curricular standards in the State of Florida; (b) to discuss literacy resources offered by Florida Holocaust Education task force sites that support teachers' and teacher educators' integration of these standards into K-12 classrooms, including Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS); (c) to highlight specific resources available to

educators through the Florida Holocaust Museum, as well the Florida Center of Instructional Technology website *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust*; and (d) to discuss integration of Holocaust Education curriculum and resources into literacy teacher education coursework.

Florida's Holocaust Education Curriculum

In 1994, Florida passed a law that mandated Holocaust instruction in grades K – 12 (Holocaust Education Bill, 1994). The purpose of this law was to require instruction on issues related to the history of the Holocaust and to encourage the teaching of tolerance. "Rather than a separate subject area, the recommendation was focused on cross-curricular integration at all levels" (Calandra, Lang, & Barron, 2004, p.173). Florida Statute 1003.42(f) states:

The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions (n.p.).

Once this bill was passed, the Florida's Commissioner of Education appointed a task force on Holocaust education to assist school

districts by providing resources to help teachers learn and implement these standards. There are nine task force sites throughout the state, and a tenth site is currently opening at the Florida

Table 1

Florida DOE Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education Sites

Florida Holocaust Museum [FHM, St. Petersburg, FL]

<https://www.fholocaustmuseum.org/learn/for-educators/>

The FHM offers individual and class tours (K-Higher Education), teacher training, summer institutes, and outreach programs. The museum ships teaching trunks with K-12 literature and curricular materials to teachers across the U.S. and world.

Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc. [HDEC; Hollywood, FL]

<http://www.hdec.org/>

HDEC organizes teacher institutes, tours of center exhibits, as well as student awareness days and competitions. In addition to Holocaust history/lessons, center programs also focus on dangers of hatred, prejudice, and bullying in contemporary times.

Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida [Maitland, FL]

<http://www.holocaustedu.org/>

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida hosts monthly forums where teachers can learn about specific Holocaust-related topic. In addition, the center offers teacher institutes, a student center, and teaching trunks available for educators.

The Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Southwest Florida [Naples, FL]

<http://www.holocaustmuseumsfwl.org/>

This center offers speaker series and guided museum tours. Quarterly and summer teacher training and student educational programs incorporate multimedia curriculum and materials.

Florida Atlantic University Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education

[Boca Raton, FL] <http://www.coe.fau.edu/centersandprograms/chhre/>

The center offers workshops, advanced seminars, and summer institutes that prepare K-12 teachers to implement Holocaust and genocide education using historical data. Lessons focus on ethics, individual responsibility, nonviolence, and conflict resolution.

Holocaust Education Resource Council [HERC; Tallahassee, FL]

<http://www.holocaustresources.org/>

[HERC offers teacher and student education programs and curricula, teaching trunks, speakers, online resources, as well as support and consultation for educators.](#)

University of Florida Center for Jewish Studies [Gainesville, FL]

<http://www.jst.ufl.edu/shift.shtml>

The Center for Jewish Studies provides an outreach program and Holocaust education through individual lectures and lecture series, in addition to an annual summer institute.

Florida State University Center for Academic & Professional Development (CAPD)

Holocaust Institute for Educators [Tallahassee, FL]

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/fsu-holocaust-institute-for-educators/>

FSU CAPD offers a two day Holocaust Education institute for teachers and college faculty.

University of Miami School of Education Annual Holocaust Institute [Coral Gables, FL]

http://www.education.miami.edu/Organization/Organizations_Detail.asp?Organization_ID=117

[This five day institute provides educators with materials, strategies, and resources for implementing Holocaust Education curriculum in K-12 classrooms.](#)

State College in Jacksonville. Through these task force sites, Florida teachers have opportunities for professional development, to acquire teaching resources for implementing Holocaust curriculum, and meet survivors, liberators, scholars, historians, or other experts in this field. As a former classroom teacher, I was not aware of these centers and the summer institutes and free resources they provide for teachers. (see Table 1).

Integration of the Curriculum

Although the mandate for Holocaust Education is clear, the directives for implementation of this curriculum across grades at the district level are not well defined. Consequently, each Florida school district has approached the Holocaust Education Bill differently. While some districts provide standards per grade level, others offer professional development courses or simply refer teachers to the local task force for curricular support and resources. Many schools rely on a certain grade level to teach this curriculum as a unit. However, this is at odds with the bill's intention for Holocaust curriculum to be taught as cross-curricular instruction across K-12 grade levels, as opposed to a self-contained subject or unit of study. As well, many teachers do not know about this mandate even though they may be teaching subject areas and grade levels their school or district has decided would participate.

The Florida Department of Education Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education has recognized the need to better define the scope and sequence of the curriculum to support teachers in implementing the state statute. According to Multicultural Curriculum Development/Training Specialist for Broward County Public Schools, Linda Medvin (personal communication, September, 2014), the task force has recently finished designing a full scope and sequence for Holocaust education in grades 9 -12. These standards will be integrated in all content areas and take an interdisciplinary approach. The

high school scope and sequence is being piloted throughout the state this year. The task force is now developing standards for middle school grades. It is the aim of the task force to ensure these materials make teaching the Holocaust more accessible for Florida educators.

A Curriculum for All Grade Levels?

Upon learning about the K-12 Holocaust education requirement, many teachers and parents initially ask if Holocaust education is appropriate in elementary grades. However, the overarching goals of these standards are to (a) investigate human behavior; (b) understand (ramifications) of prejudice, racism and stereotyping; and (c) to encourage tolerance of diversity in an increasingly diverse society. Many scholars have engaged in a spirited debate on this subject, and recommend that the horrors of the Holocaust not be taught until around the fifth grade (e.g., Schwebber, 2008; Seppinwall, 1999; Totten, 1999). However, some recommend focusing on the overarching goals mentioned above through a "preparatory" approach to Holocaust Education at grades K-4, with an incremental introduction to actual Holocaust events according to students developing emotional and cognitive abilities.

I support this incremental approach, and believe a teacher's knowledge of students, their emotional maturity, and the context of the curriculum being taught should be the deciding factors as to whether a particular curriculum approach and materials are appropriate for lower elementary, upper elementary, or middle school students. As a teacher educator, I advocate "Preparatory Holocaust Education" be a vital part of K-4 curriculum. Preparatory Holocaust Education includes teaching about the importance of acceptance, the difference in being an "up-stander" vs. a bystander, community building amongst diverse groups, and moving past tolerance to acceptance. The overarching goals of Holocaust Education, as listed above, are consistent with Florida social studies and character education curriculum

implemented across grade levels. Moreover, these goals are also central to building culturally responsive classrooms that move beyond tolerance education, to prepare students to work and live as ethical citizens in a diverse and global society.

Research indicates secondary teachers avoid implementing Holocaust education into the curriculum in part because they do not feel they know enough about the Holocaust to teach it accurately, or they are uncomfortable discussing issues related to multicultural education (Ali & Horne, 2010; Donnelly, 2006). However, in a large longitudinal study that followed students from 11-12 years of age to secondary school, Cowan and Maitles (2007) concluded that learning about the Holocaust may have an immediate and lasting positive impact on students' values. In this longitudinal study, students who studied the Holocaust had stronger positive values, were more tolerant, had a better understanding of individual responsibility for racism, and were more disposed toward active citizenship than their peers who had not studied the Holocaust. The researchers concluded, "Thus, studying the Holocaust teaches citizenship targets that are central to the development of well-rounded young people" (p.14).

In a 2003-2004 study (Donnelly, 2006) conducted through the United States Holocaust Memorial, middle and high school teachers reported that their own high school coursework was their only source of Holocaust information. These findings suggest many teachers would benefit from professional development in this area. Thus, access to teacher resources for professional training, as well as materials to support developmentally appropriate implementation of Holocaust Education curriculum across grade levels is imperative. Professional development should support teachers' understanding of Holocaust curriculum content, and improve their competence in navigating critical conversations of literature that presents Holocaust curricular topics, such as cultural diversity, social injustice, and genocide. Critical conversations

can provide opportunities for students to gain empathy and make connections between curricular content and the world around them.

Teacher Resources

Many high-quality resources for studying the Holocaust are available for teachers and students. I highlight below, two sites that provide lessons, materials, and ideas for integration of Holocaust Education standards into the K-12 classroom: the Florida Holocaust Museum and the Florida Center of Instructional Technology (FCIT) website, *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust*.

The Florida Holocaust Museum

Like many other people, I remember special visits to museums as a child, during which I had the opportunity to explore different artifacts, enjoy interactive exhibits, and learn about history, art, or a variety of different subjects. Museum visits can support K-12 curriculum, and offer students unique resources and perspectives that can complement classroom learning (Griffin, 2007; Marcus, 2008). While museums can increase students' interest in a particular subject, knowledge-building is an important mission of all museums visits (Griffin, 2007; Marcus, 2008). For example, the Florida Holocaust Museum's mission is to teach members of all races and cultures to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of human life in order to prevent future genocides.

Located in St. Petersburg, the Florida Holocaust Museum is one of the largest museums of its kind in the United States, and one of only three Holocaust museums in the country accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum schedules educational tours for students starting at fourth grade, and hosts professional development institutes for educators.

In addition, the museum has compiled Holocaust Education curricular resources for teachers and organized them by grade levels into teaching trunks (see Figure 1). These teaching trunks are shipped, at no cost, to teachers in public, private, and parochial

schools across the country and around the world.



Figure 1. This upper elementary grades level teaching trunk contains single copies of books, sets of books, DVDs, posters, and lesson plans (photo used with permission of Florida Holocaust Museum).

Teaching trunks are grade- and age-level appropriate for implementing the Florida Holocaust curriculum. For example, the third-to-fourth grade level trunk contains fiction and nonfiction books that address issues of tolerance, respect, immigration, diverse cultures, and history. There are individual books, sets of books for both small-group and whole-class activities, as well as rich multimedia content to support cross-curricular instruction. In the older grades, teaching trunks provide in-depth multimedia resources to teach about the Holocaust, other genocides, and human rights. The Florida Holocaust Museum website states, “With books, videos, maps, diaries, photos, artwork, guidelines and lesson plans, each trunk is literally jam-packed with all the materials an educator would need to create an engaging learning experience for their students. Last year alone, our trunks traveled to 17 states.” Table 2 provides examples of nonfiction texts from select teaching trunks, as

well as suggested teaching/learning and activities that integrate Holocaust curriculum with K-12 Florida Language Arts Standards (LAFS).

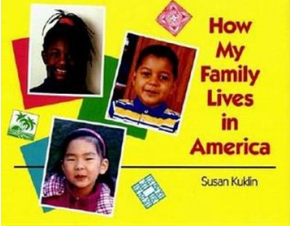
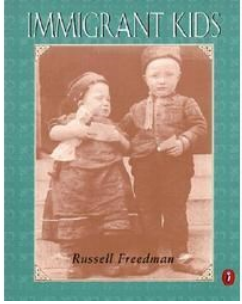
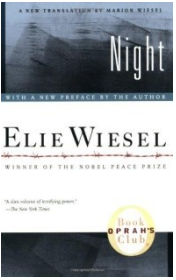
FCIT Website: A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust

A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust (<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/>) is an online resource designed specifically for preservice and current classroom teachers. The Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT) designed and built this unique website in collaboration with a Florida school district in response to the Holocaust education requirement. The mission of this website is to provide free resources for teachers, including primary sources and photographs; the website hosts a plethora of resources for the K-12 classroom. Calandra, Lang, and Barron (2004) state, “The website currently consists of an amalgam of over 10,000 files in a variety of media, including virtual reality tours of memorials and concentration camps, videos of survivor testimonies, galleries of photographs, primary source documents, music, plays, maps, and student activities” (p.175).

A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust presents content about the Holocaust from three perspectives: Timeline, People, and the Arts. The timeline begins in 1918 with the rise of the Nazi party and continues through the Aftermath in 2000. The People section is organized according to different people’s perspectives, such as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, children, and liberators. The Arts section includes visual arts, literature, and music. Photographs depict visual art created in ghettos and concentration camps as well as memorial art created since the end of the Holocaust.

Table 2

Sample of Literature and Suggested Teaching/Learning Activities for K-12 Language Arts

Teaching Trunk Resource	Teaching/Learning Activity & Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS)
 <p>K-2 Grade Trunk: <i>How My Family Lives in America</i> by Susan Kuklin (1998)</p>	<p>This ReadWriteThink lesson (Katsikis, 2015) focuses on varied family experiences with a comprehension focus using the strategy of making text connections. <i>How my Family Lives in America</i>, is a literature choice that can easily be integrated into this lesson.</p> <p>http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/family-ties-making-connections-1070.html Standard: LAFS.K.SL.1.2. Standard: LAFS.1.SL.1.2. Standard: LAFS.2.1.7.8.</p>
<p>Middle School Trunk: <i>Immigrant Kids</i> By Russell Freeman (1980)</p> 	<p>This text uses photographs immigrant children at home, school work and play. The ReadWriteThink lesson (Wickline, 2015) at the link below, focuses on using digital primary source documents and nonfiction text.</p> <p>http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/digitally-explaining-immigrant-experience-31149.html Standard: LAFS.68.RH.37. Standard: LAFS.68.RH.37.</p>
<p>High School Trunk: <i>Night</i> By Elie Wiesel (1955)</p> 	<p>These ReadWriteThink links provide lessons (Schulze, 2015; Striegel, 2015) using <i>Night</i>, the memoir of Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust Survivor. These lessons focus on comprehension strategies and analyzing information across multiple texts (including digital media).</p> <p>http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/using-student-centered-comprehension-884.html http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/life-beautiful-teaching-holocaust-30851.html Standard: LA.910.1.7.8. Standard: LA.910.1.7.8. Standard: LA.1112.2.1.1.</p>

The literature section includes recommended works representing “voices of victims, survivor testimony, accounts of resistance, stories of rescue and heroism, the German experience, and response and reflection” (FCIT, 2013, n.p.). A discussion of the role of music throughout the Holocaust includes photographs and audio files that exemplify street songs, resistance songs, music of the concentration camps, and many other perspectives.

FCIT director, Dr. James Welsh (personal communication, October 5, 2014), stated that when the website was originally constructed, FCIT hired teachers to create lesson plans that address the Florida Holocaust education needs for grades PreK-12. Welsh stated, “These lessons plans are age appropriate. For example, in the primary grades the focus is on difference, belonging, appreciating diversity and understanding. In upper elementary school and secondary education, the lesson plans address historical information about the Holocaust, as well and recognizing and appreciating diversity” (personal communication, October 5, 2014).

Holocaust Curriculum in Literacy Teacher Education

The Florida Holocaust Education Curriculum is not only a mandate for teachers; it is a mandate for teacher educators as well. To meet this challenge, teacher educators can draw upon the resources discussed here, to integrate Holocaust K-12 literature and curricular materials into literacy teacher education coursework. These resources are well suited to the increased focus in the revised LAFS on content area reading/writing, close reading along a continuum of text complexity, and critical literacies across text genres and media formats. Through modeling and guided practice, preservice and in-service teachers can develop proficiencies with navigating critical conversations with multicultural literature (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015; Vasquez, 2003), and in designing lessons that effectively address language arts,

Holocaust Education, and other curricular standards.

As a literacy teacher educator, I have integrated a range of materials and activities using Holocaust curriculum teaching trunks, as well as visits to the Florida Holocaust Museum, into literacy methods coursework. During the semester, preservice/in-service teachers explore museum trunk literature and resources across grade levels, and learn how to design and implement instruction that critically engages students with these materials, in a developmentally appropriate manner. In addition, we visit the actual museum as a class, interact with the varied multimedia exhibits, and have the opportunity to meet Holocaust survivors to hear their personal stories. In their course reflections, my students maintained that this integrated framework of experiences has had a powerful impact on their learning; learning they have already begun to share with other educator colleagues (Gunn, 2014). More importantly, these experiences have shaped my students’ vision for their future teaching: “I will teach children the danger of indifference, that they shouldn’t stand back and watch man’s inhumanity to another ...” (M. Ed. Student, personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Summary

It is the goal of the Florida State Standards and Florida Holocaust Education curriculum to prepare our students to be global citizens. In this article, I provide resources that are accessible for K-12 teachers and teacher educators, to support interdisciplinary integration of Holocaust studies with Language Arts Florida Standards for classroom instruction. Teaching the Holocaust curriculum at an age appropriate level, can develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and ethnic groups. Furthermore, thoughtfully planned Holocaust education supports the Florida statute’s multicultural purpose of “encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society” and “nurturing and

protecting democratic values and institutions” (Holocaust Education Bill, 1994).

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VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM: SLAYING THE SUMMER SLUMP

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The final weeks of May and June bring with them the promise of summer, sleep, and sunshine for teachers and students alike. However, many dedicated teachers spend time during the spring semester creating resources to support student learning over the summer months, lest the threat of the “summer slump” set in and linger into the month of August. Any quick Internet search will bring up thousands of opportunities for how to support learning over the summer with generic suggestions of recommended websites, journal writing prompts, and suggested reading materials. As classroom teachers, we have spent many summers creating a variety of daily “fun” calendars to make summer more engaging and education for our students. The goal of these fun calendars is to keep summer educational activities brief and captivating for students and their families. Ideally, by committing to a summer activities calendar, students will have accumulated 90 days of activities by mid August. They will return to school with a mind primed and ready to begin learning on day one. Yet, even if not every day or activity on the calendar is completed by August, participating in some activities will guarantee a creative educational experience for not just the single student, but their entire family.

Assembling and distributing an activity calendar is as much a part of the spring ritual of every seasoned Language Arts teacher as the preparing of, admittedly generic, final report card comments such as “continue reading over the summer!” These well-intentioned acts are an attempt to extend the passion for learning we have established in our classroom community into the open-ended days of summer. We aspire to build on the momentum

of the school year by inspiring students and their families to find ways to make the summer more intellectually engaging, and ultimately minimize the effects of the well-known summer slump. Our vision is to create appealing activities that engage and enlightening so students return in August with a brain primed and eager for the first day back to school. However, the reality is that these well-intentioned attempts often fail to meet the mark. Most students never look at the calendar, and of the small percentage that may, many never make it past week 1 before completely losing all interest. Part of the reason for this may be that the rehashed activities neatly outlined in the carefully created grids are often generic, uninspiring, and curriculum-centric; a far cry from the student centered experiences that are carefully planned in our daily classroom experiences. What expert teachers know is that in order for learning experiences to be engaging, they must be individualized and connected to previous experiences, so that our students find them personally meaningful.

By the spring, reading teachers typically know their students’ likes, interests, and abilities well. We’ve created a classroom community of learners, immersed in quality literature of various genres, and we understand how each student learns best. As we work to create lifelong learners, we empower our students to take a vital role in their own learning experiences; and while there are many areas of the curriculum we cannot relinquish control over, we do understand the importance of student buy-in and motivation to learn. Using the vital foundation we have built over the school year, and armed with intimate knowledge of our learning community, schools

might consider a different approach to battling the summer slump, and ultimately how students see their role in their own education. By allowing students to develop personalized learning calendars, teachers can help them actively understand more about the standards we routinely post on the board each day, conduct the research that is outlined in those learning standards, and empower our students to hop in the driver's seat and take control of their summer ventures. With this in mind, we have planned a whole new approach to preparing students to experience more engaging learning opportunities, as they gain control over how they spend the 80+ days they have stretched out in front of them this summer. As an example, after testing is finalized in the spring, we begin a research unit, followed by class presentations, and a final product of a personalized "Summer-Slump-Slaying" schedule.

- To shake off test stress, the class begins with a walk down memory lane – a whole group activity where students create a class list of all of the best learning activities they have participated in over the years, both in and out of school. Students will share specifically what they did in the activity and what they learned.
- Once the group has compiled the large list, the teacher introduces the Florida Standards, show students how they are used, and start to make connections to the activities we have listed.
- The next phase will be to develop a list of children's literature the class will be exposed to during this project. (Don't forget to enlist the support of your local librarians and fellow colleagues to bring in a variety of titles from each genre to introduce to the students).
- Teachers then model for students how to connect learning activities to books, based on the "memory lane" list generated earlier.

- The students will then create a project that centers on one book title, and is supported by five fun learning activities that connect to learning standards across content areas.
- As a culminating activity, students will present their title, prepare a mini book talk, and share their supporting activities.
- After all presentations are completed, students will set up stations around the room, in Science Fair format, with a tri-fold display on their book and activities, and multiple copies of their presentation in the format of a 7-block calendar strip.
- Students will visit the stations and listen to peer presentations to get more insight into the activities prepared.
- From all of the options offered, students choose 10 weeks that are most interesting to them, and create their own calendars.

After all assignments are completed the calendars, a family night can be planned where students present their ideas to their family and a conversation about the importance of summer learning can take place.

The weekends are a time when parents hit the brakes on the morning work commute and routine, deciding to spend quality time with their children. One weekend family activity that has taken the South Florida community by storm is the fitness craze. Boot camps, bike tours, 5K runs, cooking classes, and nutrition seminars are organized for family members of all ages. Capitalizing on this recent development and focusing on the improvement of our students' intellectual, cultural, and physical quality of life, design a "My City Scavenger Hunt Activity" to encourage your students to spend their summer exploring their city or the surrounding areas, and add this to the summer activity calendar. Some large cities may have organized scavenger hunts available online for ideas, however other examples of "My City Scavenger Hunt Activities" are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Scavenger Hunt Ideas

My City Scavenger Hunt Suggestions	
Visiting a local museum	Engaging in a service learning opportunity
Visiting a pet shelter	Taking an organized historical tour in your area
Taking a bike/walking tour	Watching a movie related to the book/theme
Creating a photo essay of landmarks in the area	Mapping out a journey on public transport or local maps
Take a series of selfies around your city	Learn to cook a style of local cuisine
Create a digital story related to the book/theme	Design an “Amazing Race” style set of challenges
Collect nature artifacts from around the city (leaves, beach sand, rocks)	Participate in a social media scavenger hunt using Twitter or Instagram
Attend a concert, play, or other live performance	Attend or participate in a themed sporting event (such as Kids’ Day at a baseball game)

By sharing their experiences in My City Scavenger Hunt Activity, students enrich their cultural awareness and deepen their comprehension of the novel, while also creating special memories with their family over the summer break. What a wonderful way to start the new scholastic year in August!

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Technology: Advanced Search and Replace for Writing

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As teachers, part of our job is to challenge readers (and writers). I recently went to a keynote speech at a conference and heard the speaker talking about how she has been working to improve her students writing of narrative. What she has done is that on a sign above her board are two don'ts, specifically don't use these two words in your stories: "went" and "said". According to her, she has found these two terms to be among the most overused by her students, and she has been working to fix that. From my own experiences I would have to agree, and also that it isn't just in their writing, but even a big part of their speaking. After all how many times have we not read (or heard) students' stories that have lines of, "and then she said _____, and then she said _____, and then he said _____."

Research has shown that most people can't exactly read what they have, instead they read what they think that they wrote, and that this is also true of even recognizing mistakes in others writings. For example, I have a personal issue

of often typing "you" when I meant to type "your", but when reading over it myself, my brain adds that "r" where it should be. Luckily for me, today's word processor marks words that have something like some letter switches with that red underline so you can fix that which you might not otherwise notice. Often all it takes to help you recognize something is wrong can be something as simple as a little red underline. So I thought that perhaps the tech could help with this too. So here are some things you can try with your own students to help them identify if they are overusing a word.

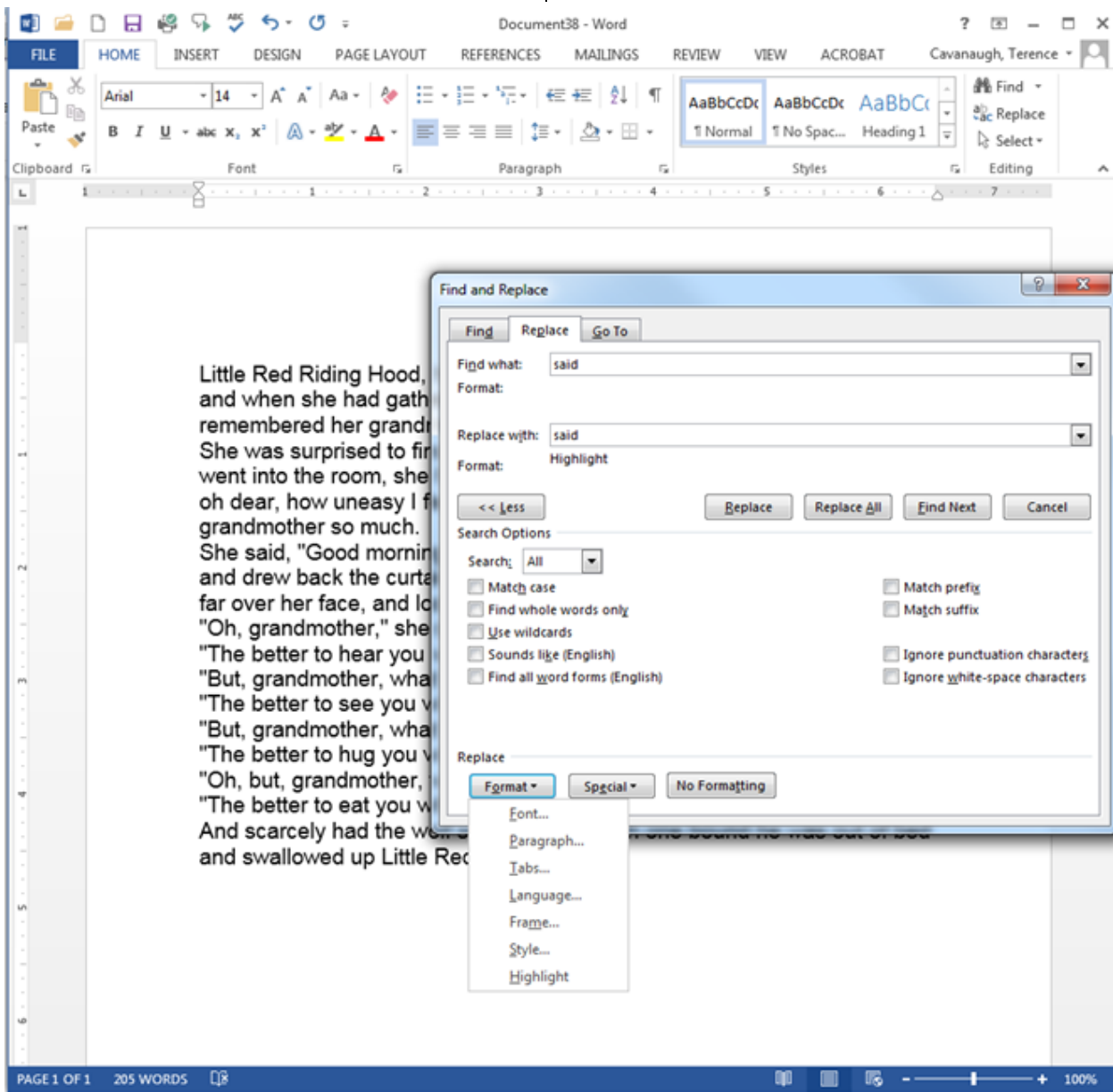
Of course for these tech tools to work, you will need to have the student writing in a digital format. You could use a concordance tool like *Wordle* or *Tagxido* to make a word cloud of the text to see a visual display of the words used, but that can be tough to use to focus on just a word or two. You can also use a concordance frequency analysis tool like Text Fixer's online Word Counter (<http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>), where you can paste the text and get a frequency list, but this is out of context. So my suggestion is to use a tool you most likely have used, but to access a feature you most likely haven't tried, use the word processor's Search tool.

I'm sure that just about everyone has used the search tool to look for something in a word processing document (really useful in long documents). And perhaps you have used the search and replace for when you have decided that a word that you used throughout a document would be better if was a different

word. And it can be good for doing reader's theaters, but changing the name from something like "Reader 1" to "Lisa". Those things are really useful, but the search and replace tool can do even more, just by having you click the More button. With that you can use Search & Replace to get started on applying synonyms for these work and get student minds working on new ways of describing what they want to say.

So here are instructions for how you can use the Microsoft word processor Word to help students "see" if they are overusing words like "said" and "went" in their writing.

1. After the narrative is written, go to the **Find** tool (Ctrl+h) for Find and Replace, then click on the **Replace** tab.

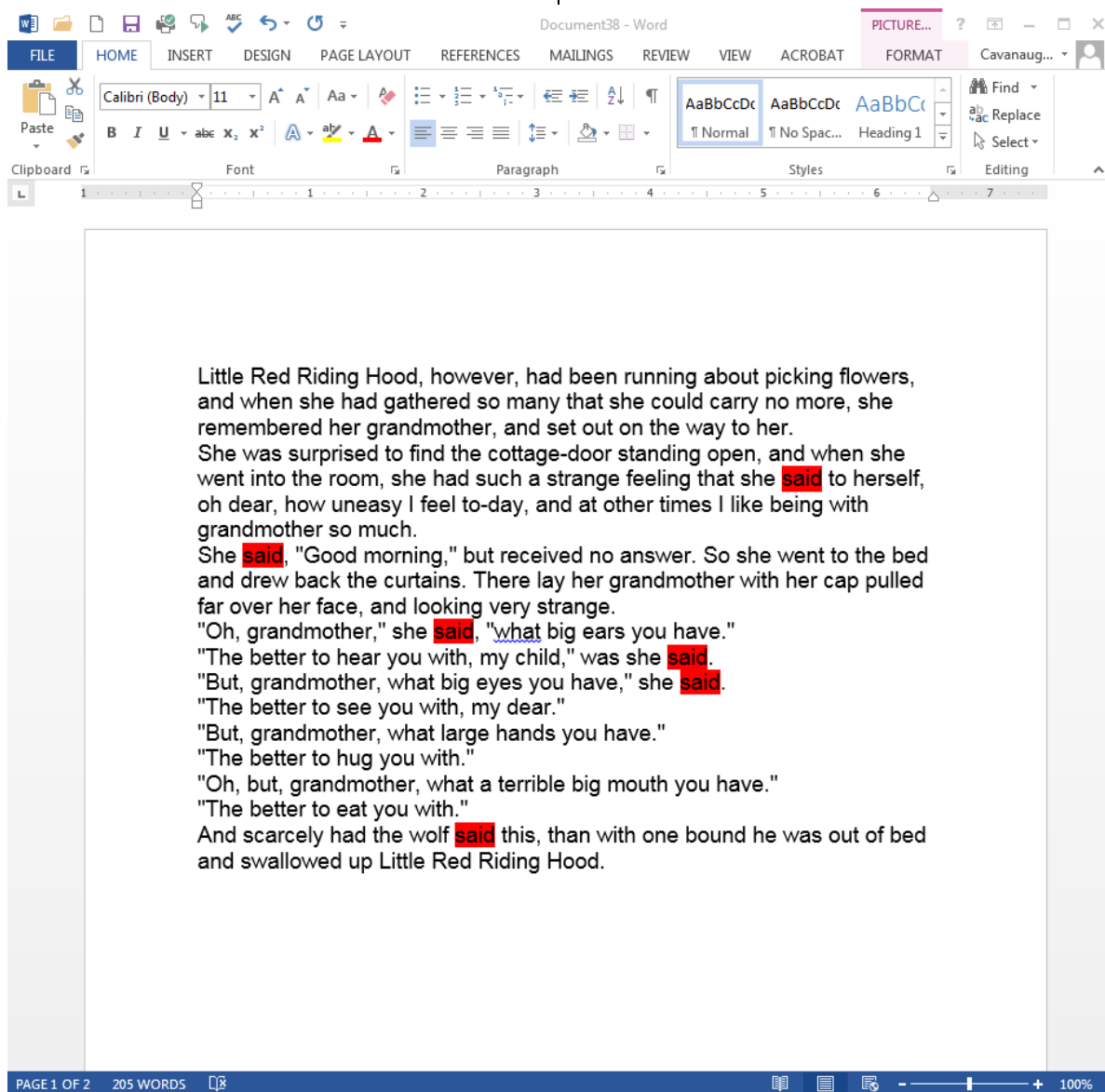


2. Next, click on the **More** button, to display the full number of replace options, as we are doing more than a simple word replace.
3. In the **Find what** and **Replace with** space type in the word “said” or “went” into both blanks (same word each).
4. Now click in the **Replace with** textbox, so that your cursor is there with the replacement text, and then click on the **Format** button and choose the option for **Highlight**
- 5.

6. Then, click on the **Replace All** button. A pop-up should now show how many replacements have been made. Click on the **OK** to complete the process.

Now look at your document, you should notice that all the words (in this case said or went) have been highlighted, making it very easy to see how many times that the word has been used. Now the student can start replacing that overused word with descriptive synonyms.

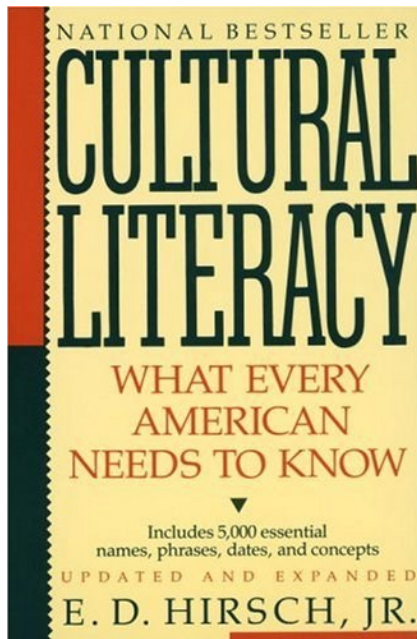
Happy Writing with Technology



Book Review

Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know

By E. D. Hirsch, Jr.



Lisa Rochefort
Nova Southeastern University

To be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world, according to E. D. Hirsch, Jr. in his widely-read, somewhat controversial book published in 1987 entitled *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Hirsch, an educator, an academic, and educational reformer, argues that there is a common body of information that must be possessed by every “literate” person in American society and this common cultural vocabulary must be taught in school via an intensive curriculum. Hirsch even provides a descriptive list of names, phrases, dates, and concepts he asserted literate Americans actually possess for the purpose that

every American might, too, be considered “literate” in today’s society. Furthermore, he argued that this education is the most democratic and socially just way of allowing the disadvantaged to successfully participate in American society.

Context, Arguments, and Analysis

At the time of its publishing, although the phrase had not yet come into vogue, the “culture wars” between highly polarized ideological camps of moral and intellectual values raged. Hirsch addressed the issues of the day – multicultural curricula and its perceived unmooring of the traditional Western canon of literature taught in schools, the “closing” of the American mind, and the “dumbing down” of America. Interestingly enough, while he was acclaimed by Conservatives and vilified by Liberals, Hirsch, in fact a lifelong Democrat and self-proclaimed progressive, firmly believes in social justice and universal literacy to raise people out of poverty and powerlessness. He cited the dreams of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thomas Jefferson of a society founded on personal merit, not on race or class. The answer to fulfilling that dream, Hirsch posited, “. . . depends on mature literacy. No modern society can hope to become a just society without a high degree of universal literacy” (p. 12). To support his argument, Hirsch turned to the essence of literacy itself. Asserting that literacy does not occur with the mere decoding of letters or words or sentences, but rather, it encompasses those tasks plus “. . . our ability to grasp the general shape of what we are reading and to tie it to what we already know” (p. 14).

Hirsch insisted that an educational philosophy which emphasizes multiculturalism can deprive students of the information they need to be culturally literate in a core knowledge. Similarly, Hirsch refuted the claim some argue that teaching traditional literate

culture means teaching conservative material, citing as an example, the 1972 platform of the Black Panther Party that used the Declaration of Independence, the Bible, and the Nixon campaign to forward a radical, anti-establishment agenda. To Hirsch, “mainstream culture” (or pop culture in colloquial terms) is subject to constant change, whereas literate culture is stable because it is tied to the written word (thus perhaps appearing to be more formal and elitist). Hirsch reiterates that “literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land; it excludes nobody; it cuts across generations and social groups and classes; it is not usually one’s first culture, but it should be everyone’s second, existing as it does beyond the narrow spheres of family, neighborhood, and region” (p. 21).

While I agree with Hirsch insofar as we need to sustain this cultural literacy to enable us to communicate and to allow for equality and democracy, I believe this list must be fluid and ever-evolving – dissimilar to the quixotic nature of mainstream culture, but changeable, nonetheless, in an attempt to keep the list relevant. While I agree with him that we must not allow multicultural education to replace the traditional curriculum, I surmise we can reach some sort of middle ground inasmuch as these two perspectives are not diametrically opposed. My rationale for this assertion is based in anecdotal evidence from my own classroom experience over the past 20-plus years and supported by the musings of other educators such as Bernard Schweizer, who originally dismissed Hirsch’s work. Schweizer (2009) discusses his “awakening with regard to the merits of a shared basis of knowledge” (p. 52) based on his own classroom experiences with college students. His conclusion? “. . . My students are not only hampered by a lack of factual knowledge, but that this shortcoming translates into problems with diction and literacy as well. . . . Their reading

comprehension is flat, anemic, and literal rather than deep, rich, and associative” (Schweizer, 2009, pp. 52-53). Schweizer further claims that this experience does matter in the balance of power because those who hold the reins of wealth and power do care about cultural literacy, hence their children are inculcated with this fluency while the general population is not, thereby perpetuating social stratification and lessening social mobility (p. 54).

Moreover, I was struck by Hirsch’s proposal of the extensive curriculum, traditional literate knowledge, and the intensive curriculum, a fully developed, coherent, and integrated understanding of a subject (p. 128). One of my initial concerns as I began reading this text remained the fear that his design would entail all students following an inflexible plan. However, he claimed “the intensive curriculum is the more pluralistic of my proposal, because it ensures that individual students, teachers, and schools can work intensively with materials that are appropriate for their diverse temperaments and aims” (p. 128). This assertion reassured me that such a curriculum could serve all students well. My overall impression of Hirsch’s text is that he makes valid, rational, well-supported arguments for engaging in transmitting that shared body of cultural literacy in an ongoing dialogue with our students, and the ensuing research that has come forth since the publication of his book certainly seems to prove his points. We would do well to pass this rich inheritance on to our youth.

Impact/Influence

Curiously enough, Hirsch’s popularity has resurged of late with the introduction of the Common Core Standards, among other factors. In a 2013 New York Times article, “Culture Warrior, Gaining Ground,” journalist Al Baker detailed Hirsch’s rise to prestige again at the age of 85. He proclaimed, by drawing flawed

parallels, the Common Core Standards to be a vindication of Hirsch's argument. He wrote, "Philosophically, the Common Core ideal of a rigorous nationwide standard has become a vindication of Mr. Hirsch's long campaign against what he saw as the squishiness—a lack of specific curriculums for history, civics, science, and literature—in modern education (Baker, 2013, p. 2). However, careful examination of Hirsch's ideas and today's Common Core clearly indicates that mere shared nomenclature does not equate the two.

Hirsch's release of *Cultural Literacy* catapulted him onto the best-seller list in 1987. In 1986, Hirsch founded the Core Knowledge Foundation that still publishes and revises its books and sequences today that are being used by schools and homeschoolers throughout the United States and Great Britain. Hirsch has had a prolific publication career and has fared well on multiple fronts as an educator, an education reformer, an academic and a literacy expert – his influence has spanned a quarter of a century with this book remaining relevant and influential even today.

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