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All Call to Action: Literacy as Change Agent

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Professional Organizations Looking at the Past to Envision a Future: A Historical Note About the American Reading Forum (ARF)

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Literacy professionals join professional organizations to engage and share with colleagues about their work. Those organizations bring professionals together to advance knowledge about and the practice of literacy instruction and research. Yet, each professional organization offers a unique focus, mission, and culture, which prompts some professionals to join more than one organization. For instance, many Literacy Research Association (LRA) members are also members of the American Reading Forum (ARF). Dual membership in both organizations has been common for decades, long before the National Reading Conference (NRC) became LRA in 2010-11. The two organizations share an interesting, overlapping history dating to the late 1970s when ARF was founded, and that history may offer some insights into challenges facing LRA today. However, longtime members of both organizations may not be fully informed about that history. Many have inaccurate or incomplete understandings of how ARF came into existence, which may lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions about the formation of ARF and about what insights might be learned from their entwined histories.

Specifically, a common belief is that the reason ARF emerged as a separate organization was a disagreement among NRC members about Florida's failure to pass the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the US Constitution. NRC did pass a resolution in December, 1977, to no longer hold the conference in Florida and to meet only in states that had passed the ERA. The resolution was to take effect in 1979 with the 1978 conference held in Florida "under protest." An interesting footnote is that, although Florida did not pass the ERA, its house of representatives overwhelmingly voted in favor of it four times (1972, with a vote of 91 to 4; and again in 1975, 1979, and 1980). However, on all 4 occasions, the vote in Florida's Senate did not reach the threshold for passage. Further, NRC's resolution was short lived with the conference returning in 1984 to the well-liked Don Caesar Hotel in Florida, after conferences in Texas and California, and subsequently in other non-ERA states.

Nonetheless, both primary and secondary sources demonstrate that the situation created by the actions of the Florida legislature and the policy adopted by the NRC Board of Directors did not prompt the formation of ARF. Documents in the LRA archives and oral data offer a degree of proof that ARF was not founded by a group of NRC members who thought meeting in Florida was more important than the ERA. Historical documents available in LRA's current archives reveal a more accurate and more complex, interesting, and informative picture. Those documents include a published history of ARF's origins authored by Bob Jerrolds, then a

professor at the University of Georgia. Another is a 1980 memo written by Harry Singer, then NRC president, and a letter to him from Albert Kingston. Both were luminaries in the field, with the latter still honored and remembered today within LRA through the annual award of the Albert Kingston Award for lifetime service to a deserving LRA member.

The correspondence touches on the formation of the American Reading Conference (the first name for ARF). The letters indicate that the formation of ARF and the consequent threat of losing many disgruntled NRC members to another organization was only a problematic and unwelcome complicating factor for NRC. The real issue for NRC was the expected decline in attendance at the annual meeting for logistical and financial reasons created by moving the conference to San Diego in 1980. The formation of ARF only exacerbated that decision and created an existential threat to NRC. As the memo from President Singer to the NRC Board of Directors clearly indicates, he believed that the decision to move NRC out of Florida to the West Coast was a mistake and that the Board should reconsider that decision. Perhaps ironically, given the dominant narrative about the formation of ARF as a reaction to the ERA issue, Estes, on NRC Letterhead, stated: “the issues of ERA and Florida vs not Florida are surely not the problem.”

So, if it was not the ERA and consequent move out of Florida, what were the reasons ARF formed as an alternative to NRC at the time? The answer to that question is evident in these documents. For several years prior to 1980, dissatisfaction with and concern about the direction of NRC was percolating among its members, including many of its founders, leaders, and past presidents (e.g. George and Evelyn Spache, Wayne Otto, Betty, and Al Raygor, and Gordon Gray). Even Kingston, one of the founders and stalwarts of NRC, acknowledged in his letter to Singer the essence and reasonableness of those concerns and his ambivalence about them when he stated, “I certainly have done a great deal to help NRC develop to be the viable organization it is today. [But,] I find myself agreeing with both the NRC leadership and those who hope to create an organization like NRC used to be.” His memo also refers to his discussions with those who had decided to form their own organization and their own conference. He pointed out their frustration that their concerns had been ignored by the leadership and that they rejected the notion that they had “stabbed NRC in the back.” Jerrolds claimed that there were even some threats of professional retaliation against those who did not remain loyal to NRC.

But, what were the specific concerns? The answer to that question, too, can be found in these documents. Those who were dissatisfied thought NRC was becoming too large and too much like other organizations, such as AERA where the program was packed with presentations with little time for extended dialog. They thought NRC was moving away from its roots aimed at creating a relaxing venue and atmosphere where professors interested in reading and their doctoral students could informally have serious discussion and dialog. According to Smith in his letter to Jerrolds and Dinnan, students and younger scholars wanted “to present their research and ideas . . . in a forum that could be helpful and rigorous without . . . savage attacks . . . and to meet and talk with some of the leaders in the field without being cast as sycophants. Further, the more senior NRC members saw the original intent of NRC was to get away from the stresses of a university environment “where administrators and tenure, promotion, and merit-pay committees counted products in terms of instructional hours generated, number of scholarly publications made, and number of articles published.” There

was also a concern that NRC leadership at the time had not been well-managed financially. These themes emerge within and across the archived documents.

Another question that might be asked, is 'What does the decision of NRC to move out of Florida for the sake of the ERA, and its timing, say about the role women played in our professional organizations of that era?' There is little doubt that the gender balance of the professoriate in our field (and most others) of that era favored males. However, despite that imbalance, a number of women were directly involved with both NRC and the formation of ARF in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, Jerrolds recounts, "as best I remember" an informal dinner at NRC, attended by "three women and four men," as the start of the conversation about forming ARF. And, Sylvia Hutchinson, a faculty member at the University of Georgia, served on its first Board. Harry Singer's 1980 memo on letterhead lists NRC's officers, including Trika Smith-Burke as Treasurer and Jane Larson as Secretary. Irene Athey was a member of the board, and Priscilla Drum was Publications Chair. And, NRC had elected 3 women Presidents before the end of the 1980s (Irene Athey, Lenore Ringler, and Trika Smith-Burke). More importantly, the fact that a decision was made in 1977 to move out of Florida in support of the ERA suggests either a rising voice of women in NRC at the time, greater enlightenment among their male colleagues, or both.

There may be more general lessons or reminders for us today as LRA members looking back at the historical events surrounding ARF's origins. Foremost, to us, it makes clear the fragility of professional organizations in achieving a delicate balance between honoring the past, accepting the present, and moving toward an uncertain future. When profound shifts in that balance occur quickly, there is potential for tensions and frustration, which can escalate to turmoil, personal stress, divisiveness, and conflict. That escalation may be more likely when tensions and frustrations are ignored or sublimated.

The antidote may be open and respectful dialog. Without it, there is a risk of backdoor politics, disenfranchisement, and, in extreme cases, a separating of ways. What might have happened if the individuals who felt the need to form ARF and those who remained faithful to NRC had engaged in more dialog with a commitment to bridging the ambivalence that Kingston expressed? What if both groups had been more reflective about the limitations of their own views and more willing to see the viewpoints of others. Winning arguments, with the winners imposing their views on others, is not a formula for an open and welcoming, indeed viable, organization.

Another lesson is that a balance needs to be carefully maintained between our passionate commitments and strongly held views and the pragmatics of acting on them and bringing them to fruition. A well-intentioned move to support the ERA amendment created existential threats to the organization, while being essentially symbolic, and was soon abandoned. Perhaps there were means, less disruptive to the organization and more effective in a larger sense, to show that support. Put more colloquially, we have to think equally with our hearts and our heads.

Although both NRC/LRA and ARF have evolved to be much different today, reflecting important changes in the socio-cultural context and vast changes in virtually all aspects of our field and its work, some vestiges of these historical differences remain today. For example, ARF still meets every year in Florida. It has a Chair of an elected Board, not an elected President. The ARF program, although much more formalized and typical than its founders envisioned, still

has a session format labeled “Problems Court,” which allows for extended discussion, and there is an “Advancing Literacies” format to create critical dialogue between participants and audience. ARF has remained a smaller, more intimate group, with fewer sessions, all of which never start before 9am and are finished precisely at 5pm, followed by much time for socializing, networking, and informal discussion, as well as a leisurely walk on the beach to watch the morning sunrise. In a sense, ARF is a time capsule of NRC/LRA’s origins.

As members of both LRA and ARF, we find those respective memberships to fulfill somewhat different, but essentially complementary needs in our professional lives. Both organizations address and serve a commitment to advancing literacy as a means to better and to enrich the lives of all people. We think the field is well served by having both organizations.

Minutes and all other documents referred to in this article are available in LRA’s online historical archives. The authors wish to thank Dixie Massey, LRA’s current historian, for providing access to the archives. We also thank all members past and present who have contributed to this valuable resource. Readers interested in examining the documents we cite, as well as other interesting historical documents, should contact Professor Massey.

Equitable Grouping Practices for Early Literacy Instruction:

Reimagining Guided Reading Groups

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Abstract

Grouping early elementary students by perceived literacy ability for guided reading instruction has returned as a hallmark of early literacy instruction. This paper argues that early ability grouping for literacy instruction is problematic due to the provision of inequitable access to grade level literacy content and instruction. In such a system, the bifurcation of the literacy rich and the literacy poor is systematically widened, which disproportionately affects our poor and minority youth. Informed by a two-year action research study, a system of heterogeneous grouping for guided reading instruction is proposed as an effective and viable alternative. This system relies on teachers' pedagogical ability to differentiate *instruction* rather than *content* to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Design-based research, an orientation to educational research that contributes both to practice and theory, is discussed as one possible avenue through which more equitable alternatives to ability grouped guided reading instruction may be realized.

Keywords: ability grouping, guided reading

Introduction

At historic levels, elementary school students are grouped for literacy instruction with peers of similar reading ability in a practice called within-class ability grouping (Loveless, 2013) for guided reading instruction. Through this practice, students are differentially exposed to reading skills, strategies, and texts that are presumed to match their current level of ability. This widespread practice is particularly problematic given that (1) current notions of matching early readers to the appropriate levels of text difficulty for reading instruction are based on tradition rather than empirical evidence (Brown, 2009), (2) poor and minority students are overrepresented in the lowest ranked groups (Braddock & Slavin, 1992; Condrón, 2008), (3) students in higher ranked groups make greater academic gains than lower ranked groups (Tach & Farkas, 2006), and (4) teacher perceptions of students' abilities are often inaccurate (Ready & Wright, 2011). Conversely, several studies have shown that when students are presented with texts of increased difficulty and given adequate instructional support, they are able to make accelerated reading progress (e.g. Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, Morris, Morrow, Woo, Meisinger, Sevcik, Bradley, & Stahl, 2006; Stahl & Heubach, 2005; Reis, McCoach, Little, Muller, & Kaniskan, 2011).

Objective

According to Loveless (2013), "Grouping students by ability, no matter how well it is done, will inevitably separate students by characteristics that are correlated statistically with measures of ability, including race, ethnicity, native language, and class" (p.15). This paper will provide a brief overview of a two-year action research study focusing on the literacy instructional practices that replaced within-class ability grouping for guided reading instruction with heterogeneous grouping to the achievement benefit of students of all abilities, with a lens

toward advancing this work in other instructional contexts. New directions for research will be presented in an effort to renew the dialogue on ability grouping practices that has largely dissipated since its peak in the 1990s (Loveless, 2013), in a way that leads to practical and theoretical insights on grouping strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Research on alternatives to ability grouping practices has dotted the professional landscape over the past 30 years (e.g. Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1991, 1998; Kuhn, 2005; Schwanenflugel, Kuhn, Morris, Morrow, Meisinger, Woo, Quirk, & Sevcik, 2009; Stahl & Heubach, 2005), yet none have engendered salient and long-lasting changes in elementary reading instruction. To better understand the complexity of educational reform, Oakes (1992) identified three dimensions of change that must accompany reform in ability grouping practices: the *technical*, the *normative*, and the *political*. It is suggested that these three dimensions are used to guide future research in this area and to frame the design process in ways that attend to the multiple criteria needed for change.

The *technical* dimension, which includes changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, has been perhaps the most widely addressed dimension in efforts to replace ability grouping practices (Oakes, 1992). Studies on various approaches that support students' reading of grade level texts such as Fluency Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) (e.g. Stahl & Heubach, 2005), wide reading (e.g. Kuhn, 2005), dyad reading (e.g. Morgan, Wilcox, & Eldridge, 2000), and the Schoolwide Enrichment Model-Reading SEM-R (e.g. Reis et al., 2011) successfully addressed the technical aspects of change. These studies documented instructional practices that enabled students to read more complex texts that led to increases in students' reading achievement. They could be viewed as exemplars of more equitable alternatives to ability

grouping. Studies of the technical dimension, including thick descriptions of contextual features can provide practical information on how these technical dimensions function in realistic settings and offer information regarding both the strengths and challenges of new approaches (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). Understanding these components are essential to the spread and sustainability of educational reform.

The *normative* dimension of change refers to the traditions and norms that sustain educational practices. In terms of ability grouping in the United States, over 200 years of slavery, discrimination, and segregation in education serve as the backdrop for current norms that favor practices designed to provide differential access to opportunity based on supposed merit. This false pretense of meritocracy is so deeply ingrained in the national norms that schools are accustomed to inequity. These norms must be explicitly confronted, questioned, and revised. Oakes (1992) writes that this process, asks people to “challenge their entrenched views” and reconsider “whether sorting students to prepare them for a differentiated work force with unequal economic rewards is what schools should do” (p. 19). This difficult work requires attention to mindsets, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers, administrators, and even students.

Educational innovations must also fit within the structural norms of the classroom. Designing an intervention that asks teachers to make grand systemic changes that require unavailable time and resources are likely to end as quickly as the researcher leaves the site. Instead, efforts must be made to balance the ideal with the realistic. Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1998) found that teachers are often willing to try an educational innovation if it “has lots of familiar elements, is doable within the time frame and materials they currently have, and results in observably better readers and writers (p. 662).” In other words, when innovations fit within the current norms, long-term adoption is more likely. In the case of ability grouping, some

norms such as inequity must be adapted to fit the intervention; on the other hand, the intervention must be adapted to fit other norms such as time and resource availability.

Finally, the *political* dimension accounts for the new relations that must develop in the school. Ability grouping practices are utilized by schools, but they are sustained by the interests of educational stakeholders, such as parents, students, and policymakers. Often, the politics of compared advantage result in parents advocating for their children to be placed in the highest group knowing that this placement will widen future opportunities. This often occurs through the intergenerational transmission of advantage as those parents who themselves were advantaged know how to access similar resources for their own children (Oakes, 2005). Thus, changes in ability grouping practices require the redistribution of power (Oakes, 1992). Systemic policies and structures must be confronted and people at multiple levels of decision-making must be on board. For example, even if teachers are informed of the research on ability grouping and subscribe to a discourse of equity, higher levels of power such as administrators and curriculum programs may thwart teachers' autonomy in determining grouping practices (Park & Datnow, 2017). To increase the likelihood of forming a coalition that advocates for all students, these efforts must ensure that the new innovations "will create education opportunities that are at least as rich and rigorous as those previously enjoyed by high students" (Oakes, 1992, p. 19).

As Oakes (2008) writes, "absent a concerted effort to establish new norms about whether and how all students can learn to high standards, high-stakes incentives seem to have driven well-intentioned people to intensify the old patterns of differentiation and inequity" (p. 707). As a result, decades after the debate of ability grouping seemed to end, we are once again faced with increasing numbers of students whose instruction is limited by their current level of literacy achievement, which is often simply a proxy for the amount and quality of early literacy

experiences they have encountered. Before any sweeping changes in ability grouping practices in elementary reading instruction are likely to occur, research is needed that attends to the normative and political aspects of change that must accompany the technical (Oakes, 1992). According to the Thomas Theorem, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (as cited in Merton, 1948, p. 193). It is time to stop defining students as low readers and begin defining the instructional approaches that will better serve them.

Developing Methods

Towards this end, I designed and conducted a two-year action research study in my kindergarten classroom utilizing heterogeneous grouping practices during guided reading instruction in combination with a variety of research-based instructional practices, such as explicit and systematic instruction (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013), to increase the opportunities for all students to learn in my classroom. With the exception of grouping students heterogeneously and providing students with texts of greater than traditionally accepted levels of difficulty, I closely followed the essential characteristics of guided reading described by Fountas & Pinnell (2017), including placing students in small groups, providing a rich book introduction, giving all students in the group the same text, building comprehension skills and strategies through text discussion, building word work skills, and providing purposeful instruction.

The results were very promising. Every student in the study (nearly 50) demonstrated significant growth in literacy learning with all students meeting grade level expectations for reading fluency and nearly all students for reading comprehension, including special education students, English language learners, and those who began formal schooling with limited prior literacy experiences. Furthermore, contrary to those claiming heterogeneous grouping is detrimental to high ability students, the highest achievers also performed at higher levels than the

highest students in the previous years. Purposefully matching instruction to the interactions between reader and text proved more beneficial than traditional practices in which students are matched to texts at their supposed ability level.

Based on this two-year action research and study review of the literature on ability grouping, the following design principles (a format suggested by Van den Akker, 2013 as cited in Bakker, 2018) were developed to inform future research efforts.

If you want to design guided reading instruction in which heterogeneous grouping is used to support the literacy achievement of all students, you are advised to:

- *Distribute students heterogeneously across groups, paying special attention to reading achievement, native language, and behavior because this increases the opportunities to learn for all students.*
- *If there is a group of students reading significantly higher than all other students, they may be pulled into their own group to receive instruction. An emerging hypothesis is that students who are reading well beyond grade level may continue to be pulled into their own group. This is supported by research on the gifted (e.g., Kulik & Kulik, 1987).*
- *Select text that is at grade level or higher because students will not be able to read grade level text if they have no exposure to it. Students need time to practice reading texts with the level of material they are expected to master.*
- *Provide the instruction and practice necessary for students to be successful at grade level text or higher because students cannot be left to unproductively struggle while reading a text. Students may need a richer book introduction, oral practice using the language of the text, and additional teacher guidance while reading. They may benefit*

from participating in two guided reading groups per day to allow for sufficient practice of the text.

- *Carefully plan guided reading instruction based upon the individualized needs of all students in the group* so all students benefit from guided reading instruction. For example, if the highest achieving students in the group are ready to learn digraphs and the lowest achieving students still need more practice with short /a/ words, then during the word work portion of guided reading, teach all students digraphs but focus on reading and writing words that also have the short a sound (e.g., catch, that, sham). In this way, all students will receive instruction on necessary skills while still being exposed to grade level content.
- *Synchronize instruction across contexts* so students, particularly those who find reading to be challenging, have a cohesive program of instruction. As much as possible, all of the teachers working with the students (e.g., classroom teacher, English language teacher, special education teacher, reading intervention teachers, paraeducators, etc.) align instruction so that students are hearing the same instruction and the same language across contexts.
- *Provide explicit instruction on reading strategies* because reading is a complex process that can be broken down to scaffold students' learning. When a student gets to an unknown word while reading, rather than providing students with a random assortment of strategies to try, teach an explicit problem-solving sequence, such as: (1) Put the first letter in your mouth. (2) Think what would make sense. (3) Blend the letters. (4) Reread from the beginning of the sentence. (5) Read ahead to the end of the sentence. When

students are presented with multiple strategies, but no instruction on *when* to use them, strategy instruction becomes haphazard.

To expand upon this work, a design-based research study is currently being conducted to merge the gap between theory and practice informed by the design principles explored above. According to Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, and Schauble (2003), “design experiments have both a pragmatic bent -- ‘engineering’ particular forms of learning -- and a theoretical orientation -- developing domain specific theories by systematically studying those forms of learning and the means of supporting them” (p. 9). Qualitative research methods such as participant observations and semi-structured interviews are being utilized in this study to provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of effective classroom practices as an exemplar of educational reformation. This study relies on the ongoing partnership between a kindergarten teacher and a literacy researcher to collaboratively and iteratively revise the design principles to be conducive to real classroom contexts and instrumental in theoretical development. This type of marriage of theory and practice, researcher and teacher, supports the investigation of not only *what* works, but also *how*, *when*, and *why* it works (Cobb et al., 2003).

Key Questions for Discussion

According to the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), “Where a state has undertaken to provide a benefit to the people, such as public education, the benefits must be provided on equal terms to all people unless the state can demonstrate a compelling reason for doing otherwise.” This assertion calls into question the nature of the word *equal*. It begs the question, is differential access to instruction via ability grouping practices considered to be equal? And, if not, is there a reason compelling enough to continue the practice? If the answer is no, how can primary literacy teachers create a technical, normative, and political classroom

environment in which heterogeneous grouping practices effectively replace homogeneous grouping structures in a way that results in optimal achievement for students of all ability levels? What supports are needed so that all students are able to successfully access grade level reading materials? These questions are not so easily answered and, as a result, ability grouping remains a “perennial theme” in education studies (Loveless, 2013, p. 3), a theme in desperate need of research on alternative practices.

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Literacy as Change Agent: Conversations about Literacy and Social Justice

A University/ High School Program with Marginalized, Diverse Students Uses the News to
Explore Views and Raise Voices about Inequities

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Abstract

A university and high school partnership to provide a tutoring program for low-performing students was modified to include time to read, discuss, and write responses expressing their views on the news. This article describes the setting and perceptions of the participants, both the Haitian students and the tutors who are master's candidates in a Reading Education program, from student work and candidates' answers to a questionnaire at the end of the term. The opportunity gave students space to build a culture for sharing their opinions and empowering their voices on current events.

Students come into the cafeteria slowly, they know the procedures for signing in and go to their areas for tutoring where they are greeted by their tutors, master's candidates in Reading Education, from the university. They sit quietly in small groups, waiting for the tutoring to begin. They come for extra help because their intensive reading teacher has recommended that they get the extra help in reading, so they can pass the standardized tests that will determine if they can be promoted to the next grade or graduate.

The graduate candidates are participating in a service-learning practicum, a required part of their program of studies for a master's degree in reading. Based on a Socio-cultural perspective, they are working with a predominantly Haitian group of students in an urban, low-performing school. The candidates will be assessing the students after the students have been attending school all day and instructing them using a variety of strategies for an hour and a half, starting at 5:00 pm. At 6:30, the room arrangement changes as the students and teachers come together in communities of two teachers and their student groups to read, discuss, and respond to news articles. Because these students are typical of growing numbers of at-risk students, (Hodgkinson, 1991) they do not often get the opportunity to voice their opinions as they choose to sit on the outer rims of classrooms, marginalized because of their poor performance, or low self-esteem. This special half-hour, they get to read news articles about local, national, and world events, selected by their tutors, that are on levels they can read because the website, Newsela.org, offers the same article on multiple reading levels. This half hour gives them space to think, something adolescents are ready to do. They try to solve the problems by coming up with innovative solutions or actions that could be taken. The topics vary from personal situations to those that involve the environment, technology-related topics, science, or school safety.

As the professor for the practicum and the author of this article, I decided to use this half-hour to provide time to explore the news. The idea to do this was based on the concept that as adolescents, the students were ready to delve into issues beyond their immediate surroundings. I had been holding the practicum at the school with my different candidates for ten years and had used the last half hour to have the students interact using literacy games such as Scrabble© and Apples to Apples©. I had wanted the students to leave having had fun with literacy so that they would see literacy as a positive experience and come back for more tutoring. However, I discerned from observations over the terms that the most important part of the interaction was talking to each other. Therefore, I decided to take a new approach using the news to encourage talking about their world because I believed it would be a more beneficial educational goal. During this time, students would have a chance to express their voice. Student voice refers to the “values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives and cultural backgrounds of individual students” (Abbot, 2013). This focus would include “instructional approaches based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions” (Abbot, 2013). I wanted to allow “participatory literacy” moving the students from being “consumers of information” to becoming “intelligent participants in discourse communities” (Dawes, 2017).

Methods

The participants included 16 tutors and a rolling enrollment of students with the numbers as high as 89 for some sessions. Some students came at 5:00 and others came in after their sports team practices. All were offered a slice of pizza and a drink. This snack helped to motivate students to attend and to establish a friendly climate in the Reading Scene, as the tutoring sessions were called.

The procedures for the first hour and a half included master's candidates assessing the students on an individual reading inventory, a phonics survey, an interest inventory, an attitude inventory, a spelling inventory, and an assessment of morphological structures. The information was then used to identify instructional needs. The intervention was based on teaching and applying comprehension strategies and integrating instruction related to the areas of growth identified from the analysis of the assessments.

For the last half hour, the master's candidates, in communities of two candidates and their students, read, discussed, and wrote about news stories. The topics for the news discussions were chosen by the candidates based on what they believed would match the students' interests. They included protecting the environment, with a discussion about Earth Day and its origins. The candidates taught cause and effect relationships and expository text structure with students. The conclusion was that everyone needs to take responsibility to protect the environment. They also discussed the amount of plastic spreading disease in the world's coral reefs. The students problem-solved and suggested becoming advocates for placing more trash cans on the beach. They also discussed news articles about invasive species found in the Florida Keys which concluded with them wanting to start a campaign with a hashtag to warn about dumping foreign fish in the Atlantic Ocean. Another topic that resounded with them was about the cloning of monkeys. They concluded that cloning was not morally a good idea. They also took the side of a student who had been suspended for two days for making a video, after a student suicide, about the extreme degree of bullying at her high school. They stated that her actions were responsible and were motivated by her desire to make changes in her school's culture. Another topic involved popular culture, especially the movie, *Black Panther*, which, they were delighted to see, starred a superhero that looked like them. They also responded to articles related to the game-

inspired version of Monopoly, Fortnite. Even though this game is free, sales resulting from the purchase of online accessories, such as clothing outfits topped the charts. That 3.4 million people were playing the game online, made them realize just how far-reaching technology can be. After discussing Mark Zuckerberg's testimony, in which he took responsibility for the outcome of Facebook's world involvement, a student remarked that, "Social media is taking control of people."

As it turned out, this term became an electrifying time to discuss the news with high school students due to the horrific events on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018. That was the day that a former student at a high school massacred 17, 14 students and three teachers, at a school in a neighboring county from the high school where the practicum was held. With this incident being so close to home, the students were super-charged to know every detail they could. The students in the practicum were inspired by the response of the Parkland High School students who became activists for gun control legislation. The practicum students eagerly read articles that detailed the events following the shooting, including the speeches, the March for Our Lives in Washington and the changes in state legislation which raised the age when someone could purchase a gun. Of great interest was the suggestion to arm teachers. While parents and teachers were divided on this point, the students were against it. They were afraid that teachers "might shoot students accidentally." Incidentally, the state, one year later, has just passed a law that teachers, if trained, could carry guns.

To capture the response of the master's candidates, a survey was distributed asking nine questions related to their use of newspapers and reading the news with diverse adolescents. (See the list of questions in the Appendix).

Results

Not surprising, considering the fact that newspapers are said to be dying, none of the teachers subscribe to a paper copy of a daily newspaper. A few read them on occasion. Most get the news from the internet, social media, or the TV. A few mentioned listening to CNN or NPR. All the teachers used Newsela.com for articles, with two mentioning Readworks.org.

The topics were chosen based on the students' interests. The tragedy in Parkland was chosen often because the teachers felt students "needed to talk about it to feel safe." The student walkouts and the March for Our Lives in Washington that the Parkland students conducted were important topics of discussion. Mental health issues and bullying were all related topics. Some candidates also mentioned trying to find these articles because "soon the students would make decisions as voters that impact society." The *Black Panther* movie was popular because the teachers and students recognized it promoted diversity in the movies which was empowering to the Black students in the practicum.

The teacher candidates felt the students gained much from reading, discussing, and writing about the news. They thought they were more aware of current events. They noted that the students gained oral communication skills, especially the vocabulary needed to be able to share their opinions in conversation, how to respectfully listen and show empathy towards one another. Thus, by "discussing opinions, writing their views, students were given the skills to express their voice."

Some of the comments that candidates wrote were that the students thought the "students from Parkland were heroic and bold." One candidate said that "it was easy to tell that the students wanted to be heard and that they wanted to be treated like adults." Another

candidate shared that her student wrote that he would “vote against any politician who did not support gun laws.”

The candidates wrote that using the news impacted the students greatly. One wrote, “because the students who were slain in the school massacre were so close to their age, it affected the students deeply.” In general, the candidates felt students were able to hold conversations, express their opinions freely, “feel they are informed citizens who can have conversations while knowing what they are talking about.” One candidate wrote that she felt the sessions “motivated the students to keep learning and to gather more information about the news.” Another wrote that they “came away with the ability to respect their peers’ opinion no matter if it’s different from their own,” while another wrote that the students would go back to their friends and discuss these topics because they were interesting and relevant.” Yet another wrote, “the students started to realize their voice does matter and they were empowered.”

Some of the memorable comments that the candidates related were that the students in discussing the importance of *Brown v. the Board of Education* mentioned that “the people who staked their lives made it possible for her to be sitting in the school setting she’s in today.” A candidate wrote that some “still feel the impact of racism in the United States and have a strong opinion about equity and justice.” Another candidate commented on the students’ ability to see issues from different points of view, which helped her to expand her own thinking.

Many candidate comments about what the students gained from participating in the current events activities stated that the students gained a voice. One candidate explained that the activity meant a lot to the student because he asked as soon as he saw her at the beginning of tutoring, “What article did you bring for the group to discuss?” This eagerness indicates renewed interest in learning and culture-sharing in a tutoring program.

Essentially, from this experience, it seems the activity of using the news with students at risk is one way to address diverse adolescents' needs to learn about the world. For students anticipating reading, discussing, and writing their opinions, this type of session provides the best chance to impact students' literacy learning and their involvement in the world. As one teacher pointed out, these students are close to being able to voice their opinions in the voting booth. It behooves teachers to teach them to be critical consumers of the news.

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Appendix A

Name _____ Date _____

RED 6805: Building Critical Literacies Using News to Illicit Adolescents' Views and Voices

Dear Teachers,

Please answer the following questions as best you can and send it back to me electronically. Your answers will be qualitatively evaluated and shared, but your individual information and the students' will be kept anonymous and not be able to be linked to you or them. This information will be secure.

Thank you,
Dr. Fine

- 1) Do you read a newspaper? How often? Everyday? Once a week? Once a month? Which ones?
- 2) Where do you get your news? Is it from TV? From the internet?
- 3) What resources did you use for your news articles?
- 4) What topics did you use for your news lessons? Why did you select each of these?
- 5) Do you think the students gained from discussing news articles?
- 6) Did they use their voices to express their views and opinions after reading the news? What did they say?
- 7) How do you think this activity impacted them to voice their opinions on current events?

8) What do you remember that students said that was particularly important or memorable?

9) What do you think they gained by participating in the current events activities?

Novice special educators: Insights and experiences teaching literacy

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Abstract

We see an increased focus on identifying effective literacy instruction for students struggling with literacy, along with determining how best to prepare teachers to deliver it. However, a large amount of uncertainty remains. Given that the majority of students with disabilities have challenges in literacy, it is especially critical that all educators be knowledgeable and skillful about literacy instruction. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances and experiences of novice special educators related to literacy instruction, and to use this information to improve teacher learning about literacy. The study draws on interviews with 32 novice special educators. The findings highlight the wide array of teaching contexts teachers experienced, challenging conditions they faced during literacy instruction, and minimal supports they received in schools. Teachers also shared a variety of literacy strategies they implemented and ways they adapted their instruction.

Novice special educators: Insights and experiences teaching literacy

Effective educators can make a difference in the literacy development and achievement of students with disabilities who struggle with literacy (Accardo, Finnegan, Gulkus, & Papay, 2017). We know that teachers who use effective literacy practices secure higher student achievement gains (Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2005), and students with disabilities make the most literacy gains when teachers are responsive to their needs and differentiate instruction (Haager, Gersten, Baker, & Graves, 2003). Thus, it is key that we, as teacher educators, provide our preservice educators with high-quality coursework and experiential experiences that could help prepare them for the wide range of literacy skills they might see in the students they work with, as well as prepare them to be responsive to all the students they will teach. However, designing these literacy courses and experiences can be challenging for teacher educators, since neither students nor faculty can predict the wide range of literacy needs kindergarten to 12th grade students with disabilities may exhibit in these novices' classrooms (Parker-Katz, Hughes, & Lee, 2017).

What we do know generally is what special educators are mandated to do. They must modify the curriculum for students with widely varying needs and disabilities, devise Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), employ assistive technology, and comply with federal special education laws (Billingsley, 2004). Furthermore, we also note additional challenges as special educators assume new instructional delivery roles, moving from isolated segregated teaching with exclusively students who have disabilities into teaching in inclusive educational settings. The contexts of collaborative teaching can take many different forms (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010; Mitchell, 2007) and can also be associated with role ambiguity for some teachers. Moreover, to work in inclusive as well as segregated contexts

special educators require a deep knowledge base in both general education curriculum and in adapting the curriculum to meet the multiple literacy needs of learners (Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Kiely, 2015). Such circumstances support the continued need to examine and redesign literacy teacher education and learning opportunities for special educators to meet these evolving responsibilities. Simply put, if not addressed with effective literacy instruction, many students with disabilities could fall further behind their peers (Buntin, 2002).

Special educators face many challenges during their first professional years as they advocate for their students while also negotiating a wide range of responsibilities and gaining the expertise necessary to perform those responsibilities. Special educators are often responsible for teaching multiple subject matters across multiple grade levels, and at times in several different instructional delivery models (e.g., co-teaching, resource/pull-out, self-contained). In addition, the wide range of student diversity with respect to disability characteristics greatly influences how special educators will enact knowledge for teaching literacy. Special educators, therefore, need to teach in ways that consider how literacy-related challenges could result from or be associated with specific disability characteristics. Consequently, to effectively address literacy in schools, special educators need to have strong content knowledge of literacy, as well as pedagogical skills specific to teaching literacy (Parker-Katz, Hughes, & Lee, 2017). However, novice special educators often struggle and need assistance in a number of areas including instructional strategies, collaboration with general education teachers, and learning and enacting curriculum (White & Mason, 2003).

Novice Special Educators and the Teaching of Literacy

Since new special educators' instructional practices have a significant impact on student achievement in literacy (Brownell et al., 2009), the teaching of literacy has emerged as one of the

main curriculum challenges. Special educators report they have difficulties teaching literacy, and they feel unprepared to teach literacy to students with disabilities and to address their complex literacy difficulties (Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko & Galman, 2010). Many teachers report having difficulties with the basics of teaching literacy (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012) that include receptive skills (reading and listening) and expressive skills (writing and speaking). Therefore, to effectively address literacy skills, special educators need to have strong content knowledge of literacy (e.g., what are the multiple components of comprehension?) as well as pedagogical skills specific to it (Brownell et al., 2005). Research also shows that the availability of literacy curricula influences novices' instruction, in that teachers who use a structured literacy program have higher levels of student engagement (Bishop et al., 2010). Novice teachers who do not have adequate access to literacy teaching materials and programs indicate that teaching literacy is a challenge (Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, & Otis-Wilborn, 2008). This lack of materials is reported by over a third of early career special educators (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004), and a lack of materials is one of the first difficulties novices encounter and one that they need to address quickly. Furthermore, teachers who have access to a well-articulated curriculum feel more confident when approaching literacy instruction when compared to teachers who do not have access to structured curriculum (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002).

While novice special educators indicate that they feel adequately prepared in special education, they report feeling inadequately prepared to teach literacy (Bishop et al., 2010). This is not surprising given that there is some disjuncture between the practices highlighted in coursework and what teachers encounter in schools (Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007). Thus, since not all special educators benefit equally from their preparation, it appears that the opportunities that preservice special educators have to apply their knowledge of literacy

instruction, as well as their beliefs about their teaching competence, work together to influence the quality of their instruction. Moreover, preservice special educators could benefit from more opportunities to access the knowledge and tools needed to teach literacy to students with disabilities, develop confidence in their teaching abilities, and apply their knowledge in practice with ongoing support and feedback (Leko & Brownell, 2011).

High quality literacy instruction is necessary for the struggling readers that special educators teach in order to enhance their literacy achievement. By analyzing the context and literacy instruction of novice special educators, we can better align literacy instruction in teacher education with the realities novices face. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the circumstances and experiences of novice special educators who instruct students with disabilities in literacy. Specifically, we focused on supports they received in their schools, their focuses when teaching literacy, and types of modifications and adaptations they made for students. Their insights enable us to highlight the realities and demands of teaching literacy as an early career special educator. This focus can assist early career special educators to enhance the literacy achievement of students with disabilities and assist teacher educators as we aim to support novices in the plethora of settings in which they might find themselves teaching literacy.

Method

Participants

Thirty-two special educators (28 females) participated in the study. All teachers had recently completed a special education master's program at a large urban university within the past two years. The program was designed for individuals obtaining their initial special education teaching license that would allow them to teach in grades K-12th across a variety of disability

categories. All the teachers had taught two years or less in special education, and all but two teachers were currently teaching in special education programs in school districts in the Midwest, with the two others working as special education case managers who work with students, special educators and families throughout the IEP process. Several of the teachers had teaching experience in other areas (e.g., elementary education) prior to obtaining their special education certification, thus teachers had an average of 4 years (range 1-10 years) of teaching experience overall. Students who the teachers taught during the academic year of this study were representative of a multiplicity of disabilities (Table 1), with most teachers (84%) instructing at least one student with specific learning disabilities (SLD). The majority of teachers (62%) taught in elementary schools (K-8). Furthermore, teachers provided instruction in an assortment of instructional delivery models with most (78%) teaching in multiple models throughout the day (Table 2).

Table 1

Number of students taught and type of disabilities of the students

	%
<hr/>	
Number of students with disabilities	
1-10 students	41
11-19 students	31
20-48 students	28
Disability classification of students	
Learning disabilities	84
Autism	56
Cognitive delays	44
Emotional disabilities	41
Other health impairments	38
Behavior disorders	31

Table 2

School size, demographics, and service delivery models

	%
<hr/>	
School size	
Less than 200 students	16
200-799 students	41
800 or more students 1999 students	43
School ethnic and race composition	
Predominately white	28
Predominately Hispanic	22
Over half minority (Hispanic; African American)	16
Predominately African American	13
Other	21
Service delivery models	
Resource/Self-contained/Inclusion	31
Inclusion/Resource	22
Self-contained only	16
Self-contained/Inclusion	13
Self-contained/Resource	13
Inclusion only	6
<hr/>	

Instrument

We developed the interview protocol, gearing it towards eliciting comprehensive information about the teaching contexts of the teachers, how literacy was taught in their settings, and adaptations they made. This semi-structured interview was designed to gain insight into how teachers understood and made meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). Prior to the study, we piloted the interview with a small group of special educators, and revised questions that confused participants and/or led to unclear responses.

Domain 1 questions focused on the contexts of teaching such as school demographics, teaching position and responsibilities, available literacy resources, curricular requirements, and general information teachers had about their how their students were taught. The goal was to obtain a picture of where the teachers worked and the conditions of the contexts related to literacy instruction. In Domain 2, we asked questions that focused on the specifics of teachers' literacy instruction. We asked them to describe lessons, materials, strategies, modifications and accommodations used in their literacy instruction (see Appendix A for the interview protocol).

Procedure

We elicited the support of a doctoral student who had never taught in the program nor taken coursework. The student contacted all alumni who had graduated within the previous two years. Using the program's alumni contact database, email notices and letters were sent out announcing the research study. In addition, a telephone message was also used that informed the prospective study participants. If contact information was incorrect, we made attempts to locate more recent information. After four contact attempts were made, if an individual did not respond, no further attempts were made. All alumni who responded and indicated an interest in the study were screened to determine eligibility for participation. The four criteria included: recent

graduate (past two years); obtained a special education state teaching license; taught for at least three months as a special educator upon graduation; and, currently worked in the field of special education. Eleven alumni contacted did not meet the screening criteria because they had not taught after graduation and/or chose not to obtain special education certification. That left a pool of 51 possible participants. Of those, 19 either could not be contacted or chose not to participate in the study. The 32 teachers (63% of the possible eligible pool of 51) who met the screening criteria consented to take part in the interview.

A convenient time for the telephone interviews was then scheduled. Throughout the interview the researchers took detailed notes to capture the essential points of the given responses. Following the interview, teachers were contacted by phone for any clarifications or follow-up questions. Secondly, interview notes were then sent to teachers for a member check; we made any additional changes requested by the teachers. Finally, toward the conclusion of the data collection period, teachers received a summary of their interview responses to ensure that it accurately reflected their thoughts. Reviewed summaries showing corrections and/or additional information were returned to the researchers via email.

Data Analysis

We reviewed all teacher interviews and analyzed them for concepts, context, and process using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process of data analysis was guided by the work of Miles and Huberman (2013) in which analysis consists of three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. During the first stage, we reviewed interviews and developed codes. Researchers independently read teacher responses looking for initial codes while continually comparing data for similarities and differences. By continually comparing specific responses,

researchers identified concepts, described them, and explored their relationship to each other. In the second stage, we organized the information into matrixes and reviewed those for similarities, possible patterns, disconfirming evidence and eventually themes. After identifying emerging themes, we defined them and looked for sample supporting teacher quotations. Researchers met regularly to discuss their individual coding and to come to agreement on the final themes. Over time, through these negotiations, we refined, expanded, and/or deleted the categories as needed (Barbour, 2001). Finally, in the third stage, we reviewed the entire corpus of patterns and themes in an effort to confirm or deny any assertions or hunches that emerged.

Findings

From analyses of the data, four overarching themes emerged. Specifically, novice special educators discussed: a) lack of high quality supports for teachers, b) the challenges of providing literacy instruction, c) focusing less on writing instruction, and d) demands emerging from their teaching contexts to modify and adjust their literacy instruction. We review each below.

Lack of Support

These new special educators taught literacy in a wide variety of schools, programs, grades, and special education instructional delivery models. The teachers also provided instruction to students with disabilities who had a diverse set of needs and challenges. Teachers indicated that supports such as quality mentoring and professional development at their schools could have facilitated their transition into special education teaching. In comments, they seemed to link that request to the wide range of circumstances in which they found themselves teaching. However, only 53% of the teachers noted that their schools provided opportunities to work with a mentor. More often than not, the teachers who did have a mentor reported that the partnership was not as successful as they had hoped. Several concerns emerged about the mentoring they

received, particularly that most mentors were not in special education and/or had no experience providing literacy instruction to students with disabilities. Said one teacher, “I was assigned a building mentor who is a 2nd grade general education teacher. She was unable to help with special education issues.” Teachers also noted that there were few or no opportunities to meet with the mentor, e.g., “My mentor’s schedule and mine didn’t blend. We try to set up observations and informal meetings.” One person indicated that the assigned mentor had different perspectives on education: “I had a mentor during my first year, but she was not very good. She kept trying to teach me short cuts, finding easy ways out.” A handful of teachers did indicate that they valued their engagement with their mentors. As one notes, “I keep in constant contact with my mentor. This is where I did my teaching practice and my mentor knows the students.” And, “I gained a perspective on working in special education as we discussed how to work with the students, and shared everyday ideas. I had to learn new ways of doing things.” For teachers that were not provided with mentoring, many indicated that they relied on an informal network, “I put my feelers out there and ask.” Or, they stated that they went and did things on their own, e.g., “We had to figure out things ourselves. We are not fully supported by the administration.”

The majority of the teachers (75%) reported receiving some type of professional development from their school or school district. The range of it varied greatly across the different schools both in focus and quantity. Most teachers indicated a dissatisfaction with the professional development in which they participated, reporting mostly that it consisted of one-time sessions that lasted for 90 minutes to two hours during school professional development days. Several reported that it was led by other teachers at the school. Although most teachers did receive some type of professional development, the most common concern was that none or very

little focused on literacy instruction, special education issues, or literacy for struggling readers and students with disabilities. In addition, a sizable number of the teachers (about 25%) reported receiving no professional development.

Challenges to Literacy Instruction

Providing literacy instruction, that is, planning, teaching, and assessing students' learning, presented multiple challenges for the teacher participants. One major finding is that a significant number of teachers needed to formulate their own literacy curricula to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. They did that in part depending on the varied kinds of resources and programs available in their schools. The vast majority of teachers (75%) reported that they did not have any supplemental reading materials or specific reading intervention programs for use with students with disabilities. To meet their students' needs and to revise instruction based on students' successful learning, as novice teachers they found themselves tailoring instruction. For the most part, teachers reported that they were asked to use the same materials as are used by the general education students. As one person said that also mimicked several others' comments about materials: "The English department uses typical high school books - just the text without any supplemental materials for Sped and ESL students. I use other resources and adapt them to fit in the curriculum."

In several instances teachers (31%) reported that the schools had no guidelines or policies that took into account the unique needs to students with disabilities. Rather, special educators were required to follow the same scope and sequence as the rest of the school. As this teacher reported:

We follow a curriculum map that is mapped out by the literacy coach and given to all teachers so that we are teaching the same topics around the same time and we can cover

the topics within the allotted time. We must follow the curriculum map. It specifies the topics and resources. The literacy coach comes in twice weekly to observe our lessons and to ensure that we are doing what we should be doing.

Another teacher responded, “We have a very straight forward curriculum. Each grade level has specific benchmarks for each subject. ... We must use novel study for writing assignments. What we do is checked by us submitting curriculum plans every week by email.”

About a quarter of all teachers stated that they were required to use a published reading program with their students. As these two teachers reported, “My students learn reading using the Reading Mastery Program. It is very structured and scripted.” And, “We have the Success For All reading program. It is a very explicit program with very little opportunity for creativity.”

Overall, novice special educators stated that most of the students they instructed had challenges in the area of reading. Most of the students were reading several years below grade level. Teachers indicated that they used many different methods and practices to help students develop their reading skills. Although students had difficulties in several areas of reading (e.g., decoding, word recognition), the majority of teachers (72%) report focusing most of their literacy instruction on enhancing comprehension. They did that mostly by concentrating their lessons on vocabulary development and using graphic organizers. Typical responses were similar to this teacher:

I make sure students understand the key vocabulary words before we start a concept. I break it down and explain the concept. I use pictures to describe visually. I use the new words in contexts to make sure students can relate to the word.

Said another teacher, “I teach KWL, Venn Diagrams, SQR, journaling. I use lots of graphic organizers. These help in comprehension of the reading.” Teachers also discussed integrating a number of strategies to facilitate students’ understanding of text, such as this teacher:

We do pre-, during- and post-reading strategies. Students predict- we set them up for what they are about to read/learn. They tell what will happen next. Some post reading strategies they are coming up with to make a different ending for the story, drawing pictures, describing a character, using graphic organizers.

Another teacher said, “We go on an Image Walk and I have kids make connections to the text. This helps students understand, and make it more real, and eventually become better readers. Students commented on what they saw, smell, touch and heard in the reading.”

Although most teachers spent most of their literacy instruction on comprehension, a sizable group of teachers (47%) discussed how they often focus on assisting students with word recognition by emphasizing phonemic awareness, letter identification, phonics, and decoding skills. As this teacher stated, “We start with a mini-lesson on the skill of focus. I pull out a sample passage from the book or short story being read.” Teachers also used a variety of activities to engage students in developing these skills, as this teacher indicated,

We played games to remember letter sounds and different words. I introduce different cards. Each card gives a reading rule- what is a consonant or a vowel? I showed the card and asked him to say the letter and the sound /b/.

Teachers in both elementary and secondary schools discussed working on word recognition skills, similar to what this elementary teacher expressed, “We practice decoding and offer strategies like breaking words apart, finding the smaller words in a word.” and this secondary

teacher, “We look for patterns in the words- vowel sounds, prefixes, suffixes, spelling patterns. This helps with decoding, reading vocabulary and spelling.”

Less Focus on Writing Instruction

Similar to reports about teaching reading, the majority of teachers (66%) reported that little to no curriculum particular to teaching writing was available or required at their schools. As one elementary teacher said, “There is no specific national writing curriculum mandated by the school, and it is not checked. No specific processes or genres are taught. Kids are just given exposure to writing.” Within those conditions, however, teachers found ways to work around a lack of curriculum support at the schools in order to teach writing. They gathered resources from multiple areas in order to develop lessons. One teacher, for instance, shared that she gathered “general books about Pre-K learning and literacy. I get ideas from speakers at professional development seminars.”

Across this group of teachers, writing instruction seemed to focus both on the processes and products of students’ writing. Those included students writing in journals to record personal experiences, large group reviews of writing mechanics, and use of organizational techniques to help students recall details. A majority of teachers (60%) reported teaching writing lessons or parts of lessons that focused on grammar, mechanics and/or handwriting. One example from a secondary teacher mirrored methods used by others in terms of large group lesson focuses, showing students’ work, and correcting it together. As a class, the teacher explained, they talk about improving sentences by “...making them longer, changing sentence fragments and run-ons, ...making them more interesting, more descriptive.”

A similar number of teachers (60%) indicated they taught writing as a process, and used methods such as modeling, organizing ideas and joint writing that are closely associated with

teaching the writing process. Said one teacher, “I guide through the writing process. We do writing together. I do sample writing stories, and they use that to write on their own. The teaching assistant and myself went around and help individual students.” Another teacher gave an example of teaching ways to organize ideas with a method she called Power Mapping. She explained that students often “complain they don’t know what to write. I teach pre-writing strategies- brain storming, webbing. We put brain stormed ideas in the form of a template students use to write.” Although there is overlap between the teachers who indicated they taught writing mechanics and those that focused on the writing process, we found a large number of teachers that focused most of the writing instruction on one aspect of writing over the other. Therefore, teachers who had multiple focuses during writing instruction were in the minority. When they did, many of the lessons described were of a similar nature to this teacher:

We do lots of modeling in writing to get students to understand that writing is a process. We do the introductory sentence then add details. We did writing on the topic ‘Pretend you are shoes for today’. Students used index cards. We generated ideas and wrote one sentence at a time. Students wrote each sentence on the index cards. Then we focused on creating details of the shoe. We placed the sentences in the correct order to complete the paragraph.

Modifications and Adaptations

We asked the novice teachers about how they adapted and modified their literacy instruction to support the literacy learning of students with disabilities. Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated that they primarily changed the format of the assignment (53%) or provided students with one-on-one support (50%). Teachers (47%) also reported adjusting the amount of work (47%) and allowing extra time to complete it (38%). A smaller number of teachers reported using alternative materials (28%) than those typically used with general education students.

Overall, we saw a primary focus on comprehension related adaptations such as using audio books “so students could listen to the book as they followed along.” Teachers combined changing formats with key practices in special education such as highlighting and using visuals like in this example, “I’ve taken a story from the text and rewritten and made it into an individual book for my kids. I use color coded worksheets, where the answer is obvious to the kid. I add visuals/pictures to work sheets to make it accessible to my students.”

Modifications in writing instruction showed less specificity than those for reading. Most teachers (75%) reported using “supports” (e.g., modeling, working with peers, working one on one with a teacher or teacher aide). Teachers also indicated they made the writing activity less challenging (50%) by adjusting the assignment or expectations of the product, while about a third of teachers (34%) talked about the importance of scaffolding to modify the teaching of writing. Overall in writing, we noted that teachers reporting finding alternative ways to help students express themselves. For instance, along with what many others also had reported, one teacher said that she has some students orally express themselves, and she then writes it for them. Another teacher reported how she changes the format of some assignments to make the actual physical writing easier “to cater to fine motor abilities.”

We asked teachers how they made decisions about using adaptations and modifications. The response of linking literacy adaptations to students’ specific challenges arose clearly across most teachers. “It depends on the individual student. Some need a lot of hands-on activities and games,” said one teacher, while another said, “No specific program has worked, so I adapt programs to suit student needs.” Another teaching explained, “Essentially, I adjust my expectations for different students. For some I look at grammar or spelling and for others I don’t. I vary the number of words expected in a sentence, or the number of sentences in a paragraph. “

Embedded in the theme of linking adaptations to students' challenges were examples of reasoning teachers used to make choices. For example, one teacher was concerned that students might spend too much time finding an answer in the text. So, she "cuts down on the amount of text for lower students (and) guides them where to find answers." Another teacher explained that she changes the format of an assignment at times because "...most of my kids have processing difficulties... I might change asking a kid to write a paragraph to a short answer or multiple-choice format."

Discussion

Through this study, we sought to highlight the realities and demands of teaching literacy as perceived by recent special educator graduates. Two major sets of findings emerge that also coalesce. First, we look at each separately.

One finding shows that the conditions and contexts of novice special educators teaching literacy vary widely, and that those situations also influence literacy instruction. Special educators teach in a number of different instructional models that include collaborative teaching in general education classes, pulling out students with disabilities for separate teaching in another classroom setting for a set period of time, or teaching students with disabilities in a segregated separate classroom for most of the day. Within those different environments, how literacy instruction can be implemented differs. For example, the intensity of an intervention and use of curriculum and related resources to teach it will be dependent in part on the resources, physical space and/or finances available in a school to secure materials. Integrally linked to that and most key in the context is the students, and their strengths and challenges. Novice special educators, as we saw, were often constructing a literacy pedagogy and curriculum for students with disabilities. How they could do that was influenced not only by their knowledge and skill, but by

the resources they had as well as the multiple spaces in which they did their work, e.g., in schools with varied mandates for what literacy should be taught, how and when, or alone in a classroom or collaboratively teaching with a range of colleagues who might have different viewpoints about best practices for literacy learning. In fact, that co-teaching collaboration is increasingly pertinent as we see that over 60% of students with disabilities spend 80% of their school days in a general education environment (US Department of Education, 2017). Finally, increasingly we have evidence of the importance of teaching all students in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive (Paris, 2012; Zion & Blanchett, 2017).

Even in those multiple spaces and dynamics for implementing literacy instruction, the novice teachers in this study showed several teacher “moves” grounded in knowledge of promising practices. That happened in spite of the fact that many had no program or curriculum for teaching literacy at their schools, and that their literacy professional development experiences and mentoring had a range of usefulness. Teachers described a variety of strategies they infused throughout the teaching of reading and writing. They developed literacy resources, with the vast majority being teacher-made materials (e.g., word walls). In teaching the writing process, some developed a kind of scope and sequence that provided a curricular pathway in the absence of anything official. Many teachers also spoke of supporting students with organization, a key characteristic that many students with disabilities find to be a challenge.

A related second major finding highlights that special educators made modifications and adaptations to teach literacy to students with disabilities and did so in reasoned ways. Teachers formulated instruction by choosing practices, planning, implementing and assessing interventions, gathering resources and at times building literacy curricula. They configured ways to do that within the range of instructional models in which they taught that included

collaborative work with a host of other education personnel and within a range of resource availability. Given different instructional responsibilities, we see that they served a range of students at different ages and who had diverse strengths and challenges sometimes all across one day.

Making adaptations to other teachers' instruction and/or to curriculum and programs is a complex set of actions that call upon teachers to know their students' strengths and challenges while also understanding the content they are to teach. The complexity of building teaching practice in the beginning years has been well documented generally (e.g., Avalos, 2011; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and for literacy (e.g., Chambers- Cantrell, David-Burns & Callaway, 2008; Helfrich & Bean, 2011; Tschannen-Morgan & Johnson, 2011). Yet when teaching and adapting literacy instruction for students with disabilities, special educators add layers of additional necessary knowledge and skill. They need what many would say is core knowledge of literacy; that is, to know about the multiple components of teaching reading that include word study, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension. But in order to make adaptations, they often need to know the topics and subject matter to be learned such as the topics being read about in the expository text or what students are to write about. Knowing themselves about key features of text, like how to use headings or genres of expository text is important, but special educators need also to know a range of strategies and evidence-based practices to create, revise and then choose the intensity and longevity of an intervention (Hughes & Parker-Katz, 2013; Bishop et al., 2010; Dingle, Brownell, Leko, Boardman & Haager, 2011). Moreover, teaching literacy is arguably even more complex for special educators since most students with disabilities have challenges in reading (Accardo et al., 2017). To serve those students, special educators must consistently assess students' progress in order to make revisions,

and thus they also need to build concomitant assessment practices while teaching literacy (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely & Danielson, 2010).

Linkages

Weaving together the purposes of special educators to provide high quality literacy instruction and make instructional adaptations for students with disabilities, with the conditions and contexts of their work, shows vividly that special educators on any given day work with an array of learners, subject matter and topics, and educational colleagues. This is a critical point for teacher educators to keep in mind as they consider how best to prepare special educator to teach literacy. Two particular areas arose as key in how special educators learn to enact literacy instruction that should provide some guidance as we consider the content and experiences preservice educators are exposed to. One is learning ways to interact and collaborate with educational personnel in order to enact a literacy pedagogy rich in attention to diverse students who study diverse subject matter, which is at the heart special educators' work. Related to that is the importance of learning ways to make adaptations for students that are not only responsive to their challenges, but responsive also to cultural diversity. Gay (2002) points to the importance of that awareness for two reasons. Many students of color are disproportionately placed into special education (and stay in special education) due in part to a lack of teachers' awareness of cultural expectations and upbringing that might affect ways students learn. Further, she argues, all students could benefit from instruction embedded with cultural histories and perspectives. Others point also to the importance of linking literacy instruction with students' backgrounds that include language (Ososco & O'Connor, 2014) and income (Cummings, 2007). While attention to culturally responsive teaching has waned in some ways (Sleeter, 2012), new forms of so-called asset pedagogies have also arisen. By thinking about culturally sustaining practice, Paris (2012)

and Paris and Alim (2014) argue that educators can dynamically integrate changes that are interdependent with ways youth of color interact with their worlds. Literacy plays a central role in order “to foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change.” (p. 3). Novice special educators need knowledge of literacy that is embedded in asset-pedagogies as they develop, implement and assess their literacy instruction for students with disabilities.

Implications

This study leaves us with essential questions about learning to construct and sustain a pedagogy for teaching literacy as a special educator. As teacher educators, we need to consider how we can design our literacy courses to provide preservice special educators with opportunities to grow and feel better prepared. Participating in experiential literacy experiences early in a teacher preparation program can be valuable, since it may assist them in developing their knowledge, skill, and beliefs about literacy instruction. They need to have repeated exposure to the literacy content they are learning, as well as opportunities to use this knowledge as they engage in practice with students (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014). We know that meaningful practice in teaching students can be taught throughout special education teacher preparation programs (Sayeski, Hamilton-Jones, Cutler, Earle, & Husney, 2017); thus, by designing structured experiential experiences that allow preservice educators to apply what they are learning literacy courses with students with disabilities allows them to develop their teaching practices and hopefully prepare them to meet the challenges they may encounter in their first years of teaching.

In preparation for teaching, new teacher support, and in advanced professional development, knowledge about ways to assess the conditions of one’s teaching context could

also be invaluable. For example, the abilities to advocate and argue for new resources could be fundamental to bringing about better literacy instruction. Multiple ways to learn about students' identities, strengths and challenges are key methods to learn, and ways to ascertain that at times nuanced knowledge in collaboration with other personnel could prove useful. All teachers of literacy, which is in many ways all teachers since literacy is core to all learning, could benefit from specific discussions and instructional practice adapting curricular and instructional broad frameworks like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Understanding by Design (UbD) with specific talk about using those for teaching literacy. Innovative professional learning techniques such as rehearsal and practice could prove useful in helping all teachers learn ways to do that.

To do that, professional learning for teaching literacy throughout a career span could adopt an inquiry-focused orientation in which all teachers investigate problems of practice (Parker-Katz, Hughes, & Lee, 2017). Within professional learning, teachers could explore their own identities (Noonan, 2018) while deepening their knowledge and skill to become consistently thoughtful and resourceful to make changes (Bishop et al., 2010). Increasingly, we see teachers working in professional learning communities with colleagues; such structures could be ways to fold in all teachers (both special and general educators) and to provide professional learning for novices as well as they build rich learning experiences for all students, including those with disabilities.

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Appendix A

Interview

1. Describe your school and services available to students with disabilities.
2. Tell us about your work at the school.
 - What is your position? Who do you teach, and when (e.g., one period a day, continuum program where you see kids at different times in the day?)
 - We want to know about the resources you have.
3. Describe curriculum and curricular requirements in your school.
 - What do you consider as your “curriculum?” What do you follow?
 - What do you believe you must use (e.g., texts, certain programs)? How is that mandated and checked?
 - What aspects of curriculum do you believe you have constructed? In other words, what do you bring in from other books and materials perhaps not used in the school or by others?
4. Talk to us about any supports you have received, since you started working as a special education teacher.
 - Have you had a mentor?
 - What PD opportunities have been provided?
5. Tell us what we would see, if we’d been in your classroom last week, when you taught reading. Just take last week and give us details. What would we have seen students doing each time they were working on reading?
6. Reading is one part of literacy, but we know that writing is important parts as well. We’d like to know about writing instruction and what we might see and hear from your students and you. Tell us what we would see, if we’d been in your classroom last week when you taught about writing.
7. Tell us about ways you change what you do for certain students. To do that, can you choose two students, somewhat different from each other, and tell us what they were doing while you taught about writing last week.

Raising Race Discussions in K-5th Grade Classrooms

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Abstract

Racial understanding is important for many reasons, but the most pressing is that the general population in the United States is growing increasingly diverse while many communities are still racially segregated. The study's principal investigator (PI) sought to ascertain whether four white K-5 grade teachers who taught in predominantly white schools (of 85% white or higher) would better understand the lives of people who are not of the dominant culture, become comfortable talking about and teaching about race, and how, if at all, their teaching practices would change as a result of the study. Critical reflection was the lens used to understand whether the teachers examined their long-held beliefs and had begun to pose questions about equity and positionality. Teachers were provided with a resource to find quality multicultural literature and asked to structure four lessons around an anti-racist framework. Data consisted of sources including journal entries and lesson plans, audio recordings of mid-term meetings and final interviews, and others. Data analysis yielded the following findings for all of the teachers: the anti-racist framework provided the structure they needed to begin race-related discussions, they felt some level of comfort talking about race with their students, and they planned to continue reading multicultural literature aloud to their students. It is significant that the study teachers felt comfortable talking about race in their classrooms in light of the fact that many white people have never had a conversation about race with anyone other than immediate family members.

Background of the Study

Race has always mattered in the United States and it continues to matter in an increasingly racially diverse society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2003; Morrison, 1992; Omi & Winant, 1993; West, 1992). U.S. teachers, in particular, have compelling reasons to understand race impacts. Nearly 83% of U.S. teachers are of European-American descent, hold middle class status, and speak only one language (Ladson-Billings, 1995, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education or AACTE report, 2012). In contrast, students of color make up more than 45% of the P–12 population (AACTE) with an estimated 21% of school-aged children speaking a first language other than English (American Community Survey, using 2012 census data). Nearly 21% of children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). Public schools today are growing increasingly diverse while the teaching population is growing racially diverse much more slowly (The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, 2016). In classrooms where teachers and students do not share cultural frames of reference, miscommunication will occur (Orlando, 1990; Erickson, 1987).

Even though most people in the U. S. agree that race-related issues are problematic, many white people have difficulty discussing race (DiAngelo, 2016; Howard, 2010; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2007). If we ever hope to ease racial tensions and better understand each other, we must hold difficult discussions. Perhaps P-12 classrooms are the ideal place so that the next generation is more comfortable discussing race than their predecessors. But white teachers who teach in predominantly white schools may find race discussions and lessons especially difficult. Many admit that they are not sure what to teach, or even how to talk about race (Michael, 2015). In fact, they might neither understand themselves as racial/cultural beings (Howard, 2010; Michael; 2015; Sleeter, 2008), nor the transformative work necessary to understand differences of race and culture (Howard, 2016). Positive racial

identity development may well be a life-long process, but it is important to pursue because it yields two types of knowledge: self- knowledge and knowledge of “the other.” By first understanding themselves, whites are then better able to understand others (Howard, 2010; Michael, 2015). An additional complication, white teachers must also wrestle with allocating time to discuss race in an already crowded curriculum, is compounded by the fact that their communities may not expect them to teach about racial issues. Some community members may even object to race discussions in classrooms believing that race talk engenders racism, though research supports the contrary view (Aboud & Doyle, 1996). And, although many White teachers are not overtly racist (Wilson, 2002), those who live and teach in racially segregated communities (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2015) regularly have racist beliefs reinforced and may hold onto assumptions of white superiority (Howard, 2016). With unexamined racial beliefs, people of the dominant culture may view themselves as the racial norm by which they measure others (Milner, 2013; Williams, 1997). Teachers’ underlying beliefs influence their professional decision-making that impacts curricular content, teaching methods, and the materials that are included or excluded (Au, 2012).

Living in segregation can cause racial aversion rather than racial awareness. Racial awareness is used to describe a consciousness of historical, social, political and economic impacts experienced by racially marginalized groups (Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Tatum, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Further, it describes knowing how students understand their worlds, themselves as racial beings, and race impacts the U.S. society (Roediger, 1994; 2005; Sleeter, 1996). Accordingly, this study was designed to help white teachers examine their own racial beliefs in a sustainable way over the course of an academic year. The principal investigator (PI) designed this phenomenological study that teachers would not deem too time-consuming, but would provide adequate opportunities to

explore or further explore their White racial identity while learning about race impacts for people not of the dominant culture.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Reflection

The works of Descartes, Dewey, and Schön provide the foundation for teacher reflection, so widely held as a means of improving teaching practices. Support from diverse perspectives including conservative, radical, feminist, and Deweyan both account for its acceptance by many, and for the contradictions of what is meant by reflection. Four main paradigms currently dominate U.S. teacher education research and practice: Cartesian rationality, Deweyan thought, Schön's teacher professionalism, and feminist anti-establishment critiques.

Reflection in education, according to Cartesian rationality, assumes deliberation and making choices in order to produce alternative courses of action (van Manen, 1991). Others influenced by Cartesian rationality describe reflection as a means of making rational choices and assuming responsibility for choices (Evans and Policella, 2000; Ross and Bondy, 1996). For Dewey (1933), reflective thinking was meant to stimulate thinking about the future while promoting reason and science over instinct and impulse. In contrast to what Dewey actually intended, current thought on reflection ascribed to Dewey usually focuses more prominently on thinking about past actions in order to promote introspective understanding (Clark, 2001; Loughran, 2002). Schön sought to raise the status of teachers by promoting the characteristics of professionalism through reflection (Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). He promoted the artistry involved in teaching along with practitioner-based intuition over technical expertise (Gore, 1987). A feminist perspective of reflection assumes definitions of agency and reflection in which practitioners trust the authenticity of the inner self (Noddings, 1986; Richert, 1992) and denounce socializing influences that shape our knowledge and experiences.

Howard (2003) proposes that reflection should contain an aspect of criticality in order for teachers to examine long-held beliefs and to pose difficult questions about equity and positionality in regard to themselves and their practice. For Palmer (1998), the concept of teaching and identity are integrally intertwined as he contends that “we teach who we are.” Additionally, teachers who practice critical reflection in order to develop culturally relevant practices are teachers that: a.) acknowledge that deficit-based mindsets about diverse students affect how these children are taught and portrayed in media, b.) use students’ cultural capital to help students make connections between their culture and school learning, and c.) are aware of the ways that traditional teaching practices privilege students of the dominant culture (Howard, 2003). These aspects of critically reflective practice are as important for teachers who teach few students of color as they are for teachers whose students are predominantly students of color.

Critical reflection, then, is important to culturally relevant practice (Howard, 2010) and, encompasses reflection in areas of equity, access, and social justice (Calderhead, 1989; Gore, 1987). The study teachers reflected on their lives when they wrote autobiographies, a practice well-documented in helping teachers examine their assumptions present in their personal lives as well as in their professional beliefs (Goodson & Cole, 1993; Pinar, 1994), and also after they selected texts and taught lessons.

The Read-Aloud Framework

The multicultural picture books teachers read aloud and used to lead discussions on race or culture, provided opportunities to experience people racially or culturally different from the teachers and many of the students. This is important because, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), stories by people of color can be used to challenge dysconscious racism. Characters’ life circumstances and perspectives allow teachers and students to consider their own and others’ societal positions. The Read-Aloud framework used in the

study was designed to facilitate thinking about and talking about equity, access, and social justice, all of which are extensions of critical reflection. Without classroom discussions, students may have trouble articulating these concepts even if prevalent in the books they read. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) state that, “Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others, and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world” (p. 41). Dorn and Soffos (2005) concur stating that teacher read-alouds with ensuing discussions allow students to develop background knowledge and clarify their thinking on concepts presented in stories.

Based on Howard’s (2016) work that promotes racial healing, Garlough and Carrothers (2017) developed a fourfold anti-racist framework with four components: honesty, empathy, action, and advocacy. Found on the following website (<http://webstu.onu.edu/awmpb/>), the framework provides teachers with a structure for discussing race and culture in P-12 classrooms. Here honesty is meant to challenge whites to question their assumptions of rightness and acknowledge that what they believe and the ways they experience life are likely not the same for everyone. For many white educators, honestly looking at their own social standing and the unequal standing of others is challenging. Further, coming to understand oppression which has been rationalized and not viewed as not oppression to perpetrators (Lawrence, 1987) may be more palatable while mediated through multicultural literature. Empathy means “to feel with” and requires whites to focus attention on others’ perspectives and worldviews. Empathy requires a reflexive role-taking, imagining what life would be like if experienced as someone of a different societal position. Well-crafted picture books are appropriate messengers to convey empathy as readers enter into the text world where racial and cultural “others” have opportunities to tell personal stories. The next two parts of the framework go beyond the reading toward enacting anti-racist work: advocacy and action. Advocacy begins when privileged people look honestly at impacts of

race and culture and the ways that people are unequally positioned within society. At its best, advocacy means investing people who are not represented in power circles to speak on their own behalf or, at a minimum, considering diverse viewpoints. Because working toward an anti-racist society can feel too lofty and unattainable, involving children and adolescents in this work can ground teachers and provide motivation. This framework completes a cycle of questioning with action. The website provides teachers with suggestions for action items although teachers may develop other courses of action suited to their students' ages and interests, or invite students to develop their own. Whether the actions generated through the process are great or small, they provide a means of working toward eradicating societal dominance and inequity.

Picture books chosen for the website developed for this study were recognized with awards by their corresponding racial/cultural group as being of high quality and representative of that race/culture. Norton's (2012) racial/cultural designations were used: Native American (the American Indian Youth Literature Award), Asian/Asian American (the Asian Pacific American Libraries Association), African/African American (the Coretta Scott King Award), Middle Eastern (the Middle East Book Award), Jewish (the National Jewish Book Award), and Chicano/Latino/a (the Pura Belpre Award). The PI elected to use literature chosen by each racial/cultural group to honor the voices of these groups.

Reading multicultural literature served as a mirror (Bishop, 1990) to validate the few children of color in the study teachers' classrooms who saw characters that looked like them, normalizing the existence of people of color by their presence, and indicating worth as spaces within classroom walls were opened to include people of color. Perhaps these discussions helped white teachers and students understand that race and culture do not impact people of all racial and cultural groups equally. Multicultural literature also served as a window (Bishop, 1990) through which the teachers viewed the lives of racial and cultural "others"

with whom they had little contact with in life circumstances. Looking through these windows into the lives of others is especially important if white people are to increase their appreciation for and awareness of those with whom they may not share values, norms, or world views (Howard, 2003).

Research Design

This phenomenological study was designed to investigate white racial identity development in four white elementary school teachers who taught in predominantly white schools. Specific questions under investigation include:

- 1.) How did the use of the anti-racist framework facilitate teachers' understanding of the impacts of race in the daily lives of non-dominant culture people, if at all?
- 2.) How did the anti-racist framework help teachers become more comfortable talking about and teaching about race, if at all?
- 3.) How did the teachers plan to put what they had learned during the study into practice, if at all?

Participants were selected from schools with populations of 85% or more white students within 40 miles of the teacher education program in which the PI worked. Because many white people resist examining long-held racial beliefs (Sleeter, 2008), purposeful sampling was employed to select participants who were willing to examine their racial identities and beliefs. After teachers were selected for the study, they participated in a three-hour workshop to explore some of the ways race impacts people of different races differently in the United States, and to understand the expectations of the study.

Participant-generated data included a cultural/racial autobiography written using the template provided by the PI (Appendix A) on which participants where they fell within stages of white racial identity (Appendix B), written answers to follow-up questions, written journal entries on text selection for lessons (Appendix C), written lesson plans created using the anti-

racist framework (Appendix D) with multicultural texts, and a written lesson debriefing guide (Appendix E). Additional data were collected and coded for themes from notes the PI transcribed from the mid-point group meetings (only three of the teachers could meet with the PI in November due to scheduling issues; when the PI met with Bonnie in December she attempted to replicate the meeting with the other teachers), and from individual interviews with the teachers at the end of the study, and classroom videos of lessons taught using the anti-racist framework with multicultural literature. Students created artifacts for each lesson; teachers brought the artifacts without student names to the meetings and interviews. No data were generated from the student artifacts.

The PI used the constant comparative method of coding data for units of meaning (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), engaged in a process of evolving data analysis, and made adjustments in data collection (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 2007). This allowed for data to be analyzed in accordance with her initial understandings and allowed for emerging understandings to occur.

The Participants and Their School Districts

The four teachers who participated in the study, Amy, Bailey, Bonnie, and Harmony, are female, of middle socio-economic status, white, speak only English, and proclaim Christian beliefs. All of the teachers related that at least part of their P-12 school years was spent in racially segregated communities.

During the year of this study, Harmony, Bailey, and Bonnie all taught in the same village school district with a population of 8,009 (2014-15 Ohio School District Demographic Profiles). At the time of the census, the village population of people who reported one race affiliation was 96.8% white, .1.3% Asian, .7% Native Hawaiian, .4% black and .04% Native American. The community in which Amy works had a population of 19,789 according to the same census data with 97.1% of the population reporting one race affiliation. Of those,

87.1% are white, 8.2% are black, .6% are Asian, and .4% are American Indian and Alaska Native. The state racial demographics at a similar time for single race affiliated people which makes up 97.70 of the total population include the following: 82.13% white, 12.24 % black/African American, 3.4% Hispanic of any race, 1.94% Asian, .20 % American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Bailey teaches second grade in the same district in which she began her 30-year career. For all but five of those years, she has taught the same grade level. Amy teaches 24 second graders in a district with three second grades in a K-12 building. Two of her students are African American, and the rest are white. When Bailey was a child in this same district, she participated in choir, band, 4-H, and Girl Scouts. Bailey was the first member of her family to graduate from college. She has taken her children to visit their grandparents on a weekly basis during their childhood. Bailey attended a large state university close to her home that was much more racially diverse than her high school where her beliefs on race changed to be more inclusive.

Bonnie is a third grade teacher with 15 years of experience, six in her present school. She describes the context as a self-contained classroom in a rural community. Many of her students receive free or reduced lunches. Three of her twenty-one students are from cultures other than the dominant culture (debriefing guide). Although Bonnie has had little experience with people outside of the dominant culture, some of her opinions are based on her husband's life experiences. Bonnie's husband is a parole officer who works with a large number of African Americans who have committed crimes. Bonnie believes that the stereotype of African Americans having greater criminal tendencies is, thus, well-founded due to her husband's work experiences. She was raised in a strictly religious household where following rules was important. Her family taught her to be fearful of people who looked or acted different. Bonnie learned a strong work ethic from her family and stated, "We

can all pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and make things better. ... We have to accept responsibility for our choices and should learn from our mistakes (cultural autobiography).”

Bonnie has a close family member who has developmental delays that caused her to be compassionate toward those not like her.

Harmony is the youngest teacher in the study and is in her fifth year of teaching, her first in kindergarten. Although she is white, when she was a child some people believed her to be bi-racial due to her relatively dark skin, hair color, and eyes. She believes that these comments allowed her to know that she had a race at an early age. Harmony grew up on a farm, and was active showing cattle in 4-H, school musicals, track and field, and other school and church activities. Unlike her family, Harmony attended church while she was growing up. She is the first in her family to attend college and earn bachelor's and master's degrees. Harmony has had several significant friendships with people of color in elementary school and throughout college. She believes that these friendships that have helped her better understand how race impacts people of color.

Amy is a fifth grade language arts teacher who works with a total of 107 students throughout the day. The first community she remembers living in is a small predominantly white community where she attended Catholic school. Her next school experience was in a public school district in a school district in a major city. Amy had to readjust to her middle school that she described as “scary” because she had to walk through metal detectors in hallways patrolled by police officers. She eventually adjusted to the diversity, learned to make friends, and felt that she fit in. After three years, her family returned to their original community and Amy was once again in Catholic school. Amy's college years were a time when she experienced a friendship group that was diverse in regard to religious beliefs. Recently, members of Amy's family have experienced a death and a robbery by people of color leaving her feeling fearful.

Findings from the Data

The study was designed to help teachers better understand race impacts of people not of the dominant culture as well as afford them greater comfort in talking about race in their classrooms. The PI hoped this could be accomplished while providing the teachers with a lens through which to experience life as a member of a different racial group while they read multicultural literature and led discussions using an anti-racist framework. However, data analysis from the first half of the study indicated that teachers operated from four interrelated beliefs that did little to promote the goals of the study: a foundational belief in the white racial norm, and supporting beliefs of universalism and empathy without honesty, all of which furthered a cultural differences perspective (Garlough, in press). Operating from the white racial norm through which whites believe that whiteness represents *the* human experience, these teachers tended to believe that their experiences were common to all people. The white racial norm exists conceptually even though there are numerous white racial experiences as is true for all racial groups. Universalism, the belief in which all people are merely human with no understanding that people of differing races experience life differently due to their race. Accordingly, teachers expected all people's efforts to reap the same rewards. A second mutually reinforcing belief was demonstrated when these teachers focused on empathy with the cultural/racial "others" but understanding historical and structural impacts of race that differ according to race. These beliefs reinforce the cultural differences perspective signaling that whites are the standard by which all other groups are to be compared and reinforcing the concept of "the other" as someone to be objectified.

As a means of facilitating cognitive dissonance to disrupt the unfolding paradigm analyzed from data collected during the first half of the study, the PI provided the teachers with a copy of *What Does It Mean to Be White?: Developing White Racial Literacy* (DiAngelo, 2016) during the mid-point meetings. Each teacher read portions of Chapter 9

How Race Shapes the Lives of White People in order to provide the teachers opportunities to discuss race. All of the teachers discussed race in meaningful ways during the meeting; data analysis from the meetings indicated that each teacher had moments of better understanding the impacts of race on themselves and those of other races. One such example occurred when Amy shared that what she read in DiAngelo's book in regard to race differences, "opened my eyes for one thing, with learning about how it's everywhere and it's all the time. You know, that's probably the biggest realization that I experienced through the whole thing." Other examples of the impact of the mid-point meetings follow in the discussion section.

Discussion

Data analysis from teachers' journals, debriefing guides, as well as transcripts from recorded lessons, the mid-point meetings, and final individual interviews yielded the following insights specific to the research questions.

Teachers' Understanding of the Impacts of Race in the Daily Lives of Non-Dominant Culture People

Early in the study, Amy introduced her fifth graders to *Caribou Song* (Highway, 2012), the story of a nomadic Cree family that follow caribou. As she talked with her students (teaching video) she explained that it is often easier to find differences between ourselves and others who don't appear to be similar. She encouraged her students to think about similarities between themselves and the boys in the story. Amy brought up many interesting points for her students to consider, although she primarily operated from a cultural differences perspective. In discussing the Cree family's hard work without the use of modern conveniences, she said, "This shows us that the way this tribe lives is a lot more hard work as well as how difficult it is for them to come across food and shelter. It also shows us that we take many things for granted that we have in today's world while others are not as blessed as we are." Amy had not considered that the Cree people might feel blessed not to live in a

typical urban lifestyle with artificial lights, pollution, a dependence on motorized transportation, regulated work schedules, and in which parents and children spend a large portion of the day apart from each other.

After the mid-point meetings, Amy selected texts that allowed her to actually discuss race with her students. She began to better understand the impacts of race for her students who are not of the dominant culture. Using the anti-racist framework allowed her to discuss race which signaled to students that race discussions are important. After discussing *Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom* (Evans, 2011) and *Henry's Freedom Box* (Levine, 2007), two stories that had won the Coretta Scott King award, one of Amy's students shared an experience she recently had while at a restaurant. People at tables all around them had their orders taken and food served while her family was not waited on. The student's grandmother had to speak to the manager in order to receive proper service. Because Amy worked in restaurants during the summer she related that some of her co-workers would have done the same. In her final interview Amy stated, "It was neat hearing their stories, also kinda sad hearing their stories even as little kids what they've experienced up until where they're at now."

Bailey explained that she had been hesitant to participate in the study initially but after the mid-point meeting she better understood race impacts and, before the end of the study, she was glad that she had participated (final interview). Reading multicultural literature and discussing the stories with her class allowed her to know things about people's lives that she had not known before. She said, "I think delving into the books and showing the kids the different races helped me be more aware of the different (races)." Bailey reflected on whether the study helped her understand racial impacts. She said,

I think it did somewhat, but I still don't think you can really understand unless you walk in their shoes. I mean, it's hard for me being a white person to understand black

people are still judged and ... I wonder how it feels to be walking in their shoes (final interview).

While Bailey might not understand *how* race impacts people of other races, she knew that it did.

Bonnie said,

Reading those books, and seeing the pictures of things portrayed from lives of individuals that were not culturally white, just made me think about where they live, and the type of situation, who they're living with and what their life is probably like. But it also made me think about, and we talked about it with our first story, that even though their lives are different how they're mirroring the importance of family, the importance of working hard, how beauty is often perceived in some of the same ways (final interview).

Bonnie also mentioned that she was developing a curiosity for people not of the dominant culture stating,

...so that kinda opened my eyes that I am truly not aware of what happens besides in our basic dominant culture. We hear a lot about African American things that go on but we do not hear about what it's like for your Islamic people and Chinese and Japanese and Korean. I don't know; I felt that it was eye opening (final interview).

Harmony stated in her final interview that participation in the study helped make her more aware of race.

I think it just made me more aware, I guess, of the differences out there and the spins on some of it and the way people are portraying different races to be. But like, the biggest one I can think of is the new smoking commercial and how it's like pointing

out that they're attacking the African American culture. Before I probably never would have paid attention to the commercial.

There were, naturally, also some missed opportunities in exploring race impacts as teaching about race was new to the teachers. Two areas of concern arose when the teachers did not follow the anti-racist framework. The first is that when some of the teachers expressed beliefs from a cultural differences perspective which reinforced the concept of "the other." By focusing on empathy toward a "misfortunate other" without working to understand structures of oppression that exist, teachers reinforced stereotypes even if unintentionally. An example occurred when Bonnie taught about a child whose grandmother was not comfortable speaking English using *Grandma's Gift* (Velasquez, 2012). Because of her limited English, Grandma's life was limited to El Barrio in New York City. Empathizing with this grandmother and her grandson because the grandma's language was a barrier while not looking honestly at some of the structures that helped hold segregation in place causes misunderstanding. Both grandma and grandson are viewed as lesser individuals who should be expected to change their situations by individual determination alone.

The second area of concern for not using the entire framework was that the teachers did not use the advocacy and action portions. The teachers did not operate from an anti-racist perspective, challenging racial oppression and working to reconstruct racist systems in order to achieve equity among racial/cultural groups. The study, was designed, though, only to help teachers begin to understand the impacts of race. Amy stated that she believed the study "almost put me 'back in check' as how I should be thinking about other races (final interview), helps put into perspective that the teachers were beginning to understand the impacts of race.

Teachers' Comfort Talking About and Teaching About Race Using the Framework

Although many white people have difficulty discussing race (DiAngelo, 2016; Howard, 2010; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2007), and have never had conversations about race with anyone other than immediate family members (Michael, 2015), three of the study's teachers reported that they were comfortable teaching about race. However, these three teachers taught about culture and not about race or only in a very limited way. Only Amy said that she was initially uncomfortable talking about race in her classroom. She was also the only teacher who actually did teach about race during the last half of the study. Data from multiple sources provides insight into the teachers' avoidance of or their nascent experiences leading race-related discussions.

Of all of the study's teachers, Amy experienced the biggest change in her level of comfort talking about race and culture from the first story to the fourth. Reviewing the first part of the study at the mid-point meeting, Amy said,

To be honest, it was a bit difficult at first. Some students asked many 'Why' questions and not knowing the answer 100% made me feel a bit uncomfortable. Also with teaching to a student who is of different race, I felt like I was walking on egg shells when I was talking about how different cultures/races are not really that different. I didn't want to offend her in any way (final interview).

For her second story, Amy said,

This book was a lot easier to teach than the last one. I put some of my fears of offending people behind me and made sure to research this culture more before going about teaching the lesson so I could answer the questions that would come up (debriefing guide).

With Amy's level of discomfort, it was easy to understand why she had chosen books about different cultures at the beginning of the study. At the mid-point meetings, the PI reminded

the teachers that the study was designed to help them discuss race with their students, and that text selection plays an important role in their ability to do so. After reading from DiAngelo's book (2016), and spending some time during the meetings discussing being white, all of the teachers pledged to actually discuss race. The two texts Amy chose for the third and fourth reading allowed for race discussions. Through the discussion that accompanied *Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom* (Evans, 2011), Amy said that she felt uncomfortable at times. One topic for honest discussion was opened when Amy's fifth graders began to understand that black people were owned as property by white people during the time when slavery was legal in the United States. Amy recalled,

I also felt uncomfortable at first when the one class mentioned that it was 'messed up' that all slaves were only black. ... However, after the discussion I really felt a bit more at ease and I think they did as well. Another time was when I had one student who said he didn't feel comfortable with this lesson since he had ancestors that were confederate soldiers. After talking to that student and explaining that I wasn't saying every confederate person was a horrible person, he felt better. I also explained to him that we are not the same people that our ancestors are so even if his ancestors did own slaves and were mean to them, we don't have to follow in those same footsteps (final interview).

Finally, with the fourth story Amy explained,

This book was again easier than the last lesson dealing with race. I did get uncomfortable especially when I felt the urge to talk about racism in our society. However, after asking the students if they felt comfortable discussing the matter and after receiving an overwhelming, "Yes, I felt much more at ease about the situation." Then to hear others' perspectives on the whole situation was amazing. Hearing the kids talk about how they have racist relatives and that they would never

want to be like that when they grow up or how they ask their relatives to not say such hurtful things is a huge deal (final interview).

When discussing with the PI which part of the study's design was most helpful in supporting her feel to comfortable discussing race, Amy said about the fourth story,

This lesson (the anti-racist framework) definitely helped me feel more comfortable and open with talking about my racial identity. Taking away that scare factor of discussing it really helps me understand and be able to listen to others. ... I know that I, as a person, have grown. In fact, ... we talked about like racism and why it's wrong and today's society and all this like, I felt that uncomfortableness, like one of things in the beginning I would've skated around it at that time, and not talked about it because I was so uncomfortable, but then, after it was like neat to finally get over that and be able to talk about and just to hear experiences that some of the kids ... Like I had one kid that was talking about how his dad is extremely racist and going on. I was like, "How do you react when he does that?" and he was, "Usually I try to tell him that's not cool, you know?" I was, "Well, that's good because you sticking up for somebody is what's gonna help the future. Yeah, it was really, really, good (final interview)."

Bailey said that the framework helped her when discussing race with her students, and that the honesty portion was very powerful especially when discussing *My Christmas Coat: Memories of My Sioux Childhood* (Sneve, 2012). Bailey even read some of the linked articles from the literature website on challenges faced by the Sioux such as poverty, high suicide rates, and low high school graduation rates, something she would not have previously done with her second graders. Even though Bailey had experiences that helped her connect to this story, without the study, Bailey would not have brought up a discussion in which she talked about race-related poverty. Bailey wrote in her debriefing guides that she felt

comfortable talking about the first two stories because she wanted her students to “be aware of different races in our country.” Her debriefing guide comments were similar for the third and fourth stories even though she clearly talked about race rather than culture only once. When asked directly about her comfort level discussing race, Bailey said she was comfortable. However, when she continued to explain, she described an evolution of thought on the topic of race conversations in classrooms. At the study’s outset Bailey said she was not sure she should talk about race (final interview). She explained that the news coverage of young black men being shot and “implications” of the guilt of white police officers seems unfair to her. Bailey stated, “... it’s just really bad and I thought, ‘Do I want to call attention to that?’” Bailey explained that in her Christian worldview that there was only one human race with skin colors of different hues rather than different races of people. The mid-point meeting drew her attention to the impacts that people with different skin color experience within our society. She stated, “Of course all of ‘em are different (ways of being treated due to race) at this time in our life, but it made me glad that I was doing it then. And I was like, ‘Maybe I do need to bring knowledge that there are different races.’”

During Bonnie’s final interview, when asked about her comfort level in talking about race, she stated, “This was not hard but I felt the need to do a little more research on my own in case some questions came up.” She made similar statements about better understanding the culture prior to reading all of the books and did not select any that would allow her to actually discuss race, nor did she use the anti-racist framework with her students. In an effort to better ascertain Bonnie’s comfort level, the PI asked for clarification about a statement that Bonnie had written in regard to reading *Razia’s Ray of Hope* (Suneby, 2014). Bonnie stated that some of the students are fearful when they see a woman wearing a hijab. This statement was reminiscent of Bonnie’s statement in her cultural autobiography that she was raised to be cautious and even fearful of people who looked or acted different, though she could only

recall being around white people growing up in her small rural community. When asked how she knew her students were fearful she replied,

Hmmm, they just don't know, just don't know what to think. I mean someone who looks different they're going to shy away from. Just like I think they almost think they see them as someone who comes in with a bandana over their face to rob a bank. I mean they don't associate that as being normal (final interview).

Even though Bonnie stated that she was comfortable teaching about race, her avoidance of race during the study and the comments above seem to indicate discomfort.

Harmony was another teacher whose literature selections did not allow her to discuss race. Her students' ages as kindergartners also factored into the discussions she led. During Harmony's final interview she stated,

I would say my comfort level on the first lesson to the fourth lesson was straight across the board 'cause they're all so different. I didn't really get into too deep 'cause the others had the older (students) where they really could talk about it. ... I would say I was comfortable with all of them just because it was such a *broad* spectrum we were looking at and we were talking about and we were able to relate to and it wasn't something that I was afraid that they were going to attack me on or another student on where I think older grades might have.

Harmony shared about a time when race came up naturally in her class. Students were drawing pictures of themselves and were asking others which crayons came the closest to their skin colors. The PI noted that even though Harmony did not discuss race with her students using the multicultural literature, the data analysis from her second pair of lessons revealed richer discussions about culture with these than with previous lessons. Harmony's students became interested in Spanish words after she read *Book Fiesta!: Celebrate Children's Day/Book Day* (Mora, 2010) so she capitalized on their interest when she read

How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Book (MacDonald & Taibah, 2012). Harmony honored the Arabic language by attempting to count in Arabic even though it was not an easy task. She asked students questions about the people's clothing, mode of transportation, and the materials their houses were made of. Rather than just asking for cultural differences, she helped students understand the reason for the differences as being due to natural resources found in their geographic region. Harmony showed respect for the language and culture of the Arabic people rather than presenting them as different. Another new aspect of Harmony's teaching was that it did not fully assume the white racial norm. She asked a question for *Hanukkah Bear* (Kimmel, 2012) guiding students to listen one way if they were Jewish, and another way if they were not Jewish. While she had an assumption that none of her students were Jewish, she provided a space for what she was not sure of. Harmony used the anti-racist framework to extend discussions in ways that demonstrated a level of confidence in discussing culture, though not race.

Critical Reflection as a Lens for Implications for Practice

Would teachers begin to pose difficult questions about equity and positionality in regard to themselves and their practices while living in and teaching in predominantly white communities? Would they come to see that they teach who they are in ways that would allow for change in their practices? Affirmative answers to these questions would mean that the teachers had exercised critical reflection during the study. The PI had not observed much change in mindsets or teaching practices until the mid-point meetings. During these meetings, the teachers began to examine some of their long-held beliefs in regard to what is "normal" and to understand that race impacts people of different races differently. All of the teachers made statements that indicated that they better understood the role of media in perpetrating racial stereotypes and white dominance whether it was that of people of color needing white people to help them, a common theme in movies, or that portrayals of beauty

favor white blue-eyed blonds after reading portions. These revelations came with the reading of portions of DiAngelos's (2016) text in the ensuing discussions. Amid learning that they had engaged in racist practices and mindsets and participated in a racist society, they struggled with cognitive dissonance because they believed themselves to be good people and, therefore, were not racist. Some also voiced a sense of white guilt and helplessness due to better understanding the pervasiveness of racism. In order to ignite a sense of agency within the teachers, the PI reminded them that using multicultural literature with the anti-racist framework provided materials and tools to counter some of the media portrayals of white dominance and racial stereotypes. After all, the teachers held the power to determine appropriate teaching materials and were able to guide classroom discussions. The teachers could use positionality to change the status quo of reading literature that only showcased the lives of white people.

Teaching and identity are integrally intertwined according to Palmer (1991). For many of the teachers their choices of literature prior to the study reinforced white racial identity for themselves and their white students, and reinforced the "otherness" of their students of color. Only Bonnie was purposeful in her selection of multicultural literature prior to the start of the study; she focused primarily on white cultures that were not middle class and Christian. By discussing how people who are not of the dominant culture experience life in the U.S. differently than white people, the teachers began to better understand how they were reinforcing their own whiteness and that of their white students by their text selections as well as the value of teaching about the truth behind racial oppression. Slavery struck a chord in Amy's fifth grade class; Bailey taught about the impacts of poverty due to war and government-sanctioned oppression. Bonnie focused on the oppression of females in some cultures. Harmony taught about culture geographically and discussed culturally-based differences to help students become familiar with customs different from their own. Long-

held beliefs of meritocracy were being shaken by talking about why some of these things have happened or are happening rather than only focusing on the experiences of dominant culture people. The teachers were becoming more aware of their positionality, but were not yet articulating it. Amy confronted her white guilt and helped students navigate those same feelings. She also provided the time and classroom climate conducive to discuss race and its impacts in her students' lives. Talk about the feelings associated with racism allowed for the possibility for change to occur. Amy felt hopeful that the students she taught would be further ahead in anti-racist actions due to these discussions.

At the study's end, all of the teachers said they would teach using multicultural literature. Amy said, "I plan on doing this again in the future, that's for sure. Especially with the, well culture obviously because in our curriculum that's part of it. With *Henry's Freedom Box* (Levine, 2007) and the *Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom* (Evans, 2011), knowing that the kids have come up not really understanding truly about slavery and why we had it and what happened during that. I think it's a key thing they really need to know." Amy said that her students really "got it." "Just knowing that they're taking that (race) with them because I can't remember learning something like that when I was growing up, you know?" In Bailey's and Harmony's separate final interviews they said that they, too, would read more multicultural literature with their students. Bonnie (final interview) also said that she had become more aware of that she'd read more multicultural literature than she'd realized and would continue to purchase more to read with her students. Though the PI had hoped that the teachers would have committed to using the anti-racist framework, they at least committed to a larger representation of races and cultures within their reading selections. From a Cartesian perspective, reflection that facilitates changes in teachers' professional practice (vanManen, 1991), such as selection of reading materials, appropriately frames the study's impact.

Limitations, Study Implications and Recommendations for Further Study

As with all studies that employ self-reporting, the data must be understood to have limitations such as social desirability bias in which the participants provide answers that are socially acceptable (Fisher, 1993). The PI employed multiple data collection samples that were used to provide triangulation in order to offset this tendency. As all humans have incomplete understandings of race and of their own biases, this data analysis is offered with humility as the PI attempted to provide descriptive examples to convey the perspectives of the study's teachers each with a unique view.

As would be expected, the study teachers did not have identical experiences using the read aloud framework with the multicultural literature they selected. They also held differing understandings of race impacts, and different perceptions of their comfort levels in talking about and teaching about race. Amy's fifth graders were the oldest of the study's students. She voiced the most fear at the beginning of the study in talking about race. When she did facilitate honest race discussions, notable topics included the following: a new understanding that slaves were the property of their masters (and not hired servants) as well as some of the cruelties of slavery; her students' experiences with racism (something she had not previously known); and the feelings of a white student who experienced white guilt as a result of conversations about slavery because his family had been part of the confederacy. Each of these topics provided opportunities for further discussion and understanding within the classroom community. Amy believed the discussions would help her students take a stand when oppressive situations arose in their lives. The other teachers discussed cultural differences rather than race, even when the texts afforded the opportunity to talk about race, and stated that they felt comfortable with the discussions from the beginning of the study to the end.

All of the teachers believed that using the anti-racist framework with their students in discussing the literature helped make them and their students more aware of race and race issues, though they used it to varying degrees and none ventured into advocacy or action. One teacher was able to see some of her own racist beliefs, though this came from the mid-point meeting rather than from using the framework, and another was more aware of her students' conversations that might include aspects of race. Another teacher had determined that she need not deny aspects of race in the lives of her students of color. This understanding, too, likely stemmed from the reading and discussions during the mid-point meetings. All of the teachers believed that using the anti-racist framework with multicultural literature provided them with the structure they needed to begin race-related discussions. All of the teachers planned to continue reading multicultural literature aloud to their students.

Michael (2015) states that many white people have never had a conversation about race with anyone other than immediate family members. The study teachers have allowed open discussions about race and culture to have a place of legitimacy within their classrooms. They believe that these discussions provided a beginning for the next generation to begin discussions about race and to examine beliefs about race. Additionally, the study helped broaden the teachers' literature selections, which is important because curriculum is political in nature. What is taught becomes "official" (Parker, 2003). Even though the state standards reinforce the ideologies promote knowledge that is embedded within power relations, and most of these teachers did not find reasons to teach about race or culture within the state standards, they chose to begin to make changes in their curriculum through the texts they selected and a cursory usage of the anti-racist framework. These beginnings are important because, according to Zimmerman (2002) what is taught and how it is taught is important; it impacts the developing national identity as our children come into positions of power in adulthood.

Recommendations for further study include replicating this study to include more time with resources to help teachers examine long-held racial beliefs discussing texts such as *What Does it Mean to Be White?: Developing White Racial Literacy* (DiAngelo, 2016), as well as more time exploring the anti-racist framework developed for the study. Other possible future studies include using a similar methodology with preservice teachers rather than practicing teachers.

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APPENDIX A: Racial/Cultural Autobiography

*Note: Anything to change from your original work should be written in a different colored font and dated.

Section 1—Background

Family Background: Describe your family of origin. Discuss the ethnic/cultural history of your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents. What is the primary language, religion, race of your culture? Describe and critically examine your own background related to race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, language, class, religion, and sexual orientation. Describe your upbringing regarding your neighborhood, community, school, church, clubs, courses, etc. Discuss your family/individual values, beliefs, and goals regarding success/failure in life.

Section 2—Experiences with Others

My View of “Others” & Life Experiences with “Difference”: What *generalized* experiences have you had with people who are different from yourself (race, ethnicity, language, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation)? What did these experiences teach you about people who are different from you? What messages have you heard or assumed or been taught about people who are different from you?

“Other” Memory: Describe in detail a specific incident that you had with another individual that stands out in your mind. This person should be different from you by race, ethnicity, language, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and/or [dis]ability. This can be either a positive or negative experience. What did you learn from this experience?

Section 3—Identity

Racial/ethnic Identity: How do you identify yourself racially and ethnically? Where are you in your stage of racial identity development? What other stages have you been in in the past? How did you get to the stage that you are in now? Why do you believe that you are in this stage? How does being in this stage affect your interracial relationships (friends, classmates, etc.)?

Other areas of Identity: How have you come to know yourself as a gendered, classed, religious (etc.) person? With what groups do you now identify (e.g. social class, religion)? Do you identify with a characteristic of “difference”? In what way? What messages have you heard about these identities (e.g. what you believe you should be as a gendered man or woman)? How have these messages affected you?

Section 4 (or skillfully weaved throughout sections 1-3)—Research Study Connections**Learning Experiences:**

How have my learning experiences in this study (i.e. discussions, preparing for lessons, teaching lessons, debriefing, journaling) informed, influenced, or reinforced values, beliefs, and attitudes toward others? How have they helped you to better understand your experiences and your position in society? Give specific examples.

Section 4/5 (Conclusion)—Implications on Practice

How might your understanding of your identity development affect your practice as a teacher and relationships with others in general?

Adapted from the following source:

<http://eduweb.education.radford.edu/ncate/docs/ru%20ir%20addendum%20appendices/appendix%20k%20courses%20supporting%20diversity/educ%20670-cultural%20autobiography.docx>

APPENDIX B: Stages of White Racial Identity Development

Adapted from a presentation written by Dr. Anne Tellett and Dr. Priscilla A. Day, University of Minnesota Duluth

Underlying concepts:

What is privilege?

Society gives **privilege** to groups by assigning **unearned over**advantage to some groups and **unearned under**advantage to others. It gives status and power to members of the groups *with* privilege.

It has nothing to do with merit or ability. It is systemic.

Privilege is similar to a fish being unaware of the water in which it lives.

There are many kinds of privilege:

- White privilege
- Heterosexual privilege
- Able-bodies privilege
- Class privilege
- Privilege based on religion
- Privilege based on gender
- Privilege based on formal education

White Racial Identity Development (WRID) Assumptions (Sue & Sue, 1999)

- Racism permeates all aspects of life.
- We are all socialized into society—inheriting all the biases, stereotypes and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the larger society.
- Individuals go through an identifiable process as they perceive themselves as racial beings.
- All interracial relationships are affected by the stage of racial identity each person is in.

Minority Racial Identity Development (MRID)-Assumptions (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993)

- Anchored in belief that all minority groups experience the common force of oppression.
- As a result, all will generate attitudes and behaviors consistent with natural internal struggle to develop strong sense of self-identity and group identity, despite oppressive situations.

Comments on Stage theories:

- Racial identity development is not linear.
- People move back and forth from stage to stage, but when revisiting an earlier stage, it will look different because of new experiences.
- The concept of recycling through the stages can be seen as a spiral staircase

Conformity Stage

Dissonance Stage

Resistance and Immersion

Introspection Stage

*Integrative Awareness
Awareness*

Synergistic Articulation and

“Differences do not separate us, but refusing to acknowledge them and the role they take in shaping our relationships and institutions keeps us apart. We need to rethink difference – use it as a place to reconstruct our world.” (Audre Lorde)

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See also:

http://www.pierce.ctc.edu/staff/tlink/development/theme_identity_and_cohort/race_stages.html

APPENDIX C: Journal Prompts

The purpose of the journals is 1.) to help you think through specific aspects of the lessons: preparation, implementation, and your observations of student work, 2.) to help you think about your white racial identity development (WRID), and 3.) to help you think about how WRID can impact your teaching. I strongly encourage you not to write about what you think I'm looking for. Honest journal responses are a necessity.

Be sure you date all of your journal responses. Copy and paste your responses into the journal googledoc.

Prior to Lesson 1- What kinds of things did you think about as you selected the text you'll be using for the read-aloud? What background knowledge will students need to be participative in this lesson? What will the central focus of the lesson be? What student work will help you know if students understood the central focus? Other thoughts?

After Lesson 1- Is there anything you'd like to add or elaborate on after your debriefing? Do you have questions, issues, or changed opinions with what you've read in the Howard text? Please describe. Have you begun to notice issues about race and/or culture more now than in the past? Please explain. Do you have questions about race and/or culture that you'd like to find out about? What are they? Where could you go to get some answers? Are your reading or viewing habits changed at all as a result of this study? If so, how? Other thoughts? If you have any changes to make to your cultural autobiography, remember to use a different colored font and make note of when you made the changes.

Prior to Lesson 2- What kinds of things did you think about as you selected the text you'll be using for the read-aloud? What background knowledge will students need to be participative in this lesson? What will the central focus of the lesson be? What student work will help you know if students understood the central focus?

After Lesson 2- Is there anything you'd like to add or elaborate on after your debriefing? Do you have questions, issues, or changed opinions with what you've read in the Howard text? Please describe. Have you begun to notice issues about race and/or culture more now than in the past? Please explain. Do you have questions about race and/or culture that you'd like to find out about? What are they? Where could you go to get some answers? Are your reading or viewing habits changed at all as a result of this study? If so, how? Other thoughts? If you have any changes to make to your cultural autobiography, remember to use a different colored font and make note of when you made the changes.

Prior to Lesson 3- What kinds of things did you think about as you selected the text you'll be using for the read-aloud? What background knowledge will students need to be participative in this lesson? What will the central focus of the lesson be? What student work will help you know if students understood the central focus?

After Lesson 3- Is there anything you'd like to add or elaborate on after your debriefing? Do you have questions, issues, or changed opinions with what you've read in the Howard text? Please describe. Have you begun to notice issues about race and/or culture more now than in the past? Please explain. Do you have questions about race and/or culture that you'd like to find out about? What are they? Where could you go to get some answers? Are your reading or viewing habits changed at all as a result of this study? If so, how? Other thoughts? If you

have any changes to make to your cultural autobiography, remember to use a different colored font and make note of when you made the changes.

Prior to Lesson 4- What kinds of things did you think about as you selected the text you'll be using for the read-aloud? What background knowledge will students need to be participative in this lesson? What will the central focus of the lesson be? What student work will help you know if students understood the central focus?

After Lesson 4- Is there anything you'd like to add or elaborate on after your debriefing? Do you have questions, issues, or changed opinions with what you've read in the Howard text? Please describe. Have you begun to notice issues about race and/or culture more now than in the past? Please explain. Do you have questions about race and/or culture that you'd like to find out about? What are they? Where could you go to get some answers? Are your reading or viewing habits changed at all as a result of this study? If so, how? Other thoughts? If you have any changes to make to your cultural autobiography, remember to use a different colored font and make note of when you made the changes.

APPENDIX D: Framework to Guide Book Discussions (Garlough & Carrothers, 2017) based on Howard's (2016) work.

Howard suggests approaching the healing through addressing four elements:

1. Honesty- For White teachers the "assumption of rightness" and the "luxury of ignorance" are both challenged by an honest approach.

We must learn to question our own assumptions and acknowledge what we have been preconditioned to understand and believe is likely not the same for everyone. You must realize and admit that there is much you do not know-- and your only access to knowing is through listening (and believing) the experience of others (also known as "wisdom).

It is through honesty that we can see the limitation of knowledge and realize that those in the privileged groups have had the unconsidered advantage of rarely being hungry, or seen as suspicious, or been the sole representative of a group in a room, or seen a person killed. It is also through this honesty that we can then promote some stories of wisdom to be included in the curricular knowledge (i.e. teaching various perspectives on history, adding global literature, teaching about inequality as something that still occurs).

2. Empathy- Means "to feel with" and requires us to focus our attention on the perspective and worldview of another person.

Empathy requires more than just a "guess" as to what it feels like, it requires a reflexive role-taking where you imagine what it would be like to be someone in a given position. So while a young teacher may have no idea what it is like to be a Hindu child in a predominantly Christian school, they likely have the ability to recall what it was like at some point in their life where they felt like an outsider because of what they thought or believed. From there, it's a matter of listening to the wisdom of those who have experienced that specific challenge to bridge the gap between teacher and student.

The teacher can now step outside of the dominant position and see their own position in a new light and better gauge what an appropriate response to a given issue may be. Empathy may also help the teacher better be able to reach a student.

3. Advocacy- Once honestly assessing their positions of privilege and ignorance, and developing empathy, the teacher may now start to work on behalf of their underrepresented students. Advocacy can take a variety of forms from encouraging the inclusion of diversity in your lessons, to speaking on behalf of the underrepresented in circles of power (thereby given them access to decision makers), to encouraging other privileged people to take that honest inventory.

It is through acts of advocacy that structural changes may start to occur, thereby leveling the playing field.

4. Action- This leads to action where we actively work to assure that the dominance that exists (and ultimately caused these problems) is eradicated.

"We are not responsible for having been born White, but we are responsible for how we respond to racism and dominance in our schools and communities today (Kivel, 2011)."

APPENDIX E: Debriefing Guide

Procedure: Be sure to voice record this session. Feel free to ask follow-up questions that you feel would help better the research questions.

The purpose of the debriefing sessions is to help determine how, if at all, the research questions are being addressed. They are printed below to help guide this debriefing session.

Research Questions

1. How does this planned procedure (outlined below) impact white teachers' racial identity development, if at all?
2. Which part(s) of the procedure was/were most beneficial to teachers in (further) developing their racial identities?
3. How does this planned procedure (outlined below) impact teachers' understanding of the impact of race in the daily lives of non-dominant culture people, if at all?
4. How do teachers plan to put their implications into practice, if at all?

Debriefing Questions

1. Briefly describe the school in which you teach- grade level, school setting, other pertinent information.
2. Give a brief summary of the book you used and the race-related topic you taught (this is probably the central focus). How did you convey the central focus?
3. If the central focus of your lesson was not a race related topic, how did you convey this message?
4. How do you think the lesson went? What went well? What would you have liked to have changed? Do you think there were any missed opportunities in discussing race-related issues?
5. How comfortable were you teaching this lesson, especially the aspects that dealt with race?
6. How did the students receive the lesson? How do you know?
7. Do you think the lesson helped students better understand how race affects our lives? Why do you think that? Which portion of the read aloud guide seemed to have the most impact- honesty, empathy, advocacy or action? What were the highlights of discussions or other portions of the lesson?
8. Has preparing for, or teaching the lesson helped you think about yourself as a racial being? If so, in what ways?
9. Which portion of the read aloud guide was the easiest/most difficult to teach- honesty, empathy, advocacy or action? Why do you think that was?
10. Do you notice issues of race and culture more now since your participation in the study?
11. Do you have any additional comments or questions?

Running head: THE EFFECTS OF WRITING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION ON

The Effects of Writing Strategy Instruction on K to 2 Students' Opinion and Procedural Writing

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of strategy instruction combined with dialogic pedagogy practices on the quality of opinion and procedural papers written by primary-grade students. Specifically, collaborative reasoning was employed for opinion writing and dramatization was applied at the planning and revision stage of procedural writing. A time-series design was used with 193 students and 11 teachers in grades K to 2. Instruction lasted for five weeks and students wrote opinion and procedural papers across three assessment periods. Results found statistically significant differences across time ($p < .001$). Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Strategy instruction, writing, dialogic pedagogy, collaborative reasoning, dramatization, opinion, procedural

Writing, as both a social and a cognitive process (Nystrand, 2006; Graham, 2017) poses several challenges to young learners. Besides cognitive challenges (Hayes, 2006), working memory challenges (Abbott & Berninger, 1993), and orthographic challenges (Berninger, 1999) students may also be challenged by genre expectations (e.g., Rose, 2016). Genre refers both to syntax, linguistics, and text structure (McCutchen, 1986), and students may find the development and organization of ideas for different genres difficult resulting in essays that are based on knowledge telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

According to the Common Core State Standards, students of the primary grades should write for different purposes and audiences (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010), and carefully consider the rhetorical purpose (Authors, 2018) as they navigate through the writing process. Therefore, students need to be able to read an assignment, identify what the topic and issue is, determine who the audience and what the writing purpose is, and consider the genre and its specific criteria in order to plan, draft, evaluate to revise, and edit their work. Based on the standards and on the guidelines of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), writing serves the purpose to persuade, inform, entertain, and convey an experience. The several genres and academic forms within those purposes can be several and also can be challenging for students to understand how to compose and even recognize in their readings.

For instance, opinion writing, which would be under the purpose *to persuade*, requires a clear opinion statement and reasons that would appeal to the audience. Challenges with this genre may draw from (a) students' difficulty to consider the view of the audience and develop convincing reasons (e.g., Kuhn, 1991; 1992), (b) the lack of an immediate audience to help

students consider opposing viewpoints to develop reasons (Golder & Coirier, 1993), and (c) its organizational demands.

Procedural writing, which is under the purpose *to inform*, is factual and also can be challenging. Its challenge primarily draws on the need for the writer to provide clear steps for the reader; Thus, the writer needs to visualize steps and provide them sequentially for the learner to complete a task. Occasionally, explanations of those steps may be needed (Authors, in press) so the reader will know the significance of a step and complete it without skipping it or modifying it. Considering the goal for students to develop genre knowledge early in their academic career (CCSS, 2010), an intervention was designed that was based on strategy instruction, connected reading and writing, and involved dialogic interactions and dramatization.

Strategy Instruction

Strategy instruction refers to the explicit and systematic instruction of processes and skills for the completion of a demanding task (MacArthur, 2011). Under strategy instruction, students consciously apply processes that assist them in the completion of planning and revising that can pose cognitive demands on writers. Strategy instruction also addresses pedagogical practices that can best assist instruction of cognitively demanding processes. Thus, modeling and collaborative practice are used as they function as scaffolds and support the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the student. At the modeling stage teachers model by thinking out loud and making visible not only the cognitive but also the metacognitive strategies used to set goals, monitor progress, examine the use of the strategies, and reflect. Finally, strategy instruction emphasizes independence and has a strong emphasis on students' ability to independently use the strategies. Research on strategy instruction suggests that it is an evidence-

based approach (Graham, Bollinger et al., 2012), and its effects are stronger when it is combined with self-regulation (Graham, McKeown, et al., 2012). One of the most effective models of strategy instruction is the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) model (Harris & Graham, 2009; Harris, Graham, MacArthur, Reid, & Mason, 2011) with a plethora of studies to support its effectiveness with students both in special education and in regular education and across grade level.

Dialogic Pedagogy

Instructionally, dialogic pedagogy is based on interactions among peers and learning partners with a strong emphasis on dialog. Learning is argued to be a social activity and internalization of knowledge is the result of applications in social forums prior to knowledge being part of the individual. Therefore, “Dialogue is an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve the knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants” (Burbules, 1993, p. 8) is an applicable assertion. Dialogic pedagogy is argued to be equitable because it identifies not only the uniqueness of each participant as a member of this dialogic-learning process, but it also values the contribution of each individual with the understanding that learning is a process that may not be similar to all (Matusov, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2018). Therefore, language promotes a social-linguistic interaction that supports communication among partners and also as a vehicle for learning (Bakhtin, 1981).

Current Study

In this study we combined the principles of strategy instruction and dialogic pedagogy for an instructional approach that would support students in the application of challenging cognitive and metacognitive strategies but with an acknowledgement of the dialogic nature of learning and

the use of language as a vehicle that supports the completion of cognitively challenging tasks. Specifically, for opinion writing, collaborative reasoning (with the inclusion of teacher to students, student to teacher, and student-student interactions) (Anderson et al., 2001; Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007) was used during read alouds followed with explicit instruction of the writing process (Graham, 2006). The read aloud books chosen for this study initiated a dialogue with the audience and supported an argument with the learner. Specifically, books by Mo Willems were used that have a pigeon as a central character. The pigeon wants to do something (e.g., drive the bus) or not do something (e.g., take a bath), and this stimulates an interaction with the audience and among students who argue with the character. Based on the principles of collaborative argumentation the teacher facilitated the process by asking questions and across all grades teachers also guided students as they developed their reasons and examples to respond to Pigeon's and each other's responses. When information from the book stimulated an argument among students, the teacher moderated the discussion (e.g., when the Pigeon claimed that it will give students 5 dollars to let it drive the bus) and guided students in the application of information from the text as well as the use of linguistically and syntactically challenging vocabulary. Sentence frames were verbally supported and applied throughout with students and their teacher prior to students being asked to use those in writing.

For procedural writing, the use of dialogic interactions and dramatization (e.g., Moore & Caldwell, 1993) were used during planning and later during evaluation for revising. The teacher modeled how to plan by utilizing miming or drama. For example, when modeling how to properly brush teeth, the teacher mimed the process in order to better understand the order of steps. In this process, language was used as a way to explain the task and confirm the process.

Students and teacher or students and students also discussed to confirm a step or determine a step during collaborative practice. At the evaluation stage and once the teacher had completed the writing of the paper that was part of the modeling, the actual task was performed step-by-step to confirm the accuracy and clarity of directions. This process attempted to show to learners the importance of writing with clarity for a reader as ultimately a reader will need to follow the written directions.

The overall approach used principles of strategy instruction with self-regulation (Harris & Graham, 2009; MacArthur, 2011) and dialogic pedagogy. Specifically, the teacher discussed the genre, provided read alouds and engaged in dialogic interactions and dramatization, explained the writing process as a strategy, and modeled planning and drafting a response. This was followed with collaborative writing during which the teacher included mini-lessons and the approach concluded with guided practice and students' independent writing.

The instructional sequence was based on strategy for teaching strategies (STS) (Authors, 2015), which draws from the SRSD model of instruction (Harris & Graham, 2009), addresses reading and writing through read alouds, emphasizes evaluation using genre-specific criteria (Authors, 2016a,b), connects planning and revising using text-structure elements (Englert et al., 1991), addresses genre (Martin & Rose, 2012), and views genre as syntax, linguistics, and text structure (McCutchen, 1986). Lessons began with an introduction to the writing purposes and an explanation of the specific purpose and genre that would be the focus of instruction followed by the introduction of the genre elements through a read aloud. The components are included below:

1. **Introduction to the writing purposes.** Explanation of the writing purposes and explanation of the specific purpose would be addressed in this unit/week.

2. **Introduction of genre via read-alouds.** The specific genre is introduced as well as the structural elements, relevant vocabulary, and syntax. The teacher conducts a read aloud on a text that addresses the genre and using the elements of that genre takes notes. Finally, using the elements the teacher retells and summarizes the information.
3. **Evaluation of good and weak examples.** Weak and good examples of the genre are used for the teacher to model the application of the evaluation criteria and how to critically review a paper. Students practice the process collaboratively in different formats. Students evaluate their own work and set learning goals at the end of the practice.
4. **Think-aloud modeling.** The teacher models how to complete the writing process using a think aloud with problem-solving. The strategies for assignment analysis, planning, drafting, evaluating to revise, editing are modeled as well ways that the writer manages to stay focused and use the strategies to overcome difficulties and complete the task.
5. **A focus on Self-regulation and a mini-lesson.** The teacher explains how s/he managed to overcome cognitive challenges and how s/he used the strategy to effectively complete the task. Teacher and students together develop statements that would function as self-talk and can help the writer while working alone as a reminder of the strategies to use and are at his/her disposal.
6. **Collaborative practice.** Teacher and students work as a group to complete the writing process. The teacher functions as a facilitator by asking questions that students would later ask as they complete the task (e.g., What shall we do first?)
7. **Guided practice.** Students begin their work and the teacher supports students in small groups or in individual conferences. At this stage differentiation of instruction takes place based on students' needs.

8. **Preparation for peer review, self-evaluation, and peer review.** Once students complete their paper, the teacher models how to evaluate a paper and give feedback. In this process the teacher reads aloud a weak paper written by an unknown writer, identifies the elements of the genre, questions the clarity of the information and its quality, and assigns a score. It is important for students to practice evaluation and feedback in order to effectively complete the peer review process; otherwise, they may not follow the process of evaluation correctly or may not give helpful feedback to their partner. Students self-evaluate their work and then meet with a partner to evaluate each other's work.
9. **Editing.** Students reread their work and edit it. A generic mnemonic called SCIPS (Spelling, Capitalization, Indentation, Punctuation, Sentences; Authors, 2015) is used to guide students' editing as they reread their work. The editing goals are based on grade-level expectations and on students' needs.
10. **Continuous practice to mastery and independence.** Students continue to write in response to a new topic and set goals for improvement.

It should be noted that for students in Kindergarten the process of evaluation was primarily teacher modeling with students completing self-evaluation. When students met to discuss their work, they read the work of each other as penmanship was developing and reviewers asked the writers to share the elements they had identified (e.g., opinion, etc.). Then the pairs discussed their work and their ideas.

The research question for this investigation was the following: Does this approach statistically significantly affect the quality of opinion and procedural essays written by all K to 2 students and by special education students?

Methods

Participants and Setting

The study took place at a public school on the east coast of the United States. Teachers used a core program for reading that included writing and taught students the writing process. However, teachers shared that they primarily utilized teacher-made or online resources in their instruction.

Teacher Participants. Participants were 11 female teachers (four in Kindergarten, four in first grade and three in second grade). One of the first-grade teachers was a long-term substitute. One first-grade and two second grade teachers had a Master's degree).

Student Participants. A total of 193 students were included in the analysis (See Table 1); 23 students were excluded from the analysis due to missing data ($n = 3$ Kindergarten students; $n = 12$ first graders; and $n = 8$ second graders). Data were missing from either pre or posttest assessments or across all points ($n = 9$; six students from Grade 1 and three from grade 2). Data were analysed for 193 participants. Three first grade participants ($n = 2$ male) were ESL learners; and 17 students received special education services ($n = 17$; $n = 11$ male). Information about students was provided deidentified by the district.

Table 1

Demographic Composition of All Participants by Grade

Ethnicity	Grade Level						Total
	Grade K		Grade 1		Grade 2		
	Females	Male	Females	Male	Female	Male	
American Indian	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (%)	2 (1.04%)
African American	12 (14.12%)	13 (15.3%)	11 (12.94%)	22 (25.88%)	9 (10.59%)	18 (21.18%)	85 (44.04%)
Caucasian	21 (22.34%)	14 (14.89%)	15 (15.96%)	12 (12.77%)	13 (13.83%)	19 (20.21%)	94 (48.7%)
Asian	n = 0 (0%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.59%)
Multi-Racial	2 (28.57%)	0 (0%)	3 (42.86%)	2 (28.57%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (3.63%)
Total by gender by grade	35 (18.13%)	30 (15.54%)	30 (15.54%)	37 (19.17%)	24 (12.44%)	37 (19.17%)	193 (100%)
Special Education	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (23.52%)	6 (35.3%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (23.52%)	17 (8.8%)
ESL Learners	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.55%)

Note: *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

Research Design and Procedures

A time series design was employed. The intervention lasted for five weeks (from February to March). Students wrote a procedural and opinion essay at pretest. Then they were

instructed on opinion writing and after two weeks they were assessed on opinion and procedural writing. Next, students were instructed on procedural writing and at posttest were assessed on both procedural and opinion writing. The goal of using this design was to examine whether there were carryover effects from one genre to the other and whether students' performance on opinion writing (maintenance) was sustained after two weeks of no instruction. No maintenance task was collected for procedural writing. Opinion essays were on controversial persuasive topics (e.g., would you like to watch a movie at a movie theatre or at home) and procedural essays asked students to provide clear processes for the completion of tasks (e.g., explain how to draw an animal of your choice).

All teachers were invited via informed consent. Student demographics and papers were provided deidentified by the school district. An introductory meeting took place with teachers prior to the start of the study in which the approach was explained and modeled by the researcher. Teachers were provided with a manual that included the lessons and guiding questions to initiate discussions with students or with guidelines on how to promote discussions among students as they facilitated those (Authors, in press). Teachers were observed live or via video at least once per genre.

Measures

Quality. Across the three assessment times, students responded to persuasive prompts on controversial topics and on procedural prompts.

Quality of opinion and procedural essays was measured using two different rubrics (adapted from Coker & MacArthur, 2011; Authors, in press) that examined organization, ideas,

and word choice. Rubrics were on a 6-point scale; Two raters independently scored all opinion essays ($r = .93$) and all procedural essays ($r = .95$).

Results

Student essays were analyzed for quality using a repeated measures' analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Field, 2009) across three times: pretest, mid-instruction, and posttest and the Bonferroni correction was applied ($p = .016$).

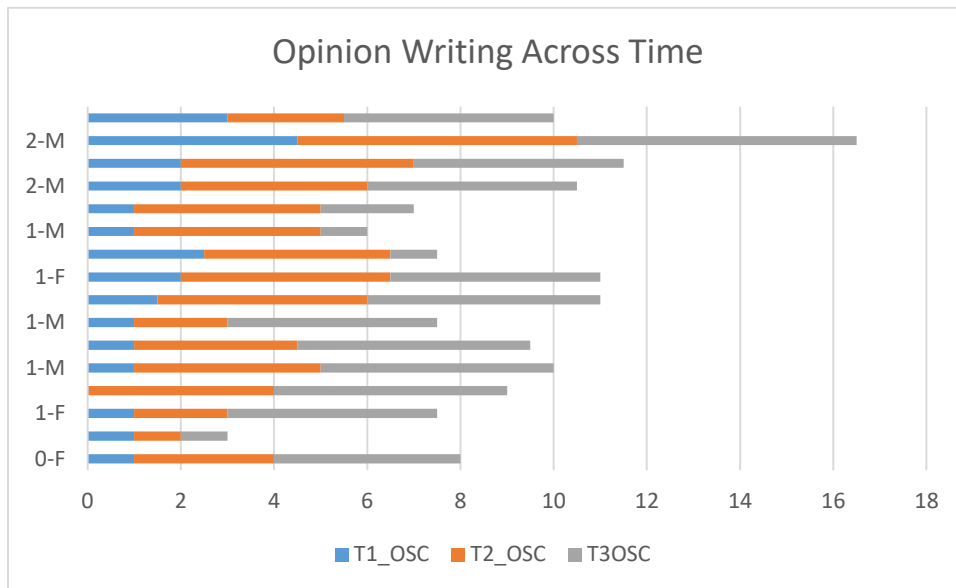
Quality of Opinion Essays

All assumptions were examined and met. There was a statistically significant effect of time ($F(2, 362) = 279.40, p < .001$, partial eta squared = .607) (See Table 2), and pairwise comparisons found statistically significant differences from baseline to midassessment ($p < .001$), but marginally not from midassessment to postassessment ($p = .017$).

A separate analysis only for the special education students also found a statistically significant effect of time ($F(2, 30) = 17.25, p < .001$, partial eta squared = .54) (See Table 2). Pairwise comparisons found statistically significant differences from baseline to midassessment ($p < .001$), from baseline to posttest ($p < .001$), but not from midassessment to posttest ($p = 1.00$). Students' performance across time indicated a consistent growth. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Performance of Special Education students across time (T(ime)1, T(ime)2, T(ime)3



Note: 0 refers to Kindergarten student, 1 refers to grade 1 students, and 2 refers to grade 2 students; F stands for female and M stands for male. T1 stands for time 1 (preassessment), T2 for Time 2 (midassessment) and T3 stands for Time 3 (postassessment).

Quality of Procedural Essays

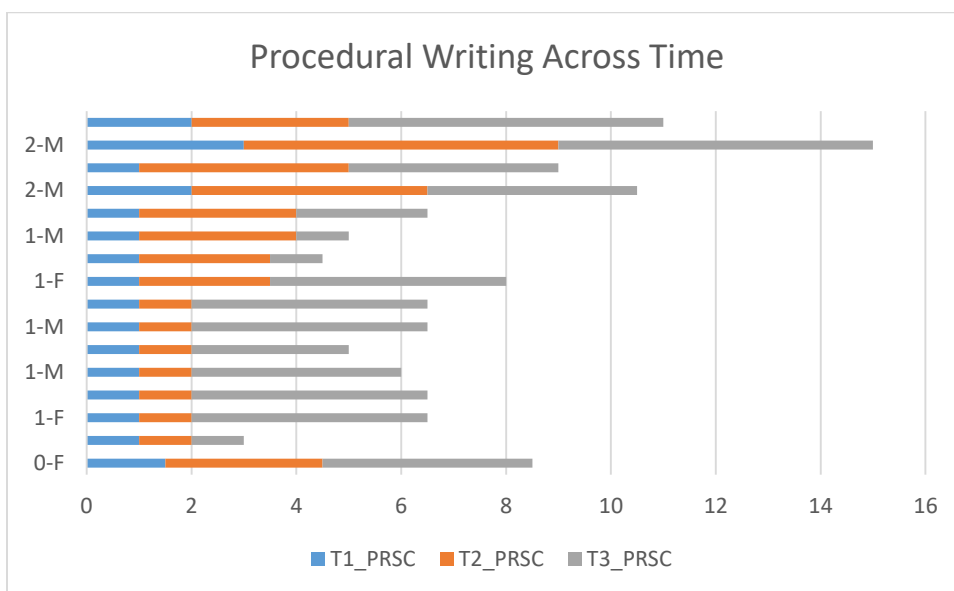
Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of Sphericity had been violated $\chi^2(2) = 16.14$ $p < .001$); therefore, the Huynh-Feldt estimate was used ($\epsilonpsilon = .92$). There was a statistically significant effect of time ($F(1.86, 330.71) = 315.04$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared = .64) (See Table 2). Pairwise comparisons found statistically significant differences from baseline to midassessment ($p < .001$), and from midassessment to posttest ($p < .001$).

The analysis for special education students showed that the assumption of sphericity had been violated $\chi^2(2) = .59$ $p < .03$); therefore, degrees of freedom were corrected using

Greenhouse-Geisser ($\epsilon = .71$). There was a statistically significant effect of time ($F(1.42, 21.29) = 20.00, p < .001$, partial eta squared = .57) (See Table 2). Pairwise comparison found statistically significant differences from baseline to midassessment ($p = .004$), but not from midassessment to posttest ($p = .56$) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Performance of Special Education students across time (T(ime)1, T(ime)2, T(ime)3



Note: 0 refers to Kindergarten student, 1 refers to grade 1 students, and 2 refers to grade 2 students; F stands for female and M stands for male. T1 stands for time 1 (preassessment), T2 for Time 2 (midassessment) and T3 stands for Time 3 (postassessment).

Table 2

	Baseline	Midassessment	Postassessment	Gain from Pretest to Posttest
	(<i>M, SD</i>)	(<i>M, SD</i>)	(<i>M, SD</i>)	
All Participants	2.00 ^a (1.03)	3.56 ^b (1.17)	3.75 ^c (1.40)	1.75
Opinion				
Special Educ.	1.78 ^a (1.03)	3.60 ^b (1.23)	3.91 ^a (1.59)	2.13
Kindergarten	1.34 ^a (.50)	2.60 ^b (1.30)	2.90 ^a (1.16)	1.56
Grade 1	1.81 ^a (.89)	3.51 ^b (1.10)	3.67 ^a (1.24)	1.86
Grade 2	3.00 ^a (.98)	4.60 ^b (.96)	4.90 ^a (.94)	1.90
Procedural	1.74 ^a (.96)	2.54 ^b (1.23)	3.70 ^c (1.40)	1.96
Special Educ.	1.29 ^a (.56)	2.41 ^b (1.52)	3.65 ^c (1.55)	2.36
Kindergarten	1.20 ^a (.37)	1.90 ^b (.78)	2.77 ^c (1.19)	1.57
Grade 1	1.37 ^a (.62)	1.93 ^b (.83)	3.46 ^c (1.08)	2.09
Grade 2	2.70 ^a (.96)	3.81 ^b (.98)	4.84 ^c (.96)	2.14

Quality Across Time on Opinion and Procedural Papers

Note: *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

Quality was rated on a 6-point holistic scale ($p < .001$).

^{a,b}Values with different superscripts are different at $p = .016$ level.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of strategy instruction combined with dialogic interactions and dramatization on the quality of students' opinion and procedural papers. Results showed that there was a carryover effect from opinion writing to procedural writing even though students had not yet been taught how to write in the procedural genre. Results also indicated that the combination of this dialogic approach with strategy instruction was feasible and yielded statistically significant effects.

Considering the demands of the standards and the need for students to be prepared for college and their careers it is essential that instruction addresses genres early on in students' schooling; however, in this process it is important to consider the value and importance of language as a vehicle for learning. In this approach, collaborative reasoning was employed, which allowed teachers and students to engage in a dialog and an argument about the content of a book and the character's opinion. Students interacted with the book and with peers and in that process they applied linguistically-challenging features of argumentation that required the statement of their opinion, reasons, and evidence. This was conducted in a participatory format that allowed all students to have an opportunity to share or initiate an argument with the character, the teacher, and/or a peer. Similarly, when working on procedural writing students mimed and dramatized the steps needed to complete a task, verbalized their actions and their thoughts, and this process assisted them in visualizing the task and confirming the steps they were to complete or revise them. This combined approach has the potential to engage students in a learning process that is rewarding as well as exploratory using language as a way to understand genre-specific tasks prior to engaging in writing. This can be especially important for students

who develop orthography and their writing skills. Their ability to draw information from their lexicon to compose text can be vital once they have developed the alphabetic principle and penmanship. Otherwise, if both develop at the same time, students may find themselves limiting their ideas to avoid spelling or grammar errors.

In this work, it should be no surprise that special education students grew in their writing quality. SRSD and studies on strategy instruction conducted with special education students point out positive effects on writing quality (e.g., Asaro-Saddler, 2014). What is interesting, though, is the growth of second grade students, who seemed to accelerate through this work.

Limitations

Even though this was not a randomized control group design, but a time-series design, it is important in its findings as it reveals that students within a short period of time were able to develop clear opinion responses and learn how to compose comprehensive procedural and opinion papers. Future research could examine through a randomized control group design this specific approach to other writing approaches to examine its effects.

The cognitive and social components of writing were addressed in this instructional approach and even though dialogic components were included the effects of those on language development are not identified. Future research could include a measure of oral language to examine students' oral-language development and whether this approach supports it or how it supports it. Further, future research could examine the classroom interactions and types of interactions that took place in the classroom during the application of the dialogic components. Even though all teachers followed the manual and its guidelines, it would be interesting to

examine the types of interactions across classrooms and correlate them to students' oral language performance and writing.

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