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Becoming a Reading Specialist: Surveying the Possibilities

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The terrain of graduate programs is changing, especially in light of preparing highly qualified teachers (NCLB, 2001) and standards-based accreditation (IRA, 2004a, NCATE, 2008). This changing terrain is noticed as many institutions of higher learning undergo program reviews through self-studies required by the institution, by state departments of education, by specialized professional associations, or by national accreditation entities. This project sought to explore the nature of reading specialists master's programs by examining their websites in light of the shift towards standards-based accreditation of programs and the influence of federal legislation. Specific objectives for this descriptive study included: (a) reviewing master's programs that lead to reading specialist certification at institutions of varying purpose, size, and location; (b) examining program configurations, including but not limited to programs of study, requirements, and special features; and (c) exploring features of institutions' websites offering information about becoming a certified reading specialist.

Related Research

Recent interest in preparing highly qualified reading professionals has provided opportunities for institutions of higher learning engaged in teacher preparation to examine the nature of their programs. The International Reading Association (2004a; 2004b) advocates for teacher education to prepare high-quality teachers who can deliver high-quality teaching—teaching that makes a difference with all students, able and struggling (Roller, 2001). Research that examines the nature and quality of teacher preparation assists faculty in developing programs for reading specialists who can not only help struggling readers achieve (Bean, Swan & Knaub, 2003), but who can help colleagues develop their knowledge and skill in teaching reading and/or literacy studies (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Dole, 2004). Though the research is not conclusive, it is suggestive that well prepared teachers outperform those who are not prepared.

Some institutions that prepare educational professional have begun to structure their preparation programs on standards-based content knowledge, pedagogical skill, and professional dispositions (IRA, 2004a; NCATE 2008). The nature of the courses, the assessments of candidates, and the field and clinical experiences are moving toward the expectations and language of the national standards. Additionally, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) calls for highly qualified teachers, defined as having a bachelor's degree, a state teaching certification or a passing score on the state teacher licensing examination, and subject matter knowledge (Liston, Borko, & Whitcomb, 2008). As a minimum base for teacher knowledge, this definition focuses on input measures—teacher preparation programs and state certification requirements. Advanced preparation, such as reading specialist/literacy coach programs, are also responding to the expectations of professional standards (IRA, 2004a; IRA, 2004b) and are seeking to prepare highly qualified advanced teachers—those having a master's degree with substantial coursework

in reading, a state endorsement or certification that connects to an initial teaching license, and a passing score on the state advanced licensing examination (Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

In addition to professional organization standards, large-scale surveys (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002; Dole, 2004) and school-university partnerships also inform preparation programs. Both surveys and partnerships provide insight into the daily lives of teachers and reading specialists. When considering the work of reading specialists, recent surveys indicated that their work included providing services to students, coaching colleagues in refining and/or altering instructional practices, providing professional development to teachers within their schools and, at times, beyond their schools, locating and securing instructional materials, writing grants, and managing budgets (Bean et al., 2002). Considering these tasks and expectations required of reading specialists across the nation suggest that professional preparations programs keep pace with these expanding roles. Faculty in teacher preparation programs that partner with public schools may be aware of the changing roles because of the time that they spend in schools and because of their relationships with teachers and principals. This intimate knowledge of the lives of teachers may influence the way preparation programs are altered to not only stay current with the needs of teachers and schools, but also to lead the nature of the work performed by reading specialists (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Professional preparation programs that produce successful teachers include (1) collaborative relationships between university programs and local school districts, (2) coursework and school and community fieldwork in which candidates' attitudes, knowledge and beliefs about teaching diverse learners are addressed, and (3) program components that are clearly related to teacher quality and student achievement (i.e., program purpose, program vision, program goals) (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Technology and the World Wide Web have provided access to information in unprecedented ways. Individuals are able to use the Internet to search for possibilities before making decisions. This is certainly true as more and more individuals seek information about colleges and universities that may offer programs that meet their professional goals. No longer are consumers limited to the local college or university when seeking advanced preparation programs. They are able to explore options beyond their local setting through the use of blended courses, web-based courses, and professional development modules (Williams, 2008). This enlarged sphere of options creates challenges for institutions of higher education to make their professional programs and learning opportunities available as an option for technology savvy students.

Creating a web presence requires careful consideration, planning, and time. Some institutions provide personnel to create and maintain program websites, while other institutions expect faculty and staff within programs to create and maintain their own websites. Regardless of the genesis of a professional preparation program's website, the content and the navigation are the critical aspects of the site. Pearson (2001) suggested that much could be gained by developing a database that documents reading teacher education. This project attempts to examine the nature of reading specialists master's programs based on information gleaned from websites of institutions categorized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005).

Methodology

Sample

This descriptive research project involved a content analysis of the websites of master's programs that prepare reading specialists at selected institutions of higher education. Four types of institutions were identified based on Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, higher education classifications (2005)—Research Universities, very high activity, Doctoral/Research Universities, Master's Colleges and Universities, larger programs, and Master's Colleges and Universities, smaller programs. Ten institutions in each of the four types of institutions were selected to serve as the sample for this project. Care was taken to select institutions that represented a mix of census regions of the United States and funding status. Appendix A presents the institutional profile for the 40 institutions that comprised the sample, including the Carnegie Foundation classification, the state in which the institution is located, the United State region in which it is located, the setting, and the funding status.

To summarize the institutions (see Table 1), the 40 institutions were located in 26 states; 16 of the states were home to one institution, six states had two institutions, and four states had three institutions within this sample. Forty-two percent (n=17) of the institutions were located in the South, 22.5% (n=9) in the Midwest, 17.5% (n=7) in the West, 15% (n=6) in the Northeast, and 2.5% (n=1) in the Pacific. The institutions were more frequently situated in urban centers (n=29; 72.5%) than in rural areas (n=11; 27.5%). The sample reflected many public institutions (n=29; 72.5%) and few private institutions (n=11; 27.5%).

Table 1. Summary of the Institutional Profiles

	States Represented	Regions Represented	Settings Represented	Status Represented
MS*	10 states	South = 3 (30%)	Urban = 5 (50%)	Private = 2 (20%)
	Number of institutions per state:	Midwest = 3 (30%)	Rural = 5 (50%)	Public = 8 (80%)
	1 institution per state (100%)	West = 1 (10%)		
		Northeast = 2 (20%)		
		Pacific = 1 (10%)		
ML*	10 states	South = 4 (40%)	Urban = 7 (70%)	Private = 6 (60%)
	Number of institutions per state:	Midwest = 2 (20%)	Rural = 3 (30%)	Public = 4 (40%)
	1 institution per state (100%)	West = 2 (20%)		
		Northeast = 2 (20%)		
		Pacific = 0		
DRU*	10 states	South = 4 (40%)	Urban = 9 (90%)	Private = 2 (20%)
	Number of institutions per state:	Midwest = 3 (30%)	Rural = 1 (10%)	Public = 8 (80%)
	1 institution per state (100%)	West = 2 (20%)		
		Northeast = 1 (10%)		
		Pacific = 0		
RUVH*	10 states	South = 6 (60%)	Urban = 8 (80%)	Private = 1 (10%)
	Number of institutions per state:	Midwest = 1 (10%)	Rural = 2 (20%)	Public = 9 (90%)
	1 institution per state (100%)	West = 1 (10%)		
		Northeast = 1 (10%)		
		Pacific = 0		
Summary	26 states	South = 17 (42.5%)	Urban = 29 (72.5%)	Private = 11 (27.5%)
	Number of institutions per state:	Midwest = 9 (22.5%)	Rural = 11 (27.5%)	Public = 29 (72.5%)
	1 institution = 16 states (62%)	West = 7 (17.5%)		
	2 institutions = 6 states (23%)	Northeast = 6 (15.0%)		
	3 institutions = 4 states (15%)	Pacific = 1 (2.5%)		

*MS=master's small; ML=master's large; DRU=doctoral research university; RUVH=doctoral research university, very high activity

Data Collection and Analysis

Using a feature checklist that emerged from a pilot review of two institutions from each of the four types of institutions, websites of master's programs that led to a specialization in reading/literacy studies were examined. The first level of analysis focused on website features. The feature checklist included accreditation information, program contacts, faculty descriptions, course descriptions, course syllabi, and reading student handbooks. A complexity rating for finding information on each website was determined—1=information directly found or found by using a simple search of the website; 0=no information was found or finding the information required multiple steps. The second level of analysis, a deeper document analysis, was completed by printing selected materials available on the website, including the degrees offered, coursework requirements, certification requirements, field/clinical requirements, admission requirements, and costs per credit hour. A cross-institution analysis was completed for each of the four types of institutions examined. Description statistics were used to represent the data.

Results

The analysis of the 40 institutions demonstrated variation in reading specialists master's degree program websites. Programs reviewed included those that provided a master's degree in reading and/or literacy and those that provided a master's degree in education with an emphasis in reading and/or literacy studies. The features of the websites and the information available to potential and current students ranged from basic program descriptions to complex websites with multiple levels of multiple links.

The first level of review focused on features of the website. Thirty-seven (92.5%) of the websites reviewed earned a complexity rating of one, meaning that information was found through direct links or by using a simple search within the website. Three websites seemed more complex, requiring multiple steps in locating targeted information or the information was never found. Table 2 presents the overview of website feature analysis. Of the 40 institutions reviewed, 36 institutions (90%) reported that their education programs were fully accredited by a national accrediting agency and/or by the state department of education, while accreditation information for four institutions was unavailable. Of the four institutions with unavailable accreditation information, all were public institutions, three were urban, and one was rural.

Table 2. Website Feature Analysis

School by Carnegie Foundation Classification*	Accreditation	Program Contacts	Faculty Descriptions	Courses Descriptions	Course Syllabi	Reading Student Handbook	Complexity Rating Totals**
MS	9	5	6	10	2	4	9
ML	9	9	6	10	1	0	10
DRU	9	10	9	9	2	0	9
RUVH	9	9	9	10	3	0	9
Totals	36 (90%)	33 (82.5%)	30 (75.5%)	39 (97.5%)	8 (20%)	4 (10%)	37 (92.5%)

*MS=master's small; ML=master's large; DRU=doctoral research university; RUVH=research university, very high activity
**1=information found directly or using a simple search; 0=no information or required multiple steps or efforts to find specific information

Websites that provide program coordinator contact information and faculty information support individuals when seeking ways to directly contact personnel by telephone, by email, or in person. Thirty-three institutions (82.5%) provided explicit program contact information. Interestingly, only five of the master's small (MS) program institutions provided contact information on the portion of their website that featured information about becoming a reading specialist or about attaining a master's degree. Faculty information was provided more frequently by the doctoral institutions (n=18; 90%) than by the master's institutions (n=12; 60%). Faculty information included names, contact information, degrees, specializations, research interest, and/or curriculum vitas.

When interested individuals or matriculating candidates seek information about courses or about the policies and procedures for a particular program, they often consult program websites. Of the 40 program websites reviewed, 97.5% (n=39) provided course descriptions, but few provided posted course syllabi (n=8; 20%). The syllabi that were provided were representative of the nature of the required courses rather than current syllabi for a particular semester. Student handbooks often include policies and procedures for particular programs, and candidates often find handbooks useful during matriculation. Few reading student handbooks (n=4; 10%) were found as links on program websites. In fact, of the four electronic handbooks found, each was offered by public MS institutions.

The second level of analysis required a deeper, more comprehensive examination of materials printed from each of the websites. Table 3 provides data related to the website document analysis. Graduate programs making candidates eligible to apply for a reading specialist certification reflected two pathways—a master's degree in education with an emphasis or track for reading/literacy studies or a master's degree in reading. Twenty-two (55%) of the institutions offered master's degrees in education with an emphasis or track for reading/literacy studies; 18 (45%) offered master's degrees in reading/literacy studies. Of interest is that the size of the institution seemed to make a difference in the type of degree that was offered in master's institutions. Programs in MS institutions were more likely to offer the master's of education (n=9; 90%), while programs in the master's large (ML) institutions were more likely to offer the master's of reading/literacy studies (n=8; 80%). Doctoral institutions were more similar in the ways in which they offered programs that lead to eligibility for certification as a reading specialist. Four (40%) of the doctoral research universities (DRU) and five (50%) of the research university, very high activity, (RUVH) offered master's in reading/literacy studies degrees.

Table 3. Website Document Analysis

Carnegie	Degree	Hours	Certification Requirements	Clinical Exp	Admission

	Emphasis in Reading	Reading	Total (h=hours)	Reading (h=hours)	Praxis II	State Test	No Test	Teaching Experience	Field or Clinical Exp.	Teaching Certificate	Teaching Experience
MS	9	1	3 <36 h	4-18 h	5	1	4	1	10	10	3
			7 36 h	3-21 h							
				3-24 h							
ML	2	8	4 <36 h	1-18 h	5	4	1	4	10	9	1
			3 36 h	4-21 h							
			3 >36 h	4-24 h							
				1-33 h							
DRU	6	4	3 <36 h	1-12 h	3	6	1	0	10	7	1
			5 36 h	3-18 h							
			2 >36 h	2-21 h							
				1-27 h							
				2-30 h							
				1-32 h							
RUVH	5	5	4 <36 h	1-12 h	4	5	1	6	10	7	2
			5 36 h	1-15 h							
			1 >36 h	4-18 h							
				2-24 h							
				1-33 h							
				1-36 h							
Summary	22 (55%)	18 (45%)	14 <36 h	2-12 h	17 (42.5%)	16 (40%)	7 (17.5%)	11 (27.5%)	40 (100%)	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)
			20 36 h	1-15 h							
			6 >36 h	12-18 h							
				9-21 h							
				9-24 h							
				1-27 h							
				2-30 h							
				1-32							
				2-33 h							
				1-36 h							

*MS=master's small; ML=master's large; DRU=doctoral research university; RUVH=research university, very high activity

The analysis of the printed documents allowed for a more careful examination of the total credit hours and the types of hours required for the master's degree at each of the institutions. The total credit hours to complete a degree at the 40 institutions were sorted into three categories—those that required fewer than 36 hours, those that required 36 hours, and those that required more than 36 hours. Overall, 14 institutions (35%) required fewer than 36 credit hours, 20 institutions (50%) required 36 credit hours, and six institutions (15%) required more than 36 credit hours. When examining the number of credit hours that could be explicitly categorized as reading/literacy studies content, the credit hours ranged from as few as 12 to as many as 36. The majority of the institutions (n=30; 75%) required 18-24 credit hours of reading/literacy studies content. Institutions rated MS had the tightest range of content credits (18-24 hours), while RUVH had the broadest range of content credits (12-36 hours).

Becoming a certified/licensed reading specialist is a state department of education function. Universities recommended as eligible for certification graduates who successfully completed an approved program. When analyzing the requirements for certification, state departments of education required completing an approved preparation program. They often also required passing a content test and teaching experience. Thirty-three (82.5%) institutions

required completing an approved program and passing a designated test to be eligible for a recommendation to the state department of education for a reading specialist certificate, while seven (17.5%) institutions required only completing an approved program to be eligible for the recommendation to the state department of education. Of the 40 institutions reviewed for this project, 17 (42.3%) required the Education Testing Service Praxis II, 16 (40%) required a state test, and seven (17.5%) required no test. A minority of institutions had programs that required teaching experience (n=11; 27.5%). Of note was that four ML institutions (40%) and six RUVH institutions (60%) required teaching experience prior to certification as a reading specialist.

Each of the 40 institutions reviewed in this project required a clinical experience. The clinical experiences included university-based reading clinics where teachers and/or parents referred children with reading difficulties to work one-on-one with candidates seeking certification/licensing as a reading specialist or were school-based structured tutoring experiences. Some institutions also referred to practicum or field experiences that focused on providing professional development to teacher and/or coaching teachers in classrooms.

A certified/licensed reading specialist is qualified to provide specialized instruction to children who struggle with reading. Most state departments of education require reading specialist certification as an endorsement to an existing teaching certification. Consequently, many programs include admission requirements related to holding teaching certification and/or teaching experience. Thirty-three institutions ((82.5%) required a teaching certification for admission. Interestingly, the MS and ML institutions were more likely to require a teaching certificate (n=10; n=9, respectively), than the DRU and the RUVH (n=7; n=7, respectively). Having teaching experience is a step beyond requiring a valid teaching certificate. Seven (17.5%) of the 40 institutions required teaching experience for admission to their programs. These seven institutions were spread across the four categories of institutions in this project (MS=3; ML=1; DRU=1; RUVH=2).

Not surprisingly, the cost of becoming a reading specialist varied by the funding status of the institution (see Table 4). Generally, the cost per credit hour increased with the classification of the institution. The mean cost for in-state students at public institutions was $281 per credit hour and for out-of-state students at public institutions is $651 per credit hour. The mean cost for students enrolled in private institutions in this sample was $713 per credit hour. Note that the mean for private MS institutions was less expensive than tuition for out-of-state students at public institutions.

Table 4. Mean Costs per Credit Hour

Carnegie Foundation Rating*	In-State		Out-of-State	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
MS	$246 (n= 8)	$ 473 (n= 2)	$577 (n= 8)	$ 473 (n= 2)
ML	$252 (n= 4)	$ 579 (n= 6)	$545 (n= 4)	$ 579 (n= 6)
DRU	$300 (n= 8)	$ 778 (n= 2)	$662 (n= 8)	$ 778 (n= 2)
RUVH	$324 (n= 9)	$1020 (n= 1)	$821 (n= 9)	$1020 (n= 1)
Summary	$281 (n=29)	$ 713 (n=11)	$651 (n=29)	$ 713 (n=11)

*MS=master's small; ML=master's large; DRU=doctoral research university; RUVH=research university, very high activity

Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to explore the nature of graduate professional preparation programs through examining the websites of institutions of higher education that represented four of the six Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005) classifications. In general, websites of the 40 institutions in this project provided information concerning the graduate professional preparation program that led to teachers becoming reading specialists/literacy coaches. Nearly all of the websites presented content that was easy to navigate. As technology savvy students seek information, they want website navigation structures to be reasonably predictable. Though websites are somewhat unique, the ways in which one navigates and finds information should be somewhat intuitive. Ease in navigation allows focus to be devoted to content—what are the answers to my questions and what additional information can be found, rather than where is the information that is being sought.

Consumers interested in information about graduate professional preparation program for reading specialist/literacy coaches can find that information on the websites of the 40 institutions. Basic information such as accreditation, program requirements, and course descriptions were nearly universally available within our sample. Specific program contacts and faculty descriptions were more available in the two levels of doctoral institutions (DRU and RUVH) than in the two levels of master's institutions (MS and ML). This could be due to the doctoral-granting institutions having a faculty with more full-time personnel. Smaller institutions, whose faculty was often more focused on teaching rather than generating research, may have used more part-time personnel. Consequently, keeping websites current with faculty contact information and professional descriptions may be more challenging at the master's institutions than at the doctoral institutions. Additionally, though students often request specific information about particular courses before enrolling, course syllabi were rarely available on program websites, regardless of the classification, location, or funding status of the institutions. The content of courses evolve over time; thus, keeping syllabi accurate would mean developing a schedule to upload current syllabi each semester. This may be considered a challenging task for preparation program personnel. Finally, few professional preparation programs had student handbooks specific to their programs posted on their websites. General, campus-wide student handbooks were often available as links from the institutions' homepage, however. In summary, some of the more stable information, such as accreditation information and course descriptions, were more likely available on the website, regardless of the institution's profile.

Pathways to completing a graduate program that would allow a teacher to apply for a certification/license as a reading specialist vary. Across the sample, more institutions offered a master's in education with a specialization/track in reading/literacy studies than a master's in reading/literacy studies. Based on our sample, the classification of the institutions did not seem related to the type of degree offered, the number of hours required for the degree, or to the number of hours of reading/literacy studies required. Thirty-three institutions required a content test prior to certification. The master's small institutions were more likely than the other institutions to require no test. This may have been due more to state department of education requirements for licensing reading specialists rather than institutional decisions. Many professional preparation program requirements in this sample seemed influenced by accreditation agencies (IRA, 2004a; NCATE, 2008) and state departments of education. Neither of the national accreditation agencies mandated the types of degrees, specific courses, learning

experiences, or assessment instruments; however, standards for accreditation are clearly articulated. The national standards are written to reflect the research on high quality teachers and high quality teaching (Williams, 2008). Additionally, education continues to be a local responsibility; thus, it was not surprising to find some variation in the nature of the programs of study for professional preparation programs that have met accreditation standards.

Seeking a master's degree that makes one eligible for certification/licensing as a reading specialist required a teaching certificate at admission for 33 of the institutions in the sample, though teaching experience was required by only 7 of the institutions. Interestingly, more master's large and research universities, very high activity, required teaching experience for certification/licensing (ML=4; RUVH=6) than required teaching experience for admission (ML=1; RUVH=2). The specific admission requirement of teaching experiences as a requirement may have been omitted since certification/licensing requirements were explicit. Though institutions varied in requiring teaching experience, each institution required field or clinical experiences as a part of their professional preparation program. The descriptions of the clinical experiences varied, yet direct work with children was required and some programs also required work with teachers either through professional development or through coaching, tasks that represent much of the work in which practicing reading specialists indicate that they perform (Bean et al., 2002; Bean et al., 2003; Dole, 2004).

This project was a scan of selected professional preparation programs leading to certification/licensing as a reading specialist/literacy coach. The purpose of this project was to examine the websites features of the program and a deeper website document analysis looking for similarities and differences in the ways in which aspects of reading specialists programs are presented electronically. The results of this descriptive study contribute to the understanding of the preparation of reading specialists across the nation called for by researchers (Pearson, 2001; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008; Roller, 2001). Scholars and educational leaders may find this information useful as they consider program changes and policy related to the preparation of reading specialists/literacy coaches, advanced certification in reading/literacy studies, and master's degree programs in reading and/or literacy studies.

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Appendix A. Institutional Profiles

Carnegie Foundation Rating*	State of Institution	US Region	Setting Urban=>50,000 Rural=<50,000	Funding Status
MS	Alabama	South	Urban	Public
MS	Alaska	Pacific	Rural	Public
MS	Minnesota	Midwest	Rural	Public
MS	Mississippi	South	Urban	Public
MS	New Mexico	West	Rural	Public
MS	New York	Northeast	Rural	Public
MS	North Carolina	South	Urban	Public
MS	Ohio	Midwest	Urban	Private
MS	Pennsylvania	Northeast	Rural	Public
MS	Wisconsin	Midwest	Urban	Private
ML	California	West	Urban	Private
ML	Florida	South	Urban	Public
ML	Maryland	South	Rural	Public
ML	Missouri	Midwest	Urban	Private
ML	New York	Northeast	Urban	Private
ML	North Carolina	South	Rural	Public
ML	Ohio	Midwest	Urban	Private
ML	Pennsylvania	Northeast	Rural	Public
ML	Texas	South	Urban	Private
ML	Washington	West	Urban	Private
DRU	Florida	South	Urban	Private
DRU	Georgia	South	Urban	Public
DRU	Idaho	West	Urban	Public
DRU	Illinois	Midwest	Urban	Public
DRU	Indiana	Midwest	Urban	Public
DRU	Louisiana	South	Rural	Public
DRU	Michigan	Midwest	Urban	Public
DRU	New York	Northeast	Urban	Private
DRU	North Carolina	South	Urban	Public
DRU	Oregon	West	Urban	Public
RUVH	California	West	Urban	Public
RUVH	Florida	South	Urban	Public
RUVH	Georgia	South	Urban	Public
RUVH	Kansas	Midwest	Urban	Public
RUVH	Maryland	South	Urban	Public
RUVH	Pennsylvania	Northeast	Urban	Public
RUVH	Tennessee	South	Urban	Private
RUVH	Texas	South	Urban	Public
RUVH	Virginia	South	Rural	Public
RUVH	Washington	West	Rural	Public

*MS=master's small; ML=master's large; DRU=doctoral research university; RUVH=research university, very high activity

Effective Comprehension Strategies in a Culturally Responsive Environment on the Navajo Reservation: A Preliminary Inquiry

Leslie Marlow
Duane Inman

Because of linguistic and cultural differences, Native American students often find themselves at a disadvantage in contemporary English language based classroom instruction since they may speak and think in their native language, or a non-standard English, and have a lack of schema related to the basals and texts with which they must work in the school setting. The gap between family and community culture and school culture complicates the instruction students receive and the manner in which they process the information (Reyhner, 2001). Further, the emphasis of NCLB researched programs has not considered significant Native American populations and therefore causes a disparity between the population being served and the strategies and methods being used with Native students (National Indian Education Association Legislative Summit, 2005). In the southwest, each Native American tribe has unique educational issues related to their specific cultural beliefs, geographical environments, and socio-economic circumstances. The purpose of this investigation was to engage in a preliminary examination of reading strategies used in specific, targeted Navajo schools in order to begin developing a better understanding of effective instructional methods used in the school of one specific Northwest Native American tribe.

Background: Socio-economic and Geographic Considerations

The Navajo (Dine′) Nation, regarded by the US government as the most economically disadvantaged US Indian tribe, consists of a population of approximately 300,000. By Navajo law, to be a tribal member an individual must be at least one-quarter Navajo (Indian Country Extension, 2008). Approximately 175,000 Navajo live on the Navajo Reservation (US Census Bureau from Navajo Division of Economic Development, 2000), 27,000 square miles in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, larger than the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts combined.

Geographically, the Navajo Nation is arid to semi-arid with the annual precipitation in most areas being fewer than 10 inches. The area is known for having very cold winters and very hot summers, with an annual average temperature of about 40ºF to 55ºF. Climatic patterns vary from south to north and generally, the Navajo lands lie outside the typical major pathways of winter and summer moisture-bearing air masses. Winter moisture comes infrequently. Summers are generally hot, with infrequent rainfall. Precipitation in is low to moderate in the early winter, increasing in February and March, and then drops off quickly into April. May through June is very dry throughout the region. Many Navajo still live in wood-heated housing, with little or no access to running water and/or electricity. (World Culture Encyclopedia, 2007; Interviews: Tohatchi Elementary School, May 2007).

The Navajo society and economy have been continually evolving since the Navajo first arrived in the Southwest. The Navajo have depended on a combination of farming, animal husbandry,

and the sale of various craft products. Historically, the raising of sheep and goats has provided substantial quantities of meat and milk, as well as hides, wool, and lambs that were exchanged for manufactured goods at any of the numerous trading posts throughout the Navajo country. Beginning in the early 1900s, a few Navajo were employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and by off-reservation towns and ranches, but income from these outside sources did not become a significant part of the Navajo economy until around 1950. Families traditionally have exclusive use rights to agricultural land as long as they actually farm it; if it lies uncultivated for more than two years another family may take possession. All rangeland, however, is treated as common and collective property of the whole community and is unfenced.

In the traditional Navajo economy there was a rigid division between male and female tasks. For example, farming and the care of horses were male activities; weaving and most household tasks were female activities. More recently, however, both genders have collaborated in lambing, shearing, and herding activities, and both men and women are now heavily involved in wage earning. Although males play the dominant roles in Navajo ritual activities, the Navajo Nation is a matriarchal society (Interview: Sonny Dooley, May 2007).

Today, although the more traditional farming and livestock economies are maintained throughout the reservation, mineral production and lumbering are main sources of income on the Navajo Reservation, along with tourism and the selling of Navajo crafts such as rugs, weavings, baskets, pottery and silver and turquoise jewelry. Most Navajo trade has been funneled through the trading posts, which resemble old country general stores. Clothing, household goods, bedding, and most of the other material needs of the Navajo are supplied in exchange for livestock products or, more recently, are sold. Traditionally, most Navajo families lived on credit for much of the year, paying off their accounts with wool in the spring and with lambs in the fall. Over 56% of the Navajo live below the poverty level, the highest poverty rate in the US, with a median family income of $11,885 and a per capita income of $6,217 (Indian Country Extension, 2008).

Cultural Beliefs

In order to fully understand what cultural and social difference affect Navajo students' comprehension in the classroom, one must have a general knowledge of the Navajo. However, the social and cultural organization of the Navajo tribe is quite extensive and one of the least well understood. Few people outside of the Navajo know very much about tribal social mores and customs and personal conduct among the Navajo that differs from that of other Native American tribes as well as other cultures (Witherspoon, 1996). For example, historically, the Navajo people have a kinship system that follows the lineage of the women. K'é—the Navajo kinship system—is the strength of the People and keeps the Navajo people together. Navajo is a matrilineal society. Each Navajo belongs to four different, unrelated clans. Each person belongs to the mother's clan, is born for the father's clan, and has maternal and paternal grandfathers' clans. Traditionally, the Navajo were forbidden to marry into the first two clans; today they are still strongly discouraged from doing so. K'é also extends to the natural world and the gods. The People are always among relatives. Just these differences from mainstream American can lead to misunderstandings of relationships and conceptual connections in schools (Navajo-Indian.org; http://serc.carleton.edu/research_education/nativelands/navajo/culture.html).

Terry Nichols, a Supervisory Park Ranger at Hubbell Trading Post (Manchester & Manchester, 1993) compiled generalizations about the Navajo cultural and social structure during her many years working on the reservation. While still not all encompassing regarding cultural aspects of the Navajo, her observations revealed that the Navajo feel their way of life is perfectly adequate. Vocally loud and extroverted behavior by a Navajo member may be considered overly aggressive conduct, although many Navajo expect this behavior from non-Native Americans and they may not be annoyed or disconcerted by it. However, the Navajo are characterized as reserved, quiet, gentle and not outspoken. Older people are deferred to, treated with respect and not ignored. At social gatherings, with food and drink available, if one is quiet and reserved, friendly and smiling, opportunities for some sort of communication should arise.
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(1) the establishment of instructional content and achievement standards for schools to include the consolidation of the standards of the three states overlapping in the Navajo Nation with those of the Navajo Nation for Navajo language and cultural knowledge and
(2) the development of a written standards-based curriculum to be founded on the needs of the students served and the cultural values and individual interests of Navajo students, focused on full knowledge of basic skills including reading . . . , with instructional strategies that reflect best research and evidence based practices, and inclusive of both English Language and Navajo Language skills and knowledge of not only American but also Navajo cultures (Navajo Nation Council, 2005).

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Often, Native American students have been among the lowest scoring students on standardized reading tests or aren't reported at the school level, the most left out among any contemporary United States racial group (Blankenship, D. 2006). The high poverty level of most Navajo families precludes inclusion of print rich home environments, thereby causing these students to be at a disadvantage when attending school. Insights into the comprehension strategies and methodologies that are culturally relevant may help alleviate this problem for native students and can be applicable for other cultural groups experiencing similar difficulties.

Many students such as the Navajo, who come to school with dual language exposure or ability and whose cultural background is not that of mainstream America, are at a disadvantage when attempting to read and comprehend the material that is generally provided in the school setting. Walker's 1990 study indicated that classroom teachers often consider inferences made by students from various cultural backgrounds incorrect. According to Block and Pressley (2002), five primary conditions negatively impact a student's comprehension if that student identifies with a different cultural background or language from that of the school environment: (1) differences in that which should be attended to, ignored, or unnecessary while reading, (2) misguided understandings due to a different conceptual framework, (3) cause and effect sequences can differ, thus evoking a different type of response, (4) symbolism may be different, and (5) expectations of what is typical in a particular circumstance or environment. Within the Navajo culture, concepts such as male and female roles, perceived disrespect toward adults, the needs of the community being more important than that of the individual, clothing and jewelry importance and the symbolism of things such as colors or land formations could cause students to infer meaning in non-Native text that would be incorrect.

Subjects and Methodology

In May 2007, the authors visited four schools located in middle/northwest Arizona and New Mexico within 15-30 miles from Gallup New Mexico, serving approximately 99% Native American populations. While all schools were located on the Navajo Reservation, one was a residential school, one was under the auspices of the Gallup-McKinley school district and the others were Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. With the exception of the residential school, students attending all schools were bused from remote areas to the schools each day, with the travel time to and from schools taking one to two hours each way. Approximately 95% of the teachers interviewed during classroom visits were Native American, with the remaining 5% being Anglo, Philipino, African American and Hispanic. Informal observations and discussions with teachers and principals were conducted in classes for grades K-8, with data gathered through observation, interviews, and photographs, focusing on four question sets in the context of teaching comprehension: (1) Is a variety of children's literature used in the classroom? If so, for what purpose is it used? What are some examples of what are considered to be "good"

literature for use in the classroom? (2) What type of more formal reading instruction appears to be most beneficial to use with the students? (3) What place does vocabulary development have in the classroom? (4) Of what importance is the integration of language skills in content areas in addition to reading?

Discussion

The responses of the teachers and principals from among the various schools were consistent with one another, were supported by the variety of activities in which students were engaged in each classroom, and addressed the focus questions of the project. Additionally, student work samples throughout each of the schools supported the information provided by the teachers and principals.

Literature use: Is a variety of children's literature used in the classroom? If so, for what purpose is it used? What are some examples of what are considered to be "good" literature for use in the classroom?

Children and adolescent literature use was prevalent within the visited classrooms. Fiction and non-fiction about various cultures was used to encourage students to see other people's stories and history and then compare these to their own. Culturally diverse and sensitive children's literature was used to enhance students' learning and teachers' instruction and served as a vehicle for creating lessons to suit the needs of the individual students. Culturally relevant literature was also a vehicle incorporated throughout the curriculum to encourage readers, to share vicariously the emotions, experiences, and aspirations of those from their own and other cultural groups as well as promote social and cultural values. Examples of culturally relevant literature used to promote comprehension experiences and integrative content included People, Navajo Indians, Annie and the Old One, Don't Call Me Pig! The Unbreakable Code, and Songs of Shiprock Fair.

Shared Reading: What type of more formal reading instruction appears to be most beneficial to use with the students?

Shared reading of material in the native language as well as in English allowed students to focus on the pictures and the text to make predictions and to generate meaning. Beginning with a 'picture walk', the teacher guided students through a preview of the story, asking questions to elicit words and phrases, in both languages, that were used in the text. The book was then read to students and predictions were checked against the text. Repeated readings of the book were reported to occur over several days. Further comprehension of the stories such as The Story of Despereaux, Dear Children of the Earth, Pablo's Tree and Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock took place through questioning and discussion of each story, character analysis, retelling boards, story grammar analysis, (setting, theme, characters, problem, solution), and sequencing illustrations. Activities occurred in large and small group settings with authentic texts rather than basal readers. Additional shared reading experiences took place through use of self-constructed, dual language stories by students and teachers and student created materials, based on the stories and history of the Navajo people.

Vocabulary Development: What place does vocabulary development have in the classroom?

Automatic recognition of words is necessary for reading comprehension. Language experiences in which reading, writing, listening and speaking were practiced through a thematic approach

appeared to be an efficient way of ensuring word repetition and reinforcement. Vocabulary building activities, also related to concept building, engaged students in organizing information or words according to concepts or topics. As learners read and talked about a topic, a schema of related concepts, and hence words, was built and reinforced. A print-rich environment existed in all of the schools visited, with English, Dine´ and Spanish being used with functional labeling, word walls, and student work.

Integration: Of what importance is the integration of language skills in content areas in addition to reading?
"Thematic learning is a process closer to the way the human brain is naturally designed best to learn" was a quote posted in the teacher workroom at one of the visited schools, and seemed to summarize the belief system of the majority of teachers of the visited classrooms. The use of thematic instruction, focusing on the Navajo culture, provides valuable focus in terms of demonstrating coherent connections among disciplines that allows for a transfer of learning from one context to another, helping students understand how and why to apply certain concepts, and helping students to grasp the relation of content to process. Traditional and historical aspects of the Navajo and non-Navajo cultures, family, agriculture, government, clothing, housing and society, combined with indigenous language study provided a link with more mainstream America. Some examples of literature used to effectively contribute to integration included Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat (food experiences and cultural comparisons), Who Took the Cookies from the Cookie Jar? (Math and problem solving), Kites (Asian cultural comparisons), The Unbreakable Code (Navajo/WWII history) and Building a Bridge (Navajo/Anglo cooperation).

A constant "theme" that was evident throughout the observations of classrooms and discussions with teachers and principals was that of storytelling and oral language as part of the overall curriculum. Storytelling is part of the oral tradition of the Navajo and its use helps students maintain tradition and language. Storytelling allows students to communicate values, language, memories, ethics and philosophy, while at the same time allowing for discussions to promote comprehension. In one of the three schools, one hour each morning was dedicated to oral language use, alternating between Standard English usage, native language usage, and storytelling techniques. Both of the other schools incorporated oral language activities in native language and English within the context of other content areas and included Spanish as an additional language option. Oral language activities began with focus on the social environment, talking about the day before, student concerns, the community and sports. Emphasized during activities were dual language acquisition, team building and social skills, The latter two were deemed of particular importance as, culturally, the Navajo tend to be a reticent people, focusing more on listening in group situations than in talking.

Conclusions

The lack of understanding due to differences in culture, development, family, or experience can cause major disconnects when attempting to understand narrative and/or expository text. Teachers therefore must offset these difficulties and promote effective reading strategies through direct explanation of the strategy as well as scaffolding (gradual release of responsibility) and consideration of culture in order to support independent reading and elimination of misunderstood concepts. In order for strategies to be effective, learning must be made personally

relevant for individual students. This, then, fulfills the Dine´ belief that "…firm grounding of native students in their indigenous cultural heritage and language is a fundamentally sound pre-requisite to well developed and culturally healthy students." (Office of Dine´ Culture, Language, and Community Service, 2007).

The core questions used as parameters of this investigation yielded basic information regarding types of comprehension strategies used and provided a basis for continued study with other Navajo schools as well as schools of other native populations. There are certain practices that teachers of Native students can utilize in order to promote a greater understanding of the characteristics unique to specific Native students' environment. Teachers must examine strategies and instructional methodologies which have been demonstrated to be effective in promoting comprehension within culturally responsive Native American/Dine′ schools, focusing on those aspects which can lessen the disparity between community and school culture, and setting up a circumstance in which students can use schema to better understand the disparity. Finally, outside agencies must develop better awareness of the Native American/Dine′ teacher's approach to teaching reading comprehension to Native students and encourage the integration of cultural schema within the context of reading.

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Effective Comprehension Strategies in a Culturally Responsive Environment on the Navajo Reservation: A Preliminary Inquiry

Leslie Marlow
Duane Inman

Because of linguistic and cultural differences, Native American students often find themselves at a disadvantage in contemporary English language based classroom instruction since they may speak and think in their native language, or a non-standard English, and have a lack of schema related to the basals and texts with which they must work in the school setting. The gap between family and community culture and school culture complicates the instruction students receive and the manner in which they process the information (Reyhner, 2001). Further, the emphasis of NCLB researched programs has not considered significant Native American populations and therefore causes a disparity between the population being served and the strategies and methods being used with Native students (National Indian Education Association Legislative Summit, 2005). In the southwest, each Native American tribe has unique educational issues related to their specific cultural beliefs, geographical environments, and socio-economic circumstances. The purpose of this investigation was to engage in a preliminary examination of reading strategies used in specific, targeted Navajo schools in order to begin developing a better understanding of effective instructional methods used in the school of one specific Northwest Native American tribe.

Background: Socio-economic and Geographic Considerations

The Navajo (Dine′) Nation, regarded by the US government as the most economically disadvantaged US Indian tribe, consists of a population of approximately 300,000. By Navajo law, to be a tribal member an individual must be at least one-quarter Navajo (Indian Country Extension, 2008). Approximately 175,000 Navajo live on the Navajo Reservation (US Census Bureau from Navajo Division of Economic Development, 2000), 27,000 square miles in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, larger than the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts combined.

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The responses of the teachers and principals from among the various schools were consistent with one another, were supported by the variety of activities in which students were engaged in each classroom, and addressed the focus questions of the project. Additionally, student work samples throughout each of the schools supported the information provided by the teachers and principals.

Literature use: Is a variety of children's literature used in the classroom? If so, for what purpose is it used? What are some examples of what are considered to be "good" literature for use in the classroom?

Children and adolescent literature use was prevalent within the visited classrooms. Fiction and non-fiction about various cultures was used to encourage students to see other people's stories and history and then compare these to their own. Culturally diverse and sensitive children's literature was used to enhance students' learning and teachers' instruction and served as a vehicle for creating lessons to suit the needs of the individual students. Culturally relevant literature was also a vehicle incorporated throughout the curriculum to encourage readers, to share vicariously the emotions, experiences, and aspirations of those from their own and other cultural groups as well as promote social and cultural values. Examples of culturally relevant literature used to promote comprehension experiences and integrative content included People, Navajo Indians, Annie and the Old One, Don't Call Me Pig! The Unbreakable Code, and Songs of Shiprock Fair.

Shared Reading: What type of more formal reading instruction appears to be most beneficial to use with the students?

Shared reading of material in the native language as well as in English allowed students to focus on the pictures and the text to make predictions and to generate meaning. Beginning with a 'picture walk', the teacher guided students through a preview of the story, asking questions to elicit words and phrases, in both languages, that were used in the text. The book was then read to students and predictions were checked against the text. Repeated readings of the book were reported to occur over several days. Further comprehension of the stories such as The Story of Despereaux, Dear Children of the Earth, Pablo's Tree and Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock took place through questioning and discussion of each story, character analysis, retelling boards, story grammar analysis, (setting, theme, characters, problem, solution), and sequencing illustrations. Activities occurred in large and small group settings with authentic texts rather than basal readers. Additional shared reading experiences took place through use of self-constructed, dual language stories by students and teachers and student created materials, based on the stories and history of the Navajo people.

Vocabulary Development: What place does vocabulary development have in the classroom?

Automatic recognition of words is necessary for reading comprehension. Language experiences in which reading, writing, listening and speaking were practiced through a thematic approach

appeared to be an efficient way of ensuring word repetition and reinforcement. Vocabulary building activities, also related to concept building, engaged students in organizing information or words according to concepts or topics. As learners read and talked about a topic, a schema of related concepts, and hence words, was built and reinforced. A print-rich environment existed in all of the schools visited, with English, Dine´ and Spanish being used with functional labeling, word walls, and student work.

Integration: Of what importance is the integration of language skills in content areas in addition to reading?
"Thematic learning is a process closer to the way the human brain is naturally designed best to learn" was a quote posted in the teacher workroom at one of the visited schools, and seemed to summarize the belief system of the majority of teachers of the visited classrooms. The use of thematic instruction, focusing on the Navajo culture, provides valuable focus in terms of demonstrating coherent connections among disciplines that allows for a transfer of learning from one context to another, helping students understand how and why to apply certain concepts, and helping students to grasp the relation of content to process. Traditional and historical aspects of the Navajo and non-Navajo cultures, family, agriculture, government, clothing, housing and society, combined with indigenous language study provided a link with more mainstream America. Some examples of literature used to effectively contribute to integration included Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat (food experiences and cultural comparisons), Who Took the Cookies from the Cookie Jar? (Math and problem solving), Kites (Asian cultural comparisons), The Unbreakable Code (Navajo/WWII history) and Building a Bridge (Navajo/Anglo cooperation).

A constant "theme" that was evident throughout the observations of classrooms and discussions with teachers and principals was that of storytelling and oral language as part of the overall curriculum. Storytelling is part of the oral tradition of the Navajo and its use helps students maintain tradition and language. Storytelling allows students to communicate values, language, memories, ethics and philosophy, while at the same time allowing for discussions to promote comprehension. In one of the three schools, one hour each morning was dedicated to oral language use, alternating between Standard English usage, native language usage, and storytelling techniques. Both of the other schools incorporated oral language activities in native language and English within the context of other content areas and included Spanish as an additional language option. Oral language activities began with focus on the social environment, talking about the day before, student concerns, the community and sports. Emphasized during activities were dual language acquisition, team building and social skills, The latter two were deemed of particular importance as, culturally, the Navajo tend to be a reticent people, focusing more on listening in group situations than in talking.

Conclusions

The lack of understanding due to differences in culture, development, family, or experience can cause major disconnects when attempting to understand narrative and/or expository text. Teachers therefore must offset these difficulties and promote effective reading strategies through direct explanation of the strategy as well as scaffolding (gradual release of responsibility) and consideration of culture in order to support independent reading and elimination of misunderstood concepts. In order for strategies to be effective, learning must be made personally

relevant for individual students. This, then, fulfills the Dine´ belief that "…firm grounding of native students in their indigenous cultural heritage and language is a fundamentally sound pre-requisite to well developed and culturally healthy students." (Office of Dine´ Culture, Language, and Community Service, 2007).

The core questions used as parameters of this investigation yielded basic information regarding types of comprehension strategies used and provided a basis for continued study with other Navajo schools as well as schools of other native populations. There are certain practices that teachers of Native students can utilize in order to promote a greater understanding of the characteristics unique to specific Native students' environment. Teachers must examine strategies and instructional methodologies which have been demonstrated to be effective in promoting comprehension within culturally responsive Native American/Dine′ schools, focusing on those aspects which can lessen the disparity between community and school culture, and setting up a circumstance in which students can use schema to better understand the disparity. Finally, outside agencies must develop better awareness of the Native American/Dine′ teacher's approach to teaching reading comprehension to Native students and encourage the integration of cultural schema within the context of reading.

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Connecting Readers' Understandings Through Meaningful Themes and Writing Engagement

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A descriptive study with outcomes-based results is described in this paper. The study presented a summer guided reading/guided writing approach called the "6Rs" to thousands of inner-city children residing in New York City housing projects and Department of Homeless Services transitional facilities over a three-year period. The approach, offered half a school day in an annual CampUs Program, connected readings, writings, and computer projects to three meaningful themes which the funding agencies and program designers believed would be relevant to the children's lives.

Background of the Problem

The phenomenon of "summer loss" was a key factor in the CampUs Program design. Research has documented that during the summer months of June through August, disadvantaged and poverty-situated children loose academic and learning gains when compared to their more economically advantaged peers (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Borman & Boulay, 2004; Bracey, 2002b). In a research syntheses of 39 studies, Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse (1996) found that during the summer months a loss of about three months occurred in reading and language achievement between low- and middle-class students. Comprehension and reading recognition scores declined more for low-income students while reading recognition scores showed a significant gain for advantaged students. The researchers theorized that the gain in the learning of new words for middle-class students was due to the home and community environments which provided the opportunities to learn new words. In a second line of research Kim (2004) found that the reading of four or five books during the summer had a potentially large enough effect to prevent reading achievement loss from Spring to Fall. Many have noted that active participation in summer academic and enrichment programs would reap strong benefits for those who are economically disadvantaged and educationally undernourished (Bracy, 2002a; Franklin, 2004; Gerber, 1996; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

In the structure of the academic half day, we strived to accomplish two major objectives. First, we wished to provide children with knowledge and strategies that could potentially assist them in the larger school arena when they returned in the Fall. Here we fused three major literacy components regarding how and what children read, how they translated what they read into organized plans in preparation for writing, and how children wrote to meet acceptable standards.

Secondly, in efforts to influence children in a positive way and to provide guidance in helping them overcome the influences of inner-city risk factors, we focused the readings in both

the classroom and computer lab settings on three socially relevant themes. These themes asked children to be aware of the dangers of substance abuse (say "NO" to drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes), to be a good person (be of good character at home, at school, and on the athletic fields), and to show respect for the environment and the community (don't litter and pollute). In the literary readings offered to children, we followed what Rudman (1995) described as an "issues approach" in which problems found in literature mirror what actually occurs for people in society. Also known as the practice of "bibliotherapy", an issues approach offers a thematic way to provide guidance and protection through story reading. Such a thematic focus helps both teachers and students think about meaning while promoting positive attitudes towards the very acts of reading and writing (Burns, Roe & Ross, 1999).

Inherent in the approach was the belief that what one reads can influence what one thinks and how one writes. Borrowing cues from Rosenblatt (2004) was the notion that readers and writers add onto their understandings and extensions of language as they engage in and transact with new readings, new types of writing formats, and new learning environments. Researchers and literacy educators have also noted that when students write while engaged in reading, they are better able to understand unfamiliar content, learn new information, and reveal more complex thoughts (Newell, 1984; Newell & Winograd, 1989; Spivey, 1990). Graham and Perin (2007) emphasized that writing well is not an option for our students with writing skills along with reading comprehension being necessities, predicators of academic success, and basically needed to compete in the global economy.

Literature Review

Our emphasis on helping children write coherent papers assisted them with meeting the New York State assessment requirements and the English language arts and technology standards. State standards were supported in the "6Rs" approach by: (1) the engagement of children in wide and varied readings; (2) the production of discussion, written papers, and computer projects about issues or topics in which they had to produce evidence of understandings; and by (3) creation of a multi-media computer project in which they had to write, format, gather, and organize information (Board of Education of the City of New York, 1997, 2001). Students at fourth and eighth grade levels also had to attain benchmark standards by writing acceptable papers based on responses made to textual readings. This integrated reading/writing act was evaluated by the use of rubrics or scoring scales ranging from a level "1" as being inadequate writing to a level "4", defined as being "advanced writing proficiency." A level "3" indicated acceptable standards for writing. For differing writing tasks, students needed to address the writing criteria of meaning, organization, development, language use, and mechanics. New York City students performed quite poorly over a four year period with 67%, 58%, 56% and 53.5% of its fourth graders achieving below acceptable writing standards (a level "2" or below), and 65%, 67%, 67%, and 70% of its eighth graders performing in a similar way.

The planning for writing accomplished in the literacy classroom settings and computer lab was done through the use of story and concept maps. Researchers have reported that students with and without learning problems have improved in reading comprehension and planning for writing when they have been shown how text ideas are organized in narrative and expository readings and when they have been provided with visual models of text organization (Davis,

1994; Swanson & DeLaPaz, 1998; Vallecorsa & deBettencourt, 1997; Wong, 1997). Many of the studies in the literature also reported positive effects of concept map use for vocabulary and reading comprehension development when small groups of children and youth were taught in controlled settings (Bos & Anders, 1990; Boyle 1996; Englert & Mariage, 1991). Providing writers with visual frameworks of text organization gives them a framework for producing, organizing, and editing compositions and has a positive influence on report writing (Englert, Raphael, Anderson, Anthony, & Stevens, 1991; Guastello, Beasley, & Sinatra, 2000; Wong, 1997). Moreover, research has shown that instruction in writing improves reading comprehension, especially when writing occurs in unison with reading (Biancorosa & Snow, 2006).

While disadvantaged children involved in summer programs need to engage in literacy work, they also need to experience other activities that they ordinarily would not experience in their home and community environments, such as activities that require physical exertion, learning of rules, changing of roles, and development by coaches and mentors (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001). Others note that the best programs should include a wide range of options, provide hands-on activities related to a thematic interest, and have an academic focus aligned with work connected to the classroom (Pardini, 2001). In an analysis of seven studies of out-of-school time programs Chaput (2004) found that participation in a variety of offerings was associated with more beneficial outcomes in academic achievement, literacy gains, and decreased drug involvement. Criteria for high quality implementation was established in a review of 34 academically focused summer programs (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006). These criteria were: (1) developing a program with intentionality, (2) attempting to build positive and individual connections with youth, (3) developing highly skilled staff, (4) engaging institutions and community groups in programming, and (5) using engaging and pleasurable program activities.

Other practitioners and providers may wish to use the structure of this outcomes-based summer approach to achieve an integrated and coordinated way of increasing children's overall literacy development while connecting to State English Language Arts standards in a meaningful way. Focusing on very unique and needy populations, the CampUs Program likewise offered activities to children, who may have experienced a disruptive school schedule, may not have participated in organized sports activities with team interaction, and may not have had opportunity to work on computers.

Research Questions

During three years of the CampUs Program, the following research question was investigated. Will participating in the summer CampUs Program significantly improve the essay writing scores of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) children between the ages of 7 to 14? During the third year of the Program, an additional research question was introduced. What effect did engagement in reading every day have on the DHS children? In addition, a questionnaire was given to all the children at the end of each year's program to assess their satisfaction for participating in the program.

Methods

Participants

The CampUs participants were of two types: the children who attended in summer cohorts and the staff who served the children.

Children. The CampUs program served children and youth between the ages of 7 to 14 from two government agencies, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The Authority supplied affordable and safe housing for over 174,000 low-income families living in its 346 housing development sites (projects) located throughout the city's five boroughs. DHS children and youth resided in transitional families, also known as "family centers", and generally remained in their temporary housing facility for no more than a year before being relocated to a NYCHA housing site. From 400-500 NYCHA children and youth from the five boroughs were bused to the St. John's University, Queens, NY, campus to participate in two-week cohorts, and from 150 to 200 children and youth from DHS facilities in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx participated in a two to three week CampUs program at a partner college.

The housing project children, for the most part, had experienced stability of residence and an uninterrupted school schedule during the regular school year. It should be noted, however, that a good number of these children were speakers of other languages (478 in a three-year period), and many had received special education services (287 over a three-year period). The homeless children, on the other hand, had traditionally experienced high mobility, relocation of housing, and interrupted schooling. In New York City from 50 to 55% of homeless children transfer to a new school each year, with 21% of that percentage, transferring twice and 16% transferring three times or more (Nunez, 2004; Saulny, 2004). Furthermore, homeless children perform well below reading and math, about 25 percent repeat a grade, and many are unnecessarily placed in special education classes (Institute for Children and Poverty, 2003). Over the three-year cohort period, from 10 to 23 percent of CampUs participants reported that they had repeated a grade; 21 to 34 percent reported that they had been placed in a special education setting, and from 7 to 41 percent reported that they spoke another language.

Staff: Children were directly taught, coached, and mentored by veteran and pre-service teachers from The St. John's University School of Education and by student athletes enrolled in other university programs. Many of the undergraduates were eligible for federally provided work-study funds. This additional funding source allowed the program developers to recruit more adults to serve as teachers and coaches so that small group configurations could be achieved in the classrooms and on the playing fields. Additionally, the undergraduates served as important role models since many come from the same communities and neighborhoods as the children, and they exemplified how college life could become a reality for those who are economically disadvantaged but strive to do well in school.

Measures.

Even with the short program duration, we used three types of outcome-based evaluations to determine if our reading/mapping/writing emphasis was effective and if the program was achieving its intended goals. We measured each participant's writing ability at the beginning and end of each summer cycle and used a questionnaire at the end of each cycle to ask students what they felt they learned, what they liked best, and if they thought their reading and writing improved. During one cycle of DHS children, we measured participants' pre-and post-perceptions about their reading behavior.

Writing. On the first and last days of each cohort cycle, we collected a paper on the same topic, to tell about a favorite experience, with the second requesting children to tell about a favorite CampUs experience. In this instance, we wanted children to be able to visualize something memorable in their lives so that they could write about it without turning to reference sources or teacher assistance.

Both sets of papers were evaluated by a teacher rater using the State holistic scoring rubric. With such a rubric procedure, evaluators don't focus on one aspect of writing, such as mechanics or conventions, but assess on the overall quality of the written work. Usually expressed in a numerical rating system of 1 to 4 or 1 to 6 or a verbal rating system of good (high), average (middle, or poor (low), the evaluator of the written work judges each quality of writing – such as organization – in relation to a rating system. All rubrics have two main features in common, in that they show and describe the criteria or "What counts" in a written piece and secondly, they have a graduation of the quality of writing expressed in the rating scale or rating system (Andrade, 2000). Rubrics assist teachers and project evaluators (1) by making the rating process of sets of papers more consistent and objective; (2) by making the analysis of sets of individual student papers and projects easier to evaluate; and (3) by making an impact on instructional quality since they show the key features that should appear in a top-quality paper (Popham, 2000; Reutzel & Cooter, 2003).

Reader Self-Perception Sale. With the last cohort of DHS children, we used an adaptation of the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) (Henk & Melnick, 1995) to see what effect engagement in reading every day would have for these children. Henk and Melnick developed a 33-item scale categorized into the five areas of: (1) General Perception, (2) Progress, (3) Observational Comparison, (4) Social Feedback, and (5) Physiological States. Based on a sample of 1525 students an alpha reliability coefficient of .84 was established for the Progress Scale and .81 for the Social Feedback Scale. No alpha coefficient could be generated for the General Perception item "I think I am a good reader," but because of our program intent, we felt that this was a key item to evaluate.

For our purposes, we selected the category areas of (1) General Perception, having the one item; (2) Progress, having 9 items, and (3) Social feedback, having 9 items. Children completed 19 items at the beginning and end of the program, and they responded how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement based on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The category area of Progress was related to how students felt about themselves as they improved or became stronger in their reading and overall literacy abilities. It contained nine items and was measured by such statements as, "I am getting better at reading, "I understand what I read better than I could before," "When I read, I recognize more words than I

used to." Social Feedback, measured by nine items, was concerned with how the student perceives what others think about the improvement in one's ability. It contained such statements as, "My teacher thinks I am a good reader," "People in my family think I am a good reader," "Other kids think I am a good reader."

Questionnaire. An exit questionnaire administered on the last day of each program cycle asked children to write short narratives in response to four questions. They were asked to "tell about some of the things they learned, to tell how their reading and writing may have gotten better, to tell if the mapping experience helped them write a better paper," and "to tell what CampUs activities they liked the best."

Procedure

Training. The undergraduates were trained a full two weeks prior to program implementation in management techniques, conflict resolution, behavior management, and lesson preparation. The pre-service teachers spent two days learning the children's software programs and four days with veteran reading/literacy teachers. They previewed the books to be used by children, saw demonstrations of and practiced model lessons, planned concept and story map usage with particular readings, and learned how to assist children with written development by focusing on the qualities of writing indicated on the state writing rubric.

Each pre-service teacher, in turn, was assigned two groups of children with six to eight children in each group. During the morning block, they worked with a group in the 10 to 14-year-old range and in the afternoon time block they had a group in the 7 to 9-year-old range. The pre-service teachers were also assigned to one veteran, literacy teacher who acted as a coach and mentor during each project day. The veteran teachers circulated among their groups of pre-service teachers and observed the steps of lesson development, assisted with feedback, conducted model lessons for particular pre-service teachers needing assistance, and, at times, actually worked with a smaller set of children or a single child during the writing process. Here we attempted to implement the intervention guidelines offered by Allington (2006) for needy and struggling students. He noted that small group size and limited number of groups coupled with good intensive instruction increases the likelihood of program success. In a meta-analysis of 93 summer school program, Cooper and his colleagues (2000) also noted that impacts were greater when programs featured small-group or individualized instruction.

The literacy teachers, all graduates of the St. John's University Master's Literacy Program, were also calibrated in their roles as evaluators of the children's writing using the New York State rubric procedure. The evaluators had rated papers of children from second to eighth grade levels prior to program implementation. An overall inter-scores phi-coefficient of .860 was established. This rather high correlation of inter-rater reliability meant that raters who scored project children's papers were of a close mindset. By judging each of the state writing qualities of meaning, development, organization, language use, and mechanics on the one to four point system, we were able to arrive at a focused holistic score for each paper. For instance, one fifth grade student Aaron telling about his favorite experiences of playing sports, received scores of 3 for meaning, 3 for development, 3 for mechanics, 2 for language use, 2 for organization, achieving an overall holistic score of 2.6.

Program and literacy component features. The program featured academic and athletics with full day participation in rotating time blocks. Two periods (90 minutes) were devoted to small group reading and writing instruction; one period (45 minutes) involved working on a reading, writing, and graphic design project in a college computer lab; and two periods (2 hours and 15 minutes) were spent learning how to swim and at other athletic activities of choice.

The literacy component was research informed and theoretically based, highly supportive of State standards, and cohesive in its daily approach. We called it the 6Rs – Read, Reason, Retell/Reconstruct, Rubric, w(Rite), and Revise. Featuring a series of six guided cumulative steps, the approach promoted development in the four domains of the language arts and visual representation. We structured the two half-day components of literacy work and athletics so that a predicable pattern of stability and consistency would occur every day for these children. The 6Rs steps integrated many of the components of a balanced literacy framework in that viewing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing were featured as children and teachers engaged in shared reading/shared writing and guided reading/guided writing as they worked through differing text styles (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). Furthermore, vocabulary developed out of the textual readings, and students applied their new word knowledge in active ways through writing activities (Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1999).

Read. Reading – the first "R" in the approach – was managed by the use of small collections of trade books, often known as text sets, and these were strategically used by teachers as they reinforced the three major themes of the program. We used fiction and non-fiction trade books on a daily basis as the "magnifying glass" vehicle to enlarge and enhance the children's interactions with the messages of the three themes (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Of the 37 books previewed and selected to be used as small group text sets, 23 related to the character development theme, 6 to the substance abuse theme, and 8 to the respecting the environment theme. Because we believed that many children were still struggling readers, were English language learners, or had been or were in special education settings, a read aloud was generally accomplished first, followed by a second, shared oral reading before they were lead through the text reasoning and reconstruction processes.

The readings provided a way to increase the children's meaning and reading vocabularies. New words were printed on five by eight cards and mounted on a "word wall" under the appropriate theme heading. Both the thematic book readings and vocabulary reinforcements were aimed at organizing the children's knowledge of concepts and helping them see the relevance of information (Gunning, 2003).

Reason. During reasoning, teachers engaged children in thinking and feeling about the text and its message. Questioning and verbal discussion occurring during and after the reading made this step very lively. Children interacted freely with the text, the teacher, and one another as they talked about book ideas, new vocabulary, the relationship to the theme, and their personal reactions to meaning. Here we applied the three levels of thinking about a reading-experiencing, connecting, and extending – as noted by Finders and Hynds (2003). They experienced the reading through the pictures, words, and images aroused by the text; they connected the reading

to impressions in their lives regarding substance abuse, what makes a good person, and the local environment issues of littering and pollution; and they began to think about how they would extent the text reading into a graphic map format, a writing, an artistic project, or in a computer project.

Retell/Reconstruct. The thinking and reasoning processes involved in the "retelling" and "reconstructing" aspects of the plan made use of the visual literacy representation of ideas through "maps." Concept and story maps, also known as semantic maps, webs, clusters, and graphic organizers, served as a major program strategy to help children formulate and organize their ideas after reading and before and during writing. Teachers moved students smoothly into retellings and reconstructions of stories and informational readings by verbally engaging students in map construction. Information based on the reading was written within graphic figures either by the teacher who elicited this information during verbal discussion or by the children themselves as they puzzled out the sequence of events or the concepts and ideas of the text and wrote them into the figures on a map.

Teachers used differing map structures that represented how various reading and writings were organized. The maps used with literature or story readings reflected the common story grammar features of character(s), plot, setting, problems faced by the main character, outcomes or consequences, resolution, and theme. These maps generated a retelling of a story's events as sequencing and causal interactions were the notations that children wrote down. The maps used with expository, informational readings reflected cause and effect, sequential, compare and contrast, and topic development text patterns. These maps helped children reconstruct information from a textual reading by allowing them to see the connections among ideas and concepts and by relating details and new vocabulary appropriately.

Rubric. The mapping step was followed by a discussion about writing and how reading can provide a number of ideas to develop in writing. Children were presented with the qualities of writing and the four-point weighting scale of the state rubric scoring system. The components of the rubric were written in a more "user friendly" way for children, and large copies of the children's rubric were made and hung in each of the project's classrooms. Teachers and students discussed what features of writing would made a good paper as they viewed the rubric, and children would return to look at the rubric as they engaged in the on-going writing or revision processes.

(w)Rite. Writing and planning for writing after reading and mapping became a central feature of the 6Rs stepwise approach. Children wrote their own individual papers while viewing either a group-constructed map or their own filled-in map. Project teachers interacted freely with the children as they wrote often answering questions posed by the children about their writing, such as "Does it sound good?" or "Is this correct?" After teacher interaction and revision suggestions, a rewriting was accomplished. Ten-year-old Queen wrote; "It got better by me writing a lot. The reason why I've writing a lot is because for the whole time that I've been here I have been writing."

Revise. The rewriting was, more often than not, accomplished by a highly motivating, visual and artistic literacy activity that connected to the meaning of the book. For instance, with

the book *Playing Right Field* (Welch, 2000) aligned to our character development theme, young children constructed a "pop-up book." On the accordion panels of a folded strip of paper to which a paper ball was attached on one end and a paper baseball glove on the other, children wrote their episodes of the right fielder's story. For older children, the culminating writing activity with the fiction book, *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), was rewriting the story on panels on a cut-out picket fence. The fence represented the divide between a black and white neighborhood, and the setting where two young girls of different races overcome the barriers set by the segregation climate of the times. For *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 2000), children wrote their version of what the animals told the young man about the dangers of deforesting on large tree leaves and then hung their "leaves" on a drawing of a giant tree constructed on chart paper. Once revision and editing were completed, children would share their reading with a buddy or the whole group with the paper finally becoming displayed on the classroom wall under the appropriate theme title.

Computer Project. This expectation and routine continued in the computer lab, where children worked on a multi-media project connected to one of the three project themes. Use of popular children's software programs allowed children to author, to use visuals and illustrations, to link to Internet informational resources, and to accomplish appealing page/screen lay-outs. A four-point scoring rubric was generated to evaluate each child's computer project with a focus on the five qualities of project completeness in exemplifying a theme, organization and structure, originality, graphical presentation, and written presentation.

After a teacher-lead discussion of the meaning of each of the themes and how they might be addressed, children followed these planning steps: (1) they selected an aspect of a theme to investigate; (2) they generated an idea web or concept map of the components of the theme idea that were known at the present time; (3) they constructed an outline of how screens might be planned based on the number of concept ideas shown on the map; (4) they linked to Internet sites related to the themes provided by the teacher and began to gain information and take notes; and (5) they wrote their initial scripts for each screen or card, incorporating their notes and possible ideas of visuals that would complement the text.

Results

To answer the first research question the pretest and posttest writing rubric scores of both the NYCHA and DHS children were analyzed using the *t*-test for dependent samples. In each instance, a significant difference was found with the posttests being significantly higher than the pretests. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Summary of Writing Gain Scores of CAMPUS Participants

	Assessment	N	Average Rubric Score	Writing Gain	Significance
Year One					

NYCHA	Pretest	668	2.46		
				+.30	.000
	Posttest	668	2.76		
DHS	Pretest	42	2.31		
				+.32	.004
	Posttest	42	2.63		
		Year Two			
NYCHA	Pretest	615	2.43		
				+.26	.000
	Posttest	615	2.69		
DHS	Pretest	63	1.96		
				+.69	.000
	Posttest	63	2.65		
		Year Three			
NYCHA	Pretest	674	2.47		
				+.30	.000
	Posttest	674	2.77		
DHS	Pretest	90	2.01		
				+.40	.000
	Posttest	90	2.41		

When the above data is disaggregated first by ethnicity and then by class placement, the significance of these findings becomes even more revealing. The U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics identified African American and Hispanic students as performing much lower than both their White and Asian American counterparts on the 2007 Writing Assessment (2007). In the CAMPUS Program, the writing gain scores achieved by both the African American and Hispanic students were significant at the .000 level compared to their White and Asian counterparts but it should be noted that the significance of the latter's gain scores, with the exception of the gain scores of Caucasians in the second year, were probably due to the small number of participants. These results are summarized in Table 2. The analysis of class placement data revealed that both the special education and general education students made significant gains at the $p = .000$ levels. The gain scores for the special education students ranged from +.23 to +.35, and the gain scores for the general education students ranged from +.25 to +.34.

Table 2

Summary of Three Year Writing Gain Scores of African American, Hispanic Students, Caucasian, and Asian Students.

Ethnicity	Year One		Year Two		Year Three	
	N	Gain Score	N	Gain Score	N	Gain Score
African American	426	+.31***	381	+.24***	401	+.26***
Hispanic	160	+.40***	153	+.35***	165	+.33***
Caucasian	9	+.09	4	+.75**	11	+.29
Asian	2	+.60	2	+.20	2	+1.0

Note. ** $p = .01$. *** $p = .000$

The second research question was answered by the results of the adaptation of the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS). A dependent *t*-test was used to analyze the pretest – posttest differences in the three category areas: General Perception, Progress, and Social Feedback. For General Perception a nonsignificant difference was found (+.19, $t = 1.82$, ns). A similar nonsignificant difference was found for Social Feedback (+.96, $t = 1.68$, ns). However, in the area of Progress, a significant difference was found (+.99, $t = 2.14$, $p < .04$) suggesting that the students felt that they improved or became stronger in their reading and overall literacy abilities.

When asked to "tell about some of the things they learned" in a questionnaire given at the end of the program, the children indicated that they had internalized many of the major themes of the program and were able to express these in writing. The most prevalent responses included knowledge about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and smoking (55); computer use (45); the protection of and respect for the environment (25); good character and respectfulness (47); how to read better (31); how to write better (54); and how to swim (37).

Discussion

Offering a structured and intense literacy program supplemented with athletic, recreational, and academically focused motivational activities would appear to be quite beneficial for low-income children when offered during the out-of-school-time of summer. This

type of program may succeed because it offers consistency and routine each and every day in small group and large group configurations in a controlled environmental setting. Here there was not sense of "catching up" with the skill work and assignments of one's classmates. Instead, children read, wrote, and did computer work each day and added to their skills as they acquired new vocabulary, new writing techniques, and new learnings to add to their knowledge base. Athletic participation, as noted by others (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003), may have provided both a motivational and learning complement to the academic offerings.

During the literacy-block period, children completed from four to five papers based on the readings of differing trade books and the use of the differing map organizational plans. Young children and less proficient writers would generally produce a paragraph-length paper but teachers worked on elaborating content details, on how to expand sentences and transform phrases and clauses to achieve sentence variety, and on the construction of good "topic sentences" that would introduce paragraphs.

The reading, mapping, and writing process of the 6Rs steps supported and built upon one another. The literacy engagement was cumulative and recursive in that written products were visible outcomes of each trade book reading and the cycle began again with the new offering of a trade book related to another theme. With this approach, children's expectations were that reading, reconstructing, writing, and revision, were connected as one unifying event. A "routine" was established that writers became accustomed to in their expectations and requirements (Piazza, 2003).

The engagement processes of talk, questioning, analyzing text, and writing based on reading was in line with the findings of literacy instruction involving 88 teachers in nine high poverty schools across the United States (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). These researchers noted that successful teachers challenged students to think reflectively and taught students how to apply reading strategies to their reading and writing.

We believed that the benchmark standard of writing an acceptable paper and thinking deeply about a topic was a task of worth and value. The National Commission on Writing (2003) noted that while many effective models of how to teach writing exist, the practice of applying it in the classroom is becoming increasingly "short changed", even though writing is the means by which "students connect dots in their knowledge." The Commission recommended that the time students devote to writing should be at least doubled, that writing should occur across the curriculum, and that writing should occur during out-of-school time. When reading and writing occur in unison, they create a powerful bond which influences learning in ways that are not possible when students read without writing and write without reading (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Also when students write about what they read, the engagement of the writing process enhances their ability to learn to write (Cohen & Spenciner, 2005). The writing activities accomplished in our approach with pens, pencils, and keyboard asked children to reflect upon socially relevant issues and consider the meanings found in the trade book readings. By focusing on how to write and how writing coordinates with what was read, we wished to lessen the gap of summer loss and to provide the children with skills that would help them in the formal arena of schooling when they returned in the fall.

The many low-income students in our program were quite aware in their written comments and evaluations that they participated in reading and writing on a daily basis and were learning new words. Some of their written comments reveal understanding of the program's intentionality:

> 10-year-old Queen; "It got better by me writing a lot. The reason why I've writing a lot is because for the whole time that I've been here I have been writing."
> 11-year-old Syherra; "In reading we read a story and mapped it out…I think my reading and writing just got stronger because I got back into the school mode. I haven't done work in a long time but now I have so I feel like I'm in school."
> 11-year-old Mike; "I think my reading and writing got better because I got to experience more things I didn't know. I also got better because I learned new words and I got to hear new stories."
> (1) 11-year-old Tiffany, "I read and write a lot more than in school"; (2) 12-year-old Aneesa, "My reading and writing got better because we did it a lot; and (3) 13-year-old Bhekvante, "My favorite activity I likes best was reading the books and doing work after it and the hanging it up…it makes me feel that I have accomplished everything in one day…My reading and writing got better because I can read and write big words that I thought I could not read…also the reading has encourage me to do more reading at home and in school."

Furthermore, DHS students in the last year's cohort revealed through the RSPS that their perceptions of themselves improved, especially in the area of reading progress. Because the 6Rs guided reading/guided writing approach was the only formal one offered to these children during the summer period, they responded to the 19 items based on what they believed happened to themselves in our classrooms. The structured reading of the trade books, the reading during the mapping and the writing components, the re-readings of daily engagement which the children felt to be a positive influence contributing to their progress as competent readers. Children from all cohorts reported via the questionnaire that they learned to read better and that they read more than they would have otherwise.

Recommendations and Implications for Practice and Research

If groups of low-income children could be served in controlled environmental settings as was done in the CampUs Program, other program options noted in the literature may be considered as well. Researchers could randomly assign groups of children to intervention conditions investigating the use of differing reading or writing methodologies and compare the results with those of the 6Rs approach described in this paper. For instance, as noted earlier, with children classified as learning disabled, studies in which maps and map-type structures were used, have yielded positive results (Bos & Anders, 1990; Boyle, 1996; Englert & Mariage, 1991). In a study with 11 intermediate-grade children, Englert & Mariage (1991) used a map structure which helped students predict ideas based on their background knowledge, organize the predicted text ideas based on the text's written structure, search for the text structure pattern in the informational passage, summarize the main ideas of the search, and evaluate their comprehension. When compared with 17 controlled peers, the map structure students made significant gains in text ideas.

Use of a cognitive mapping strategy with inner city and low-income students has also revealed positive results. When two groups of 62 low-achieving seventh-grade students in an urban school were assigned to two reading treatments, the group following a model of concept mapping to connect ideas in a science text performed significantly better in comprehension than matched controls who were taught by a read-and-discuss, teacher-directed method (Guastello, Beasley, & Sinatra, 2000). Twenty nine, Title I, at-risk fifth-grade students assigned to two writing treatment approaches were evaluated by their State's holistic scoring rubric for expressive, narrative writing and a scale assessing for writing apprehension (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000). Over a six-month period, students in the experimental group who were provided with a number of prewriting strategies, including gathering and organizing ideas through story mapping, significantly improved in their written expression scores in comparison to the control group. Writing anxiety lessened for the experimental students although not significantly so when compared to controls.

In a number of studies with students classified as having learning or writing problems, Graham and his associates have investigated the use of a Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model which also examines aspects of pre-writing behaviors (Harris & Graham, 1999; Page-Voth & Graham, 1999; Sawyer, Graham, & Harris, 1992; Troia, Graham, & Harris, 1999). With the SRSD procedure experimental students were shown how to use self-regulation strategies such as goal setting, self monitoring, brainstorming and sequencing ideas and generally produced stronger written papers and compositions than matched controls. The SRSD model or the pre-writing activity approach described by Schweiker-Marra & Marra (2000) could be compared with the 6Rs approach described in this present paper to determine which approach would yield the most beneficial results for low-income children when writing was based on information and reflections from what was read.

Finally, we evaluated our pre-and-post papers based on the holistic scale criteria used in the state assessment plan. While we formed a holistic score based on five qualities of writing, future researchers and program developers using such an outcome evaluation procedure may wish to focus on just use of the organization and development components of a rubric scale if mapping were used as the organizational strategy.

Limitations

This program had three major limitations. First of all, regular and sustained attendance during each cohort summer was a recurring problem. Like others, even with the best program intentions and support from staff and facility directors, student absenteeism creates gaps in program effectiveness and measurement of goals (Gibbs, 2004; Harvard Family Research Project, 2006; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). Possibly by forging stronger relationships with students' parents, the retention and attendance of youth would strengthen (Lauver, Little, & Weiss, 2004).

The second limitation primarily due to funding and staff and facility availability was length of project time. Even though the academic component was intense and equivalent to half a regular school day, the project duration was only 10 days over a two to three week period. A

longer time period may yield even stronger writing improvement with means in writing reaching the 3.0 State acceptable benchmark score and perception about reading proficiency revealing positive results on major scales of the Reader Self Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995). The Self-Regulated Strategy Development procedure discussed previously was used with some participants over a two-week period, suggesting that both the SRSD and the 6R model could be compared in short time periods in controlled settings with low-income students to determine effects on writing behavior.

Another limitation was regarding the transfer value of the mapping strategy as a way to organize what was read and as a way to prepare a written piece. While we taught the mapping procedure in a direct way and had children model and practice its use with writing assignments, we didn't determine if they thought the strategy had transfer value to help organize other writings nor did we determine if they were taught how to generalize the mapping strategy to use with other academic areas and content readings. Likewise we did not determine if participation in the second half of the day's program had any relevance to how they behaved or reacted to the academic component. Possibly more effective use of the exit questionnaire and personal interviews with students would yield information regarding how they perceived the use of mapping in future school assignments and if they perceived sports participation to be a positive complement to academic participation.

In conclusion, described in this paper are a program and a literacy approach offered with consistency and design over three consecutive summers. This paper does reveal that the coordinated program ingredients of the 6Rs literacy approach presented in both the small-group classroom and computer lab settings by trained and caring teachers can influence this low-income and needy population to succeed in writing achievement and in their perceptions of themselves as readers.

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Running head: LEARNING FROM PAST AND PRESENT USES

Learning from Past and Present Uses of the Term ‘Literacy’

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Abstract

This paper is an outline of a selective etymological history of the word ‘literacy’ in English, along with contemporary definitions of the term in political and research settings. The author identifies two common strands between past and present uses of the term literacy: (1) literacy as a facility with texts; and (2) literacy as a way of being. The author traces how these strands have largely remained the same for centuries, albeit with important distinctions, and suggests that new ways of thinking about literacy are called for in the 21st century.

Learning from Past and Present Uses of the Term ‘Literacy’

As Bakhtin (1981) has noted, the relationship between a word and the thing that it signifies is not neutral and objective. Instead, every word “finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value” (p. 276). The word *literacy* is no exception; rather than objectively referring to some universal skill such as reading or writing, this term has been overlain with points of view, value judgments, and connotations throughout the centuries that it and proto-types of it have been in use. Each previous meaning of the word has left “a trace in all its semantic layers” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276), which carries implications for how the term *literacy* is understood today. A brief look to past uses of the term *literacy* in the English language may therefore provide insight into the ways that the word is used today and point directions for how the term might be used with more empowering and humane consequences in the future.

Lettrede or lewed?: English Uses of the Word ‘Literacy’ in the Middle Ages

The word *literacy* stems from the Latin word *literra,* denoting a letter of the alphabet, and sharing a common root with the words *letter*, *literate*, and *literature* (Kress, 1997; Williams, 1977). Of these words, *letter* was the first that appeared on the scene in English (Letter, 1989) when, by the early thirteenth century, the word *lettres* designated symbols that comprised the alphabet. A hundred years later, *lettre* was used by renowned authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland to connote any written text that used these alphabetic letters. In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, around the same time that *lettre* came to signify a piece of writing or text, the term *lettered* came into being to designate educated and learned people who could read and write letters, both in the sense of alphabetic symbols and whole texts (Lettered, 1989). Because it would be many centuries before printing presses would make possible the

mass distribution of printed texts, the ability to be *lettered* was reserved largely for clerics and nobility.

As a point of contradistinction, English writers in the Middle Ages and Renaissance sometimes contrasted the words *lettered* or *learned* with the word *lewed,* a term that in its early days simply signified somebody who was unlearned (Lettered, 1989). For instance, in 1225 St. Juliana wrote the phrase: "Alle lewede men þat understonden ne mahen latines ledene," translatable as "all lewd men that didn't understand how to produce Latin language" (Lewd, 1989). Soon, *lewed* developed class-based connotations, first indicating those of the 'common' or 'lower' orders who were 'ill-mannered' and 'ignorant,' and later acquiring the meaning of lasciviousness and immorality. The term lettered, then, came to be associated and paired with terms such as *elegance*, *wit*, and *good breeding*, whereas *unlettered* and *lewd* people were demonized variously as being *Barbarians*, *unenlightened*, *children*, *peasants*, *plain*, *savage*, *ignorant*, *base*, *unruly*, *unhonest,* and characterized by *harlotrye*, to borrow the spelling from Chaucer (Unlettered, 1989; Lewd, 1989).

What can be learned from the early English etymological history of the word *literra*? Two distinct strands of definitions emerge. First, being *lettered* applied to a facility with reading and writing texts with letters. This ability led to the second definition of *lettered,* used to designate a certain kind of person, a *lettered* person, who was produced as the result of reading and writing. This person was not lewd, common, or ignorant as a child (to use the common parlance of the time), but instead was companionable, witty, and elegant with good taste. According to its proto-definitions, then, *literacy* was not just a skill, but a characteristic of a particular type of person. Moreover, in the de facto context of the Middle Ages, the lettered person was largely defined in terms of social class and access to printed reading materials.

'Literacy' and Politics in Recent History

The terms *literate* and *illiterate* emerged in published texts several generations after *lettered* and *unlettered*. Unlike the latter terms, which were often used to describe personal characteristics of individuals, the terms *literate* and *illiterate* came to be used throughout the nineteenth century to depict qualities of social classes in political contexts, for instance, in debates over whether or not this characteristic should determine whether people could vote or register for the army (Illiterate, 1989; Literate, 1989).

In the history of the English language, the actual word *literacy* emerged relatively late on the scene, first appearing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Williams, 1977). Like its predecessors *lettered* and *literate,* the term *literacy* referred to more than the ability to read and write alphabetic letters, although this skill was still central to definitions of the word. Like *lettered,* this word was still paired with ways of being, which included being "refined [in] habits and tastes" (Literacy, 1989). Continuing the trend that had begun with the word *literate,* the term literacy was also often paired with large-scale political, social, and economic goals as well.

Several examples illustrate the overtly political and societal nature of the term *literacy* as it was used in the late nineteenth century and the ensuing decades. For instance, in 1883, the *New England Journal of Education* praised Massachusetts for being "the first state in the Union in literacy," using the term *literacy* to compare the general reading abilities of people in one state to people in other states (as quoted in Literacy, 1989). Similarly, in World War Two, writers of the *American Magazine* declared America's mission to "help many of the poverty-stricken peoples to set their feet on the path of education, manual dexterity, and economic literacy" (as quoted in Literacy, 1989). Later in the twentieth century and beyond, international organizations such as United Nations have worked toward "the promotion of literacy" in countries around the world

"in the context of poverty reduction" (UNESCO, 2007, para. 1; see also Street, 1984). The term *literacy*, then, has been used for political purposes when making large-scale comparisons between peoples of different social groups, and it is often charged with economic undertones.

Street (1984) and others (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Scribner & Cole, 1981) have asserted that the term *literacy* is just as ideologically, economically, culturally, and politically charged today as related English terms were in 1300. According to Street (1995), national legislative assemblies and international organizations use the word literacy as though it were a politically neutral, autonomous skill, divorced from any social context. In other words, these institutions present literacy—usually connected with the ability to read and write—as a universally beneficial skill that will promote the intellectual development of those who acquire it (Goody & Watt, 1963), whether they are from rural Mississippi, inner-city New York, Yemen, or the Congo. By extension, this intellectual development is believed to lead to economic development (UNESCO, 2007). Street (1995) has noted that this definition of literacy has often been used as leverage to assert cultural superiority. In other words, by defining literacy as the ability to read and write printed texts, or by defining literacy as the ability to demonstrate competence on Eurocentric assessments, Western cultures can devalue oral traditions, the use of images, or other ways of communicating valued by indigenous peoples across the world (Cole, 1996).

As in former ages, two distinct meanings for the word *literacy* have persisted. First, the ability to read and write texts continues to be connected to the term. Street has called this designation the autonomous definition of literacy. The second sense of the term *literacy* is connected to produce a certain kind of person: an intellectually-developed person who can and will vote and lift herself or himself out of poverty. The previous semantic layer of the term, indicating one with "refined habits and tastes," has not vanished, but the person produced by

literacy now is a good citizen, defined in terms of her or his ability to contribute to the uplift of society. (Perhaps people within some societies do not believe the attendant implication that they need to be 'uplifted' or 'intellectually developed.') As in ages before, definitions of *literacy* are intertwined with issues of economic power and cultural or class bias.

Two-stranded Conceptions of Literacy in Literacy Research

Along with these political organizations, literacy researchers have adopted versions of this two-stranded definition as well. For instance, Norris and Phillips (2003), in explicating the debated term *scientific literacy*, proposed two ways of conceptualizing it: (1) *fundamental* scientific literacy, which refers to an individual's ability to read and write texts with scientific content; and (2) *derived* scientific literacy, which refers to ways of being that stem from this reading and writing. These ways of being include being knowledgeable, learned, and educated in science, along with exhibiting scientific 'habits of mind,' such as curiosity and skepticism (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1993; National Research Council, 1996). The derived sense of scientific literacy may also encompass active citizenship as people apply what they know about nature and science to make the world a better place (Roth & Barton, 2004). Under this framework, reading and writing is a *fundamental* prerequisite to being a scientist, or one who has developed scientific habits of mind and who works toward the improvement of living conditions and environmental conditions.

Knobel and Lankshear (2007), too, have developed a comparable, though not identical, two-threaded definition of literacy as they distinguish between 'big L' literacy and 'little l' literacy. According to the authors, "Literacy, with a 'small l,' describes the actual processes of reading, writing, viewing, listening, manipulating images and sound…and using words and symbols that are part of…larger, more embodied Literacy practices" (p. 220). In other

words, though 'little l' literacy in this definition is no longer limited to a facility with printed words, it nonetheless is firmly connected to people's facility with reading and writing texts, albeit multimodal ones.

In contrast, "Big L literacies are connected with identities, patterns, and *ways of being* in the world rather than solely with the acts of reading and writing" (Lewis, 2007, p. 240; emphasis added). Knobel and Lankshear (2007) and Lewis grounded this definition of Literacies in Gee's (1996, 2008) previous work. According to Gee (2008), literacy can be conceptualized in terms of identities enacted within given Discourses, or ways of being in the world that integrate ways of communicating through clothes, gestures, actions, use of specialized tools, spoken words, written words, images, music, and so forth. For example, in chronicling her experiences while hiking the Appalachian Trail, Rush (2003) defined literacy in relation to her ability to read her own body, including physical sensations and the color of her urine; to read environmental conditions; to keep a trail journal; to use topographic maps to guide her; and to communicate with other hikers through signing registers in shelters, leaving trail markers, and holding conversations. Rush enacted an identity as a member of the Discourse of thru-hikers through reading, writing, speaking, valuing, acting, and interacting in relation to Discourse-specific texts.

In contemporary definitions such as these ones, Literacy continues to be associated with a way of being that is desirable according to the norms and values of a given Discourse. Knobel and Lanskhear (2007) clarified that, in today's technological landscape, Literacy practices included "*being* a fan…, *being* privy to a plethora of online—and offline—affinity space 'insider jokes,' *being* familiar and up-to-date with Hollywood movies" (p. 221; emphasis added).

Whether this state of being is connected to being a fan, being a thru-hiker, being a chemist, or (to use an anachronism) being a noble, Literacy in this sense encompasses the enactment of identities in such a way that people are recognizable to themselves and to others as being a member of a Discourse. Under this two-tiered definition of the term *literacy*, reading and writing practices are subsumed and given meaning by people's ways of being.

Little 'l' literacy: Past and Present Differences

In some senses, current conceptualizations of *literacy* bear striking similarities to those of English writers of the 1300s and before. For centuries, definitions of *literacy* have been two-fold: relating to a facility with texts and to a state of being that is tied in some way to this facility. There are, however, important differences between past and present conceptualizations of *literacy*, both in the sense of *facility with texts* and in the sense of a *way of being.* Clarifying some of these differences will help to highlight problems in contemporary uses of the term.

Literacy in English, in its *fundamental* or *little l* sense, was initially considered in relation to the ability to read and write printed letters. This meaning has left a discernable "trace in the word's semantic layers," since *literacy* is etymologically derived from the word *littera*, or letter. Although texts have always been multimodal—spoken words, gestures, architectural layouts, clothing, songs, and so forth—at the time when the distinction between *lettered* and *unlettered* came about, only higher classes had widespread access to printed alphabetic texts and tutors to provide instruction on how to read and write them. As a marker of social privilege, proto-types of the word *literacy* came to be associated with this limited skill, rather than with the ability to create songs, dances, clothes, spoken words, drawings in the sand, room designs, and other multimodal texts to which 'common' people had access.

Literacy is still conceptualized in relations to texts, with *text* now defined as any instance of communication using any semiotic resource (Kress, 2003). In today's digital age, however, issues of accessibility have changed. Whereas previous conceptions of the word *literacy* were defined in relation to access to printed letters, now many definitions of literacy are conjoined with access to various types of media. *New literacies* (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) are defined in part by their inclusion of new technologies, such as the Internet and cell phones, which provide new material resources and potentialities for the development of 'small l' literacy (Ranker, 2008). *Media literacy*, too, can be defined in relation to a person's attitude toward, evaluation of, and experience in reading and designing texts made possible by recent printing and dissemination technologies (Hobbs, 2007; Semali, 2001). Media literacy may include recognizing and negotiating the social positionings inherent in the exchange of these texts, including comic books, computer games, music, films, and any combination of these (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

In all, although 'small l literacy' and its predecessors entailed a facility with texts, two aspects surrounding this definition have changed. First, conceptions of that facility have been in flux: from being able to write a signature as an indicator of literacy (Flood & Lapp, 1995), to critically evaluating and resisting how popular culture texts position subjects (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000), and more. Thus, while the word *literacy* has been used to connote a facility with reading and writing texts, the nature of that facility and how to measure it are a matter of debate. Second, conceptualizations of what counts as *text* have changed due to technology and its attendant multimodal capacities. Even though texts have always been multimodal, people who did not read and write printed letters were often considered to be *illiterate.* Now, people who can

only read and write alphabetic letters may be viewed as lacking in literacy skills vital to a current digital age, which is characterized by moving images, sound, and other texts on various screens.

'Big L' Literacy: Past and Present Differences

Conceptualizations of 'big L' Literacy, associated with ways of being, have multiplied as well. The term *lettered* in early English writings was associated with being educated, learned, and refined—qualities generally reserved for upper classes. Now, however, current sociocultural theorists (e.g., Gee, 2008) connect the term *literacy* with ways of being that fit into specialized Discourses, which may or may not be primarily defined in terms of class. This approach to literacy assumes that literacy as a chemist may entail reading notations of elements, writing observations of reactions in anticipation of adjusting levels of certain chemicals, and so forth, while in contrast, literacy as a hip hop artist may require an entirely different set of literacies. This pluralization of the term literacy recognizes not only new forms of texts, but also new social configurations in which these texts are valued.

Some recent sociocultural theories of Literacy also invert previously-held beliefs about the relationship between 'big L' and 'small l' literacies. In the past, ways of being—such as educated, refined, and economically self-sufficient—were said to *derive* from the ability to read and write. To be sure, many current political organizations and literacy researchers still assert that ways of being result from reading and writing. Norris and Phillips' (2003) terminology, distinguishing *fundamental* from *derived* scientific literacy, is a prime example of this mindset. In this cause-and-effect model, the *being-ness* of a scientist, encompassing scientific habits of mind and ways of acting, are said to derive from the previous ability to read and write and scientific texts.

In contrast, many current researchers and theorists (e.g., Gee, 2008; Lewis & Fabos, 2005) who adopt a sociocultural stance toward literacy have emphasized people's identities in social contexts as being fundamental, with reading and writing practices at times deriving from those identities. In this latter conception of 'big L/little l' literacies, reading/writing practices and identity construction are mutually constitutive and recursive, rather than existing in a linear cause-and-effect relationship as in some previous and current articulations of the word *literacy*.

Critiquing Current Conceptions of Big L/Little l Literacy

With this selective sketch of various uses of the word *literacy* as a backdrop, I now move to critique current definitions of *literacy* under the belief that these definitions potentially obfuscate or reify the practices and identities of people who read, design, and use texts. I argue first that, given its historical connotations, (little l) 'literacy' is a problematic term to apply to a facility with multimodal texts, and secondly, that theories of the relationship between 'little l/big l' literacies should more fully account for people's material conditions that enable or deny *literacy* to them.

Current notions of 'small l' literacy, including the notion of 'multi-literacies' which theorizes literacy in terms of reading and designing multimodal texts (e.g., New London Group, 1996), can be problematic. The reading and writing of lettered texts require a distinctive and unique set of processes—connecting alphabetic symbols to form words in syntactically comprehensible sentences, for instance (Kress, 2003). Moreover, the mode of written letters has its own distinct affordances: It requires the unfolding of events through time, word after word, unlike other modes such as images that display all components of a text simultaneously. If the reading and writing of printed texts involves a distinguishable set of processes, and if the texts themselves have distinct semiotic affordances, then literacy researchers may obfuscate the

semiotic resources and processes involved in designing different kinds of texts—such as videos and music—by subsuming these processes under the title of *literacy*.

Given the etymological origins of the word *literacy* in its 'little l' sense of *facility with texts*, perhaps literacy researchers do a dishonor to other modes by forcing this terminology on this concept. Kress (2003) has noted that terms such 'non-print' or 'paralinguistic systems of communication' privilege printed words and language, when people might also refer to words as 'non-gestural' or 'para-gestural systems of communication' if they wanted to privilege the mode of gestures. In other words, modes should not be defined primarily by their relationship to written words, but instead should be considered legitimate systems of communication in their own right. By applying the term *literacy* with its letter-based etymology to these sign systems, people may actually be importing print-centric connotations and values that diminish the independent legitimacy of these modes.

Current notions of 'big L' literacy, defined as a way of being derived from the reading and writing of texts, should be re-examined, questioned, and challenged as well. I return to the example of the nobleman, who because he read and wrote alphabetic texts, could consider himself *lettered* and thus more refined, polite, educated, and companionable than the *lewd* masses of unlettered people. In this example, *educated* and *refined* were not just ways of being; they were indicators of access to economic and social capital. I return next to the example of the woman traversing the Appalachian Trail, whose literacies in reading urine and trail markers, among other texts, contributed to her successful enactment of an identity as a thru-hiker. This Discourse, like all Discourses, was characterized by issues of access and capital—those with physical handicaps that prevented them from walking could not have enacted this identity. Thus, they would have been barred access to developing literacy in relation to thru-hiking.

In today's digital age, perhaps one of the most important markers of Literacy is connected to students' identities in relation to the proliferation and "multiplicity of communications channels and media" (New London Group, 1996 p. 61; see also Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). An acknowledgment of the importance of material resources raises important questions for a 'multi-literacies' framework (New London Group, 1996). If a key tenet of 'multi-literacies' is that adolescents draw from "available designs"—such as images, genres of printed words, music, and so forth—to create re-designed texts, then the question remains: To whom are these initial designs available? Do some adolescents have prolonged access to valued social networks, denied to others, in which they can learn how to design texts that are appropriate for powerful Discourses? Do some adolescents have greater access to actual material resources required for particular text designs—such as Internet access, computer editing programs, I-phones, and other communication technologies that are constantly changing? If literacy is theorized in terms of using 'available designs,' then are those who have more access to certain designs (and the materials with which to make them) more 'Literate'?

Literacy, when defined in terms of new communication technologies, also requires material resources. Those who enact identities as bloggers or online fans require access to a working computer and Internet connection, parents who allow them to go online, time to go online, and perhaps online or offline friends who can make initial recommendations of sites or programs, along with showing them the ropes. In fact, adolescents with the best material resources—for instance, scanners; Video Studio Editor; computers with a lot of memory to hold music and videos; multiple computers in one home so they do not have to compete with their siblings for time online but instead can have ample blocks of uninterrupted time on the Net—may be those who appear the most proficient at navigating digital literacies. If the term *literacy*

is associated only with skills or with ways of being, and not primarily with access to material resources, then using the term may serve to naturalize and hide the fact that the "haves" are granted ways of being (blogger, educated, thru-hiker) that the "have-nots" are not granted. In this sense, *accessibility* to ways of being, rather than *Literacy* in ways of being, is perhaps a more fitting term.

In sum, *literacy*—in both its big L and little l senses—has long been a divider and a way for people with more material resources to assert superiority over those without material resources. This trend began in the earliest uses of proto-types of the word literacy, when noblemen could read and write letters and could therefore project themselves as *learned* in opposition to the *lewd* masses of 'common' people. In today's digital age, access to different communication technologies is now one potent divisor in current conceptions of who 'has' literacy and who does not. Consequently, literacy researchers and policy makers would do well to consider how they use the term *literacy* in conjunction with 'abilities' and 'ways of being,' lest they continue to perpetuate the denial of literacy to people who lack access to certain types of material resources.

Conclusion

According to Bakhtin (1981), "the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads…it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue" (p. 276). For a word such as *literacy*—which has a centuries-old history fraught with contention, ideology, class structures, and overt political objectives—this statement rings especially true. I have suggested that *literacy* is not the most apt term to apply to 'small l' literacy practices with 'non-print' texts such as dance or images, nor is *literacy* the most apt term

to apply to identity enactment within a Discourse. I do not intend for this paper to signal a closure or an attempt at a definitional statement of literacy—indeed, I would not wish to make such a statement even if I could. Instead, I conceive of this paper as a point of consideration, another utterance spoken in the vast array of dialogic threads concerning the definition of literacy. I do consider this paper to be a call to use the word literacy—in both the 'big L' and 'small l' sense—in ways that do not devalue 'non-print' communicative systems, and in ways that explicitly acknowledge that some people have access to material resources while others are excluded from this access. By considering these factors in discussions of literacy, it is my hope that literacy research will be both clearer and more empowering for the people whose lives are impacted by this research.

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