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# Theme: Diverse Teaching for Diverse Populations

## Volume 51, No. 3, Fall 2016

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*Additional images from Morguefile:*
Letter from the Editors

Maryann Tobin, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University

Lina Chiappone, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University

Dear Readers,

As promised, this is the second issue dedicated to the theme “Diverse Teaching for Diverse Populations.” We were pleasingly overwhelmed by the amount of manuscripts sent to our previous call, so we decided to dedicate two issues to this important topic. Call this one “Diverse Teaching for Diverse Populations: Part 2.” Articles in this edition focus specifically on literacy-building activities for ethnically and linguistically diverse students, as well as addressing the standards designed to instruct these students.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, whose most recent incarnation was the No Child Left Behind Act which brought with it needed change but left the door open for questions and further exploration of opportunities for all learners. As teachers of literacy, it is important to understand how new standards, legislation, and other initiatives usher in questions and change the landscape of instruction for diverse groups. As you read the pieces in the present issue, consider their current and, more importantly, future contexts and how those will drive classroom content and instruction as we prepare all learners to meet the challenges of being college and career ready. How will your role as a literacy educator be modified? What are the implications for students from diverse backgrounds? How do we reconcile standards and expectations with classroom realities?

We hope our readership has enjoyed this first year of our tenure as editors. It has truly been an honor and we look forward to the exciting promise of next year.

Keep on reading,

Maryann & Lina

Editors, The Florida Reading Journal
frjeditor@flreads.org
Greetings to FRA Colleagues,

Florida Reading Association is leading the way to literacy! The FRA publications provide current research and information to educators from PreK-12 and beyond. The FRA Board of Directors is very proud of the material disseminated via *Florida Reading Journal*, *Teachers on the Cutting Edge*, and the *FRA Newsletter*. Each publication is available electronically to FRA members – please visit [www.flreads.org](http://www.flreads.org) for more information.

The 2016 Conference Committee, led by President-Elect Deanne Panighetti, has spent countless hours during the last year planning, organizing, and developing a remarkable program. The 2016 Conference Committee has provided an exemplary variety of strands and sessions aligned to the Florida Standards.

Florida Reading Association has an outstanding Board of Directors who represent individuals from all facets of education. The caliber of our board members is exceptional, several of whom will be session presenters at the 2016 FRA Conference. There are several tasks the FRA Board has been charged with during 2016-2017—one of which is the ILA transformation. Local Florida councils will be kept up-to-date by their District Directors regarding information received from ILA.

FRA Vision: The Florida Reading Association is a group of professionals whose focus and energy center on reading issues and other literacy concerns; By coming together to promote our common interests, we create a dynamic presence and a collective voice that can be heard throughout Florida. We invite all who share our common vision to join in our effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as President of FRA—and leading the way to literacy!

In anticipation, 

*Kathleen Fontaine, Ed.D.*

FRA President
Publication Themes for 2016-2017

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

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

**Submission Guidelines are online at:** [http://www.flreads.org/Publications/quarterly/call.htm](http://www.flreads.org/Publications/quarterly/call.htm)

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**Ongoing Annual Theme: Florida Standards in Action**

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

**Ongoing Call for Book Reviews**

FRJ has an ongoing interest in reviews of professional texts related to teaching and the themed calls for 2015-16. Reviews should be between 750-1000 words and should offer an overview of the book, not a detailed synopsis or an in-depth essay. Examples of published book reviews can be found in previous editions of FRJ.
Volume 52, Issue 1: Preparing Early Readers for Success
January 2017
In this issue, we invite manuscripts that deal specifically with the literacy life of early readers. Research has identified the importance of providing a solid foundation in reading to promote later success in school life. However, new standards have put increasingly high cognitive demands on these children to be active, 21st-century learners. We are specifically interested in articles that address innovative and creative practices with pre-K/primary students, as well as addressing the needs of various stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators).

Submission deadline: November 1, 2016

Volume 52, Issue 2: Navigating the World of Disciplinary Literacy
April 2017
The rising influence of STEM in education has brought to focus the need for those of us in the field of literacy to embrace and develop strategies for addressing reading and writing across the content areas. To that end, this issue seeks manuscripts that address disciplinary literacy and the specific set of transferable skills and strategies needed to for students to be successful in all subjects, including science, math, and the social sciences. What are the challenges teachers must be able to address to be both masters of content and process? We are most interested in submissions that address disciplinary literacy challenges for diverse learners.

Submission deadline: February 1, 2017

Volume 52, Issue 3: The Flipped Classroom
September 2017
Flipped learning has emerged as a unique approach for improving student transfer by moving didactic instruction to the online environment and planning for active learning in the classroom. Thus, the teacher serves in many roles, including subject matter expert, media specialist, and instructional designer. How does this affect reading time in the classroom and the monitoring of student reading progress? We are interested in submissions that explore how flipped learning is accomplished in a literacy classroom. What are the challenges presented to struggling readers in this curricular design and how are those challenges met? Submissions concerning innovations and critiques of the flipped model are also welcomed.

Submission deadline: July 1, 2017
ASSESSING CHILDREN’S USE OF LANGUAGE IN DRAMATIC PLAY CONTEXTS

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Abstract: Oral language provides a foundation for children’s literacy and their learning in classroom contexts and beyond. As such, it is important for literacy teachers to find effective ways to assess and support children’s oral language. In this paper, we introduce and critique a number of tools that are currently available for assessing young children’s oral language. We then present a framework for assessing oral language while children are engaged in dramatic/pretend play and give an example from a northern Canadian kindergarten classroom to show how the framework can be used.

Oral communication is important for communicating desires, needs, emotions, and ideas. In classrooms and beyond, children use talk to achieve a wide range of purposes. Talking is not only a form of communication, however. Often, half-formed or wobbly ideas are clarified and extended through talking about them with others. In this way, oral language supports thinking (Boyd & Galda, 2011). Oral language is also foundational to children’s literacy, as children hear the sounds of language, and learn vocabulary and ways of putting words and phrases together to communicate meaning. Children draw on their growing phonological awareness and the new vocabulary and language understandings to make predictions in their reading and to communicate for a range of purposes using written language (Bradford et al., 2014; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Resnick & Snow, 2009). Additionally, “children’s ordinary conversations and talk-through procedures teach them to recount and reinterpret events, to display their abilities, to share the process of how they do things, and to encounter and understand the logic behind different points of view—processes that are essential for ultimate success in reading and writing” (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 50). Children learn that they can achieve intended purposes using language, whether it be oral or written.

The importance of oral language is underscored in the Florida Standards, in which a number of standards refer to oral language as a way of demonstrating various skills and knowledge. One expectation, in particular, highlights the communicative and learning potential of oral language, as it specifies that students should be able to: “prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively” (CPALMS, n.d.).

In this paper, we introduce and critique a number of tools that are currently available for assessing young children’s oral language. Then, we present a framework for assessing oral language while children are engaged in dramatic play and give an example of how the framework might be used. We draw on data from a large-scale action research study currently underway in northern rural communities across Canada. In this paper, we focus on one action research project conducted by three kindergarten teachers, who teach in communities ranging in size from 400 to 6,000 people in a western Canadian province. The primary goal of the research is to design oral language assessment approaches that can be carried out on an ongoing basis in classrooms and that capture children’s use of language in authentic contexts.
Assessing Oral Language: Tools

Research on Oral Language Assessment Tools

To guide our action research, we looked to the research published in the last 25 years on oral language assessment involving four- to eight-year old children who do not have a speech or language delay. Our comprehensive search of research articles in three major databases resulted in 35 articles. We were surprised at where the research has been published – almost exclusively in journals on assessment, speech-language pathology, and learning difficulties (e.g., Qi & Marley, 2011; Restrepo, Schwanenflugel, Blake, Neuharth-Pritchett, Cramer, & Ruston, 2006) and not in literacy journals.

We found two main strands in this research – the predominant one examined young children’s vocabulary. The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition* (Dunn & Dunn, 2007), a one-on-one test requiring children to provide labels for pictures or words when given definitions, emerged as the most frequently-used test, although we found that numerous other vocabulary assessments also exist (e.g., Tomblin & Zhang, 2006). As educators, our action research team believes that these vocabulary tests are limited in the type of information and assessment they provide. We also see that the selection of images does not reflect northern rural Canadian children’s experience and does not measure their rich conceptual knowledge.

The other branch of the oral language assessment research involves the analysis of children’s narrative retellings. Yonovitz and Andrews (1995), for example, assessed children’s retellings using categories reflecting their understanding of characters and themes (e.g., existence, rejection, denial, possession, attitude/emotion, and obligation). Many others (e.g., Justice et. al., 2006) assessed what they called “productivity” (e.g., total number of words, total number of T-units), and structural complexity (e.g., mean length of T-units in words and morphemes, number of coordinating conjunctions). We believe that although retellings provide more contextualized language than do the vocabulary assessments, the question of relevance still comes into play, as Mercer Mayer’s (1969) book *Frog where are you?* is often the stimulus text for generating retellings. This book was published before the parents of many of the young children in today’s classrooms were born!

The research studies on oral language assessment that came to our attention through our comprehensive review did not use approaches and tools that assess children’s “real talk”, the language that young children use in everyday interactions to carry out a range of purposes (Boyd & Galda, 2011, p. 5). Instead, they involved one-on-one meetings that removed children from real-life communicative contexts. The teachers in our action research study and the researchers were looking for approaches that would provide a more authentic picture of children’s language that would guide teaching.

Available Oral Language Classroom Assessment Tools

Some of the available oral language assessments for classroom use have been set up for teacher-student meetings where children are removed from everyday classroom activity for the assessment (e.g., Clay, 2007; Crevola & Vineis, 2004) These assessments require children to repeat sentences of increasing syntactic complexity, providing information about children’s receptive language (e.g., the language structures that they understand when they hear adults speaking). These features of language do not help teachers to understand how children use speech sounds, words, and syntax to interact with others in a range of contexts, however. Although the oral language assessments are not time-consuming, they require that children be withdrawn from regular classroom activity.

Another assessment tool, the *TROLL* (Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy) is useful for assessing children’s use of language for a number of social purposes (Dickinson, McCabe, & Sprague, 2003).
However, the interactions are primarily with adults (e.g., start a conversation, communicate personal experiences, ask questions, recognize and produce rhymes, use varied vocabulary and speak so adults can understand what is being said) and do not capture children’s use of language that is more typical in their social worlds beyond classrooms. Only one of the criteria refers to language in natural everyday contexts (e.g., children’s use of talk while pretending with peers). This criterion does not specify how the children use language to achieve particular purposes within the pretend play, however.

Similarly, the *Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Continuum: Oral Language* (British Columbia Education, 2004) and the *Kindergarten Oral Language Assessment Scale* (Scholastic, 2011) assess children’s oral language in classroom settings. The former assesses whether children can attend, listen, speak, take turns in conversation, and stay on topic with varying levels of adult support. The specific categories for assessing oral language are:

1. Knowledge of content and structure of language (e.g., understanding vocabulary, speaking in sentences, understanding and following directions, retelling, asking and responding to questions) and
2. Phonological awareness (British Columbia Education, 2004, unpaged)

The *Kindergarten Oral Language Assessment Scale* (Scholastic, 2011) is a rubric used to indicate how frequently the teacher observes children using oral language for:

1. Social relationships (e.g., takes turns in conversations; uses appropriate tone; sustains conversations)
2. Learning (e.g., uses specialized vocabulary; uses language to inquire, problem solve, and reflect; responds appropriately to questions)
3. Demonstrating phonological and phonemic awareness (e.g., joins in with rhythmic poems and songs; claps chants, or sings syllables; orally stretches words into phonemes)
4. Demonstrating knowledge and use of language structures (e.g., has clear articulation; uses simple, compound, and some complex sentences; uses personal pronouns appropriately) (Scholastic, 2011, unpaged).

These assessments provide much richer information about children’s oral language than do the Clay and Crevola assessments. However, they provide little information about the identities that children take up when talking with others in real-world settings. In the next section, I make a case for using dramatic play as a context for assessing children’s oral language, beginning with a definition of dramatic play.

**Dramatic Play as a Context for Assessing Oral Language**

Smilansky (1968) defines dramatic play as play where children take up pretend roles. It provides “one way of acquiring cognitive (and literacy) skills, and indeed a natural and enjoyable way” (Smith, 2009, p. 15). Through dramatic play, children engage in problem solving. They draw on their background knowledge and experience, and use their imaginations to give new meanings to the familiar and to make sense of the unfamiliar (Whitebread, 2010). Dramatic play bridges children’s school and out-of-school worlds, offering settings for children to use language for a wide range of purposes (Halliday, 1975).

In our inductive coding of transcripts of 2,584 utterances from 81 video clips of 78 kindergarten children’s dramatic play (recorded by three classroom teachers using iPods set up on tripods at the dramatic play center in their classrooms between October and May), we found that children used language for four overarching purposes (see Table 1).
Table 1: Purposes for Using Language in Children’s Play

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<td>ON</td>
<td>Using talk to take care of own needs</td>
<td>Express desire or need</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>Using talk for learning</td>
<td>Plan what will do</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Using talk to make collaboration on happen</td>
<td>Direct peer’s behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CN</td>
<td>Using talk to create or sustain narratives</td>
<td>Introduce new narrative</td>
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Teachers find it useful to observe children engaged in dramatic play while holding a clip board with sticky notes. They write the date and the shorthand note for the category, along with quotes from what the children say and notes about what they are doing. The sticky notes can be attached to a page in children’s folders/portfolios as an ongoing record of their oral language. Additionally, using a smartphone or other device, teachers could take a picture of the child(ren) to create a helpful visual that would accompany the notes. Together, the notes and the visual provide a helpful, ongoing picture of the children’s language growth.

We use the following example of a dramatic play scene, one of many that were used to generate the above oral language assessment categories, to show how it is possible to capture some helpful information about children’s use of language in a very short time. The two girls and two boys are in Polly’s classroom (all names of participants and communities are pseudonyms) in Aspen, a community of about 2,500 people. Polly is a teacher participating in our action research study.

Candy Canes and Broomsticks: Oral Language Assessment at the House Center Example

This dramatic play scene took place in October.

Kaitlyn and Bella are inside the house center, serving food at a small table. Steven rides a two-foot long wooden candy cane, as if it were a horse, just outside the house. He says, “Look at me!” But Kaitlyn sees trouble lurking and commands, “Close the curtains.” This happens none too soon, as Gerard and Steven start being attacked by imagined bad guys just outside the house. There are plenty of sound effects as the two boys fight the imagined malevolent force that has descended on the scene. Bella, still inside the house, proposes a solution, saying, “Time to bring out the magic broom!” But Kaitlyn has other plans for the broom and says, “Hand ME the broom,” leaving Bella with a good idea but no objects to carry to join in the play.

Gerard lets everyone know what he is doing: “Hey! I’m wrestling with bad guys!” Kaitlyn acknowledges that she is joining this play narrative and says, “I know. I’m helping you.”

As the battle continues (with sound effects, such as Psssheww), Kaitlyn offers a new twist to the narrative with a questioning voice: “And you saw your mommy dyYYING?” The broom falls beside Kaitlyn as she dies with sound effects (OWWW!). Steven goes along with her new story line, saying to Bella, “Hey! See, my mom died.” Gerard also invites Bella to go along with this story line: “I’m your brother, okay? You see your brother die?” Bella is standing just outside the house and he taps her on the shoulder to get her attention. She turns around and he repeats, “You see your brother die.” Then Gerard falls.

The following notes were taken for all four children. Teachers might find it more manageable to focus on one or two children at a
time. We should note that sometimes when taking notes, teachers found it necessary to include information about children’s use of gestures and actions to communicate because they responded to the situation without words.

To analyze these notes, teachers could use the criteria from the Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Continuum: Oral Language (British Columbia Education, 2004) and the Kindergarten Oral Language Assessment Scale (Scholastic, 2011) and note that the children are speaking in sentences, taking turns, sustaining narratives and conversations, and using pronouns appropriately. However, in addition to these types of information, teachers can also observe what the children are doing with language in a natural communicative setting. For example, in this very short scene, teachers get a sense of how children use language to persuade others. Being adept at using persuasive language is important in dramatic play and everyday life from early childhood through adulthood. In children’s academic lives, they will encounter many assignments where they have to use written language to persuade or convince others to do something or take a particular perspective. In this example, the children show some knowledge of ways to use language to persuade, but would benefit from instruction to enhance their repertoires. Here is one way to assess the children’s use of language to persuade:

Kaitlyn, Gerard, and Steven use commands to direct others to do something. Sometimes they soften the command using intonation, so that it sounds like a question, and in one case, Gerard added, “okay?” at the end of a direct command. By doing these things, the children show an understanding of how to persuade others to go along with what they want, especially in a situation where they have the
same status as the other children in the play scene. There are situations where the children make direct commands, however. Additionally, when Bella comes up with a possible way to help the boys wrestle the invaders (using a magic broom), her suggestion is ignored; she has not been able to use language to persuade peers to take up her suggestion. She allows Kaitlyn to take the broom and does not negotiate for use of it, which is concerning because she initially had it in her possession. Teachers who note these successful and not-so-successful uses of oral language might teach persuasive language and approaches to persuading. They might use role modeling or think-alouds as they talk about their observations of conflicts that happen on the playground or in the classroom. They might also highlight examples where characters use language to persuade in stories that are read aloud to the class, or use puppets to demonstrate how to persuade others as part of a lesson on using persuasive language.

The categories that teachers and we have generated provide helpful information about how children use language to get things done in their lives, and roles that they tend to take up, such as leadership or follower roles, when interacting with others. This information may be used to support children’s use of oral language, and potentially, their social skill development, and written language, as well.

Oral Language Assessment in Dramatic Play

Although it is important for teachers to assess children’s use of syntactically complex sentences, specialized vocabulary and other language features assessed in formal academic settings, oral language assessments should also provide information about how children respond to the communicative demands that are placed on them in their everyday lives and should be flexible to capture the complexities of children’s language in authentic interactions with others (Halliday, 1975). Children’s dramatic play provides the ideal situation for assessing oral language, as children use language (including gestures, facial expressions and actions) to respond to social situations that have many resemblances to real life. In dramatic play, children are engaged in activities where their understandings about language, about social interactions and social expectations, about speech and language conventions, and about the content of their play, are readily observed and assessed by teachers throughout the school year.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank the teachers and children participating in the action research study and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding the research.

References


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USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE POETRY GROUPS WITH DIVERSE TEENS

Jennifer Nicole Bacon
Independent Educational Consultant

Abstract: This article integrates differentiated lesson plans, Common Core standards, student poetry, narratives and research in a comprehensive guide for in-service and pre-service teachers and education professors. This article provides a guide for educators seeking to successfully incorporate culturally responsive and inclusive (for exceptional learners and English language learners) writing groups in their literacy activities and practices. In this article, a definition of culturally responsive poetry and an overview of learning disabilities and English language learners will be provided.

As a holistic educational consultant, college professor, teacher trainer, and former secondary special education teacher, one of the most important practices highlighted in this article is the inclusion of research alongside writings, practical applications, and actual classroom experiences. The inclusion of research is designed to augment student and teacher work rather than substitute it. Moreover, this article is intended to support the literacy practices of special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and general education teachers, as well as university professors seeking to incorporate this work with student teachers or graduate students in special, bilingual, multicultural, minority and urban, gifted and general education, and curriculum and instruction. In addition, this guide is appropriate for poetry/writing facilitators working in schools, community centers, residential facilities, and libraries.

Introduction

On September 20, 2006, I began a poetry group with approximately eight special education and general education African American high school students. The group was inclusive of both teenagers who did not write poetry along with some experienced poets. The program was designed to meet once a week during lunch for approximately 45 minutes over a three-month period. As time continued, the number of consistent members began to decrease; however, the voices of the members who attended regularly began to become more pronounced. As the group began to solidify and relationships were forged, by request, weekly meetings became twice a week, and three months grew to almost eight. Powerful voices and experiences, particularly of Tia who was an African American special education student, began to emerge, igniting a collective recognition of African American adolescent girls. Tia’s poetry and story, featured below, continue to be one of my greatest inspirations as a teacher and writing facilitator.

Tia

Tia (a pseudonym) like many adolescent girls, has a voice that has been muted by the spaces where her words wither into inaudible noises, fall upon “unlistening ears,” or are strangled into silence. Yet her voice, along with the emergence of her true identity, seems to be revealed when she writes poetry (Bacon, 2011; Bacon, 2009). In various segments, Tia’s poetry is shared in unadulterated form as she writes it, as is the poetry shared of other teenage students in this article.

You don’t Know Me:
You don’t know me, unless you know how hard I try not to cry! At the age 13 my step-mother had died, by the age of 14 nothing could go right. Got my virginity taken by a boy who had no rights. By age 15 I thought it could be the end, when everything started falling again and again! I thought I would go crazy and love I never felt. Because I thought I was inlove,
love, looking at the cards I was dealt. I put my whole life around him and you wouldn’t even know, because if he asked for it he’ll get it his feelings didn’t even show. But by the end of 10th grade I didn’t care anymore the fighting the violence it all seemed to show. By the age 16 I seen the light. But soon as it shined it went out with the night. I lost 2 more cousins one after another. But see it just goes to show how one thing can lead to another. Yea I go through a lot and no I don’t want it to show. Because I too cry at night and no, no one seem to even know! Because you don’t know unless you know I too cry!

(Tia, as cited in Bacon, 2011, p. 8; Tia, in Bacon, 2009, p. 2)

Diversity and Education Programs: Unpacking Prejudices and Stereotypes

We all have prejudices that must be unpacked especially in doing this level of work. I often have had to help even my graduate students unpack their notions of what an inner city is or what constitutes a homogenous class. Frequently schools, with what is considered a significant population of students of color or who speak a foreign language (especially Spanish), are inappropriately labeled as inner-city schools regardless of their actual location.

It is also important to note that you do not need to have experienced what you write about in order to create it. Some of the most powerful writers are able to draw from their imaginations rather than their experiences.

Our students should feel comfortable writing what is of interest to them, without fear of having their real or perceived circumstances or those of the community in which they identify and judged. Such judgments are a reflection of the facilitator/teacher not the writer/student.

Racial Composition within Educational Settings

In most of the education programs in the United States, the education students/future teachers are primarily white and female (Gargiulo, 2012; Council for Exceptional Children and The National Alliance of Black School Educators, 2002). In my most recent college setting in New York, the education department reflected this trend with the overwhelming majority of undergraduate students (and faculty) belonging to the Caucasian population. In addition the majority were from lower-middle to upper-middle class, predominately Caucasian, neighborhoods having attended predominately Caucasian primary and secondary schools. Service hours and student teaching opportunities provided many of the students (and some faculty) their first exposure to working outside of their own communities with diverse ethnic and racial groups. (Many of the students’ placements were within schools where the population was predominately Latino).

Students (as well as faculty) often mistakenly perceived these settings as homogenous using this as a means for opting to remain in their own environments or comfort zones. It is important to note the absolute critical nature of student teachers being exposed to other cultures and locations that they might not necessarily be exposed to (by choice or circumstances). Furthermore, there is a significant amount of diversity within schools and classes labeled homogenous. For instance, in a student teacher’s predominately Spanish-speaking English language learner (ELL) class of 20, more than 10 Latin American countries, regions or territories were represented not to mention numerous dialects, customs, traditions, backgrounds, etc. In addition, regardless of one’s background, culture, or previous experience, all educators are capable of becoming more culturally responsive (Bacon, 2014).
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy has also been referred to as culturally relevant pedagogy, as well as culturally congruent or centered teaching. Pedagogy is the method or practice of teaching. Culturally responsive pedagogy involves creating a climate in which educational practices connect with students’ cultures and experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy challenges school inequities and affirms students’ identities. Along these lines, holding high expectations for all students and fostering academic achievement and success are deemed essential. Culturally responsive pedagogy also provides a bridge between home and school by honoring and including students’ cultural experiences and practices (Gay, 2010; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges & Jennings, 2010; Bacon, 2009; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 1990).

Culturally Responsive Poetry

As an educator and writer, I have fused culturally responsive pedagogy with poetry to create an empowering literacy practice for diverse students I call culturally responsive poetry.

Why Poetry?

Poetry allows the writer and reader freedom to explore her or his creativity, to experiment with different writing styles and forms, and to enter into the process rhythmically. Poetry increases reading, writing and oral fluency. It allows poets to operate as an individual writer or as a group. The poet even has the gumption to abandon the rules of grammar, syntax, and structure as s/he sees fit. The writing teacher, once creativity and ideas begin to easily flow, can return to the rules of grammar often without students being bored or threatened by the transition.

Why Culturally Responsive Poetry?

If you wanted to know about me you would have to look really deep. Deeper then my Brown eyes. Brown skin. Different color hair. The real me. Look past the tough. Mean outer shell that’s hard to break. Look deeper then my height, my weight, the walk and the talk. Just look into my mind. Look into my heart. Thoughts that are created, a feeling that’s truly felt. Understand the real me, understand that the looks I give you are not from hate, not from anger and not from love. I look at you to understand you, like you should do me. You may think you know me because of my past. Think because of my looks you can predict my future. I bet you cant look at my face and tell me my emotion. Tell me what you think.. go ahead I’ll wait! Come up with it no because you have to look past deep down past my outer shell. Even past the next level & the one after that. Even past it all until the core. The rhythm, the beat of me. You still don’t know, me & wont until you look past the disguise that’s shown to be me.

(Tia, as cited in Bacon, 2011, p.10; Tia, in Bacon, 2009, p 12.)

Offering culturally responsive poetry to diverse students allows for all of the above and more. I created the term and practice of culturally responsive poetry, as a teacher and writer, by fusing culturally responsive pedagogy with poetry writing for empowerment, social change, creativity, and community. Creating culturally responsive poetry is a powerful recognition and expression of students’ multiple identities that include but are not limited to race, gender, age, class, and location as defined by the writer. Moreover, embedded in the fabric of culturally responsive poetry is the voice of resistance.
My Life Starts with a Word

A word of justice
That I have always wanted to practice
My life cries law
My duty is to help, good and bad…

My life, my life, my goal
(Blue, in Bacon, 2009, p. 183)

Teacher as Facilitator of Change

As an assistant professor of special education, I worked with teacher candidates, student teachers, and graduate students in the field. The expressed needs and fears of my student teachers, specifically, is one of the main reasons I included Common Core State Standards in this guide along with models for differentiating instruction. Pre- and in-service teachers often experience being so overwhelmed by high-stakes tests and new requirements that they feel forced to abandon their creative sides.

There were 20-year-old student teachers who had not even been in the school system for a full semester, who expressed feelings of burnout. They sometimes reported that the public school system made them feel more like well-trained seals or robots than educators. For example, following a very engaging poetry lesson by a fellow student teacher in my Language and Literacy class, one of my highest-ranking student teachers, gave him the following feedback. “Forget it. Throw it out.” “You can’t use it.” “Just stick to the Common Core, there is no creativity.”

Whether you are teaching in New York or California, teaching kindergarten or high school, you will need to understand and work within the guidelines and confines of the curriculum and set standards. However, I encourage us not to “forget it” or “throw it out” but to push harder to redefine our roles as teachers and continue to encourage creativity.

Student as Writer

I was…
I was the girl who had a lot to say
But was afraid of what others said about me.

Was my hair right? Will they talk about my clothes or shoes? It mattered to me if I had a boyfriend or not. Because I look like the only girl w/o a boyfriend. I didn’t feel comfortable with most of my friends because, I’m not all skinny like them. I was disgusted at the way my body was.

I am…
Now confident in myself & ready to try to be a teenager. I’m proud that I have curves and that I don’t look like everyone else… I’m a girl who isn’t afraid to speak her mind.

I will be …
Whatever I choose to be… I want to be a singer, dancer, actress, director, producer, activist, mentor, & own my own businesses.

(Divine Diva, in Bacon, 2009, p. 204)

The adolescent girls in my dissertation study, poetry group (some whose poems are shared in this article), and poetry pilot who wrote their stories, pain, identities, strength, and successes also wrote and created their own truths. Declarations and even questions of who they are reveal their inner voices and allow the adolescent girls to uncover their real names and make their identities more visible to themselves and each other. Writing poetry allows the girls to share their lived experiences in such a way as to create and cultivate their essence and inner lives on their own terms without the confines, labels, definitions or superficial interpretations of others. Many poets often express this feeling by the way in which they describe and experience poetry.

While many of my poetry groups have been designed for pre-teen and teen girls and
women, it is imperative to note that poetry can also be an essential mode of expression for boys and young men as well as an engaging means for increasing their literacy skills. Regardless of whether you are creating a group exclusively for girls, for boys, or a co-educational group, you will need to create a poetry model that allows for comfort, connection, and self-expression.

**Differentiating Instruction for Exceptional and English Language Learners**

The following reflection and poem was written by a poetry participant who chose the pen name “Family” after being placed in foster care. Family was a special education student who struggled with speaking in public due to a stutter. Through her inclusion in the poetry program, along with such accommodations as having her poetry read aloud by other students until she felt safe and comfortable enough to read on her own, Family began to find her own voice and to experience self-acceptance.

English language learners (ELLs) may share similar experiences and benefit greatly from access to poetry programs that offer additional support.

*Family,* in Bacon, 2009, p. 202

**I was shy when I first came here. I did not share my inner me like everybody else.**

*Now I am still working on speaking in front of a big crowd because I get [stage fright] right but I am getting over it now (Family’s “stage fright” is one of the reasons she was not able to facilitate).*

*I will be one day be an outspoken person who will present her stuff in front of a big crowd and not [stutter].*

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**Exceptional Learners**

Students with learning disabilities often struggle with self-regulation, as it pertains to attending to tasks, focusing on target information, controlling impulses, monitoring and modifying behavior, and organization, which impacts learning (Johnson & Clohessy, 2014; Gargiulo, 2012; Algozzine, 2006; Bender, 2004; IDEA, 2004).
Students with special needs have enormous strengths and talents that are often overlooked. In order to access these talents, it is necessary at times to provide accommodations. Accommodations provide access to the curriculum, standard, material or activity without altering the content, difficulty level or criteria for mastery. Examples of accommodations include: having the text read aloud, extra time, large print, and speech to text software or a human transcriber. There are also times when modifications are needed. Modifications provide changes to the content, criteria for mastery or difficulty level. For example, offering text at a lower, although high interest, reading level or comprehension level.

Creating Poetic Groups

When creating lesson plans, for your culturally responsive poetry groups, you may also divide students into groups with diverse tasks. You have observed here that many of my students’ poems are featured in their unadulterated form. One of the reasons the poems remain unedited is to allow for complete self-expression and freedom for my students to incorporate creative spelling, free flowing verses and jargon often used by adolescents. Another is to ensure that my students with learning disabilities, who often struggle with spelling, may tap into their creativity without fear or hesitation that their spelling skills will be judged or that their writing process will be thwarted. Because a student may struggle with written expression (grammar, spelling, organization, word choice or even syntax), does not mean they struggle with creativity, ideas, reflection, thoughtfulness, imagination, sentiment, wisdom, discernment, talent, feelings or the use of imagery.

Many students with learning disabilities, as well as students with emotional disabilities and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, have difficulty regulating their emotions or physical activity, recognizing emotional triggers or identifying and naming feelings (Johnson & Clohessy, 2014; Raymond, 2008; Kauffmann, 1999). Reading the poetry of published poets may allow emotions to be explored in a non-threatening manner, provide access to naming emotions (lessons can be constructed on identifying the feelings of the poet) and nurture empathy and compassion. Writing poetry allows students to express their feelings and stream of consciousness in a way they might not otherwise feel they can express or regulate. In addition, performance poetry allows students to channel their physical energy by acting out poems or engaging in animated and often theatrical readings. Moreover slam poetry (in which poems are scored by judges and participants compete with one another often in teams) can be used to engage students in healthy competition, group/team work, rapid verbal response, and demonstration of intellectual prowess.

Students may also have a learning disability and be gifted and talented. Therefore a student who struggles with mathematical calculations may far surpass his peers (testing well above grade level) in written expression. According to poet and activist Louis Reyes Rivera, known as “The People’s Poet”, there is a necessity to break with tradition to develop free verse poetry that is lead by listening to a rhythm of language constructed by one’s spirit rather than rules and boundaries (Reyes Rivera on McIntosh, 2003). Students who excel in poetry writing, reading and/or performance (regardless of other areas in which they might struggle) should be given ample opportunity to exercise their skills as team leader, group anchor, writing facilitator, performance poet, etc.

Curriculum

Teachers may align their poetry lessons with the curriculum by incorporating spelling and grammar into the poetry lesson by using samples of poems that the students may edit once they have finished with the creative process. If the student’s own poem is to be used, it is advisable to work 1:1 teacher and student, teacher’s assistant and student or peers rather than use the student’s poem as a
class example. Students should be encouraged to “play with language” by writing and reading poems with a variety of dialects (southern dialect, “Black English,” bilingual poetry, formal American English or classical English) and styles. Poems from well known poets such as Langston Hughes or Phillis Wheatley provide excellent examples, of such play with language, that are also featured in the curriculum or common core.

Differentiating Instruction
In differentiating instruction, one group may focus on correcting spelling and grammatical errors while another provides a deep analysis of the poem. See the suggestions below for working with the poem “If you wanted to know me”.

If you wanted to know about me you would have to look really deep. Deeper then my Brown eyes. Brown skin. Different color hair. The real me. Look past the tough. Mean outer sheal that’s hard to break. Look deeper then my height, my weight, the walk and the talk. Just look into my mind. Look into my heart. Thoughts that are created, a feeling that’s truly felt. Understand the real me, understand that the looks I give you are not from hate, not from anger and not from love. I look at you to understand you, like you should do me. You may think you know me because of my past. Think because of my looks you can predict my future. I bet you cant look at my face and tell me my emotion. Tell me what you think.. go ahead I’ll wait! Come up with it no because you have to look past deep down past my outer sheal. Even past the next level & the one after that. Even passed it all until the core. The rythm, the beat of me. You still don’t know, me & wont until you look past the disguise that’s shown to be me.
(Tia, in Bacon, 2011, p. 8; Tia, in Bacon, 2009, p. 2.)

Exercise
Assignments
Group 1 Read and summarize the poem
Group 2 Write a response to the poem by creating a poem or short essay (2-3 paragraphs) based on your interpretation and feelings about the poem.
Group 3 proofread and edit the original poem
  • Correct all words that have been underlined and placed in bold for spelling, word choice, contractions, etc.
  • Explore punctuation. Where would you add, delete or change periods or include question marks?
Group 4 Write a group poem about your own self-image(s) or looking past the outer shell

List Accommodations and Modifications used
Accommodations (e.g. transcriber, audio recorder, etc):

 Modifications:

True inclusion involves full access to services and supplies in order to participate completely in activities and the curriculum. Equally as important, inclusion involves valuing all students and respecting their differences. While we cannot control every perception or misperception of students by one another, we can set the standard in our classrooms and groups by creating a safe environment, modeling appropriate behavior, and demanding excellence.
Love is caring for someone beyond all means
It’s a desire for another
Love is family sisters and brothers
Love is the closest thing we have to magic
Love is like food 3 times you gotta have it.
Love is what made us.
(Mishaps, in Bacon, 2009, p. 200)

Teaching Applications for the Poetic Heart

To fall away: My grief, pain and confusion
To invite: Affection, happiness, change, music and knowledge

I was a bitter person. I was upset all the time. Crying all the time. I don’t like to let people know it or show it a lot. Cause I don’t know I think people use that as a weakness. Most people I know. I was angry… I was hurt…

I am I still am but not as much. And then coming in here I became more open. I always wanted to talk coming in here… I was happy to talk. Willing to talk. That changed my talking a lot. I used to talk a lot when my mother was here but then I stopped. Coming in here it’s like it filled a piece of my heart in. Now I can use that piece.

I will be powerful. I will be a better me.
(Mishaps, in Bacon, 2009, p. 199)

Even teachers who are non-poets/writers are capable of successfully creating and facilitating a culturally responsive poetry group. However, teachers must be willing to take the risks that they ask of their students. Teachers/facilitators must lead from the heart, engage and participate in poetry writing, readings and discussions with openness.

Although teachers might need to adjust my poetry design and format to accommodate their work environments, schedules or comfort level, the elements of positive communication, trust and accountability must remain consistent for success. In adapting this design for a poetry group during class time, it is important to recognize that some schools operate on a ninety minute “block” schedule (where classes meet less frequently for longer periods of time) while others might operate daily on a 50- or 60-minute schedule. Therefore, teachers might need to shorten or expand a lesson.

It is important to include icebreakers, writing activities, and discussions that build upon and foster exploration and imagination. For student empowerment, modeling and encouraging students to lead and facilitate poetry segments, activities and discussions is of great importance.

I was angry hopeless and drained of energy
I was mean and cruel
I was my own enemy

I am happy I am whole
I am happy I am whole
I am smarter I am bold
I am new but getting old
I am god’s gift
I am known
I will be patient
I will be kind
I will broaden my horizon
I will forever use my mind
I will be a doctor I might even be a nurse
but of all things
I will be me for better and for worse
(Mishaps, in Bacon, 2009, p. 200)

For students to remain actively engaged through writing, they must be allowed to write what is of interest or relevant to them. The poetry process, in my groups, unfolded in four stages: writing, reading/speaking (their poems, stories and truths), being heard (having their voices received by listening ears) and hearing others (creating the collective and reciprocal
experience through active listening). In this process, even if they lived experiences are not one’s own, there is an element of recognition. Recognition offers engagement for the listener as she/he connects with her/his own experiences, observations, reflections, desires or concerns (such as activism or social justice). This process is supported and nurtured by the facilitator and upheld by the group.

Small groups (such as 8-12 participants) allow participants more time to write, read and discuss their poetry. Smaller groups also seem to provide the space for students to become better acquainted with each other and the facilitator. However, poetry groups can be constructed for large classes. *Even in a class of 30, students can assume leadership roles.* Large groups can also be divided into groups of 3 or 4 (allowing the participant number of 8-12 to be maintained). Students are also able to serve as facilitators. Facilitators and participants may be rotated to allow students to build relationships.

The Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, are applied to general education students, special education students, and ELLs alike. A fundamental goal of the CCSS is to promote high expectations for all students. Students with disabilities may be provided, as appropriate, with additional services and supports in order to be successful. Instructional supports include permitting multiple and diverse avenues of engagement, action and expression. Literacy skills and college and career readiness are promoted and students must learn to speak, read, write, listen and use language effectively (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016; Prangley, 2014; Tucker, 2014).

**Format**

As a general education or special education teacher in an inclusion class, using the co-teaching model may be ideal. Using this model, allows the general education teacher and special education teacher to facilitate groups simultaneously through parallel teaching or incorporate the use of stations (with specific activities for each station). Each teacher may also facilitate a certain topic or theme. If you are a self-contained special education teacher, with a class consisting of all special education students, with a para-educator (teacher's assistant) you may choose to facilitate poetry or writing groups with the para-educator or work with a group that is struggling with concepts while the para-educator assists student facilitators. Student leadership roles in poetry groups provide additional opportunities for students to uncover or strengthen their skills and maintain their voices.

Below, find my lesson plan template and samples of lesson plans I created for my poetry groups.

**Poetry Lesson Plan Template**

**Common Core State Standard or Benchmark:**

**Purpose:**

**Topic:**

**Prompt:**

**Poem:**

**Format**

1. Check-in and house keeping
   - 5 minutes
   - Ask…”Share two surprising experiences from your day”.

2. Poetry reading
   - 2-4 minutes

3. Discussion of the poem -including sharing experiences and stories, reflections, etc
   - 20 minutes

4. Activity -of the facilitator’s choice
   - 5-7 minutes

5. Poetry writing in response to the poem
   - 5-7 minutes

6. Sharing- poetry writing
   - 6-8 minutes

7. Closing discussion and reflection - including suggested topic for next meeting
   - 10 minutes
8. Closing readings-sharing poems of any topic and interest
   • 3-5 minutes
   (Bacon, 2009, p. 317)

_Culturally Responsive Poetry Lesson Plan 1_

1. Introduction
   • 15 minutes
   • Review student and parent/guardian letters
   • Review guidelines of the group
   • Review and distribute consent (parent/guardian) and assent (minor or individual with limited cognitive ability) forms
2. Discuss trust
   • 15 minutes
   • Ask
   • “What is trust?”
   • “How can we establish trust in the group?”
   • “How should conflicts be handled?”
3. Distribute index cards
   • 5 minutes
   • List contact information (phone numbers and email addresses)
   • Emergency information
4. Have students list what they would like to write about in a poetry group
   • 5 minutes
5. Ice breaker
   • 15 minutes
   • Select a partner
   • Share 3 things with your partner about who you are (such as age or grade, where you are from, hobbies or if you have siblings)
   • Share 3 things that describe you (personality traits or characteristics such as serious, studious, etc)
6. Share with the group
   • 10 minutes
   • 2 things that you learned about your partner
7. Begin writing activity
   • 5 minutes
   • Writing prompt
8. Sharing
   • 15 minutes
   • Read a poem of your choice
9. Closing Discussion
   • 10 minutes
   • Thoughts about the group
   • Questions
10. Review of homework assignments
    • 5 minutes
    • Think of a poetry topic you would like to write about and facilitate for the group
    • Bring a poem to share
    (Bacon, 2009, pp. 318-319)

_Culturally Responsive Poetry Lesson Plan 2_

1. Housekeeping
   • 5 minutes
   • Collect consent and assent forms
2. Follow-up discussion
   • 5 minutes
   • What is trust?
   • Review of guidelines for the group
3. Question
   • 10 minutes
   • Ask
   • “What makes a good friend?”
   • “What does friendship look like?”
   • What is sisterhood or brotherhood?
4. Sharing poems
   • 15 minutes
   • Students read what they brought in for homework
5. Sign-up sheet
   • 5 minutes
   • Self-selected topics for writing and facilitating a poetry meeting
   • Sign-up for dates to facilitate
6. Writing activity
   • 10 minutes
   • Prompt
   • Ask “What’s in a name (naming and labels)?”
7. Discussion
   • 20 minutes
Exercise

Purpose: The purpose of today’s group is to write about and discuss what it means to look past the outer shell (the shell, identity or image of you or someone else) through the groups’ individual and collective experiences.

What’s in a Name Responses from Poetic Eight (dissertation study poetry group)

- Your identity
- Self worth
- Opinions (as far as others)
- Success
- Power
- Heritage
- Your personality

(Bacon, 2009, p. 320)

Culturally Responsive Poetry Lesson Plan 3

1. Follow-up
   - 10 minutes
   - Reflections
   - Ask
   - “Thoughts about judgment or naming?”

2. Check-in
   - 5-7 minutes
   - Questions about the poetry group?
   - Ideas or interests?

3. Sharing
   - 10 minutes
   - Students read their poems

6. Discussion of poems
   - 5-7 minutes

7. Activity
   - 5-7 minutes
   - Select a pen name

8. Writing prompt
   - 15 minutes
   - Ask
   - “What’s your poetic name?”
   - “Why did you select your poetic name?”
   - Sharing and discussion

9. Reflections and discussion
   - 10 minutes

10. Free writing
    - 7 minutes

11. Sharing
    - 5-7 minutes
    - Volunteers to share free writing

12. Review of homework assignments
    - 5 minutes
    - Begin to think about I Am
    - Bring your poem to share

(Bacon, 2009, pp. 322-323)
following poem has been edited for spelling and some grammatical errors)

**Format**
1. Check-in and house keeping
   - 5 minutes
   - Ask…“Share two surprising experiences from your day”.
2. Poetry reading
   - 2-4 minutes
3. Discussion of the poem -including sharing experiences and stories, reflections, etc
   - 20 minutes
4. Activity -of the facilitator’s choice
   - 5-7 minutes
5. Poetry writing in response to the poem
   - 5-7 minutes
6. Sharing- poetry writing
   - 6-8 minutes

Closing discussion and reflection -including suggested topic for next meeting
   - 10 minutes
Closing readings-sharing poems of any topic and interest
   - 3-5 minutes

If you wanted to know about me you would have to look really deep. Deeper then my Brown eyes. Brown skin. Different color hair. The real me. Look past the tough. Mean outer shell that’s hard to break. Look deeper then my height, my weight, the walk and the talk. Just look into my mind. Look into my heart. Thoughts that are created, a feeling that’s truly felt. Understand the real me, understand that the looks I give you are not from hate, not from anger and not from love. I look at you to understand you, like you should do me. You may think you know me because of my past. Think because of my looks you can predict my future. I bet you can’t look at my face and tell me my emotion. Tell me what you think.. go ahead I’ll wait! Come up with it no because you have to look past deep down past my outer shell. Even past the next level & the one after that. Even passed it all until the core. The rhythm, the beat of me. You still don’t know, me & won’t until you look past the disguise that’s shown to be me.

(Tia, in Bacon, 2011, p.8; Tia, in Bacon, 2009, p. 2)

**Conclusion and preparation for follow up poetry sessions:**
- Think about emerging themes in the group from your poetry writing:
  - Being different or unique
  - “Being me,”
  - Fake relationships and fake friends
  - Male/female relationships
  - What I’m thinking
  - Love
  - Race/culture
- Pick one of these themes and write a poem or reflection for the next meeting

**Student Add-ons**
- Personal and critical reflections and responses written in a journal (a method of reflection I have required of my undergraduate and graduate students as well) in reference to the poems read.
- Creating their own poems initially reflecting on topics and themes that resonate with them from the poetry readings.
- Techniques, topics, and poetic structures which may be “borrowed” or “imitated” from published poets/poems to provide support or serve as a model; however, the ultimate goal is to generate poems based upon the thoughts, ideas, lived experiences, and interests of the student.
- Prompts to help generate ideas and begin writing activities depending on the theme or writing topic. For instance, a writing exercise on “naming” (exploring the ways in which you identify and define yourself literally and abstractly/poetically) may include such prompts as, “How do you feel you are defined
by others”? “How do you define (or seek to define) yourself”?

Since positive relationships were deemed to be imperative in our poetry group, during the second meeting, I created a lesson plan to begin cultivating relationships within the group. I began by continuing the discussion on trust and followed up with a candid conversation about friendship and sisterhood. I asked, “What makes a good friend?” I also asked, “What does friendship look like?” and “What is sisterhood (or brotherhood)?” In addition to working as a group, students worked in pairs to establish more individual communication.

It is also important to note that each student is different and possesses his/her own styles and preferences. For instance, in my college course for senior student teachers, one of my students who was a very serious African American male preferred Shakespeare and British writers, classical music and rock and expressed an absolute aversion to the use of hip hop and RAP (an acronym which actually stands for rhythm and poetry) in the poetry unit. On the other hand, one of my European American (born in Eastern Europe) male students expressed a love for Langston Hughes, a genuine thirst for knowledge about poetry and literature from the Harlem Renaissance Movement, close identification with his students of color from urban areas and an interest in independent films about the African Diaspora.

**Exercise: Lesson Plan Creations**

**Poetry Lesson Plan Template**

**Common Core State Standard or Benchmark:**

**Purpose:**

**Topic:**

**Prompt:**

**Poem:**

**Format**

1. Check-in and house keeping
   - 5 minutes
   - Ask Question or Prompt...
2. Poetry reading

3. Discussion of the poem -including sharing experiences and stories, reflections, etc
   - 20 minutes
4. Activity -of the facilitator’s choice
   - 5-7 minutes
5. Poetry writing in response to the poem
   - 5-7 minutes
6. Sharing- poetry writing
   - 6-8 minutes
7. Closing discussion and reflection - including suggested topic for next meeting
   - 10 minutes
8. Closing readings-sharing poems of any topic and interest
   - 3-5 minutes

**Conclusion and Final Reflections**

As we work toward increasing and enhancing our students' literacy skills, allowing them, and ourselves, to tap into their creative sides often produces results even beyond our expectations. Measurement tools and set standards are often necessary for assessing literacy skills and determining student improvement; however, I conclude this segment with the collective voices of my poetry group followed by their reflections of the poetic experience. These reflections continue to serve as a reminder for me that there are some critical experiences that cannot be measured by conventional means yet are equally as important. The final reflections of my poetry group provide great insight into the importance of self-expression as they declare, “All of us have grown whether the outside sees it or not.”

I’ve enjoyed having people understand me. Even though I’m still working on my life, I’ve had so much fun getting to know new people. I learned you can write what you feel it doesn’t have to be about the topic. You can write what your heart tells you to write. I love being in the poetry club because I
can let out all my emotions and not worry about people judging me.
(.Divine Diva, in Bacon, 2009, p. 299)

It was fun and a good experience... overwhelmed with good. The experience made me realize the [potential] everyone has in new things.
(Blue, in Bacon, 2009, p. 300)

...We accomplished a lot. Everybody, all of us have grown whether the outside sees it or not. Wow, I have friends (now) that are girls and are cool. That are actually decent people. I wish I could have gotten to something like this earlier (as this was her last year in high school).

How I feel about leaving:
Waaaaaah... Exhale
Waaaaahhhhh... Inhale
Wahhhhhhh... Inhale
Waahhh... inhale... Exhale
Waaaahhhhh!!!
Okay, I’m finished 09!
(KiRe, in Bacon, 2009, p. 300)

I’m speechless I completely don’t know what to say. I wish It could be a little longer... Naw maybe, it was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had and it helped me to grow. It took out hate and put in happiness it took away [doubt] and replaced it with hope. “I will miss everyone I love poetry...
I am every page in ever word. I am every tear in every joy...
(Mishaps, in Bacon, 2009, p. 300)

References


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**Destination Knowledge**

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READING is THINKING – HOW to GROW SPIRITED READERS

Sheryl Lain
Independent Educational Consultant

Abstract: This article explains how to give a real boost to delayed readers by using two teacher tools -- a reading process framework based on Bloom’s taxonomy and a protocol for one-on-one tutoring. This article is for teachers who want to know about and embed research-based tutoring in their repertoire to grow students who need the most support.

Robert saunters in, the picture of nonchalance, if not reluctance. He’s a cool kid—diamond-bright studs in both ears, baseball cap turned around, St. Louis Cardinals logo at the back of his head. He slouches in his chair next to Brenda, his one-on-one tutor, as ready as he’ll ever be to begin this new reading intervention. Robert isn’t new to interventions, having been placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) years ago. Now, an eleventh grader, he reads at a fourth-grade level and writes at a third-grade level, and he doesn’t hold out much hope that this new tutoring idea will work.

I watched Robert pitch for the local American Legion baseball team. He’s super. Oh, how I wanted him to pitch in college. But Robert never had the success in school he’s had on the mound. Besides, he’s the first in his family to stay in high school until eleventh grade. Going to college is a pipe dream.

Robert, Brenda and I, along with a dozen other teachers and an equal number of kids, were testing out one-on-one tutoring. We were learning to read with the most tangled readers in the school—the ones who fall in the lowest quartile on reading and writing assessments. The idea of tutoring strugglers is catching on nation-wide. It’s a key element named in Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy (2006). Among the 15 elements deemed critical to a literacy program, strategic tutoring is essential. As a literacy consultant hired by the district special education director, I am sitting at the table today with Brenda and Robert to watch and give Brenda feedback as she tutors.

Over the past 30 years of teaching, Robert and students like him posed a challenge to me. That is, until I acquired two tools. One is one-on-one tutoring, a protocol roughly following Marie Clay’s Reading Recovery – and tweaked to work with students who are behind in Grade Two through adulthood. The second tool is Northwest Regional Educational Lab’s framework, the Six Traits of Reading (1999). This framework based on Bloom’s taxonomy (1956), reminds us that reading is thinking; this thinking can be cast into a taxonomy to encourage higher-order thinking while students read.

The Six Traits of Reading mirrors the reading process: Building Context, Decoding, Comprehending, Interpreting, Synthesizing, and Evaluating. This framework nudges teachers —tutors and classroom teachers alike - - to go beyond simple multiple-choice, true-false thinking. Just as a seamstress pins her pattern to the dressmaker’s form, Brenda pins her strategies to the Six Traits of Reading taxonomy, one that encourages interpretive, analytic and critical thinking for even the most tangled readers.

Robert is getting the best of two worlds: one-on-one tutoring and a framework of strategies to encourage comprehension at higher levels of thinking. Furthermore, his high school has embodied the notion that kids like Robert need to be triple-dipped. First, he needs English and daily support in reading across the content areas. Next, he is in a guided reading group, consisting of seven boys and a teacher – all of them engrossed in the autobiography of Coach Wooden. In addition to these two structures – content reading all day
and small group reading, Robert reads with Brenda, his tutor, one-on-one. Thus, Robert hears the same strategy language across the school day. Like an ice cream cone coated in chocolate, Robert is getting triple-dipped.

Allington (2006) assures us that common framework, language and strategies in interventions, give us much more bang for our buck, if we really want to be sure we leave no student behind in reading, writing and thinking (2006). The one-on-one protocol (see Figure 1) and the Six Traits of Reading (Figure 2) work with the students who most need our help.

Building Context
Students can make more sense of reading if they build some background knowledge before they read. What is the title? Who is the author? What genre is this book – fiction, nonfiction, horror? What’s the format of the book – print size, chapter length? Good readers sample a bit of the text, reading the first few paragraphs, maybe perusing the blurb on the back. Readers answer these questions as they flip through a book at the bookstore, so we should practice this context building in our tutorial. All the while students flip, they know, maybe without conscious thought, the purpose for reading the book. Is it to learn how to do something or to relax? Setting a purpose is big! Like positioning the feet on the blocks before the gun goes off in track signaling the beginning of the race, readers need to think in their heads, “OK, I’m going to read this book because....”

When Brenda helps Robert build background knowledge and set his purpose for reading, he has more success while he reads.

Decoding
Decoding is more than learning phonics. The key decoding ingredients are phonemic awareness (syllable tapping), phonics/spelling, fluency (reading smoothly, with expression), and vocabulary growth. All of these decoding elements, however, are best learned while Robert reads meaningful text, especially if he loves his book. He helped pick it, a book about Sammy Sousa, baseball star. The book is in his instructional level, not too hard nor too easy. Reading is a complex activity, Marie Clay reminds us; a good reader juggles comprehension, syntax, and graphophonics—all at the same time (2006). As a matter of fact, Brenda would handicap an already handicapped reader if she would work on phonics in isolation of meaningful text.

Brenda scaffolds for Robert, who struggles with graphophonetic cues, by showing him how to chunk words into syllables. For example, the word capitulation appears in today’s reading, so before they begin reading the new text, Brenda prints the word on tag board, gives the word and a pair of scissors to Robert, and says, “Can you cut this word into the chunks you hear?” Robert cuts, whispering the word. Then he puts the pieces back together to make the whole word. “You’ll see capitulation in today’s reading,” she assures him.

Robert, like many tangled older readers, needs to tap out syllables, hearing where the accent falls. He needs to see phonics patterns such as the -ight in enlightenment. He needs to work on the vocabulary that comes up in the text. Today, Brenda has Robert skim through some paragraphs locating a few tricky words. “I’m thinking of the word infinite in today’s text. It’s about right here.” She narrows down his search to a paragraph or so. Robert skims quickly, repeating the word. His eyes spot the word and his fingers frame it. “What do you notice about the word?” Brenda asks him. He peers at it closely and says, “Hey, there are a couple of little words in it -- in and fin.” Then Brenda reads a little of the sentence to model that readers figure out the meaning of words in context.

Fluent reading is all about smooth, expressive reading. Brenda and Robert practice rereading a very short piece of the book, a passage with dialogue. “Read this for me,” she says, pointing to a few lines of text. Robert reads, haltingly. Then Brenda reads with expressiveness while Robert follows along, marking with a slash mark whenever she pauses. “Now you read it,” she invites him.
This time Robert reads like he’s auditioning for a part in a movie. “Hey, it makes more sense this way,” he notes. Reading a passage three times affords Robert a chance to practice smooth, meaningful reading.

**Comprehending**

Decoding text is the most superficial aspect of reading, and it’s lower on the Six Traits listing. In fact, Keene and Zimmermann (1997) claim that almost all students decode just fine after first grade. But as they grow older, about a third of them don’t understand what they are reading. They cannot make meaning, and since making meaning is what reading is all about, they aren’t really reading at all. So Brenda’s lesson spends about six minutes total on the above decoding rituals. Then off they go, reading the book, employing comprehension strategies.

On the Six Traits of Reading Framework, comprehending stands on a lower rung of the hierarchical ladder. Comprehending is the literal level of reading—reading the lines. To help Robert work on the literal level, Brenda has Robert retell, summarize, and answer literal questions, such as, “So, who is this guy, again?” and, “Where are we now?”

**Interpreting**

Robert, like all readers, yearns to move rapidly from the right-wrong literal information in his book to the juicy stuff, like, “I wonder why Sammy Sosa feels so loyal to his family back home?” Robert is chomping at the bit to interpret. That’s good, because only about 20 to 30 percent of norm-referenced test questions dwell on literal comprehension; the rest of the questions require readers to infer, synthesize, and evaluate. Besides, no student who reads just to regurgitate facts becomes a motivated reader. If we want kids to read enough to become proficient, they have to enjoy it. I like a reading taxonomy that includes the complex mental activities going beyond literal comprehending. Making meaning is so important that four of the six traits deal with cognitive levels. Ironically, the higher on the taxonomy, the more fun readers have.

Cognitive difficulty, it turns out, is enjoyable. Brenda wants Robert to get to the bottom of the text. To put it another way, she wants him to figure out the point of the piece. One tool that really helps Robert is a list of universal themes (see Figure 3). Students refer to this list as they read, asking themselves, what is the author really getting at? Brenda tells Robert that these big ideas move in and around our lives. “We find these themes if we dig deeply enough in all books,” she says. “Even your biology book.” Universal themes give Robert the nudge to read below the surface.

**Synthesizing**

Rosenblatt (1999) teaches us to braid our own experiences into the words on the page, to bring our own life to bear on the printed word. Brenda often asks Robert to make connections and as he does so, he learns to embrace the book with his head and his heart. It’s hard to keep reading at a distance when our lives are intertwined with the words.

Synthesizing also means making some product. After putting the reading ingredients together, what comes out the other end? For Brenda and Robert, discussion is one product. That’s one kind of synthesis. Here’s another: At the end of the tutoring session, Robert and Brenda turn to their journals. Today, Robert writes about how cool it would be to get 10,000 free at-bats, just to practice his swing. “Hmmm,” he begins. “10,000 swings. Just think how good I’d be. I’d blow Coach away.” After about five minutes of writing, both Brenda and Robert share their quick writes with one another. Graves, who wrote about the importance of allowing kids to bring their lives to school in their writing, would not be surprised that this boy, allergic to reading and especially writing, fell to composing his personal journal jot without hesitation.
Evaluating

The most liberating of the traits for Robert, Brenda tells me, is evaluating. “Now, evaluating does not mean saying, ‘That sucks!’ or some other colorful put down,” she explains. “We’re not judging here. We’re checking out the values.” She models for him how to look closely at the text, peering between the lines, interpreting the mood and message, and thinking, “Well, this author seems to value hard work and love of family.” As a good reader, Robert is encouraged to evaluate what he reads, holding the text up to the light to see the values and then comparing the values to his own.

Conclusion

Reading is a juggling act – keeping all the traits in the air to make deep sense of what we read. Building context, decoding, comprehending the facts, interpreting what’s behind the lines, synthesizing by making something out of the reading, and evaluating – to see if the text’s values speak to our lives. Brenda and Robert model a lesson that weaves together fluency, word work, skimming, vocabulary building, strategy use, and writing – all the while reading a book Robert can’t wait to get his hands on each day. The use of the Six Traits of Reading taxonomy helps assure that all of this reading business really matters – it’s not just the stuff of thinking; it’s the stuff of life.

Postscript

I observed Robert and Brenda last year when he was in eleventh grade. They had read together for approximately 25 lessons over three months. His post test showed growth. According to the Jerry Johns assessments she used for pre and post tests in reading, Robert grew from a fourth-grade level to an eighth-grade level in reading. According to the writing assessment, holistically scored from district anchor papers and rubrics, he grew five years.

But the real proof came the other day via an email from Brenda – a whole year later. Robert is a senior now. “Hey, just wanted to let you know that Robert was accepted into a junior college in Colorado. He received a baseball scholarship, and he passed the college entrance test (known as COMPASS). Wow, is he jazzed! The tutorial and the Bloom’s taxonomy made all the difference.”

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**Figure 1 One-on-One Protocol**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>minutes</th>
<th>Lesson Notes</th>
<th>Comments/Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Context</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder of previous lesson, 1 sentence. Note salient contextual facts (genre, author, length, organization).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Start where left off. Student reads a bit aloud. Teacher reads with expression. Student marks pauses and then rereads. (Use other markings if needed).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-select 1-2 words with phonics, spelling, or convention patterns. Use white board. Print word along with several other words with similar pattern. Have student circle salient word parts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-select 2-3 words for definitions. Have students scan for word. Teacher reads word in context and give a quick definition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Record</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student begins to read where left off. After about 100 words, student retells.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name a thinking strategy appropriate to the text. Explain and demonstrate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reads aloud. Teacher questions 2-3 times using thinking strategy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Traits of an Effective Reader

Building Context
- Knowing the author
- Noting the text features
- Recognizing the genre
- Seeing the structure/mode
- Realizing the historical time, cultural overtones, social issues

Decoding Conventions
- Decoding words
  - Get Your Mouth Ready, Tricky Word, Chunk It
- Gaining fluency
  - Pause, Articulation, Varied pace, pitch, volume
- Growing vocabulary
- Decoding punctuation

Comprehending
- Reading the lines—literal understanding
- Retelling
- Summarizing/Paraphrasing
- Questioning
- Visualizing
- Marking facts
- Predicting

Interpreting
- Reading between the lines
- Inferring/Wandering
- Finding the universal themes/symbols

Synthesizing
- Reading beyond the lines
- Making something new—writing
- Making connections: text, self and world

Evaluating
- Being metacognitive and monitoring oneself
- Figuring out the author’s values and comparing to one’s own

Figure 3 List of universal themes

- Anger
- Beauty
- Bravery
- Brotherhood
- Celebration
- Compassion
- Courage
- Cowardice
- Cruelty
- Daring
- Deception
- Desire
- Devotion
- Discovery
- Duty
- Evil
- Failure
- Fairness
- Fear
- Flattery
- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Greed
- Harmony
- Heroism
- Honor
- Humility
- Injustice
- Inspiration
- Kindness
- Loneliness
- Loss
- Love
- Loyalty
- Modesty
- Nobility
- Perseverance
- Pride
- Rejection
- Resentment
- Resourcefulness
- Revenge
- Reverence
- Selfishness
- Serenity
- Sin
- Sisterhood
- Stinginess
- Survival
- Temptation
- Tranquility
- Truth
- Tyranny
- Vanity
- Violence

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THE FOURTH WAVE: THE ESSENTIALS IN NAVIGATING STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

Cassie Hernandez
School District of Hillsborough County, Florida

Abstract: Teaching that supports standards has always been important, but is perhaps even more important now that the Florida Standards have been implemented. These standards include demanding certain expectations of the students and require teaching that integrates content area knowledge with expertise in reading and writing. Using the Literacy Design Collaborative model, the district was able to provide a framework for effective standards-based instruction and implement models that align content area knowledge with literacy standards. By leveraging the teacher knowledge and gathering their input, this framework has been refined to provide a flexible structure that the teachers can use to support instruction. Shared understanding of the standards, skills, and criteria for evaluation have given a concrete reference to both teachers and students, and that can guide their teaching and learning. This model is predicated on demanding Teaching Tasks that give the teachers some insight on student learning and encourage differentiated instruction.

Alvin Toffler, an American writer and futurist, influenced thought and practice in many different areas, including government, business, technology, and social science. In his writings, he describes three waves of societal development, indicating that, in the future, “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn” (Toffler, 2016). This quote resonates with many in education, given our nation’s focus on preparing citizens for success. The current commentary about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) suggests that different components of standards-based instruction are fluid, and therefore, in a constant state of modification; standards-based teaching and learning are no different. In this context, students must develop their capacity to think critically, and, in reflection, about the ideas and concepts across content areas and literacies. According to the CCSS, when students graduate from high school, they should have strong content knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that will prepare them to be successful in postsecondary education and career (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2015).

Planning for this new approach, our district saw the need to support the development of teaching and learning, aligned with the new standards and diversity within the schools. Hillsborough County is the 8th largest school district in the nation. The ethnic diversity alone creates a melting pot of cultural backgrounds, as described in the figure below.

(School District of Hillsborough County, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Breakdown</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>8,152</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>44,668</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>72,898</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>11,650</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>73,344</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>211,234</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from the varied ethnic backgrounds, 62% of the students received free or reduced-price lunch, 30% of students received Exceptional Student Education services, and 20% were English Language Learners. With such diversity in a large district, there had to be a way to connect the standards-based learning, while taking into account the subsets of students who coexist from classroom to classroom. The Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) was identified as the tool to do exactly that. LDC is not a part of the prescribed curriculum, but rather, a framework to empower teachers and design academic content through reading and writing aligned with the
CCSS. Teams of teachers created models of modules that were implemented across content areas and grade levels. After the design teams met for 6th grade Reading, 8th grade History, and 7th grade English Language Arts, they began module creation to supplement existing purchased curricula. Over time, the teacher teams were able to become more independent, yet, still collaborative while building the standards-based instruction for their content areas.

The district curriculum team, an informally-structured group made up of teachers, instructional coaches, literacy support personnel, and content area supervisors, decided to begin development of these frameworks within the 6th grade Reading course. The team met to collaborate and design a four-week unit of study (module), consisting of: a student performance task (teaching task), standards alignment resources, skill building activities, and lessons that included mini-tasks. Once complete, the first module was titled *Personal Change Creates Community.*

**Backwards Design**

An LDC framework is developed using four critical questions. These are: What Task?, What Skills?, What Instruction?, What Results? This framework is built upon the work of Wiggins and McTighe (1998):

1. **Identify desired results** - Defining goals and objectives. At this stage, it is important to create the Essential Questions. These questions should be inquiry-based. The questions facilitated the students’ process of "uncovering" the answer.
2. **Determine acceptable evidence** - The forms of assessment and performance that would demonstrate that students have acquired the knowledge, understanding, and skill necessary to answer the questions.
3. **Plan learning experiences and instruction** - The sequence of teaching and learning experiences that will equip students to develop and demonstrate the desired understanding.

The team felt confident that upon answering the four critical questions, the teachers would have a clear understanding of the LDC framework and see its alignment with effective instructional design. Faced with the challenge of creating the first module, *Personal Change Creates Community*, the design team created a task that demanded critical thinking of the students and allowed the teachers to explicitly integrate standards-based instruction. The informational task they created is as follows:

> “And a little child shall lead them.”
> How does this quote hold true?

After reading *Seedfolks* and a variety of articles focusing on the impact young people have in their communities, write an essay that describes how young people from the articles and characters from *Seedfolks* influence change. Be sure your answer addresses the question.”

During module development, feedback from teachers revealed a strong preference for an assessment task that the students would read and write about, providing teachers with authentic student work that could be evaluated for better understanding and mastery. As a result, one of the mini-tasks embedded within the module was a Task Analysis. The team noted that this was an often-overlooked piece of instruction. With Task Analysis built into the module, teachers and students could easily identify the purpose for learning each day within the module (See Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SKILL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SKILLS CLUSTER 1: PREPARING FOR THE TASK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bridging Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Task Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Project Planning | Ability to plan in a way that the task is accomplished on time.

**SKILLS CLUSTER 2: READING PROCESS**

1. Strategic Reading | Ability to read and understand various texts and understand the necessary reading strategies needed for completing the task.

2. Essential Vocabulary | Ability to apply strategies for developing an understanding of the text(s) by locating words and phrases that identify key concepts and facts, or information.

3. Note Taking | Ability to read purposefully and select relevant information; to summarize and/or paraphrase.

4. Organizing Notes | Ability to prioritize and narrow supporting information.

**SKILLS CLUSTER 3: TRANSITION TO WRITING**

1. Bridging | Ability to transition from reading or researching phase to the writing phase.

**SKILLS CLUSTER 4: WRITING PROCESS**

1. Initiation of Task | Ability to establish a controlling idea and consolidate information that is relevant to the task.

2. Planning | Ability to develop a line of thought and text structure which is appropriate for an informational or explanatory task.

3. Development | Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.

4. Revision | Ability to apply revision strategies to refine development of information or explanation, including the line of thought, language use, and tone, as being appropriate for audience and purpose.

5. Editing | Ability to apply editing strategies and presentation applications.

**Alignment**

Following the design of several LDC modules, a teacher focus group, consisting of teachers from many different LDC modules provided additional insight on this framework. In the focus group, teachers were asked, “When planning instruction, do you plan mostly by yourself or with others and for how long?” Some of the responses were as follows:

“In the beginning, a lot of time. Now, being more familiar with the modules, not as much planning is needed. When creating new modules, it goes faster because the LDC framework is so familiar.”

“We like to go through the entire module and determine what the students will need and what they already know. So, some revisions are made based on that analysis.”

(Hernandez, 2016)

Although planning is one part of standards-based instruction, it is important to note that the teachers are not teaching isolated activities. Instead, the LDC framework allows them to deliver lessons that are integrated across content areas, and subsequently, aligned with each other.

Another question posed to the focus group was, “How well do you believe the LDC modules improve student learning of your grade-level standards and their ability to succeed with rigorous materials?” Responses from the focus group participants included observations that when lessons were planned and delivered using the LDC framework, content was successfully differentiated and improvement was evident:

“If the teachers are planning and differentiating, then the kids do show improvement.”

“If the teachers don’t understand the objective and the progression of the lessons, they can skip major lessons that won’t scaffold the kids to success.” (Hernandez, 2016)

Using the LDC Skills Ladder (see Figure 1), teachers and students are able to identify the required skills and then, prepare for instruction. Students have a clear understanding that each
A defined skill must be mastered in order to complete the Teaching Task at the end of the writing process successfully.

**Instructional Decision Making**

Among the district leaders and teachers, there is a clear desire to make some standards-based instruction accessible to all students. As Wiggins states, “Students cannot possibly learn everything by the time they leave school, but we can instill in them the desire to keep questioning throughout their lives” (1989, p.44). The LDC design process and subsequent teacher focus groups reveal that knowing where their students “are” and where they “need to go”, is an essential element of effective standards-based instruction. So, whether a teacher designs a module with his/her Professional Learning Community, or uses one which the district provides, like *Seedfolks*, this framework forces the teachers to understand the standards, be mindful of the students’ strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate mastery, using both objective and subjective measures. The essence of the LDC framework is its intent to provide structure for the teacher through mini-tasks, skills, and performance tasks, but also to provide flexibility to the student, which allows them to provide authentic work and continuous growth in their mastery of standards and skills.

During the feedback sessions, with the focus group, some teachers provided insights about how they make standards-based instruction accessible to all students while using an LDC Module:

“Kids who come with little background knowledge, sometimes additional standards were added around the topic to build into the LDC module. The kids get so excited about the LDC that building other standards into the existing LDC is accepted by the kids.”

“Figuring out what works best for the kids but using a consistent approach to say, note-taking, really helped the kids understand the

**Looking at Student Work**

The LDC design and implementation in our district demonstrates how teachers can be empowered to deliver effective standards-based instruction. This work revealed how LDC modules are being used to help the students gain knowledge of specific standards, while also building their capacity for self-reflection. Reflection is something that takes places along the way, as mentioned earlier, but the ultimate goal of the LDC framework is for the students to demonstrate their knowledge by answering a Teaching Task.

Literacy Design Collaborative has led to the creation and use of common rubrics for the evaluation of student work. Once teachers began scoring student work across the district, and a clear need for anchor papers (e.g., student samples, demonstrating each of the scoring criteria and performance levels) emerged. Following extensive training by the district, the teachers have worked to achieve consensus on their understanding of these rubrics. During their training, district teachers used these anchor papers to become more familiar with the variations in student work that would influence their scoring.

By providing anchor papers, the district also provided some concrete references for the teacher’s use during scoring. The anchor papers provided evidence that was related to the seven scoring elements included in the LDC rubric: Focus, Controlling Idea, Reading/Research, Development, Organization, Conventions, and Content Understanding. With clear examples of how student work might look
at each scoring point for each element of the rubric, the teachers also benefited from a better understanding of how to score. The district, as a whole, benefitted, as demonstrated by the inter-rater reliability among scorers.

In creating anchor paper sets for each LDC, the district used scores from three readers (see Figure 2). These rater-triads included a district administrator from Assessment and Accountability, a content area specialist from the Curriculum and Instruction office, and a literacy expert from the Curriculum and Instruction office. All were trained to score students’ responses, using the LDC rubric and the recommended hybrid approach (an analytic review, followed by an assignment of a holistic score). The resulting inter-rater reliability of 0.711 was above the conventionally accepted values and underscored the relatively high rate of agreement among the scorers (Welch, 2015).

When teachers begin to feel confident in this instructional model and gain experience while scoring student work, they benefit from an enhanced ability to apply the standards and deliver more effective instruction. Research shows that professional development that focuses on relevant subject matters and student learning, while linking it to daily teaching challenges, matters most to the teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Professional development needs to be embedded into the daily work and less in a “drive by” approach (Louks-Horsley, 1999). The LDC framework has helped the district to provide job-embedded professional development in a meaningful and actionable way.

Along these lines, the district began to use the “Looking at Student Work” protocol in 2012, prior to LDC implementation. This protocol, designed by the Aspen Institute, helped the district begin to sustain some meaningful discussion about student work (see Figure 3). After being successful in piloting this protocol with Instructional Leadership Teams, the site-based teacher teams that review student work, teachers began to use this protocol through their Professional Learning Communities, even beyond the LDC modules. The protocol facilitates reflection by the teachers and is focused on the students’ understanding of the standards. The impact of this protocol extends beyond mere presentation of the student work. Through this protocol, the teams identify and discuss some patterns evident in student work, how they can be encouraged, wherever appropriate, or remediated where needed. Additionally, schools have hosted site-based professional development to help the teachers respond to the patterns and trends evident in the student work. Both the LDC framework and the “Looking at Student Work” protocol have sparked a desire among the teachers to seek out additional resources about the standards and improve the alignment of their lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intra Class Correlation</th>
<th>Intra-class Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>F Test with True Value 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.486 - 0.630</td>
<td>3.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.370 - 0.720</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.710 - 0.770</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.710 - 0.770</td>
<td>208.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation of Intra Class Coefficient**

- **Value of ICC**
  - Poor: 0.00
  - Fair: 0.40 - 0.59
  - Good: 0.60 - 0.74
  - Excellent: 0.75 - 1.00

**Figure 2**

![Table and Graph](image-url)
Discussion

The district began implementing standards-based instruction using the Literacy Design Collaborative model. Through the process of designing and delivering LDC modules in grades four through twelve, our teams were able to refine the content of these modules and improve upon the delivery of standards-based instruction. The overarching premise of beginning with the end in mind, as emphasized in backwards design, helped the district team to create a useful tool for both teachers and students. The process of developing these modules and gathering feedback from teachers was inspiring. Those who have taught LDC across the district share a positive outlook on standards-based instruction. As CCSS and the Florida Standards, in particular, become more familiar, other districts and teachers should consider similar efforts to introduce these modules and collaborate. The end result will surely benefit the students and prepare them for success beyond the classroom.

This account is only a brief summary of the dynamic process used to create LDC modules and foster meaningful instructional leadership within the schools. As this work continues to evolve, we expect even more clarity about the standards and instruction that supports mastery to emerge. There is no doubt that frameworks like LDC have empowered educators to confidently implement standards-based instruction. Time spent designing, implementing, and refining this approach should continue to drive the mission of contemporary educators.

References


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STUDENTS, STANDARDS, AND SCALES: TEACHING BY DESIGN

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Walker Middle Magnet School

Emily Williams
Walker Middle Magnet School

Abstract: Classrooms consist of diverse learners from varied backgrounds who have different needs and strengths. Finding a way to leverage diversity and integrate it with effective instruction can be challenging for many teachers. Using tiered learning progressions to support standards-based instruction reinforces expectations for students and allows for successful differentiation. Through this instructional design, students are engaged and motivated, while teachers gain valuable time to support instruction where it is needed. This model provides an example of how successful differentiation can be achieved by integrating tiered proficiency scales that combine content and literacy standards.

Introduction

As the school day comes to an end, I sit at my desk grading the unit tests that my students have recently completed … 90%, 78%, 40%, 72%, and so on. The grades seem to fit into the classic bell curve trend, some high, some low, and most in the middle range. This is typical. This is the norm. Tomorrow, we will move on to the next unit. I begin thinking about my students and their test scores. The student who was absent three days; the student who has lived in this country and spoken English for only one year; the student who has a specific learning disability; and the student who seemed to understand the concepts after only a few days but was bored through the rest, each passes through my mind. How was I supposed to meet the needs of each individual student in my classroom? It seems like an impossible task.

Naturally, one is steered toward differentiated instruction, which allows each of these students to learn the curriculum at his or her own pace, at a depth of knowledge that builds confidence, and at a level of complexity that meets learning needs. According to Coil (2007), this type of instruction becomes incredibly valuable with diverse student populations because the instruction acknowledges student differences and provides a multitude of ways to learn.

The differentiated classroom teacher must be flexible in planning, grouping, and use of time. Planning must be practical and thoughtful. An abundance of resources is needed in a classroom that meets many diverse needs, and teachers may need to access experts in their school or at the district level to meet student needs. For a struggling student or one with disabilities, learning curriculum that integrates content and literacy can be particularly frustrating. That same curriculum can be painstakingly boring for others who are gifted, needing a little push to dig deeper, or those who want more obvious connections to the real world. A differentiated classroom sounds wonderful in theory, but what does it look like in reality? How does a teacher find the planning and instructional time to differentiate every standard to every student throughout the school year? The purpose of this article is to provide a framework for a differentiated classroom through effective planning and sequenced implementation.

Through the use of tiered learning progressions, differentiation can become a reality. Heritage (2008) explained that for each learning domain, teachers must consider how the learning would develop as part of a continuum to reach proficiency from the beginning learning level of each student. She continues to explain that formative assessments are then embedded at each level in the continuum so feedback is provided and actions can be taken to remediate in real time. The learning progression then provides the teacher...
and students with tiered objectives to meet at each level. By pairing each tiered objective with formative assessments, the development of knowledge and skills becomes apparent to the teacher along the way. Student learning is successfully differentiated and mastery is shown in a summative assessment (Brookhart, 2004).

Formative assessments built into the learning progressions are the key to providing instructional feedback to both teachers and students throughout the learning process. They help teachers and students track progress as they move toward mastery of the standard, or group of standards, and clearly articulate the development of learning within a standard, creating a big picture where expectations and outcomes are clear for students. The use of formative assessment in this design allows teachers to monitor individual student progress toward mastery and decide on the strategies needed to move that student’s learning forward (Heritage, 2008).

According to Marzano (2010), the use of proficiency scales, which mirror learning progressions, helps to break down each individual standard into the various depths of knowledge that the students are expected to understand. With a well-articulated sequence of knowledge and skills derived from content standards, the learning design takes shape giving teachers the ability to realize differentiation and giving students confidence and clarity about expectations for each standard. When combined with careful planning, this design gives teachers the freedom to provide extensions and enrichment, allow acceleration, and provide remediation, all while meeting student needs and monitoring achievement and proficiency in a diverse classroom.

Methods
To implement this framework using proficiency scales, work begins with effective planning by the teacher. As shown in Table 1, the content standard is identified and then tiered to support learning goals that range in complexity. A more complex learning goal, a simpler learning goal, and the learning that can only be accomplished with support. Webb’s Depths of Knowledge (DOK) is also used to designate the level of knowledge expected at each target on the scale. After these targets are defined, the teacher’s expectations have been set and planning can begin for the instructional activities and tasks that should be accomplished at each level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Learning Scale Content Standard Progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this design, the proficiency scale also provides clarity for the gradual release model. All students begin at a level one and the teacher uses whole group instruction to provide foundations that are required to achieve the learning target. As the students move up to the next level of the scale, the next goal is accomplished with peer support. Students are able to collaborate in order to work through misconceptions together with only a minimal amount of guided support from the teacher. After showing proficiency at this level, students then work independently at the third level of the scale.

Once accomplished, this third level indicates full proficiency of the standard since the student has reached the target learning goal for that standard. Students work independently at this level, which allows the teacher to spend extra instructional time to support those students that have not shown proficiency on the previous levels. Finally, the students who reach proficiency early on have the opportunity to move on to the more complex learning goal and extend their knowledge level. Formative assessments are embedded at each level of the scale to provide feedback to both teacher and
student on progress toward mastery and what instructional supports need to be given. Activities are varied at each level to appeal to different learning modalities and levels of knowledge.

After spending a year implementing and refining this framework in 7th grade Civics and Science classrooms, content literacy standards were selected to be tiered alongside each content standard. This reinforced the skills necessary to access the content for both the teacher and students (see Table 2). The instructional activities at each level connect the skills to the content through activities that build literacy skills as well. A completed proficiency scale shows how objectives become more complex at each level along with the acceptable evidence, or assessments. The tiered literacy skills help students acquire the content as well as reach mastery on the standards (see Table 3).

Table 2. Learning Scale Content and Literacy Standard Progression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Standard</th>
<th>Reading Standard</th>
<th>Writing Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>More Complex Learning Goal</td>
<td>More Complex Learning Goal</td>
<td>More Complex Learning Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Target Learning Goal</td>
<td>Target Learning Goal</td>
<td>Target Learning Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Simpler Learning Goal</td>
<td>Simpler Learning Goal</td>
<td>Simpler Learning Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning with Support</td>
<td>Learning with Support</td>
<td>Learning with Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student assessment and perception data were collected and reviewed over the course of a semester in both Civics and Science classrooms. Students were enrolled in 7th grade Advanced/Honors classes, with prior achievement scores at or above proficiency in reading. Formative and summative data were reviewed and analyzed for patterns. In addition, students participated in a perception survey to gather feedback about their experiences.

Results

Data from the perception survey suggest that most students are still internalizing how the learning scales are intended to be used. Assessment data reinforced this finding as there was limited evidence of profound academic improvement after a semester. Nonetheless, the survey data revealed that 89% of students believed the proficiency scales were helpful. Similarly, 83% of students responded that the proficiency scales helped to motivate them.

The lack of strong evidence related to academic improvement is somewhat expected in the early phases of implementation. As students become more familiar with this instructional design, the expectation would be that aggregate levels of mastery for content and literacy standards would increase while the proportion of students requiring remediation would decrease. The flexibility of this instructional design is its most unique feature, and through its use, students and teachers gain insight about individual learning.

Discussion

Designing a diverse classroom is a careful process and must have a foundation in an assortment of strategies and techniques. The first day is much the same for all students. Every student faces similar circumstances on the first day, entering a new grade, meeting a new teacher, and sometimes attending a new school to learn new things. But often that is where the similarities end. Once the learning begins, only students who come with a special set of tools and those that speak the language of school will be successful in its culture (Burke, 2004).
### Table 3. Complete Learning Scale Civics

**SS.7.C.1.1 Recognize how Enlightenment thinkers influenced the Founding Fathers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Content Description</th>
<th>Reading Focus LAFS.6-8.R.2</th>
<th>Writing Focus LAFS.6-8.W.9</th>
<th>Acceptable Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *7-8  | Extend your thinking on the topic.  
- Apply concepts  
- Synthesize  
- Create  
- Analyze  
- Design | Determine **two or more central ideas** in a text and analyze their development of the course of the text or lesson. | Draw **evidence** from informational texts to **support analysis**, reflection, and research. | 1. Current event  
2. Screencast Tutorial  
3. Independent study  
4. Poem  
5. Children’s book |
| *5-6  | Content mastery  
**Develop a logical argument** to support your analysis of a quote from a Founding Father. | - Identify 2 or more big ideas  
- Show relationship between big ideas  
- Support analysis of text | - Formal style  
- Claim  
- Quote as a primary source  
- Accurate evidence  
- Concluding statement | After analyzing a quote from a Founding Father, decide which Enlightenment idea & Thinker **most influenced that Founding Father** and communicate the results in a PSA. |
| 3-4   | Summarize information about an assigned Enlightenment thinker and answer questions about them during an interview with a partner. | - Identify key ideas & details | - Summarizing text | Complete "**Interview with an old guy.**”  
Fill in notes matrix. |
| 1-2   | **Draw** simple pictures and **match** events from John Locke’s story to complete a comic strip. | - Identify key words | - Identify a topic  
- Form claim  
- Identify evidence | Complete a comic strip of John Locke’s life using Comic Creator by "Read, Write, Think,” Bitstrips or hand draw one. |
The need to quickly acculturate and learn how to learn is the responsibility of both teachers and students. The school culture helps students to identify with the mindset that, “everyone comes to school as an intentional learner” (Lampert, 2001, p. 265).

Unfortunately, not all students are intentional learners. As educators, the diverse backgrounds and motivations of students must be considered and should not hinder student success.

Reflecting on the very definition of the word education, which comes from the Latin term “educare,” meaning to draw out that which is within, our experience reinforces that teachers must be the leaders that recognize strengths in every child. They must also equip students to use their unique skills and talents and develop a sense of self through differentiated learning that is intentional for each individual (Burke, 2013). A teacher’s role in the classroom is to offer an instructional design that will cultivate the desire to learn and contribute to student success.

Students don’t always know what traits they possess that will make them productive learners. By introducing tiered learning scales in combination with standards-based instruction, teachers can unlock individual motivations and facilitate student learning through differentiation. This form of teaching and learning, by design, helps both students and teachers become more insightful. The combination of differentiation, formative assessments, learning progressions, and clear goals that integrate content and literacy standards leads to greater clarity about expectations and enhanced motivation to succeed. Students eventually show teachers which design works best for them through the process while the diversity in the room fosters an environment where strengths can be used to overcome weaknesses.

Both the school and the classroom acknowledge and celebrate diversity. Students move from a fixed mindset, thinking that they are defined by the tools they arrive with and the grades they receive, to a growth mindset (Glenn, 2010). The growth mindset reminds students that their success is eminent and will happen once they learn to use available resources and supports to move their learning forward. As seen from the results, students feel challenged, motivated to learn, and are able to work at their own pace to achieve mastery.

Conclusion

Ultimately, proficiency scales force the teacher to develop a better understanding of content and literacy standards during the planning process. The proficiency scale template clearly communicates the standards and expectations to the students, while the model supports gradual release and differentiated timing and supports needed for student mastery. Students feel more successful, motivated, and challenged in the differentiated classroom, while the teacher gains valuable instructional time to meet the needs of a diverse student population. This model allows teacher and student to realize academic goals and use diversity as a tool in student success.

References


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The Morgridge International Reading Center is a dynamic complex for the free exchange of ideas and information to improve transdisciplinary literacy acquisition and instruction. Our main goal is to advance transdisciplinary literacy through communication, collaboration, learning, and research.
PROMISING LITERACY PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH INTERRUPTED FORMAL EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING COMPETENCE WITH ACADEMIC LANGUAGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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David B. Ross  
*Nova Southeastern University*

Abstract: Rapidly growing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students in U.S. schools and increased accountability measures in the nation’s education have drawn the attention of educational practitioners and researchers to determining effective instructional models and practices designed to meet academic needs of these students. English language learners (ELLs) with weak educational backgrounds and limited literacy in native languages, or Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), find themselves at a disadvantage compared to not only their English speaking peers but other ELL subgroups as in addition to developing English language proficiency while simultaneously studying the required grade-level disciplines, ELLs who are also SIFEs are challenged to perform triple the work of bridging the gaps in knowledge and literacy they failed to learn in their home countries. This article addresses the unique challenges the ELL SIFE students face as they advance their academic careers through the nation’s system of education, particularly at the high school level. The article gives recommendations on promising educational practices, including innovating approaches and strategies to support and supplant effective literacy instruction for these students.

Rapidly growing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students in U.S. schools and increased accountability measures in education have drawn the attention of educational practitioners and researchers to determining effective instructional models and practices designed to meet academic needs of these students. English language learners (ELLs) currently comprise 9% of the total Pre-K-12 population nationwide (NCELA, 2015a); and it is projected that by 2050, just Hispanics will comprise 30% of the nation’s total school population (Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011). ELLs represent an extremely heterogeneous population of students due to the differences in cultural, ethnic, linguistic and educational backgrounds, socio-economic status, and immigration experiences. One similarity ELLs seem to share is their academic underachievement when they do not receive appropriate and high quality academic instruction. Cucchiara (2015) attributed ELLs’ lack of academic progress to educators’ failure to (a) “recognize the role played by language itself in literacy,” and (b) explicitly teach and amply expose students to the “grammatical structures and devices” (p. 3) of disciplinary discourse patterns of academic English; ELLs were given easy texts, and never had a chance to work with complex texts.

Proficiency with academic language register across disciplinary domains is paramount for becoming a literate individual in the 21st century (Silliman & Wilkinson, 2014). The Common Core Standards and the New Generation State Standards (further referred to as the Standards) promote this register as a tool that all students must develop to master college and career readiness standards (American College Testing, 2011; College Board, 2012). In order to prepare ELLs to participate in the discussions implied by the Standards, all features of academic language register must be explicitly taught and practiced in the classroom across all content areas. An important change in ELL instruction must occur from traditional “remedial in nature” (Cucchiara, 2015, p. 1) that contributed to academic underperformance to instruction that “accelerates learning, language and literacy” (p. 1).
Academic and social needs of ELLs differ in significant ways. Although all ELLs face multiple challenges, particular attention must be paid to those students who recently arrived to the United States as immigrants or refugees from countries where poverty, civil unrest, and natural disasters affected their opportunities for schooling as they entered American high schools based on their age. In addition, these ELLs have a barrier to learning because their parents also lack the skills of learning based on language issues and difficulties communicating between one another (McClure, 2011). Also referred to as ELL Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), this ELL population is the most susceptible among ELLs for academic failure due to their rudimentary or no native language literacy, and significant gaps in grade level disciplinary knowledge. The number of ELL SIFE in American schools has increased as the global number of children and adolescents not enrolled in school is on the rise. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UNESCO, 2015), in 2013, 124 million children between ages 6 and 15 have either never started school or have dropped out compared to 122 million in 2011. McClure (2011) stated that “immigrant children attending high-LEP, segregated, and high-poverty schools stand to become undereducated in America” (p. 4).

Upon their enrollment in the U.S. high schools, ELL SIFE have much more to learn than just English; yet they are held to the same standards and are expected to graduate within the same amount of time as other students. Academic and social needs and challenges ELL SIFE face differ from those of ELLs. Oral language and literacy skills in the native language and in English, and previous schooling experiences in native countries are a strong predictor of ELLs’ academic success. Without the benefits of either, it is not surprising that ELL SIFE demonstrated the slowest rate of English and literacy development, particularly in the first couple years of high school, compared to their literate and partially or fully schooled in home language ELL peers (Short & Boyson, 2012). It is important for educators to recognize the variability among ELLs’ challenges and needs to ensure that: (a) timely and appropriate pedagogical adjustments are being made to meet their academic needs, and high-quality instruction is provided to maximize their learning; and (b) the ELL SIFE’s slow academic progress that naturally occurs at the beginning stages of schooling, was not misinterpreted for a learning disability and led to their misplacement in special education.

ELL SIFE Challenges

ELL SIFE’s weak educational backgrounds and limited literacy in native languages place them at a disadvantage compared to not only their English speaking peers but other ELLs as in addition to developing English language proficiency while simultaneously studying the required grade-level disciplines, the ELL SIFE are challenged to perform triple the work of bridging the gaps in knowledge and literacy they failed to learn in their home countries. This additional barrier of acquiring English literacy without the benefit of linguistic transfer, and bridging educational gaps in their knowledge prior to being able to access information in high school level texts poses immediate threat to ELL SIFE academic success.

The above-mentioned challenges are exacerbated at the high school level because of the limited time students have to graduate. “Developing a full English proficiency takes at least a decade of schooling – if not longer” (Berman, as cited in Silliman & Wilkinson, 2014, p. 117); it is not surprising that many ELL SIFE get discouraged and drop out of school, while the majority of those committed to persist age out of school by reaching the age of 21 prior to being able to meet high school graduation requirements.

To exacerbate the problem, newly arrived high school ELL SIFE enroll at an age beyond
which literacy instruction is usually provided to students, and many teachers are not prepared to incorporate basic literacy components, such as alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency while maintaining the rigor of the grade-level instruction (Short & Boyson, 2012; Zwiers, 2008). In addition to the aforementioned challenges, ELL SIFE face psycho-social issues while trying to adjust and acculturate to the new country and school system resulting in the forecast for academic success of this student population without additional supports beyond those offered to other ELLs is far from being favorable.

**ELL SIFE Impact on High Schools**

As the nation strives to provide equal educational opportunities to all students, build capacity to meet the Standards, and hold educators accountable for student learning outcomes, teachers and school leaders of high schools with high numbers of ELL SIFE populations place their jobs on the line as they struggle to meet the needs of these students within the limited school budgets. To exemplify the challenges some American high schools with high numbers of ELL SIFE face, the researchers will share their experiences of working at a public Title I high school located in the southern community of a northern Florida county the area that in the last 4 years evidenced an increase in refugee immigrants from Guatemala. The selected urban high school in this article serving approximately 1,687 students in Grades 9-12 has experienced a significant increase in ELL SIFE population from 16% or 34 students of the total ELL population in 2011 to almost 60% or 104 students in 2015. With the limited resources, the selected high school faced an analogous problem of providing appropriate and high quality education for ELL SIFE. Specifically, research suggests low teacher-student ratio, appropriate instructional resources, timely and on-going teacher training, and extended instructional time are beneficial for ELL SIFE (Ziemke, 2014) remain the unattainable commodities with the limitations of the Title I high school budget.

In an effort to address ELL SIFE academic needs several programs were implemented, including an extended-day program with the in-class instructional support in core academic disciplines, the literacy development I-Pad program I-Lit, and after-school tutoring in academic subjects and vocational training component. The extended-day program was discontinued after a year of implementation as ELL SIFE inability to stay after school due to extenuating life situations: many had jobs to support their families, or had to babysit their younger siblings to enable parents’ employment. The instructional support in the core disciplines was also discontinued due to limited budget. The literacy development program I-Lit is used with ELLs in Intensive Reading Classes. The success of these programs on ELL SIFE’s achievement is difficult to measure due to the expected slow rate of academic progress of these students, particularly at the first year of their instruction; however, positive feedback about the programs from students, parents, and educators was received.

ELL SIFE dropout rate of approximately 90% and 0% graduating from high school with a regular diploma in 2015 signify that the problem of effectively educating this population persists at the selected high school. It is imperative that educators, administrators, and policy-makers have a clear understanding of the challenges and needs of this population, have realistic expectations for the ELL SIFE academic progress, and most importantly, provide support necessary to appropriately educate these students in terms of suitable instructional resources, personnel development, targeted interventions, and curricular and programmatic options.

This article aims to focus attention of educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers on the challenges and needs of ELL SIFE population to communicate promising academic interventions aimed at helping this underprivileged student subgroup...
function successfully in the United States education system and beyond.

In their study examining the challenges recently arrived immigrant ELLs face at the secondary school level, Short and Boyson (2012) underscored the importance of recognizing the differences in academic needs of different types of ELLs to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students. Newly arrived adolescent ELLs with gaps in formal schooling are at risk in high schools across America (Short & Boyson, 2012). In their national study, Short and Boyson conducted a targeted nationwide search for programs and sites that offer supports for newly arrived ELLs and examined 63 programs in which one third of enrolled ELLs were identified as ELL SIFE students. The study revealed that successful educational programs were aware of the unique needs of ELL SIFE students and provided targeted academic interventions aimed at meeting the needs of this susceptible to academic failure ELL subgroup.

Although the lack of ELL student performance has been the hot topic on the agenda of educational researchers and practitioners for the last couple decades, we do not have national statistics on graduation rates and academic performance of the ELL SIFE subgroup thus limiting research-based studies that aim to increase this student subgroup’s academic achievement. The recent national data shows the lack of ELLs’ academic progress, and the persisting achievement gap between ELLs and their native English-speaking counterparts despite the abundance of evidence-validated research aimed at improving ELL achievement. Between 2005 and 2014, the percentage of Grade 8 ELLs scoring below basic level in reading decreased by only 1% while the percentage of students scoring proficient decreased by one point (USDOE, NCES, 2014). The lack of ELL academic progress in the last decade is particularly significant at the high school level. The achievement gap in reading scores between ELLs and non-ELLs widened by grade from 39 points in Grade 4, to 45 points in Grade 8, and to 53 points in Grade 12 (NCELA, 2015a). As passing of the standardized reading assessment is part of many graduation requirements, the ELL graduation rate was negatively impacted. Specifically, in 2011-2012, only 59% of newly arrived ELLs received a regular high school diploma within four years of starting ninth grade for the first time (NCELA, 2015b). It is predicted that if a student speaks English with difficulty, his or her chances to graduate are reduced by 82% (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

Although some school districts across the nation are aware of the challenges the ELL SIFE face and provide some sort of interventions to meet the needs of this student subgroup, many schools fail to provide supports to their most disadvantaged ELL subgroup beyond those offered for ELLs, such as sheltered instruction or bilingual education. Meeting the needs of all students through the rigor of Common Core standards and disciplinary academic language development to achieve educational equity and upward social mobility of underprivileged populations is a paramount priority in education.

**Promising Educational Practices for ELL SIFE Students**

_So** Applying the synergy of approaches. _With the advent of the more rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and New Generation State Standards (NGSS) in education, the need for a sound, comprehensive and research-based pedagogy for all ELL subgroups has increased prompting administrators and teachers to look at ways ELLs might progress faster toward proficiency on the national and state assessments. The standards call for students to develop a wide range of strategies to be able to interpret multimedia sources, engage in meaningful discussion with the text, utilize a variety of genres and registers for different purposes and in a variety of contexts, critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize information to transform or create new texts (Ehren, Lenz, &
Deshler, 2014; Fang, 2014). The major shifts in education transformed the ways teachers teach and students learn. Knowing one approach that dictates a particular set of practices is no longer sufficient for the 21st century learning to take place. Educators must be well-versed in a variety of approaches, their strengths, limitations, and complementarities to be able to employ the synergy of approaches, including linguistic, socio-cultural, critical, and cognitive, to maximize the development of the linguistic capacities and disciplinary literacies of all students (Fang, 2014; Stone & Learned, 2014). In the last decade, cognitive and socio-cultural approaches dominated the educational arenas in the country. Rooted in the philosophy of cognitive and socio-cultural approaches, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model has been extensively with various grade levels nationwide. The effectiveness of this model stems from a set of practices that make instruction more comprehensible and texts more accessible for ELLs. Although the SIOP model is a very powerful approach to teaching ELLs in content area classes, it is only effective with ELL students who achieved at least intermediate level of English language development. The model is designed to follow an initial second language acquisition program, such as a bilingual education program, or an English immersion program that develop ELLs from non-English speaker to intermediate English speaker (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2014). If used or misused with non-English speakers or beginner level speakers, the SIOP model disadvantages the ELLs as it becomes a submersion approach, which is truly a “sink or swim approach . . . often observed as the default methodology in working with English language learners . . . [as] a reflection of a school’s inability to respond to the[ir] needs ” (Temple et al., 2014, p. 479).

Recommendations for ELL SIFE students. The following promising programmatic offerings must be considered for newly arrive ELL SIFE students: a bilingual education program, an English immersion program, or native language instruction program. These programs provide ample native language support indispensable for ELL SIFE students at the beginning stages of their academic careers in the United States. Since many ELL SIFE students are not able to read texts even in their mother tongues, they rely heavily on auditory means of the only language they understand, which is their native spoken language. The SIOP model draws heavily from the strengths of cognitive and socio-cultural approaches; however, the benefits of linguistic approach within the model were not fully understood and utilized by educators (Ehren, Lenz, & Deshler, 2014).

Linguistic approach: Focus on language development across disciplines. Although English Language development standards have been the focus of many instructional models designed for ELLs, their significance for content learning was often overlooked by educators. Ehren, Lenz, and Deshler (2014) asserted that “the relationship of language learning and specific domain learning was not fully understood by educators” (p. 629) resulting in teaching disciplinary content without addressing the language. Placing academic language at the forefront of college and career readiness, the Common Core and the new state standards require mastery of disciplinary literacy and effective use of academic language register within each content area. Hakuta, Santos, and Fang (2013, p. 451) maintained that “Language and content are inseparable . . . [and] Learning the language of each academic discipline is essential to learning disciplinary content.” With greater content sophistication, the role language plays in academic learning escalates exponentially; therefore, teachers must address language correlates as they teach skills, strategies, subject matter, and higher-order thinking, particularly with ELLs. “English language proficiency and disciplinary knowledge can be developed simultaneously in the context of content instruction” (Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013, p. 451).
Ehren, Lenz, and Deshler (2014) emphasized the importance of enhanced focus on language embedded into discipline-specific content instruction through: “(a) teacher awareness of the literacy demands of their texts; (b) scaffolding student comprehension of cognitively demanding texts with before, during, and after reading activities; (c) teacher modeling of processing of discipline-specific texts; and (d) classroom discussions on how to make meaning of texts” (p. 627). Educators must assume responsibility for explicitly teaching the language of their content areas to improve all students’ disciplinary literacy (Ehren, Lenz, & Deshler, 2014; Fang, 2014; Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014; Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013; Short & Boyson, 2012; Silliman & Wilkinson, 2014). While knowledge of the subject matter is a necessary prerequisite to good teaching, being an expert in their discipline is not enough. Teachers must have the skills to make the content knowledge comprehensible for the students by discussing the structures and the meanings of the disciplinary texts to increase student engagement and enhance student learning (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Lukin, 2008).

**Functional Language Analysis**

To assist ELL SIFE students in meeting the challenge of the Common Core and state standards, to help them understand how language works, and to unpack multiple layers of meaning coded in complex disciplinary texts, educators need to employ new strategies to equip students with new ways of making meaning and using language to participate in disciplinary oral and written discourses in the classroom. In the past decade, educators employed reading approaches that emphasize comprehension strategies, such as visualizing, summarizing, asking questions, making inferences and predictions. These strategies are beneficial only if students are capable of breaking the code or unpacking the dense, complex and multilayered discourses of academic disciplines (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Lukin, 2008). Rooted in systemic functional linguistics, a “framework that demonstrates how meaning is constructed in particular language choices” (p. 10), Functional Language Analysis (FLA) equips students with the tools necessary to deconstruct unfamiliar discourse patterns sentence-by-sentence, and discuss how meaning is made through linguistic choices. The FLA skills enable students to use other reading strategies thus allowing them to engage with the texts at deeper levels (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Lukin, 2008). Fang, Sheppegrell, and Moore (2014) posited that close reading and FLA allow students to “slow down the reading and focus attention to details … process the dense information … and enable more participation in the discussion by readers who otherwise struggle to make meaning from texts” (p. 305). FLA strategies are used to unpack three levels of meaning: (a) experiential, or content area knowledge or knowledge about the world; (b) textual, or organizational structure of the text to make it coherent; and (c) interpersonal meaning, or authors’ judgments and perspectives. Close reading and FLA help students learn how language is used to “present information, structure the text, and embed values in the core curriculum subjects” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014, p. 305).

**FLA code-breaking/unpacking procedures.**

Fang (2012, p. 107) asserted that 21st century adolescent literacy demands students to become “code breakers … meaning makers … text users … and text critics. The following three-step FLA procedures allows student to develop these literacy skills (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014, p. 303):

1. Unpack content or experiential meaning of the text. Questions to ask about the text: “Who does what to whom, how when and where? What is the text about?” To address the leading questions, the following analysis strategies must be used: (a) find and mark nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns; (b) links and discuss pronouns to appropriate nouns; (c) identify and analyze each clause; and
(d) explain the relationships between parts of speech, clauses and other language features to understand the content in the text.

2. Unpack textual meaning, or text organization. Questions to ask about the text: “How does the text weave meanings into a coherent message? How is the text organized?” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014, p. 303). To address the leading questions, the following analysis strategies must be employed: (a) “analyze what begins each clause; (b) how clauses are combined; and (c) how cohesion is created” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014, p. 303).

3. Unpack interpersonal meaning or author’s perspective. Questions to ask about the text: “How does the author infuse judgments and viewpoints? What is the author’s perspective?” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Moore, 2014, p. 303). To address the leading questions, the following analysis strategies must be employed: (a) analyze word choices, syntax, tone, attitudes; (b) evaluate author’s stance on the issue, and use textual evidence to support your responses.

Additional strategies to supplement FLA and close reading. Educators must differentiate and individualize instruction by adding within the context of close reading and functional analysis procedures. ELL SIFE students may need the development of alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, morphological awareness, oral language development, critical thinking skills development. To supplement effective literacy instruction, teachers must provide explicit and direct instruction of those aforementioned word-level skills in addition to text-level skills. Depending on the needs of the students, teachers may incorporate reading activities for emerging and beginning readers (i.e., reading aloud, guided reading, shared reading), word study activities (i.e., working with nouns to teach alphabet, word sorting, word hunts, word wall activities, and analytic phonics lesson), vocabulary activities (i.e., semantic web, semantic feature analysis), fluency activities (i.e., repeated reading, paired reading), comprehension activities (i.e., instructional conversations, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), reciprocal reading, What? So what? Now what?).

Conclusion

The new CCSS and the NGSS raised the bar for learning for all students by redefining what it means to be an educated person in the 21st century world. To be college and career ready, students must develop academic register proficiency in oral and written English across disciplinary domains. The standards require students to “develop increased language capacities in combination with greater content sophistication, necessitating a high level of discourse” (Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013, p. 451) in classrooms across all disciplinary domains. Adolescent English language learners with gaps in formal schooling are among the most vulnerable student subgroups at risk of academic failure. To help students meaningfully engage with the more rigorous grade-level disciplinary content, and meet the increasing language demands of the Standards, educators must employ innovative strategies and approaches. Promising pedagogy on ELL SIFE academic literacy development in all disciplinary domains includes functional language analysis, and close reading strategies. Functional language analysis skills are a valuable tool for unpacking multiple levels of meaning coded in the densely packed complex disciplinary texts. This instructional strategy also allows students to learn how language is used for a variety of purposes through different textual structures of academic registers. Simultaneously, teachers must use a synergy of additional evidence-based literacy practices and approaches to individualize instruction according to ELL SIFE students’ wide range of needs, curricular goals, and particular objectives at hand. It is important, however, that functional language analysis precedes other reading comprehension strategies to maximize their effectiveness and increase student engagement and motivation.
References


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Ok, this edition is light on the tech (it is still there though) and heavier on building. If you are not familiar with the Little Free Library organization (https://littlefreelibrary.org/), I would like to introduce you. If you are familiar then I’d really like you to join.

The concept behind the Little Free Libraries is to provide books to your local community and thereby encourage reading. The Little Free Library movement started in 2009 with one person sharing books with his neighbors. Today, there are about 40,000 Little Free Library book exchanges around the world bringing books to their local curbside. The idea is to provide and accept books at no cost to the reader, no time limits or cards needed. So think of it as what we have been doing in the classroom, but now also in the community.

I’ve had my own Little Free Library for over the past three years, and it has a regular turnover of books, and come every school holiday there will be an increase of school age children coming to see what is currently available (I’ve got requests now for horse books and more Goosebumps), but it isn’t children alone stopping by. Families out walking or bike riding, older people walking their dog, and just about anyone from my community who comes by, looks in my library to see if there is something that they want or they might drop off some books for others.

The difference between this and my school or public library is that there is no return date. If you really like the book, then it is yours to keep. Ideally they should give back a book for each that they take, but there aren’t any real rules or tracking. I usually see what is there and what has been taken, and then I’ll put out more of the books that have gone out, and make sure...
that there isn’t an overload of some kind of book that just came in, like the one time when I went out and found 20 new romance novels by Debbie Macomber or the other time it seemed like someone dropped off a whole Dan Brown collection. If the donations coming in don’t match the outgoing demand, or when I run low on a genre or reading level, I go to my regional public library book sale, yard sales, or local thrift store and stock up on those books.

So, if you want to see some of these libraries, you can go to the world map of Little Free Libraries (https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/). There you can search by what is near you, by ZIP code, or state, or if you are looking for a special library by the person’s name. So you if you are looking for a few books to add to your classroom collection, you might consider visiting one of these to pick up a few.

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On the other hand, you, or an organization you work with (such as scouting, or your school) could put up your own free library and list it so that others could come by for books to keep or share. There are some that are in schools, but remember that that would limit the access to only students and other approved persons, but if you are looking to get more books into your student’s hands that could be one way to go. The other way would be to place it in your yard, or off the “school grounds” in a public accessible location as a service learning project to share the reading with your community. People have built their own library containers or adapted other containers, such as old newspaper vending machines. I found one that was an adapted bench in a school outside the principal’s office. If you happen to have the wood and tools and want to build your own, or as a group project, there are free plans and instructions available online (https://littlefreelibrary.org/build/) that will take you through the building process. For it to be an official Little Free library you will need to pay the one time registration fee of $45, and then you get a charter sign engraved with a unique charter number and you can have your library listed on the world map.
If you do build your own, make sure to give it at least a couple of coats of paint, that the door is large enough for the books you will use, and don’t skimp on caulking all the joints. Mine hasn’t leaked yet.

*Happy reading with technology.*
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