On the Cover:
Steve Long, designer of this month’s cover, is a Marketing & Training Director for the division of Campus Business Services at the University of South Florida as well as the Director of Printing & Graphic Design Services for the university. He has been designing publications since 1985. He has been a fan of “The Wizard of Oz” for as long as he can remember.

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Hello Friends!

We are well into the fall semester of a new school year. I love the beginning of a new school year. The freshman all show up so eager to for new beginnings. (Do they look younger and younger to you, too?) There is always an influx of new graduate students, teachers who have chosen to broaden their horizons by taking graduate programs. This time of year always seems to me as a good time for new commitments.

We have several commitments for OTER that are approaching quickly. The 2011 IRA Annual Convention will be held in Orlando May 8-11, 2011. The OTER program is Wednesday May 11, 2011, from 10 to 12 in the morning in the West Building W307a. I hope you can all plan to attend. We just received official notice our OTER program has been accepted and based on presentation descriptions, we are in for a wonderful treat!

Secondly, the new 2010 Standards for IRA, Standards for Reading Professionals-Revised 2010 and the companion publication, Preparing Reading Professionals, has been published. For those of you who write your reading program reports for IRA/NCATE and for those of you who may review programs, this is wonderful news. The new publications on standards are available on-line on the IRA website or are available in hard copy through the IRA bookstore. Rita Bean, Chair of the Standards Committee, and her committee did a wonderful job revising our standards and deserve to be commended. I hope everyone will take the opportunity to look over the new standards. There is a short clip (less than ten minutes) by Rita Bean discussing the new standards and their alignment to the common core standards and NCATE’s four principles at http://www.reading.org/Resources/Radio.aspx if you want to learn more. Also, there will be training for those of us who write program reports and for those of us who review programs through the IRA/NCATE Institute at IRA on May 8, 2011.

If you are like me, your year is off to a busy start with promises to get even busier. I encourage you to stay involved in reading education with all its changes, and plan on attending IRA and OTER in Orlando this May for some needed revitalization, knowledge, and continuing motivation.

Sincerely,

Kathleen J. Sanders
OTER President, 2010-2011
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For Submission Guidelines see page 55.

The JRE is seeking qualified applicants for the manuscript Review Board. Please send your application to Lisa Adkins at lisaadkins@usf.edu. Applicants should include their demographic information, publications, and experience as a reviewer. Janet Richards, Senior Editor; Sherry Kragler, Co-Editor, JRE
Advocating for Literacy in a Climate of Political Division

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Introduction

I have chosen the title, Advocating for Literacy in a Climate of Political Division, for my article because I believe that too many literacy teachers, literacy coaches, and literacy teacher educators are sliding slowly but ever so surely into a cycle of cynicism. We need to remember each day why we chose this profession and draw from that wellspring the hope that will compel us to useful action in making positive changes in our world.

Frederick Buechner (1993) offers a generous and humane image of vocation as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Parker Palmer (1998) elaborates on this definition of vocation stating that, "If a work is mine to do, it will make me glad over the long haul, despite the difficult days… If a work does not gladden me in these ways, I need to consider laying it down. When I devote myself to something that does not flow from my identity, that is not integral to my nature, I am most likely deepening the world's hunger rather than helping to alleviate it."

Teaching literacy involves much more than instructing a finite set of topics, themes, skills, concepts, and strategies such as the now indelible federal five – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is much more than testing, grades, management, explicit instruction or even a good lesson plan. It extends beyond simplistic or even complex applications of modern technology. The act of teaching literacy resists a simplistic reduction to the sum of its parts. High quality literacy instruction is the work of a professional lifetime. It is ultimately a complex human interaction (or transaction) between the hearts and the heads of teachers, students, and authors.

The pendulum of literacy instructional practice has swung back and forth between pedagogical and philosophical extremes for more than 200 years in U.S. reading history (Smith, 2002). For many years, debates about literacy policy and practice were primarily confined to persons within the educational establishment. But as a part of the Ronald Reagan administration's new U.S. Department of Education in the 1980's, Secretary Terrell Bell's blue ribbon panel issued a report on the state of education in the U.S., entitled, A Nation at Risk (1983). In this report, the state of public education was decried as a threat to national security. With the publication of this report, public suspicions, fed by a hungry press possessed of a need for sensationalism, began to run high about the trustworthiness of the educational establishment to police its own ranks and make changes based on data rather than on the winds of political change and fashionable but as-yet-untied and untested theories. In the mid-1980s a landmark report entitled, Becoming a Nation of Readers, was issued to stem the rising tide of public doubts about the quality and quantity of knowledge in relation to effective reading instruction.

But again by the mid-1990s, President William Jefferson Clinton began an effort to make operational the plans of the meetings of the National Governor's Conventions as embodied in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). President Clinton strongly supported and urged not only increased professional development in literacy education, but also nationwide testing in reading and mathematics as evidence necessary to satisfy the increasing demands upon education for public accountability. Simultaneously from within the congressionally funded testing service, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1994 data were released in 1995 showing a measurable and statistically significant decline in fourth grade reading scores across the nation. And, when these data were reported by the press, the culprit had been clearly identified, a decade-long curricular flirtation with whole language philosophy and a rejection of the reading research evidence compiled in previous decades.

The press was quick to seize upon these NAEP data as well as this particularized explanation for the downward trend in national literacy scores. A disgruntled public bolstered by a substantial contingent of equally discontented school educators and administrators con-tacted local, state, and national policy-makers to complain about the interminable debates about how to teach children to read and write within the literacy community. Although acclaimed by some members within the literacy community as helpful dialog, many individuals internal and external to the literacy community wearied of the battle and sought common ground, even refuge from the often bombastic accusations and counter accusations, under the banner of “balanced reading instruction.” But this too, soon became the target of unrelenting criticism. Balanced reading instruction was not well defined and was soon under attack because of the “fuzziness” of who’s balancing what, how? In the meantime children at-risk for literacy problems, especially those students in poverty, were reportedly slipping through the cracks. As a consequence, politicians resolved that the fate
of literacy instruction had become entirely too important to the fate and future of a nation to be left to the internal debates of educators and the educational system. Private foundations and public government agencies arrayed data in the mid-to-late 1990s showing that failure to learn to read on grade level at an early age, often by third-grade or age nine, was clearly correlated with nearly every undesirable social, political, and economic malady conceivable (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 1998).

Add to this unfolding national drama in the mid-1990s another bitter internal battle among literacy researchers known as the research paradigm wars (Kamil, 1995). Proponents of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms fought bitterly over the philosophical and practical differences between these presumably diametrically opposed and irreconcilable approaches to conceptualizing and conducting literacy research. From the perspective of an external on-looking reader who read the headlines of nationally distributed and regarded books, newspapers, and magazines, one was almost compelled to conclude that literacy researchers and educators not only didn’t agree upon much of anything but also did not know how to teach children to read.

The literacy research paradigm war, which was embedded in the larger educational research paradigm war, was exacerbated in the mid- to late 1990s by a research focus on teacher attitudes and beliefs about literacy instruction rather than focusing on teachers’ knowledge and skill to teach literacy effectively. A simultaneous focus on student motivation rather than literacy achievement was also prominent in reading research at a time in history when literacy achievement, particularly among at-risk populations seemed to be slipping. As a result, the next federally funded research center, at the University of Michigan, reflected a clear focus on reading achievement – The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) rather than upon reading motivation. Taken together these historic elements combined in a way and at a point in time allowing the news media and press to portray the literacy house as a house divided and in total disarray.

As a consequence, many literacy researchers and literacy research publications were characterized by the press, politicians, and other opportunistic educators as unscientific and focused on tertiary issues unrelated to the central literacy concerns of the American public - a concern that many children were not achieving reading proficiency. By the late 1990s, public and political opinions had arrived at a point where literacy instruction was thought to be in need of reform by the public, the press and policy makers alike. When this time came, it was clear that future decisions about how literacy would be taught and which type of research paradigm would be valued to guide the literacy instruction would not be left to what was perceived externally as a contentious professional literacy community. Reading reform as policy was initially to take the shape of The Reading Excellence Act.

The Reading Excellence Act (1998) national legislation was funded and approved under President William Clinton’s administration. It contained federal funding specifically targeted to underachieving and poverty schools where lagging reading achievement needed immediate attention. And within the halls of the U.S Congress the value and ability of the two literacy research paradigms to answer questions about literacy instruction of public interest had also been decided as well. The research to be used to “reform” literacy education was to meet the demanding bar of “scientific” standards like those accepted within other highly regarded professional fields such as engineering, business, nursing, and medicine.

The clear evidence of the outcome of this political process would be revealed later in the reports of Preventing Reading Failure in Young Children (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998) and The National Reading Panel (2000). It was now clear that politicians and the public would no longer allow something as socially, politically, and economically powerful as literacy to be the sole property of what the press derisively called the “educationists.” To make matters worse, as the literacy profession entered a new millennium, the U.S. government’s chief testing agency, NAEP, issued its 2000 Reading Report Card showing a downward trend in literacy scores generally and a growing achievement gap between the top and bottom readers in the U.S. Even more disturbingly the increasing achievement gap found among specific ethnic groups in comparison with Caucasian children was highlighted. Having published these trends, government watchdogs began examining the relationship between federal funding for reading and the NAEP scores over several decades. The comparison showed that while investments had quadrupled in adjusted inflated dollars, reading scores had remained essentially flat.

By the time that the new Bush administration came along in 2000, literacy reform policy was already well-ensconced in bi-partisan efforts within the U.S. Congress. With the joint efforts of Senator Edward Kennedy and George W. Bush to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 into the sweeping legislative reform of public education law known as No Child Left Behind (2002), the scientific reading research agenda and the assurance that early reading instruction would include attention to early, systematic, explicit phonics instruction was made law. It is important to note here that the No Child Left Behind legislation was a strongly supported bi-partisan effort. It passed with one of the largest bi-partisan votes on record since its inception in 1964 (Senate - 87 Yeas/10 Nay’s/ 3 Non-voting; House – 381 Yeas/ 41 Nay’s/ 3 Non-voting). Even among IRA members there were and are mixed views about the values and implementation of NCLB with as many IRA members expressing strongly agree or agree responses as strongly disagree or disagree responses to a recent IRA survey. This significant new federal intervention into state and local education provided federal funds to states for Reading First grants along with a long menu of unfunded mandates to cement the educational reforms begun in the mid-to-late 1980s.

In my own state of Utah, which by the way is a no-contest Republican state, the Utah Governor and State Legislature have been soundly resisting the mandates of NCLB. Although these Utah policy-makers declare that state’s rights are violated by the federal intrusion of NCLB into state-level education, a closer look may reveal potential avoidance of external scrutiny relative to Utah’s “flexible” accountability system (UPASS) which provides no carrots.
or consequences for schools that fail to disaggregate data and report minority subgroup performance. So, in some respects NCLB was a welcome addition to deal affirmatively with failure to address these children's hidden needs, to quell the use of poorly qualified rural teachers who didn't have preparation in the areas in which they were to teach, and a perennially under funded state education system with among the lowest teacher pay, per student expenditure, and highest classroom sizes in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. NCLB was and is truly a two-edged sword. Few there be who can condemn its intentions and purposes to leave no child behind as foul or misguided, on the other hand, few there can be who do not recognize it's fundamentally unrealistic timetable and expectations, unfunded mandates, and punitive consequences.

Having ignored the unrelenting criticisms of the press, the mounting public outcry, the discontent of teachers and administrators with constantly changing information about how to effectively teach youngsters to read and write, and the gradual but steady gaze of politicians, the world of literacy education is now and has been for several years in a state of "hostile" take over. We find ourselves as a professional community, in a sense, in a deep political and policy abyss.

As a literacy profession, we must become quick studies in the art of compromising and political engagement. For example, let us resist some of the unrealistic mandates of NCLB by joining forces with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Rather than trashing the entire NCLB law, we need to seriously examine its weaknesses and offer up measured responses in support to those recommended in a recent task force report of the NCSL that has gone forward to the Congress, the Administration, and the U.S. Department of Education to leverage necessary changes in NCLB.

Having said this, I have personally endeavored since 2001 to become very much involved in local political matters potentially affecting education. I have contacted my local legislative representatives and maintain a continuing personal contact. Furthermore, I have tried to involve myself with my former and current local representative in literacy and educational issues in the state, and much to my surprise and pleasure, my local representative has made valiant efforts to keep me involved and informed as well.

Together, Representatives Loraine Pace and Fred Hunsaker of the Utah Legislature and I have fashioned a list of suggestions for those who want not only to become engaged in the political process but who honestly want to learn the art of political "compromise" and succeed, at least to some degree, in having a voice to shape the literacy policy of their local, state, and national governments. To close, I offer these collectively fashioned suggestions below and invite all literacy educators to become personally engaged in the political process. Regardless of your personal political persuasions and ideology, for this grand experiment in democracy and a representative republic to work, we must do more than complain, even when those complaints are articulate and eloquent. We must act and act now!

### Suggestions for Successfully Engaging in the Political Process as Literacy Educators

1. Get to know your local, state, and national representatives. Obtain their contact information including e-mail, phone number, and business address.
2. Learn how to make positive constituent contacts with legislators. Invite a legislator to visit over lunch to offer your expertise, insights, and involvement. Help them see you as a resource to whom they may turn when in need of information.
3. Do not offend your legislators. Respect their time and intelligence. Inform yourself about issues and be prepared to offer informed opinions that show a balance of interests. Come prepared to listen as well as to advocate your position.
4. Become familiar with the legislative process (sequence of events) so that your contacts can be timely. The most effective time to advocate for literacy is just before or just after a bill has been introduced. The time to influence a new bill, legislation under consideration for first time, is before the bill is introduced.
5. Be a credible, non-partisan lobbyist that a legislator can trust. Always, always, always tell the truth and be absolutely trustworthy. Get your facts straight and be able to document your assertions. Offer to make available an executive summary of factual information for the use of your legislator on demand.
6. Legislators are not miracle workers. Do not present problems without simultaneously presenting potential solutions and ideas. A high-impact message is concise, factual and clear.
7. Legislators are bound by laws and ethics. Do not offer gifts, services, etc. that would compromise their integrity.
8. Legislators do not only deal with educational issues. Many legislators deal with a wide range of issues including zoning, plumbing codes, natural resources, transportation, etc. You are the expert on education and must narrow the many issues to a concise list of only two or three priority issues for discussion and action.
9. Put a face on the effects of legislation. Bring children, teachers, and parents who are affected by legislation (positive or negative) to advocate for your position on the issues. When asked to testify the same is also true, put a real face on the effects of legislation.
10. Remain in regular contact with elected representatives. Go out of your way to keep communications constant and positive. A "thank you" note goes a long way when a legislator has put in many long hours of service without adequate remuneration much like those of us who work in education! Ask to be put on their mailing or e-mail distribution list for upcoming issues, reports, and legislation that may impact educational funding, policy, or practices.
In conclusion, in May 2003, Cathy Roller, Director of Research and Policy for IRA said in response to a discussion about the many policies that local, state, and federal governments were enacting:

1) We can vent.
2) We can circumvent.
3) We can invent.

Let us focus our best efforts on inventing a future for literacy education in which every child receives evidence-based reading instruction that recognizes the multiple uses for literacy among the diverse cultures, languages, and needs of all our children!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

D. Ray Reutzel is the Emma Eccles Jones Distinguished Professor and Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education at Utah State University. Ray has taught in Kindergarten, 1st grade, 3rd grade, and 6th grade. Dr. Reutzel is the author of more than 185 refereed research reports, articles, books, book chapters, and monographs published in The Elementary School Journal, Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Literacy Research, Journal of Educational Research, Reading Psychology, Reading Research and Instruction, Language Arts, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, and The Reading Teacher, among others. He has received more than 7.5 million dollars in research/professional development funding from private, state, and federal funding agencies including the Institute of Education Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education.

He is the past Editor of – The Reading Teacher and Literacy Research and Instruction. He is author or coauthor of several handbook chapters published in the Handbook of Classroom Management, Handbook of Research on Literacy and Diversity, and the Handbook of Reading Research. Vol. IV. Dr. Reutzel received the 1999 A.B. Herr Award from the College Reading Association for Outstanding Research and Published Contributions to Reading Education. Dr. Reutzel was given the John C. Manning Public Service Award from the International Reading Association in May 2007. Ray also served as Past President of the College Reading Association/Association for Literacy Educators and Researchers and as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association from 2007-2010.

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The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), http://www.ceira.org. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
Ethical Issues in Conducting Literacy Research in School and Out-of-School Settings

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ABSTRACT

This invited paper, authored by members of the National Reading Conference Ethics Innovative Community Group (ICG), discusses ethical issues involved in conducting literacy research in formal and informal school and out-of-school settings. The researchers ground their work in Noddings’ ethics of care applied to educational settings (1984, 1999, 2002). The authors introduce each literacy research section with a vignette that illustrates ethical issues under consideration, followed by an analysis of the types of issues that arise in each setting. The analyses raise questions about ethical research practices for the field of literacy research.

Introduction

Literacy researchers know the value of conducting research in authentic settings, whether studying classroom learning, home literacy, literacy in university settings, or new literacies in community settings. While basic ethical guidelines apply to all literacy research, each of these naturalistic settings can pose particular ethical issues or dilemmas for the researcher. Some literacy researchers conducting classroom research have reported in recent years being denied access to public school classrooms to carry out research related to reading and writing instruction and teachers’ practices. In other cases, the stresses placed on school administrators and teachers from high stakes testing raise fear that researchers could uncover unethical practices or teaching methods that are not best practices. Others may simply worry that research will take time away from students’ test preparation. K-12 educators may fear public humiliation if published research findings portray them in negative ways. In yet other schools, curriculum is scripted, leaving teachers little time or flexibility to participate in studies of innovative instructional strategies or diverse professional education models.

Partly as a consequence of such difficulties, some literacy researchers have adapted their research methods and questions to conduct research in out-of-school settings. Teacher educators study preservice and inservice teachers’ professional development in university settings, after-school centers, or summer community literacy programs. Other researchers have shifted their research focus from classrooms to university lab schools, child development centers, and reading clinics. Still others, especially researchers interested in emergent, adolescent, and family literacy, have a long tradition of research in informal settings, such as homes, community centers, libraries, coffeehouses, and other public places.

This paper is based on an alternative session at the 2009 National Reading Conference sponsored by the NRC Ethics ICG where members explored ethical dilemmas related to the varied settings and participants of literacy research. The theoretical perspective that informed this exploration of ethical issues is an ethics of care, as developed and applied to educational settings by Noddings (1984, 1999, 2002). In the following sections of the paper, the authors apply Noddings’ ethics of care to ethical dilemmas encountered in six literacy research settings and raise questions for the field of literacy research about ethically conducting research in these various settings. Each section begins with a vignette that illustrates ethical issues encountered in that setting, followed by an analysis of issues and questions raised by that type of research.

Noddings takes the position that care is a primary component of human life since all people need to care and be cared for (Noddings, 2002; Smith, 2004). Literacy researchers demonstrate care through their actions, especially through their relationships with their participants. The concept of caring relationships in literacy research requires researchers to be open to the experiences of participants and to reflect on their observations and their own affective responses as researchers. Noddings notes a caring relationship also implies some reciprocity between those caring and those being cared for. The relationship should be mutually beneficial to both parties, with researchers...
invited scholars

Research with Adolescents in Informal Settings

It's a cold and rainy January day, and I am running late to meet my research informants, three 17-year-old girls who engage in the underground literacy practice of "zining," creating self publications as alternatives to commercial magazines. When I arrive at the coffeehouse to interview them, I find they have each ordered and are waiting for me. As I order my own drink, I notice that every table that could accommodate four people is already taken. Going outside on the patio is not an option since it is raining, and I am concerned about my laptop and tape recorder getting wet, as well as all of us.

As we begin the interview, I am aware that the tables are very close together and that others in the coffee shop cannot help but overhear my informants' remarks. I begin to worry about confidentiality issues that come with using public places to share private information. Because of the difficulty in juggling four people's schedules, I plunge ahead with the interview anyway, hoping that no one is eavesdropping.

As I continue to glance around the room wondering what to do, I notice that one young woman is seated by herself at a table for six with her books and papers spread out before her. My position with my adolescent informants has always been one of "least adult" (Mandell, 1988), an elder who did not assume a role of authority typical of a teacher or a parent. Yet, I find myself approaching this young woman and asking her to move to another table as the girls stand from a distance looking uncomfortable. I am also uncomfortable. I feel that I am asserting my power as an adult to influence this young woman's decision to move. I find myself worrying if my behavior will cause the girls to perceive me as an authority figure, an association which could damage my rapport with them.

As we begin the interview, I am aware that the tables are very close together and that others in the coffee shop cannot help but overhear my informants' remarks. I begin to worry about confidentiality issues that come with using public places to share private information. Because of the difficulty in juggling four people's schedules, I plunge ahead with the interview anyway, hoping that no one is eavesdropping.

This vignette illustrates two ethical issues in conducting research with adolescents in informal settings. One of these issues is the influence of the setting on role relations between the researcher and the researched. The least adult position allows the researcher to admit to adult status without assuming adult responsibilities when with adolescent informants (Mandell, 1988). Yet, conducting research in informal settings can require the exposure of unequal positions of power and influence that adults automatically have over children (Alvarez, 1997). Incidents such as asking a younger person, who typically has less power than an elder, to move to accommodate the study provokes a reconsideration of the role of least adult participant observer (Alvarez, 1997). This instance reminds us we should not put those who are cared for, our research informants and others in close proximity to our informants, in the position of being dependent with insufficient control over situations (Hoagland, 2000).

A second related ethical consideration is the issue of confidentiality that conducting research in informal settings evokes. Out-of-school settings particularly require the researcher to anticipate and thoughtfully prepare for unexpected conditions that may demand more flexibility than required by research conducted in institutional settings like schools. School settings may be more facilitative of the privacy required for conducting confidential interviews than informal settings. Enacting an ethics of care (Noddings, 1984) requires respect for the privacy of informants and concern for confidentiality. The receptivity and engagement required to enact an ethics of care (Diller, 1992) demands elimination of the possibility of any personal discomfort research informants may feel due to sharing private confidences in the midst of others in a public place. Noddings' (1984) concept of engrossment does not imply fixation on research participants, but an investment of enough time to understand the personal situation of our informants.

Another issue that arises in conducting research with adolescents in informal settings is the lack of a shared understanding by outsiders of the researcher's role in relation to the researched. It is confusing for informants' peers who may unexpectedly or even expectedly be present during an interview situation to know why an adult is present in their social setting. It is difficult for the research participant to adequately explain the researcher's presence to their friends, as well. This situation presents unique challenges, particularly when coupled with the researcher's lack of familiarity with youth culture and the language of youth culture, and is a reminder of Noddings' (1984) requirement for engrossment through understanding the individual's personal and physical situation.

These experiences raise questions for future investigations. How can research participants' confidentiality be maintained in informal settings? What kind of script can be developed that adequately explains the researchers' role and purpose to those outside of the study who may become tangentially involved in the research process? How can researchers adequately prepare for investigations of young people when they lack a common language and understanding of their cultural norms? By raising these questions and sharing these experiences, researchers may begin to dialogue about resolutions to unanticipated issues and derive insights into the nuances of access and data collection in qualitative inquiries of adolescents' informal literacies.

Research with Families in Home and Community Settings

In my research with Asian American families, I interview Chinese immigrant parents about family literacy practices. A number of parents say it's important for their children to read for pleasure at home. The families have access to lots of books and magazines popular with American school children, but it's difficult to find books about children and young adults of their own cultural background. I take
this finding into consideration as I plan my present study that will involve these same families. I recently read a children's novel set in China, and I think parents and children will enjoy reading it. I ask six of the children to read the novel and make arrangements to interview them later in their homes about their responses to the book. A week later, I get a call from 10-year-old Wei-Ling. "I don't like this book. It doesn't make sense. I just can't read it," she shares.

I respond, "Can I interview you about the book? Then maybe I'll understand why the book doesn't make sense to you." Wei-Ling agrees to the interview, and I make arrangements with her parents to meet with her in their home. During the interview, her comments indicate she doesn't understand what the book is about. She's confused about the main character. Although in illustrations the girl looks Chinese, in the story she's European American but born in China. The more Wei-Ling talks about the book, the more confused she becomes about the story's content. I try to explain the story to her, but she's still confused, so I tell her, "You don't need to finish reading the book since it doesn't make sense to you."

I continue my study and interview several of the other children. Some like the book, but others don't find the book interesting. They lose interest in my study and don't want to read any more books, even though I find some other novels I think they will really like about Chinese American youth.

Four months later Wei-Ling calls me unexpectedly to say she's ready for me to interview her about the book. I'm surprised to hear from her. As I interview her, I feel bad I didn't anticipate her reaction. In my attempt to design a culturally relevant study, I inadvertently designed a study that limited participant input and showed a lack of sensitivity to cultural patterns of interaction between children and adults. Looking back on my interviews with Wei-Ling, I realize she didn't want to be disrespectful to me as an adult, and she didn't want to lose face, so she pushed herself to read the book, even though it took her four months and the book made no sense to her.

This vignette illustrates the layers of complexity that come into play as literacy researchers design and implement research studies with children and families of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in home and community settings. A caring researcher is sensitive to cultural differences and how they might impact research design and data collection. Applying Noddings (2002) ethics of care to family literacy research, we realize families, as well as researchers, should mutually benefit from research studies. The researcher in this vignette attempted to design a culturally sensitive study, but she did not think to involve the families in the research design itself. She could have provided parents and children with a list of books to choose from and made copies of these books available for families to preview before making final selections. The researcher and families could have developed research questions together, and the study could have included parents' and children's responses to the books. This would have been a much richer study, especially since the researcher's goal was to design a study that would benefit the families.

The work of family literacy researchers, including Taylor (1997), Purcell-Gates (1993, 2000), Heath (1983), and Edwards (1999), has moved research on family literacy practices away from a deficit-model to a more complex representation of families' "funds of knowledge" and the diversity of families (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, 1992). Ethical issues in family literacy research relate to culturally responsive research and sensitivity towards research participants, informant confidentiality, mutually beneficial studies, collaborative planning of research questions with family members or communities, protecting children and families from intrusion resulting from research projects, and using literacy research to advance social justice and inform educational policies. Ethical family literacy research integrates social, cultural, and intergenerational contexts within the study of family literacy.

Central to this research perspective is honoring and respecting multiple approaches to literacies and redefining "the relationship of literacy to poverty, the notion of socioeconomic status, and the concept of 'disadvantaged' families (Taylor, 1997, p. 3). For example, designing research to explore ways to improve home-school literacy connections for low literacy parents, Edwards and McMillon (2008) discovered that listening to parents' stories about literacy led to stronger parent-teacher understanding than asking the parents to read to their children. Purcell-Gates (1993) designed family literacy studies in ways that would not lead to participants feeling manipulated or exploited. She stated her belief that "research into family literacy practices is research into cultural practices and, thus, entails genuine attempts to understand a culture from an insider's perspective" (p. 675).

Literacy researchers can further explore the following questions related to conducting research in family literacy: What types of studies follow ethical research practices and result in the most valid data (questionnaires, interviews, ethnographic studies of families with home visits, direct observation of events, other designs)? How do we select families to participate in our studies? What is the role of minority researchers or research assistants in conducting research with families of diverse cultural backgrounds? What are the consequences of false beliefs or myths about family literacy (dysfunctional parenting, lack of ability and skills, and poor motivation)? Do researchers and family members interpret family practices and cultural events in the same ways? What if there are objections and suspicions by family members to ways researchers will deal with issues related to invasion of privacy, violation of social codes, lack of sufficient time for families to participate in research activities, and disapproval of child care practices? Ultimately, family literacy researchers should consider these questions: What will families gain from participating in family literacy research projects? How can we collaborate with family members in research design and implementation so our studies are more ethical and respect cultural differences?

Research with Teachers and Students in School Settings

I am doing an ethnographic study of unconventional literacy instruction in Ms. Adam's classroom, observing and interviewing both teacher and students. Ms. Adams is obviously a creative and dedicated early literacy teacher, whose fast-paced discussions and discovery-based teaching style
work very well for the boys in her class and most of the girls. But it is not working for one particular student, Lisa, who is rather shy and tends to require a good bit of reassurance that she is doing things correctly. Ms. Adams sometimes loses patience with Lisa, feeling that she is too clinging and demanding of her time, which can slow the pace of the class. But the more impatient and irritable she gets with Lisa, the worse Lisa tends to do. In recent weeks, Lisa has even become a sort of scapegoat in the classroom, with other students calling her "slow" and "stupid" and a "crybaby." Uncharacteristically, Ms. Adams has done little to stop them.

Lisa has shared her unhappiness with me in several interviews, under the promise of confidentiality given to all participants in the study, while Ms. Adams has also shared her misgivings about Lisa and her decision to "hold her back" in first grade for another year. Even though Ms. Adams admits in discussion that Lisa is academically at grade level, she just feels Lisa is "too immature" to do well in second grade. I have seen this immaturity in class, but have also come to know Lisa as a verbally bright and even witty conversationalist in private interviews. There is no way Lisa needs to repeat first grade.

I wonder if I should share Lisa's unhappiness with Ms. Adams, given my promise of confidentiality to Lisa? Should I share with Ms. Adams my own observational data and the conclusions I have drawn from it, that the main source of Lisa's problem is Ms. Adams' open irritation with her, which has now been modeled and exaggerated by the students? How can I eventually write about what I have seen, and put forward some cautions about the effects of this sort of instructional environment on students like Lisa, without committing "ethnographic betrayal" (Denzin, 1997) against Ms. Adams, who will certainly read anything I write, and with whom I have developed a relationship of trust and openness which I value highly.

As this vignette demonstrates, literacy researchers conducting research in schools with teachers and students can face paradoxes in trying to apply Noddings (1984, 2002) ethics of care. Multiple persons and groups involved in this type of research have a legitimate claim to the researcher's "care," and these claims can conflict. For example, researchers who spend time in schools invariably observe or gather evidence of less-than-optimal educational practices that often hurt children. Researchers learn a lot from these observations, often about the very issues they are in schools to investigate. Yet, they are able to do research in schools only because teachers and other school professionals trust the researchers and believe in their good will towards them and their students. They are not expecting researchers to tell stories that will open them up to derision or harm. On the other hand, researchers are expected by the scholarly community to tell the truth as they see it, and not just the part of the truth that reflects well on all participants (Eisner, 1996).

Since the publication of Rist's scathing ethnography of an urban school classroom in 1970, this issue of "ethnographic betrayal" (Denzin, 1997, p. 154) has been the "elephant in the room" in discussions of research in schools, especially qualitative or action research, because the typically small number of participants and/or extended time frame of the research make the identification even of pseudonymous participants almost inevitable, especially by their colleagues who have watched the researcher come and go from certain classrooms for months (Beynon, 2008). Nind, Benjamin, Sheehy, Collins, and Hall (2004) have written about the same dilemma, wanting in their research on inclusion to write about the struggles and failures, as well as the successes, they uncovered, but worrying about "the risk of problematizing" the teachers they worked with (p. 1).

Then there is the issue of my responsibility to Lisa herself. The first principle in the NRC Ethics Statement about research in classrooms is that "researchers should keep the best interests of the students in mind at all points in the research project" (Section G, NRC 2010). The Ethics Statement rightly acknowledges that while research with all participants necessitates care, researchers have a special obligation to protect this most vulnerable of populations. Yet, how can I know whether sharing Lisa's concerns and my own conclusions with Ms. Adams will actually help her? I cannot be sure of Ms. Adams's response, and besides, I have promised Lisa confidentiality. In addition, sharing my observations of her pattern of interaction with Lisa may threaten my relationship with Ms. Adams. Few people really appreciate the "friend" who holds up an unflattering mirror. I need to preserve this relationship in order to complete my study, a practical consideration that most researchers cannot afford to ignore (Sabar, 1998).

Is it not less risky to simply remain the quiet, "objective" observer? But should I stay silent when I have verifiable, transcribed data that bear on a decision that could impact Lisa's next year in school, and perhaps beyond? How will Ms. Adams feel when she eventually reads my analysis of Lisa's case, whether in a pre-publication "member check," (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or worse, in publication? Will she feel, perhaps rightly, that I was less than honest with her and even disrespectful of her professionalism by not sharing my observations at the time, when they might have done some good? These are the sorts of questions literacy researchers face every time we go into schools to do research, questions we need to address as individual professionals and as a group in order to continue to do research ethically and with care for all participants.

Research in University Lab Schools, Child Development Centers, and Reading Clinics/Literacy Labs

It is another busy evening at Reading Clinic. I am the Clinic Supervisor, and I watch as Ms. Garcia meets her client, Sam, outside their assigned tutoring room. She greets his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hope, and explains that she is going to administer some more reading and writing assessments and then help their son read a book of his choice. After the one hour session, Ms. Garcia dismisses Sam to the snack table and spends a few minutes speaking with his parents. Ms. Garcia tells them Sam has major challenges comprehending texts at his grade level. Mr. and Mrs. Hope are surprised to learn the results of Sam's reading assessments. They explain that Sam scored "proficient" on the state reading test and has done well on major benchmark tests in both 4th and 5th grade. What puzzled them at the time was that
Sam was always taken to a separate room where a special education teacher would read aloud the test. When the Hope family brings Sam back to Reading Clinic the next week, they show me a copy of Sam’s Special Education information, an IEP. The only special accommodation for testing authorized for Sam is the use of a computer for writing tasks because of a motor development problem. Thus, the scores that Sam received in school were not an accurate measure of his reading skills because all the tests were read aloud to him. As a consequence of the questionable scores, he was placed in a reading group in his 5th grade classroom that was too challenging for him. I realize that the use of these inaccurate scores can cause even more difficulty for Sam when he goes to middle school next year. All along we had thought of including Sam in our multiple case study research of young adolescents who come to Reading Clinic. Now, our focus turns to how best to help Sam beyond Reading Clinic.

Child development centers, lab schools, health clinics, and reading clinics/literacy labs are contexts in which parents receive a service for their children. These sites, especially reading clinics, have been a focal point for literacy research for many decades and add another component to the discussion of ethical research practices (Kibby & Barr, 1999; Bean & Quatroche, 1990). As Evensen and Mosenthal (1999) point out, university-based reading clinics typically focus in dynamic ways on multiple purposes and activities, including literacy learning, professional development, research, exploration of innovative teaching strategies, and development of visions to guide future research and instruction. Research in these settings involves not only children and young adults who participate in literacy experiences, but also their parents or guardians, literacy educators who work directly with clients, university faculty and administrators, and, indirectly, PK-12 schools the clients attend.

The perspectives on diversity of family literacies discussed above (Purcell-Gates, 1993, 2000; Heath, 1983; Edwards, 1999; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) are prominent in clinical settings as university faculty, graduate students who may be practicing teachers, and undergraduate students interact with a variety of parents and guardians. Issues of confidentiality and collaboration with diverse families must be addressed, so that all clinicians understand that professional behavior is a basic requirement for participation in the clinical setting. This is a complex relationship in several ways. First, teachers must listen to and actively learn from parents who may be from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. Second, professional behavior includes confidentiality of the client’s information. Thus, even though service is directed to the child or adolescent, the parent, not the school, receives the report since they procured services. Parents may later choose to deliver the report to the school, but the school is a “third party” (Muia & Connors, 1978). Only if parents give explicit permission should a report be delivered to the child’s school. Third, teachers who work with children and adolescents are in a novice/student role while working in the clinical setting. Thus, it is the faculty supervisor who is responsible for research or services. For example, at one reading clinic, a teacher who worked directly with a child while she was doing a clinical internship was subpoenaed to testify in a legal hearing for a special education determination. In the end, though, it was the faculty supervisor, the instructor of record for that clinical experience, who had to testify at the hearing.

Ethical issues related to the physical and psychological safety of young participants, as well as special procedures needed for gaining consent for their participation, add an important dimension to the research process and ongoing services. Many clinics/labs/centers routinely ask parents to sign a consent form to assess, instruct, and use information gleaned from instructional sessions for research purposes. Parents’ concerns about the safety of their children, as well as their concerns that denying participation may result in their children not receiving a needed service, are important considerations. Researchers/teachers must have the care of children uppermost in their minds as they conduct investigations or provide services (Noddings, 2002). In fact, needs of clients, whether the service is speech or hearing remediation, literacy assessment, or reading and writing instruction, should be at the forefront when researchers design, implement, and report research (or just provide direct services).

Reading clinic directors and others (Muia & Connors, 1978; Laster et al., 2002) have wrestled with these issues and will continue to consider many questions, including the following: Even with parental permission to audiotape and videotape clients, how is the privacy of clients protected, especially when audio or videotapes are used for research or teaching purposes? What if parents are not able to advocate for their child at the school (because of linguistic differences, lack of advocacy skills, etc.)? In those cases, what are the roles of the clinical teacher and faculty supervisor? If and when does the researcher/teacher cross the boundary between independent researcher/teacher and advocate for the client in their K-12 school in cases where some harm is being done to the child or adolescent, as in Sam’s case or in cases where the child is not being harmed, but is not being assisted appropriately and could benefit from the knowledge gleaned in the clinic/lab?

The work of Noddings (2002) gives a direction to the activities of a clinic/lab. Using an ethics of care as a frame to examine the interpersonal relationships of those interacting in the clinic/lab, the experiences and perspectives of all participants – clinician, client, parent, and supervisor – are valued. Consequently, the adults may show caring through advocacy on behalf of a child or adolescent within and beyond the clinical setting, such as at Sam’s school. An ethics of care, with its emphasis on communication, would involve Sam’s parents, the clinician, and the supervisor in a discussion of if, how, or when the school should be contacted. Also, an ethics of care fits well with one of the other missions of the clinical setting: to provide authentic opportunities for aspiring reading specialists to learn leadership and advocacy skills (IRA, 2010).
Qualitative Research with University Students in Out-of-School Settings

Melinda, a doctoral student conducting research for her dissertation, and I, the faculty course supervisor and summer camp leader, both observe Kate and Dan as they offer a reading lesson to four five-year-old children struggling with literacy. Kate and Dan have chosen a culturally insensitive children’s book to read to their small group. Following the story they begin questioning the children about the book’s content, asking inappropriately complex questions that require considerable understanding of and experiences with literature (e.g., “What does the author want you to know about life?”)

Not surprisingly, the children look confused and do not respond. Oh, how I want to step in and model a reading lesson that supports these five-year-olds in their developmental reading progress so that Kate and Dan can observe some exemplary reading instruction techniques and strategies. But how will that affect Melinda’s research? How might Kate and Dan feel and react if I interrupt their lesson in front of Melinda? Even worse, how does his lesson make the children feel about their inability to answer questions following a shared book reading?

Literacy teacher educators and their doctoral students often study education majors in field-based settings. In addition, literacy teacher educators conduct research on the K-12th grade students these education majors tutor. In this way they can pragmatically combine teaching and research (Richards, 2006). However, such connections are fraught with ethical considerations and conflicts that may impact study participants and must be acknowledged (Stake, 2005). Despite the common disclaimers on consent forms, education majors may feel compelled to participate in an inquiry to please the course instructor, who awards their final grades. Furthermore, education majors may alter their teaching practices to avoid taking risks when observed by literacy teacher educators conducting research. Education majors also may fear public disclosure or embarrassment. In fact, the single most likely source of harm in social science inquiry is the disclosure of private information (Keddie, 2000).

Other ethical issues can arise if literacy teacher educators note inappropriate instruction as they observe their education majors working with children. Immediate intervention, while best for the children, might negate the research study. Teacher educators/researchers also have to resist altering course content just to suit an inquiry’s a priori research questions. Reciprocally, they must recognize how their instructional role may influence their research topics, questions, and methodologies. Although these concerns are discomforting, Hatch (1995) points out that researchers need not become paralyzed by these ethical considerations. Rather, researchers need to engage in self-reflexive practices, such as questioning one’s motives for conducting an inquiry, engaging in member checking, and asking thought provoking questions, such as: Why am I doing this research? What is my relationship to the study participants? Who benefits from this study?

Some ethical dilemmas I have encountered conducting research in field settings include the following: (a) I find out what attitudinal or professionally related problems master’s education majors have with one another; (b) Doctoral students who conduct research with me learn private information about education majors; (c) When doctoral students conduct research in my field-based courses, I cannot immediately step in and intervene in education majors’ poorly prepared lessons, nor can I immediately interfere if education majors exhibit misunderstandings about literacy pedagogy; (d) I learn a lot about my education majors when I conduct research in field-based courses, and I have to guard against letting this information influence my behavior toward my education majors and the grades I award.

Quantitative Research with University Students in Public School Settings

I close my email and consider the news I just received. The school district to which I’ve submitted a research proposal has suggested alterations in my research design before they will approve the project. Specifically, they suggest that I eliminate the control group in my intervention study because they believe all of their students should be given the opportunity to benefit from the intervention. Such a change would compromise the methodological quality of my study, effectively eliminating the ability to infer effectiveness of the intervention. After reading the email from the school district, I wonder how I might revise my research proposal to preserve the integrity of the design while responding to the district’s concerns. Equally serious, I wonder how I will explain the reasons for the shift in research methodology to my team of research assistants. My university student research assistants, students in psychology and education, are learning to apply their knowledge of sound research design under my guidance. I have an ethical responsibility to guide them in methodologically sound research to support their learning. In this particular case, these students worked with me to design a reading comprehension intervention study for elementary students: a classic experimental study with random assignment to experimental and control groups. My students were correct. Such a design provides – from a methodological standpoint – the strongest basis for causal inferences about intervention effects (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Rubin, 1974). However, the school district is concerned about depriving the control students of beneficial educational support because we know the intervention has helped other children in the past.

Literacy researchers and school personnel view the research process through different lenses. These differing views sometimes produce what seem to be conflicting goals regarding students’ education and educational research. These tensions can be mediated by finding a common focus. Consistent with ethical issues presented earlier in this paper, Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care is relevant to the vignette presented above, as care for the individual educational benefit of students, both research participants and research students, should remain central to our research plans in these contexts. Emerson is often quoted as saying that “the secret of education lies in respecting the pupil” (as cited in Gilman, 2003, p. 475). For educational
researchers, school administrators, and teachers, alike, this means that "we respect students as students, valuing their learning and growth, whether they are students in our classes or participants in our research" (Cartwright, 2007, p. 134).

This vignette raises ethical questions in two areas which must be carefully balanced and negotiated for researchers working with university students in school settings: (a) designing educationally responsible and methodologically rigorous research that is responsive to schools' needs and (b) providing ethically responsible education for future researchers. For researchers trained in rigorous quantitative methodology, the carefully controlled experiment, complete with experimental and control groups, is usually the sine qua non of quality research (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Pressley, 2002). But researchers who approach proposals for school-based research from this perspective may encounter resistance from administrators and teachers who find such designs unethical because all children do not benefit from the intervention or because such designs disrupt children's educational experience.

Ethical Standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2000) require sensitivity to the integrity of ongoing activities in educational research settings such that research activities produce minimal disruption. Research that provides educational benefit to some students but not others is potentially disruptive, as it promotes disparate development across students within classes, grade levels, and schools.

Furthermore, in recent decades the notion that children should benefit from research participation has received wide attention (Childress, 2006; Glantz, 2002; Thompson, 1990). Some suggest that intervention benefits should extend to all participants, making problematic the methodological imperative to include a no-intervention control group in rigorous designs. These concerns can be negotiated, resulting in research that is responsive to school contexts and concerns. To address the concern raised in the vignette above, we revised the design to ensure that all students would receive the intervention, some in the fall and some in the spring, administering a pretest before the study and posttests after each intervention phase. Thus, the new design was responsive to school district concerns while still permitting group comparison to test treatment effects.

The vignette presented in this section raises questions about our work as researchers in school settings and as educators of future researchers. How can we provide ethically and educationally appropriate research training for our students in school contexts limited by concerns about testing, accountability, and research design? Conversely, how can we design methodologically rigorous research that is responsive to schools' needs while still providing responsible tests of our hypotheses to yield findings that will best advance work in our field? Discussion and negotiation of these tensions will produce quality outcomes for researchers and schools. Consistent with Pressley's (2002) assertion, we may find that the best studies are not always the classically methodologically rigorous ones. Rather, they are those that are done in real schools, with real children, examining real educational processes. These kinds of studies, which balance methodological, ethical, and practical concerns, while prioritizing an ethics of care (Noddings, 1984) for those participating in and learning about the research, provide ecologically valid evidence about literacy processes and instruction to inform educational practice.

Final Reflections
While each of the research settings discussed above poses unique ethical challenges, common themes recur in these discussions of ethical dilemmas. Although confidentiality is a primary responsibility of literacy researchers, it can be difficult to guarantee research participants confidentiality when we conduct research in natural settings, such as coffee houses, community centers, classrooms, and clinics, because others present in the venue may identify our participants as research informants or may overhear what is said. Research in authentic settings also brings up the question of whether literacy researchers have a moral, or even legal, obligation to break promises of confidentiality to schools, teachers, or parents, or even to the children themselves, to prevent clear harm to children or others. As a number of the vignettes in this paper show, the move toward collaborative research in natural settings has blurred role boundaries and made relationships between researchers and participants more complex. Literacy researchers are often put in the awkward position of trying to fulfill conflicting obligations to a multitude of stakeholders, but we also have an obligation to our fellow scholars, policy-makers, educators, and the public to conduct responsible and methodologically rigorous research and to present our research findings truthfully and without distortion.

We have approached these ethical dilemmas encountered in educational research from a theoretical framework based on Noddings’ ethics of care (Noddings, 1984, 1999, 2002). We do not pretend to have answers for all these dilemmas, recognizing that an ethics of care is complex in application. But despite this inevitable complexity, literacy researchers need to act in ways that establish, maintain, and enhance care for the participants in their research, their students and fellow researchers, the scholarly community, and the millions of children and adults who stand to benefit from their research. It is our hope that this paper will spark thought, encourage discussion, and contribute to commitment to these goals in our literacy research community.
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Addressing Literacy Needs in Malawi

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ABSTRACT
The study was conducted in the context of a graduate program in elementary education offered in Malawi. The purpose was to examine the kinds of literacy improvement projects implemented in primary schools by the students and their perceptions about utilization of these strategies. The students were able to make contacts with primary teachers and work collaboratively to develop plans for and implement strategies to improve literacy instruction. This study demonstrates that literacy teacher education programs can lead to the design and implementation of literacy learning support strategies in primary classrooms in developing countries.

Introduction
Globalization is having an increasingly powerful impact upon school and teacher education practices (Noddings, 2005). As teacher educators prepare beginning and inservice teachers, awareness should be keen that these teachers may be impacting education for the next thirty to forty years. Teacher preparation should include the development of global citizens who have the ability to understand and participate in world affairs, who appreciate cultural differences, and who have the ability to function as cultural ambassadors (Flinders, 2009; Noddings, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, 2004). U.S. schools are experiencing tremendous increases in numbers of foreign born and ESL students, and literacy teachers must be well prepared to understand and meet the needs of these children (Purcell-Gates, 2007).

As globalization continues, education increasingly becomes a worldwide endeavor (Noddings, 2005). “If teacher education programs are to stay apace with global change, and if we are to meet the many challenges presented to us by global realities, we seem to have little choice … other than to infuse global initiatives in teacher education programs” (Gilliom, 1993, 46). To gain global perspectives, examination of international issues in teacher education is essential.

Currently, there is a worldwide focus on the improvement of basic education. In April 2000, the World Education Forum met with a shared goal of outlining global educational needs for basic education. Over 1100 participants from 164 countries collaborated to develop a plan based on a common belief: “Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization” (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000, 8; also quoted by Pimentel, 2006, 3). A major goal of the Dakar Framework is that of attaining a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy around the world by 2015, with enhancement of elementary/primary education viewed as a needed shared global aim. Changes in literacy teacher education are critical to addressing goals of improving elementary/primary education in many countries. This paper describes a study of literacy teacher education in the context of a collaborative partnership in Malawi between [US university], Domasi Teacher Training College, and the Malawi Institute of Education, supported by a grant from USAID.

Changes in literacy teacher education are critical to addressing goals of improving elementary/primary education in many countries.

Malawi Context
The Malawian regional and educational contexts are at the heart of this study. The design for the teacher education project was conceived as the result of an exploratory grant to survey school conditions and teacher education needs in this country. The second grant with USAID served as the backdrop for this research project. The USAID teacher preparation grant was designed to prepare Malawians with knowledge and skills for designing and implementing a teacher education program that would meet the needs of pre and inservice teachers in this cultural context.

Malawi is located in southeast Africa, landlocked but bordered on the east by Lake Malawi. The population is approximately 12.6 million, and Malawi is considered to be among the ten poorest nations in the world (World Bank, 2006; World's Poorest Countries, 2004). Seventy-six percent of the population of Malawi lived on less than the equivalent of two US dollars per day during 1990-2004 (United Nations, 2006). Life expectancy in Malawi is 40 years (World Bank); as a result, children under the age of 14 comprise 46.5% of the population. Adults aged 15-64 make up 50.8%, and adults over the age of 65 account for 2.7% of the total population (CIA World Factbook, 2006;
UNICEF, 2006). HIV/AIDS is a serious problem; in 2003, 14.2 percent of adults aged 15–49 were infected (UNICEF; World Bank).

The people of Malawi include Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asian, and European groups (CIA World Factbook). English is the official language of the country and Chichewa is the national language. Approximately 20% of the nation's children speak native languages such as Tumbuka and Yao prior to entering school. They encounter Chichewa and English when they enter school at age 6 (Author, et.al., 2007).

Literacy is defined in Malawi as the ability to read and write in Chichewa at age 15 onward, and the World Bank reports Malawian literacy rates to be 64%. UNICEF found literacy rates in females in Malawi to be lower than literacy rates among males, with male literacy at about 75% and female literacy approximately 54%. The United Nations, UNESCO, and UNICEF have established a solid correlation between countries with the highest poverty and countries with highest illiteracy rates (Greaney, 1996). "Tragically, scourges like poverty, exploitation, poor health and illiteracy go hand-in-hand. It is not a coincidence that where illiteracy is high people face other, often dire, challenges" (United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012, 2004, 4).

Clearly, literacy learning is a considerable problem that must be addressed in Malawi. To explore the problem, it is important to understand the workings of education in Malawi. The Malawian educational organization is a 8-4-4 system consisting of primary school, secondary school and university education. Children start formal education at primary school at the age of six. Primary education takes 8 years from Standard 1 to 8. At the end of Standard 8, students write the Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) examinations. Students must not only pass, but also be selected if they are to continue education at the secondary level (MOESC and United Nations Children's Fund, 1998; MOESC, 2000).

The Ministry of Education in Malawi reports that approximately 12% of students pass the PSLC and are selected for secondary school, thus 88% of the population completes their education by the end of Standard 8, at age 14 (Chakwera, Khembo & Sireci, 2004; Malawi Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture, 2000). Secondary school education takes 4 years from Form 1 to Form 4. There are two significant secondary school tests, the Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) at Form 2 and the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) at Form 4. Fewer than 16% of secondary students who take the MSCE pass this exam.

Students who have completed as much as two years of secondary school can be hired as teachers at the primary level. Better paying teaching positions are available in primary schools for those who complete four years of secondary school and pass the MSCE. After individuals obtain primary teaching positions, they attend Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) to earn teaching certificates that represent approximately two years of college training. Secondary teachers must earn a diploma representing three years of college (Stuart & Kunje, 2000).

Instructors in the TTCs in Malawi are responsible for the preparation of primary teachers. To obtain a TTC teaching position, one must earn at least a diploma in college; thus, in the past, most primary instructors in the TTCs were trained in secondary methods. They enter the TTCs with little, if any, experience and specific knowledge about primary teacher education methods. Improved primary teacher education in the area of literacy is a necessary component in increasing literacy rates in Malawi.

In 1994, the government of Malawi introduced the policy of Universal Free Primary Education and the number of children attending primary school more than doubled. This change in policy brought numerous challenges in terms of the need for improvements in infrastructure and new resources and teachers. Infrastructure problems include the conditions of school buildings, and the lack of desks and other furniture, textbooks, and children's books. There is no security in primary classrooms and there are no locks on the doors, so teachers must bring in all materials to be used and carry them out at the end of the school day. There are few libraries anywhere in Malawi, and there are not enough textbooks for the number of students in classrooms (usually between 60 and 120 in Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4, and somewhat fewer at the upper levels due to drop outs). Student texts are kept in locked rooms for security purposes, so students have no access to them except during lessons. Many of the students do not have paper, and schools cannot provide paper for the children. Pencils are very much valued.

The concept of literature for children is unfamiliar to most Malawians. The process of becoming literate in an environment in which children may never have experienced a book (other than a textbook) is indeed challenging (Kazembe, 2005). Mchazime (1994) found that 70% of a group of 170 students who had successfully completed Standard 8 had never read a book other than a textbook; thus, they held no understandings of the world of books. Books are simply not available to most citizens. Many of the participants in Mchazime's study reported that they kept and continued to read the notes that they recorded when they were students in primary and secondary school, with the purpose of maintaining knowledge gained in school. The majority of the population in Malawi simply does not have opportunities to engage in intellectual endeavors and learn through reading after completing primary education (Mchazime, 1989, 1994, 2001).

In addition to lack of print and opportunities for reading practice, second language issues pose problems for primary schools. The focus of literacy instruction in Standards 1-4 is Chichewa, although the introduction to English instruction also occurs in the first four years of primary school. Most primary teachers do not have strong English literacy skills themselves, so chances are low that Malawian children will successfully gain command of English as a second language (or in some cases third). English is the official language of government and business in Malawi. The complexity of a system in which classroom sizes are very large, very few materials are available to support learning to read and write in English, and teachers themselves have limited English literacy skills has led to an environment in which the primary schools are
not able to prepare large numbers of citizens with the level of expertise in English needed for participation in their democracy.

The challenge of improving literacy learning in Malawi is not one for which there are any quick fixes. A logical starting point is the development of a highly trained workforce of primary educators who are knowledgeable about literacy learning and Malawian conditions and culture and able to design workable strategies for instruction in Malawian Primary Schools.

**The Malawi/[US University]/USAID Partnership**

The current research project was conducted within the context of grant project with an overarching goal of improving pre-service teacher education through the establishment of a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed. Primary) degree at Domasi College. One objective was to train a cohort of 24 Masters in Education students in primary education, with specializations in math education, science education, social studies education, and literacy education. These students were the leaders in the design and implementation of the B. Ed. program and serve as instructors in this program at Domasi College and in the other TTCs. The program was planned deliberately to meet the needs of teachers and learners in the Malawian primary school context.

It was with this group of students that the current research project was conducted. The students were selected for the program from all over the country. Most of them held bachelor's degrees and already worked in TTCs. The program was delivered on site in Malawi, with [US University] professors traveling to Malawi to teach the courses. The B. Ed. program was successfully designed and approved, and the first B. Ed. graduates completed their degrees in January 2008. Former students in the Master's program served as professors of most of the primary education courses and supervisors of students in practical experiences.

**Methodology**

For this study, the research questions were, "What kinds of improvements in literacy instruction will the Malawian Master's degree students select and implement in primary classrooms in Malawi in collaboration with a classroom teacher? and, "What perceptions did the Master's degree student have about the utilization of these literacy instruction strategies in the primary classrooms?"

During one month, the 24 Malawian Master's Degree students took three [US University] courses including: (1) Foundations of Reading, (2) Writing Methods, and (3) Teacher as Researcher. The instructors designed an integrated experience based upon sociocultural perspectives on literacy and inquiry across these three courses. The students were placed in collaborative groups and were engaged in many hands-on, cooperative projects during the courses. For instance, the groups worked together to select passages in English from student reading books at different primary grade levels, then they worked in pairs to have students from a local school read the passages while they recorded running records. After the running records had been obtained, the students met in their collaborative groups to engage in analysis of these literacy records and identify methods of improving literacy instruction for the students who had been tested. In the writing course, the students engaged in collaborative writer's workshop activities in writing, illustrating, and creating culturally relevant children's books that were read to groups of children in a local primary school. A consistent focus was that of inquiring about primary grade instructional strategies based upon US research and whether they would or would not work in Malawian classrooms. Engaging the students in fieldwork involving implementation was critical.

As a final project to be completed over a time span of five months after the one-month course session had ended, students were asked to collaborate with a primary teacher (standards/grades 1-8) to design and implement a plan for improving literacy learning in a Malawian classroom. The students were asked to review everything that had been covered in the reading and writing courses and select several teaching methods, activities, or strategies that they were interested in seeing implemented in an actual primary classroom. The students were to identify a primary teacher and ask for permission to collaboratively with this teacher to implement some literacy improvement methods over a three-month time frame. The students were asked to explain the methods/activities/strategies that had been selected and the rationales for using these methods to the primary teacher. The students were to elicit input from the primary teachers about the particular methods the teachers felt would be most useful in the student groups taught in these particular classrooms. Decisions about the methods to be implemented were to be made collaboratively. The Master's students were to be involved in all aspects of the process, observing classroom sessions and participating in the teaching as needed, recording field notes, and later, analyzing the data collected.

Students submitted a detailed report on what happened from beginning to end. The students spent one month planning the projects and collaboratively planning with the primary teachers, three months implementing their literacy improvement projects, and one month analyzing data and completing their project reports. During the implementation phase of the project, they were in the classrooms at least three times per week for literacy lessons.

One year after the course session had ended, all of the Master's students were interviewed about the experience. The interviews were based on the questions: "Tell me about the results of your reading/writing project," and, "Tell me about anything you have learned about the use of the methods you implemented in the primary classroom in the time since your report was submitted." The 24 interviews took about 30 minutes and were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The data collected for this study included the actual reports written by the Master's degree students and the interview transcripts. A phenomenological approach to data analysis was taken, viewing the reports written by the students and the interviews as independently occurring phenomenon (as compared with data that might be considered grounded theory or constant comparison) (Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). All of the reports from the Malawian students were analyzed to identify the kinds
of improvements in literacy instruction that were selected by the students during their collaborative work with the primary teachers in their classrooms. All kinds of literacy and related instructional methods/activities/strategies implemented in the classrooms were considered. Notes were made on the types of methods used, teacher and children's responses to the methods, and the reflections of the Master's students on the methods. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Hycner's (1985) guidelines. The interviews were segmented into separate idea units then coded in themed groups.

Results

Student Reports

Based on the reports submitted, a count was made of the number of instances in which specific methods were implemented in primary Malawian classrooms. In total, the student/primary teacher pairs attempted 39 different types of literacy support strategies in Malawian classrooms. Table 1 includes only the activities that were attempted in six or more classrooms.

The match between the methods implemented in the classrooms and the methods of particular focus in the reading/writing courses was apparent. For instance, one focus in the course had been on word study strategies such as creating word walls, sorting words (such as rhyming words, root words, words with inflectional endings, and words with initial or final word clusters). In the reports, 19 of the 24 students indicated that they had worked with primary teachers to implement word study activities in primary classrooms that closely matched those modeled in the university courses. Similarly, in the university courses, the students had been arranged in cooperative groups and had engaged in collaborative activities with their group members throughout the one-month session and in all three courses. In the classrooms, 17 of the 24 students worked with primary classroom teachers to utilize grouping plans for literacy instruction as opposed to whole class instruction.

The project data demonstrated that the Master's students were able to work with primary teachers to implement the kinds of strategies that had been centered upon during the literacy courses. Further, the student reports demonstrated that many of them had worked hard to create materials for the literacy activities in primary classrooms. For instance, one student collected 2000 soft drink bottle caps and wrote alphabet letters in them with a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Activities Implemented in Primary Malawian Classrooms</th>
<th>Number of Classrooms in which the Activity was Implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word building, word play, work search, word sort</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed ability grouping or cooperative grouping plans as alternatives to whole class grouping</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive writing or writing process</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive reading</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's independent reading of self-selected books provided by the Master's student and/or classroom teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence building or sentence writing practice</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing/Evaluation of Reading and/or Writing abilities (Pre-Post Testing)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Writing Games/Puzzles created by the Master's student and/or classroom teacher</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating classroom charts, posters, learning materials for reading/writing instruction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making words</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's writing on teacher selected topic or picture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for learning parts of speech and tense</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
permanently marker for student manipulation in several different classroom activities. About half of the students lived in the three most highly populated parts of Malawi, and these participants stated they had been able to find texts of various types to provide for student reading practice in primary classrooms. These texts included newspapers, donated books from charitable organizations, and books borrowed from the TTCs. Students in rural areas were not able to locate text materials, but some of them created materials such as the bottle tops.

The Master’s students reported high levels of success in utilizing these strategies with primary teachers in their classrooms. Comments were included in the reports such as, “I was excited at how the teacher and the children were able to get right to work on the making words activity. There was such a great level of enthusiasm for this from the children that the teacher says she will continue it at least once per week, and she has in fact done so.” Another student stated, “Everyone assumes that there are no reading materials for children to use other than the curriculum textbooks, so I was surprised that I was so easily able to locate some actual children’s books without difficulty, and the children loved them.”

Interviews

The interviews with the Master’s students must be viewed in context. The only “negatives” mentioned by the students were suggestions that it would have been nice if there had been more – more books, more time, and more contact with the university professors. Otherwise, most statements made by the students were positive. In consideration of these data, it is important to note that the students were interviewed by the same individual who had been their professor for the reading course; thus, they were unlikely to make negative statements about their course experience. Approval for interviews of students by one of their instructors was permitted due to the fact that this professor was the only team member who traveled to Malawi at the time of data collection for this study. The student projects were completed across a five-month time span, they were submitted and graded, and data collection activities took place six months after grades were posted.

The offering of an in-country Master’s program by an American university was unprecedented in Malawi and the students were appreciative of the opportunity they had been offered. Many stated that they were sure they could never have obtained a Master’s degree had it not been for this grant opportunity. This students were suggestions that it would have been nice if there had been more – more books, more time, and more contact with the university professors. Otherwise, most statements made by the students were positive. In consideration of these data, it is important to note that the students were interviewed by the same individual who had been their professor for the reading course; thus, they were unlikely to make negative statements about their course experience. Approval for interviews of students by one of their instructors was permitted due to the fact that this professor was the only team member who traveled to Malawi at the time of data collection for this study. The student projects were completed across a five-month time span, they were submitted and graded, and data collection activities took place six months after grades were posted.

Six primary themes were identified in the interview data. These themes were: (a) cooperative grouping, (b) modeling, (c) reading practice and materials, (d) the reading/writing connection, (e) enthusiasm and motivation, and (f) follow-up. Each theme will be discussed separately, although they are interrelated in much of the data. For each theme, a representative quote from one of the master’s students has been provided to tell the story of their experiences. Many of the quotes are somewhat lengthy. In the interview transcripts, it was notable that the participants tended to talk extensively about the topics they brought up.

Cooperative Grouping

The students discussed the fact that the use of grouping plans other than whole class grouping was not a common practice in primary schools, but that, having experienced cooperative group work in the university courses, the students wanted to see if alternative grouping plans would work in primary classrooms. One student stated:

The most powerful thing about the project, for the pupils and the teacher, was the use of small groups … [the teacher] was very unsure, but I think I convinced him to give it a go, and he gave the pupils a great, a very detailed talk about what to do, and it was like magic, really like magic to us when they got started, as I was even nervous myself as primary students never have activities like this, but they fell right in and were just perfect and loved the activity, so the teacher was immediately enthusiastic to try this again.

The data indicated that the students were anxious to experiment with cooperative grouping strategies in primary classrooms. They made statements such as, “I was surprised at how well the groups worked in our class and I wanted to see if they could work that well with children.”

It was common for the participants to report that the primary teachers were opposed to the idea of using small cooperative groups at the onset, but they were willing to try. Nineteen of the students reported using cooperative grouping in literacy activities with success.

Modeling

While many of the students already knew the term “modeling” and had some conceptual understandings of it when they entered the program, most had not experienced modeling by their own instructors and did not know how to model differing literacy practices. For this reason, modeling was featured regularly in the reading and writing courses, including modeling of read alouds, word study and vocabulary strategies, comprehension strategies such as think alouds, and writing process activities such as brainstorming, drafting, and editing. In the interviews, students pointed out that the modeling activities in the university courses had a major impact on their learning. Thus, the students felt that it was important for modeling to occur for the students in the primary classrooms. One student said:

I saw in our courses the importance of modeling, so I was trying to figure out how I could do the modeling for the pupils, so when we did the first journal writing lesson, I began by telling the pupils about the journals and I sat there and wrote my own journal entry in front of them while composing the words out loud and writing them down … The teacher was impressed with how this affected the students and got them started, so we worked to come up with many different ways of modeling throughout the project and always found it to be successful.

Within the 24 interviews, 22 of the students explicitly discussed modeling and their use of modeling in the literacy implementation projects. Some students noted that learning to model was awkward. For example, one student said, “The first time I wanted to use modeling, the teacher didn’t understand, so I needed to do a demonstration, and
I was rather nervous, so it didn't go very smoothly. But I saw that the pupils understood what I had done and were ready to move forward and it gave me confidence, so the next time I was better, and the teacher tried too, so we both improved and tried to include a modeling in every lesson." The students understood and valued modeling to support literacy learning as reflected in their repeated reports of use of modeling in their literacy projects and discussion of the topic in their interviews.

Reading Practice and Materials.

There was much discussion during the university courses about the need to provide materials for students to practice reading. When the students completed their projects, as previously mentioned, many of them made efforts to obtain children's books and other texts (aside from textbooks) for reading practice. Half of the students were successful in obtaining some children's books. All of the students who located children's books lived in the more populated areas of Malawi; students in the rural areas were not able to find children's books for use in their classrooms. A student explained:

... the school had these boxes stored in the library, boxes that were closed up and against the wall, and one of the teachers knew these boxes contained books for pupils but they had never been used in the school because the teachers didn't know what to do with them and were afraid the pupils would steal them. So I said that it would be just as well for the pupils to steal the books as for them to stay in boxes unused for years in the library and the teacher really laughed and agreed ...

In this case, a religious mission had donated the boxes of children's books to the school. The collection consisted of used picture books from the United States. Several students were able to locate children's books that had been donated through charitable organizations. One student was able to borrow children's books from a university library.

The study participants indicated that the children enjoyed reading the children's books. One student said, "The kids were silent soon after we gave them the books and told them to read. I wasn't sure whether they were all understanding what they read, but we could see their eyes going across the words and looking at the pictures, and after that, they were very happy and eager to tell about the books they were reading." Another stated, "After the first day, every time I came to the classroom, the pupils would be saying, 'Did you bring the books today? Are we going to read again?' They loved reading the books every time we used them." All of the students who located and used children's books reported that children had positive responses to them.

Some students were unable to locate children's books, but located other reading materials such as newspapers. A representative statement was, "I decided that I wanted the pupils to read some real material, because I never before this realized the importance of just reading, so I collected newspapers for several weeks and in the lessons ... they found this to be fun and unusual, so they were very happy each time we brought the newspapers."

These interview data demonstrated that awareness of the value of reading practice in literacy development impacted perceptions of the students in the design and implementation of the literacy improvement projects. They worked hard at locating materials for children to read and reported enjoyment of and some success with these reading experiences.

Reading/Writing.

In both the reading and writing courses, there was discussion of the relationship between reading and writing. As previously discussed, the students used a writing workshop approach to write and illustrate their own children's stories, which were later read to children in a local school. This was an important component of the course, as we wished to point out to students the lack of literature that is culturally relevant for Malawian children and the need for teachers and teacher educators to engage in writing activities to model for children and provide relevant stories for children to read. Many of the master's students found this experience to be meaningful and in their literacy projects, they worked to engage primary pupils in writing and illustrating texts of their own. As one student explained:

I wanted to get the pupils to write stories like those we wrote in class and I began with telling them about my own writing in class and then I read it to them and showed the pictures, and it was actually amazing that they liked my story so well and loved the pictures and thought I was a real writer. They did not think they could do the same ... but it was done in a few weeks and when finally they were close, they read their stories to each other ... It was an amazing experience to see this happen for the pupils; they knew they were very successful and saw that they could be real writers.

Fourteen of the students had a focus on writing experiences in their literacy projects. Three worked with Standard 1 classrooms and used interactive writing, and 11 implemented writing process projects. Writer's workshop was a new and unknown activity in these classrooms and implementation was not always smooth; however, all of the 11 master's students and teachers persisted to assure that the children completed a written product to be shared with the class. In many cases, these written products were considered to be highly successful and representative of notable gains for the children as writers.

Enthusiasm and Motivation.

All of the master's students discussed the fact that students in the primary schools were enthusiastic about the literacy activities that were introduced in their classrooms. Many discussed both enthusiasm and high levels of motivation in the primary school students. The context of having an instructor from a TTC work closely with the teacher to implement literacy lessons was unique for the children. It was not a surprise that the children were reported to be enthusiastic and motivated when introduced to new kinds of literacy activities in this context. Representative comments from the master's students included:
• “The teacher said that her pupils were so happy about the games with the letters that they asked to do them every day.”
• “I noticed that the children were very enthusiastic every time we used any of the literacy activities, much more so than when I first visited the class.”
• “The pupils were highly motivated to try to read all of the books I brought, even when the books were difficult for them to understand. Both of us [the teacher and the master's student] were surprised to see how the pupils persisted to try to read and understand.”

It was notable that in the interviews, every master's student mentioned student enthusiasm or excitement, student motivation, or both. The data indicated that the students and the teachers with whom they worked were impressed and gratified by the levels of excitement seen in the children when the literacy improvement projects were implemented.

Follow-up.

The master's students completed the literacy classroom implementation projects during a five-month time frame after completion of the one-month period in which the three courses were taught. These students were not required to follow-up on the projects once they had been completed; however, more than half of the students had returned to these classroom teachers to investigate the impact of their work. In most cases, the students reported that the classroom teachers had continued to use at least some of the literacy strategies. One student was representative in stating:

The Standard 5 teacher I worked with has continued to enthusiastically use the making words and word solving activities that I shared and she has developed creative uses of these learning activities … I think many primary teachers hunger for new methods of teaching that are of use in the classroom, and they accept many of them readily and use them for many years; hence, I work hard in my own courses at providing practice with these many of these activities in the B.Ed. program and encourage the same of my students when they enter the Teacher Training Colleges.

According to the students, classroom teachers had maintained use of the literacy support activities that had been introduced during the formal phase of the project, the teachers and students maintained enthusiasm for these instructional approaches, and many of the teachers asked about additional recommendations and support.

Discussion

The study was designed to examine the kinds of literacy improvements collaboratively selected and implemented in primary classrooms in Malawi by Master's degree students and primary teachers, as well as the perceptions of the students about utilization of the literacy improvement activities. The literacy implementation reports submitted by the graduate students provided evidence that they were successful in collaborating with primary teachers to select, plan, locate materials for, and implement a variety of activities to support literacy learning in primary classrooms in Malawi. For the most part, the graduate student/primary teacher pairs selected literacy activities that they found to be interesting and “doable” in specific teaching contexts. There were only a handful of cases in which the students articulated in their reports ways in which literacy support strategies were selected for the purpose of meeting specific needs in the classroom. A need was identified to provide support for graduate students in utilization of knowledge of literacy assessment to identify specific strategies to meet classroom needs.

In interviews with the Master's students, their discussions of the classroom projects focused on the use of cooperative grouping strategies, modeling, providing reading practice for primary students by supplying reading materials, and use of writing to provide literacy practice and produce materials to be read in the classroom. The graduate students had heard of cooperative learning prior to starting the Master's program, but they had never seen it in practice until they experienced it in their courses. Through this personal experience, the students developed an appreciation for ways in which cooperative grouping plans could be used to support learning, and nineteen of them attempted cooperative learning in the primary classrooms and reported success.

Similarly, the students did not appreciate modeling prior to their engagement in the graduate program. As one student put it, "I had heard of modeling before but I didn't understand how it worked." The university professors modeled a variety of learning approaches for the graduate students, the students developed understandings of the value and use of modeling, and they proceeded to model literacy strategies for primary teachers and children.

In the graduate courses, there was much discussion of the need for reading materials and reading practice among emergent readers (Greaney, 1996; Kazembe, 2005). Another major focus of the graduate instruction was on use of the writing process to engage teachers and children in the creation of relevant materials for classroom use (Atwell, 1998; Author, et. al., 1997; Calkins, 2000; Tompkins, 1997). The graduate students demonstrated through their implementation of classroom activities and their interview discussions that they understood and valued these methods of supporting literacy learning. They worked with teachers in primary classrooms to either increase the amount of printed material available for student reading, engage children in writing, or both. The graduate students also reported teaching these literacy support strategies to students in the B.Ed. program and in the TTCs.

This study demonstrates that literacy teacher education programs in developing countries can lead to the successful design and implementation of literacy learning support strategies in primary classrooms. After a one-month intensive experience, Master's students were able to successfully make contacts with primary teachers, work collaboratively to design and implement plans for improvement of literacy instruction. In at least some cases, the classroom teachers continued to use the new methods that had been introduced.
This study demonstrates that literacy teacher education programs in developing countries can lead to the successful design and implementation of literacy learning support strategies in primary classrooms.

The time frame in which the literacy implementation projects were completed may be of particular interest in drawing conclusions based upon this research. Instruction in the three courses took place over an intensive one-month time span in which the students were in class for seven hours per day, then completed readings and assignments in the evenings and on weekends. After the course sessions ended, the students had five months in which they could complete the implementation projects in schools. They were expected to spend about one month identifying classroom teachers and working with these individuals to plan for the projects. Students were to spend at least three months on project implementation in the classrooms. They had one month following implementation for writing and submitting their reports. Meanwhile, it was possible for most students to communicate with the US instructors via email to ask questions or receive feedback on their ideas (not all students lived in areas where connectivity was regularly available). In the interviews, some students noted that the time frame for the project had been important. For example, “It was a good thing we had so much time because the teacher and I were not so successful at first, but we kept trying and things just got better and better because we were practicing new ideas.” Consideration of the value of this time frame is of interest to literacy teacher educators in both US and international contexts. An instructional model that uses intensive modeling and study followed by the establishment of partnerships with classroom teachers, collaboration to design instructional strategies to improve literacy learning, then several months for actual implementation appears to have been at the heart of the success experienced by the participants in this study.

In this study, it was notable that the students collaborated with classroom teachers to select instructional strategies and activities for implementation, but the approaches that were chosen were those that had been of great focus and were modeled and practiced during the courses. Some activities that had been used during the course were not identified for implementation, particularly literacy assessments. It would be productive to engage in future research on participant decision making in selecting specific course content for implementation in schools.

Little literacy research has been conducted in Malawi and other developing countries in Africa where educational needs are critical and where contexts and languages vary from region to region (Greaney, 1996). There is a need for print materials in primary classrooms across the country, as well as much more literacy research that will inform practice (Kazembe, 2005; Mchazime, 1989, 1994, 2001). Further, there is a need for literature for children that will reflect their lives and cultures. Research-based approaches to literacy instruction in Malawi require development; we cannot take the assumption that what works in one culture will necessarily work in another. However, this project demonstrates that there is reason for hope in affecting change in literacy instruction in primary classrooms in developing countries.

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On the Cusp of Great Knowledge: An Investigation of How a Reading Methods Course Supported the Development of Characteristics of Excellent Reading Teachers

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ABSTRACT
This article presents the findings from a qualitative study of thirty-eight preservice teachers of reading. The purpose of this study was to determine if the preservice teachers demonstrated any of the qualities of excellent reading teachers as defined by the International Reading Association (IRA) and to consider the specific structures of a reading methods course that supported the development of those qualities.

Literature Review
In 2001, No Child Left Behind charged schools to provide “highly qualified teachers” for every child; therefore, those who prepare the teachers of tomorrow must be concerned with aspects of their program that support, encourage, and enhance the characteristics of highly qualified teachers. In the field of reading education, the International Reading Association’s (2000) position statement outlines qualities of excellent reading teachers and provides a foundation of knowledge to instill in preservice teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine if preservice teachers demonstrate any of these qualities and to what degree. Additionally, this article describes the specific structures of a reading methods course that supported the development of these qualities.

Thanks to a wealth of research on effective teaching, particularly in the field of literacy, teacher educators can strive to provide experiences in higher education settings that support the development of effective teachers. Exemplary teachers create literacy rich environments, use many types of reading instruction, and seize teachable moments (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). They coach, model, and scaffold learning rather than simply telling the students the right answer (Roehler & Duffy, 1984; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). They emphasize higher order thinking (Knapp, 1995) and use small group formats to engage students in targeted instruction (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Acknowledging the evidence that teachers make a difference rather than programs, IRA (2000) utilized the effective teacher literature to describe six characteristics of excellent reading teachers (See Figure 1). Knowing the characteristics they are striving to produce allows those in teacher preparation to consider how to best support the development of these characteristics. The most effective teacher educators explain, demonstrate, evaluate, and support these characteristics in their courses. These characteristics then become significant foci for teacher preparation courses.

Thanks to a wealth of research on effective teaching, particularly in the field of literacy, teacher educators can strive to provide experiences in higher education settings that support the development of effective teachers.

Guiding Preservice Teachers to New Understandings
In addition to the effective teacher studies, a significant body of research on teacher preparation also exists. In a recent review of the literature, Risko (2009) offered insights into the common themes across successful teacher preparation studies. These common themes included helping students make personal connections between and among courses and course content, making the links between the university classroom and the field setting explicit, collecting and analyzing student data, and “teaching with explicit guidance” (p. 8). Furthermore, the “learn by doing” approach is closely associated with teacher education. Commeryas, Reinking, Heuback, and Pagnucoo (1993) found that preservice teachers identified
field-based experiences as the most helpful and significant factor in helping them feel prepared to teach reading. Similarly, Swafford, Chapman, Rhodes, and Kallus (1996) argued that field experiences allowed preservice teachers opportunities to make decisions about instruction and reflect upon and refine their beliefs about literacy.

While most teacher education programs recognize the important role of field-based experiences, there is another body of literature guiding the work of teacher educators: the literature related to university classroom instruction. Case-based teaching can be used to support teacher reflection (Levin, 1995). Wolf, Carey, and Mieras (1996) acknowledged case-based teaching as important “situated learning” but added another dimension of “guided participation” in which the preservice teachers’ understandings are supported through “explicit modeling, assigned readings, class activities, and written commentary” (p. 152). Kagan (1992) posited that by first providing novice teachers with procedural routines it frees their minds to “turn outward to pupils and what they are learning from academic tasks” (p. 161). In other words, they can teach with divided attention when some instructional procedures become routine. Along with building a core of procedural understandings, Risko’s (2009) review of teacher education studies revealed three common characteristics across teacher preparation studies. First, teacher educators model effective teaching practices through video examples or in-class demonstrations. Second, the use of deliberate and explicit lesson planning emphasizing reading strategies was common across the reviewed studies. Finally, specific feedback on lesson plans and reflections was utilized across the studies. L’Allier (2005) found that preservice teachers were more likely to implement teaching practices that had not only been modeled in the university classroom but also supported in structured field placements as well.

Given the above body of research, this study was designed to consider the relationship between effective teacher preparation practices and the development of characteristics of excellent teachers of reading in preservice teachers. Specifically, the research questions guiding this study were (a) What qualities of excellent classroom reading teachers (as identified by the International Reading Association, 2000) do preservice teachers enrolled in a reading methods course demonstrate over the course of a semester? and (b) How does the structure of the course enhance or support the development of these qualities?

The Research Context

In the fall of 2007, forty-three preservice teachers were enrolled in two sections of an undergraduate reading methods course at a teaching university in the south. Thirty-nine agreed to participate in the study though all engaged in the same course assignments and experiences. All of the preservice teachers were pursuing a degree in elementary education or special education. All but three were seniors scheduled to student teach the following semester. Both sections were taught by the first author and followed the same syllabus, course calendar, and assignment criteria.

This reading methods course, entitled “Assessment, Design, and Implementation of Elementary Classroom Reading Instruction” was the second of two required courses for all elementary education and special education preservice teachers. The class met twice a week for 1.25 hours. The major objectives of this course included understanding the role of literacy assessments, interpreting the results of those assessments and using them to design and implement reading instruction. In addition to the literature on effective teachers of reading and teacher education, the professor’s teaching philosophy was guided by Clay’s (1991, 1998, 2005) tenets of literacy acquisition and Owocki and Goodman’s (2002) “kidwatching” stance. “Intensely observing and documenting what [children] know and can do” (Owocki & Goodman, p. X) and planning instruction based upon those strengths and needs (Clay, 2005) served as the core mantra for this course. Repeatedly preservice teachers were scaffolded into becoming keen observers of children and were often reminded to focus first on the children’s strengths and then identify their most pressing needs.

Small group and whole group reading approaches were also discussed throughout the semester. A ten-hour practicum allowed the preservice teachers to implement the new learning in a real world setting, making the links between the university classroom and the field explicit (Risko, 2009). The preservice teachers were required to teach one interactive read aloud to the whole class and one guided reading lesson to a small group of students in their practicum settings. These lessons were supervised by the clinical teacher rather than the professor of the course. In their practicum placements, each preservice teacher identified a case study student to follow throughout the semester. Running records, oral reading anecdotal notes, and other general observations were collected on the case study students throughout the clinical placement and were

“Excellent reading teachers share several critical qualities of knowledge and practice:
1. They understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
2. They continually assess children’s individual progress and relate reading instruction to children’s previous experiences.
3. They know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the methods into an effective instruction program.
4. They offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
5. They use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.
6. They are good reading “coaches” (that is, they provide help strategically).”

Figure 1: IRA’s (2000) Excellent Reading Teacher Characteristics (p. 1)
used to guide the planning of the reading lessons. Early in the semester (4th and 6th weeks) the professor arranged two additional field experiences allowing for direct supervision of the preservice teachers’ administration of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2005) to kindergarten students at a local school. Two weeks later, the preservice teachers administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 2006) to second graders at the same elementary. Given that the school was named Elkwood, these experiences were referred to as “The Elkwood Experience.” Throughout the course, the Elkwood Experience served as a catalyst for many class discussions. Experiences with real students helped everyone learn about the developmental stages of literacy, matching books to readers, and making texts accessible through book introductions and careful prompting. Preservice teachers became keenly aware of the range of needs within one classroom so conversations about individualized instruction commonly occurred.

Following the Elkwood Experience, class sessions focused less on assessments and more on methods for reading instruction. Class sessions were devoted to matching books to readers, teaching guided reading and shared reading, teaching for word solving strategies, and supporting comprehension strategies in various reading contexts. Video examples, classroom artifacts, and small group activities (Risko, 2009) were utilized to learn the content in the university classroom setting. Oftentimes, a case-based approach (Levin, 1995) was employed using student assessment data or anecdotal notes to discuss these topics. For instance, when learning about the characteristics of texts that make them easy or hard, the preservice teachers continually referred to the strengths and needs of the kindergarteners and the second graders at Elkwood. Having specific students in mind allowed the preservice teachers to consider the skills and strategies the reader would need to possess in order to process each text. Much like Wolf et al.’s (1996) “guided participation,” the preservice teachers learned procedures for various reading approaches and were guided through the entire decision-making process from lesson planning to implementation to reflection and evaluation. Follow-up assignments in their clinical placements then allowed them to apply this knowledge in the real-world classroom (Commerayas et al., 1993; Swafford et al., 1996). Furthermore, the professor’s specific and explicit feedback on lesson plans and reflections (Risko, 2009) enhanced the preservice teachers’ understandings.

Data Collection and Analysis

Four data sources were analyzed for this study: 1) Elkwood note cards; 2) Elkwood Experience Surveys; 3) K-2 Assessment Reflections, and 4) the Final Case Study Assignment. A description of each follows.

During the class session following the administration of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2005) to the kindergartener students the preservice teachers responded to two prompts on a note card: a) What did you learn from administering the assessments at Elkwood? and b) Record five strengths and two needs of your Elkwood student. Two weeks after administering the Developmental Reading Assessment to the second graders at Elkwood, preservice teachers were asked to complete the Elkwood Experience Survey in class. The questions for this survey included:

1. Write about your feelings about practicing the assessments with real children.
2. What did you learn when administering the assessments?
3. What role, if any, will these assessments play in your own classroom? Do you envision using any of them? If so, how?
4. Would you recommend keeping or eliminating these experiences in future sections of this course? Why or why not?
5. Additional comments/suggestions.

Following the administration of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2005) to the kindergarteners, the preservice teachers also submitted the K-2 Assessment Reflection Assignment. This assignment consisted of four sections. Preservice teachers identified the strengths and needs of the kindergarten student they tested in a) letter identification, b) concepts about print, and c) hearing and recording sounds in words. The final section of the assignment required the preservice teacher to identify instructional supports addressing the student's needs while building upon his/her strengths.

The culminating project for this course was the final case study assignment. This paper required the preservice teachers to introduce the case study student in a section entitled “Meet My Student.” Next, the preservice teacher identified the case study students’ strengths and needs related to literacy, followed by a reflection on the instruction provided by the preservice teacher (interactive read aloud and guided reading lessons). The preservice teachers then suggested future plans for instruction for the case study student. The final component of this assignment was a personal reflection on the case study project.

Data were first converted to a digital format and shared electronically with the research team of three tenure track faculty, one adjunct instructor, and one graduate student. The individual Elkwood Note Cards were typed into one word document so responses from all 39 participants could be viewed together. Line numbers were added to allow for easier discussion during data analysis meetings. A similar process occurred for the Elkwood Experience Surveys. The team analyzed the Elkwood Experience data and two researchers continued with data analysis of the six case studies. Each researcher read through the initial data set (Elkwood Note Cards) independently, highlighted key phrases, and named them. The team then met to decide on the tentative codes: general observations, varying levels of students, student's content knowledge related to literacy, observations/realizations related to administering the assessments, what it means for teaching, using assessment to inform instruction, and reading as a developmental process. Employing Fonteyn, Vettese, Lancaster, and Bauer-Wu’s (2008) model for group analysis, the team created a codebook with definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and exemplary transcript units for each code. The same codes were then applied to the Elkwood Experience Surveys. Each team member wrote
summary statements about each data set and then looked for similarities and differences between the two.

To allow for more in-depth analysis, six preservice teachers were purposively sampled (Patton, 2001) as separate cases. Using the final grade, class participation, and the level of reflectiveness on the initial Elkwood Experience note cards, criterion sampling allowed the research team to identify participants that represented the range of abilities in the course. The K-2 assessment reflection assignment and the final case study assignment were analyzed by the first two authors and member checking helped guard against researcher bias.

The Elkwood Experience codes were then compared to the IRA (2000) characteristics of excellent reading teachers. All of the Elkwood Experience codes fell under three of the IRA characteristics: “understand reading and writing development (RWD), continually assess children’s individual progress (ASSESS), and use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students (II)” (p. 1). The codes of “varying levels,” “student’s content knowledge related to literacy,” and “reading as a developmental process” fell under the understanding reading and writing development code (RWD). The code “observations/realizations related to administering the assessments” closely aligned with IRA’s code “continually assess children’s individual progress” (ASSESS) while what it means for teaching and using assessment to inform instruction aligned with IRA’s code “use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students” (II) (See Figure 2).

The IRA codes (including the above converged Elkwood Experience codes) were then applied to two additional course assignments - the K-2 assessment reflection and the final case study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IRA Code</th>
<th>Understanding Reading and Writing Development (RWD)</th>
<th>Continually Assess Individual Student Progress (ASSESS)</th>
<th>Know a Variety of Ways to Teach Reading (TR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varying levels</td>
<td>General observations</td>
<td>Observations/realizations related to administering the assessments</td>
<td>Shared reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General observations</td>
<td>Content knowledge related to literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guided reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding reading and writing development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a Variety of Texts and Materials for Children to Read (TXTS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Flexible Grouping Strategies to Tailor Instruction to Individual Students (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Help Strategically / Good Reading “Coaches” (STRAT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literature Circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big books</td>
<td>Guided reading books</td>
<td>What it means for instruction</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various genres</td>
<td>Word wall and other resources</td>
<td>Assessment to inform instruction</td>
<td>Guided practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it means for instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Any use of reading strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Initial codes converged with IRA’s Characteristics of Excellent Reading Teachers

The Elkwood Experience: Making it Real for Preservice Teachers

At the beginning of the semester, data indicated the preservice teachers were surprised by the varying levels of students’ literacy understandings within one grade level. Though field experiences were part of the previous reading course and other elementary or special education courses, before the Elkwood Experience, these preservice teachers had not considered the range of abilities children within one classroom. Ellen wrote, “I learned that students are going to be at a lot of different reading levels when they come to school and it may take some students longer than others to catch up to where they should be.” General observations about student behavior and personality such as this statement by Kasey, “I learned that kindergarteners get easily distracted. They may need breaks during the testing to talk about the pictures in a book or share a story” were commonly noted in these beginning data sources. Since administering these assessments for the first time, a common theme at this point in the semester was characterized by realizations and observations about administering the assessments. After administering the Observation Survey (Clay, 2005), Brittany wrote, “Doing this series of tests also requires you to be a multi-tasker.” The format of the Elkwood Note Card encouraged the preservice teachers to comment on the Elkwood students’ content knowledge related to literacy. Sometimes the comments were statements about the students as a group and other times the comments specifically described an individual student’s content knowledge related to literacy. “Kindergarteners tend to look at pictures instead of words” and “My student didn’t know the computerized g and a” exemplified this category. The language the preservice teachers used to describe the strengths and needs of the Elkwood students were coded as positive, negative, or neutral. Some of the
Two weeks and four class sessions later, the preservice teachers' responses on the Elkwood Experience Surveys were influenced by in-class discussions related to analyzing literacy assessments, understanding reading and writing as developmental processes, and instructional practices that support emergent and early readers and writers. The theme of how to administer the assessments was still dominant but there were fewer comments about managing student behavior and more comments about the value of hands-on learning experiences in teacher preparation courses. Comments about varying levels of learners were still prevalent but there was an increase in the awareness of characteristics of students at those various levels. Darla noted, "Students at different reading levels have different characteristics or attributes that stand out." The most important difference between these two data sets was the marked increase in understanding how to use assessment to inform instruction (II) from only four occurrences in the Elkwood Note Cards to 34 instances on the Elkwood Surveys. Preservice teachers identified five uses for these assessments: a) to determine the student's reading level; b) to identify the student's strengths and needs; c) to know where to begin instruction; d) to form guided reading groups; and e) to monitor growth (See Figure 3). These findings prompted further data analysis in which the initial themes were compared to IRA's characteristics of excellent reading teachers. Studying the descriptions of IRA's six characteristics, (See Figure 1) indicated the structures of the Elkwood Experience (the process of learning how to administer assessments in the university setting, administering them to real children in the field, debriefing the process, discussing how the results could be analyzed, and finally considering what the results meant for instruction) supported the development of three of the six IRA characteristics in the preservice teachers. Following these experiences, the preservice teachers articulated understandings about reading and writing development, the role of assessment, and individualized instruction.

Meaningful Assignments: Supporting the Development of Effective Reading Teachers

Analysis of the other data sources (i.e. the course assignments) revealed that the remaining IRA characteristics – those dealing with instruction – had been supported in other portions of the course.

K-2 Assessment

The six case studies that were selected to analyze further, Crystal, Annmarie, Jessica, Abigail, Nicole, and Kasey represented the preservice teachers' range of reflectiveness on the initial Elkwood note cards. Like the majority of the preservice teachers (24 out of 38) Kasey, Abigail, Jessica, and Crystal used language that was less sophisticated in terms of describing their student's strengths and needs and tended to frame the needs as weaknesses or deficits. For example, Jessica wrote, "He needs a lot of work on letters and he needs a lot of work on concepts about print." Nicole's initial comments were coded as moderately reflective. She balanced statements of needs ("He only knew five letters") with observations of his strengths that were not directly related to the concepts being tested ("He listened and asked question about the story. He commented on what was going on in the story.") Annmarie's comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Elmhurst Experience – Administering Observation Survey to Kindergarteners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patterns of Responses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General observations about children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to administer assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing children during assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprised by varying levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some observations about students' strengths and needs, though little analysis beyond scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September-October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class topics following first Elmhurst Experience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyzing Observation Survey results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional approaches to support emergent and early readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning to administer to DRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Elmhurst Experience – Administering DRA to 2nd graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patterns of Responses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to administer assessments though fewer comments about managing student behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing varying levels again but increased awareness of characteristics at each level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using assessment to inform instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More observations about students' strengths and needs, though little analysis beyond scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Pattern of Growth of All Preservice Teachers
were classified as neutral with her simply stating the scores and engaging in minimal reflection or interpretation of the strengths and needs. She focused more on item knowledge (“He knew forty-two letters” and “He didn’t know the exclamation mark”).

Three other codes became apparent during the K-2 Assessment analysis: a) teaching reading strategies (STRAT); b) a variety of ways to teach reading; and c) offering a variety of texts (TXTS). Jessica reflected on the power of using children’s names to teach emergent readers the names and sounds of letters. She wrote, “These students value their names and ‘their’ letters as well. Using [children’s] names in the classroom to teach letters would be beneficial” (TR). To support Jeffrey’s developing one-to-one matching of voice to print, Abigail suggested encouraging him to be point to the words during shared reading (STRAT/TR). And to support emergent reader, Amelia, Kasey suggested using big books, alphabet books, and repetitive books (TXTS).

Examples of Understanding Reading Writing Development, Assessment, and Individualized Instruction continued to be coded. An additional layer of analysis was added to consider the appropriateness of the statements. For instance, when Crystal suggested that her student’s most pressing concept about print was punctuation when he did not yet control one-to-one matching, it was coded as RWD (–) to indicate that her understanding of reading and writing development was lacking. When Kasey wrote that her student was “very attentive to the pictures and had a sense of story as demonstrated by her comments about the book throughout the reading,” it was coded as RWD (+) to indicate that she understood the developmental nature of the concepts about print task.

When analyzing the K-2 Assessment Reflections, an assignment that was submitted one week after administering the assessments at Elkwood, Crystal’s and Annmarie’s application or articulation of the characteristics of exemplary reading teachers were similar. Crystal described eleven instances of specific literacy knowledge demonstrated by her Elkwood student and all were characterized as having a positive tone. There was one instance of valuing partially correct responses “Although Jack missed a few letters, the ones that he did miss were very similar or close to the one that he said. For example, U/V, n/h, i/l, etc…” However, Crystal made several comments that indicated that she did not yet understand the developmental nature of reading and writing. She wrote, “Based upon this assessment, I feel that if Jack were to slow down and take his time, he would perform much better!” She did not yet understand that it was not a simple matter of paying more attention but that her student was not yet developmentally ready to attend to all aspects of print that she expected of him. Similarly, Kirsten’s understanding of the developmental stages of writing was not yet refined. Her statements implied that the student “just was not trying hard enough” rather than understanding he was only hearing the dominant sounds in words.

Like Crystal, Annmarie’s understanding of reading and writing development at the beginning of the semester was lacking. She made similar comments about the student needing to slow down and pay more attention. Unlike Crystal, Annmarie only identified two of her student’s strengths and her comments were brief and lacked depth. She seemed “annoyed” with the developmental level of her kindergarten student. She wrote, “He needs to practice sitting still and slowing down. He needs to work on his spelling skills and when he sounds out the word, write what he is sounding out, not just what he wants to write down.” Annmarie came from a long line of educators and often commented on the way her mother taught before she became a principal so it was of little surprise that her responses related to how to teach reading were traditional in nature and likened to the “drill and kill” approaches that she might have experienced as a student.

Jessica made several general observations about the student’s personality and articulated seven instances of her student’s strengths and needs related to literacy. Like Crystal, Jessica valued partially correct responses and viewed them as reasonable responses given the student’s developmental level. For instance when writing about the concepts about print task, Jessica noted that her student “looked at the pictures rather than paying attention to the text…she pointed to the girl in the picture on the path and followed the path with her finger. This was very interesting because she was responding to my question, ‘Where do I go next?’ but she used the picture to answer my question rather than the text.” Unlike Crystal and Annmarie, Jessica identified five ways to teach reading including using the word wall and name charts to teach letters but she could not seem to let go of the idea of “letter of the week.” These examples provided evidence that her understanding of a variety of ways to teach reading (TR) were emerging.

Abigail’s responses on the K-2 Assessment Reflection were somewhat similar to Jessica’s in that she was able to articulate specific literacy knowledge demonstrated by her Elkwood student. There was some evidence that Abigail was developing an awareness of reading as a developmental process (RWD) because she identified the student’s most pressing need related to concepts about print but had some of the later concepts out of order in their normal developmental scheme. She did, however, demonstrate a basic understanding of writing development. “Based upon this assessment, James’s strengths include hearing a dominant sound in most of the words he wrote. He also wrote straight across the page and then started a new line.” What made Abigail’s reflection different from those discussed so far was that she made two attempts to individualize instruction for James, one of which could be argued as an example of “providing help strategically” or being a good reading “coach” (IRA, 2000, p. 1).

Like their peers, Nicole and Kasey were able to articulate specific literacy knowledge demonstrated by the Elkwood students. It should be noted that Kasey and Nicole tested two of the lowest performing kindergarteners at Elkwood yet they were still able to indentify literacy strengths these students possessed even when they knew only 3 out of 54 letters. Both preservice teachers valued partially correct responses. Kasey wrote, “She also recognized that some letters are in her name, as indicated when she pointed to an ‘a’ and said, ‘That’s in my name.’ Then she pointed to a ‘Y’ and said, ‘That’s in my name, too.’” Both of these preservice teachers identified multiple
ways to teach reading (TR) and how to specifically support their students’ individual needs (II). They also understood reading and writing as developmental processes (RWD). Nicole noted, “Amelia’s needs include directional behaviors, such as knowing where to start reading, which way to go, and the return sweep. AFTER, Amelia can successfully control these concepts about print; attention should then be turned to her visual scanning behaviors.” Kasey demonstrated the most sophisticated level of analysis on this assignment because she was beginning to interpret the assessment; moving beyond the simple skill to an interpretation of what that behavior means. She wrote, “She is also very attentive to the pictures and has a sense of story as demonstrated by her comments about the book throughout the reading.”

Based upon these data, two preservice teachers (Crystal and Annmarie) were only moderately affected by the Elkwood Experience. Following the Elkwood Experience, they demonstrated two IRA characteristics effectively - the need to assess children continually (ASSESS) and understanding reading and writing development (RWD). They could administer, score, and analyze assessments and could use those assessments to identify where the child was in his/her reading and writing development though they were often unclear about where to go next and how to proceed with instruction. There was evidence that Crystal was also becoming aware of what to notice and thereby developing an emerging understanding of reading and writing development (RWD). She was refining her observational skills. Furthermore, the language they used to talk about children was neutral or negative. These two students adopted a deficit stance rather than the stance espoused by Clay (2005) “to build upon the child’s foundation whether it is rich or meager” (p. 10).
In comparison, Jessica, Abigail, Kasey, and Nicole demonstrated three of the six IRA characteristics following the Elkwood Experience. These preservice teachers demonstrated understandings of reading and writing development (RWD), the value of continually assessing students, (ASSESS), and could articulate a variety of ways to teach reading (TR).

**Final Case Study Assignments**

The final case study assignment was analyzed in the same manner as the K-2 Assessment reflection and the results were then compared. Overall, the preservice teachers used the language of knowledgeable teachers of reading. By the end of the semester, they were more keen observers of children and were able to interpret the reading behaviors in terms of strengths and needs. They had a deeper understanding, or in some cases, a more accurate understanding of reading and writing development. They could articulate a variety of ways to teach reading and specifically addressed strategies, engagement, and a variety of texts as important aspects of reading instruction (See Figure 4). Over the course of the semester, Annmarie's comments shifted from general observations that lacked in-depth analysis to ones that indicated that she was able to use informal assessments to guide instruction. She could now identify a variety of ways to teach reading (TR) and provide appropriate suggestions for individualizing instruction (II) through careful text selection (TXTS) and by providing support strategically (STRAT) (See Figure 5). Like Annmarie, Kasey began the semester unsure of what to notice as she observed her student at Elkwood. As the semester progressed, she was not only able to identify the her case study student’s specific strengths and needs in literacy (RWD) but was also able to suggest and even engage in a variety of ways to individualize instruction (II) and support reading strategically (STRAT).

**What This Means for Teacher Educators: Implications for Practice**

Findings from this study indicate that preservice teachers are not naturally inclined to develop excellent reading teacher characteristics independently; therefore thoughtfully structuring teacher education courses is of utmost importance. The preservice teachers in this study demonstrated beginning qualities of excellent reading teachers when provided with the right kind of scaffolding in two settings: the university classroom and field-based experiences. In this study, preservice teachers were introduced to the procedural aspects of two literacy assessments; allowed to administer those assessments in the field; and guiding through the process of analyzing the results to determine students’ strengths and needs (Risko, 2009). As they gained confidence with the assessment procedures and their behaviors became routine (Kagan, 1992), they were able to turn their attention to kidwatching (Owocki & Goodman, 2002) and decision making (Swafford et al., 1996). The common supervised field experience gave the entire class including the professor a point of reference throughout the entire course. This “teaching with explicit guidance” (Risko, p. 8) can be equated to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development in that they continually received feedback during class discussions, on written assignments, in lesson planning, and in the supervised field experience at Elkwood.

Though still developing at the end of the course, all 39 preservice teachers exhibited each of the six IRA (2000) characteristics of excellent reading teachers to varying degrees. This finding is encouraging as teacher preparation programs come under fire to prove their effectiveness. Teacher educators are giving preservice teachers...
the knowledge they need when they leave the university setting while acknowledging that they have not yet “arrived” excellent reading teacher status, as deemed by RA. These preservice teachers possessed declarative knowledge (Paris, Lipson, & Wixon, 1983) of these key characteristics as well as procedural knowledge of informal literacy assessments, using a variety of texts, and describing a variety of ways to teach reading. To some degree, these preservice teachers also demonstrated conditional knowledge related to teaching for strategies and individualizing instruction during the case study.

While it remains to be seen if these preservice teachers continued to develop and refine these characteristics once they left the teacher preparation program and entered the field, the foundational knowledge upon which they can grow as professionals was clearly evident when they left the university classroom. These beginning teachers were on the cusp of great knowledge.

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References


Preservice Teachers’ Knowledge of and Beliefs About Dyslexia

Molly K. Ness  
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Gena Southall  
LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore preservice teachers’ knowledge bases regarding dyslexia as a language-based reading disorder. In a researcher-designed open-ended survey, 287 preservice teachers from Alabama, New York, and Virginia defined dyslexia, identified the characteristics of students with dyslexia, provided ideas for effective instruction for students with dyslexia, and cited the sources which informed their knowledge. Findings indicated that while preservice teachers held basic understandings of dyslexia as a reading disorder, they expressed confusion and misunderstandings about the specific phonological processing components of dyslexia. Suggestions for improving preservice teacher education regarding dyslexia are provided.

Since its earliest documentation in 1896, enormous strides have been made in understanding dyslexia as a language-based reading disorder. Despite these research findings, much confusion exists within the field of education. Teachers still are uncertain about recognizing and remediating the reading and writing difficulties displayed by 2.8 million children (Hudson, High, & Al Otaiba, 2007). For the purpose of this paper, we will define dyslexia as such:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003, p. 2)

Because reading disabilities impact nearly 80% of students who are labeled learning disabled, the terms dyslexia and reading disabilities have become somewhat interchangeable (Hudson et al., 2007). It is estimated that dyslexia affects approximately 5 to 17 percent of the population (Shaywitz, 2003).

Students with dyslexia struggle most with the phonological understandings of language and often fail to connect letters and sounds. These challenges complicate the task of decoding, in which readers must use their knowledge of letters and sounds to decipher unfamiliar words. Because students with dyslexia struggle with letter-to-sound correspondences, their decoding is slow and inaccurate. As disfluent readers, students with dyslexia may also struggle with comprehension.

By studying brain structures, researchers have begun to understand the neurobiological roots of dyslexia. Booth and Burman (2001) discovered that, when compared to non-dyslexics, students with dyslexia have decreased amounts of gray matter in the brain’s lobes associated with processing spoken and written language, potentially resulting in difficulties in phonological awareness (Hudson et al., 2007). Functional brain imaging reveals that students with dyslexia show underactivation in the lobes of the brain responsible for language processing and overactivation in other areas of the brain which may compensate for their language difficulties (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2004).

Another significant step towards understanding dyslexia came through genetic studies, which suggest a biological influence on reading development. One-fourth to one-half of children with a dyslexic parent develops similar literacy struggles (Scarborough, 1990). Specific genes, including chromosomes 6 and 15, have been identified as involved with reading disabilities (Grigorenko, 2001). Though these studies do not explain why some children develop dyslexia and others do not, there appear to be genetic factors impacting dyslexia.

Effective Instruction for Students with Dyslexia

To understand effective instruction for students with dyslexia, we can draw on research involving students with reading difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The earlier that children with reading difficulties are identified, the better their chances are to receive effective remedial instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). To make significant progress, students with dyslexia need both systematic and explicit, focusing on the alphabetic principle of how letters and letter combinations represent speech sounds. In particular, readers with dyslexia benefit from various methods of intensive intervention: instruction on letter-sound correspondence, phonemic awareness including blending and segmenting, fluency practice with sight words and decodable words, oral reading practice, and writing instruction connected to word work (Blachman et al., 2004). There is promising evidence that students with dyslexia are able to make gains in reading accuracy and fluency when they receive such instruction (Shaywitz et al., 2003). Functional brain imaging reveals that such instruction helps students with dyslexia to activate previously underactivated parts of the brain that are associated with reading.
To understand effective instruction for students with dyslexia, we can draw on research involving students with reading difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

**The Confusion Surrounding Dyslexia**

Despite significant strides in understanding the nature of dyslexia as a language-based reading disorder, dyslexia is "often misunderstood" (Hudson et al., 2007, p. 506). The confusion surrounding dyslexia has led several researchers to point out common misconceptions or confusion about the causes, incidence, and instructional implications of dyslexia (Hudson et al.; Waladtington & Waddington, 2005). One of the most common misunderstandings is that dyslexia is rooted in word and/or letter reversals and inversions (Hudson et al.; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001). Many emergent and beginning readers – dyslexic or not – write and read letters backwards, reflecting their developing understandings of orthographic representations (Adams, 1999). Reversals alone cannot be used as an early identification marker, though students with dyslexia may be less likely to grow out of letter and/or word reversals.

Another common misconception is that dyslexia is caused by deficits within the visual system. Morgan’s (1896) early written records refer to dyslexia as ‘word blindness’. Orton’s (1925) optical reversibility theory and Hermann’s (1959) spatial confusion theory attributed dyslexia to the perception of letters and words in reversed forms. Research from the last three decades (Fletcher et al.; Vellutino, 1979; Vellutino et al., 1991) has helped to dispel the visual perception myths of dyslexia.

Many misconceptions also exist about the incidence of dyslexia. Contrary to popular belief, girls and boys are equally affected by dyslexia, as shown in longitudinal research from Shaywitz and colleagues (Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Escobar, 1999). Boys are typically overidentified as reading disabled because they may be more likely to act out and demonstrate frustrational behavior in response to their struggles.

Another common confusion is the notion that dyslexia can be outgrown. In fact, dyslexia is a lifelong condition, as shown through research with adolescents, college students, and adults with dyslexia (Bruck, 1990; 1993; Shaywitz et al., 2003). Another myth is that dyslexia can be cured. While people with dyslexia often develop compensatory strategies and can be academically and professionally successful, they still may display phonological deficits. Though people with dyslexia can develop reading comprehension skills, they tend to be slower, less accurate readers than their non-dyslexic peers.

**Teacher Knowledge of Language and Language-Based Reading Disorders**

Because teachers are often the first adults to recognize the signs of dyslexia in young children, it is imperative that teachers understand the nature of dyslexia. In fact, multiple organizations from the fields of teacher education, special education, and language and literacy (American Federation of Teachers, 1999; Brady & Moats, 1997; International Dyslexia Association, 1997; International Reading Association, 2003; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2000) have addressed teacher knowledge about reading disabilities in their standards and position statements. In its position paper on preservice teacher education, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998) stated that all graduates of teacher preparation programs must "have knowledge of current definitions and characteristics of individuals with learning disabilities and how these disabilities affect students’ development and educational performance" (p. 2). Furthermore, because students with dyslexia benefit from explicit instruction in foundational skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, and phonemic awareness, teachers must demonstrate expertise in understanding our linguistic system and its relation to literacy development. As explained by Moats & Foorman (2003), “Knowledge of language structure, language and reading development, and the dependence of literacy on oral language proficiency are prerequisite (but not sufficient) for informed instruction of reading” (p. 32).

Sadly, too many of our elementary school teachers enter classrooms with deficits in their knowledge of language structures and linguistics. In her survey of teacher knowledge, Moats (1994) found that teachers were unaware of linguistic terminology including phonics and phoneme, were unable to reliably identify consonant digraphs and blends, and were unable to analyze words at the phonetic level. A number of studies (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Moats & Foorman, 2003; McCutchen, Abbott, & Green, 2002; McCutchen, Harry, et al., 2002; Spear-Swearing & Brucker, 2003) have revealed that experienced general education teachers and special education teachers demonstrate knowledge gaps in language structure, leading to the conclusion that teachers “lack a degree of technical knowledge that is relevant and fundamental to the teaching of reading” (Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004, p. 161). Teachers’ gaps in knowledge have largely been attributed to teacher preparation programs, which have historically neglected teaching word level reading skills (Hoffman & Roller, 2001; Moats, 1994; Moats & Lyon, 1996). When teachers receive training in phonological awareness and orthographic instruction, they are able to understand the importance of both in meeting the needs of struggling readers and to adapt their own instructional practices to improve student learning (2002).

Many teachers struggle to understand linguistic and orthographic structure of our language; it is not surprising that teachers may operate with similar confusion about language-based reading disabilities such as dyslexia. Researchers who have explored teachers’ beliefs and knowledge about dyslexia documented that teachers...
operate with many misunderstandings and misinformation (Regan & Woods, 2000; Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005). In administering a survey of their knowledge and beliefs to 250 participants, researchers (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005) found that nearly 70% of participants incorrectly identified word reversal as a major criterion in the identification of dyslexia and over 50% of participants were unaware of a hereditary link in dyslexia. Furthermore, the majority of participants vocalized their uncertainty about dyslexia and requested further information and training.

**Purposes of the Study**

The following questions guided the present study: (a) What understandings and/or misunderstandings do preservice teachers have regarding dyslexia?, and (b) How do preservice teachers come to these understandings and/or misunderstandings? Our overarching intent was to give voice to preservice teachers’ knowledge on the definitions of dyslexia and their understandings of how to recognize and identify students with dyslexia in classroom settings. An additional intent was to understand how well teacher education coursework informs preservice teachers about language-based reading disabilities.

**Methodology**

**Data Sources**

We designed a five-item questionnaire to understand participants’ knowledge of and beliefs about dyslexia. The questionnaire asked participants to (a) define dyslexia, (b) list traits of students with dyslexia, (c) discuss how teachers might identify students with dyslexia in their classrooms, (d) suggest methods of instructional support for students with dyslexia, and (e) identify any experiences that have influenced their beliefs about dyslexia.

In designing the first four questions, we believed that asking participants to generate their own definitions of dyslexia would produce very different findings than simply asking participants to rely on declarative knowledge. The objective of the survey was to encourage participants to rely solely on their own knowledge, rather than responding to the cues and implied information that prompts in a true-false, multiple-choice, or Likert-type format may carry. Previous researchers (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005) examined teachers’ beliefs about dyslexia in a survey form, with participants providing a Likert-type answer to one-sentence factual statements.

The final research question came in response to previous research (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005), which encouraged future researchers to “explore not only what participants believe but also why they believe as they do” (p. 30). Participants also provided minimal biographic data, including age, gender, and nature their teaching certification.

**Research Sites and Participants**

Participants for this study consisted of 287 preservice teachers from Alabama, New York, and Virginia. All preservice teachers were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate education literacy and language arts coursework at one of three universities in Alabama, New York, and Virginia. Of the 287 preservice teachers, 213 pursued certification in elementary (K–6) education, 45 sought secondary (6–12) certification, and 29 pursued a dual certification in elementary and special education. Students from both the Alabama and New York universities were in their third semester of a two-year Masters in Teaching program, and were student teaching at the time of the study. Prior to data collection, students from the New York university had completed two courses in literacy development and one course in special education. Students from the Alabama university had completed one course in literacy development, as well as two courses in special education. Students from the Virginia university were in their fourth of five years in a teacher education program, which includes both a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Arts in Teaching. These students had completed three courses in language and literacy development and one course in special education. Though there was certainly variability among the participants in terms of their areas of certification and the nature of their preparation, all participants had finished all special education and literacy courses by the time they completed the survey and only had student teaching and reflective seminars; in other words, none of the participants were to take any other course offerings in the areas of literacy or special education. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 55, and none had previous classroom experience. Of the sample, 86% were women and 14% men.

Data collection from all preservice teachers occurred during university classes in elementary and secondary language, literacy, and writing instruction. At the end of weekly classes, participants spent approximately fifteen minutes completing an open-ended questionnaire. To minimize the effects of researcher presence, researchers were not responsible for the distribution and collection of questionnaires; when possible, this task was instead handled by graduate assistants, who had no responsibility for students’ grades. Of all invited participants, the response rate was 96%. Participation was both voluntary and anonymous.

**Data Analysis**

The qualitative data were analyzed using the principles of grounded theory, involving repeated readings of multiple data sources to identify significant themes. After collecting data, we independently read all of the questionnaires and recorded our observations in memos. We then reread the data and worked independently to identify emerging themes. Next, we collaboratively discussed these themes to identify more specific codes to be used for data analysis. Once we jointly established codes, we independently coded all data; we both reread all questionnaires to code responses. Subsequently, we compared our findings and established an interrater reliability of 0.92. Though our initial hope was to disaggregate the data by preservice teachers’ state of training and their areas of certification, the unequal numbers of participants from Alabama, New York, and Virginia made such analysis unattainable.
Findings

The Definition and Characteristics of Dyslexia

A very small number of participants, less than 2% of preservice teachers, understood dyslexia as a language-based reading disability. A significant number of participants defined dyslexia as a reading disability which complicates a student's ability to read and write. The following is the most sophisticated response, provided by an elementary teacher pursuing dual certification in K-6 and special education:

- Dyslexia is a language-based reading disorder, especially in the phonological component of reading. Students with dyslexia struggle with aspects of reading, such as spelling and decoding unfamiliar words, but may perform extremely well in other academic areas.

Table 1 provides additional information about how preservice teachers defined dyslexia and its characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants' Definitions and Characteristics of Dyslexia</th>
<th>Responding Percentage of Preservice Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter reversals (including switching, transposing, flipping, inverting, and jumbling)</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading / writing words out of order or in the wrong direction</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with fluency (including slow, labored, or disfluent reading)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number reversals</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading disorder / disability</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with writing</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below level / not able to keep up with classmates</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested in reading (motivation, refuses)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with or reluctance to read aloud</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with comprehension</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with spelling</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with decoding and/or letter-sound correspondence</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with oral language and/or pronunciation</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty learning to read and write</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know a definition or characteristics</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual processing deficiencies</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain / cognitive impairment</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with math</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal or above normal intelligence</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language-based reading disorder</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messy handwriting</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Providing Instructional Support for Students with Dyslexia

When asked about instructional support for students with dyslexia, preservice teachers would provide one-on-one help and request time with reading specialists. Additional suggestions for helping students with dyslexia included extended work time, additional reading/writing practice, peer editing and support, a supportive
environment, and patience on the part of teachers. Nineteen percent of participants stated that they did not feel prepared to provide instructional support for students with dyslexia.

Sources of Information

When asked about the sources of information which informed their knowledge about dyslexia, over one-third of preservice teachers self-reported that they lacked experience and/or knowledge about dyslexia. Table 2 details the preservice participants’ ideas about the origins of their knowledge of dyslexia. The next most commonly cited sources of information were (1) experiences in undergraduate and graduate coursework and (2) interactions with family or friends who had been diagnosed with dyslexia. A small portion of participants reported that hands-on experiences working with students with dyslexia in tutoring or field placements were important sources of information. Even fewer participants pointed to online research or textbooks as valuable sources of information.

Discussion and Implications

Our overarching purpose in this study was to examine preservice teachers’ knowledge of and beliefs about dyslexia. We undertook this task in order to understand how well teacher education coursework prepares preservice teachers to identify and work with the students with dyslexia whom they will likely encounter in future years of teaching.

We were both encouraged and discouraged by trends in our findings. We were pleased to find that preservice teachers seem to have a basic understanding of dyslexia as a reading disorder which complicates a student’s ability to read and write. It also seems that the participants in our study understood that dyslexia may impact all aspects of literacy development, including fluency, comprehension, decoding, writing, and spelling. We were discouraged to find that our participants did not seem to understand dyslexia’s link to deficits in the phonological components of language. If teachers fail to understand the more complex issues inherent in dyslexia, they may struggle to provide effective remediation and instruction for students with dyslexia.

Our findings suggest that teacher education coursework lacks sufficient or accurate information about dyslexia, as evidenced by the 8% of participants who could not define dyslexia and the 33% who were not able to identify any sources which informed their understandings. Furthermore, participants’ confusion about the roles of reversals as an early marker of dyslexia and about dyslexia as a visual processing deficiency or cognitive impairment suggest that much of the up-to-date scientifically-based research has not been effectively conveyed in coursework. These findings are particularly significant since the majority of the preservice teachers in our study were in their final semesters of their course of study and had completed at least one semester-long course in special education.

This study has important implications for teacher training and ongoing professional development. Graduate schools must make concerted efforts to improve preservice teachers’ knowledge of dyslexia. Our findings reveal that the majority of preservice teachers do not have the conceptual knowledge base to recognize, diagnose, and remediate readers with dyslexia in their classrooms. As such, our teacher preparation programs do not seem to meet the standards advocated by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998), which state that educators “be prepared to meet the needs of all students, including students with learning disabilities who have unique needs” (p. 1).

Improving preservice teachers’ understandings of dyslexia must be connected to meaningful, hands-on experiences including formal field experiences such as tutoring students with dyslexia. Understandably, preservice teachers’ lack of classroom experience emerged as a significant obstacle to their ability to define dyslexia or to identify students with dyslexia in their future classrooms. This experience could be gained if teacher education courses in both reading and special education incorporate field placements in which preservice students provided instructional support for readers with dyslexia. Preservice teacher coursework could include assignments such as case studies focusing on readers with dyslexia, one-on-one tutoring of a child with dyslexia, informational interviews with literacy specialists who provide

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**Table 2: Sources of Preservice Teachers’ Knowledge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Response</th>
<th>Responding Percentage of Preservice Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of experience / no idea</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A close friend / family member diagnosed with dyslexia</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate / Graduate coursework</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with peers / colleagues</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified self as dyslexic</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media (including television and films)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in school / classes with students with dyslexia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with students with dyslexia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online research</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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explicit instruction for readers with dyslexia, research about the myriad of programs and instructional approaches to remediating readers with dyslexia, and classroom observations of readers with dyslexia in whole-group settings. If geographically feasible, preservice teacher preparation could include observations at private and public schools specifically dedicated to meeting the needs of children with language-based reading disorders. Examples of these schools include the Center School in Philadelphia, the Greenwood School in Vermont, the Windward School and the Gow School in New York, the Oakland School in Virginia, the Greengate School in Alabama, the Prentice School in California, and the Rawson-Saunders School in Texas. Preservice teachers must construct their knowledge of dyslexia not merely through class lectures or textbook readings, but with practical applications to classrooms and students.

**Improving preservice teachers’ understandings of dyslexia must be connected to meaningful, hands-on experiences including formal field experiences such as tutoring students with dyslexia.**

All preservice teachers must be involved in these crucial experiences, both at the elementary and secondary levels. Though literacy acquisition is very much the central focus of elementary education, secondary teachers must be able to recognize readers with dyslexia in their content-area classrooms. By understanding effective curricular modifications to meet the needs of diverse learners, secondary teachers may then be able to help students with dyslexia who struggle with issues of fluency and comprehension when reading their content-area texts.

Finally, we hope these findings will encourage reading researchers and teacher educators to continue their efforts to both conduct research that informs practice and to disseminate these findings in preservice teacher education. Though researchers have clearly made significant strides in understanding dyslexia, we need to make concerted efforts to translate this knowledge to the practical level of future teachers. We find much truth in Edwards’ (2003) plea for practical applications to research: we must commit ourselves to conducting research that has implications for practitioners, and we must do the work of disseminating that research. We need to answer the “so what?” question of significance, not only in terms of our own scholarly ambitions, but we need to know and understand how our research will impact literacy teaching and learning in classrooms across the country. (p. 100)

Thus, we offer these findings in hopes that reading researchers and teacher educators will see the potential and the possibilities of filling the gaps in preservice teachers’ knowledge.

It is our hope that this study will pave the way for substantial follow-up work. Though our original intent was to compare preservice teachers certified in general education to those certified in special education, such analysis was not feasible with our data. Thus, this comparison is a logical starting point. We would like to conduct similar research across more states as to see whether differences among states in their required number of special education courses would yield different results. We also hope to conduct similar research with preservice teachers at the beginning of their teacher education coursework to understand what information these future teachers bring with them into schools of education; this might also lead to longitudinal research which follows preservice teachers through their courses of study to examine how their initial knowledge and beliefs evolved over time and coursework. Because our research is inherently linked to the nature of teacher education, we are also interested in surveying how teacher educators in graduate schools of education prepare preservice teachers with knowledge about students with dyslexia. This extension of our work might serve two purposes: we might discover interesting information about how well informed our teacher educators are regarding dyslexia and how teacher educators incorporate information about students with dyslexia into graduate coursework.

**Conclusion**

Findings from this study indicate that preservice teachers understand dyslexia as a reading disability which both complicates a child’s literacy development and presents specific difficulties in the areas of fluency, comprehension, writing, spelling, and decoding. Despite this rudimentary knowledge, many of our participants expressed confusion, uncertainty, or a lack of knowledge about dyslexia – even after coursework in both literacy and special education. These findings suggest that graduate schools must offer preservice teachers more in-depth and accurate information about dyslexia, as well as meaningful field-based opportunities to observe and instruct students with dyslexia. Teacher educators have the enormously important responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to recognize and to teach students with dyslexia – identified or unidentified – in their future classrooms; our findings suggest that there is room for growth in this area.

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References


Okay, I will end the suspense right now and answer the question. Of course not, no more than in face-to-face (F2F) courses on campus. A related question remains, however, how is learning in the online environment maximized for varying learning styles while maintaining interest and capturing the creative and critical thinking of students? In this Teaching and Learning column, I offer insights I have gathered over the past three years as I moved courses to hybrid and online versions. I collected information from three sources: a) anonymous surveys collected from students each semester, b) two volunteer focus groups with students who had completed at least one online course in our reading masters’ program, and c) reflection on the ongoing review and revision process in which I engage as I continue to develop courses. I will explain how I organize my courses online and manage the large amounts of maintenance information required to run online courses smoothly. I will describe some glitches in assignments that I have encountered, and in the last section I have listed several closing thoughts that the reader may find helpful. The examples are taken from courses in a masters’ level reading certification program.

Logical and Sequential Organization

Courses have multiple organizational structures. There is the primary organization of the subject content, which is rooted in the inherent structure of the discipline, components of practice, and structures of the texts. When planning a semesters’ course of study, instructors frequently use the weeks of the semester as one framework to organize their courses and the chapters of a text as another. Weekly class meetings and textbooks that generally have approximately as many chapters as weeks in the semester support these frameworks.

Many universities use course management systems, such as Blackboard, eCollege, WebCT, Desire2Learn, or Moodle, to provide online access to materials and communication within courses. Our university uses Blackboard as the learning management system for all courses. The individual instructor decides which Blackboard features will be active for the course but may not use many of its features, opting instead to distribute materials in class, require students to buy packets of readings, and turn in hard copies of assignments during class.

Online courses require instructors to use more components of the course management system to organize uploaded documents, links for submitting assignments, assessment tools, communication within the class, student work groups, and gradebooks. The default organization of courses on Blackboard is an opening page, which has current announcements for the course and a left sidebar of content folders. Default content folders include Syllabus, Instructor, Assignments, Course Materials, Work Groups, Email, External Links, and Grade Center. The content folders introduce another organizational framework to the course, that is, task organization. The organization of tasks within content folders is neither sequential nor intuitively logical. If left at the default setting, students may need to search several content folders for one task, such as, retrieving directions from the Assignment folder, required documents from the Course Materials folder, information from External Links, and then finally submitting the completed task to an Assignment submission link. Parts of one assignment, therefore, may appear in several Blackboard content folders.

I have experimented with two organizational frameworks for online courses to match both timelines and task structures and have found both to be helpful to students. The first is a weekly folder organization. Content folders are replaced with folders corresponding to the weeks of the semester. Inside each folder are all the links required for the assignments due during that week. Blackboard allows all types of links, including documents, submission links, podcasts, and external links to URLs, to be inserted into folders. If a task needs several links, I create an assignment subfolder inside the weekly folder to group all links and materials for that task together.

The second time sequence is course modules covering several weeks. Figure 1 shows the module organization of a ten-week summer course in our reading masters’ program. Week One is the orientation when students are introduced to course requirements and technology. The class meets on Elluminate, our online in real-time virtual classroom, for a general orientation during which I explain assignments and demonstrate different technologies we will be using. Elluminate’s two-way communication allows students to listen and watch and ask questions. Every module has a theme project. There is one semester-long assignment, and there are required readings, journals, and sharing teaching ideas in each module. In the journals students identify key concepts from assigned readings, make practical applications, and add a “wondering,” that is, a question or request for additional information. Because the wonderings usually cluster around common topics, I identify discussion threads and post a wiki with my responses and invite further comments.
The two time sequences have advantages and disadvantages. The weekly folders keep students more connected to the course because there is some communication or task every week. Students are less likely to lose track of time in the course; however, students selecting online courses may have real-life schedule challenges that need more flexibility.

Modules provide a more logical organization for assignments that require more than one week to complete. The modules are ordered in a time sequence, and the contents within the modules are grouped by tasks. Figure 1 shows a course organized with theme projects that are each completed within its respective module, a major project due at the end of the semester, and the ongoing reading and writing assignments connected to the textbook and reading professional journals. Students organize their work within the module to fit their own schedules. Over-extended students, as well as procrastinators, may become lost in modules that require assignments to be submitted only at the end of a module spanning several weeks.

Lots of Time

In addition to difficulties in organizing the assignments of an online course, students frequently underestimate the amount of time they need for the work. At our university students can select either F2F or online sections of many courses, and we find many students taking both online and F2F courses during their time with us. Anonymous surveys taken every semester and communications from students indicate they make course selections based on availability and convenience rather than on concerns for their individual learning needs. These data indicate students do not select course format that fits their strongest or preferred learning styles, perhaps because of a lack of understanding of what is required in online learning. Many students may have the notion that online courses take less time and effort because there are no pesky, time-consuming class meetings, but as the semester wears on many realize their online courses are taking more time.

There are reasons why online courses require extra time for some students: oral language (lecture and discussion) usually takes less time than written communication (reading, writing responses), and students who are slow readers and/or writers need even more time to accomplish the additional reading and writing tasks required online. Moreover, discussions that take place in 20 minutes in a classroom will take days to occur in asynchronous blogs or discussion boards. Instructors can require all students to take part in online discussions, but this creates additional problems for maintaining interest in a topic. Instructors and students in F2F classes are rarely required to respond to every comment on a topic. In F2F class discussions students decide whether they wish to respond and to which questions and prompts. Everyone simply does not join in every discussion, and redundancies are filtered out by the discussants themselves. They do not repeat points already made.

For these reasons, students may not be prepared for the time demands of their online courses. The orientation during the first week of class includes a discussion of differences between F2F and online learning. A second support system includes aids to help students manage the flood of maintenance information in the course.

The Flood of Information

In addition to content specific information in courses, online courses must rely on written directions for maintenance information. The flood of this type of information becomes background noise after awhile. The syllabus may not receive a careful read after the first week of the semester. Students often don’t bother to check for new announcements because they all look alike. Emails, especially if too long, are skimmed, often missing important information. There are several aids I use in my online classes that I find grab students’ attention and act as reminders.

Homepage and Calendar

Blackboard’s default opening page is Announcements. I change the Announcement opening page to the Homepage option and create an opening page that acts as an organizer for students. Figure 2 shows the Homepage with the Module Folders in the left sidebar and a reminder with a link to check Announcements at the top, a calendar with frequently updated reminders, and a link to a personalized glossary of technology terms that are
essential for the course. At the beginning of each module, I add reminders and important information to the calendar using text enhancements, for example, font, size, text color, and highlighting, to capture students’ attention. At the end of the module, I change text back to standard size and color, and then post and enhance reminders in the next module.

To Do Lists
Like many instructors in F2F classes, I always end with “Next week we will do a and b, and don’t forget c and d are due, and bring x, y, and z to class.” A “To Do” list in each module is a simple list of tasks to be completed. It does not replace the syllabus; it is a list of highlighted keywords to act as reminders and keep order. On the end of semester surveys students indicate this is one of the most helpful aids in organizing the flood of information in their courses.

Virtual Office Hours
Elluminate sessions can be set up to offer virtual office hours for students who need to confer with the instructor. Remaining online for a few minutes after other sessions, that is, the Book Clubs and orientations, allows students to ask questions either in a group or in a private break out room. Since Elluminate sessions can be set up at any time, an invitation to meet online allows you to answer a detailed question you receive in an email or demonstrate a difficult technology application.

Adapting F2F Assignments to Online
In this section I briefly describe four generic formats for online assignments that parallel class activities students experience in F2F classes. The technology enhancements add interest and challenge, and some cautions are included.

Online Book Clubs
Students select books to read and Book Club sessions to attend on Elluminate during the semester. Two potential difficulties are technical problems novice users have logging into sessions and dead air during discussions. During the first semester I offered Book Clubs online, different students attended each session, and a few students had difficulties logging into each Elluminate session. Since different students attended each Book Club, I had to deal with these problems during every session. After my first online semester, I required all students to attend a general orientation on Elluminate during the first week of the semester so technical problems would be resolved and not recur during every book club.

My second worry was keeping the book discussions going without my having to act as a ringmaster. Students submit five open-ended questions several days before their Book Club meeting. I synthesize them into a discussion list and post it for group members. At the beginning of each meeting, I explain procedures and describe how the pacing of online may differ from in-class discussions.
because participants cannot gauge timing of talk turns by visual cues. Wait time may seem to be unnaturally long at first; but once students gain confidence, they relax and join in. Previewing discussion questions also allows them to think ahead to what they want to say during their discussions.

Feedback from students indicates the Book Clubs are a very positive experience. When large numbers of students select one session, Elluminate’s breakout rooms create small groups so popular books do not end up with discussion groups too large to manage. Making their own book choices increases students’ investment in the experience, and they report they appreciate personal contact with students they do not otherwise meet.

Enhanced Powerpoint Presentations
Students in F2F courses frequently prepare and make presentations on individually researched topics. An online assignment requires students to select and view workshops produced by the Annenberg Foundation (www.learner.org). Students synthesize key information from their workshops and produce a Powerpoint enhanced with recorded comments. Microsoft Office 07-08 allows students to easily embed short recordings into slides, and this discourages them from turning Powerpoint slides into Word documents. I particularly like this format for an assignment because it is an alternative so that every assignment is not traditional reading information and writing reports.

Problems arise when students use outdated programs. The limited functionality of older programs is difficult to overcome even with substantial technology support. I require students to use the Office 07-08 version to produce their reports. Requiring updated technology allows students to use student loans if they need to purchase programs, releases instructors from trying to provide instructions on old technology to which they no longer have access, and sends the message that our online programs are not a collection of cobbled together assignments.

Movies
Both Windows MovieMaker and IMovie are easy to use and can be appropriately challenging to students with varying levels of expertise. There are always students who, without any support, can produce a report in movie format worthy of an Academy Award. Both programs can be greatly simplified for the technologically challenged. By using movie enhancements built into the programs, students can produce a “text movie” without actually having to master video production. Text movies are easily made by using titles, scrolling text, transitions, and embedded program music and sound effects. Students can drop in jpeg pictures to give the impression of “moving pictures” without actually having to produce videos. As a finishing touch, the student movie producer adds his/her own narration using the recording feature in the program.

Electronic Notebooks
Many instructors require students to collect and organize materials from their courses in a notebook that becomes a teacher resource. Students leave the course with a notebook of reading strategies or assessment strategies or a literature anthology. Free wikis, such as pbworks.com, allow students to create electronic notebooks with multiple levels of organization using hyperlinks. These notebooks are far superior to paper binders. Hyperlinks move the user back and forth to various sections in the electronic notebook, and also out to URLs to add internet resources. Wikis look and operate like webpages, but have an additional feature that teachers find beneficial. The owner of the wiki can grant writers’ privileges to colleagues, and the wiki can become a collaborative work group. Many teachers in our masters’ program continue to use their wikis as a planning tool with teams of teachers at their schools.

Quick Closing Thoughts
In closing, I include a few random thoughts that I have collected. I made some of these conclusions only after the same situation occurred several times. Hopefully they will be an alternative to long experience for readers.

First, be prepared to answer lots of emails. Many questions are redundant or could be answered by rereading the syllabus, but students are just trying to handle the flood of information.

When troubleshooting tech problems, ask students to let you know when and how the difficulty is resolved, if your suggestions worked, and if they found the solution from someone else. This helps you build a storehouse of problem fix-its to share with other students.

Anonymous surveys with a minimal point incentive provide extensive information for future course building. If students know you will use their feedback, they are more likely to give it. Unlike standardized student course evaluations, you can ask for information you really need for immediate impact on instruction.

Suggest as many free downloadables as possible. Many sites encourage upgrades at a cost, so warn students if this is not necessary. Note: I have never required or needed an upgrade to any free program I use or recommend to students.

And finally, emphasize honoring copyright as a professional responsibility. Since copyright protects all text, students’ works are also protected and recognized as part of their professional development as educators.

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Independent and Collaborative Writing in a Kindergarten Classroom

Sunita Singh

LE MOYNE COLLEGE

Introduction
This strategy examines the creation of independent collaborative texts for an audience in a kindergarten classroom in which, Lucy, the teacher, provided opportunities for the children to connect writing to reading processes that related to their own landscapes of experience for the purpose of creating independent texts. The children became involved in this strategy toward the end of the spring semester after cumulative modeling and independent writing events that started from the beginning of the semester. For this article, I will highlight key modeling and independent writing strategies within this balanced literacy curriculum that played a crucial role for the development of the children’s independence in collaborative writing.

Background
Writing in the early grades is integrally connected to reading development (Clay, 1975, 1991) and it enables children to acquire knowledge of letter and word identification skills through their invented spellings (Chomsky, 1970, 1971; Geeke, Cambourne, & Fitzsimmons, 1999), also reflecting their knowledge of the phonological and orthographic system (Ritchey, 2008). The writing process is considered more meaningful for reading, especially if children read what they have written (Chomsky, 1971), and is an inherently social process (Dyson, 1989, 2001) in which children construct their own texts from their contexts (Bakhtin, 1981). Lucy implemented theory into practice in her classroom. Her holistic view of literacy was integrated within the social fabric of the class. She said that she tried to build connections between reading and writing in her curriculum and hoped that the children could connect to the curriculum. She believed that this could be achieved by creating and using the content that was central to the interests of the children and also culturally relevant to them. According to her, children needed support to develop their full potential and that was one reason that she always validated the child’s reading and writing—she wanted them to know they were readers and writers in the classroom and in their homes.

Keeping the focus of balanced instruction, the writing process occurred in four stages that included providing the children a step-by-step modeling of the writing process. In modeled writing, Lucy modeled the writing process for the whole class, in interactive writing, Lucy wrote with the children in small groups, in shared writing, Lucy and the children wrote messages together with the whole class, and in independent writing, children wrote independently in their journals on topics of their choosing.

Modeling the Writing Process
The process of modeling occurred everyday throughout the year. The focus of the modeling activity was to help in alphabet practice, letter formation, capitalization, concept of word, high frequency words, sentence structure, punctuation, space, and return sweep. Table 1 provides a layout of some of the key modeling strategies used in the classroom.

Modeling strategies focused not only on the mechanics of the writing process, for example letter identification, punctuation, spacing, and others, but also on building narrative skills that are required for composition. One such example of modeling was the writing of the morning message. This activity occurred three-four days a week and lasted approximately for 15 minutes. Lucy generally wrote the messages on a large white sheet of paper on an easel by sharing her thoughts with the children. Sometimes, she also asked the children if they wanted to write about something. The message was generally in the form of one sentence initially, and topics ranged from what the children would do during the day, a special event in the school or about a particular child in the classroom. Typically, during the first month, Lucy wrote the message herself and the children echo read the sentence, counted the words, circled or underlined a particular letter (consonant or vowel), word, or space. After the first month, Lucy also started asking children to identify high-frequency words, for example, the, is, an, this, and others, find rhyming words if the message was in the form of a rhyme, or words that children could identify independently. Children had to underline words that they already knew. Later during the semester, Lucy would write the message by omitting some letters in words or some high frequency words. New sight words were also added to the message. For most days, Lucy assigned a child to be a “spacer.” The spacer’s task was to put her/his two fingers between two words to help in spacing.

During spring semester, Lucy modeled different genres of composing styles. Sometimes she wrote tongue twisters, jokes, or riddles for the morning message. Later during the semester, modeling for message writing also included modeling story writing. At times, words needed for writing the message were chosen from the word wall in the classroom to demonstrate what children could do if they did not know how to write a word. During the later part of the year, Lucy also asked the children to make their own story based on one of the predictable stories they had read during reading time. Lucy wrote the children’s story as they dictated. Some messages also took form of writing thank you letters or get well soon letters that were signed by the whole class. Lucy would take dictation from the children and write letters to senior
Table 1. Modeled Writing in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity &amp; Time/ Frequency</th>
<th>Group size</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of line leaders</td>
<td>Two children every day</td>
<td>During this time two children were selected who lead the whole class in</td>
<td>Teaching English/Spanish alphabet; concept of space, concept of word,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During circle time,</td>
<td>(in rotation).</td>
<td>forming the line when the class had to go out to the playground, for lunch</td>
<td>initials of name, and numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:55:9:20, everyday</td>
<td>Students as instructors</td>
<td>PE. Students held their name cards and spelled their names in either English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Spanish. Lucy asked them if they noticed anything about their names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(how many ‘Ns’/’Ts’, initials of names, capital letters, number of letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and spacing). The children were asked to count the letters in their names in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English/Spanish and clap the syllables in their names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>Whole group</td>
<td>Two children participated in the calendar activity every day. The task</td>
<td>Days of the week, months of the year, and seasons in the year, numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle time, everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td>was to tell the day, date, year, and count the number of days children had</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>been in school. Generally, Lucy asked them to choose the language they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wanted to do this activity in. Initially children chose from English or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish but later in the year she also included Japanese and Vietnamese.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Recognition</td>
<td>Whole group</td>
<td>During this time children sang the alphabet song and identified letters of</td>
<td>Relationship between letters and sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle time, everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td>the alphabet in English and Spanish. Generally Lucy and the Spanish aide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mixed the cards in random order and asked the children to identify the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>letters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Message</td>
<td>Whole group interactive</td>
<td>Wrote a message by sharing her thoughts with the children, occasionally</td>
<td>Alphabet practice; concepts of punctuation; space, return sweep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy hour, 3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>asking them to join in the writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>days a week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Writing/Shared</td>
<td>Whole group</td>
<td>Lucy incorporated this as a part of the morning message. Initially, the</td>
<td>Familiarity with the process of writing, concept of space, capital letters,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>children had to circle capital letters, a particular alphabet, or punctuation</td>
<td>punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy hour, 3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>marks on the message. Later in the semester she would ask the children to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>days a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>write some words in the message, and at times the whole class would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>write a message and everyone would sign their names.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Writing</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>The whole class wrote on chart paper from a book that they had read.</td>
<td>Help to compose independently; formation of letters, words, sentences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy hour, 2-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lucy assisted them as they wrote the words. Later they made pictures and</td>
<td>punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>days a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>the results were chart stories - read by the whole class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens or the school principal. At the same time, Lucy tried to make sure that there was variation in the writing when she said:

Here I am, I get to do morning message or writing for them everyday. I write, “Scary children,” some days I write “Wonderful children.” I don’t always say, “Dear boys and girls.” Now I am using different words. They told me to write “Scary children.”

Morning message became synonymous with “shared writing” because of the participation of the children in the process of writing, especially after a few months. Lucy considered the message writing a very important activity because it helped children to transition into journal (or independent) writing activity.

Independent Writing

Writing independently was a key focus for Lucy in the classroom. Independent writing activities occurred from the first day at school. Although children wrote on their own, Lucy often guided children toward using the strategies they needed for encoding their messages. Two of the key independent writing activities were sign-in and journal writing.

Sign-in

A typical day started with the children signing-in. Everyday, they had to “sign” (write) their names on large lined or unlined sheets of paper (11x16) spread on a kidney shaped table at the back of the classroom or at their own tables. On the big sheets of paper, Lucy wrote down the date and her name and sometimes numbered the sheets. The children’s first, middle and last names (initially only first names) were written in Zaner-Bloser cards in English and their native language. Lucy introduced the children to their first names at the beginning of the semester in August, last names in October, and their middle names in November during the sign-in and circle time. Children who spoke a language other than English or Spanish (for example, Japanese, Korean), had their names written on their name cards in English and their native language.
As the children walked into the classroom in the morning, they gathered around the table to write their names. Lucy’s purpose during sign-in was to invite the children to write, and based on her teaching experience of several years, she knew that they were always interested in writing their names since it was the most meaningful of the experiences with print (Haney, 2002). Although the children always had their name cards in front of them, many times they signed without looking at their name cards. Even if they did look at them, they did not always attempt to approximate what was on the name card, especially at the beginning of the semester. Lucy never gave the children any explicit instruction on letter formation and spacing during this time nor did she correct them. She accepted whatever they wrote as their “names,” just reminding them occasionally to write the “kindergarten way,” i.e., conventionally with upper and lower case letters. The sign-in sheets provided Lucy with an idea of how her children were progressing in writing. Instruction regarding letter formation, spacing, capitalization, and others was provided during the subsequent line-leader routine during circle time (see Table 1).

Specifically modeled the process of writing a journal for the children on a butcher paper attached to the easel. She first modeled the process of thinking of a story and drew a picture for it. Next, she sounded out the words in her story and wrote it with assistance from the children using invented spellings. She also demonstrated some writing conventions including capitalization, spacing with two fingers, and punctuation. At the end, she re-read her story by pointing to the words and also wrote the story conventionally, below the original invented spelling version. All children were provided with a “journal” that Lucy made herself. These journals were approximately 20 blank, unlined sheets of spiral bound paper. When one journal was complete, Lucy sent it to homes of the children for the parents.

When the children started journal writing Lucy asked them to follow the same process. They also had to stamp the date on their story. They read their story by pointing to the words. Everyday, Lucy selected a few children with whom she would work individually. After children had written their stories using invented spellings, Lucy would ask them to read their version of the story by pointing to the words. Next, she modeled for the children by writing the conventional way, telling them, “This is how it looks when big people write.” Finally, children were asked to read what they had written and what Lucy had written.

The focus of the journal writing activity was on letter-sound relationship, letter formation and left-right reading sweep. According to Lucy, writing development could aide in the development of reading, and that was the reason writing was significant in her classroom. She knew this would also lead to co-development of reading and writing. After children understood the process of journal writing, and could write independently, Lucy occasionally asked children to read a book and write their journal based on one of the characters or incidents in the book. Following is a description of the journal writing process in the classroom:
(All children are at their tables writing their journals. Lucy is helping Breona. Breona’s story is “Me and my mom are going to the park.”)

Lucy How do you spell "mom?" (Sounds out the first letter of the word) mmmm-

Child (From a different table someone spells) M-O-M.

Lucy (Looks around) Oh! Is that someone helping you? Awesome!

Breona (Spells.) M-O-M. (Starts writing.)

Lucy M-O-M. Me and my mom are, are-

Breona R! (Writes "R.")

Lucy Ya, space it. What are you doing?

Breona Walking.

Lucy Okay, say it with me. Put (The word) on a rubberband, (Lucy comes closer to Breona and pretends to hold a rubberband and makes her mouth in shape of an "O.") Wooooooow. Make that sound.

Breona (Comes closer to Lucy.) Wooh! (Both laugh.)

Lucy What’s the letter? Like in Wednesday? Like in Windmill?

(Breona gets up from her seat to check the word wall for the letter.)

Lucy Write down what you think. Me and my mom are going to, TO. How do we spell “to”? We spelled it today, TO-day, Th, Th. What letter do you hear?

Breona T-H-E (Spells the word “the”).

Lucy T-H-E spells “the,” we’re writing “to.”

Breona H (Says the letter “h”).

Lucy Come here. We are writing “Me and my mom are walking TO /Th/.”

Breona T (Says the letter “T”).

Lucy Yes, you know how to write a “T”? (Breona writes “T”.)

Lucy Okay. “Me and my mom are walking to the.” Now you can write “the.” You know how to spell “the?” (Jessica sitting at table next to Lucy and Breona, comes over.)

Jessica (Spells) T-H-E “the.”

Breona T-H-E “the” (Breona writes as she spells). Me and my mom are walking to the park.

Lucy How do you spell park?

Breona P (Says the letter “P”).

Lucy Yes, write it down. (Lucy asks Breona to punctuate her sentence. She models for Breona the way “big people write’ and asks her to read her writing.)

Lucy never interrupted when children were telling each other how to spell words. She believed that sharing was important for building the classroom community.

Lucy also referred to journal writing as the writing workshop. Later during the semester, Lucy also introduced persuasive writing and sometimes children chose topics to write upon for a whole week. Following is an example of a journal from the later part of the semester.

![Figure 3. Journal Writing](image)

Journal sharing was an integral part of the journal writing event. Almost every day Lucy invited some children to share their journals with the whole class in order to provide them with authentic purposes to write (Schickendanz, 1996). The child sharing his/her journal was given the “author’s chair” in which they sat, read their journal to the whole class, and explained what the picture they drew meant.

**Collaborative Writing in the Classroom**

During the literacy center time, the most prominent activity was the message writing by the children. Since modeling message was a frequent activity, children were aware of the process and more than eager to play the role of “teacher.” Lucy assigned small groups of children to write the message for the class similar to the way she wrote herself. Following is a description of the process:

Lucy These four children are going to write our morning message today.

we are going to come back and read it together.

(J. I. Jawon, Deanna, Madeline, and Jasmine stand in front of the easel with a pen in their hand, ready to write the message for the class.)

Lucy Make sure you put the punctuation in their spot. You can write dear children, dear class, it’s your choice, you decide. (Madeline writes “Dear.”)

J I Jawon (Writes boys) That says boys. Dear boys and (Turns to Jessica) can she write “and?” (Jessica smiles because she is talking to Deanna. Okay, then I will write “and.”)
Madeline: Okay, first is me, then J Jawon, then-
Deanna: No, it's me (Deanna gets her turn next and she starts writing the date) We gotta write the month. (J Jawon goes over to the classroom calendar and dictates to Deanna, also keeps looking at what she is writing.)

J Jawon: F-E-B-R-
(Madeline and Jessica also go over to the calendar area to look at it. They giggle pointing to the "hearts" on the word "February." J Jawon comes over to see what Deanna is writing.)

J Jawon: No, let me see it. You can't write the same thing right here (Holds her hand and writes B.)

Madeline: (To Deanna) R (She also tells Deanna the date and Deanna writes) It's her turn (pointing to Jessica). We take turns!

Deanna: I know.

J Jawon: (Reading the message) February 20, Dear boys and girls.

Lucy: Keep going. Today.

Deanna: T-O-D-A-Y (J Jawon is writing "Today is").

Lucy: Today is what?

Deanna: It's your turn (To Madeline).
(Deanna takes the pen from J Jawon and writes Thursday but J Jawon takes it back from her. Children start playing.)

Lucy: Okay, what do we have so far? Today is Thursday. What is going to be your message? What are you going to write? (Children have various suggestions including "The ghost got blood in his eyes." They continue dancing and playing around.)

Madeline: I know what, I know what, Where did the sheep go to get a haircut? To the ba-ba shop.

J Jawon: Where did the cow go to get his haircut? To the mo-mo shop.

Lucy: How do you spell cow?

J Jawon: Sound it out!

Lucy: The final message was: Dear Boys and Girls, Where did the cow go to get his haircut? To the mo-mo shop.

Discussion
The literacy events discussed above aptly reflected the philosophy Lucy had for the children in her class, which had an ultimate goal: “I am teaching them to be independent of me.” She firmly believed that literacy would flourish in the classroom only if initiated by the
“classroom community,” not just by her and so she tried to support the literacy development of children in her classroom in developmentally appropriate ways at all times. The learning process of the children began with mediation from the teacher, and later on their own (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987). The collaborative process, in which writing was co-constructed by the children while negotiating, provided them with a shared purpose and identity at the same time, aiding in motivation development (Nolen, 2007). Children were able to demonstrate that they understood the mechanics of writing, problem solving skills, and negotiate social skills involved in collaborative work. This learner-centered writing instruction also served as a means of motivation and empowerment for expressing individual and collective voice (Weber, Wroge, & Yoder, 2007).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Sunita Singh is an Assistant Professor of Education at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. Dr. Singh’s research areas include early childhood education, early literacy, second language and literacy acquisition, and teacher education. Her current research explores ways in which teachers can be supported to provide developmentally appropriate literacy instruction to all children, especially in classrooms that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

References
International Reading Association
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OTER Membership:
Melinda Adams
University of South Florida

Parliamentarian:
Irene Allen
Central Michigan University (retired)
Submission Guidelines

The Journal of Reading Education (JRE) is a juried publication of the Organization of Teacher Educators in Reading (OTER). The OTER members primarily consist of professors, administrators, supervisors, consultants, and students pursuing degrees in the Reading Education field.

The focus of JRE is to promote excellent literacy education through improvement in the education of reading teachers. The articles of interest to JRE members include: improving professional practices in higher education, helping teachers improve their instruction, facilitating the administrative and supervisory processes, and researching teaching practices.

You must be a member of both the International Reading Association and OTER for your work to be considered for publication in this journal.

Articles—(Must be Research-Based)

Submission Guidelines and Word Counts
Article length - 20 pages (including references), double-spaced, 12-point type, New Times Roman font. Articles exceeding maximum length will be returned to the author.
When submitting an article for consideration, please provide the following:

- One proofed, APA 6th Edition electronic copy, in the form of an email attachment, to the submissions editor Lisa Adkins at lisaadkins@usf.edu
- An abstract—100 words max
- An author note—50 words max, or 75 words max for articles with multiple authors

Special Writing Notes:
- Use active voice.
- Avoid overuse of weak “ing” verbs.
- Avoid overuse of adjectives/adverbs and the word “very.”
- Articles must contain methodology, a theoretical perspective for the methodology, and must offer implications.

Special Interest Columns
(Column length—2,000 words max)
- Teaching and Learning

Acceptance Rate — 20%
Application for Membership in the
Organization of Teacher Educators in Reading

Name    Dr.    Mr.    Mrs.    Ms._______________________________________________________________________
Title ___________________________________________________________________________________________
Institution _______________________________________________________________________________________
Institution Address ________________________________________________________________________________
City _________________________________________  State ______________  Zip __________________________
Phone:  Office (_________) ________________________________  Home (_________) _______________________
Fax (_________) ______________________________  E-mail ____________________________________________
Home Address _____________________________________________________________________________________
City _________________________________________  State ______________  Zip __________________________
Preferred Mailing Address:  □Office  □Home

Areas of professional expertise, research, and publications ________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
Journal topics of interest ___________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

Membership in the International Reading Association is required.
Membership applications will not be accepted from non-IRA members.
I.R.A. Membership Number: ______________________________  I.R.A. Expiration Date: ______________________

OTER Membership:  □ Renewal  □ New Member  (Yearly membership begins upon receipt of dues.)
1 Year Membership:  □ $15 USD Single  □ $20 USD Canada & International  □ $25 USD Institutions

Please make check payable to Organization of Teacher Educators in Reading
and send to:

OTER Membership
Journal of Reading Education
4202 East Fowler Avenue EDU105
Tampa, FL  33620-5650

Total Check Amount: $