JOURNAL OF LITERACY INNOVATION

RETHINKING LITERACY INSTRUCTION

VOLUME THREE, ISSUE ONE
SPRING 2018
SEAN RUDAY, EDITOR
WWW. JOURNALOFLITERACYINNOVATION.WEEBLY.COM

JOURNAL OF LITERACY INNOVATION

RETHINKING LITERACY INSTRUCTION

VOLUME THREE, ISSUE ONE
SPRING 2018
SEAN RUDAY, EDITOR
WWW. JOURNALOFLITERACYINNOVATION.WEEBLY.COM

Table of Contents

Editor's Introduction……...…….2

"The Reading Pendulum: Phonics, Word Method, and Whole Language"
Carly Gould & Chyllis E. Scott, University of Nevada, Las Vegas……...…….4

"Countering the Peter Effect: Blogging and Talking About Children's Literature in Teacher Education Classes"
Victoria B. Fantozzi & Katie Egan Cunningham, Manhattanville College…….……..16

Author Bios……..……..……31

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

SEAN RUDAY, *JLI* FOUNDER AND EDITOR
LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

What do today's literacy professionals need to know about reading instruction?

What does the research say about the best way to equip our students with the skills they need to make sense of text they encounter?

What tactics can teachers utilize to help their students read effectively, enjoy reading, and identify as readers?

Questions like these are at the heart of every discussion I have about reading with educators, administrators, and pre-service teachers. They address the importance of understanding what research says about teaching reading effective, how those research findings can be put into action, and what teachers can do to help their students develop reading skills and a passion for reading. I'm proud to say that the two articles in this issue of the *Journal of Literacy Innovation* address these questions by describing what research says about reading instruction, what those findings mean for today's literacy classroom, and how teachers can put those findings into action in their instruction.

First, you'll encounter "The Reading Pendulum: Phonics, Word Method, and Whole Language" by Carly Gould and Chyllis E. Scott. This well-researched and insightful piece "encapsulates the research and theories that have influenced beginning reading trends in America, focusing on the rise and fall of phonics throughout time." This article not only charts key issues and movements related to the history of phonics instruction, but also describes implications for what today's teachers can learn from these pendulum swings to best provide effective instruction for their students. This article provides insight into the past, present, and future of phonics instruction and is a must-read for those interested in this topic.

The second article you'll find is "Countering the Peter Effect: Blogging and Talking About Children's Literature in Teacher Education Classes" by Victoria B. Fantozzi & Katie Egan Cunningham. This innovative and relevant piece describes the "results from an action research project focused on supporting teacher education students' knowledge of children's literature and identities as readers." In the project the authors describe, teacher education students blogged about their experiences reading children's and young adult literature; their posts convey increased abilities to reflect on the texts they read and their identities as readers. This piece concludes with insightful recommendations that K-12 teachers can use to apply the study's findings to their instruction.

I am proud to share these excellent pieces. I hope you will consider adding your voice to this conversation by submitting your work for consideration for publication in a future issue of the *Journal of Literacy Innovation.* For more information on the journal, please visit www.journalofliteracyinnovation.weebly.com.

See you in October 2018 for *JLI*'s next issue!

Sean

Sean Ruday, Ph.D.

Editor, *Journal of Literacy Innovation*

Associate Professor of English Education, Longwood University

THE READING PENDULUM: PHONICS, WORD METHOD, AND WHOLE LANGUAGE

CARLY GOULD, M.ED.
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

CHYLLIS E. SCOTT, PH.D.
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

Abstract

The history of phonics in America has been consistently inconsistent. Phonics instruction in American classrooms has been praised at times while viewed as an evil years later. The pendulum shifts that characterize phonics instruction in America have been widely influenced by new methods and reading research including the Word Method and Whole Language. This literature review encapsulates the research and theories that have influenced beginning reading trends in America, focusing on the rise and fall of phonics throughout time.

Keywords: phonics, phonics instruction, word method, whole language, beginning reading

The Reading Pendulum: Phonics, Word Method, and Whole Language

In a one room, little red schoolhouse in Virginia was a young schoolteacher. Amidst the slates and wood-burning stove, were freshly printed New England Primers, one on each student's desk. The teacher, however, had no primer or manuals for instruction. At the opening of her lesson, the teacher attempted to teach her students how to accurately say letter sounds, understanding that her main purpose was to help unify language in America, starting with the multi-aged students in her schoolhouse. While the primers provided a sequence for teaching what would later be identified as phonics, the young school teacher hoped that she was teaching the letter sounds correctly.

Introduction

As teachers and teacher educators continually strive to meet the ever-changing demands of curriculum, instruction, and students, there is also value in reviewing how education has changed over the years. Often, teachers find themselves confused, lost, or unsure about their own teaching, similar to the above vignette. Therefore, in this paper we provide a historical overview of phonics, the word method, and whole language in the context of the well-known pendulum swing in reading education. Our goal is to provide teachers, reading specialists, and teacher educators with a foundation or renewed foundation about reading and reading instruction. First, we must define phonics, which is the process of being able to translate individual or groups of

letters into sounds, and phonic analysis is the process of applying one's knowledge of letter-sound relationships, also known as blending, to arrive at the pronunciation of a word (Gans, 1964; Heilman, 1976). These two processes are intertwined and instruction of both, known as phonics instruction, provides a reader with the ability to associate printed letters with the speech sounds that those letters represent (Heilman, 1976). Flesch suggested that learning phonics is empowering in that knowing the rules of how letters combine to make sounds provides any reader with the ability to decode and read any word (1966).

Learning phonics generalizations requires the use of sound and speech (Gans 1964; Gates & Yale, 2011). According to Gans' work in 1964, children come to preschool and kindergarten having had different experiences with sounds and vocabulary. Some students have a variety of words they have heard in their household, while others have a much more limited vocabulary (Gans, 1964). An individual child's interaction with sounds is directly related to that child's ability to learn how letters and sounds blend together, thus impacting their readiness to learn phonics (Gans, 1964).

Phonics instruction has been applauded and condemned throughout history (Abadiano, Turner & Valerie, 2011; Flesch, 1966; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995). Often, phonics has been the sole type of instruction seen in classrooms at times, and other times it has been completely eradicated from classrooms (Flesch, 1966). Critics and new methods, such as the Word Method, Whole Language and their proponents, have threatened the nature of phonics and phonics instruction and questioned its validity and effectiveness in the classroom (Emans, 1968).

Therefore, it might be said that phonics instruction in American classrooms has been consistently inconsistent (Emans 1968; Flesch, 1966). Thus, this literature review explored the history of phonics instruction, particularly in American classrooms. Beginning in the 1500's and following the path of phonics through history, this review explored phonics from its original purpose of unifying a nation and concludes with an analysis of how phonics fits into a 21st century American classroom, moving into 2018.

Purpose of Phonics and Phonics Instruction

In 1534, Ickelsamer encouraged the teaching of sounds rather than letters (Emans, 1968). However, in 1570, Hart pointed out the issues with teaching sounds instead of letters through his observations with the incorrect ways that students were saying words (Emans, 1968). Later, Franklin revised Ickelsamer's ideas for teaching phonics by advising teachers to teach letter sounds to help new readers make connections between letters and sounds. This connection between letters and sounds was the beginning of systematic phonics, explicit instruction in the alphabet and sounds (Graaf, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009).

In 1768, Franklin published a device for teaching the letter sounds called *Scheme for a New Alphabet and Reformed Mode of Spelling* (Emans, 1968). After its publication, the New England Primer was published in the 1790's as the first primer designed for the American colonies (Smith, 1934, 2002). In this primer, there was a large emphasis on reading instruction that focused on elocution and pronunciation. The purpose of focusing on pronunciation was to unify

different dialects and accents that had recently joined in the colonies, and to bring about one way to pronounce words (Emans, 1968).

Next, Noah Webster published *The American Spelling Book,* also known as the *Blue- Black Speller,* in 1790, which was a scheme for teaching and learning phonics (Smith, 1934, 2002). This scheme for phonics was not entirely meant to teach reading, but rather, to continue the unification of the American language (Emans, 1968, Smith, 1934, 2002). Webster's primer was important because he was the first to realize that an English primer had to be based on phonetics. In the preface of his book, he wrote, "[…] it was necessary to begin with the elements of language and explain the powers of the letters" (Flesch, 1966, p. 44). Flesch (1966) suggested that it is difficult to determine if Webster's primer was meant as a reading or a spelling book because in that time, reading and spelling were taught simultaneously.

Although the instructional significance of the *Blue-Black Speller* is unclear, besides language unification in the colonies, The *Blue-Black Speller* was used without challenge in American schools into the second half of the 19th century (Flesch, 1966). After several generations of using the *Blue-Black Speller,* students began to learn to read from McGuffey Readers, which started with letters and sounds (Flesch, 1966). Phonics for beginning reading was a wide-spread method of teaching beginning reading until the mid-1800's (Emans, 1968).

Challenge from the Word Method

Despite the fact that the word method did not gain popularity or recognition until the mid-1800's, this method has roots dating back to 1658. During this time, Comenius wrote a book in which he advocated for teaching the meaning of words rather than sounds (Emans, 1968). Whereas in 1828, Worcester, the author of *The Primer of the English Language,* reinforced the pedagogy of Comenius when he suggested that it is not necessary for a child to know his letters and sounds prior to reading. Rather, children can learn to read words by seeing them, hearing them pronounced, and making meaning of the words (Emans, 1968). Meaning making and children's experiences were most important to Comenius, and so, he believed that children would learn to read through these mediums (Hoffman & Roser, 2012).

It was not until 1846, however, that the word method began to be recognized among influential educators as a method worth trying. Flesch (1966) recited a story of a young teacher in a village reading a newspaper with a four-year old on his lap. A man was outside of the house milking a cow when the man inside saw the word "cow" in the newspaper. He showed the girl the word and connected the word to the activity of the man outside. From then on, the girl could read the word "cow" (Flesch, 1966). This, Flesch explains, is where the word method was born.

At the same time that this teacher discovered this method, parents of school-aged children were frustrated that their children could not spell words (Flesch, 1966). Upon hearing of this newly discovered method, the Teacher's Institute at Watertown was held. The teacher from the story, J. W. Russell, was asked to explain this new method of teaching beginning reading (Flesch, 1966). The Institute determined that Russell's method was one that needed to be published and used in schools and *John's First Book* and *The Child's First Reader* was published. The New York School Journal reported that this book was one of great reform and would save millions of

children through the use of the word method (Flesch, 1966). In response, the word method slowly gained popularity among educators.

Shortly after in 1885, a significant study by Cattel was published which reported that in a given unit of time, only a few letter sounds could be identified. In the same amount of time, it was possible to identify words with four times the number of letters, thus, revealing the efficiency of learning whole words (Emans, 1968). Flesch (1966) argued that this was the only study that showed the word method to be superior to the teaching of phonics. Contrarily, Gill (1911) reported that using the sentence method in opposition to phonics increased reading speed. At this point in time, the use of the word method and books like Russell's were a rarity and typically only utilized by experiment-minded teachers and schools. The phonics method was still widely used, while the word method was gaining exposure and popularity (Flesch, 1966).

Instructional materials during the early 1900's still included a great deal of phonics (Flesch, 1966). Word method resources and books still included phonics since abandoning phonics altogether was not an option in the mind of many educators and teachers (Flesch, 1966). However, when the *Beacon Readers* were published at the end of 1920, phonics content and instruction was not included. At this time, loyalty to and dependence on phonics was decreasing in the educational domain as the word method gained popularity.

Furthermore, Arthur I. Gates from Teachers College, Columbia University began to preach about his enthusiasm for the word method in the 1920's (Flesch, 1966). Gates argued that systematic phonics was evil, but also recognized that teachers were still teaching phonics and were not interested in completely abandoning the method (Emans, 1968). As a result, Gates proposed that the word method include phonics but in a new format and offered alternative techniques for phonics instruction (Gans, 1964).

Gates' new form of phonics did not include teaching explicit sounds (Flesch, 1966). No longer would teachers teach students that "s" says /s/ or that "m" says /m/, rather, this new form of phonics encouraged teachers to teach students the sound /m/ when they read the word "monkey," and teach the sound /s/ when they read the word "snake" (Flesch, 1966). This newest form was the introduction of intrinsic or incidental phonics, which refers to learning phonics as one learns words (Flesch, 1966).

Gates wrote an article in 1928, which was published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* that largely threatened phonics instruction in schools (Flesch, 1966). As a result, phonics was not taught until second grade and was taught as incidental, rather than systematic (Flesch, 1966). Schools continued to postpone phonics instruction to older grades until it was completely erased from classroom practice altogether (Flesch, 1966).

Phonics made a return to the educational scene in the 1930's due to the dissatisfaction with the word method; which was not a realistic method of teaching reading, when done on its own (Emans, 1968). More convincingly, several studies were published during this time that proved the effectiveness of phonics. For example, Winch (1925) tested the alphabet approach, word method approach, and two phonics approaches. The phonics approaches proved to be superior to the other approaches. Next, Agnew (1939) reported that phonics increased independence in word

recognition and Rogers (1938) suggested that poor phonics skills resulted in poor comprehension and reading proficiency. Additionally, Tiffin and McKinnis (1940) found a large connection between phonics and silent reading ability. There was undeniable evidence of the benefits of phonics in beginning reading within reading research of the time (Emans, 1968).

The resurgence of phonics during this era was different from the phonics that was taught in the previous era in which phonics was characterized as a kill-and-drill approach, one that synthetically/systematically builds up words from their parts (Emans, 1968). The new era was characterized by analytic phonics, which included taking a word apart in order to recognize the parts of the word (Emans, 1968). Tate, Herbert, and Zeman (1940) published a study that was favorable to the use of analytic phonics and found that phonics taught in connection to word attack skills, as those taught in analytic phonics, was superior to other methods.

New and Refined Methods of Phonics and Phonics Instruction

Williams S. Gray (1948), a leading researcher in reading education, had a differing theory than that of the word method or phonics. This theory condemned the use of phonics drills and dull word-by-word reading while also rejecting the "guessing from context" method that characterized the word method (Gray, 1948, p. 28). Gray's theory developed "word perception skills that [were] functional in the total reading act" (Gray, 1948, p. 28). In essence, this theory argued for the use of gaining meaning from context, using the form or appearance of the word (configuration clues), structural clues to determine the word, and phonetic clues (Gray, 1948).

In response to research, Flesch (1966) detailed his research and investigations regarding how students were performing in reading and published the first edition of *Why Johnny Can't Read* in 1955. This text, which venomously argued against the word method, forced parents and educators to question the role of phonics in reading instruction (Emans, 1968). According to Flesch, teachers in the 1950's knew nothing about phonics nor did their students. Flesch blamed the word method for the students' inabilities to read and spell (1966). Published research during this time supported Flesch's plea for the return of phonics instruction in schools (see Elwell, 1952; Bloomfield, 1942; Spache, 1963). For example, Spache (1963) reported that Porter found children need phonics clues 77% of the time to get a word right when reading. The word method was beginning to see resistance from significant educators (Emans, 1968).

Within his book, Flesch (1966) described his experiences in several classrooms that utilized different beginning reading approaches. Additionally, Flesch (1966) described an occurrence in a school that was experimenting with the phonetic method. The students could read brand new passages or newspaper articles utilizing their decoding skills. While some students took a while to decode the text, they were able to do it on their own using the tools of phonetic analysis (Flesch, 1966). Furthermore, students were sounding out words while writing, rather than copying the teacher's writing. Reports from Flesch's experiences revealed the effects of the word method and phonics on students' reading and spelling abilities (Flesch, 1966). Thus, schools that used the word method began facing resistance from parents, which continued until the beginning of the Second World War (Flesch, 1966).

World War II halted the criticisms on schools as communities and families were struggling with the effects of the war (Gans, 1964). People were unable to focus on the limitations of the school system and force change as families coped with economic, political, and social disruptions (Gans, 1964). Upon the end of the war, parents resumed criticizing schools for their failure to teach phonics (Gans, 1964).

Advocates of the word method continued to argue for the validity and effectiveness of the method while suggesting that phonics was ineffective. Gans (1964) argued that it was inappropriate to expect a young child to attend to individual sounds of words and parts of words without ensuring his hearing experience is mature. However, while Gans did not argue in favor or against the use of phonics instruction, he did suggest that phonics instruction was only effective when the child's auditory skills and experience are sufficiently developed and will allow him or her to listen to and identify individual sounds and words (1964).

Parents continued to show great concern about student progress and joined Flesch in his criticism of the word method as parents realized that their school-age children were unable to read (Gans, 1964). While the basal readers used in the schools had a phonics component, the basal readers did not rely on phonics to blend sounds (Harris, 1961). Instead, the readers offered word attack skills, which meant paying attention to configuration, meanings, and structure, while using phonics as a last resort (Harris, 1961). Consequently, the public was advocating for a mixed use of phonics and the word method (Gans, 1964).

In response to previous work, researcher Jeanne Chall published *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, which included strong research findings that indicated that learning letters and sounds and the process of decoding was superior to other methods in teaching beginning reading (Chall, 1967). After this seminal text was published, it became acceptable once again to explicitly teach students that "m" says /m/ (Hempenstall, 2006). This resurgence of systematic phonics was supported by the First-Grade Studies report that was conducted by the Department of Education (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998). The report concluded that systematic phonics was related to success with decoding and fluency. Additionally, the report found no consistency across grade levels and classrooms in regard to systematic phonics being most effective (Baumann et al., 1998). Thus, while trends in phonics instruction had changed once again, the issue of how to best teach reading was unresolved (Baumann et al., 1998).

Whole Language

Earlier in this review, Comenius was mentioned in regard to his early theory that children can learn to read by being introduced to what is familiar to them, manipulating concrete objects, and using their native language to talk about what is being learned (Goodman & Martens, 1993). A new movement, known as Whole Language, was connected to Comenius' idea in the way the word method had been over fifty years prior. Whole language was a grassroots movement made up of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers in 1986 (Goodman & Martens, 1993). This movement put the power of educational decision making back in the hands of the teachers (Goodman & Martens, 1993).

Whole language was a student-centered approach that placed the learner above the content and embraced the theories of Dewey, Vygotsky, and Rosenblatt (Goodman, 1989). Whole language activists believed that learning to read and write was the same as learning to speak and listen, and thus, learning to read and write would happen naturally through literacy-rich environments and experiences. In its original development, phonics was not part of the whole language. Goodman, an authority in whole language, explained that phonics was detrimental to student progress and that direct instruction in individual phonics elements was not effective (Hempenstall, 2006). Goodman (1992) wrote that the process of learning to read or write did not require knowing letter-sound relationships in isolation.

While Goodman and other whole language experts had been unable to see how phonics could be a part of whole language, the students taught without phonics struggled with spelling skills (Bruck, Treiman, Caravolas, & Geneese, 1998). This is evidenced in the 1992 book, *Looking Closely: Exploring the Role of Phonics in the Whole Language Classroom* by Mills, O'Keefe, and Stephens. The book follows a young girl who had learned to write but clearly had not been taught phonics rules (Mills et al., 1992). As she writes, it is acknowledged that she does not know rules, such as the silent e and others. The girl's writing was difficult to read as she was unable to call upon her phonics skills to support her writing (Mills et al., 1992). This was one issue with the whole language approach and foreshadowed the need for phonics in this type of instruction.

While the lack of phonics began to impact student spelling, teachers were completely enthused by whole language (Goodman, 1989). This movement provided teachers with new resources, and empowered teachers to make educational decisions (Goodman, 1989). Although teachers were empowered by their own autonomy in the classroom, teacher preparation courses were not teaching teachers how to teach phonics or word attack skills (Routman, 1996). As phonics instruction was limited in the whole language classroom and preparation was lacking, many teachers during this era placed themselves in the middle of the debate of phonics versus no phonics, and instead, promoted a balanced approach, such as the one that characterized the end of the word method (Baumann et al., 1998). Parent perceptions were quite different from teacher perceptions during the whole language movement (Routman, 1996).

Phonics began to resurface and whole language was largely threatened around 1998 due to dissatisfaction with the results of a strictly whole language curriculum. It is important to note that at times, whole language and phonics were combined together (Donat, 2003). Reading Their Way was a reading program that supported the concept that children need both phonics and whole language to be successful readers (Donat, 2003). The author believed that instruction in both arenas could help strengthen skills and strategies when learning to read (Donat, 2003). Through *Reading Their Way*, children were taught systematic and explicit phonics in conjunction with classic literature and whole language strategies (Donat, 2003).

Additionally, Mills and colleagues (1992) showcased how children in a whole language classroom were invited to make observations about language that brought awareness to sound-letter relationships without explicit instruction. Children also utilized phonics in the whole language classroom through writing and making connections between combined letters and the

sounds they make (Mills et al., 1992). Thus, phonics did have a place in the whole language classroom, and it was argued that the combination was more effective than solely teaching the individual methods. In 2018, most classrooms engage in a balanced approach such as these with a mixture of sight word (word method), explicit phonics instruction, and analytic phonics (Cohen, Mather, Schneider, & White, 2016). The next trend in phonics instruction has yet to be discovered.

Conclusion

Reading instruction (i.e., phonics, word method, whole language) has been a consistent problem plaguing our educational system and one that can have severely negative implications on the reading progress and proficiency of our students. Through colonial times to the end of whole language, teachers have consistently completed teacher education programs receiving minimal training in teaching reading techniques, specifically phonics (Gans, 1954; Joshi et al., 2009). With the emergence of the word method, phonics was only taught and used as a remedial method (Flesch, 1966). Thus, unwise and misguided reading instruction has resulted in a loss of learning among students in America for over one hundred years (Gans, 1954).

Trends in how teachers teach phonics have made consistent changes. Beginning in colonial times, teachers taught letter sounds to help unify the pronunciation of words in the colonies (Emans, 1968). Systematic phonics was the popular pedagogy from colonial times until the word method in the mid 1800's (Flesch, 1966). Phonics was mostly eradicated from classrooms during the word method era, although it was used as a last resort for struggling students and by gifted students to teach themselves (Flesch, 1966). In the 1950's and 1960's, teaching isolated sounds in any systematic fashion was looked down upon by authorities in reading instruction (Baumann et al., 1998). After Chall's 1967 publication, teaching isolated sounds was accepted once again as the pendulum swung back to the side of phonics (Baumann et al., 1998).

Now, in 2018, systematic and explicit phonics is observed in most classrooms as movements for increased reading proficiency sweep the nation. Many states have adopted an early literacy intervention initiative, such as Colorado's READ Act, Nevada's Read by Grade 3, and Texas' LASERS on Literacy to improve teacher instruction in early literacy as well as student proficiency. Initiatives such as these require specific amounts of professional development and targeted instruction in several domains, one of which includes explicit phonics (Nevada Department of Education, 2016; Texas Education Agency, 2015). It seems that the ever-swinging pendulum of reading instruction has once again found its home on the side of phonics (Abadiano, Turner & Valerie, 2011; Stahl, 1985). While systematic and explicit phonics instruction is encouraged today, teachers remain unprepared to teach phonics in the classroom (Cohen et al., 2016). The current state of reading proficiency in America in 2018 is still low and educators are still ill prepared to teach beginning reading in the primary grades (Cohen et al., 2016).

According to Stahl (1985), "history is our first and best teacher" (p. 416). More recently, Stahl suggested that we can only be successful in preparing for our future if we know and understand our history (Armstrong, 2012). It is noticeable that America has yet to learn from its history as

teacher instruction and reading continue to lack proficiency. While current teacher education programs strive to develop well-rounded teachers for the 21st century classroom, possible changes to address the lack of preparation in beginning reading and literacy instruction may include: specific early literacy courses and instruction grounded in experiential learning. For example, teacher education programs need to provide specific courses aimed at teaching phonics methods, such as Implicit and Explicit Phonics, which provide methods for teaching phonics in writing instruction, and provide teacher candidates with a solid foundation in phonological awareness. Additionally, the inclusion of courses in teacher education programs or targeted professional development workshops for new teachers can inform teachers of effective strategies for teaching phonics in all grade levels and in all instructional settings (whole group, small group, one-on-one). Cross-curricular preparation would also be valuable by coupling phonics methods courses with other courses that emphasize writing instruction or children's literature.

Targeted instructional literacy practicum courses will also help new teachers entering classrooms to be better prepared to teach beginning reading through a balanced literacy lens. Teacher candidates, similar to their future students, need direct and explicit instruction, but they also need to develop their own skills as teachers. This is possible by providing future teachers with practicum opportunities in which they apply their knowledge to students in a one-on-one, tutoring, and class situation. As teacher educators and researchers, we acknowledge that we are preparing teacher candidates for vast teaching experiences, and these experiences start in their preparation programs with an array of learning opportunities. With the addition of targeted courses and experiences across teacher education programs, teachers may feel better prepared when they open their teacher's manual on their first day.

In the scenario at the beginning of this article we were introduced to a young teacher in *a one room, little red schoolhouse in Virginia.* Now, in 2018, we learn about another *young teacher, who recently graduated from a top tier, Midwestern, four-year teacher education program, as she enters her first-grade classroom with excitement and zeal. With her detailed teacher's manual in her hand, her step-by-step lesson plans hanging on her wall, and her letter-picture ABC anchor chart up on the whiteboard screen, she begins to teach her students phonics. "B says ba, c says ca, w says wa," says the confidently unknowing teacher. Amidst the abundance of resources available to her and the formal education that characterizes her professional journey, this teacher mirrors her colonial counterpart in that little red schoolhouse.*

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ms. Carly Gould, email: gould@unlv.nevada.edu.

References

Abadiano, H. R., Turner, J. P., & Valerie, L. M. (2011). Continuity and the pendulum. *The New England Reading Association Journal, 46*(2), iii-iv.

Agnew, D. C. (1939). *The effect of varied amounts of phonetic training on primary reading.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Armstrong, S. L. (2012). The impact of history on the future of college reading. *Journal of Developmental Education, 35*(3), 24-27.

Baumann, J. F., Hoffman, J. V., Moon, J., & Duffy-Hester, A.M. (1998). Where are the teachers' voices in phonics/whole language debate? Results from a survey of U.S. elementary classroom teachers. *The Reading Teacher, 51*(8), 636-650.

Bloomfield, L. (1942). Linguistics and reading. *The Elementary English Review, 19*(4), 125-130.

Bruck, M., Treiman, R., Caravolas, M., & Genesee, F. (1998). Spelling skills of children in whole language and phonics classrooms. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 19*(4), 669-684.

Chall, J. (1967). *Learning to read: The great debate.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cohen, R. A., Mather, N., Schneider, D. A., & White, J. M. (2016). A comparison of schools: Teacher knowledge of explicit code-based reading instruction. *Reading and Writing, 30*(4), 653-690.

Colorado Department of Education. (2016). Colorado READ Act. Retrieved from https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy

Donat, D. J. (2003). *Reading their way: A balance of phonics and whole language*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Elwell, C. E. (1952). Reading-the alphabet and phonics. *Catholic Educator, 22*(9), 477-480.

Emans, R. (1968). History of phonics. *National Council of Teachers of English, 45*(5), 602-608.

Flesch, R. (1966). *Why Johnny can't read and what you can do about it*. New York: Harper.

Gans, R. (1964). *Fact and fiction about phonics*. Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.

Gates, L., & Yale, I. (2011). A logical letter-sound system in five phonic generalizations. *The Reading Teacher, 64*(5), 330-339.

Gill, E. J. (1911). Methods of teaching reading. *Journal of Experimental Pedagogy, 1*, 243-248.

Goodman, K. S. (1993). *Phonic Phacts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Goodman, Y. M. (1989). Roots of the whole-language movement. *The Elementary School Journal, 90*(2), 113-127.

Goodman, Y. M., & Martens, P. (1993). Roots of the whole-language movement. In S. K. Brady & T. M. Sills (Eds.), *Whole language: History, philosophy, practice* (pp. 18-30). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Graaf, S., Bosman, A. M. T., Hasselman, F., & Verhoeven, L. (2009). Benefits of systematic phonics instruction. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 13*(4), 318-333.

Gray, W. S. (1948). *On their own in reading: how to give children independence in analyzing new words*. Chicago: Scott Foresman.

Harris, A. J. (1961). *How to increase reading ability*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.

Heilman, A. W. (1976). *Phonics in proper perspective*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Hempenstall, K. (2006). The whole language-phonics controversy: An historical perspective. *Educational Psychology, 17*(4), 399-418.

Hoffman, J. V., & Roser, N. (2012). Reading and writing the world using beautiful books: Language experience re-envisioned. *National Council of Teachers of English, 89*(5), 293-304.

Joshi, R. M., Binks, E., Hougen, M., Dahlgren, M. E., Ocker-Dean, E., & Smith, D. L. (2009). Why elementary teachers might be inadequately prepared to teach reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42*(5), 392-402.

Mills, H., O'Keefe, T., & Stephens, D. (1992). *Looking closely: Exploring the role of phonics in one whole language classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Nevada Department of Education. (2016). Read by Grade 3 Final Guidance. Retrieved from http://www.doe.nv.gov/Legislative/Read_by_Grade_Three/

Rogers, M. V. (1938). Phonic ability as related to certain aspects of reading at the college level. *Journal of Experimental Education, 6*, 381-395.

Routman, R. (1996). *Literacy at the crossroads: Crucial talk about reading, writing, and other teaching dilemmas.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Stahl, N. A. (1986). Epilogue. In N. B. S., *American Reading Instruction* (pp. 413-418). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Smith, N. B. (1934, 2002). *American reading instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Spache, G. D. (1963). *Toward better reading.* Champaign, IL: Garrard Publishing Company.

Stanovich, K. E., & Stanovich, P. J. (1995). How research might inform the debate about early reading acquisition. *Journal of Research in Reading, 18*(2), 87-105.

Tate, H. J., Herbert, T.M., & Zeman, J.K. (1940). Nonphonic primary reading. *Elementary School Journal, 40*, 529-537.

Texas Education Agency. (2015). The Texas State Literacy Plan. Retrieved from https://tslpresource.org/lasers/texas-state-literacy-plan-overview

Tiffin, J. & McKinnis, M. (1940). Phonic ability: Its measurement and relation to reading ability. *School and Society, 51,* 190-192.

COUNTERING THE PETER EFFECT: BLOGGING AND TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TEACHER EDUCATION CLASSES

VICTORIA B. FANTOZZI
MANHATTANVILLE COLLEGE

KATIE EGAN CUNNINGHAM
MANHATTANVILLE COLLEGE

Abstract

In this article, the researchers share results from an action research project focused on supporting teacher education students' knowledge of children's literature and identities as readers. The researchers present analysis of teacher education students' blog posts about children's and young adult literature, class discussion, and survey data. Analysis reveals that the teacher education students not only gained knowledge about a wide range of texts but that their own reading identities seemed to change through the processes of text selection and text review using an online, participatory, and open platform for sharing.

Countering the Peter Effect: Blogging and Talking About Children's Literature in Teacher Education Classes

"If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good?" This quote from Allington's influential research from 1977 on the impact of independent reading for students could be asked of teachers today. As teachers and researchers of literacy, it is no surprise that we consider our reading identities central to our positions as teachers of reading and that our "books to read" lists cast a wide net from adult fiction and nonfiction, to books on pedagogy, to children's and young adult literature. In our experience, it also less and less comes as a surprise when the teacher education students in our courses do not view their own reading lives as an integral part of their identities as teachers of reading. We are not alone in this recognition. Researchers find that many teacher candidates are unenthusiastic about reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Applegate, Applegate, Mercanti, Mecgeehan, Cobb, Deboy, Modla & Lewinski, 2014, Daisey 2009, Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008). Further, their dislike of reading is often connected to negative school experiences where they read dense textbooks or did not enjoy the experience of analyzing narrative texts (Daisey, 2010). In addition, researchers found that students who were unenthusiastic readers were not necessarily poor readers but saw reading as a chore or task to be completed (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

This creates the discouraging dilemma of teachers who have the responsibility to motivate and support students in becoming deeply engaged readers when they may not be engaged readers themselves. Applegate and Applegate (2004) used the term the *Peter Effect* to describe this dilemma drawn from the New Testament story of a beggar who approaches St. Peter and asks him for money. Peter responds that he "cannot give what he does not have" (Acts 3:5). Applegate et al. (2014) conducted follow up research confirming the alarming results that the Peter effect persists. In addition, they also found that, "One particularly disconcerting finding was the low level of enthusiasm for reading among education majors aspiring to teach kindergarten and first grade" (p. 197). Their research presents the field of teacher education, with a call to action--to break out of this cycle of disengagement towards reading and to develop instead what Ruddell (1997) refers to as *influential teachers* that have a profound and lasting effect on their students as readers.

"Teachers have both the unique opportunity and the daunting task of presenting themselves as reading role models in their classrooms" (Gebhard, 2006 p.454). Teachers' reading identities matter. In examining results of their survey of in-service and prospective teachers Nathanson Pruslow & Levitt (2008) found that those who reported that they had a teacher who shared a love of reading in elementary school were more likely to be enthusiastic readers all those years later. It is easy to imagine that a teacher who shares enthusiasm for books can spur at least an initial desire for children to pick up a book. Victoria's Kindergarten class would regularly clear the school library out of an author's books after a fervid read aloud, but what effect does reading identity have on teaching practices? McKool & Gespass (2009) found that in-service teachers who read for pleasure regularly used best practices more often in their reading practice and were more likely to share insights from their own reading with their class. Similarly, Burgess, Sargent, Smith, Hill & Morrison (2011) that teachers with specific and broad knowledge of children's literature were most likely to use best literacy practices in their daily teaching. Teachers who are readers not only share their passion, but, perhaps because of their interests in the text, also engage in teaching practices that support more than a love of reading.

This has left us with the dilemma of how to best support our teacher education students as readers so they, in turn, support and inspire the readers in their own classrooms to develop and expand their reading identities. In this article, we share an action research project conducted in three literacy courses focused on supporting preservice teacher reading identities through children's literature blogs. Drawing from Lewis and Fabos (2005) we considered the ways identities, including reading identities, shape and are shaped by what counts as knowledge and who gets to make it, and designed (or rather redesigned) assignments in which preservice teachers were asked to be the knowledge makers in children's literature.

Blogging and the New Literacies

We recognize that what it means to be literate and to teach literacy has changed and is changing. New technologies offer a variety of ways to interact, communicate, produce, and consume

information. In particular, Web 2.0 tools (including but not limited to blogs, wikis, and social media) allow any user to create, edit, and collaborate with other users in shared space. This enables a transactional relationship between author and audience as the readers are able to comment on, and in some cases, edit content produced in these social venues (Hedberg & Brudvik, 2008; Karchmer-Klein & Shinas, 2012). The repositioning of reader and author also positions students and teachers in different roles as they both have the opportunity to become "critical consumers and active producers of text and curriculum" (Handsfield, Dean, & Cielocha, 2009, p.42). Additionally, we also recognize the influence of popular professional blogsites such as *The Nerdy Book Club* (https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/) and *The Classroom Bookshelf* (http://www.classroombookshelf.blogspot.com/) on teachers as communities of readers. As followers of these online reading communities, we wondered how we could use new technologies to reposition the readers in our teacher education courses to be critical consumers and active producers as they read and blogged about books.

We began to wonder, could we shift our students' attitudes towards reading if we created a space for them to share their literate lives in a 21st century way? We leaned towards Muffoletto's (2001) vision of educational technology: "educational technology is not about devices, machines, computers, or other artifacts, but rather it is about systems and processes leading to a desired outcome" (p. 3). In this case, our desired outcome was to support the teacher education students in our courses in reading widely, developing their identities as readers, and their voices as teachers of reading through blogging about children's literature.

Methodology

This paper shares an action research project carried out by the authors in their respective courses: two sections of Early Literacy and a section of Global and Multicultural Readings in Children's and Young Adult Literature. Each course took place at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast. The Early Literacy courses were comprised of a mix of students including teacher candidates pursuing their initial certification in Early Childhood Education and certified teachers working towards their Masters of Professional Studies (MPS) in Literacy. In the Global and Multicultural Readings course there were only MPS students. There were 21 students across the Early Literacy courses and 16 students in the Global and Multicultural Literature course. At the start and end of the semester, we administered a reading and technology inventory that asked students to reflect upon the kinds of texts they read, for what purposes, their knowledge of children's and young adult literature, and to describe their comfort level with using new technologies. In addition, we collected student writing through their Tumblr blog posts to document changes throughout the semester.

Data were analyzed systematically as a form of action research (Morrell 2006) to impact the direction each professor took to enhance our students' understanding of children's and young adult literature as well as methods of instruction but also to enhance our understanding of who each of our students were as readers and to take note of shifts in their reading identities. Using a process of analytic induction, we engaged in an iterative process of independently examining

data for emerging themes and instances that match with existing themes or questions, then discussing findings and emerging hypotheses, revisiting the data corpus for negative or contradictory cases, and finally revisiting and revising themes accordingly. We analyzed the surveys for patterns in our students' initial attitudes, specifically whether or not they identified as a reader in their youth and how they defined themselves as readers today. In addition, we analyzed the ways in which they wrote about children's book authors and titles and whether they included contemporary works or if they primarily relied on classic or canonical texts. Finally, we analyzed the surveys for our students' self-identified comfort levels with the use of technology in their personal and professional lives. These observations informed our teaching and readings of the Tumblr posts and served as a comparison for their responses in the final survey. We examined student posts and final reflections for shifts in our students' knowledge of children's and young adult literature, their dispositions towards reading, and their identities as teachers of reading. In addition, we read and reread their Tumblr posts paying attention to how they appropriated the language of the field through their discussion of teaching applications and methods of instruction.

Making Structural Choices to Fit Instructional Goals

As Harste (2003) states, "the redesign of curriculum begins with reflexivity; the self-reflective interrogation and critique of what it is we have been doing" (p. 11). To meet instructional goals, we carefully considered the structural choices we were making in guiding the students in our courses in their study of children's and young adult literature. We made conscious decisions with recognition that reading widely and blogging about their findings had the potential to impact their identities as readers and as teachers of reading. The courses had shared goals for the use of the Tumblr space, but there were also distinct differences in design to provide more collaboration and support in Early Literacy as a course taken early in our students' program and a greater level of choice and independence in the Global and Multicultural Readings course as illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1
Assessment Design Using Tumblr

Assessment Design Consideration	Course 1	Course 2
Collaborative Intent	Shared site	Individual student sites
Layout	Template chosen by professors to mirror a classroom bookshelf	Template chosen by students to reflect literature study focus
Site Management	Professors as site administrators approving submissions	Students create accounts Site curated and authored by students
Content	Brief summary of texts and teaching invitations	Brief summary of texts, aesthetic response, and teaching invitations
Texts Reviewed	10 texts over the semester, selection focused on children's literature appropriate for teaching in an early childhood setting	20-25 texts over the semester including multimedia and young adult literature; thematic selections based on student choice of a meaningful theme
Submission	Bi-weekly submission with in-class share	Self-paced with two check points over the semester

Early Literacy: A Shared Class Page

Over the course of a semester, our two Early Literacy courses shared a Tumblr page entitled *Read Early Read Often* (readearly.tumblr.com). The site was a re-envisioned version of an existing assignment designed to have students engage in wide reading of books appropriate for young learners. In the initial version, the students were to create an annotated bibliography of 20 children's books over the course of the semester. There were two checkpoints to make sure that the students did not read all of the books in one short period, but the work was shared only with the professor. It served the purpose of exposing students to literature, but it did not seem to foster a change in reading identities. We wanted to re-envision this assignment. Guided by research acknowledging that teacher education students do not always identify as readers, we wanted to keep the goal of having our students read widely. We also wanted to purposely start discussions about books with students learning with and from each other. The re-envisioned assignment asked students to read a children's book a week and post a review of the book on a shared Tumblr site. To allow for choice, the only parameter we placed on their choice of books was that the students were not allowed to repeat a book that had been already posted to the site.

The class Tumblr, as well as the process for submitting a review, was introduced early in the semester. By design, students' reviews were anonymous once posted. The students submitted their posts and, once approved by the professor, the review would appear on the Tumblr page without an attributed author. As such, the site was collective in nature and was positioned as a group effort with the shared goal of creating an online resource. Students could read each other's work without knowing the writer's identity; providing a safe space for online feedback if students opted to comment. Knowing that students in Colwell, Hutchins & Reinking's (2012) work with a class-based children's literature blog reported that talking with peers about children's literature was a missing component that they desired, we created purposeful spaces for discussing the books in class. The students brought their books to class every other week. During these meetings, the students were paired to discuss their books. We selected student reviews that were done particularly well or that referenced a feature of literacy discussed in class to use as mentor texts for the class. This offered two avenues, online and face-to-face, for students to grow their thoughts about books throughout the course.

Global and Multicultural Readings: Individual Tumblr Pages

As the shared Tumblr page took root in our Early Literacy courses, Katie's Global and Multicultural Readings course used Tumblr as a platform to move from a similarly paper-based annotated bibliography assignment to the construction of individual Tumblr pages focused around a narrowed topic of their choosing in children's and young adult literature. Unlike the shared class page, students in this course had choice of layout, design, and topic. Students chose specific, self-selected topics including stories about representations of family and stories about characters with disabilities. Like the Early Literacy course, the previous paper version was static in nature. It was an assignment designed to ignite interest in children's and young adult literature around a topic of interest, but it seemingly became another assignment completed for a course limiting the kinds of thinking students did. Through the redesign, the assignment became a catalyst for personal investigation and investment supporting students to not only identify as readers but to consider the multiple identities they have as readers within and beyond their classrooms. Students were able to curate their own online spaces for public viewing. They were accessing, evaluating, searching, sorting, gathering, and reading across print-based and multimedia texts and sharing their thinking with others.

Williams (2005) reminds us that

> It seems obvious that there is often a gap in how and for what ends technology is used- a gap between some students and their teachers and a gap between different groups of students. What is less obvious is the nature of these gaps in terms of literacy practices. Could we be missing ways to connect with our students and help reinforce and enlarge their literate identities? (p. 702).

The shift to a Tumblr platform helped fill in gaps to support our students to create a hybrid reading experience through the wide reading of books, by reading each other's online book

reviews, and through the process of writing their own entries. This process of reading and blogging supported our students to redefine the ways they were thinking about what it means to be a reader.

Identifying as Readers

Our initial surveys and in class discussions showed that our classes were comprised of students with a variety of stances towards reading. Our students ranged from those who did not identify as readers – and in fact could identify the moment in school in which reading became a chore – to those who read often and widely, but with a majority of the students as apathetic readers. Furthermore, it was clear that these reading practices had transformed into reading identities – in early class discussions students made statements such as "I don't read" even if they often read magazines or online content. Although these differences were palpable on the first day as some students laughed off that they could not name a favorite author, while one enthusiastically gushed about her love of *Harry Potter*, over the course of a semester this difference dissipated as every student eagerly shared the books they included in their Tumblr posts.

As students engaged in their own independent reading, class discussions about books were increasingly lively; it was difficult to tell who in the classroom did not initially identify as a reader. In particular, Alison, who in her initial reflection wrote, "I began to dislike reading when we would be forced to read over the summer and then write a paper about what we read that would be shared with the class" – indicating a fairly entrenched dislike of reading – found new excitement in the rich stories that children's books held. In her final reflection she wrote:

> I have fallen in love with children's stories! The emotion and lessons that are involved in each story are rewarding. It inspired me to one day write my own children's stories and hopefully follow the path of many of the authors I learned about in class. Literacy to many students can come off as dull and difficult, but with the right help and motivation it doesn't have to be. The Tumblr site was a big help; you never realize how many amazing stories are out there until you are presented with them. … Literacy has become a big part of my life and I can't wait to share it with others!

Alison's transformation from one who disliked reading to identifying as a passionate reader and possible future author was our most powerful declaration. Her statement reflects an awakening to a world of children's literature that many had. Katerina expressed a similar change writing,

> Personally, reading is not something that I partake in for fun. Throughout this course, my thoughts have changed. I know that if I am going to be a teacher expecting my students to love reading, I also have to enjoy it. I've recently taken the time to relax and read a book of my interest over other forms of downtime.

Although not as passionate, there is a clear and crucial recognition of the importance of teachers of reading being readers themselves and the importance of Katrina becoming a reader herself.

Along with a shift in their reading identities there was growth in our students' knowledge of children's literature. Initially, their reported comfort level in choosing books for their classrooms covered the range of feeling unsure to feeling confident. However, when asked about their favorite children's books authors, the majority of the students were either not able to name any, or only able to name those from their childhood, such as Dr. Seuss or Eric Carle. Their peers' posts served as way to discover new authors. One student, who was nudged to expand beyond Eric Carle after her first few posts, wrote "when I was stuck on finding a new book for the Tumblr each week I would always look at the page to find new authors." Another student commented, "Before class I only knew the classics… I am now much more up-to-date with the current children's authors." Many students came to see the site as a resource for ideas and commented in final surveys that they would use the site in the future and share it with peers. Finally, the students were required to review the books with other teachers as their audience. This authentic audience focused them to not only consider whether or not they liked a book but how and why they might use it in the classroom. These excerpts from the final surveys reflect their thoughts on how they grew as a result of the assignments:

> I feel like I have grown in the way I talk about my books and in the book choices I have made…
>
> When I first came to this classroom I honestly thought that children's books were just to read to students for the sake of reading them.
>
> What I am coming out of this class with is a greater appreciation for books. The actual act of writing about the books made me enjoy the books even more and gave me more respect of the craft of books.

Through blogging our students had created new reading identities in which they were readers and teachers of reading with the new responsibility and new lens for reading children's books.

Expanding Identities and Definitions of Text

While the shared Tumblr page in the Early Literacy course supported students as they shifted their identities as readers and teachers of reading, those creating individual pages in the Multicultural Children's Literature course were expanding their identities by considering the ways their reading was influenced by personal and contextual lenses. The first student to share her page during a class session became a model for others to personally invest in the design and content of their pages. This student's reading response included personal anecdotes and reflections that demonstrated an aesthetic reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1978). As Rosenblatt states, the text "is stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience—his experience with both literature and with life…the text serves as a blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forth" (p.11). The following post reveals the ways that she connected her self-selected reading for the course to her past identities as a reader:

> I return to this book every year around Christmastime, and each time I read it I find new pieces of myself in the story. I dog-ear the bottom corners of pages that hold words that never falter in their ability to make my heart jump, my eyes well up, or my soul feel lifted and finally found. I have almost dog-eared every page at this point in my life. I carry this book with me sometimes in my bag or leave it resting in my car when nerves or insecurities are getting the better of me and I need something to remind me that I will be just fine. It feels like home to me.

In this post, she is writing as means of reflecting upon the ways the book impacts her – that she feels something. Responses like this provided a model for others to include their aesthetic experience as a form of interpretation drawing of their past reading experiences to inform their current readings of self-selected texts.

Others in the course found that the Tumblr pages became a vehicle for reflection and action in their own lives expanding their identities as readers and teachers of reading to include rewriting their social identities (Alvermann, 2008). One student with a learning disability chose to invest in stories about children with disabilities. At the end of the semester, she used her page as a way of speaking back to those her bullied her in her own childhood by sharing her page on her Facebook account. In one of her posts she wrote:

> In recent years, I have been very vocal about my learning disability. I realized I needed to be an advocate for those who struggle to find their voice. This page I have created means more to me than I thought. The power of story is a gateway to voices being heard. All throughout elementary, middle, and high school, I didn't have a voice. I was bullied because I learned differently. I was humiliated. It was a rough road for me.

For many students, their individual Tumblr pages became a means of reflecting on children's and young adult literature beyond the course itself. As a free, open access site, Tumblr allowed students to choose to continue or change any aspect of their individual page at any point during or after the course. Some students maintained their pages and continued to update them for a few months after the course was over. In a reflection on the impact of the Tumblr assignment one student wrote:

> When I first started this project, I just thought about getting it done. I have so much going on, I couldn't possibly put all of my effort on this annotated bibliography. That quickly changed. Each book I read had a strong message and was powerful in its own way. If I had to choose, I would say *So B.* It was the most powerful book I read. I am still affected by this book. That certainly was a story about overcoming the odds. This wasn't just another college project, this was something that significantly impacted my life. I have learned so much, and I'll continue to share my stories, and stories written by other people on my Tumblr.

Selecting, analyzing, and writing about literature based on self-selected topics became a way of merging their reading identities with their personal identities beyond the classroom.

In addition, students began to inquire into the kinds of texts that they could "read" to better understand their self-selected topics. Through the online platform, students began including entries that reviewed and reflected upon videos, songs, and other online texts. They went beyond books themselves and found images and quotes that connected to their topics. They were reframing what counted as text, opening their definitions beyond traditional book-based or print texts, and they began taking ownership of the kinds of reading they wanted to engage in to build multimodal text sets rather than traditional print-based annotated bibliographies. Paper-based analyses of print-based texts limited the kinds of thinking students did around the topics and themes they were interested in. Through basic modeling from Katie, and greater modeling both in class and online through their peers, students were able to not only consume and critique multimedia texts but were curating their own online spaces for public viewing.

Developing a Professional Voice

Our initial goal was to respond to the continued research on the *Peter Effect* by supporting our students in broadening their consumption and thoughts about children's and young adult literature and, we hoped, to influence their habits and attitudes about reading. We found that blogging supported more than just a wider knowledge of texts. As their identities as readers shifted, our students were also supported in developing new voices as professionals who blogged about books.

In the Early Literacy class, the changes in students' attitudes and voices were seen in the ways that students wrote about the texts that they chose. Over the course of the semester they shifted from discussing what they liked about a text or peripheral connections to a topic of a unit to more sophisticated readings of the text. The examples below come from the same student. Each began with a summary of the book that has been removed for length considerations:

> On *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1987) (1st post)
>
> I found this book appealing because it incorporates many topics that can be found in the classroom. This book is great for all ages, but may be best for a Kindergarten or first grade classroom. Kindergarteners can count the numbers of each food the caterpillar eats and also practice the days of the week. For first graders, this book is a great way to introduce or teach about the life cycle of a caterpillar. I think one of the greatest aspects of this book is the illustrations. Eric Carle's tissue paper collages make for beautiful pictures, and with the bright colors he uses, it is sure to catch a child's eye.
>
> On *A House for Hickory* by Kelly Mazzone (1995) (7th post)

> This story is made even better with lift up flaps that reveal the different possibilities for Hickory's new home. Children will enjoy lifting the flap to see what animal is inside the house or if Hickory can move in! This is very sequential book including words such as first, next, and then. Children can make predictions about what is going to happen and what kind of animal lives where Hickory is searching. Another very important teaching point is the descriptive language used to describe the houses. He sees a "shiny, brown shell", "strong round, basket", "large, golden hive," etc. This is a great book to have in a classroom library for children to revisit as often as they want. It gives a great example of sequence as well as descriptive words.

This student was in Victoria's class and struggled to write her first post about *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* She felt she did not know what to write, what she should tell other teachers (or her peers) about the book, other than she and the kids she worked with liked it. Her first post reflects the way that she looked at books then: as interesting stories, with colorful images and connected to a topic that the students might study. In the second post, she is more focused on the specific language and features of the text and how these might support young children's emergent literacy. She is using the language of literacy teachers and developing a professional voice that (we hope) she will carry forward into new discussions about literacy and learning.

Likewise, in the Global and Multicultural Readings course, student entries over the course of the semester became more specific in their recommendations for teaching invitations that the books led them to consider rather than overloading their entries with in-depth summaries. In her first entry, on *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995), Emily wrote a twelve-sentence entry with eleven of the sentences composed of a summary and one sentence on generic teaching possibilities: "This book can be used to discuss many different character education topics as well as to discuss not treating others differently because of what they look like". In one of her final entries, Emily shows a more nuanced literacy specialist voice that has greater conceptualization of how a text could be incorporated into other content areas or as part of a text set:

> *The Garden of Happiness* by Erika Tamar is a great book to build classroom community with at the beginning of the year. Even though it is a picture book it can be used to compare and contrast with the book *Seedfolks*, for older students. Students can use it to connect to social studies through studying the different plants the different types of people planted…The students could look at the Spanish words. A character map could be made from different people, especially from Marisol.

As a twenty-year veteran of the field, Emily's shifts were striking in the new ways she read and responded to texts by thinking of wide possibilities for literature in her classroom. The differences in her entries from summary to application reflect greater attention as a reader and as a literacy leader.

The Tumblr spaces gave our students a practice space to develop their ideas as professionals using concepts or methods from our classes (for example: shared reading, or bilingual texts) and

apply them to self-selected texts. At the same time, the public nature of the Tumblr blog encouraged growth because students were positioned to have others read and learn from their posts encouraging a participatory culture. In addition, the forum implicitly implied that our students are people who have something to say. As Jenkins (2006) stated in reference to collective intelligence, "none of us can know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills" (p. 4). Blogging offered a space for our students to develop their voice through the act of writing and sharing in an online participatory culture with the potential to shift, expand, and even rewrite various identities.

Conclusion

Katie ends her book, *Story: Still the Heart of Literacy Learning*, with this thought:

> The writer Edith Wharton said, "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it" My hope for teachers is that you will be both the candle lighting the path of learning and the mirror helping your students to see themselves for who they are and who they want to be.

Teachers cannot be the candle or the light for reading if they do not see themselves as readers, if they have no light to spread. The blogs we created in these classes allowed our preservice teachers to explore reading as teachers of reading and gave them space to start to kindle their reading candles and also to see many other candles in blogs of their classmates. The shared nature of the blogging platform shifted the assignment from a presentation to a professor to a declaration of the kind of readers and thinkers our students were becoming. The students developed new reading identities and voices. Through the process of writing in a digital space, our students shared parts of themselves both personally and professionally. Finally, they gained experiential knowledge about the power of collaborative work and an authentic audience in the web 2.0 space.

While teacher educators can use this study to enact similar engagements in their own literacy courses, teachers in K-12 settings can use this study's results to continuously reflect on their own reading lives as readers and as teachers of reading. If they are responsible for supporting their students to have rich and fulfilling reading lives, how are they modeling and living the life of a reader? A few of our students decided to keep blogging about books by maintaining the sites they created in our courses or by generating their own site. Thanks to free, open source sites, anyone can become a blogger. Beyond blogging about books, we also recommend to our students that they find ways to fuel their own reading lives through book clubs with friends and colleagues and by following other bloggers that they were introduced to in our courses. We hope that K-12 teachers continue to shape the conversation about children's books by reflecting and sharing their thoughts and the invitations they create for their own students. Additionally, teachers in K-12 classrooms can leverage reading and blogging experiences to create similar opportunities for their own students by having their students read, reflect, and share both online

and in the classroom. In this way, K-12 students have the opportunity to become both the candle and the light for one another.

References

Allington, R.L. (1977). If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good? *Journal of Reading*, 21, 57–61.

Alvermann, D. (2008). Why bother theorizing adolescents' online literacies for classroom practice and research? *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacies, 52*(1), 8-19.

Applegate, A.J. & Applegate, M.D. (2004). The Peter effect: Reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, *57*(6), 554-563.

Applegate, A. J., Applegate, M. D., Mercantini, M. A., McGeehan, C. M., Cobb, J. B., DeBoy, J. R., & Lewinski, K. E. (2014). The Peter Effect revisited: Reading habits and attitudes of college students. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *53*(3), 188-204.DOI: 10.1080/19388071.2014.898719

Burgess, S. R, Sargent, S., Smith, M., Hill, N., & Morrison, S. (2011). Teachers' leisure reading habits and knowledge of children's books: Do they relate to the teaching practices of elementary school teachers? *Reading Improvement*, *48*(2), 88–102.

Colwell, J., Hutchinson, A. & Reinking, D. (2012). Using blogs to promote literacy professional development. *Language Arts 89*(4), 232–243.

Cunningham, K. (2015). Story: Still the heart of literacy learning. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Daisey, P. (2010). Secondary preservice teachers remember their favorite reading experiences: Insights and implications for content area instruction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 53*(3), 678-688. doi:10.1598/JAAL.53.8.6

Daisey, P. (2009). The reading experiences and beliefs of secondary pre-service teachers. *Reading Horizons*, *49*(2), 167–190.

Gebhard, S. (2006). The lost boys (and girls) readers in neverland. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *57*(5), 454-463.

Handsfield, L.J., Dean, T. R., & Cielocha, K.M. (2009). Becoming critical consumers and producers of text: Teaching literacy with web 1.0 and web 2.0. *The Reading Teacher,63*(1), 40-50. Doi:10.1598/RT.63.1.4

Harste, J. C. (2003). What do we mean by literacy now? *Voices in the Middle, 10*(3), 8- 12.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Karchmer-Klein, R. & Shinas, V.H. (2012). Guiding principles for supporting new literacies in your classroom. *The Reading Teacher 65*(5), 298-293. DOI:10.1002/TRTR01044

Lewis, C. & Fabos, B. (2005). Instant messaging, literacies, and social identities. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *40*(4), 470-501.

McKool, S. S., & Gespass, S. (2009). Does Johnny's reading teacher love to read? How teachers' personal reading habits affect instructional practices.*Literacy Research and Instruction*, *48*(3), 264-276. DOI: 10.1080/19388070802443700

Morrell, E. (2006). Critical participatory action research and the literacy achievement of ethnic minority groups. 55th yearbook of the National Reading Conference.

Muffoletto, R. (Ed.). (2001) *Education and technology: Critical and reflective practices*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Nathanson, S., Pruslow, J., & Levitt, R. (2008). The reading habits and literacy attitudes of inservice and prospective teachers: Results of a questionnaire survey. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *59*(4), 313-321

Rosenblatt, L. (1978/1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Williams, B.T. (2005). Leading double lives: Literacy and technology in and out of school. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *48*(8), 702-706.

AUTHOR BIOS

Carly Gould, M.Ed., is a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research interests are early literacy, phonics instruction, writing and writing instruction, teacher education, and teacher mentoring practices.

Chyllis E. Scott, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research interests are adolescent literacy, content-area literacy instruction, teacher education and knowledge, and mentoring practices in higher education.

Victoria B. Fantozzi is an associate professor of Early Childhood and Childhood Education and chair of the department of Curriculum and Instruction at Manhattanville College. Victoria's work has published in a variety of journals including *The Reading Teacher, Young Children, Action in Teacher Education,* and *Educational Researcher.*

Katie Egan Cunningham is an associate professor of Literacy at Manhattanville College. Katie is the author of *Story: Still at the Heart of Literacy Learning* (*Stenhouse Press)* and writes regularly for the School Library Journal blog *The Classroom Bookshelf.*