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Table of Contents

Editor's Introduction
Dr. Sean Ruday 3

My Child's Reading Identity: A Family Literacy Project Intersecting Home and School Literacy Practices
Dr. Michele Byrne 5

Innovative Ways of Literacy Coaching Preschool Teachers with the Early Literacy Learning Model
Dr. Vickie Johnston 27

How to Motivate Primary Students to Read: PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program
Dr. Jeannie Votypka 41

Teaching Writing to Young Children: A Review of Core Reading Programs
Dr. Jan Lacina & Tiffany Nakamura, M.Ed. 58

Playful Literacy Learning in Preservice Teacher Education: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy with Picture Books, Playdough, Poetry, and Prose
Dr. Shuling Yang & Dr. Amy Tondreau 74

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION
DR. SEAN RUDAY
JLI FOUNDING EDITOR

The *Journal of Literacy Innovation* is thrilled to share the five outstanding articles in this issue. Each of these manuscripts is aligned with *JLI*'s stated focus on "innovative, practical ideas that offer new insights to the field of literacy instruction and can be applied to the classroom." These works provide research-based and insightful ideas with clear applicability to literacy instruction.

In "My Child's Reading Identity: A Family Literacy Project Intersecting Home and School Literacy Practices," Dr. Michele Byrne describes "a family literacy project—*My Child's Reading Identity*—where parents build their child's 'reading identity doll' and share the significant experiences that have shaped who their children are as readers thus far." As Dr. Byrne explains in the piece, the "article aims to share steps and tips for replicating the family literacy project in your school setting while simultaneously building critical cultural understandings between parents, teachers, and students."

"Innovative Ways of Literacy Coaching Preschool Teachers with the Early Literacy Learning Model" by Dr. Vickie Johnston addresses the important issue of literacy coaching during the pandemic, explaining that this process "required programs to re-envision innovative ways of engaging teachers and coaches in a collaborative process with the use of technology." The paper "shares the effectiveness of using GoReact, Zoom and WebEx, and Canvas to provide a system to support collaboration, virtual coaching, and teacher training during academic years where coaches and teachers experienced challenges with not only a global pandemic, but also hiring and retaining teachers, site directors, and staff."

In "How to Motivate Primary Students to Read: PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program," Dr. Jeannie Votypka describes a study that "investigates changes in reading motivation and reading achievement among kindergarten through third graders following a reading motivation program, PREP, designed to increase intrinsic reading motivation." The study's "findings suggest that a reading motivation program, like PREP, should be integrated into the daily reading curriculum to boost reading motivation and strengthen reading skills."

"Teaching Writing to Young Children: A Review of Core Reading Programs" by Dr. Jan Lacina and Tiffany Nakamura, M.Ed. provides key insights into the important topic of core reading programs and their connection to writing instruction. The authors explain that "core reading programs continue to play a significant role in instructional practices and decision making in classrooms in the U.S. and internationally." This article describes "writing instruction included within core reading programs" and offers key recommendations.

In “Playful Literacy Learning in Preservice Teacher Education: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy with Picture Books, Playdough, Poetry, and Prose,” authors Dr. Shuling Yang & Dr. Amy Tondreau describe a study that “showcases a literacy lesson in which two literacy teacher educators from different institutions engaged their elementary preservice teachers with multimodal activities including reading multicultural children’s literature, creating playdough sculptures, and writing narratives and poetry.” The authors discuss the study’s important results, which suggest that preservice teachers “were engaged in this active learning process,” and share practical recommendations.

I am grateful for the authors of this piece’s manuscripts for sharing their insights, and I am thankful for you for reading *JLI*! Thank you to all of the readers, authors, and reviewers of the *Journal of Literacy Innovation* for helping this journal become what it is: a space for educators to share innovative, practical ideas that add to the current knowledge base of literacy instruction and have clear applicability to the literacy classroom.

Editor Bio

Dr. Sean Ruday (he/him/his) is a professor and program coordinator of English education at Longwood University. He is particularly interested in inclusive and equitable teaching in the English classroom. He has written 18 books for educators, all published by Routledge Eye on Education.

MY CHILD'S READING IDENTITY: A FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT INTERSECTING HOME AND SCHOOL LITERACY PRACTICES

DR. MICHELE BYRNE

Abstract

This article aims to share a family literacy project that unites the home and school settings for shaping children's reading identities. Rogers et al. (2012) identify the role that intersecting settings play in developing children's reading identities because children "acquire their cultural models and social languages surrounding literacy from home and school as well as through the community, media, and online social spaces" (p. 259). Furthermore, a child's reading identity is supported by the sociocultural theory that believes a student's reading attitude develops based on early learning experiences in the home between the people and the culture in which they live (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, family literacy projects that support the merging of school and home environments and their impact on reading identity are critical.

My Child's Reading Identity: A Family Literacy Project Intersecting Home and School Literacy Practices

Introduction

Parent projects designed to build on families' cultural identities, practices, and tools serve as robust gateways for developing critical cultural understandings between parents, teachers, and students. According to Compton (2006), as classrooms become increasingly more diverse, many teachers struggle with how to help their students "master conventional school-valued literacy practices" when students bring "varied literacy resources and identities" (p. 60) from their home environments to their school settings. Today's students bring various languages, cultures, and identities from their home environments to school settings. Therefore, family literacy activities where parents share stories about their home literacy practices provide teachers with valuable information for creating culturally responsive classroom environments, challenge deficit notions of language and literacy, and serve as powerful springboards that bring the stories of children's lives outside the classroom into our everyday work with children.

This story of an elementary school's family literacy project is one example of how programs can honor and value the integration of family practices within parent workshop learning. Because children's reading identities start developing at home long before students attend school, family literacy should be the starting point for integrating family practices with school practices through a collaborative approach between parents and teachers. In this article, I share a family literacy project—*My Child's Reading Identity*—where parents build their child's "reading identity doll" and share the significant experiences that have shaped who their children are as readers thus far. Additionally, teachers can learn valuable information about their students' cultures to integrate through culturally responsive teaching opportunities in the classroom. This article aims to share steps and tips for replicating the family literacy project in your school setting while simultaneously building critical cultural understandings between parents, teachers, and students.

Theoretical Framework

Research supports that family-school partnerships positively impact student academic achievement, motivation, and social and emotional learning (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Epstein, 2018; Green et al., 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Further studies support that parent involvement in their primary-grade child's learning positively impacts reading development inside and outside of the school walls (Compton-Lily, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). As a result, family literacy projects that support the merging of school and home literacy environments build family-school partnerships that embrace and value families' culture and home language.

Sociocultural Theory and Funds of Identity

The sociocultural theory is based on Vygotsky's (1978) belief that cognitive development results from the roles of social interactions and cultural contexts. The sociocultural theory supports family literacy because it emphasizes that learning is a social process and plays an integral role in building successful, collaborative relationships between teachers and parents. According to

Rodriguez-Brown (2003), sociocultural research in family literacy contributes "to understandings of how to support transitions between home and school, particularly among children and educators who differ culturally and linguistically" (p. 147). There is a sense of urgency for family literacy programs to address the changing demographics of students and their families while the demographic composition of teachers remains extremely homogeneous, where 80% of teachers identify as white. When designing family literacy projects, the sociocultural theory supports that families bring their *funds of knowledge*—language, family values and traditions, friends and family, family outings, household chores, favorite television shows, and family occupations—with them (Moll et al., 1992). However, program design for parent-child workshops often does not go beyond identifying and valuing families' *funds of knowledge*.

Family literacy programs must go beyond the one-dimensional approach of planning activities by simply collecting information about students' cultural experiences. Family literacy projects should provide parents with equitable opportunities and experiences to share and reflect on valuable information about their home literacy experiences in relation to school literacy practices (Byrne, 2023). Family literacy activities must translate families' *funds of knowledge* into *funds of identity* where families "actively internalize family and community resources to make meaning and to describe themselves" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p.31). Hence, parent activities must go beyond the surface level of acknowledging families' funds of knowledge and must provide experiences that allow families to tell stories of who they are through meaningful and interactive experiences.

Culturally Responsive Practices

For families to identify and experience their *funds of identity,* family literacy projects must be designed with families' cultural values, traditions, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns as the framework for parent learning activities. Additionally, when designed to honor families' cultural backgrounds, teachers acquire valuable information about their students' families that they can acknowledge inside their classroom walls through culturally responsive teaching, which Gay (2001) defines as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively (p. 106).

Many teachers are not prepared to be culturally responsive and lack cultural competence, which is a teacher's understanding of how to support "students' understanding of their history, culture, customs, and languages, and develop their fluency in their dominant culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 5). This family literacy project—My Child's Reading Identity—is a partnership that allows parents and teachers to develop the concept of *funds of identity* by examining and reflecting on their childhood reading experiences and how they contribute to their children's reading attitudes and identities.

Reading Attitude

A reading attitude is "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that make reading more or less probable" (Smith, 1990, p. 215). Consequently, reading identity is shaped by a child's reading attitude that develops at home as they proceed through elementary school to high school. Rogers et al. (2012) identify the role that intersecting settings play in developing children's reading identities because children "acquire their cultural models and social languages surrounding literacy from home and school as well as through the community, media, and online social spaces (p. 259)." As a result, reading identity is based on how a child's reading experiences—at home and school— impact their developing beliefs about reading and language. In effect, intersecting settings play a significant role in developing children's reading identities because they bring their culture and social language from home to their school setting. For this reason, family literacy programs that support parents in being their children's reading role models play a critical role in shaping children's reading identities at a young age.

Reading Identity

Reading identity is a holistic view of a person's thoughts and feelings about reading that has developed across different settings, contexts, and times. A child's reading identity begins to develop at a very young age, long before they enter school. Wagner (2022) stresses that "reading identities encompass not only the skills and strategies that comprise the technical ability to read, but the ways these skills are mediated and augmented by developing beliefs about reading, language, and the self" (p. 424). It is supported by the sociocultural theory that believes a student's reading attitude develops based on early learning experiences in the home between the people and the culture in which they live (Vygotsky, 1978).

Wagner (2018) describes reading identity as "the ways in which a child understands reading and who they are as a reader" (p. 6). Compton (2006) explains that children's reading "identities are formed within relationships with others and are constantly subject to the influences of other people and institutions" (p. 59). When children begin their early years of schooling, they bring their already developing reading identities (Kabuto, 2010) into the school setting. In effect, these identities may look very different from the school literacy practices they encounter. Compton (2006) further explains that reading identities "no longer describe[s] identity as a personal and individual essence" but as "children's personal histories as readers, their past successes, the official criteria for determining reading competence, and their current struggles" (p. 59).

The Need to Nurture a Child's Reading Identity

Smith (1990) examined the stability of a child's reading attitude from early childhood to the middle years and found that "positive attitudes about reading that are fostered—particularly during the later school years—will remain positive in adulthood" (p. 219). Wagner (2019) emphasizes the importance of positive reading identities when he explains that "reading identities play a key role in early reading because they shape children's early attitudes and

feelings toward reading and the process of learning to read, and their emerging self-concept as a reader" (p. 1062). On the other hand, Wagner (2019) warns us that "reading identities are likely to have a continuing impact on children's reading and may have a tendency to grow progressively more negative over time" (p. 8) if they are not carefully nurtured.

Wagner (2019) also stresses that without the early development of positive reading identities, struggling readers are susceptible to low motivation and self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 7). Hence, the reading identity a child develops—positive or negative—is critical to their development in conceptualizing reading and viewing themselves as a reader over time. Therefore, it is critical to develop family literacy activities where parents and teachers work together to nurture the development of their children's reading attitudes throughout their school years.

Structured Literacy and Reading Identity

With the emergence of mandated structured literacy requirements in K–3 classrooms and the emphasis on teaching phonics with an explicit, cumulative, and systematic methodology, fewer student-teacher interactions may focus on the joy of reading that shapes reading identities at an early age. For example, teacher-led read-alouds and small guided reading groups that immerse students in rich discussions about books with engaging storylines and ask comprehension questions that promote aesthetic reading experiences are replaced with decodable text with language constraints and dull storylines. Consequently, this approach to reading instruction, makes it more important than ever to foster children's reading identities using authentic texts and language-based experiences.

Project Background and Context

My Child's Reading Identity project was created as a family literacy approach for addressing a school district's strategic plan for strengthening home and school learning experiences between teachers, parents, and students. The district's K–2 building was selected to introduce the activity to families. The district aimed to emphasize equity and inclusion through understanding all perspectives and experiences of people from varying backgrounds so students, parents, and teachers could grow as engaged global citizens. As a result, the program's main goal was to promote students to be lifelong readers by immersing parents in a literacy experience that focused on developing positive student reading identities. The project took place over the course of two parent workshop sessions. During the first workshop, parents participated in Step One: Parents Reflect on their Childhood Reading Experiences and Step Two: Parents Examine their Child's Developing Reading Identity. During the second workshop, parents participated in Step Three: Parents Learn Reading Role Model Behaviors. It is important to note that the behaviors shared with parents in Step Three were determined from the results of the parent questions in Step One about their children's reading identities.

My Child's Reading Identity Project

The following three essential steps are shared for replicating the family literacy activity—*My Child's Reading Identity*: (1) parents reflect on their childhood reading experiences, (2) parents examine their child's developing reading identity, and (3) parents learn behaviors that promote themselves as reading role models. Each of the following steps described in detail are responsive and can be modified to meet the individual needs of any school community's population.

Step One: Parents Reflect on their Childhood Reading Experiences

Parents participate in an activity where they reflect on their childhood reading experiences and how they shaped their reading attitudes. The concept of reading identity is illustrated with a literacy fingerprint metaphor that helps parents understand what reading identity is and how it develops over time.

Introduce

First, explain to parents that they have a literacy fingerprint that tells the stories and experiences that have shaped their reading attitude and identity from a young age. Further explain that their literacy fingerprint began developing during their early home literacy experiences and continued developing during their school experiences well into adulthood. Next, share examples of two students' literacy fingerprints on an overhead projector for parents to see. In an unbiased manner, share Maya's fingerprint (see Figure 1) that illustrates her linguistically diverse family experiences that are full of rich language and literacy experiences based on her family's culture, language, and traditions. *Notice that her experiences are not storybook driven.* After that, share Michael's literacy fingerprint (see Figure 2) that illustrates a more ideologically storybook driven home literacy environment. Do not point out differences. Just simply share that there are many different home literacy practices that shape our children's early experiences. It is important to share both examples, so parents from all backgrounds can see that there are many forms of literacy in the home environment and that all literacy practices are recognized as valuable experiences.

Figure 1

Maya's Literacy Fingerprint

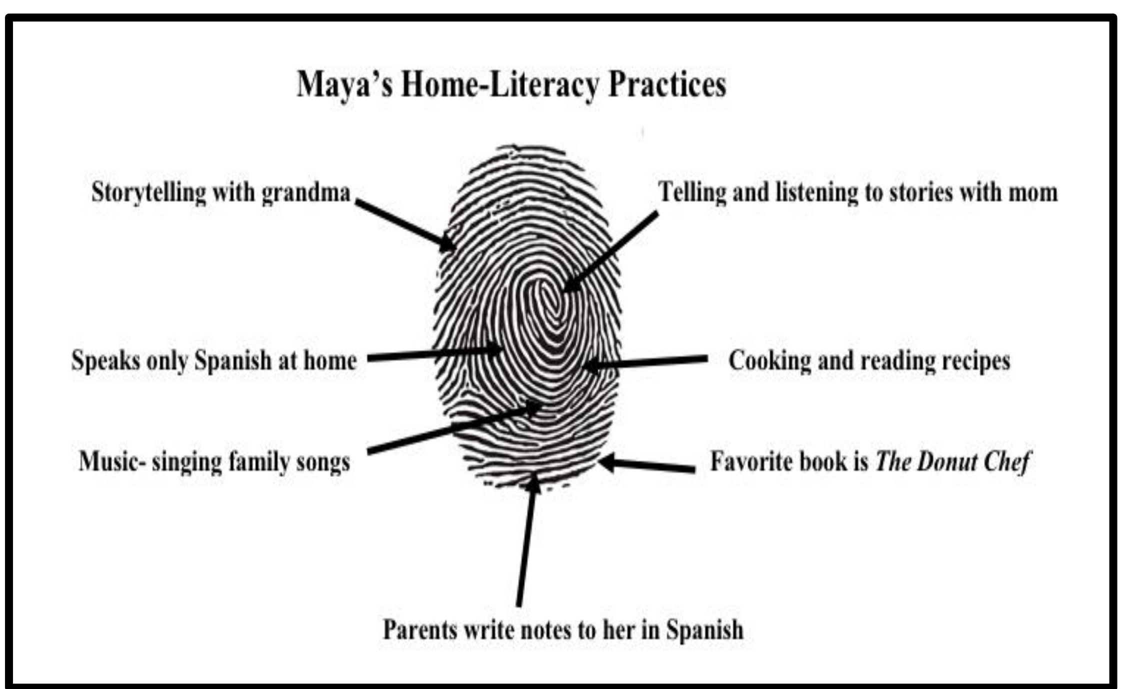
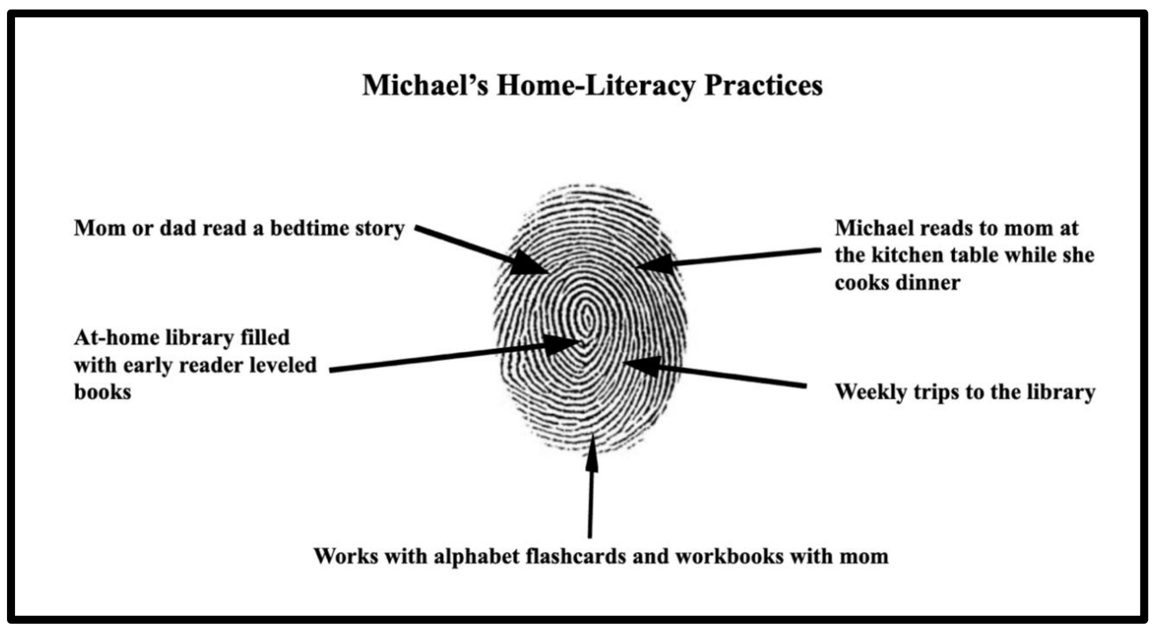


Figure 2

Michael's Literacy Fingerprint



Discuss

Provide parents with at least five minutes of open time to participate in a turn and talk activity where they share and discuss key experiences from their childhood with other parents based on the prompts provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Turn and Talk Prompts

Prompts for Discussing Reading Identity Development
1. How were reading or literacy activities a part of your childhood? 2. Talk about some of your earliest memories of reading. What were they like? 3. What books stand out to you from your childhood? Why? 4. Did you have a reading role model? If yes, who was it? 5. What were your reading experiences at school like? 6. Do you like to read as an adult? Why or why not?

Share

Following the small group discussions, bring parents back to a large group setting to share some of the things they discovered about their reading identities in their small groups. Only have parents share who are comfortable doing so.

Step Two: Parents Examine their Child's Developing Reading Identity

Introduce

Explain to parents that their children have their own literacy fingerprints that are starting to develop based on their home literacy experiences, practices, language, culture, and school experiences. Explain to parents that we are here to honor each child's unique literacy fingerprint and nurture its continued development between home and school.

Build

Parents build their child's "reading identity doll" and add the significant experiences that have shaped who their children are as readers, thus far. While constructing their child's identity doll, parents develop an awareness of the vital role they play as their child's reading role model. Simultaneously, teachers share ways that parents can continue to support their children's reading identity by supporting their children's independent reading, which intersects between home and

school. By the last workshop, each parent has a completed reading identity doll that represents who their child is as a reader based on their merging home and school experiences along with a plan for continuing to support their child's reading in school. Parents build a reading identity doll by answering the questions in Table 2. See Figures 3 and 4 for completed identity dolls.

Table 2

My Child's Reading Identity

Questions About My Child's Reading Identity
1. Where is your child's favorite place to read?
2. Who does your child like to read with?
3. Where does your child like to choose books from?
4. Does your child have a favorite book?
5. Does your child have a reading role model(s)? If yes, who is their role model(s)?
6. How often do you read with your child?
7. When someone reads with your child what types of questions do they like to ask?
8. When someone reads with your child what types of connections do they make?

Use results to plan step 3 to meet the needs of your parent population.

Table 3 shares parent responses for questions about their child's reading identity. Results are provided to help guide you in selecting the appropriate reading role model behaviors to share with parents in step 3.

Table 3

Parent Responses About Children's Reading Identities

Question	Response	Total Number
1. Favorite place to read	bedroom	8
	bed	11
	sofa/couch	5
2. Likes to read with	mom	19
	dad	17
	grandma	6
	grandpa	2
	sibling	2
3. Likes to choose books from.	library	15
	home library	9
	store	4
	Scholastic Book Clubs	3
4. Favorite types of books	picture books	13
	chapter books	12
	leveled readers	8
5. Reading Role Model	does not have one.	6
	mom	10
	dad	7
	grandparent	5
	sibling	4
6. Frequency of Reading	bedtime	14
	in the morning	2
	does not read at home.	2

Figure 3

Reading Identity Doll 1

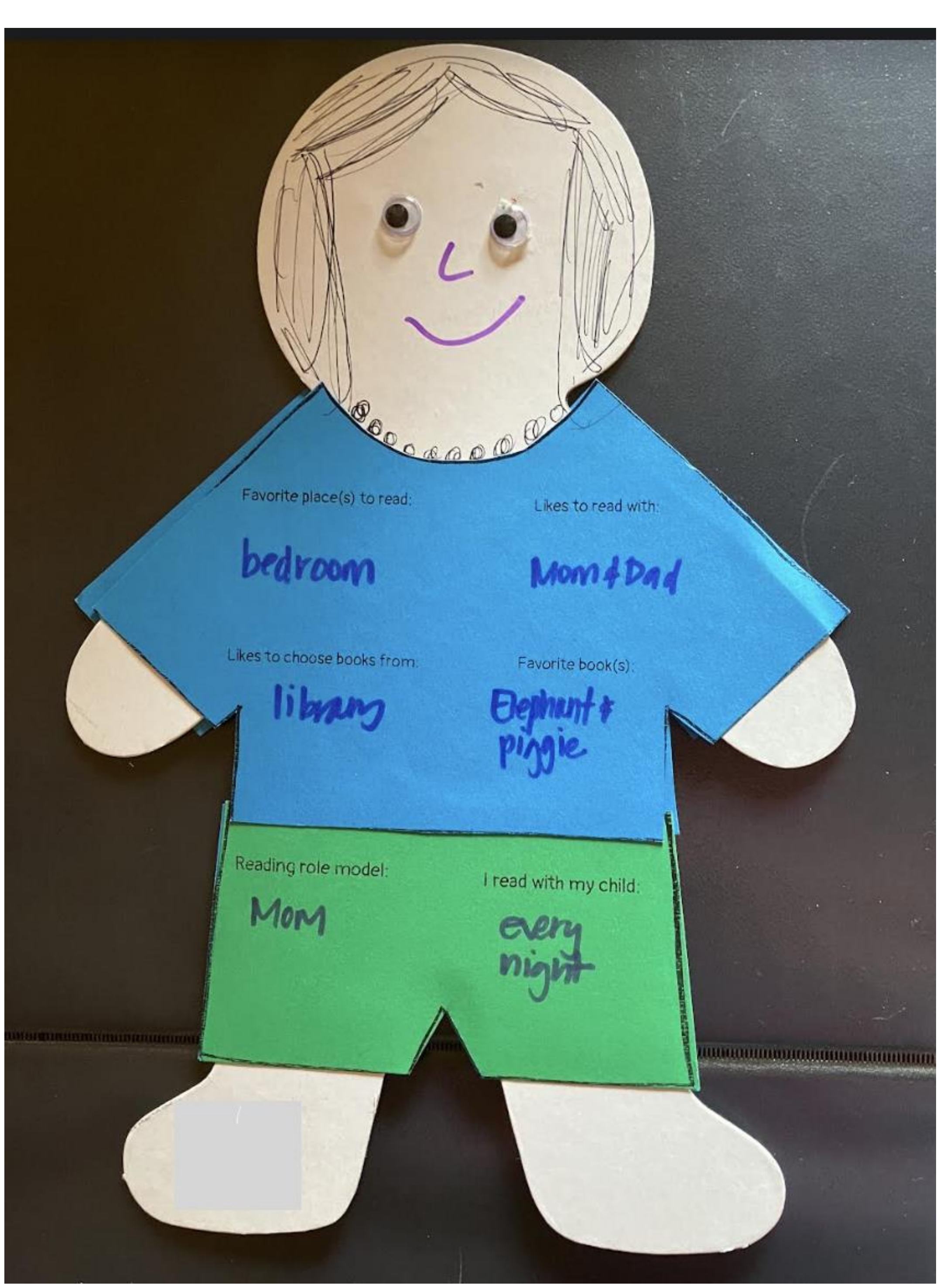
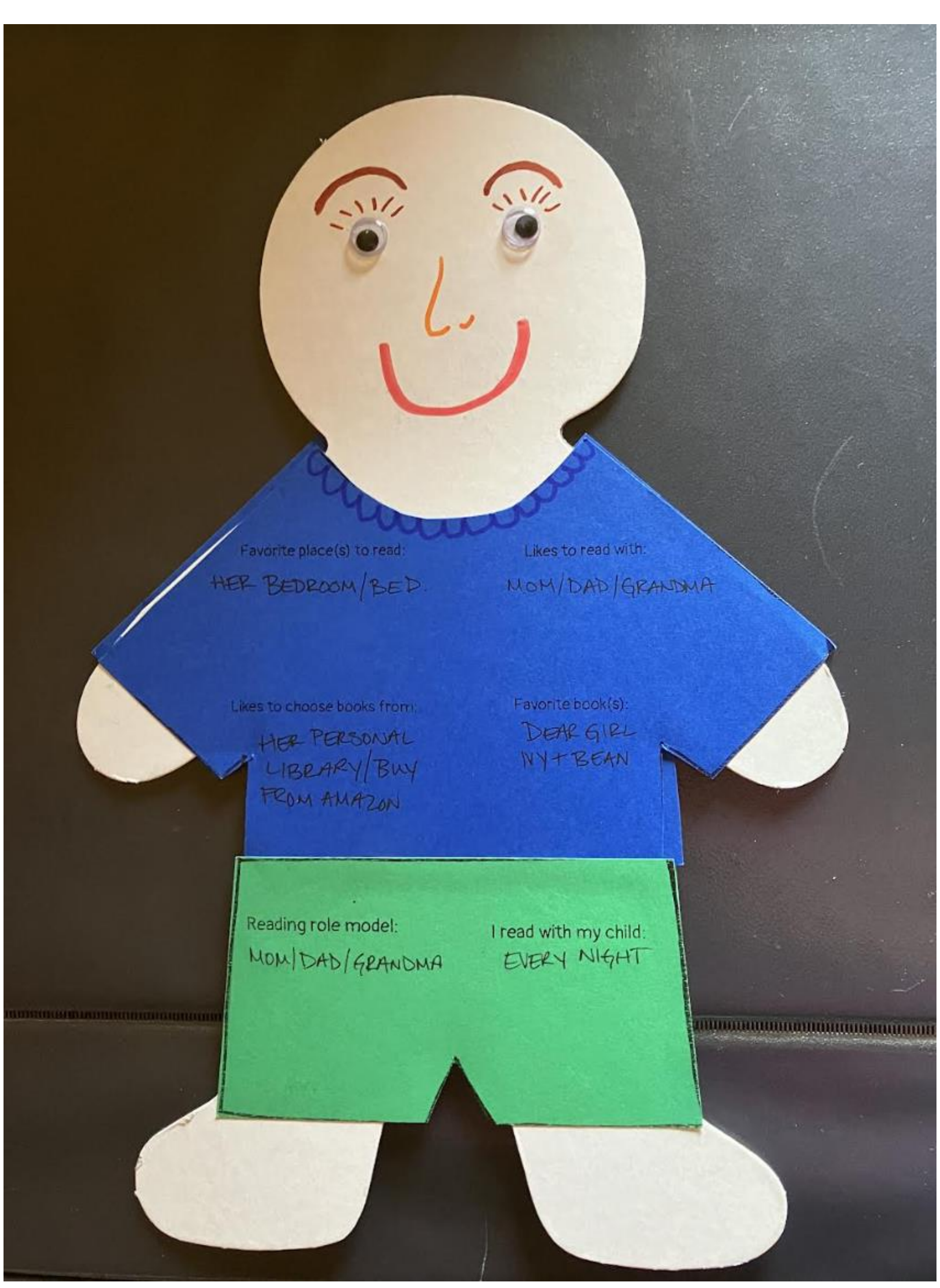


Figure 4

Reading Identity Doll 2



Step Three: Parents Learn Reading Role Model Behaviors

Introduce

Results from Step 2: Parents Examine Their Child's Reading Identity show that many families need help establishing a reading role model within their home literacy environment. Therefore, the family literacy activity titled *Parents Learn Reading Role Model Behaviors* was offered to parents. The goal of the activity was for parents to learn about specific physical and language-based moves for reading with their child that support their role or a family member's role as a reading role model in their home literacy environment. Both parents and their children were invited to attend this workshop to experience hands-on opportunities and guidance for learning physical and language-based moves while reading with their children.

Share

The family literacy activity began with sharing a mentor text that celebrates the power of being a child's reading role model. For this workshop, the English and Spanish version of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* was selected due to its pattern predictability for reading in both languages. Table 4 lists picture books in both English and Spanish that share a variety of examples of reading roles models in families.

Table 4

Mentor Texts About Reading Role Models

Mentor Text	Author	Reading Role Model
Mr. George Baker	Amy Hest	Intergenerational role model
The Wednesday Surprise	Eve Bunting	Grandparent
Lola Loves Stories *A Lola le encantan los cuentos*	Anna McQuinn	Parent
Lola Reads to Leo *Lola le lee al pequeno Leo*	Anna McQuinn	Sibling
The Whisper	Pamela Zagarenski	Teacher

Explore Physical-Based Moves

While parents read the book with their child, workshop facilitators model and guide parents to employ the physical-based moves listed in Table 5. Provide parents with the handout in Figure 5 for physical-based moves for easy access and to take home for future reference when reading with their children.

Table 5

Physical-Based Moves

Getting the Home Literacy Environment Ready for Reading with Physical-Based Moves
Physical-Based Moves: 1. Establishing a quiet, comfortable place to read 2. Encouraging my child to sit close to me 3. Letting my child hold the book 4. Inviting my child to turn the pages 5. Pointing to pictures and words (Also, part of language-based moves)

Figure 5

Physical-Based Moves for Enhancing your Child's Attention to the Text

Physical-Based Moves

Put these strategies into action when reading your pattern book and other picture books with your child at home:

Maintaining Physical Proximity

- ❑ Find a quiet, comfortable place to read with your child.
- ❑ Encourage your child to sit close to you.

Holding the Book and Turning the Pages

- ❑ Let your child hold the book
- ❑ Let your child turn the pages when he or she wants
- ❑ Ask your child if he or she would like to turn the pages
- ❑ Point to the words while you are reading the story
- ❑ Provide touch and thoughts with the book

Sentence stems for complimenting and encouraging your child's participation during the read-aloud.

- ❑ I like the way you were able to show me the picture of…
- ❑ That was a great question. I am glad you stopped to ask me that.
- ❑ Use a "high-five" or a "thumbs-up" when your child contributes an idea or asks a question.
- ❑ Would you like to turn the pages in the book while I read?
- ❑ What is your favorite picture in the book?

Explore Language-Based Moves

Parents explore language-based moves for reading with their child in the home literacy environment listed in table 6. Provide parents with the handout in Figure 6 for language-based moves for easy access and to take home for future reference when reading with their children.

Table 6

Language-Based Moves

Talking with my Child While Reading Using Language-Based Moves

Language-Based Moves:

1. Complimenting my child while reading
2. Adjusting my language to match the characters' voices
3. Pointing to pictures and words
4. Talking about the words and pictures in the story
5. Discussing the story's "big idea"
6. Discussing how the characters are like my child and different from my child

Figure 6

Language-Based Moves

Language-Based Moves

Put these strategies into action when reading your pattern book and other picture books with your child at home:

Identifying and Understanding Pictures and Words

❑ Point and make comments about pictures, words, and letters your child may recognize.

For example:

- "Jack and Jill" both start with the letter J."
- "Tyrannosaurus" is a big word. If I clap the parts in the word, there are five.
- "House and mouse" These words rhyme. They both say "ouse"

❑ Ask your child to tell you about something that is in the pictures.

For example:

- "Why does the boy look so sad?"
- "What is the mom looking for?"
- "Where is the dog going?"

Questions for promoting interactive reading and supporting comprehension:

❑ Can you point to the title? Let's read it together.

❑ Let's look at the title, cover, and pictures. What do you think this story will be about? Why do you think that?

❑ What is happening in this picture?

❑ What has happened so far in the book?

❑ How do you think the character feels? Why? Show how you know using the pictures or the words in the book.

❑ Why do you think the character is acting the way he/she is acting? Show how you know using the pictures or the words in the book.

❑ What does the word "_____" mean? Explain in child-friendly language.

❑ What does this word say? (Point to a repetitive word or a word your child my know).

❑ What is the problem in the story?

❑ As we are reading what are you wondering about?

The Parent Perspective: Exit Slips

Listening to parent voices about their learning provides critical information for those in charge of planning family literacy projects. Exit slips (Fisher & Frey, 2004) based on relational pedagogy (Reyes & Torres, 2007) is an effective approach for acquiring the parent perspective with the approach of conducting research "with" families, as opposed to conducting research "about" families. The purpose of the parent exit slips is to identify positive themes and outcomes of parent learning that provided evidence that their learning transferred into the HLE. Therefore, it is recommended to utilize exit slips at the end of the workshop. The following are exit slip examples of parent responses for promoting physical-based moves and language-based moves with their children.

Parent Voices for Establishing Physical-Based Moves

For establishing a quiet, comfortable place to read and encouraging their child to sit close to them, one parent shared that their attempts to promote physical proximity made the "experience great because attention was always high" and that "it was harder to become distracted." Another parent commented that maintaining physical proximity "was helpful as it allowed us to read while our sons were able to view the words and photographs/illustrations, which prompted us to ask questions or point out other things with the book."

Next, by providing their child an opportunity to hold the book and turn the pages during their reading experience, one parent shared that it encouraged her child "to pay more attention and follow along" with the story. Another parent noticed that when his child held the book and turned the pages it "show[ed] me that he [was] attending the story and was engaged." Lastly, one parent expressed that having her child hold the book and turn the pages "helped to keep her child's attention, and the story ran smoother" as a result.

Finally for the physical-based move of pointing to pictures and words several parents identified positive changes in their child's responses to adult cues and identification of pictures and words on their own. One parent's attempt with "pointing out words and letters" resulted in an "increase in her [child] learning to read." Another parent shared that "we also point out word patterns such as rhyming words" while reading, one mother asked her "child about words he does not know." Finally, a father expressed that it "helps him [their child to] repeat some words that are too big for him."

Parent Voices for Establishing Language-Based Moves

First, for the physical and language-based moves of pointing to and discussing pictures and words several parents identified positive changes in their child's responses to adult cues and identification of pictures and words on their own. One parent's attempt with "pointing out words and letters" resulted in an "increase in her [child] learning to read." Another parent shared that "we also point out word patterns such as rhyming words" while reading, while another parent

asked her “child about words he does not know.” Finally, a parent expressed that it “helps him [their child to] repeat some words that are too big for him.”

Next, for the language-based move of complimenting my child while reading one parent praised her child and stated that her child was “very responsive to praise while reading.” Another parent shared that it gave her child “more confidence by telling him what he was doing well” and by “switch[ing] up praise, it caused me to use other techniques– questions, turning pages, etc.” One parent stated that her attempt “helped to create and open more discussion opportunities” as well as “helped to create a more pleasant reading experience/interaction.” Another parent confirmed that her attempt “made it a more interactive and positive experience” and that “it felt good letting him know I was proud.” Additionally, one parent attempted to adjust his language to match the book’s character and stated that his child “liked the silly voice when we were reading *Fly Guy*.”

Finally, one parent shared that her attempts to discuss the story’s big idea following the reading of a story “has worked really well for us, mostly because we are able to see if our child is comprehending what we are reading.” Another parent shared that discussing the big idea “has allowed our child to discuss her feelings and express questions” about the story. Also, one parent explained that “we talked about the big idea while reading *The Donut Chef*,” and “it was successful.” The parent further explained that her child “responded really well and talked about how the characters were feeling,” and that they “thought the main idea was don’t be mean.”

Conclusion

The type of reading identity a child develops—positive or negative—is critical to their development in the way they conceptualize reading and view themselves as a reader over time. The influence of both home and school supports the importance for parents and teachers to participate in collaborative learning opportunities that nurture their children’s developing reading attitude that eventually shapes their reading identity. The activity shared in this article is just one example of family literacy partnerships where parents and teachers can work together to nurture the development of their children’s reading attitudes throughout their school years. Undoubtedly, there is a need for more family literacy partnerships that honor each child’s unique literacy fingerprint and supports parent learning for nurturing their child’s reading identity development between home and school.

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Author Bio

Michele Byrne is an assistant professor of reading at Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida. Dr. Byrne has over 35 years of experience in education, working as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, literacy coach, and district literacy specialist. Her practical and research interests focus on teacher education, family literacy, parent engagement, and culturally responsive teaching. Her most recent publication for *The Reading Teacher* is titled *"Family Belonging Backpacks: Deepening Equity and Inclusion with Diverse Literature."*

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF LITERACY COACHING PRESCHOOL TEACHERS WITH THE EARLY LITERACY LEARNING MODEL

DR. VICKIE JOHNSTON

Abstract

The process of literacy coaching during the pandemic required programs to re-envision innovative ways of engaging teachers and coaches in a collaborative process with the use of technology. This provided unique opportunities to provide literacy coaching to preschool teachers during uncertain times with contextual constraints limiting face-to-face classroom observation and dialogue. This paper will discuss the Early Literacy Learning Model's (ELLM) learning strategies, as well as techniques, issues, solutions, and courseware utilized in virtual literacy coaching. It shares the effectiveness of using GoReact, Zoom and WebEx, and Canvas to provide a system to support collaboration, virtual coaching, and teacher training during academic years where coaches and teachers experienced challenges with not only a global pandemic, but also hiring and retaining teachers, site directors, and staff.

Innovative Ways of Literacy Coaching Preschool Teachers with the Early Literacy Learning Model

According to Dean et al. (2010), effective literacy coaching positively impacts a teacher's literacy instruction, which improves their students' literacy achievement. Haneda et al. (2019) found that experienced literacy coaches provided more opportunities for the teacher to critically reflect on their pedagogical goals and explore their students' perspectives. The International Literacy Association (ILA) standards for reading professionals states that "the primary goal of literacy coaches is to work with individual and groups of teachers and to facilitate schoolwide improvement of literacy teaching and learning" (ILA, 2018, p. 43); however, the global pandemic created even greater barriers for literacy coaches to be able to access their teachers. Although the pandemic happened in 2020, we continue to experience repercussions. This paper presents the process of literacy coaching during the pandemic and the two years following, discussing how we utilized innovative ways to engage our preschools teachers, providing successful literacy coaching which resulted in positive student learning outcomes.

Because of COVID protocols and social distancing requirements during the global pandemic, ELLM coaches were unable to visit most of their classrooms. Navigating this process of literacy coaching required programs to re-envision ways of engaging teachers and coaches in

this collaborative process with the use of technology. After COVID, many of these innovative strategies for coaching teachers were weaved into face-to-face coaching to provide support for their teachers throughout the workday. This paper will discuss evidence-based practices for the Early Literacy Learning Model's (ELLM) coaching strategies, as well as our techniques, issues, solutions, and courseware utilized during the pandemic and the two years following.

Background

Although Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010), and Carlisle and Berebitsky's (2011) found a positive connection between literacy coaching and student achievement, according to Hu and van Veen (2020), how a coach implements coaching plays an important role in a teacher's willingness to fully participate. Even though young children need to have language and literacy experiences, the quantity and quality of classroom practices have shown no specific patterns or methods in early childhood education classrooms (Piasta et al., 2017). Research has shown us that literacy coaches serve as instructional leaders that provide resources to teachers, make instructional recommendations, model strategy instruction, conduct professional development, mentor new teachers, coordinate reading programs, and oversee a school's assessment system (Bean et al., 2003). They work with their teachers in the classroom, using their knowledge and skills to create plans, lead, model, and educate teachers on how to most effectively help their students with early literacy skills. Literacy coaches have expert knowledge in evidence-based practices and the science of reading, and they are trained to work with teachers as adult learners. The coaches in ELLM are not only experts in literacy education but also in training preschool teachers.

The ELLM curriculum is a research and standards-based early literacy curriculum and instructional support system for teachers and coaches, targeting at-risk 3-and 4-year-old preschool children and their families (Fountain & Wood, 2003). It is a theme-based, comprehensive literacy-focus program designed to encourage children's creativity and curiosity. The ELLM program confronts the effects of poverty on school readiness, particularly in early literacy, in at-risk Pre-K classrooms and childcare centers in southwest Florida, and ELLM was designed to close the school readiness gap for at-risk 4-year-old children. ELLM coaches work with teachers and assistants from approximately 80 classrooms, including Head Start classes, early learning centers, and preschool classes, to promote early literacy skills. They visit classrooms and coach teachers on evidence-based literacy practices. These coaches use their literacy training and skills to create plans, lead, model, and educate these teachers and classroom assistants on how to most effectively bolster students' early literacy skills. In the homes in which the typical ELLM child resides, extreme poverty precipitates daily challenges of housing, food, and safety; consequently, there is little space to address the equally fundamental needs of education. Most children served by ELLM come from homes in which English is not spoken or is a dual language. Children served by ELLM have substantial learning challenges, including foundational language and literacy skills; and English language exposure and literacy experiences before children start school have been shown to predict their learning in later grades (Bennett et al., 2002 & Burgess, 1997)

Children in poverty typically hear 30 million fewer words by age 3 than higher-income children, and a child's ability to acquire vocabulary is directly tied to parents and caregivers talking to and interacting with them. An average child from a professional family acquires 1,100 words by age 3, from a working-class family, 700 words, and from a family of low income only 500 words. Five-year-old children of lower SES score two years behind on standardized language development tests by the time they enter school (Weisleder & Fernald, 2013). Children from disadvantaged backgrounds or who are dual-language learners are at risk for inadequate language growth (August et al., 2005). Also, children from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle significantly from their more advantaged peers in verbal and other cognitive abilities when entering kindergarten (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Emergent literacy must begin in preschool as these difficulties are persistent and often affect a child's further language and literacy learning.

Many of these children served by ELLM are young children who are learning a second language while continuing to develop their home language. The absence of education and English language proficiency or knowledge compound the inability of families to support developing school readiness for their children. The aim of the ELLM program is to prepare these students to enter kindergarten with confidence and competence, both in the classroom and throughout their lives. Without the knowledge and skills required to enter school ready to learn, the learning or achievement gap between children from poverty and their more affluent peers will grow exponentially.

ELLM coaches utilize the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) as the model for coaching their teachers, which emphasizes the interactions between teachers and students and focuses on the strengths of the teacher. It also motivates the teachers, as it builds on their strengths. According to Justice et al. (2017), preschool children in classrooms with higher CLASS scores were significantly more likely to demonstrate kindergarten readiness across academic and behavioral domains, and the greatest gains were seen in classrooms where children experienced economic hardship (Hamre, et al. 2007). Utilizing this coaching model, coaches typically meet with each preschool classroom teacher weekly or every other week for coaching. During these coaching conversations, they discuss the strengths of the lesson and compare what was seen to the learning outcomes of the students, and gaps are noted and integrated into a teacher's Action Plans. Coaches are able to demonstrate to teachers the impact on student learning through the use of the assessment data and teacher coaching sessions. Additionally, inservice and mini-trainings are conducted by these ELLM coaches throughout the year with all of the teachers, focusing on the areas of need.

Problem

The entire world experienced the effects of COVID-19 global pandemic in some form or fashion; however, the impact on the development of our young children was detrimental. COVID-19 affected all aspects of young children's lives, disrupting their education and their psychological, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development and presents a significant and long-lasting risk to their health and well-being (Benner & Mistry, 2020). The global pandemic

resulted in a delay in the development of children, especially those children in poverty, contributed to increased stress for families, and caused greater economic turmoil in a field that was already plagued with financial barriers. Although the pandemic happened in 2020, we continue to experience the repercussions and face several challenges in education.

Because of COVID protocols and social distancing requirements, the literacy coaches were unable to visit most of their classrooms as these protocols prevented anyone from entering the classroom other than the teacher. Many classrooms had to deal with shutdowns for COVID and students being sent home to quarantine, as well. Students' average daily attendance was sporadic because of this, as several sites had to quarantine out of school for two weeks or students were quarantined at home when family members were exposed to COVID. Student learning was also impacted by mask wearing because of students' inability to clearly hear the teacher or visually see the teachers' formation of producing sounds and words (i.e., mouth, tongue, lips). The teachers also struggled to hear and/or see the children produce sounds and words. While masks were shown to reduce transmission of COVID and made face-to-face learning possible during this time, the impact was seen in their acquisition of phonological awareness. A key part of learning the sound of language is to see the faces, mouths, and expressions of their caregivers.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, ongoing challenges included the loss of several preschool teachers, some site directors, and the hiring of personnel to replace their positions. Many school sites experienced delays in the start of school or even the closure of classrooms due to the teacher and/or many students being out with COVID. Even in classrooms that remained open, several students were in and out of the classroom because of COVID. Some classrooms had to even temporarily absorb students from other Pre-k classrooms while their teacher and classmates were out with COVID. Because of low enrollment, several preschool sites began allowing 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds to enroll in their preschool classrooms, which posed challenges in maintaining a developmentally appropriate setting while differentiating the curriculum to meet the needs of the younger students. As new students entered or transitioned from the 3-year-old classrooms into the preschool classrooms, many enter behind or at various levels of alphabet letter recognition, print concepts, and phonological awareness.

The 2022-2023 academic year saw challenges with hiring and retaining teachers and staff. With the loss of several preschool teachers, the hiring of personnel to replace their positions was very challenging. Literacy coaches spend time and energy coaching teachers on evidence-based early literacy skills; consequently, when teachers leave, our ELLM coaches must start all over with new personnel. There were also changes in leadership in several of our sites throughout this school year, resulting in a loss of staff members and site directors. This academic year also saw delays in the start of school for many school sites and the closure of classrooms due to staff shortage. Whether it be lack of pay, the challenges of a preschool classroom, or other factors caused from the changing requirements in education, there is currently a shortage of preschool teachers entering the profession. While behavioral challenges are not new to schools, post-COVID classrooms additionally saw changes in the developmental needs of the students, as teachers observed students entering the classroom with more behavioral issues.

Solutions and Technologies Utilized

In order to overcome these challenges, the ELLM coaches had to initially find a way into the classroom virtually. Although research has shown promising results utilizing virtual coaching (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2015), the methods and technologies recommended in research varied (Thompson & Kosiorek, 2017). In order to remain consistent in our coaching methods and pedagogy, technologies that allowed the coaching process to continue seamlessly were sought. These technologies also allowed for a continuous integration into face-to-face coaching once the literacy coaches were able to go back in to the classrooms. With staff shortages and new teachers and substitute teachers being hired, these virtual tools allowed literacy coaches to provide more targeted training based on teacher need. Although face-to-face coaching is still preferred today, these virtual additions allow coaches to reach more teachers and consolidate their travel time. Consequently, GoReact, Zoom and WebEx, and CANVAS platforms were utilized with our classroom teachers in order to continue to deliver quality strengths-based early literacy coaching to their classroom teachers during a global pandemic and beyond.

GoReact

GoReact is an interactive cloud-based platform for feedback, grading, and critiquing of submitted video assignments or classroom teaching. Through the GoReact platform, classroom teachers could upload videos of themselves teaching lessons and self-reflecting. Then, they would conference with an ELLM coach during a time that was convenient for both of them. During the two years after COVID, ELLM coaches observed face-to-face in most of the classrooms; however, virtual tools such as GoReact enable coaches to meet with more teachers in order to provide support outside of the observation time or normal classroom hours.

GoReact is a closed system, so privacy and security were not an issue, and teachers could record lessons throughout their day instead of having a coach visit their classroom at the same time each week. This allowed them to gain more help throughout their teaching day. Teachers also reflected on the delivery of their lessons and teaching choices, and then shared goals with their ELLM coaches. Coaches implemented Action Plans to help their teachers implement daily small group lessons with a focus on the targeted instructional practices to support phonological awareness. In addition, they guided the teachers in understanding how to build oral language skills by asking more open-ended questions and following up by prompting students to elaborate and/or explain their thinking. Providing teachers with additional training and opportunities for one-on-one coaches can enhance their professional skills and hopefully increase teacher retention.

Zoom and WebEx

Because of the cleaning protocols the teachers were required to do during recess or break time during COVID, the preschool teachers also benefitted from being able to schedule a Zoom or WebX coaching conference with an ELLM coach at a time that was more convenient to them;

sometimes this happened late in the afternoon or evening. Video conferencing also allowed us to conduct county-wide professional development training. Through video-conferencing and shared screening capabilities, the coaches, teachers, and administrators could actively participate and engage in the training session from their individual schools and offices throughout the county. These elements of our program were utilized during the years after COVID because of the flexibility of virtual trainings and Zoom conferencing. During the 2022-2023 academic year, inservice trainings were held face-to-face, but the flexibility of Zoom and WebEx allowed for individual questions and discussions in a flexible virtual environment, as meetings could be held face-to-face and virtual at the same time. This flexibility helped when coaches had to train many new teachers or teachers that were just placed into the classroom throughout the year.

Canvas

Canvas is a learning management system that many of our preschool teachers used to provide online learning for students in quarantine or during times when their classrooms were shut down because of COVID. This required that our ELLM coaches and preschool teachers learn to navigate in Canvas in order for the coaches to be invited into their iLearning Canvas environment. Coaches were then able to view a teacher’s lessons and provide resources for their teaching. This provided coaches with follow-up conversations to discuss whether or not strategies worked and how they knew if they were effective or still needed adjusting. Coaches also spent time prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year creating additional resources for every week in the academic year for their teachers to utilize with the ELLM curriculum. The coaches provided these new resources via a separate Canvas page which was made available to all of the preschool teachers throughout the county. Providing teachers with additional materials to enhance their teaching helped teachers feel supported, as they were seeing a variety of levels in the early literacy skills of their students.

Learning Outcomes

One of the ways we used to measure our success was through the measurement of our student learning outcomes. One measurement utilized was the Alphabet Letter Recognition Inventory (ALRI). The ALRI (the Alphabet Letter Recognition Inventory) measures whether or not a child recognizes and knows the upper-case and lower-case letters and their sounds. ALRI is a formative tool used to guide instruction and monitor students' acquisition of letter names (understanding and use) of the English language.

Figure 1

Alphabet Letter Recognition (ALRI) 2020—2021 Academic Year

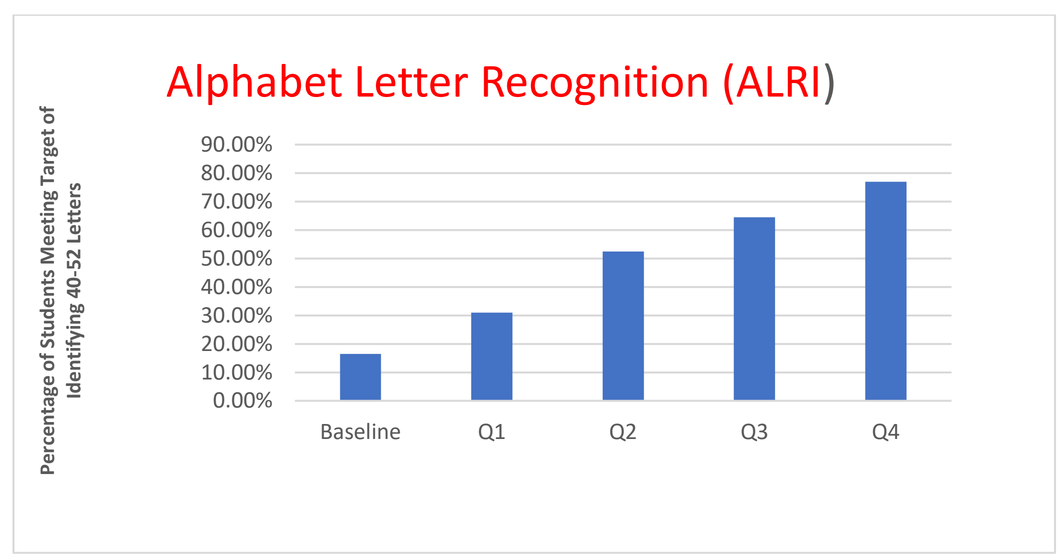


Figure 2

Alphabet Letter Recognition (ALRI) 2021—2022 Academic Year

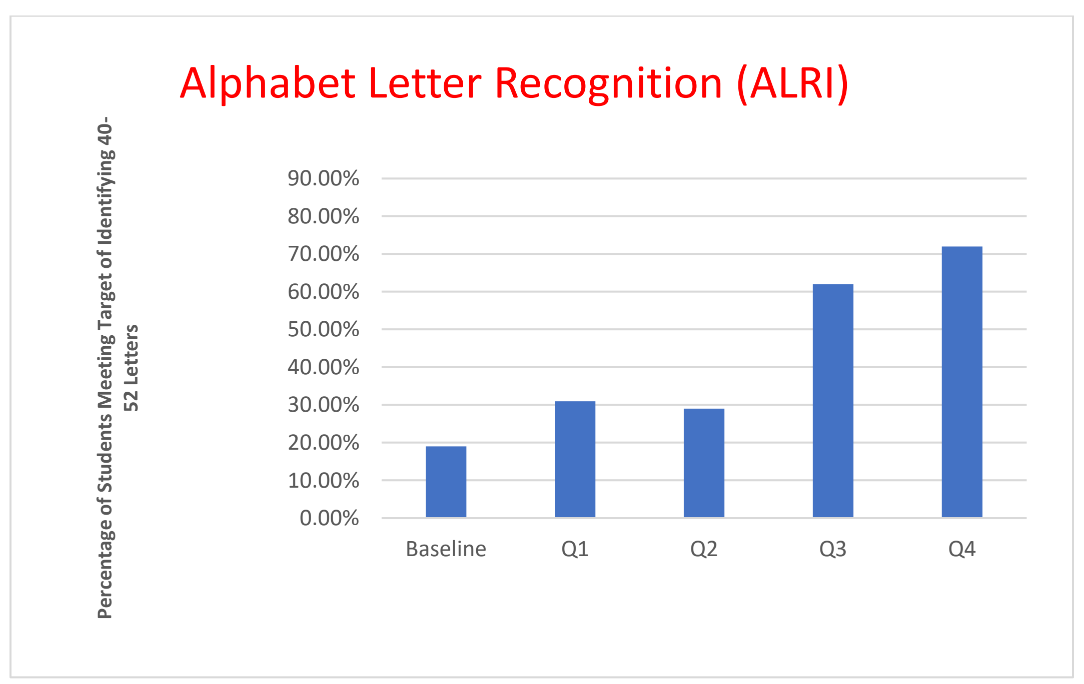
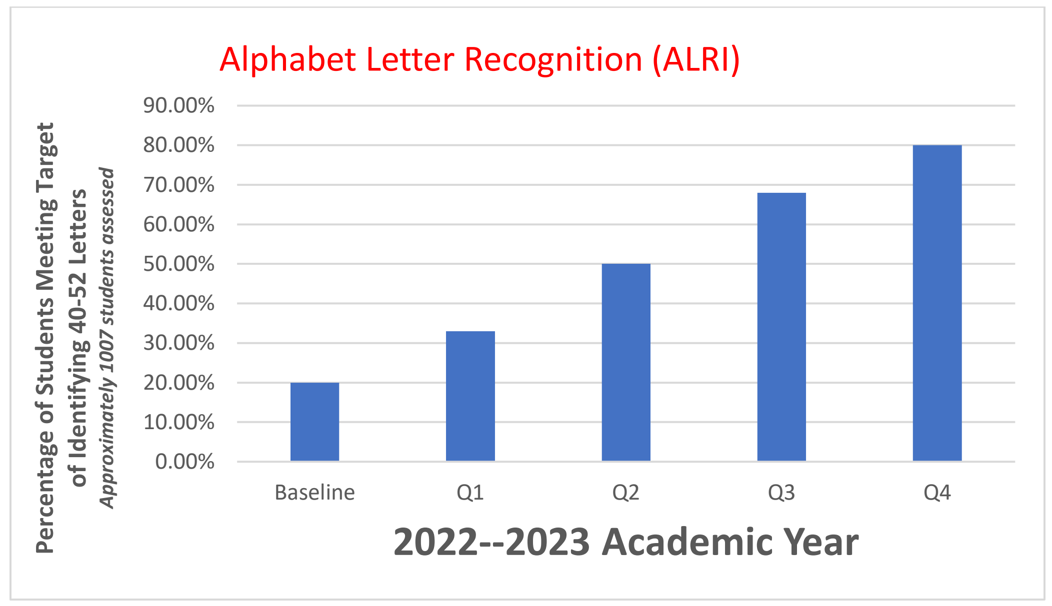


Figure 3

Alphabet Letter Recognition (ALRI) 2022—2023 Academic Year



The ALRI assessment was conducted on approximately 800 VPK students from Head Start and childcare centers in Florida in 2020-2021 and 2021—2022 (see Figure 1 & 2). During the 2022—2023 academic year, 1007 students were assessed (see Figure 3). Baseline data was collected from each student at the beginning of the academic year, and additional assessments were given four additional times throughout the academic year. Results of this assessment showed that approximately 77% of the assessed preschools students met the goal of learning 40-52 upper and lower-case letters during the 2020-2021 academic year (see Figure 1), 72% during the 2021-2022 academic year (see Figure 2), and 80% during the 2022-2023 academic year (see Figure 3).

Implications

Although the results of the student learning outcomes do not prove that the learning gains achieved corelated to the success of the technologies utilized to deliver literacy coaching, the goal was to find a way to deliver quality literacy coaching to classroom teachers during a global pandemic when coaches were not allowed to enter the classroom. Although coaches still conduct professional development workshops and inservice trainings, literacy coaches primarily observe teachers in their classrooms, provide feedback, and engage in meaningful discussion with teachers about their lessons. According to Garet et al. (2001), instructional coaching is more effective than the traditional professional development workshop model because it is integrated into teachers' day-to-day activities at the school and is designed to respond to the way in which teachers learn best, which is through active learning.

Literacy coaches play an important role by helping teachers connect valuable early literacy skills with their day-to-day teaching strategies during the process of classroom instruction or planning time. A well-designed coaching strategy is critical for enhancing teachers' skills; when students are supported by skilled teachers, their achievement levels improve (Barnett, et.al., 2008), and teachers who have access to continual coaching can learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Research has also found that preschoolers in classrooms that have quality interactions reported greater learning gains across school readiness domains, including early literacy (Vitiello et al., 2018). Using GoReact, Zoom and WebEx, and Canvas to provide a system to support collaboration, face-to-face and virtual coaching, and inservice and teacher training supported the needs of our teachers and in turn, fostered early literacy learning for their students. Consequently, ELLM coaches were able to continue to help their preschool teachers provide literacy-rich environments and interactions with their students.

Kraft, Blazar and Hogan (2018), in a review of coaching interventions, found no statistical difference in effect size between in-person and virtual coaching. Research has reported positive effects of both in-person (e.g., Biancarosa et al., 2010; Sailors & Price, 2015) and online coaching (Matsumura et al., 2019; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2013). As with face-to-face literacy coaching, virtual coaching builds on several underlying qualities of both teacher and coach; consequently, by providing a customizable approach that meet the needs of individual teachers, students, and school settings, many preschool students can be successful in their early literacy learning skills.

Although technology made educational coaching more accessible, convenient, and timely for those teachers who had access to technology infrastructure, adding virtual components to any existing practice introduces a host of challenges. The greatest challenges in implementing these technologies were many times found with the understanding and use of the technologies themselves. Although the literacy coaches provided professional development and technology training, appropriate access to technical support, availability of infrastructure, and slow internet speeds were problematic. Training videos in GoReact were utilized; however, the time allocated and required to incorporate this new technology was challenging for some teachers. Additionally, the Canvas site that was created for these preschool teachers was incorporated into the county's learning management system, so when the site was not working, the literacy coaches had to email or provide flash drives containing extra resources to teachers in order to provide them with supplemental resources, as well. With the growing pressure and duties that teachers faced in the classroom during this time, ELLM coaches had the additional responsibility of being a technology resource for their teachers.

Instructional Recommendations

Young children's language and literacy outcomes are important predictors of later academic success and are important indicators of school readiness (Araujo et al., 2016). Literacy coaching offers the opportunity to improve the classroom experiences of students by strengthening

classroom teachers' skills (Buysse & Wesley, 2005); however, if coaches are unable to enter the classroom, the teacher can be left without support. In order to continue to support classroom teachers, technology can be utilized when coaches are unable to enter the classroom. Combining virtual options with face-to-face coaching offers unique opportunities to provide literacy coaching to preschool teachers during uncertain times with contextual constraints limiting face-to-face classroom observation and dialogue.

Findings related to student learning outcomes show the effectiveness of using GoReact, videoconferencing, and Canvas to provide a system to support collaboration, virtual coaching, and teacher training; however, parent beliefs are an important factor to consider when engaging young children in language-rich interactions. Rowe (2008) found that "parents who hold beliefs about child development that are more in line with information offered by experts, pediatricians and textbooks, talk more, use more diverse vocabulary and longer utterances, and produce a smaller proportion of directive utterances during their everyday interactions with their toddlers, than parents who do not hold these beliefs" (p. 204). Consequently, family literacy nights, dual language books and other quality books, and parent training are important factors in early literacy development and must be included in any early childhood program.

Factors associated with poverty and its effect on language outcomes have been well documented. By the time a child enters kindergarten, children from impoverished homes differ from their more advantaged peers in both verbal and other cognitive abilities (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). COVID-19 disruptions changed learning across the board, including in the critical area of early literacy learning. Identifying environmental factors that shape early language proficiency is critical for remediating the growing achievement gaps between children from disadvantaged and advantaged families. The foundations for language and literacy success are built in the early years, and the path to reading proficiency in third grade and beyond are set in the birth to five early learning environments; consequently, if we do not find ways for the most vulnerable students to acquire early literacy learning, they may never catch up.

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Author Bio

Vickie Johnston is an Instructor III in literacy and the Director of the Early Literacy Learning Model (ELLM) in the College of Education at Florida Gulf Coast University where she teaches literacy and teacher education courses. Dr. Johnston began her career interpreting for deaf high school and middle school students and has more than 15 years of teaching experience in both elementary and special education classrooms. She has taught in public and private schools in Illinois, Texas, Arkansas, Michigan, and Florida. Her areas of research include early literacy learning, struggling readers, differentiated instruction, children’s literature, and technology integration in teacher education.

How to Motivate Primary Students to Read: PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program

Dr. Jeannie Votypka

Abstract

This reading motivation program summary and corresponding study examine the practical implications of a reading motivation program, PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program, for teachers interested in motivating primary students to read each day. The paper first summarizes the PREP program step by step with teacher implementation instructions, and then proceeds to investigate the research behind the program. The study investigates changes in reading motivation and reading achievement among kindergarten through third graders following a reading motivation program, PREP, designed to increase intrinsic reading motivation. The program was delivered by classroom teachers and focused on contingent reward (reward related to reading), book choice, and parental involvement. 277 children in the PREP group were compared with 277 children in a control group who did not participate in PREP. Reading motivation and reading achievement were measured at two time points. Both groups reported significantly higher reading motivation at time point 2, but a greater improvement was observed in the PREP group. Also, the PREP group had a significantly better reading performance at time point 2, whereas a non-significant difference was identified for the control group. These findings suggest that a reading motivation program, like PREP, should be integrated into the daily reading curriculum to boost reading motivation and strengthen reading skills.

How to Motivate Primary Students to Read: PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program

Introduction

Motivating young children to read consistently at home is a challenge for all teachers. As a reading intervention teacher of 16 years, serving students in grades kindergarten through third grade, I quickly realized most of my students were not reading at home. These students needed reading intervention not because they had a reading disability, but because they lacked the practice of daily reading. When primary students do not read consistently during their developmental years, decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills suffer. Another important facet of reading instruction that many teachers overlook is reading motivation. How could I motivate my students to read so they could reach grade-level reading?

As we all do when we have a problem, I turned to the internet and research for an answer. I searched and searched but did not find one. I found singular motivational practices within the literature but not a step by step, evidence-based program I could implement into my classroom. To solve this problem, I set out to develop a nightly reading program which would motivate my students to read. Luckily, at this same time, I was studying for a Ph.D. in literacy and was the mom of two young boys learning how to read. I thought about what motivated my own sons-choice and reward. With those ideas in mind, PREP-Primary Reading Engagement Program, was born. Over ten years' time I created the PREP Reading program in my primary intervention classroom. Beginning with my Ph.D. dissertation research in my 2018 classroom with only 16 students and proceeding replication studies containing larger groups of students with each iteration, the PREP program grew into an evidence-based program that is used by school districts, libraries, after school programs, summer camps and non-profits to motivate young students to read daily.

How Does PREP Work?

Teachers follow four easy steps to implement PREP into their classroom.

Step 1

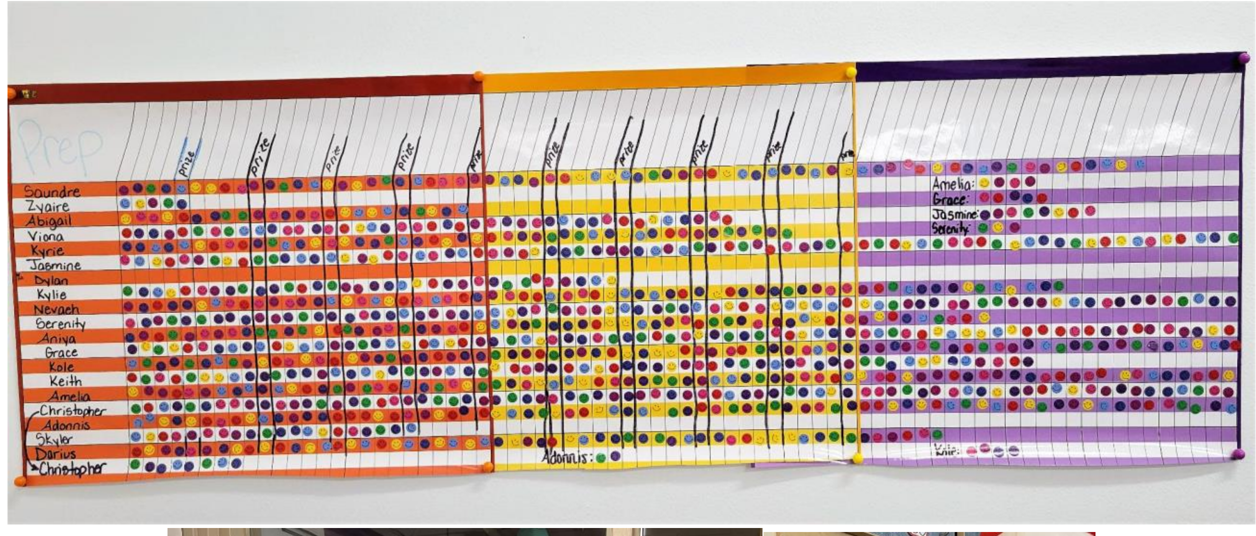
Hand out tote bags to your students. Each tote contains a pocket folder that holds a reading log with the student's name on it as well as program instructions for parents/caregivers. Instructions were also available in Spanish for ELL students. This tote will also hold the weekly book students take home to keep.

Many families struggle to support their child's literacy development. PREP overcomes this challenge by empowering students to change their out of school reading habits. Parents and caregivers are involved with their child's daily literacy practice through the consistency of the program. The motivating rewards and book choices involved in the PREP program excite

students about reading. Students begin to remind their parents to read with them each night due to the engaging facets of the program. Parents are reading more frequently with students, and families are directly involved in supporting their child's literacy development. PREP encourages daily reading together and provides easy-to-use materials for parents and caregivers to encourage and help their young readers succeed.

Step 2

Find a good place in the classroom to display a progress tracking chart. Write students' names on the chart in preparation for earning stickers. Stickers are earned by reading with parents or caregivers at home. Once a student earns five stickers, they earn a contingent reward. In addition to the progress tracking chart, each student is given a reading log to be signed by the child's parent or guardian after they read together at home.



Not only is the progress tracking chart a constant reminder for students to read, but it is also a quick visual way for students and teachers to keep track of how much they are reading. Students

enjoy seeing the row next to their name fill up with stickers and welcome the healthy competition with classmates.

Step 3

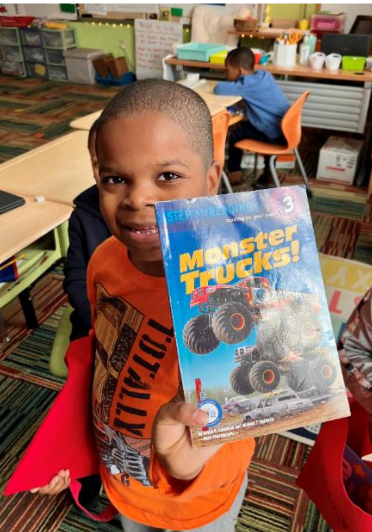
Display books once per week for students to choose from. Make sure books are displayed with the face of the book facing forward. Teachers can simply display books on a table or the classroom carpet if they do not have a display bookshelf. Include many different types of genres for students including fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, magazines, recipes, joke books, etc.

This display approach for choosing books is highly motivating for young students. Students can see the covers of the books they are choosing rather than just the spine. This colorful display motivates students into choosing books.

Step 4

Prepare scratch-off reward cards for your students. Write a reading-related reward on the blank area of the card and cover it with a scratch-off sticker. Once a student earns five stickers, they select a scratch-off reward card to reveal their reading-related reward. These rewards are often redeemed within the classroom literacy block to create excitement around the reading process. Some examples of reading rewards: read to the principal, read with the teacher, read to

the class, read with a buddy, read outside, read with a flashlight, read an eBook, play a reading game, bring your favorite book from home, etc. Teachers customize the rewards to their comfort level within their classrooms.



Read to the Class ***Read to the principal*** ***Bring a Favorite Book from Home***

When I first began as a reading specialist, I would offer token rewards such as toys or candies. The students enjoyed these prizes, but they did little to encourage more reading. After researching reward-based reading and combining it with my own trial and error, I discovered that contingent rewards encourage an intrinsic motivation to read. So, I adapted scratch-off reward cards to reveal reading-related rewards, and students overwhelmingly preferred them to any other prize offered. Contingent rewards motivate children to read daily. This consistent reading practice has a great impact on primary students' academic achievement, not only in reading but in all subject areas.

Research Supporting Reading Motivation in the Classroom

The classroom can be shaped to support reading motivation (Cleary, 2009; Fullerton & Forbes, 2014; Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Wigfield et al., 2004). It is crucial to understand the various factors that influence students' reading motivation. Several factors contribute to reading motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those that come from within the student, while extrinsic factors are those that come from outside the student. Intrinsic factors include students' interest in the topic, their desire to learn more, and their personal enjoyment of reading. Extrinsic factors include rewards, praise, and social recognition. Research has consistently shown that intrinsic reading motivation is associated with greater reading achievement, whereas weak or negative relationships have been identified between extrinsic reading motivation and reading achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Taboada et al., 2009; Schiefele et al., 2012; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Therefore, it is important for teachers to focus on fostering intrinsic motivation to promote long-term reading success.

Teachers can use various strategies to promote intrinsic reading motivation in the classroom context. One effective strategy is to provide access to a wide variety of reading materials, including books, magazines, and online resources. When students have a choice in what they read, they are more likely to be motivated to read (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The importance of providing students with choice and control over what they read cannot be overemphasized because this choice will encourage them to read more; hence, increasing their intrinsic motivation (Cremin et al., 2009). The influence of choice on reading is central to motivation. Gambrell (1996) found across her studies with first, third, and fifth grade students that one of the most consistent findings was the power of choice in reading. When students discussed both narrative and expository texts they “most enjoyed” reading, over 80% responded that they had self-selected the books from the classroom libraries. In a study conducted by Schielfele (1991), students who were allowed and encouraged to choose their own reading material expended more effort in learning and understanding the material. It appears that opportunities for choice promote students’ independence and versatility as readers (Turner, 1995).

Another strategy in the classroom to promote intrinsic motivation for reading is to provide contingent reward for reading. Contingent reward is reward that is specific to the task. Related to reading, a contingent reward is a reward related to the act of reading itself. Marinak and Gambrell’s (2008) hallmark study explored the effect of reward on intrinsic motivation. The researchers wanted to see whether the type of reward impacted the student’s intrinsic motivation. The findings revealed that students who were given a book as a reward and students who received no reward were more motivated to engage in subsequent reading than students who received a token reward. Small et al. (2017) clarified that contingent reward given to students with low intrinsic motivation involved in public library reading programs can have long-term positive impact. Deci and colleagues (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of extrinsic motivators on the intrinsic motivation of students from preschool to college. The results indicated that focusing strictly on extrinsic reward reduces intrinsic motivation. Studies on teachers’ implementation of intervention programs designed to foster reading motivation have shown that contingent reward is less undermining to intrinsic motivation than token reward.

Research Supporting Family Involvement in Literacy Related to PREP

Teachers can also promote collaborative intervention between home and school through reading engagement programs that include parental involvement, as several studies demonstrated that parental involvement generally has positive effects on children's learning and academic success (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2005). Baker and Scher (2002) found that collaborative interventions involving home and school have enhanced the reading motivation of primary readers as they enhanced comprehension, while Baker (2003) concluded that supportive home environments may foster the reading motivation of struggling readers (Leseman & De Jong, 1998; Sénéchal, 2006). Specifically, it was observed that home literacy experiences including the availability of reading materials, parental reading behavior, the frequency of reading to the child, and parents' perspectives and beliefs, were strongly associated with the child's reading motivation.

More than forty years of accumulated research suggests that family engagement is one of the strongest predictors of student performance (CDE, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic brought about changes in education, with many students shifting to remote or hybrid learning models. This transition had strong implications for family involvement on education and literacy. The relationship between the family and the school in the face of the imposed distance learning scenario caused by COVID-19 has been explored through recent research. Study findings revealed that families continued engaging in literacy practices according to family routines, perceived needs, and school requirements during the virtual learning context. Desir (2023) found out-of-school contexts play an important role in children's literacy development because, in these contexts, children engage in out-of-school practices that build transferable skills to their in-school contexts.

Many parents are concerned that children might not be unable to recover from their literacy challenges resulting from the pandemic (Bellafonte, 2020). Family assistance is essential for students to succeed (OECD, 2020). PREP fills this need because it is a family literacy program encouraging nightly reading to positively affect students' out of school reading behaviors. Parents and caregivers read with their children on a regular basis while following the PREP program. PREP is an evidence-based intervention published in the peer reviewed journals *Reading Improvement* (2018) and *The Journal of Teacher Action Research* (2021). To date, PREP has been studied through action research within 7 different school districts in Northeast Ohio. All studies were conducted within Title I school buildings with more than half of all students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. All studies have the same results: students involved in the PREP program are motivated to read, this increase in motivation leads to an increase in reading achievement.

The Present Study

The most recent study, conducted in Spring 2023, is the most robust by far because it includes the highest number students to date participating in a PREP study and the only study with a

matched control group. This study investigated the changes in intrinsic reading motivation and reading achievement among kindergarten through third-grade students, following their involvement with PREP. The program is designed to increase intrinsic reading motivation by focusing on the three motivational practices, mentioned above, for kindergarten through third graders: (a) book choice, (b) contingent reward (reward related to reading), and (c) parental involvement. The main question was whether an intervention program aimed at improving reading motivation among kindergarten through third-grade students delivered by the classroom teacher could improve children's reading motivation and reading achievement. An additional group of kindergarten through third-grade students within the same school district served as a control group and progressed through the twelve weeks without PREP in place.

277 children in kindergarten through third grade in the PREP group (50.5% boys) and 277 in the control group (52.3% girls) were enrolled in the study. The assessments delivered before and after the intervention consisted of a reading motivation questionnaire, the Me and My Reading Profile (MMRP) (Marinak et al., 2015) and the STAR reading assessment, which were administered to all students by their homeroom teachers in both the PREP group and control group at the two time points. The Me and My Reading Profile assessed reading motivation and the STAR reading assessment measured reading achievement. Each of the two groups were existing classes in two different elementary schools within one city in Northern Ohio. The control group school was chosen based on expert guidance from the district Curriculum Director. This school was underperforming and needed extra support in reading motivation. The majority of students within the CG school were either of Hispanic (32.5%), Caucasian (31.0%), or African American (30.0%) ethnicity, while most students within the IG school were either of Caucasian (30.7%) or Hispanic ethnicity (29.2%) (see Table 1 for sociodemographic characteristics). Within the intervention group, 25 students had Individualized Learning Plans (IEP) and 4 students had 504 plans. Within the control group, 28 students had IEPs and 6 students had 504 plans.

	CG		IG	
Gender	*n*	%	*n*	%
Boys	132	47.7	140	50.5
Girls	145	52.3	137	49.5
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	86	31.0	85	30.7
Hispanic	90	32.5	81	29.2
African American	83	30.0	60	21.7
Asian	0	0.0	1	0.4
Multi-racial	18	6.5	50	1.8

The 12-week PREP intervention program was delivered to the children by their homeroom teacher each school day over the 12-week period. Prior to the intervention, the PREP teachers attended a training session with the researcher and graduate assistant where they received a PREP training manual (see Appendix A) and detailed instructions on the implementation of the

program. To enhance the PREP teachers' collaboration and to prepare the intervention, the researcher and research assistant met with the teachers after the training to go over any concerns or questions. All students involved in the study (PREP group and control group) participated in an equal number of early literacy lessons, utilizing state literacy standards. While the PREP group acquired reading motivation support using the PREP intervention program, the CG acquired reading motivation through usual classroom practice.

Students involved in PREP group scored higher on reading motivation (total score) and reading achievement compared to children in the control group during the twelve weeks of the study. These results confirmed our hypotheses and support the claim that a learning environment can motivate children to participate in reading activities and as a result improve their reading achievement. See Figures I and II for differences in reading motivation data between the PREP group and the control group. See Figures III and IV for differences in reading achievement data between the PREP group and control group.

Figure I Mean differences in reading motivation between time point 1 and time point 2 for the PREP group (N-277)

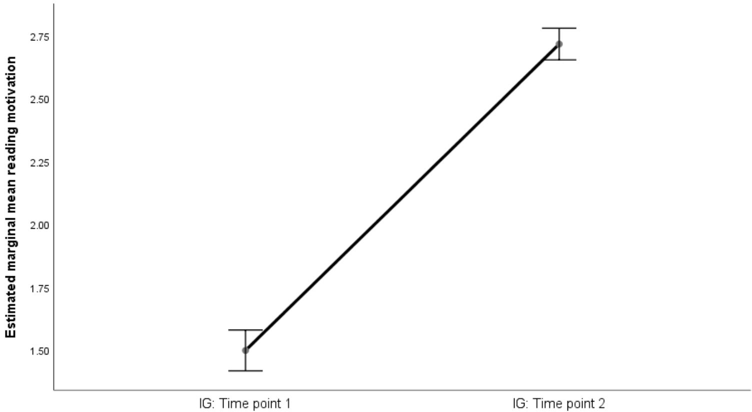


Figure II Mean differences in reading motivation between time point 1 and time point 2 for the control group (N-277)

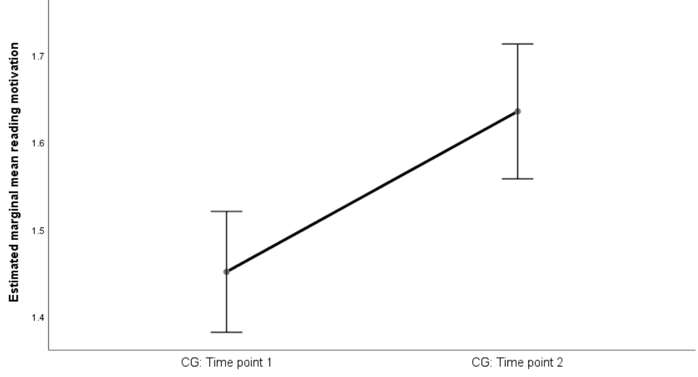


Fig. III Mean differences in reading achievement between time point 1 and time point 2 for the PREP Group (N = 277)

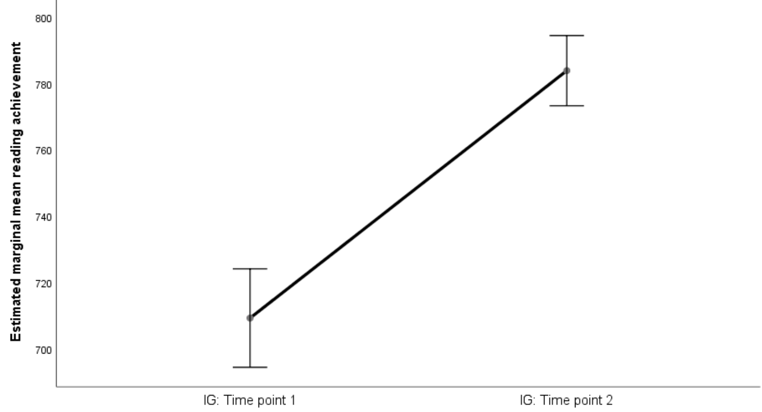
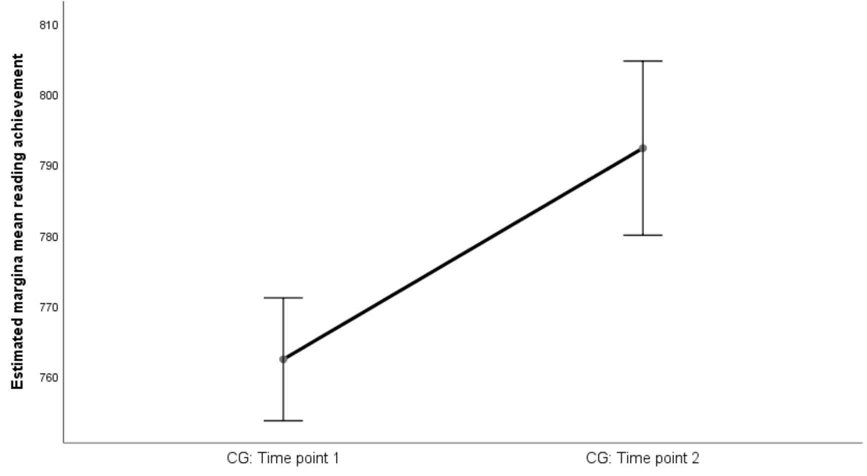


Figure IV Mean differences in reading achievement between time point 1 and time point 2 for the control group (N = 277)



Discussion

The main goal of the study was to examine whether an intervention program, PREP, aimed at improving reading motivation among kindergarten through third graders improved their intrinsic reading motivation and their reading achievement. Students in the PREP group scored higher on reading motivation (total score) and reading achievement compared to children in the control group during the twelve weeks of the study. These results confirmed the hypotheses and support the claim that a learning environment can motivate children to participate in reading activities and as a result improve their reading achievement.

In line with Guthrie and Alao's (1997) findings, the students in the PREP group, who were exposed to the PREP program exhibited higher reading achievement than children in the control group, who were not exposed to the motivational constructs the PREP program provided. Findings add to the existing knowledge on the link between reading motivation and reading

achievement by showing experimentally that implementing motivation practices with reading instruction from kindergarten through third grades increases not only the student's reading motivation but also their reading achievement as has been previously shown in older students (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2012). Since motivational interventional studies are still sparse among young children (Bates et al., 2016; Mata, 2011) in a classroom setting (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004), current results are important to the literature of reading acquisition.

Current results strengthen previous studies results showing that building a supportive classroom environment—such as the PREP program—can positively affect both reading motivation (Guthrie, 2011) and reading achievement (Guthrie et al., 2007; Law, 2011). The PREP intervention model focused on three motivational practices: allowing students to choose books to read and keep them for their home library, providing contingent rewards for consistent reading behaviors creating intrinsic motivation to read, and encouraging home-school collaboration by sending home the PREP reading bag that contained books, folders, and reading logs for parents and guardians to participate in the reading process with their children. As reported previously, combining motivational support or using multiple motivational practices leads to better results in reading achievement as opposed to using only one motivational practice (Guthrie et al., 2007). These motivational practices were chosen because they are more suitable for young children and could relatively easily be implemented in the existing classroom context of kindergarten through third grade classrooms. As the current study's results show, the chosen practices lead to a noticeable change in both children's reading motivation and reading achievement. This suggests that a supportive motivational classroom environment should be an essential part of the reading acquisition process.

Learning more about motivational constructs in the classroom context can help in designing programs that will prevent a decline in reading motivation at an early age. Research on that relationship is needed to better understand how to ensure that young students beginning school do not lose their enthusiasm for the joy of reading. Longitudinal studies are required to observe whether the effects of primary grade reading motivation programs will endure as students move on in school. Meanwhile, this study demonstrates the importance of the three motivational principles: book choice, contingent reward, and collaboration between home and school. Both the PREP group and the control group received similar number of reading classroom instruction, but the PREP group, which was exposed to a choice in book selection and keeping those books at home, contingent rewards, and collaboration between home and school, gained more in reading motivation and reading achievement. This suggests that it is not solely the time spent in teaching children that makes an impact, but the thoughtfulness of the activities we choose and the way they are presented.

Limitations

Some important limitations of the study must be noted. First, the control group and PREP group were from two separate schools, although they were in the same school district with similar demographics. Ideally, the intervention group and control group in an educational study would

be within the same school to insure validity. Second, the groups of children (PREP group and control group) were taught by different teachers, whose personal attitudes and methods of teaching could have introduced confounding influences on the results, such as the characteristics of the teacher and the students' feelings about her. Future research needs to be carried out with randomly selected students to eliminate such influences. Third, the students were not randomly assigned to the PREP group or the control group, but according to their school building, so the different makeup and atmosphere of each classroom could have introduced another confounding variable. Lastly, without an outside study to validate the effectiveness of PREP, the results of this study may include some bias. The goal is to replicate this study with future educational researchers in the future.

Instructional Implications

The current state of reading motivation among primary readers often is overlooked. Addressing reading motivation support is not an essential piece of the reading curriculum in most schools and teachers often fail to see the fundamental importance of promoting motivation within the reading process. When internal motivations such as intrinsic motivation and interest energize students' reading, students interact with text deeply and gain relatively high amounts of knowledge or aesthetic experience (Schiefele, 1999). If students' reading interests are weak, their competency grows little and their quality as readers diminishes (Guthrie et al., 2007). What is needed in a program is not only the initial development of reading motivation but its sustainment through active literacy learning.

The current study stresses the need for a classroom context that integrates motivational practices to support children's reading achievement and intrinsic reading motivation as early as kindergarten. It is possible that teachers can foster their children's reading motivation without adding extra time by implementing some simple changes in their classroom activities. Teachers can create a learning environment that exposes children to book choice, provides contingent rewards that award reading frequency, and encourages collaboration between home and school by sending home books for home libraries and using a system for students and parents to read together each day. Giving students a positive and rewarding experience can prevent a decline in reading motivation as well as reading achievement.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Appendix A:

Author Bio

Dr. Jeannie Votypka taught reading at the elementary school level for 16 years before coming to Baldwin Wallace as an assistant professor of literacy. Earning a Ph.D. in literacy studies from St. John's University in 2019, Votypka served as a literacy lecturer and director of field placements at Ashland University. She also served as literacy lecturer at John Carroll University. Her research interests and publications include work on reading engagement and motivation, social emotional literacy practices and digital literacies. Votypka is currently working on replication studies of a reading engagement program, PREP, which she developed while a reading specialist in elementary schools. She conducts research on PREP within local school districts each semester with the goal of motivating more young children to read daily.

TEACHING WRITING TO YOUNG CHILDREN: A REVIEW OF CORE READING PROGRAMS

DR. JAN LACINA
TIFFANY NAKAMURA, M.ED.

Abstract

Early childhood teachers within the elementary grades often use core reading programs as the foundation for their reading/writing instruction. Some teachers have autonomy in decision making for curriculum and instruction within their classroom, while others must follow the core reading programs scripts with fidelity. Early writing skills often predict children's later reading and writing achievement; however, consistent early writing skills are not always included in early childhood reading curricula (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Tortorelli et al., 2021). The purpose of this article is to discuss writing instruction included within core reading programs, and offer recommendations.

Teaching Writing to Young Children: A Review of Core Reading Programs

Introduction

Young children love to experiment with writing materials and to capture their ideas and experiences on paper long before they enter a classroom. By the age of three, young children are already verbally composing stories for the adults in their lives to transcribe (Rowe, 2015). Young children love to hear their stories read out loud by others, or to retell their stories. Young children develop stories with rich characters and creative plots, while verbally telling their stories. They tell their stories through drawing, scribbles, and they experiment with handwriting and sound out words while composing. Play is also essential in preschool writing (Zurcher, 2022). Young children proudly experiment with color, line, and form to scribble and play as they to simulate conventional writing. The early writing experiences described above serve as a foundation for more sophisticated literacy skills as children progress through school (Gerde et al., 2024; Gerde et al., 2018; Zurcher et al., 2022). Early writing experiences and skills often forecast children's later reading and writing achievement; unfortunately, these important early writing skills are not always included in early childhood reading curricula nor within the instruction in early childhood classrooms (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

In early childhood classrooms, children need developmentally appropriate writing instruction combined within reading instruction. Bingham et al. (2018) describes the following skills as critical for early writing development: "(a) handwriting or letter formation (b) spelling or orthographic knowledge and (c) composing or utilizing writing to make meaning" (p. 602). These three specific skills are interconnected, yet the preschool teachers they studied often focused on handwriting and spelling and neglected teaching children how to compose and make meaning while writing (Bingham et al. 2017, 2018). Researchers also find that teacher expectations and instruction differ between the preschool setting and the early childhood elementary grade setting. Rohoff et al. (2022) explains that teachers are faced with differing learning standards and conceptualizations of how writing instruction should be included in the classroom, and as a result, there are many inconsistencies in early childhood writing instructional practices.

Early childhood teachers within the elementary grades often use core reading programs as the foundation for their reading/writing instruction. These core programs are influential on what literacy skills and strategies are taught throughout the U.S. (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010). These programs are also known as basal readers, which have long been adopted by U.S. school districts (Cuticelli et al., 2016; Jaeger, 2019; Dewitz & Jones, 2012; Reutzel et al., 2014). Teachers across the United States often use these programs as the underpinning of classroom reading and writing instruction; however, the way in which teachers use these programs varies across the country. Some teachers have autonomy in decision making for curriculum and instruction within their classroom. In some school districts, teachers are mandated to follow programs with fidelity, including scripts for teaching children, instructional approaches, and classroom activities (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010). Following such a program with fidelity is complicated as many core reading programs provide a comprehensive amount of material to be covered within a unit of study, and each part of the lesson may not necessarily meet the needs of individual children. Teachers often have to carefully select parts of the curriculum to include based on timing and pacing, and teachers report they are challenged with following with fidelity (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010). Yet, core reading programs continue to play a significant role in instructional practices and decision making in classrooms in the U.S. and internationally. The purpose of this article is to discuss writing instruction included within core reading programs and offer recommendations.

Literature Review

District level leaders, and district trustee boards, make curriculum adoption decisions across the U.S. This is not only a decision about curriculum, but is a huge monetary investment by the school district. For example, in 2022 Fort Worth ISD, a large urban school district, spent more than $8.5 million to adopt Amplify, a core reading program, and two other reading curricula. Fort Worth ISD sought to invest in reading programs as they aim for stronger student achievement. In 2023 the district was 18 percentage points behind the state average on reading exams; however, superintendent Angélica Ramsey said she wants to reframe academic achievement discussions in the State of Texas because of the district's high number of bilingual students (Fort Worth Report, 2023). Dr. Ramsey leads with social justice in mind as she

prioritizes the instruction of her school district's bilingual students. Leaders like Dr. Angélica Ramsey prioritize the children in her district while connecting leadership, practice, and vision (Theoharis, 2007). Traditional models of leadership focused primarily on student learning; there is a need specifically in urban schools for leaders to highlight the intersection of race and social class with student learning. Cochran-Smith (2023) recently called for immediate action within education to prioritize social justice within curriculum and instruction. In large urban school districts where the student population is primarily Black and Brown (Cochran-Smith, 2023), it is imperative that comprehensive writing instruction be included in core reading programs and taught to all children.

International Context

While there is a long history in the U.S. of developing and implementing core reading programs, across the world other countries historically implemented existing U.S. core reading programs instead of developing their own initially. For example, the U.K., Canada, and Australia have relied on U.S.-published materials while making some revision to the U.S.-based curriculum. Canada historically adopted U.S. core reading programs until the 1950s. However, in the 1960s, Canada began revising U.S. core reading programs to develop Canadian editions. Australia and New Zealand also adopted new core reading program from the U.S. In the New South Wales (NSW), the largest education system in the Southern Hemisphere, researchers explained that the student demographics determined the core reading program's effectiveness (Freeman & Robertson, 2001).

When considering adopted core reading programs, it is important to understand the influence of commercially produced curricula. In some U.S. districts, they are a guide to what children are taught about writing, and what are for teachers, and what they teach, and what students learn. Teachers' instructional decisions are influenced by a number of factors, including by what they think about their students (Ball, 1996; Cochran, 2023), and secondly, their understanding of curriculum materials, and by what they select to include or exclude from that curriculum. Last, teachers are influenced by what parents and the greater community says about curriculum (Ball, 1996; Koss et al., 2023). Many of the core reading programs attempt to tailor to large audiences, (and large districts), which are spread throughout the United States. The needs of individual students, teachers, and school, are often generalizable to meet a greater, broader demographic and to appeal to school districts for adoption and purchasing. This is a highly political and commercial undertaking by big publishing companies.

Writing Instruction Within Core Reading Programs

Despite changes over time to improve core reading programs, research has long documented that much less is known about effective writing instruction as compared to reading instruction (Puranik, Al-Otaiba, Sidler, & Greulich, 2014). However, much is written about process writing instruction, like writer's workshop (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011). Researchers who study writing instructional practices find that there is great variance between teachers' writing

instructional practices (Culter & Graham, 2008; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000); with such variance there are also connections between teachers' writing instructional practices and their beliefs about teaching writing (Culter & Graham, 2008; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Troia et al., 2011). Today in the U.S., researchers note concern about the text complexity of many of the most popular core reading programs for young learners (Fitzgerald et al., 2016; Fitzgerald et al., 2021). As time has passed, the content of core reading programs has changed to meet the needs of society in the U.S., and these same programs are being adopted internationally.

When writing instruction is included within core reading programs, there are often inconsistencies in the breadth and depth of instruction within such programs. For example, in a comprehensive study of preschool curriculum, the five most common Head Start curricula were examined based on the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (Gerde, et al., 2024; Gerde, et al., 2018). The curricula were coded for writing objectives, strategies to promote early writing, individualized instructions, and tools to assess children's writing development. Researchers found that instruction of core writing concepts was imbalanced and almost every curriculum examined was missing at least one component of writing. They found that most of the early childhood curricula studied provided minimal guidance for the teaching of early writing, but no matter what was provided, teachers still need more instruction to support writing development (Gerde, et al., 2024; Gerde, et al., 2018). The authors recommend that more information on English language learners writing development is needed, especially instruction on how to provide opportunities for children to write in more than one language. In addition, the curriculum supports for assessment were inconsistent, and there needs to be more progress monitoring of what skills/strategies children already meet and a plan for children to continue to progress and develop new skills/strategies.

The International Literacy Association (ILA) provides guidance on how to best teach writing in their position statement, *Research Advisory: Teaching Writing to Improve Reading Skills*. ILA describes the integral and reciprocal relationship between reading and writing (2020). The teaching of writing enhances reading instruction, especially improving students' comprehension, fluency, and word decoding. Likewise, the position statement explains the importance of student composition. By composing texts, students develop texts for others to read, and this in turn provides an opportunity for students to participate in a meaningful and engaging reading/writing activity. One subheading in the position statement poses this question: "Do Reading and Writing Always Need to Be Tied Together?" (ILA, 2020, p. 9). ILA explains that they do not need to always be tied together. There are times that children just need to read, without writing, and the same is true for time specifically allocated for writing. There are also instructional times in which reading and writing need to be connected, and benefit each other. The goal in literacy instruction should be to provide time for authentic and meaningful reading and writing integration, and authentic purposes for the usage of reading and writing (ILA, 2020).

Our Inquiry

We sought to better understand how writing was included within second-grade core reading program curricula scope and sequence. After studying the research literature, we were interested in learning more about core programs adopted at the second-grade level. Children in second grade are at the older range of early childhood—ages 7-8, and they should have been exposed to a variety of literacy experiences by this grade. We examined the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021) database to locate the largest US districts, according to the school populations they served. Enrollment in these school districts ranged from 192,533 students to 960,484 students. The poverty rate ranged from 16.9% to 23.1% in the largest twenty districts. After acquiring this list of districts, we began our search to learn each district's adopted core reading program. We began searching the Internet, and for a few districts a simple Internet search provided information. As we compiled the ISBN and digital order list for obtaining teacher's manuals, we quickly realized several of the curriculum we sought did not offer their teacher's manuals separately from the rest of their aligned curriculum, and as a result, the cost was in the thousands of dollars to obtain, and thus not affordable for us to order. Another challenge we faced was that several curricula did not offer digital teacher's manuals for sale; they only offered physical copies. In the end, we chose to examine and code the scope and sequences for each of the eleven curricula due to their digital accessibility and affordability. Below is the list of curricula we were able to obtain from the largest school districts. We decided not to identify each school district in this paper as we are not studying the school district itself.

- Amplify: CKLA Knowledge
- Benchmark Advance
- Being a Reader
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journeys
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: HMH Into Reading
- IXL
- McGraw Hill Wonders
- Amplify: LAUSD CKLA Skills
- Skyline
- Pearson: ReadyGEN
- Reach Higher

Developing the Coding Guide

At the beginning of this research, we sought to develop a coding guide to document the type of writing instruction in the scope and sequences that we examined. To create the guide, we examined existing literature about research-based, effective writing instruction. We examined both the research on the strategies for effective writing as well as the instructional practices. We read *Teaching Elementary School Students to be Effective Writers* (Graham et al, 2012a) and focused much of our research and development of the coding table on the work of Steven Graham et al. (2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2023).

While reading the articles, notes were taken about any writing instruction, teacher and student-led practices, and detailed information about the writing process within the classroom setting. Within these notes, we looked for common groupings of ideas and practices to create the categories that would be included in the coding table. For example, we found much information related to the drafting stage of the writing process and consolidated the information into four different ideas within drafting. After all categories of writing instruction were compiled into the coding table, we then grouped them by purpose or action to make it easier to find while doing the coding. The groups titled "Strategies for Writing" and "Strategies for Content/Idea Development" were determined to likely be found in the scope and sequences of the curriculum being studied. Figure 1 below is the coding guide developed.

Figure 1. Coding Sheet.

Coding Sheet

		Coded Items	Curriculum										
			Amplify CKLA Knowledge	Benchmark Advance	Being a Reader	HMH Journeys	HMH Into Reading	IXL	McGraw Hill Wonders	LAUSD CKLA Skills	Chicago Public Schools (CPS)	ReadyGEN	Reach Higher
Scope and Sequence	Strategies for Writing	Letter formation											
		Spelling of commonly used words and sounding out unknown words											
		Grammar (parts of speech, sentence structure, etc.)											
		Sentence formation (parts of a sentence, capitalizing, punctuation, etc.)											
		Sentence combining											
		Teach that writing is a process											
		Writing process: Revising											
		Writing process: Editing											
		Writing process: Publishing											
		Use of a word processor											
		Writing process: Evaluating – Feedback (how to give and receive feedback, self-assessments)											
Scope and Sequence	Strategies for Content/Idea Development	**Writing process: Planning** – Prewriting activities (brain storming, graphic organizers, generating ideas, etc.)											
		Writing process: Planning – Inquiry activities (developing ideas, gather information, analyzing data, etc.)											
		Writing process: Drafting – Procedural and organizational help (prompts, hints, template, etc.)											
		Studying models and mentor texts											
		Setting purpose and expectations clear at the start											
		Product goals (setting goals for what the writing is to accomplish)											
		Writing process: Drafting – Text structure instruction											
		Writing process: Drafting – Writing for different purposes (describe, narrate, inform, persuade, analyze, entertain, etc.)											
		Writing process: Drafting – Writing for different audiences (tone, word choice, etc.)											

Graham et al. (2012a); Graham et al. (2012b); Graham et al. (2012c); Graham & Nusrat (2023); Ortiz Lienemann et al. (2006); Traga Philippakos et al. (2021)

The steps involved in the coding process included reading and coding each of the eleven reading core programs scope and sequences individually. Two graduate students met with the first author to hold multiple discussions on how to code and to discuss the coding guide and the reading core program scope and sequence for writing instruction. The coding involved the two graduate students coding individually, and then meeting together, and then meeting with the first author to discuss the coding. Codes were recorded as frequency counts and were then tabulated for a total number of frequency counts among the coders.

Limitations

We want to note that there are several limitations to this examination of core reading programs. First, in examining only the writing instruction scope and sequence of each reading core program, we are not reviewing nor understanding the scope in sequence in practice within lessons in the core reading programs. We are only counting the frequency of inclusion within the scope and sequence. Another limitation is that we are not learning teachers' perspectives on the curriculum. We do not know how they use the curriculum, either with fidelity or if they are given autonomy for curriculum and instruction decisions within their classrooms. Examining the scope and sequence provides us with a first glimpse at how writing instruction is envisioned with core reading programs adopted by large school districts across the country.

Discussion of the Coding

The review and coding of eleven core reading programs scope and sequence revealed that writing instruction varies across core reading programs. The term "writing" is used very loosely by publishers – for some it involved primarily letter formation and handwriting, and for others, students were participating in each stage of the writing process.

After coding the writing instruction scope and sequence of the eleven core reading programs, we realized that the details provided for writing instruction varied significantly between curricula. For example, HMH Into Reading had the least amount of student composition or drafting. The scope and sequence noted a focus on letter formation of handwriting and writing cursive letters. Conversely, the CKLA Knowledge and Skills scope and sequences were very detailed and contained a diverse variety of writing activities. We also noticed how the various reading core programs provided varying guidance and instruction to the teachers.

As children progress through first and second grade, they continue to need developmentally appropriate writing instruction combined within reading instruction. As mentioned earlier in this article, Bingham, et al (2018) describes skills important for early writing development, and although their paper focused specifically on PreK writing development, these skills are still needed in second grade. The skills include: handwriting or letter formation, spelling or orthographic knowledge, and composing to make meaning. These three specific skills are interconnected developmentally (Bingham et al. 2017, 2018).

The Writing Process

We found the three writing skills as described above in the reading core programs, and each were emphasized in varying ways throughout the scope and sequences that we examined. The item coded with the highest frequency was Writing Process: Drafting. This item was coded with 202 frequencies. Writing Process Drafting focused on writing for different purposes, such as writing that describes, narratives, informs, persuades, analyzes, entertains. Every core reading guide

included the writing process and drafting within their scope and sequence, except for HMH into Reading. For example, the scope and sequences of Reach Higher, Skyline, McGraw Hill Wonders, Benchmark Advance, and HMH Journeys showed a cycling through of expository, persuasive, and informational writing. These were frequently paired with a mentor text, or the content was related to the book of the week/unit. In the second case, some scope and sequences stated that students needed to retell or summarize the lesson's reading. This does not necessarily provide students with an opportunity to write freely and creatively. Moreover, retelling and summarizing may limit the opportunity for brainstorming and inquiry activities, thus decreasing the opportunity for students to brainstorm and develop their own ideas.

Spelling and Sounding Out Words

The second most frequently coded item with 129 codes was spelling of commonly used words and sounding out unknown words. Although this item had a high number of codes, we noted this item was coded only within three curricula. Conversely, letter formation was only noted in two curricula, HMH Into Reading and ReadyGEN. Including spelling and sounding out words in all early writing core reading programs is important (Bear, et. al, 2020; Gerde, et al., 2024). As children phonetically spell words, they learn to apply knowledge of letter/sound relationships. As a result, children develop phonemic awareness and develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, which is still important in second grade (Cabell et al, 2013; Tortorelli, et al, 2022). Although an important component of early writing instruction, spelling of commonly used words and sounding out unknown words was not consistently included within the scope and sequences we examined.

Editing and Revising

While we were coding each scope and sequences, we noticed that in some cases the term "editing" was used for both the editing and revising stages of the writing process. The short descriptions for the teachers within the scope and sequence noted for the teacher to have students add content or edit the details. Furthermore, the only scope and sequence that very clearly distinguished between the revising and editing stages was ReadyGen; all other core programs grouped the revising and editing stages together, or the programs did not differentiate between them at all. Revising and editing were noted infrequently within the scope and sequences, regardless of the terminology. The lesson plans in the teacher's manual could reveal more information, but the scope and sequence does not intentionally make the space for the latter half of the writing process to happen.

Evaluating Writing and Conferencing

Advocates for the process approach to writing have long stated that the majority of writing time should be spent on drafting, revising, and conferencing; researchers find that teachers often respond to students' writing with comments focused on editing/grammar rather than focusing on content, organization or style (Clare, Valdes, & Patthey-Chavez, 2000; Lacina, 2018).

Researchers who study writing instructional practices find that there is great variance between teachers' writing instructional practices (Culter & Graham, 2008; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000); with such variance there are also connections between teachers' writing instructional practices and their beliefs about teaching writing (Culter & Graham, 2008; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Troia et al., 2011). This research on teacher writing instructional practice supports the variance that we found within the scope and sequences. With the scope and sequences, we did not find any item related to evaluating the writing process, either with small group interactions or through peer feedback. We did not find reference to holding conferences between student and teacher in the scope and sequences. The absence of this stage in the writing process with the scope and sequence may be reflective of teacher writing instructional practices and the discrepancy between teacher beliefs about the teaching of writing and their actual practice.

Word Processing Skills

New literacies of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been noted for more than twenty years by professional literacy organizations as an important part of the literacy curriculum (International Reading Association, 2001; Van Leeuwe, 2011). Word processing serves as a tool to support children during the writing process. In our examination of the eleven core reading programs, there was very little mentioned in the scope of sequence about teaching word processing skills. This item was included only within the core reading programs of Benchmark Advance and Amplify: CKLA Knowledge. Teaching children how to use word processing or other technological tools while composing by computer is an important part of the writing process (Lacina, 2018; Martin & Lambert, 2015). In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (NAEP) piloted their computer-based writing assessment. NAEP conducted this pilot assessment to answer whether fourth-graders could demonstrate their writing ability via computer. Researchers found that lower to middle performing fourth graders were not able to answer or perform well using technology. Some of the challenges of the computer-based writing assessment included typing speed. What we can learn from this assessment is the importance of prior exposure to computer-based writing—well before fourth grade—and that tools and strategies for using technology while composing are important in the early childhood grades (NAEP, 2015). Teaching children how to use computers to compose prepares children with an important writing tool once they reach fourth grade.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

In reflecting on our findings from coding the scope and sequences for eleven core reading programs adopted by large school districts, we learned that writing instruction varies across reading core programs and across school districts. For some core reading programs, writing instruction in second grade involves letter formation, handwriting and cursive, and for others, writing instruction involves students taking part in each stage of the writing process with ongoing composition and connection to reading. Similar to the Gerde et al. (2018) study of Head Start curriculum, we also found the second-grade core reading programs inclusion of writing

imbalanced, and almost every curriculum examined was missing at least one component of writing, see Figure 1 Coding Sheet.

While examining the scope and sequences, we noticed the range in details provided through the scope and sequence as lacking. The amount of guidance that some of the core reading programs provide leave many instructional decisions up to the teacher. For experienced, expert teachers they may not need such guidance, but novice teachers need more guidance and professional development on how to use the district level core reading program curriculum. For example, Reach Higher only tells the teacher that students will write in a specific genre. Based on the scope and sequence, the writing instructional practice is at the teacher's discretion. This could mean that every class of second grade students in one district might be learning to write in a different way, despite all classes using the same core reading program. This lack of uniformity presents a struggle as students move schools or advance through grade levels.

Recommendations to School Leaders

Many of the core reading program adopted by large school districts are providing students with an opportunity to connect reading and writing, including using a variety of genres, and providing opportunities for students to take their writing through the complete writing process. Although the writing process may look slightly different in every scope and sequence, there is typically some mention of what teachers should be doing with their students during each lesson or unit of study. If nations seek stronger student writing, and effective writing instruction, we need robust and consistent writing within core reading programs. School districts should provide that type of feedback to large commercial producers of the core reading programs, or not purchase these commercially produced programs. School districts also need to provide professional development to support teachers' consistent implementation of the core program. If the core reading program is deficient in a specific area, districts need to provide supplemental material. Last, early learning standards and the Common Core examine writing instruction from different viewpoints, and as a result there is incompatibility in expectations for children's writing across the continuum from ages 3-8 (Tortorelli, et al., 2021), which may explain the disparity between the scope and sequences of the various reading core programs. The gap in standards and the inconsistencies within core reading programs scope and sequences calls for school district leadership to demand changes from large publishers of reading core programs. Developing early writing skills is important from the preschool years through the elementary grades. We need standards and core reading programs to be reflective of the writing developmental continuum across preschool and elementary contexts (Tortorelli et al., 2021) for teachers to successfully teaching writing within their classrooms.

Recommendations to Practitioners

Returning to the paragraph which began this article, young children love to experiment with writing, and writing materials, long before they enter a classroom. They verbally compose stories, and they love to have their stories read out loud by others. For educators who work with

young children, they need to integrate writing throughout the school day in authentic and meaningful ways. A few ways include: having students sign in their attendance as they enter the classroom each day, sign up for their lunch orders, or students can sign up for a class job or weekly responsibility. There are also a variety of ways to integrate reading/writing in authentic ways throughout the school day. Interactive writing provides children an opportunity to share the pen with the teacher as they write. There is a high level of teacher support with this activity, but children decide on the message and each word as they compose text with their classmates. Guided writing is another reading/writing strategy for supporting literacy development. In guided writing, the teacher works with a small group of students and provides a mini lesson on how to develop their writing. The teacher serves as a guide to students as students focus on composing text. Even more important, students need time to write independently every day. The Carnegie Foundation (n.d.) describes the importance of teachers monitoring independent writing time each day—and tracking that amount of time during the week using a Student Independent Writing Time (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19iDtXvPvW9rioSdTJ17WbLUhu5ZAEBU7DrVVUBAQHSo/edit#gid=1077891129).

The Student Independent Writing Time measure tracks the number of minutes students spend in independent writing. This measure is an excellent example to encourage and support independent writing, and the measure also provides teachers opportunities for conversations about writing/instructional assumptions and how they can challenge assumptions. This writing measure also encourages teacher analysis and instructional improvement. In closing, based on examining the core reading curricula noted in this paper, we learned that there are many inconsistencies in curricula throughout the U.S.; the reading core curricula is one resource that should be used for planning writing instruction, but practitioners should critically examine what is included in the curricula and what is not included in the curricula, and provide additional instruction based on gaps. Returning to the recommendation of the largest literacy organization in the world (ILA, 2020), the International Literacy Association, the goal of literacy instruction should be to provide time and space for authentic, meaningful reading and writing instruction every day. Providing children with strong writing skills in the early childhood years provides them with important tools that will support their writing and literacy achievement in later elementary grades.

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Author Bios

Jan Lacina holds the Bezos Family Foundation Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education and is Senior Associate Dean for Research, Graduate Studies & Strategic Partnerships within the College of Education. She began her career as a Texas public school teacher. Jan received the 2023 International Literacy Association Jerry Johns Outstanding Teacher Educator in Reading Award.

Tiffany Nakamura graduated from TCU with a Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Language and Literacy. She is currently a fifth-grade teacher in Aledo ISD, Texas.

PLAYFUL LITERACY LEARNING IN PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION: CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY WITH PICTURE BOOKS, PLAYDOUGH, POETRY, AND PROSE

DR. SHULING YANG
DR. AMY TONDREAU

Abstract

This study showcases a literacy lesson in which two literacy teacher educators from different institutions engaged their elementary preservice teachers (PSTs) with multimodal activities including reading multicultural children's literature, creating playdough sculptures, and writing narratives and poetry. The purposes of the activity were twofold: 1) to increase the students' understanding of culturally sustaining practices through guided discussions of multicultural children's literature, and 2) to build PSTs' understanding of the levels of diverse cultures, from surface level markers like food to deeper layers rooted in identities and ways of knowing. Picture books on dumplings and dim sum were used to involve PSTs in reading, discussion, and writing activities, highlighting reading-writing connections and multimodal composition. The results suggest PSTs were engaged in this active learning process, which brought joy to community building and literacy activities. The authors provide practical suggestions for teachers and teacher educators to integrate playdough into ELA instruction in their contexts in meaningful ways.

Playful Literacy Learning in Preservice Teacher Education: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy with Picture Books, Playdough, Poetry, and Prose

Introduction

> "I did enjoy this activity…my group worked with *Dumpling Day*, which showcased many different dumplings from different countries. I vividly remember [a classmate] laughing really loudly when we got to America's page and the 'dumpling' they presented was an apple pie. I suppose because many people have the impression that America/white people have 'no culture' and an apple pie seemed quite basic compared to all the other cultural foods presented in the book."

As the quote from a preservice teacher above illustrates, multicultural picture books offer powerful opportunities for discussions of culture and identity. To leverage these possibilities,

many teachers and teacher educators have integrated more diverse texts into their curricula and classroom libraries, embracing Bishop's (1990) concept of books as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. However, we know that having diverse books in classrooms is not enough on its own; instead, it is a necessary first step. The inclusion of these texts must be followed by critical analyses and conversations with students. Too often, books featuring diverse cultural representations are used in shallow ways that focus on observable elements of shallow culture (e.g., food, clothing, holidays) without opportunities for discussion, connection, and exploration of the deeper aspects of culture (Hammond, 2015). This approach can serve to tokenize or other the identities featured in texts if not approached in a knowledgeable, deliberate way. In other words, it is not only important that teachers *have* the books, but also how they *use* the books.

In this manuscript, we showcase a multimodal literacy activity with elementary preservice teachers (PSTs). Using multicultural picture books, we aimed to use food, a surface culture marker, as an entry point; then, through multimodal engagement, we worked to shift the focus to the deeper cultural ways of knowing and identities inspired by and connected to food. We did this through arts integration, community-building and storytelling in small groups, and genre-based writing. This activity drew upon critical literacy with picture books, active learning, and culturally sustaining pedagogy to model and engage PSTs in literacy instruction. The result was a joyful and collaborative shared learning experience for our classroom communities, one in which all of our students' intersectional identities were welcomed and sustained.

Conceptual Framework

We grounded our lesson in Paris' (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and Hammond's (2015) culture tree. CSP recognizes and amplifies the strengths, creativity, and intellectual richness students and communities bring into their classrooms (Paris, 2021). CSP-informed educators are expected to create intentional opportunities to foster the tenets of culturally relevant teaching (i.e., cultural competence, academic growth, and sociopolitical consciousness; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and implement asset-based pedagogies (Paris, 2021). In conceptualizing the cultures CSP seeks to sustain, Hammond (2015) identifies three levels of culture in the form of a tree. Surface culture is represented by the fruits of the tree, which consists of visible elements of culture and includes what you can see, smell, taste, touch, and hear, such as food and attire. Shallow culture is depicted as the trunk of the tree, referring to unspoken rules of social norms in everyday life. Deep culture is illustrated as the roots of the tree, grounding the deeply-held beliefs that underpin an individual's identity, ethics, and approaches to problem-solving.

We believe the three levels of the culture tree provide a descriptive pathway for teachers new to CSP practices, beginning with visible elements of a culture, such as food in this project, and then moving towards uncovering underlying values over time. Dumplings and dim sum can be a representative topic that allows the teachers to explore elements of surface culture, while offering opportunities to connect to shallow and deep culture, applying culturally sustaining practices.

Building upon these conceptions, Muhammad (2023) highlights an important addition to CSP: joy, which involves “uplift[ing] beauty, aesthetics, truth, ease, wonder, wellness, solutions to the problems of the world, and personal fulfillment” (p. 17). Muhammad traces the genius and joy of communities of color, even throughout histories of oppression, harm, and erasure. By centering humanizing practices that nurture the creative sensibilities of teachers and students, we can (re)claim joy as “the ultimate goal of teaching and learning” (p. 17).

Literature Review

In this section, we first review research on using multicultural children’s books in elementary classrooms and teacher education. We highlight the value of these books as mentor texts for writing instruction, and the possibilities of using them to disrupt skills-based writing discourses. We also summarize research on arts integration as another important avenue for engaging with multicultural texts, highlighting how it can promote students' engagement and confidence in learning.

Picture Books

Picture books are the “principal format” in which children experience literature (Sipe, 1998, p. 66). In picture books, the words of the text and the sequence of illustrations work together to provide a reading experience that neither could provide alone. A robust body of research has examined how picture books help children productively discuss social issues, including research on race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, during read-alouds (e.g., Jones, 2012; Kessler et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2013).

Diverse picture books are also a resource that teacher educators often draw upon to foster deeper understanding of sensitive topics with PSTs (Casto, 2020). When provided with consistent opportunities to discuss diverse children’s literature teacher preparation courses, PSTs can develop an increased awareness and readiness for acknowledging culture in their future classrooms, selecting high-quality multicultural literature, and the challenges associated with establishing a socially just curriculum. (Gibson & Parks, 2014). Engaging with diverse literature can also foster an understanding of the importance of exploring multiple perspectives and viewpoints with elementary students (Casciola, 2014).

Picture books are not only used for reading; they are also utilized as *mentor texts* for children’s writing (Ray, 1999). Mentor texts are published examples of literature that children are familiar with and can be revisited to model and inquire into writing concepts that children can emulate in their own writing. They invite children into the writing process by illustrating the conventions of a genre (Moses et al., 2016), fostering an understanding of craft moves (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017), and inspiring young writers with a sense of possibility (Tatum, 2014). In choosing mentor texts, teachers must consider the representation of characters and authors in addition to content and craft; this attention creates a sense of possibility not only in the writing pieces students create but also in the writing identities they are developing. The texts we designate as “trustworthy of

close study must reinforce the trust within children that they, too, *make* – and *belong in* – the books of their imagination" (Meehan & Sorum, 2021, p. 114).

Writing Instruction

It is often recommended that teachers see themselves as writers to work productively with children as writers. Through their writing, teachers can embrace the uncertainty and difficulty of writing, understand how and why students write, help students develop realistic expectations for writing, and create conditions that support successful writing (Atwell, 1991; Graves, 1984; Kittle, 2008). Teachers of writing frequently create demonstration texts and provide students with a vision of the work they are asked to do.

In many elementary classrooms, however, writing instruction is characterized by a discourse of skills mastery (Wohlwend, 2009), which tends to emphasize conventions over meaning and autonomy over ideological models of literacy (Street & Street, 1995); too often, this yields writing instruction that is aligned to White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) and disconnected from the languages and literacies of children's homes and communities (Machado & Flores, 2021). The continuously narrowing curricular definitions of writing and writers impede the development of positive writing identities for many students. Coppola (2019) argues, "Our concept of what 'counts' as writing in school spaces is, and has always been, severely limited. It…privileges certain kinds of writing - and certain kinds of writers – and all but silences the voices that don't 'fit' within these parameters" (p. 94). One way to begin to disrupt an autonomous skills discourse is by drawing on the reading-writing connection, centering authors and texts that better reflect students' identities and language practices, and using them as mentors. In addition, modeling multimodal writing practices and integrating the arts more consistently into literacy instruction offers more students opportunities to have successful, joyful reading and writing experiences (Coppola, 2019).

Arts Integration

Arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form (The Kennedy Center, 2020). It yields high student engagement (Brouillette et al., 2014) because the approach can address the content utilizing multiple pathways, such as drawing, music, and drama. In literacy, arts integration has proved effective in fostering developmentally appropriate practices (Souto-Manning & Jamies, 2008) and supporting emergent literacy skills (Brouillette, 2019; Brouillette et al., 2022; Phillips et al., 2010). Meanwhile, studies found that the arts integration increased students' cultural understanding and self-esteem (e.g., Catterall & Peppler, 2007; Graham, 2009; Moody & Conway; 2022;). In addition, arts integration allows the space for active playful learning that promotes the 6 Cs, a set of social-emotional soft skills that grow over the lifespan and are linked to success in school and life: content expertise, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence (Nesbitt et al., 2023).

Playdough/Clay in Literacy Instruction

One example of arts integration is sculpting clay, or playdough, to build objects and visual art. Many studies have examined the positive impact of playdough in early childhood: with math skills (Sutapa et al., 2018), electronics and circuits (Peppler et al., 2018), fine motor skills, and cognitive development (Rukmini et al., 2022; Sutapa et al., 2018; Tauriana & Siwi, 2023). Literature on using playdough for literacy instruction in elementary classrooms was scarce. Elementary art teachers have used playdough to engage students with art in vocabulary instruction (LaBrocca & Morrow, 2016), and preservice teachers using oil pastels and air-dry clay (Buelow et al., 2018) found that arts integration helped with academic vocabulary and the ability to comprehend complex visual arts texts.

We involved elementary PSTs in this hands-on activity to promote the connections between reading, writing, and joy in elementary classrooms. In this lesson, we also used food as an entry point to exploring diverse cultures. By pairing this surface-level culture with picture books, guided discussions, writing, and the art of playdough making, we created space for PSTs to explore the deeper elements of culture represented by the food items. These cultural elements included intergenerational relationships, an appreciation for multilingualism, and the ways that ingredients, recipes, and cooking experiences can be connected to identity.

Context

We are two literacy teacher educators teaching methods courses in elementary education. We implemented this project in our classes in the Spring semester of 2024. Shuling taught in a predominantly white university in the rural Appalachian region and worked with her 42 junior preservice teachers for this project in an elementary literacy course focused on whole-classroom instruction. Forty-one students were identified as white and one student of color. Thirty-seven were identified as females and four as males. Amy teaches at a mid-size public minority-serving institution in a mid-Atlantic city. She implemented the project as part of a children’s literature course with a focus on diverse literature and culturally sustaining pedagogy. The course comprised 13 preservice teachers, four of whom were undergraduates and 9 of whom were MAT students. Eight students self-identified as students of color and five as white; 12 identified as women and one as nonbinary.

Lesson Overview

We aimed to engage our PSTs in the kinds of activities that we hope they bring into their future classrooms. As previously described, we wanted to center joy, play, and creativity as essential elements of culturally sustaining literacy instruction. Because of this goal, we purposefully provided minimal guidance about what the PSTs should and could do or create during this lesson. However, we provided a general framework and prompts to invite them into the activities, which are described below.

We asked the PSTs to read a picture book focused on different types of food in small groups (see Table 1 for a complete list of texts). Students selected a text from the set provided by the teacher educator and were asked to pay attention to the food described and the cultural messages sent in the story. Next, PSTs were asked to use playdough to make the food (e.g. dumplings, dim sum) depicted in their book. During the process of creating the food, they were guided to have oral discussions with prompts such as:

- What is the food called? What does it look like?
- What are the ingredients?
- How would you describe the process of how they are made? How complicated and/or time-consuming is it?
- How do they taste? Sweet/sour/spicy?
- Which culture does it come from? How do you know?
- Does it remind you of anything you have made?

Students engaged in informal small group discussions about these topics during and after reading their texts. Their discussions evolved organically, growing to additional topics and connections as they shared; we circulated between groups, listening in and contributing to conversations as relevant.

Next, students were asked to engage in writing connected to the texts. In Shuling's class, students were prompted to draft a personal narrative of a memory connected to the text. This might include an experience learning from a family member, preparing food, or engaging in a cultural tradition. In Amy's class, groups worked together to write a poem that captured the theme of their text. They were given options and examples of found poetry, blackout poetry, and free verse as inspiration, and composed their pieces jointly on chart paper.

Small groups were asked to share their playdough sculptures and writing with the class. Whole class discussions followed with prompts on how PSTs engaged with the activity, and how those books and literacy activities could be implemented in their future classrooms. To further their understanding of how these books on dumplings and dim sum could go beyond the surface level of culture to nurture more robust culturally sustaining pedagogy, we asked:

- How does food provide an entry point for a deeper exploration of culture?
- How do these books reflect the diversity and multiplicity of cultural identities?
- What might be the next instructional steps in the classroom to further inquiry into students' diverse cultural identities?

We each collected the PSTs' writings, took pictures of their playdough making, and field notes about their discussions and interactions. The major data sources for the piece include students' writing samples, oral discussions via fieldnotes, and their art-making of the food in the books.

Table 1

Picture Books

Book Title	Author(s) and Illustrator(s)
Magic Ramen: The Story of Momofuku Ando	Andra Wang (K. Urbanowicz, illustrator)
Amy Wo and the Perfect Bao	Kat Zhang (C. Chua, illustrator)
Luna's Yum Yum Dim Sum	Natasha Yim (V. Kim, illustrator)
Let's Go Yum Cha!	Alister Felix (Y. Mariana, illustrator)
Dumpling Day	Meera Sriram (Inés de Antuñano, illustrator)
Dumplings for Lili	Melissa Iwai
Dim Sum Palace	X. Fang
Dim Sum, Here We Come	Maple Lam
The Have a Good Day Cafe	Frances Park & Ginger Park (K. Potter, illustrator)
Our World of Dumplings	Francie Dekker (S. Jung, illustrator)

Data Analysis

Our initial analysis followed the process of data collection, coding, and generating themes that mark qualitative research. Each instructor took field notes during and after their class session. Then, we engaged in an informal process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) where both of us read the PSTs' writings, transcripts of oral discussions, and reflections, and wrote memos exploring initial impressions about their crafts. We met virtually to compare our notes and generated preliminary codes together. Guided by the levels of the culture tree and principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy, we found patterns that emerged through the codes. We present the three themes, each related to joy and deeper exploration of culture, in the following section.

PSTs' Multifaceted Literacy Learning

The authors employed an arts integration approach to engage PSTs with multimodal literacy activities. The process activated a high level of interest, laughs, and socialization among the PSTs. Meaningful guided discussions centered on reflection about using CSP in their future classrooms. In the sections below, we highlight how joy emerged in active learning, collaboration, and writing.

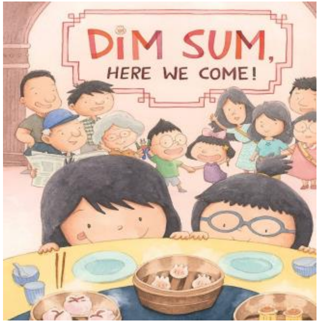
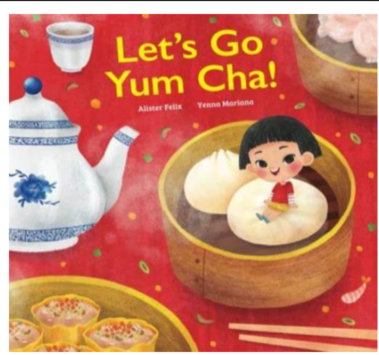
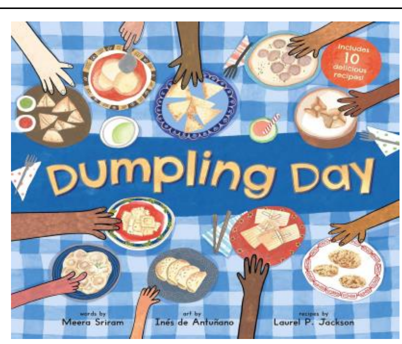
Joy of Active Learning

The human brain learns best when the experience is active, meaningful, socially interactive, engaging, and joyful (Nesbitt et al., 2023). During this lesson, we found that PSTs had the joy of active learning because they had agency over content, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creative innovation. They were provided space and time to work and decide collaboratively which food in the book they would prefer to explore more with hands-on activity via playdough-making. They had the choice to work on one or more particular foods combined with guided discussions. The task with playdough added an innovative part for these PSTs and promoted their active learning and joy. The PSTs were able to develop their 6C skills (Nesbitt et al., 2023) in this activity via small group and whole class discussions, art-making, and reading and writing. Their confidence in using these multicultural picture books as entry points to discuss diverse cultures and identities was fostered.

PSTs' active engagement in the activities was evident in several ways. All students in both institutions got involved in the sculpting, rather than allowing certain students to take the lead. Additionally, students in both classes asked the instructors for tools to support their making. This indicates both an investment in doing the task well and a level of familiarity with the process of sculpting; in tapping into their prior enjoyable experiences, we help to engage students and make space for this and other forms of popular culture in the curriculum (as an aspect of CSP). When the particular tools were not available, the students in Amy's class got creative, using scissors to make sharper edges and a roll of washi tape to stamp out circles. Interestingly, other aspects of their making indicated the ways that PSTs have internalized a regulated, "schooled" sense of both art and literacy that shapes their sense of what was allowed though neither instructor gave specific parameters around how to engage with the playdough itself. However, students did not mix the different colors and policed one another about doing so. When this happened, both instructors gave explicit permission to mix the playdough colors, and students indicated a mixture of surprise, disbelief, and happiness. They reported having more fun and more satisfaction with their sculptures once they were able to make their foods with more colors. In other words, the arts integration approach encouraged innovation and elevated joy, mirroring the findings of previous studies (Moody & Conway, 2022).

Table 2

PSTs' Explorations of Dumplings and Dim Sum

Book	Playdough	PSTs' Comments
		Our dish is called Char Siu Buns. In English, it is called sweet BBQ pork buns. It is a bun with marinated pork enclosed inside! It is carried in a bamboo bowl.
		The dishes we have made are called Siu Mai (steamed dumplings), Har Gow (dumplings), and Cha Siu Bao (Cantonese). Each of our dishes is stuffed with meat and is savory in flavor. We chose to make these because we wanted to try them in real life.
		In *Dumpling Day*, different families make a type of dumpling from their culture to bring to a picnic. This book includes a variety of ethnicities and cultures including Nigerian, Italian, Indian, Chinese, American, Israeli, Japanese, Mexican, Syrian, and Russian. Dumpling Day also incorporates math through counting the dumplings.

Moreover, the activity provided the PSTs with experiences of engaging in multimodal and multilingual responses as readers (Table 2). For many students, this was a novel experience, deviating from common literacy response strategies such as writing summaries, multiple choice quizzes, or answering comprehension questions. By immersing themselves in the tasks, they developed their understanding that active, creative responses were both challenging and meaningful ways to express one's comprehension. This perspective, cultivated by engaging in active and joyful responses, allowed them to envision new possibilities for their future classrooms. For example, one PST proposed extending the use of playdough into other disciplines, a practice supported by the previous literature (e.g., Sutapa et al., 2018, Peppler et al., 2018). She explained, "[sculpting] could be used for other books and objects other than food. Like making animals or plants from books that incorporate science into literacy."

PSTs' agency and joy were demonstrated by their ownership and pride in their artwork. They searched online for the pronunciations of different foods, watched videos on tutorials for food making, took pictures of their artworks, and desired to keep their creations. They enjoyed the whole process of making and sharing their artworks and writings. About half of them shared that they placed orders for the books during the class. One PST said,

> In terms of my own classroom literacy instruction and book selection, I really do like the idea of finding books that showcase many different cultures and having students work in groups to explore the book. That way they can share their interest in what they are unfamiliar with but also students who are familiar with some of the aspects of the book are able to share with their classmates as well.

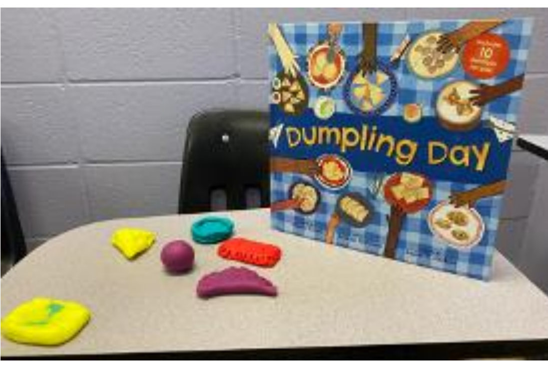
Joy of Community

Another way in which the PSTs uplifted joy during this lesson was in their interactions with one another, which fostered our classroom communities. Working in small groups allowed them to create a shared experience of the text and the activities. As they sculpted their foods and developed their writing, they were able to collaborate toward a shared goal and experience spontaneity and connection through their discussion and creations (see Figure 1). For many students, this disrupts their conception of what "counts" as literacy, and especially writing, which is typically an individual, cognitive pursuit rather than a social one. One PST reflected,

> It was interesting to do as a group assignment because it allowed us to learn more about our group mates, as some of them were very familiar with the foods we were making and had made them before themselves. It was a great way to start a conversation about our own cultures and share those stories with our peers.

Figure 1

Playdough Making with Picture Books



As the students engaged in the activities, they began to share personal connections and family stories; making space for these aspects of students' identities is a key tenant of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2021). This began in smaller ways directly connected to the text. For example, as they encountered the words for grandmother in different languages (e.g. Nai Nai, Babcia, Abuela) in *Dumplings for Lili*, (Iwai, 2021), students shared the words they use to refer to their grandparents and their origins. As they continued to read and discuss the texts, they began to share connections to and experiences of the foods they described. Students identified which foods they had eaten and which were new to them. Some PSTs had also prepared the foods depicted in the books, eagerly launching into stories of learning from family members, and offering tips and ingredients to their peers.

When students encountered foods that they were unfamiliar with, they actively sought out additional information to clarify. Unprompted, they brought out their phones or devices and looked up pronunciation guides for new vocabulary, recipes, and YouTube videos illustrating the preparation of different items. This led to purposeful synthesis across texts, as students curated an impromptu text set for themselves. This also created space for students to share their own interests and lives, as favorite blogs and YouTube channels were shared alongside the challenges of quick weeknight dinners, packing school lunches, and sharing kitchen space with family members and roommates. While the conversations began with identifiable aspects of surface culture, these later elements of PST discussions often illustrate (even if not explicitly) aspects of shallow and deep culture (Hammond, 2015).

Joy of Writing

PSTs' engagement in these lessons also offers a valuable opportunity to highlight the inextricably entwined nature of reading and writing. After reading and discussing the texts, PSTs were able to revisit them as mentor texts to inspire their writing. In Shuling's class, students used

the picture books as inspiration for sharing a personal narrative inspired by the content of the story. Many PSTs wrote about memories of cooking, shared meals, and family relationships, mirroring themes of the picture books. For example, one student wrote:

> The scent of hot chocolate reminds me of having snow days during my childhood. It revives the memories of being out of school and going outside in the snow. The scent brings back memories of building snowmen, making snow angels, and sledding down the hill in my family's backyard. It reminds me of coming into my warm home from the freezing cold, taking off my gloves and snow boots, and drinking hot chocolate with marshmallows. The scent and these memories bring back the feeling of childhood.

Inviting students to share their memories in their writing—without a specific prompt mandating what and how they should respond—allowed multiple entry points, with students having the agency to decide for themselves which aspects of their identities they felt comfortable bringing into the classroom space. Whether the picture books provided mirrors or windows for these students (Bishop, 1990), the openness of the assignment and the preceding group discussions meant that PSTs' cultures, families, and assets were welcomed into the classroom community and the curriculum. In addition, this multimodal activity deepened PSTs' understanding of how translanguaging works in multilingual families through the texts, and how they could further this practice in their future classrooms. A PST said, "I think this activity was perfect for showcasing how to use translanguaging in the classroom." Others brainstormed to have their future students share stories of food they eat in their homes as an entry point to delve deeper into diverse home cultures for developing inclusive classrooms.

In Amy's lesson, students were invited to work collaboratively to write a poem related to the theme of their picture book. They were familiar with examples of found poetry, blackout poetry, and free verse, but were able to choose any type of poetic response. Most students elected to write found poems, using phrases and vocabulary from the text and reconstructing them to compose their poems. The poem developed by the group that read *Dumplings for Lili* (Iwai, 2021) is provided below.

> Group Poem for Dumplings for Lili
> Nai Nai
> Babcia
> Abuela
> Teta
> Nonna
> Granma
> Needing ingredients
>
> Endless memories of
> Food
> Steps

Sisters
Home.

While this activity did not invite individual students' identities and cultures into the classroom in the same way as Shuling's lesson, it did serve several other purposes. First, many PSTs had previously expressed a negative perception or fear of poetry. They shared experiences of analyzing poetry word by word, line by line, to be told that their interpretations were wrong. As a result, many felt intimidated by poetry, as though it was too difficult to parse. Engaging in practices like found poetry and blackout poetry gave PSTs experiences of success with the genre, scaffolding the writing process so they did not have to start from scratch. Importantly, they also did not have to face the blank page alone. Writing with their groups, rather than individually, positioned writing as a collaborative endeavor, rather than an isolated, individual one. PSTs felt more confident sharing a poem created by their group than sharing something they had written alone.

Implications for Practice

The joy and creativity in reading, visual art-making, and writing during these lessons made the learning process meaningful for our PSTs. Because they were the agents of their learning, their discussions, explorations, elaborations, and reflections throughout the guided activity developed greater understanding of diverse cultures and culturally sustaining practices. This lesson also heightened their awareness of the importance of moving beyond the surface level of culture represented by the food itself. PSTs researched the rich linguistic features in the texts. They made cross-cultural connections. They recognized the subtle and nuanced relationships between foods and cultural identities, drawing on geography, family structures, and societal values. We hope this lesson offers ideas and inspiration for pre- and in-service teachers to dig deeper into the elements of culture for meaningful culturally sustaining practices in literacy instruction.

Integrating Multifaceted Domains in One Literacy Lesson

We believe that this lesson can be adapted and adjusted to meet the needs of teacher educators and elementary classroom teachers; we also see the potential for these activities to build strong connections with families. It helps foster joy and creativity in classrooms and creates space to embrace multiculturalism and multilingualism. It offers a fun and accessible way to explore diverse cultures at deeper levels, enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy in meaningful ways that encourage teachers, students, and families to share and learn from one another.

In addition to centering creativity and joy and making space for cultural identities, this lesson also addresses state standards from multiple domains in one lesson. It offers teachers the flexibility to engage their students with arts-integrated literacy activities in the elements of reading and writing and has the potential to nurture collaboration and communication between content-area teachers.

In Table 3, we provide several ideas that highlight various elements of literacy instruction as well as creating joy and deep learning together. Teachers may choose books from Table 1 to try these ideas out with their students. We also recommend that teachers work with one book for multiple days so they may have more time to engage students in multimodal activities and deeper conversations. In Table 4, we offer one possible five-day reading sequence for the book *Dumplings for Lili* (Iwai, 2021) as an example.

Fostering Culturally Responsive School-Family Connections

School and family relationships are essential for student success. Valuing and affirming the cultures and expertise of caregivers not only enacts culturally sustaining practices; it also cultivates more positive relationships between the schools and communities they serve.

These activities can be used to cultivate asset-based learning about diverse cultures in a school community, starting from a simple entry point: food. Classroom teachers may invite families to bring special food to school and share their family recipes with students and their families. If books about these foods can be found, parents could read them to the class in the languages they are comfortable with; or, they could bring a favorite book or oral story from home to share. Students can interview family members about traditions and cultural practices and write profiles, or they can write recipe books to integrate literacy and family assets (Durán et al., 2023). Children can brainstorm questions such as, "Where and from whom did you get it?", "Why is it so special to you or for the family?", and "What is the secret in the recipe?"

In addition to food, music, dance, and other art forms are other cultural elements for families to share. These opportunities allow teachers to become acquainted with students' families and ways of living and knowing, which may help collaborative decision-making and problem-solving if issues arise (Amatea & Cholewa, 2012). Rather than celebrating a certain heritage in a designated time frame (e.g., AAPI culture each May), regularly honoring the diverse cultures of students and their families in ongoing ways in the classroom is essential.

When the ultimate goal of teaching and learning is to elevate joy, concentrating on humanizing practices that nurture students' creativity and criticality, literacy instruction should engage students in activities that are *both* playful and meaningful. In our classrooms, immersing ourselves in books, playdough, poetry, and prose helped us make joyful, responsive learning a reality.

Table 3
Use Playdough in Literacy Activities

Example Literacy Activities	Literacy Skills Emphasized	Critical Considerations for CSP/Culture Tree/Joy
• Matching different playdough dumplings and their sounds/spellings (allow different languages and spellings) • Circle words with digraphs or blends	Word Study	• Honor students' models as learning tools for themself and others • Develop awareness of phonetic differences across languages to help students make connections or clarify confusion
• Sculpt models with vocabulary cards (definitions) • Students create a dumpling-making process with the vocabulary words from the books	Vocabulary	• Choose relevant vocabulary for multilingual learners • Offer students different choices to increase ownership, engagement, and personal fulfillment
• Readers Theater, acting out the text, improvising additional scenes with playdough props	Fluency	• Ensure skits don't act out identities in ways that perpetuate stereotypes • Allow students to speak in heritage languages
• Story retelling or summarizing with playdough • Recreating the key scenes with playdough with discussions such as "What's happening here?" and "Why is this part of the story important?"	Comprehension	• Consider different cultural norms for storytelling • Offer sentence stems as needed • Offer students choices in text selection for more significant comprehension tasks to increase engagement
• Labeling the playdough (young learners) • Peer-written feedback on each other's models • Opinion writing • Propose another ending to the story and make a scene with playdough	Writing	• Consider options for students, including dictation, audio recording, and typing • Consider that bold claims, debate, disagreement, and other opinion writing-related skills may conflict with cultural norms • Encourage students to write scenes and stories that center their identities and cultures
• Playdough for STEAM (e.g., the book *Dumpling Day* used in math, building a model of Lili's apartment building in *Dumplings for Lili*)	Disciplinary Literacy	• Highlight the contributions of minoritized scientists and mathematicians, throughout history and present-day • Celebrate students' creativity and innovation

Table 4

A Five-Day Reading Comprehension Activity with Dumplings for Lili

	Activities
Day 1	● Introduce *Dumplings for Lili* by Melissa Iwai. Show pictures of different dumplings and discuss their cultural representations. ● Read the book once, ask students to recreate scenes or characters with play dough, and share their creations
Day 2	● Introduce key vocabulary of the book. ● Use vocabulary cards with images and translations in your multilingual students' heritage languages
Day 3	● Read the book for the 2nd time. Refer to the playdough created on Day 1, stop, and ask literal and inference questions to prompt for the surface, shallow, and deep level of questions to facilitate understanding. o What are the different dumplings called in the book? (literal & surface culture) o Why is it so important for Lili to have the cabbage? (literal & shallow culture) o Throughout the story, do you think Lili made the right decisions for solving the problems she encountered? Why or why not? (Inferencing & deep culture)
Day 4	● Ask the students to pick up their favorite dumplings in the book and use playdough to make it/them. ● Ask them to share with peers about its name in the original language and pronunciation, ingredients, and how to make it.
Day 5	● Read the book a 3rd time. Ask students to share why the dumplings they made in playdough are special. ● Discussions on how they began with various types of dumplings and explored deeper to other traditions, social relations, etc.

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Author Bios

Dr. Shuling Yang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She previously worked with preservice teachers in literacy at Tennessee. Her research focuses are family literacy, literacy teacher education, and multicultural education. She won the 2024 Early Career Reviewer Award from *Bilingual Research Journal*. In 2023, Dr. Yang won the ELATE research initiatives at NCTE and the Teacher Education Research Grant at the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers. Her recent publications in journals such as *Language Arts*, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *Journal for Multicultural Education*, and *Bilingual Research Journal*.

Dr. Amy Tondreau is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Literacy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum & Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University. She previously worked as a staff developer and writer for the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, co-director of the Summer Literacy Clinic at Rhode Island College, and an elementary classroom teacher. Her research focuses on teachers' and students' literacy identities, critical literacy in children's literature and writing pedagogy, critical teacher education, and the cross-pollination of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Disability Sustaining Pedagogy in literacy teaching and learning. Her work has been published in forums such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Language Arts, Action in Teacher Education, The Teacher Educator*, and *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*.