



JOURNAL OF LITERACY INNOVATION

RETHINKING LITERACY INSTRUCTION



VOLUME SEVEN, ISSUE TWO

FALL 2022

SEAN RUDAY, EDITOR

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

SEAN RUDAY, *JLI* FOUNDER AND EDITOR

LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

I am honored that the *Journal of Literacy Innovation* is able to bring you the outstanding articles in this issue. These manuscripts are wide-ranging in that each one brings a different and important perspective regarding the best practices of literacy education, providing a variety of topics, insights, and conclusions. In addition, these pieces also possess an important commonality: they all align with *JLI*'s mission of providing readers with research-based and classroom-applicable works that represent the best practices of literacy instruction. I am proud to say that all of the manuscripts in this issue embody this idea.

The first piece you'll encounter in this issue, "The Writing Continuum: Examining Primary-Aged Students' Writing" by H. Michelle Kreamer, Barbara C. Wheatley, Kerrigan Mahoney, Tonya Moon, & Catherine Brighton "is intended to support elementary educators as they work with students so they can identify where students are along the writing continuum and implement instruction designed to support various student needs." The information in this excellent article will help teachers in their work "instructing and supporting writers across the writing continuum."

The next manuscript is "Parent Workshops with FLAIR: A Framework for Reconceptualizing the Home Literacy Environment" by Michele Byrne. This innovative piece explains that "elementary schools (grades K–3) continue to follow family literacy models that position parents through the lens of a deficit model" and "presents the author's research study for implementing a series of parent workshops that follow an asset-based lens." Byrne introduces FLAIR—Family Literacy with Adult Interactive Roles "as a promising theoretical framework for program design that positions parents as active participants while integrating each family's home literacy environment (HLE), structure, language, and culture."

Following that, you'll find "Supporting First Ventures in Labor-Based Grading" by Sandie Friedman. In this important work, Friedman builds on writing studies scholar Asao Inoue (2019)'s argument "for an antiracist assessment model, labor-based grading," in which instructors grade students according to the labor they have completed" instead of "a single standard, which privileges native speakers of White Mainstream English." As Friedman explains, "the article shows how, by forming a collective, faculty can find the courage to act on their antiracist principles by adopting labor-based grading."

Afterwards is the excellent "Questioning the Questioning Skills of Preservice Elementary Teachers" by Shuling Yang, Diane Mickey, & Carin Appleget. The describes an inquiry in which "literacy educators collaboratively designed an interactive read-aloud assignment to explore elementary preservice teachers' (PSTs) questioning skills." The authors explain that "overall, the PST reflections indicated that this read-aloud assignment highlighted the

complexity of questioning in ways they had not previously considered and they valued the opportunities to refine their questioning skills in authentic settings.” The findings of this project led “to the conclusion that PSTs need explicit instruction on questioning.”

Next, you’ll see “Creating Inclusive Writing Environments: Multimodality as a Vehicle for Inclusivity” by Haley Francis. In this engaging and important piece, Francis “discusses how varying composition styles in the writing classroom can create a diverse environment, inclusive of all students, where students are able to exercise their personal identities, learn from differences in perspective, and prepare for future professions.” While sharing these insights, Francis “highlights three major roles multimodality can occupy to enhance literacy instruction: 1) analyzing and learning writing concepts through multimodality, 2) multimodality as writing inspiration, and 3) multimodality as a form of writing composition.”

The issue then features the excellent manuscript “Exploring the Use of Digital Storytelling Tools to Support Literacy” by Michele Garabedian Stork, Christina Levicky Townley, Clarisse Halpern, & Megan Atha. The authors of this innovative work discuss ways they “explored the perceptions of teachers and students for using digital storytelling tools to engage learners in literacy activities” and reveal that their “findings suggest digital storytelling tools can be used to engage students in literacy learning activities, and teachers need support for integrating digital storytelling tools into their literacy learning environments.”

This issue of *JLI* concludes with an outstanding work by Brittany Adams, Tess Dussling, Elizabeth Y. Stevens, & Nance S. Wilson titled Troubling Critical Literacy Assessment: Criticality-in-Process. As the authors explain, “This paper examines the perceived criticality of two students in a literacy education graduate program as they read about and discussed the role of equity in digital literacy instruction.” As you engage with this work, you’ll see how “[t]he data presented in this paper illustrates students' conceptualizations of equity during active reading and how their emergent understandings transferred to their personal-practical theories of teaching literacy” and learn from its findings, which “reveal important implications for literacy educators who seek to prepare teachers to be critical, reflective practitioners.”

Thank you very much to all of this issue’s authors for their wonderful contributions. Also thank you for your continued support of *JLI*!

Sean

Sean Ruday, Ph.D.

Editor, *Journal of Literacy Innovation*

THE WRITING CONTINUUM: EXAMINING PRIMARY-AGED STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstract

Writing develops on a continuum and the writing of primary-grade students varies greatly within a single classroom (Bear et al., 2016). As such, it is essential for elementary educators to be knowledgeable regarding the different stages of the writing continuum so they can support students as they develop as writers and progress through the stages of the writing continuum. This practitioner article is intended to support elementary educators as they work with students so they can identify where students are along the writing continuum and implement instruction designed to support various student needs. In particular, the article includes an explanation of writing continuum stages and highlights variation in student writing by painting the portrait of five rising second graders at varying points along the writing continuum. Examples of student work are showcased, demonstrating variability of student writing, even within the same grade level or classroom. Lastly, recommendations for instructing and supporting writers across the writing continuum are shared.

Keywords: writing continuum, writing, student work, recommendations, primary grades

The Writing Continuum: Examining Primary-Aged Students' Writing

Introduction

Walk into any elementary classroom and you will see students reading and writing at varying stages of complexity. It is understandable that students within the same grade-level will demonstrate different strengths and areas needing additional support when it comes to literacy instruction. While this knowledge is likely second nature to educators, adapting instruction to meet all students where they are in their literacy journey can be a bit more complex. Since student writing progresses along a continuum (Bear et al., 2016; Clay, 1975; Ehri & Roberts, 2006), identifying where students are on the writing continuum can aid teachers in determining what supports students need. Within this practitioner article, the authors highlight variation in student writing found in a typical elementary classroom by painting the portrait of five rising second-grade writers at varying points along the writing continuum. Along with descriptions of writing across the continuum, student writing samples are shared, as well as recommendations on how to support these young writers as they continue to progress along the writing continuum.

Ms. Lewis's Class

At the start of the school year, second-grade teacher Ms. Lewis notices considerable variation in her students' writing. Ms. Lewis has been teaching for seven years and knows a one-size-fits-all approach to writing instruction does not support all students. Therefore, when planning her upcoming literacy unit emphasizing writing, she considers different writers in her classroom. She thinks of Noah, who has an advanced vocabulary for his age, yet frequently avoids writing tasks or communicates ideas through drawings. However, when interested in a task, he is highly motivated and demonstrates an impressive memory of terms and content related to the topic. When writing, Mariah often draws pictures accompanied by related words. For Vincent, writing is labor-intensive and he is frequently one of the last students to complete a writing task. Sofie, like Vincent, is often one of the last to finish a writing task. However, she typically produces more writing than others, at times writing in complete sentences. She is communicative in class and is eager to share ideas with her peers and teacher. Finally, Corben's advanced vocabulary is often reflected in his writing, and he writes complete or nearly complete simple sentences using complex words. As Ms. Lewis reflects on the writers in her classroom, she asks herself, "How can I support and maximize the varied writing skills for all students and help them progress along the writing continuum?"

Framework: The Writing Continuum

Writing develops on a continuum with students progressing through various stages at different points in their educational experience (Bear et al., 2016; Clay, 1975; Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Teale and Sulzby (1994) explain that reading and writing development occur concurrently with neither preceding the other, and children will not move across the continuum at the same rate or age. While the focus of this article is on writing, it is important to note that literacy development encompasses reading and writing and, as such, the two are interrelated and part of a reciprocal relationship. The stages of the writing continuum examined within this article include: *emergent*, *beginning*, *transitional*, *intermediate*, and *advanced* and come from the work of Bear et al.

(2016) and Hayes and Flanigan (2014). These different stages are detailed in Table 1. Since “[w]riting development is variable,” (Bazerman et al., 2017, p. 354) a student may be between stages on the continuum, such as a high emergent writer or an early beginner. Students also frequently move across the continuum. For example, a student may produce writing of a high beginning writer in one instance, but at other times, their writing is representative of a beginning transitional writer. This variation may be caused by a number of factors including interest in the writing task, desire to write, and content understanding.

Table 1

Explanation of Writing Continuum Stages from the work of Bear et al. (2016) and Hayes and Flanigan (2014)

Stage	Stage Explanation	How It May Look
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty understanding that print on the page matches words spoken • May refer to writing as “drawing” • May or may not know letter names • Not reading conventionally • Writing salient sounds for words, such as <i>s</i> for <i>sun</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing may be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ scribbling ○ mock linear (scribbles in a line) ○ letter-like ○ “symbol salad”—mixed-up letters and numerals • Attempts may seem to be “pretend writing” • Beginning to be able to write own name • Issues with directionality while writing
Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is labor-intensive • Writes short pieces • Understands match between spoken words and print • Writing requires constant attention to navigate rules • Learning to construct complete thoughts in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often writes using letter names for words (e.g., YN for when) • Limited number of automatically spelled words • Beginning to capitalize sentences • Beginning to use ending punctuation • Oral reading of own writing may contain more than exists
Transitional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge between beginner and more advanced writer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can spell words with common chunks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is less laborious • Increased writing quality, including awareness of audience and purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on understanding how to spell words with long vowels • Can write for longer length of time and longer amounts of writing
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is still developing, but nearing mastery • Spells most single-syllable short vowels correctly • Attempts to use silent e for long vowel markers • Ability to create graphic organizers for writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can revise and edit, but may require assistance with task • Extensive text on page • Spells most single-syllable words correctly
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually a fluent writer, have reading background to support writing • Writing includes fuller, more complex and abstract sentences and ideas • Knows basic rules of writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastered spelling high-frequency words • Can write specific forms of writing (e.g., letter, poem, etc.) • Intended audience is present in writing • Writing represents complete composition • Can actively engage in editing and revising

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Scaffolding was first described by Bruner (1975) as a way to support children in reaching a goal. This is linked to one component of Vygotsky's (1978) learning theory, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which relates to the work an individual can complete independently as compared to when working with additional support. For instance, with the support of an adult, a child can complete more challenging work than they likely could if they were working independently. With these ideas in mind, Ms. Lewis works to support students across the writing continuum, helping them to improve as writers. Considering the concept of scaffolding and its role within the ZPD framework demonstrates the importance of educators working with students with diverse writing needs to understand writing continuum stages. More importantly, this approach to writing instruction encourages the use of practical tools and strategies to support writing practices across all continuum stages.

Stages of the Writing Continuum

This article highlights variations among primary-grade students' writing based on research findings from a larger study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. In particular, we explore writing continuum stages, along with examples of student writing produced by students in Ms. Lewis's class. While not all stages in Table 1 are represented by these students, we share practical recommendations teachers can embed into instruction to maximize student writing across *all* stages of the writing continuum.

Emergent Writers

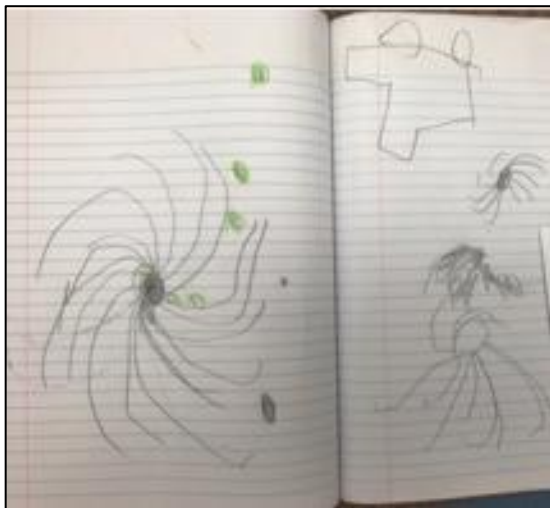
Emergent writers produce varied writing samples as they progress from non-linear scribbles to linear squiggles, letter-like forms, and what researchers call "symbol salad," which is a string of letters and/or numbers (Bear et al., 2016, p. 96; Hayes & Flanigan, 2014, p. 62).

Noah

Noah frequently portrays himself as an emergent writer since he produces few artifacts with actual writing. He often draws when asked to write or he does not write at all, which is typical of an emergent writer. However, as noted previously, he does interact with writing when interested and motivated about the topics such as outer space and black holes (Figure 1). After careful consideration, Ms. Lewis determines that his writing samples are indicative of a high emergent writer, suggesting he is nearing the stage of beginning writers and, at times, produces work representative of writers entering the beginning stage on the writing continuum.

Figure 1

High Emergent Writing Example



Beginning Writers

Beginning writers use some letter-sound associations, learning short vowels after initial and ending consonant sounds of words and often incorporate writing and drawing into their works

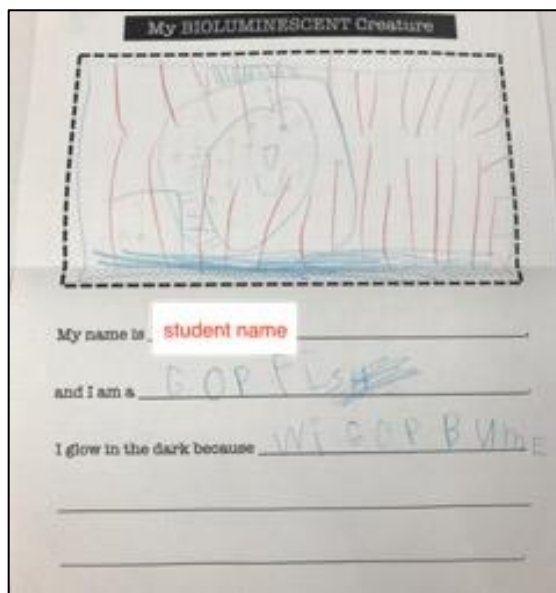
(Bear et al., 2016). Often, the writing of a beginner may be difficult to read, especially when the student's writing is on the lower end of the stage.

Vincent

Ms. Lewis observes that Vincent takes longer to complete writing tasks compared to his peers and occasionally avoids writing tasks. He frequently draws and writes using familiar words: his own and peers' names, as well as numbers, which Ms. Lewis knows is indicative of an early beginning writer. In one of his most advanced writing samples, Vincent completed sentence stems to describe a bioluminescent creature he made, sounding out each word. The italicized words represent Vincent's writing: My name is *Vincent* and I am a *GOP FiSH* (*glow fish*). I glow in the dark because *Wi GOP BUME* (*we glow bioluminescence*) (Figure 2). As noted, Vincent's work is often time-consuming for him; however, he is diligent when completing his writing tasks, at times sounding out each part of the word as he writes it in order to complete the task.

Figure 2

Writing Example from Vincent



Mariah

Unlike Vincent whose writing is at the early beginner stage of the writing continuum, Mariah's writing is further along the continuum as she is consistently at the beginning stage of the writing continuum exhibited by stronger spelling and lengthier responses. In particular, Ms. Lewis noted the alignment between Mariah's writing and drawing, demonstrating insight and understanding of the connection between written words and images. She wrote *I hut* (*I hunt*) as an explanation for why her creature glowed in the dark. After rereading her writing, she drew fish to show what her creature hunts. Ms. Lewis recognizes this as an example of beginning writing because of the simple sentence and overall brevity; however, she demonstrates comprehension between her written text and drawing (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Example of Alignment between Writing and Drawing



Transitional Writers

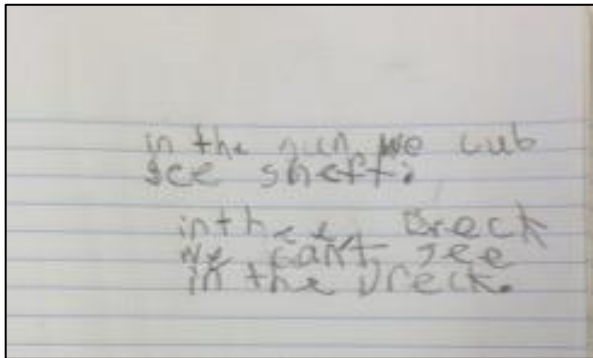
The transitional stage on the writing continuum is the bridge between time-consuming writing of the beginner and fluent writing of intermediate and advanced writers (Hayes & Flanigan, 2014). Transitional writers have a firm grasp of short vowels and common digraphs (sh-, ch-, and th-) and are working on developing knowledge of long vowel patterns such as igh, ai, ea, or vowel-consonant-e words such as slide.

Sofie

Sofie's writing indicates she is in the early transitional stage of writing, typically including complete thoughts in writing; however, her work is, at times, reflective of a late beginning writer. One of Sofie's most advanced writing samples shows her knowledge of words and sounds and her overall thought processes: *in the sun we cub see sheff. In thee Dreck we can't see in the Dreck. (In the sun we could see stuff. In the dark we can't see in the dark.)* (Figure 4). Her understanding of contractions and the sound /ck/ indicate her bridging between late beginner and early transitional writing stages. This writing sample demonstrates to Ms. Lewis Sofie's ability to communicate her thoughts and her reasoning about the ability to see in light and dark.

Figure 4

Writing Example from Sofie



Corben

Similarly, Corben consistently produces longer pieces of writing and includes complex vocabulary and sentences, indicating consistent transitional writing. Given the consistency in his different writing samples, this demonstrates to Ms. Lewis that Corben is further along the writing continuum than Sofie. One example of a longer piece of writing took place when he was asked to explain his kaleidoscope observations. For this writing task, Corben wrote: *in the sun it was bright. in the bark it was black. it worcks in the sun (In the sun it was bright. In the dark it was black. It works in the sun.)* and included a drawing aligned to his writing (Figure 5). Additionally, with Ms. Lewis's assistance, Corben included challenging vocabulary when describing his bioluminescent creature. He wrote: *I have a danegis cemicoal it's nam is bioluminessent (I have a dangerous chemical. Its name is bioluminescent)* (Figure 6). In these examples, it is evident Corben made connections between what he observed, drew, and wrote and incorporated complex vocabulary into his writing.

Figure 5

Longer Writing Example

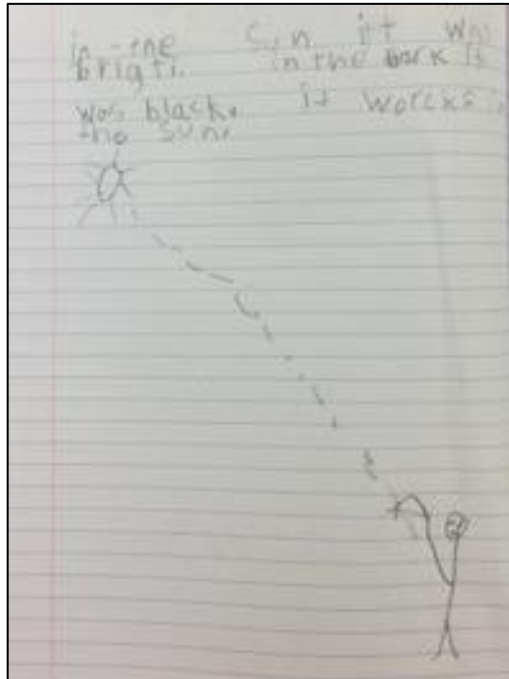


Figure 6

Example of Challenging Vocabulary



Intermediate Writers and Advanced Writers

Intermediate and advanced writers write with more fluency and produce writing with greater ease, using correct short and long vowels, abstract vowel patterns, and digraphs and blends (Bear et al., 2016). Students writing in these stages usually read at a third-grade level or higher. Ms. Lewis's students are not currently producing writing on these levels; however, as the year progresses it is likely that some students in her class will begin to produce writing representative of these later stages of the continuum. Therefore, it is important for primary-grade teachers like Ms. Lewis to be familiar with characteristics for all writing continuum stages and approaches for supporting student writers and moving them forward along the writing continuum.

Recommendations for Instruction Based on Student Profiles

To meet the varying needs of all students, regardless of development along the writing continuum, it is important for teachers to consider practical recommendations for writing instruction. It is clear that students in Ms. Lewis's second-grade classroom represent different stages of the writing continuum. As such, the recommendations below can be implemented across the writing continuum, align to best practices for writing instruction (Graham et al., 2013), and are based on the previously described students. To maximize writing skills of primary-grade

students, we recommend incorporating the following into writing instruction: (1) student interest into writing, (2) a variety of writing tasks, (3) different writing tools, and (4) targeted writing opportunities informed by on-going, formative assessment.

Student Interest and Writing

The first recommendation is to embed opportunities for students to write about things that are personally relevant and interesting to them. Assor et al. (2002) found that student choice is important to helping students engage in work, but perhaps more important is that schoolwork is relevant to their interests. Research also suggests childrens' interest and engagement in literacy-related activities can lead to development of their literacy skills (Bracken & Fischel, 2008), demonstrating the prominent role interest can have on students' literacy learning. Students in Ms. Lewis's class are able to explore their interests and engage in authentic writing providing all writers, including those who may be hesitant to write, engaging and relevant opportunities in which to compose writing. According to research, choice in topic and other creative aspects can serve as influential factors in motivating students to write (Nolen, 2007). Noah demonstrated this connection between his personal interests and his writing. By incorporating his interests and motivation to interact with specific topics, Ms. Lewis provided Noah with an opportunity to share something he was interested in while simultaneously encouraging his participation in literacy activities, resulting in writing that was more advanced along the writing continuum.

Incorporating student choice is a natural way to engage students in the writing process. When students have autonomy over what and how they write, this can influence the writing they produce (Boscolo & Gelati, 2018). As a way to provide choice while simultaneously scaffolding writing opportunities, especially for students at the early stages of the writing continuum, teachers can incorporate Language Experience Approach (LEA) stories into their literacy lessons (van Allen, 1978; Vukelich et al., 2008). In this approach, students tell their story to the teacher who writes exactly what the student says. Students are able to share stories about topics of interest and use the student-dictated writing recorded by the teacher as an example during future writing tasks as they begin to produce more independent writing.

Having students engage in pre-writing tasks encourages them to think of different topics of interest and inform their future writing activities. For instance, students in Ms. Lewis's class could create their own heart map, based on the work by Heard (2016) to record different topics that are meaningful to them. For this pre-writing task, students take a blank heart outline and fill in the heart by recording topic ideas through writing and drawing. This task is appropriate for writers at any point on the writing continuum and can be referenced when students are presented with opportunities for choice in writing. This is also a space for students to express their imagination by recording their creative writing ideas and returning to these at a later time. Through a collection of formative data, such as pre-writing activities, student interest inventories, and teacher-recorded observational data, teachers can identify student interests and use this to inform literacy instruction and the options they present to students.

Variation of Writing Tasks

Despite benefits of choice when writing, we acknowledge this might not always be plausible given a need to expose students to new information in which they might not initially express interest. As such, a second recommendation to maximize students' writing is to incorporate a variety of writing tasks so they have opportunities to interact with different types of writing. While pieces produced by Ms. Lewis's students vary, all students have ideas to share and offering a variety of writing tasks enables students to incorporate these ideas into their texts.

Primary-grade students should learn that writing is used for many purposes. Teachers can achieve this by teaching a variety of writing strategies and supporting their students as they learn these strategies (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2012). For instance, writing tasks such as list-group-label, storyboards, and graphs are tasks Ms. Lewis and other teachers can use to support students as they convey their ideas through writing. Table 2 includes explanations of varied writing tasks that can be incorporated in classrooms to support student writing.

Another way to support students when interacting with different types of writing and composing writing for varied purposes is to use literature, or mentor texts, as a model (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2012). For instance, students struggling with persuasive writing could use *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* by Mo Willems as a mentor text. Together, teacher and student can work through the text, discussing the pigeon's attempts to drive the bus and

Table 2

Writing Task Recommendations

Writing Task	Explanation	Lesson Ideas
<i>Lists / Checklists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a list—shopping, likes or dislikes, ideas on a topic, etc. • Record items needed for a task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How-to activity • Packing list • Supply checklist
<i>List--group--label</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a word list using cards or sentence strips. • Group words. • Label groups with headings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals • Machines • Weather • Community helpers
<i>Story frame / Storyboard</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequenced blocks or squares like a comic strip to create a story or sequenced events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How-to activity • Comic story • Extended read-aloud story

<i>Speech or thought bubbles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children draw characters and write what they are saying or thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw and label characters adding thought bubbles • Draw animals from an expository book and add thoughts or speech supported by the book
<i>Maps</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children create maps of an area (classroom, nature walk, etc.) and label parts of the map. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies in classroom • Birdhouses or nests in trees • Playground equipment
<i>Interviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children interview others about likes, dislikes, class topics, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How colors make them feel • What they see in an illusion • Favorite animal, food, book, etc.
<i>Graphs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children create graphs of objects, favorites, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorite color • Patterns on childrens' clothes (stripes, floral, solids)

persuasive techniques used. Students can then apply this knowledge to their own writing. Modeling writing in this way can serve as a scaffold to support students' literacy as they begin to read and compose writing using a greater variety of texts and genres.

While the focus of this article is largely aimed at examining students' writing transcription skills, it is also critical to consider the ideas students are trying to convey through their writing. If students lack transcription skills, conveying ideas clearly in writing can be a challenge. However, by varying writing tasks, teachers can provide alternative formats for students to express ideas without being hindered by challenges with transcription. While varying in writing development, both Vincent and Sofie actively participate in activities when they can use oral language to express their ideas and would benefit from the inclusion of alternative communication formats. One writing task that would support students like Vincent and Sofie would be to have them conduct interviews to share and obtain new ideas through oral communication and storytelling. Another way to scaffold writing tasks for students whom writing transcription poses a challenge is to incorporate shared writing into the classroom. In this approach, teacher and student write together, allowing the student to write words they are comfortable with while the teacher writes the more challenging words. By utilizing this method, students are not hindered by transcription skills, producing writing that expresses their ideas. Using approaches such as these is a way for students to express their creativity without being limited by their writing abilities. Furthermore,

because an adult is aiding in writing, students are exposed to the correct spelling of challenging words and can use this as a model for future writing tasks as teachers begin to remove scaffolds. The recommendation in the next section further encourages teachers to embed different approaches within their writing instruction that foster student writing development.

Tools to Support Writers' Differing Needs

Ms. Lewis can support students' writing by incorporating a variety of writing tools and resources that meet the differing needs of writers in her classroom. Specifically, these tools allow a teacher to scaffold writing tasks and support the development of student writers who represent different points along the writing continuum. For example, Ms. Lewis can support the development of students' communication skills by providing an audio recorder for them to record themselves prior to writing. For reluctant writers, the use of an audio recorder sends the message that they have stories to tell. This tool is also beneficial for non-reluctant or more advanced writers, like Sofie, who could use an audio recorder to organize ideas by listening to the recording and filling in gaps. Furthermore, this tool takes the emphasis off of students' transcription skills and focuses on the ideas students are conveying, such as pieces of creative writing.

One writing tool that was beneficial for Vincent was an alphabet strip. He referred to this on an as-needed basis during writing tasks to self-direct his learning. Teachers can facilitate student learning by modeling how to use writing tools, such as an alphabet strip or more advanced tools like dictionaries and thesauruses, to support students' writing potential based on their particular needs and where they are on the writing continuum. Graphic organizers (e.g., T-chart or Venn diagram) are another scaffolding tool for pre-writing that can assist students during idea generation. The use of various graphic organizers could be helpful for reluctant writers like Noah to organize and record his ideas and could also lead to an increase in Noah's confidence and willingness to share his ideas. Such organizers can also benefit advanced writers who may have multiple ideas for writing, since these tools can help them to organize their ideas and determine their best ideas or what is truly important when composing a piece of writing.

Another tool that can support student writers is a classroom word web. By creating a word web, teachers emphasize certain vocabulary (e.g., content-related vocabulary, student-provided words) and provide a physical space for students to re-visit words. Because such a tool is accessible to students, everyone is encouraged to make use of the word web as needed, demonstrating its flexibility. For instance, Ms. Lewis can incorporate Corben's advanced language into the word web, affirming his vocabulary and making these words accessible to his peers, so they may, in turn, incorporate more advanced language into their own writing. For Corben, or a student like him, whose spoken vocabulary is at times more expansive than what he can produce in writing, the inclusion of these words on a classroom word web can allow for him to embed this vocabulary into his writing. While Corben might have previously been limited to vocalizing some words but not being able to write them, having a classroom word web depicting these terms can support his and his peers' writing.

We also suggest the use of a writer's notebook as a tool to support primary-grade writers. Students use these notebooks to record creative and personal writing, along with content-area

writing. It is important to note that the writer's notebook is not intended to be a place for copying, but rather for students to record what they have learned in their own words, even if this includes a combination of words and pictures. Additionally, we recommend a section dedicated to skill-specific information from teacher-directed mini-lessons related to students' individual needs (e.g., spacing between words, punctuation, incorporating details into one's writing). Throughout the year students can then use this scaffolding tool as they return to this section of their writer's notebook.

Targeted Writing Instruction Informed by Formative Assessment

To best support student writers, it is essential for teachers to conduct on-going, formative assessment so they are able to determine what targeted literacy instruction students need. For instance, formative assessment can alert teachers to a student's struggle with ending sounds. With this information, the teacher can provide the necessary instruction before moving onto short vowels. On the other hand, formative assessments can also help to demonstrate to teachers advanced writing skills. Through formative assessment, teachers may note a student's complex written vocabulary, a deep understanding of the relationship between reading and writing, or the use of suffixes in one's writing, such as *-tion*, which adds complexity to an overall piece of writing. By conducting regular, formative assessments, teachers can identify areas where students need targeted support and work with fluid groups based on students' specific literacy needs.

To facilitate literacy and writing development, primary-grade teachers can utilize writing workshops in which students brainstorm, draft, write, and revise, all while collaborating with their peers as an opportunity to provide feedback to students so they can improve their writing. In such an environment, teachers are able to observe students (i.e., collect formative assessment data), learn more about their writing interests, provide different tools for writing, or discuss a new genre in which a student might try writing. By monitoring students' progress on an on-going basis in this way, teachers are also able to conduct relevant mini-lessons with small groups on a given topic. As students further along the writing continuum continue to write and share their writing with a peer, the teacher can work with other students on a particular skill to support them as they move forward on the writing continuum. Additionally, teachers should also consider teaching students how to engage in self-assessment of their writing. Teachers can conduct whole-class mini-lessons on the use of a writer's checklist or rubric that is specific to a writing task so that students are provided the skills to assess their own writing and use this knowledge to strengthen the works they produce.

Closing Thoughts

Student writing develops along a continuum presenting considerable variation within a classroom. By acknowledging differences in writing, teachers are able to implement best practices to support student skills, including those students at the lower and upper ends of the writing continuum.

The first step in supporting student writing success is to recognize that students are at different points on the writing continuum and their placement may vary based on the nature of the task or

students' interest. Secondly, it is important to frequently collect student work samples (i.e., formative assessments) to continually evaluate writing progress. Additionally, teacher observation notes can inform instruction, especially when considering tools and supports for writing instruction to benefit individual students. Finally, it is important to cultivate an environment where writing is valued by providing time, space, and support for writing. To maximize writing success, teachers must include opportunities for students to write about their own interests, implement varied writing tasks, provide student-accessible tools for writing, and provide targeted writing instruction based on on-going, formative assessment. Teachers can support students' growth as writers across the writing continuum by engaging in these instructional steps and implementing best practice recommendations for primary-grade student writing.

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PARENT WORKSHOPS WITH FLAIR: A FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCEPTUALIZING THE HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Elementary schools (grades K–3) continue to follow family literacy models that position parents through the lens of a deficit model. This article presents the author’s research study for implementing a series of parent workshops that follow an asset-based lens. FLAIR—Family Literacy with Adult Interactive Roles—is introduced as a promising theoretical framework for program design that positions parents as active participants while integrating each family’s home literacy environment (HLE), structure, language, and culture. This article shares simple action steps for implementing FLAIR using mentor texts as a model for parents to create personalized storybooks that honor their family’s funds of knowledge. Next, the article shares setting-based actions for parent-child interactive reading as physical and language-based moves that promote literacy-rich experiences in the HLE. Finally, the article provides recommendations for educators (grades K–5) interested in enacting change in their approach to family literacy in their educational settings.

Parent Workshops with FLAIR: A Framework for Reconceptualizing the Home Literacy Environment

I hosted a parent workshop each year that resulted in a large turnout where parents learned strategies for improving their children’s reading fluency at home. Each parent received three new books and a colorful bookmark listing the fluency strategies for at-home application. Parents left the workshop excited to try the strategies with their children. However, because I failed to include responsive and ongoing methods for tracking evidence of parent learning: I was left wondering if parents transferred the use of the fluency strategies at home with their children.

Whether a parent workshop setting is urban, suburban, or rural, this lack of evidence of parent learning is an all too familiar outcome of parent workshop learning. My past experiences with parent literacy workshops ended with parents who were appreciative of my effort and time, but the workshops were mostly one-directional, with no systematic way to receive and incorporate feedback from the participants themselves.

Unfortunately, this is an all too familiar phenomenon following workshops implemented in the early elementary grades K–3, the result of an overreliance on the one-size-fits-all approach to parent learning that Auerbach (1989) refers to as the transmission-of-school-practices model. This popular parent workshop model from the 1990s aims to “give parents specific guidelines, materials, and training to carry out school-like activities in the home” (Auerbach, 1989, p. 168) to develop early foundational reading skills. Parent workshops that follow a transmission-of-school-practices model teach parents good reading habits, train parents for home tutoring in basic reading skills, and provide parents with techniques for helping with homework, ideas for shared literacy activities and strategies, and guidelines for making and playing games that reinforce school-based skills (Auerbach, 1989).

A weakness of the transmission-of-school-practices model is that it positions parents through a deficit lens that focuses on what students and families lack or cannot do. Workshops following this model teach parents to base their at-home practices on how literacy is taught in the classroom and imply that parents have literacy gaps in need of intervention. This perspective toward parent learning lacks inclusive approaches that consider today’s family portrait and fails to make programs “culturally relevant for participants of varied backgrounds” (De-Bruin-Parecki, 2009, p. 385). Opposite this perspective is an asset-based lens that embraces families’ strengths and experiences as valuable tools for working with parents.

This article argues for a new approach to family literacy workshops that build home-school communication with a culturally responsive, asset-based lens, and that incorporates parent feedback into the structure of the workshops themselves. I developed a theoretical framework—Family Literacy with Adult Interactive Roles (FLAIR)—for parent workshops that incorporate parents’ own stories about their children’s home literacy experiences, practices, cultures, and languages. The workshop program is based on the principle that educators must position themselves as learners by listening to families to discover their home literacy practices in a reciprocal fashion (Compton-Lilly & Lewis Ellison, 2019). In this program, home literacy practices are honored as valuable literacy experiences even if they do not resemble traditional at-school experiences, avoiding the pitfalls of the workshops that promote school-like practices in the home. Additionally, by drawing on families’ funds of knowledge, educators can challenge the deficit notions of language and literacy and honor their students’ home literacy practices by strategically connecting them with school literacy learning. In this article, I share some of the program’s setting-based moves, workshop activities, and recommendations for future exploration and replication. Although FLAIR was implemented at the K–3 levels, it can be replicated to meet the needs of students in grades K–5.

Reflecting on Current Parent Workshop Learning Practices

As a district literacy specialist in charge of creating and leading family literacy programs, I decided to examine my current practices and models to facilitate an asset-based approach to parent workshop learning that positions parents as active participants while integrating each family’s home literacy environment (HLE), structure, language, and culture. In doing so, I reviewed my family literacy approach, where I held my existing practices and models. Through careful examination and reflection, I realized my approach to parent workshop learning was

outdated. Consequently, I set out to build a new approach to family literacy that included culturally relevant items that honored families' funds of knowledge. First, I eliminated the strategy workshop approaches I created based on a transmission-of-school-practices model that implied parents should be practicing literacy at home the same way their children experience literacy at school. Examples of my school-based strategy workshops implemented in the past, included *Strategies to Build Your Child's Fluency*, *Reading Comprehension Activities for Home*, *Teach your Child to Retell a Story*, or *Five Simple Ways to Help Your Child When They are Stuck on a Word* (Auerbach, 1989).

Next, I developed a theoretical framework—FLAIR—for family literacy as a guide for a new program design for parent workshops. Following an equitable approach that included families' funds of knowledge was my priority in developing my framework. I was committed to building a framework that celebrated families' diverse and complex social practices in their home literacy environments (HLEs). A meta-analysis conducted by Anderson et al. (2017) found that “bilingual family literacy programmes can significantly contribute to children's early literacy development and encourage families' maintenance of their home language” (p. 651–652), and so advocating for an effective and inclusive home literacy practice for bilingual families was imperative. I selected parent-child interactive reading which Saracho (2017) describes as a shared activity where “parents read the text, explain the pictures, label objects, give details about events, ask questions, and link the story to the children's life experiences” (2017, p. 555). I wanted parents to learn how to provide “the context for rich conversations between a child and an adult” with “interactions [that] frequently go beyond the text of the story and invite dialogue between the adult and the child” (Wasik & Bond, 2001, p. 243) no matter what language was spoken in the home.

The Power of the Parent-Child Interactive Read Aloud

With a goal of honoring families' home literacy practices and connecting those practices to school literacy learning, my framework embraced parent-child reading interactions in place of a school-based strategy and skills approach that can be utilized in grades K–5. The importance of family literacy and teaching parents strategies for engaging in quality interactive reading experiences with children emerged from the premise that the parent is considered the child's first and most important teacher (DeBruin-Parecki, 2009). Additionally, Saracho (2017) stressed the importance for parents and other family members to participate in storybook reading when she highlighted several positive outcomes:

The children learn to recognize the structure of stories, language in the stories, and nature of reading behavior. The family member also engages the children in dialogue about the book before, during, and/or after the actual reading of the story. Such literacy experience fosters the children's language and literacy development; develops their vocabulary; enhances the probabilities of the children's success in school-based literacy instruction; and boosts the children's reading achievement, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. (p. 564)

Several studies also suggested that “shared book reading can have an effect on general language skills, but more specific activities, such as teaching letter names, letter sounds, or printing” (Stephenson et al., 2008, p. 26) support the development of early foundational reading skills. Saracho (2017) confirmed that “shared storybook reading helps preschool children to acquire receptive and expressive language abilities and emerging early literacy skills” (p. 555). Wasik and Bond (2001) emphasized that through parent-child interactive reading, “children learn vocabulary that they may not necessarily encounter in daily conversations and learn about conventions of print and the syntactic structure of language” (p. 243). Wasik and Bond (2001) further supported that parent-child interactive reading “provides the context for rich conversations between a child and an adult” (p. 243).

Equally important, DeBruin-Parecki (2007) stated that shared reading is “instrumental in promoting the development of the reading skills and motivational factors needed to become an effective reader” (p. 7). The National Early Literacy Panel (2008) recommended that parents read books with their young children interactively based on solid evidence that there is an “association between shared book reading and children’s oral language outcomes, including vocabulary performance” (Han & Neuhauser-Pritchett, 2014, p. 55). Furthermore, Sim and Berthelsen (2014) captured the importance of language development through shared book reading when they stated that it “involves a social and interactive context in which there is a transmission of literacy knowledge from the adult to the child” (p. 50). A study with second-language learners examined shared reading based on the principle of “two-way engagement,” where parent-child reading interactions in their native language resulted in high levels of heritage language development (Li & Fleer, 2015). This study is critical in supporting interactive reading as an effective strategy for teaching families from diverse language backgrounds.

For the final step, I eliminated the use of any school-based academic vocabulary associated with parent-child interactive reading. Replacing this one-directional teacher-student language was a way to eliminate strategies common to the transmission-of-school-practices model. For example, I replaced teacher academic vocabulary—making predictions, recalling information from a story, retelling a story, using visual cues, and identifying the main idea—with a universal language that followed a schematic approach. Consequently, parents and teachers could share a common universal language for communicating with each other and their children, following an extension-of-the-home model. The universal language included setting-based actions that described the physical and language-based moves parents could apply at home. See Tables 4 and 5 for examples. These setting-based moves for promoting dialogical parent-child reading experiences are the foundation of FLAIR.

Parent Learning Based on Theory and Research

The theoretical framework FLAIR merges the sociocultural and positioning theories in a complementary fashion. This approach supports learning and positive outcomes for both parent and child and meets the needs of today’s diverse families.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) lays the groundwork in family literacy for how parent-child interactions influence learning in the HLE (Burgess et al., 2002). It stresses that learning develops based on interactions between people and the culture in which they live. Most importantly, it emphasizes that learning is a social process and plays an integral role in building successful, collaborative relationships between teachers and parents. When applying sociocultural theory to parent-child workshops, each family—children and parent(s)—has its family traditions and culture. When parents attend a parent-child workshop, they 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). Each family uses these cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information to learn and adapt to the culture in which they live. Consequently, for parent-child workshop learning to take place and transfer into the HLE, program design must contain strategically-planned activities that include families’ language, outings, values, traditions, occupations, and household chores. This inclusive approach builds mutual interactions that continue after the workshop ends and grow from one workshop to the next.

The sociocultural theory also applies to how adult learners interact in educational settings with or without their funds of knowledge. For example, Moll et al. (1992) stressed that program designers must ask, “Am I providing families access to their family toolbox during parent-child workshops?” To answer this question, family literacy program developers must reflect on how parents are positioned during parent workshop learning and, based on this positioning, consider if learning is transferring into the HLE.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory describes the perspective parents take and the positions in which they are placed during parent-child workshop learning experiences (Harre, 2012). Positioning theory emerges from the work of Langenhove and Harre (1998), who described positioning as “the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts” (p. 16), which they characterized as “a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role” (p. 15). For Harre et al. (2009), positioning is the result of “the actions that people carry out, including speech acts, partly determined by the then and there positions of the actors” (p. 8). Therefore, during parent-child workshops, “rights and duties are distributed among people [parents and teachers] in changing patterns as they engage in performing particular kinds of actions” (Harre et al., 2009, p. 5). Langenhove and Harre (1998) referred to this relationship as the “Position/Act-action/Storyline Triad” (p. 16). When applying positioning theory’s triad to parent-child workshops, the position between parents and educators depends “on a simple distinction between a person’s (or a group’s) powers and the vulnerabilities of another person or group of persons” (Harre, 2012, p. 197). In the second part of the triad, an action is a “meaningful, intended performance (speech or gesture), whereas an act is the social meaning of an action” (Harre, 2012, p. 198). Last, the positions of storylines are “predetermined, and there are procedures by which they come to be occupied by specific actors” (Harre, 2012, p. 198).

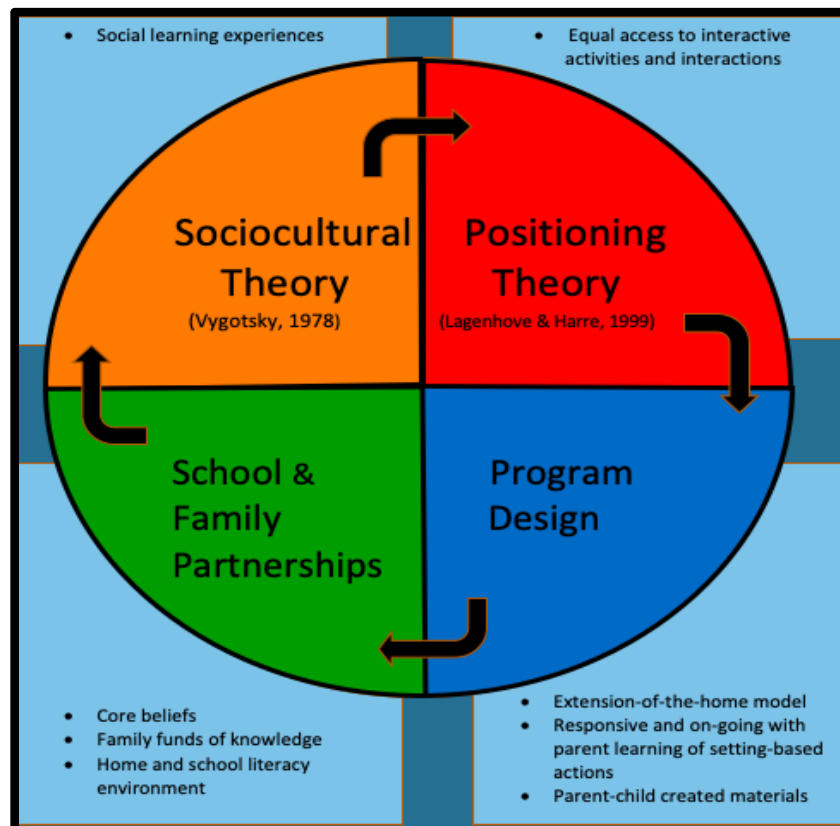
How educators position parents as participants during parent-child workshops determines access to parents' toolboxes and affects how parents experience interpersonal encounters, impacting the learning process. Current workshop models ask parents to take the submissive role of a student where "schools seek to change families or to teach families that which they lack or what others assume they lack" (Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006). This deficit perspective fails to develop workshops with interactive activities that allow parents to position themselves as active participants while incorporating their family's funds of knowledge.

FLAIR: A Theoretical Framework for Program Design

Parent positioning in the extension-of-the-home model results in various roles that empower parent voice, choice, participation, and decision-making (Handel, 1992). As shown in Figure 1, essential elements of FLAIR's framework include ongoing and responsive planning, equal partnerships between parents and teachers, core beliefs that define family literacy (Henderson et al., 2007), and the incorporation of families' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). In addition, the framework includes nontraditional methods of seeking parent information (Hoffman, 1995) and materials created by participants that match the HLE and culture (Janes & Kermani, 2001).

Figure 1

FLAIR: A Theoretical Framework for the Program Design and Implementation of Parent Workshops.



Empowering Parent Learning Through Practice

A new family literacy approach must consist of activities and best practices that position parents as active participants—not students—where they develop interactive reading strategies through creating personalized reading materials. The following is a list of action steps for empowering parent learning based on the theoretical framework FLAIR.

1. ***Establish parents as equal partners in the learning process.*** Share family literacy core beliefs that build a sense of community and honor families' funds of knowledge.
2. ***Establish the use of responsive and ongoing methods to support parent learning.*** Parents use entrance slips to share their learning, concerns, and questions while allowing workshop presenters to respond to parents' needs.
3. ***Provide parents opportunities to participate in conversations that value their perspective, voice, and home literacy practices and experiences.*** Parents take opportunities to share their thoughts with partners, small groups, and the group as a whole.
4. ***Identify the parents of English Learner (EL) students before the workshop and plan accordingly to meet their needs.*** This step may involve including a bilingual teacher who can act as a translator or pairing up parents who speak the same language. Also, the bilingual teacher can translate parent workshop talking points and pattern books ahead of time in the language of attending parents of EL students.

Table 1 is an example of the parent workshop structure that provides opportunities for positioning parents as active participants.

Table 1

Parent Workshop Structure

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Sharing and Checking-In: Family Literacy Core Beliefs
5 minutes	Honoring Parents' Voices: Parent Entrance Slips
10 minutes	Reflecting on Home Literacy Experiences and Learning: Think-Pair-Share Strategy
20 minutes	Introducing Physical and Language-Based Moves with a Mentor Text
20 minutes	Creating Parent-made Books for Attempting Physical- and Language-based Moves at Home with Children, Based on a Mentor Text

Nurturing a Community of Parent Learners

During the pre-planning phase, determine the grade or grade levels your parent workshops will target and invite parents to attend. A full parent roster is just the beginning of your community building. Your next step is to consider your prospective participants as your parent workshop *community*—a group of diverse parents who will come together to share and explore ways to strengthen reading at home with their children following an asset-based approach.

Establishing a culture that supports an understanding between home and school literacy experiences is essential to building a community of learners. The first step to building a workshop community involves sharing your school or district's core beliefs for family literacy. Core beliefs should honor families and may challenge assumptions teachers hold about parent learning. Mapp (2017) provides four core beliefs that can be shared with the community for building partnerships during parent workshops:

1. *All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.*
2. *All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.*
3. *Families and school staff are equal partners.*
4. *The responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships among school, home, and community rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders (p. 20).*

By building a community for parent learning, parents will be comfortable reaching out, asking for help, and sharing stories about their HLEs. For example, one parent's entrance slip shared her personal struggles with helping her beginning reader in the HLE:

Thank you so much for hosting a workshop. As you can tell, I'm a first-time mom who knows nothing about the beginning stages of the reading process. I think what you are doing is awesome because for the past several months, I have been struggling with what to do at home with my beginning reader, and I have struggled finding support with the process. I look forward to the workshops. I will try to be patient for the next few months.

Honoring Parent Perspectives and Remaining Responsive

The framework is designed to use responsive and ongoing approaches for meeting parents' needs by incorporating check-in points during workshops in the form of parent entrance slips. These check-in approaches provide formative and summative feedback, allowing facilitators to take responsive action that meets the needs of the participants (Janes & Kermani, 2001). Also, the prompts on these entrance slips help the families reflect on their learning during the workshop as well as their experiences reading with their children in the HLE.

At the beginning of each workshop, provide parents with an entrance slip that asks them to reflect on what they learned at the previous workshop and describe how they applied their new learning in the HLE with their children. See Table 2 for examples of entrance slip prompts.

Table 2

Parent Entrance Slip Prompts

Prompts for Physical- and Language-Based Moves
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write about one physical-based move you learned at a previous workshop. Was it helpful? Why? Describe the reading experience.• Write about one lingering question you have for attempting physical-based moves at home. Do you still need help in this area? What do you need help with?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write about one language-based move you learned at a previous workshop. Was it helpful? Why? Describe the reading experience.• Write about one lingering question you have for attempting language-based moves at home. Do you still need help in this area? What do you need help with?

Entrance slips send the message to parents that the school supports and values participants' voices and recognizes participants' experiences and knowledge from each HLE. Also, parent entrance slips serve as valuable evidence for workshop planners to determine if parent learning has transferred into the HLE and whether parents would benefit from more practice with their setting-based actions. This evidence allows workshop planners to reflect on parent learning and be responsive to their needs for future workshop learning.

Talk, Talk, and More Talk

Next, create opportunities for parents to participate in a cooperative learning technique—think-pair-share—that encourages individual and more extensive group participation and collaborative conversations. Ask parents to reflect on a question based on the previous workshop's learning and discuss it with other parents. See Table 3 for examples of parent reflection questions. Randomly pair up parents and ask them to exchange and share their thoughts. Following the think-pair-share experience, parents share their ideas with the entire group, leading to a large group discussion facilitated by workshop leaders.

Table 3

Think-Pair-Share Parent Reflection Questions

Think-Pair-Share Parent Reflection Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where is your special place to read with your child? Why?• Who holds the book and turns the pages? Why?• How do you compliment your child?• How much time do you spend reading with your child at home daily?• Who is (are) your child's reading role model(s)?• What are your child's favorite books? Why?

Introducing Physical-Based Moves for Interactive Reading with a Mentor Text

For parents to have productive parent-child interactive reading experiences, they must first learn the physical-based moves involved in the experience and have plenty of opportunities to attempt and practice these moves at home with their children. These physical-based moves, listed in Table 4, are the foundation of the reading experience and set the stage for highly-interactive dialogical experiences about a book. Because physical-based moves are an essential precursor to the parent-child reading experience, your first parent workshop should focus on modeling these moves for parents.

When modeling physical-based moves for parents to attempt with their children, using a mentor text that follows a short, rhythmic, and predictable pattern is recommended. See Table 4 for mentor text suggestions for grades K–2 and 3–5. Predictable, patterned mentor texts make it easy for a child of any age to hold the book and turn the pages while the parent points to the words and reads aloud. By attempting physical-based moves, parents indirectly expose their children to early literacy concepts and print conventions such as left-to-right directionality, return sweep, word-by-word matching, concept of word, turning the pages, and letter-sound relationships. During the first workshop, the presenter read the text *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. while modeling physical-based moves for parents to see in action.

Table 4*Physical-Based Moves and Suggested Mentor Texts*

Getting the Home Literacy Environment Ready for Reading With Physical-Based Moves
<p>Physical-based Moves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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)
<p>Suggested Mentor Texts for Students Grades K–2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i> by Bill Martin Jr. <i>Oso pardo, oso pardo, ¿qué ves ahí?</i> (Spanish version). • <i>Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?</i> by Bill Martin Jr. <i>Oso polar, oso polar, ¿qué es ese ruido?</i> (Spanish version) • <i>I Like Me!</i> by Nancy Carlson • <i>I Went Walking</i> by Sue Williams • <i>Please, Baby, Please</i> by Spike Lee & Tonya Lewis • <i>Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace</i> by Shelley Moore Thomas • <i>The Family Book</i> by Todd Parr • <i>It's Okay to Be Different</i> by Todd Parr • <i>The Kindness Book</i> by Todd Parr <p>Suggested Mentor Texts for Students Grades 3–5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Tall Tales to Read Together</i> by Mary Ann Hoberman • <i>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together</i> • <i>The Napping House</i> by Audrey Wood <i>La casa adormecida</i> by Audrey Wood (Spanish version) • <i>Something from Nothing</i> by Phoebe Gilman

Following the modeling of physical-based moves, parents then participated in a bookmaking activity where they created a book to bring home and read with their child based on *Brown Bear's* book pattern. Parents personalized their books by including their family's funds of knowledge, language, and children's interests and possessions. Before making their books, parents brainstormed a list of their child's favorite items, pets, hobbies, etc., to include in their books. Parents then added these items by writing them in a pre-made book that included the sentence frames based on the book's pattern. Parents brought home their completed books to read and illustrate with their children while attempting their newly learned physical-based

moves. See Figure 2 for an example of one parent's book creation based on *Brown Bear's* book pattern.

Figure 2

Example of a parent-created book based on Brown Bear's Book Pattern

<div><p><u>Kamal P.</u>, <u>Kamal P.</u>, What Do You See?</p><p>By <u>Dad</u></p></div>	<div><p><u>Kamal</u>, <u>Kamal</u>, What do you see?</p><p>I see a <u>green</u> <u>Yoda</u> looking at me.</p></div>
<div><p><u>Green Yoda</u>, <u>Green Yoda</u>, What do you see?</p><p>I see a <u>Pokemon</u> looking at me.</p></div>	<div><p><u>Pokemon</u>, <u>Pokemon</u>, What do you see?</p><p>I see a <u>black</u> <u>dog</u> looking at me.</p></div>

Evidence of Parent Learning Based on Entrance Slip Feedback

Parent entrance slips are an integral part of the framework and provide evidence of parent learning before, during, and after each workshop. For instance, parents' stories in these entrance slips described their experiences with their children in their HLEs, showing how they internalized the physical- and language-based moves modeled at workshops by successfully attempting them at home with their children.

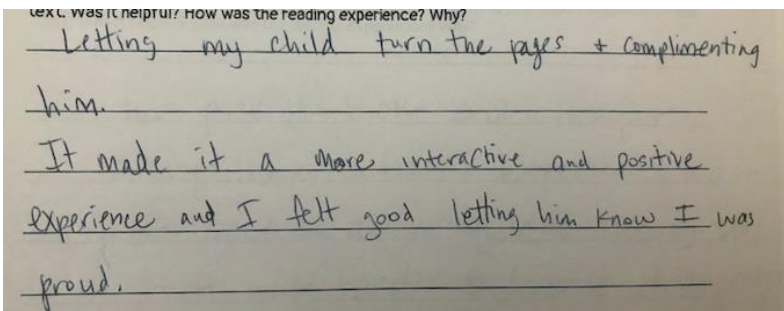
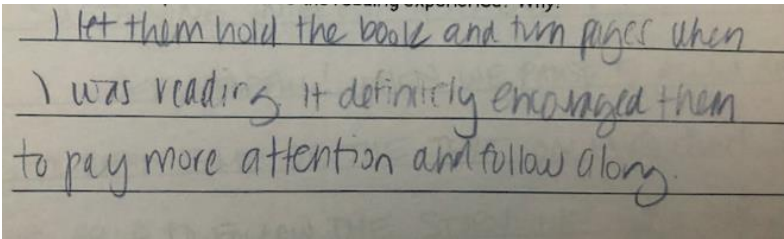
These explanations also demonstrated parents' awareness of their children's learning or positive changes in their children's reading behaviors due to their moves. These findings support the claim that the theoretical framework results in two crucial parent-child learning outcomes. First, parents internalize and transfer physical- and language-based moves in the HLE following parent workshop learning. Second, parents identify and articulate awareness of their children's learning or changes in their children's reading behaviors based on their attempts. Figure 3 shares examples of parent entrance slip responses for attempting physical-based moves in the HLE with their children.

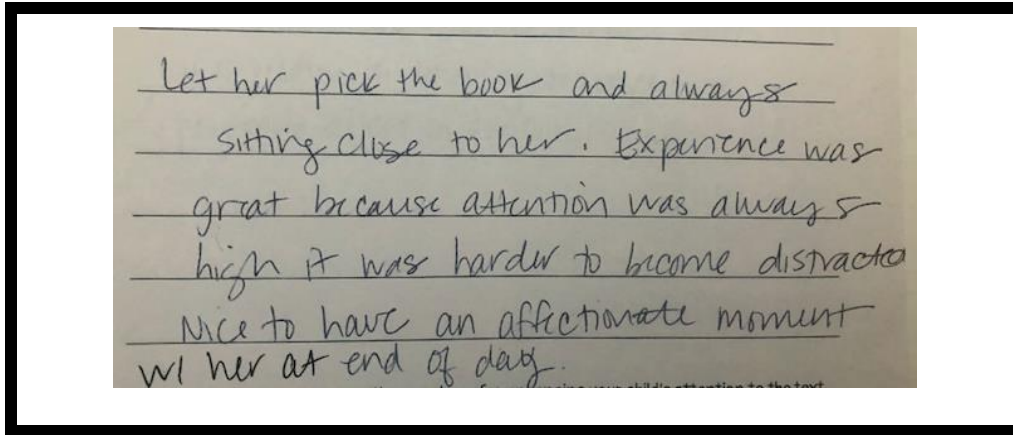
Additionally, entrance slips provided valuable feedback to the workshop planner. Entrance slips described the value parents found in the interactive workshop activities that positioned them as active participants, especially with creating personalized reading material based on the different mentor texts to bring home to share with their children.

Parent comments helped the workshop planner better understand the difference in outcomes between teaching parents isolated reading strategies like how they are taught in school and teaching parents valuable setting-based actions that result in enhanced interactive reading experiences in the home.

Figure 3

Entrance Slip Prompt for Physical-Based Moves and Parent Responses

Entrance Slip Prompt and Parent Responses
Write about one physical-based move you attempted to get your home ready for interactive reading. Was it helpful? How was the reading experience? Why?





Introducing Language-Based Moves with a Mentor Text

Once parents are comfortable establishing physical-based moves at home, the next parent workshop can focus on language-based actions that enhance the interactive reading experience. For modeling language-based moves, the framework principles promote the use of a mentor text with a rich storyline that allows for deep discussion between parent and child. Students in grades K–5 can enjoy mentor texts listed in Table 5. For example, using the mentor text *Alma And How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal, the workshop presenter modeled the language-based moves listed in Table 5. Parents were then given a blank book to write a story about how their child got their name. See Figure 4 for examples of blank book covers for the parent story. Parents brought home their books to read to their children while attempting their newly learned language-based moves.

Table 5

Language-Based Moves and Mentor Text

Talking with my Child While Reading Using Language-Based Moves
<p>Language-Based Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complimenting my child while reading 2. Adjusting my language to match the characters' voices 3. Pointing to pictures and words while reading out loud and discussing the meaning 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
<p>Suggested Mentor Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Alma And How She Got Her Name</i> by Juana Martinez-Neal <i>Alma y cómo obtuvo su nombre</i> (Spanish version)

- *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg
- *Carmela Full of Wishes*, by Matt de la Pena
Los deseos de Carmela (Spanish version)
- *Each Kindness*, by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Enemy Pie*, by Derek Munson
- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard
- *Home is a Window*, by Stephanie Ledyard
- *Saturday*, by Oge Mora
Sabado (Spanish version)
- *The Day You Begin*, by Jacqueline Woodson
El día En que descubres quién eres (Spanish version)
- *The Invisible Boy*, by Trudy Ludwig
- *The Most Magnificent Thing*, by Ashley Spires

Figure 4

Example Blank Book Covers of Parent Story About Their Child's Name

<div data-bbox="248 1066 748 1341"> <p>_____ and How He Got His Name</p> <p>By _____</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="876 1066 1354 1329"> <p>_____ and How She Got Her Name</p> <p>By _____</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="258 1484 743 1753"> <p>_____ and How They Got Their Name</p> <p>By _____</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="878 1484 1351 1747"> <p>_____ y como obtuvo su nombre</p> <p>Por _____</p> </div>

Recommendations for Planning New Approaches to Family Literacy

The following is a list of recommendations for the pre-planning phase of a workshop based on FLAIR:

1. ***Build a family literacy leadership team.*** Family literacy cannot be an endeavor led by just a few individuals. Too often, the responsibility of planning parent workshops is left to one or two persons—the school librarian or the reading specialist. Making family literacy a priority requires a team of individuals—a family literacy leadership team—devoted to creating a school culture whose purpose is to create a clear vision statement, core beliefs, and expectations that the entire school community—teachers, administrators, specialists, and parents—follow and experience.
2. ***Understand and commit to following an asset-based approach.*** Parent Learning must honor families' funds of knowledge—language, family values and traditions, friends and family, family outings, household chores, favorite television shows, and family occupations. The parent-created books in Figures 2 and 4 are two examples of workshop exercises that honor families' funds of knowledge. Parent learning should also empower parent voice, choice, participation, and decision-making. Be cautious of including practices and activities that position parents from a deficit perspective.
3. ***Identify a family literacy model based on parent-learning outcomes.*** It is imperative that the type of family literacy workshop model selected is based on the parent learning outcomes you hope to accomplish in your community. Family literacy workshops vary significantly among researchers, administrators, teachers, and families. For this reason, there are a plethora of categories that family literacy programs fall within, such as (a) home-school partnership programs, (b) intergenerational literacy programs, (c) family literacy nights, (d) parent workshops that focus on parent-child interactions, and (e) parent workshops for English Learners. Determine parent learning outcomes and then select a model that matches your outcomes.

Conclusion

It is now more important than ever to prioritize family literacy in today's schools and families' homes. Literacy specialists, teachers, librarians, administrators, and parents should solidify family literacy frameworks and define roles for implementation. There must be a sense of urgency to develop strong program models where family literacy is a two-way partnership. Schools must build on each family's strengths, HLE, family structure, language, and culture to create meaningful interactions between home and school. Responsive family literacy can no longer afford to be an afterthought at the elementary grade levels, and it must become an essential part of elementary curriculums. FLAIR—Family Literacy with Adult Interactive Roles— is a valuable tool for ensuring that responsive family literacy is an essential part of elementary curriculums.

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SUPPORTING FIRST VENTURES IN LABOR-BASED GRADING

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Abstract

Writing studies scholar Asao Inoue (2019) has made a forceful case for an antiracist assessment model, labor-based grading. Rather than evaluating students according to a single standard, which privileges native speakers of White Mainstream English, in this system, instructors grade students according to the labor they have completed. This article builds on Inoue's work by offering the perspective of a first-year writing program working to implement labor-based grading for the first time. The article shows how, by forming a collective, faculty can find the courage to act on their antiracist principles by adopting labor-based grading. After presenting the key elements of labor-based grading, the article provides theoretical context for Inoue's system by drawing on April Baker-Bell's (2020) analysis of a range of language pedagogies. The paper leads readers through the stages our group went through as we developed our assessment ecologies and offers examples of grading contracts. After offering four key recommendations for implementing labor-based grading, the article concludes by suggesting that courage, like resilience, is a quality that develops in community.

Supporting First Ventures in Labor-Based Grading

Introduction: "I'm Just Not Ready"

In his 2019 Conference on College Communication and Composition (CCCC) Chair's Address, Asao Inoue (2019a) spoke first to colleagues of color, assuring them: "We will break the steel cage of White supremacy, of White racial bias, of the many bars, like the physical bars of the jails and prisons that house the 2.3 million US inmates, 67 percent of which are our brothers and sisters of color" (p. 353). Only after this revolutionary promise, Inoue turned to white audience members, calling on them to stop using white standards of language to assess their students. At the heart of his argument is the idea that judging and imposing hierarchies, as we do with standard grading practices, is a form of violence; judging in this way serves racism, which leads to killing. He calls on us to stop delaying, to act on our professed values: to institute antiracist assessment practices in our classrooms.

In perhaps the most galvanizing passage in the address, Inoue (2019a) spoke directly to white colleagues who professed antiracist principles, but had not yet put these principles into action in their classrooms:

Our decisions NOT to build more radical, antiracist, and anti-White language supremacist assessment ecologies in our classrooms often are based on our own selfish sense of comfort, selfish sense of not being ready to share our gardens. I cannot tell you how many times I've heard writing teachers, ones who are conscientious, critical, and experienced, say to me, "I'm just not ready . . . I don't feel comfortable yet, maybe next semester." What a blind sense of privilege! What a lack of compassion—if compassion is more than feeling empathy, but a doing of something, a suffering *with* others. (p. 366)

Sitting in the audience that day, I recognized myself in Inoue's words: my own excuses for not changing my assessment practices. Fortunately, I was sitting with a group of colleagues who had similar moments of self-recognition; together, we set in motion the process that would eventually lead to implementing Inoue's anti-racist assessment model in our classrooms.

This paper addresses the questions: How can program leaders support and encourage faculty who agree with the principles of anti-racist grading, but don't feel "ready" to implement it? How can instructors support one another in adopting this practice? Our response was to create a Labor-Based Grading Study Group. The Labor-Based Grading Study Group was organized as a peer group within the University Writing Program to read key scholarship on the use of labor-based grading practices in first-year writing, peer review course materials, and make sure that faculty wishing to implement such assessment practices are rooting them in research-based pedagogy. In this article, I build on Inoue's work by offering the perspective of a program working to implement the system for the first time.

After laying out some basic elements of labor-based grading, I provide context for Inoue's system, drawing on work by April Baker-Bell (2020) on a range of language pedagogies. I go on to describe the stages our study group went through as we developed labor-based grading models appropriate to individual sections of first-year writing. Finally, I discuss some notable aspects of individual grading contracts from our group.

I show how, by forming a collective, faculty can act upon their antiracist principles, overcoming the hesitation they may feel in adopting a new system. And this circles back to principles: the group also becomes a forum for developing the *program's* collective antiracist agenda. The agenda, as Inoue puts it in his introduction to *Performing Antiracist Pedagogies* (Condon & Young, 2016), is "the articulated dream, the vision, the goal"(p. xix). The agenda can then propel further changes in classroom ecologies.

Key Elements of Labor-Based Grading

Inoue's labor-based grading system is founded on the premise that when we evaluate students with diverse literacies according to a single standard, we are reinforcing "White language supremacy," in Inoue's terms (2019a). Rather than measuring students against a standard, Inoue advocates a system that focuses on the labor students perform, including: reading, drafting, responding, and revising. Labor-based grading relies upon a grading contract, which can be negotiated between students and teacher, about how much labor a student will complete to earn a particular grade at the end of the semester. The grade at the end of the term will depend, not on the perceived quality of the students' work, but on whether the work was completed on time and

“in the spirit it was asked”(Inoue, 2019b, p. 333). This means that the entire range of grades is accessible to all students, not only those who enter with the advantage of being native speakers of so-called “standard academic English.”¹

Inoue’s grading contract lays out a baseline set of requirements, including written assignments and class participation. According to Inoue’s grading contract, which he provides in his 2019 book, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts*, the baseline grade for completing all the expected labor is a B; students may choose to do additional labor in order to raise the grade above that baseline. This additional labor may include longer projects, extra responses to peers, or a lesson for the class. No grades are assigned to individual assignments, and the grade at the end of the term depends on whether the student completed the work and participated consistently.

Following Inoue’s system, I offer students a contract that addresses them as members of a writing community and explains the reasoning behind this unfamiliar approach. For Inoue, this means asking students to imagine they are taking his class in a context other than the university, as if they are coming to his home for a course in yoga or cooking. In that scenario, they would not receive a grade, but would still be motivated to learn. They would receive feedback and strive for improvement, without expecting a grade.

While this may sound like a radical departure from conventional assessment measures, Inoue’s approach is entirely in keeping with current thinking in the field. *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2011) foregrounds eight habits of mind essential for success in college writing (p. 4), including curiosity, openness, and—closest to Inoue’s central value—persistence. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) adopted a similar document, *The Framework for Information Literacy* (ACRL, 2015). Like the *Framework for Success*, the ACRL’s information literacy guidelines foreground “frames” or “concepts central to information literacy,” rather than demonstrations of competency (ACRL, 2015, p. 11). That is, the major professional organizations for teachers of writing and research endorse Inoue’s approach of focusing on habits of mind and experiences, rather than outcomes. By focusing on students’ dispositions and on the concepts that shape their thinking, we can move away from the narrow, often punitive focus on “standard academic English.”

Moreover, the community of college writing teachers has long supported the idea that we should welcome multiple Englishes into our classrooms. The foundational statement, “Students’ Right To Their Own Language,” asserts the equal value of all dialects (Conference on College Composition and Communication [CCCC], 1974). CCCC’s chair Vershawn Ashanti Young distributed a rejoinder to the earlier statement, “This Ain’t Another Statement! This Is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice” (CCCC, 2020). This “DEMAND” harkens back to the 1974 resolution, which as Young notes, was “a response to the Black Freedom Movements and new research on Black Language of the time” (CCCC, 2020, para. 2). At the same time, the new Demand not only articulates the principles, as the 1974 statement did, but presents *strategies* for

¹ Carillo (2021) and Kryger and Zimmerman (2020) have pointed out that labor-based grading may privilege neurotypical students and place neurodivergent students at a disadvantage by assuming that the time and labor involved in tasks is equal for everyone. These critics advocate for integrating “crip time” into labor-based grading practices, making deadlines more flexible.

meeting these demands in the classroom and the profession as a whole. Through its urgency and its insistence on praxis, the Demand implicitly critiques the restraint of the earlier resolution.

The Context of Labor-Based Grading: Positions on Language Pedagogy

Inoue's (2019b) assessment model responds to an ongoing, urgent conversation about language pedagogies and how best to prepare students for college and workplace writing.

Many of us imagine a situation like this: a young African-American woman, Isabel, applies for a job as a paralegal at a law firm. She has recently graduated from your university (you remember her as a strong student) and is looking towards law school. She impresses the white interviewer by presenting herself professionally and answering challenging questions confidently. She does so in code-meshed language, using White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020) which she speaks fluently, but also Black Language. In spite of her strong qualities, the interviewer judges Isabel to be less suited to the job than a white applicant because of her use of Black Language. She doesn't get the position.

This is the scenario that preoccupies educators and divides us. As writing teachers, what is our responsibility to Isabel? To the interviewer? Isabel's dilemma reflects our concerns about how to approach language pedagogy and whether we should continue to privilege so-called "standard English." April Baker-Bell (2020) prefers the term "White Mainstream English" because, as Rosina Lippi-Green (2012) has argued, there is no such thing as "standard English," only multiple forms of English, all equally valid. In her 2020 study *Linguistic Justice*, Baker-Bell offers a language pedagogy for Black students, which enables them to critique White Mainstream English and to value Black Language. Baker-Bell (2020) differentiates among three approaches to language pedagogy for Black students:

- Eradicationist Language Pedagogies "work to eradicate Black Language from Black students' linguistic repertoires and replace it with White Mainstream English" (p. 28).
- Respectability Language Pedagogies acknowledge Black Language "as a language that should be validated, affirmed, and respected. However, the end goal of this approach is simply to use Black Language as a bridge to learn White Mainstream English" (p. 28).
- Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, which Baker-Bell develops in her book, supports students' use of Black Language and enables them to "critically interrogate white linguistic hegemony and Anti-Black Linguistic Racism" (p. 28).

The conservative position, which Baker-Bell (2020) identifies as "eradicationist" (p. 28), holds that we should teach our students only "standard English," since any other form of language is regarded as inferior or won't be accepted in most academic or professional contexts. Those of us who have worked as writing program administrators have heard professors across the disciplines articulate this position. But is not exclusively the attitude of white college professors; in fact, it is the belief initially held by Black students and teachers in the Detroit high school where Baker-Bell conducted her study.

This conservative position is a default stance in the culture at large, as we are likely to be reminded each time we tell a stranger that we teach writing or English: in response, our airplane companion or new café acquaintance almost invariably bemoans the deterioration of students' grammar. However, it's worth noting that advocates of eradicationist pedagogy don't always believe that White Mainstream English is inherently superior to other forms of English; rather, that this is the only form of English that will be accepted at gatekeeping points, such as college applications or job interviews.

According to this position, the reality for Isabel is that the interviewer privileges candidates who speak White Mainstream English, so the young woman applying for the job excluded herself when she used Black Language; if she had spoken exclusively White Mainstream English, then she might have gotten the job. According to the eradicationist position, it is our responsibility as educators to teach Isabel to eschew Black Language in favor of White Mainstream English. We would discourage her from code-meshing, whether deliberately or not, because only White Mainstream English would be considered acceptable in a job interview.

The second category, which Baker-Bell (2020) terms "Respectability Language Pedagogies" (p. 28), includes educators who hold a more liberal or moderate position: they argue that we can teach students to value their own languages, but also provide them with mastery of White Mainstream English for situations when it is appropriate. Those who stand for Respectability Language Pedagogies take as a fundamental assumption that students will earn respect if they can speak and write in White Mainstream English—in fact, that the better they can embody this standard, the more respect they will earn.

In a forceful and moving articulation of this middle position, Lisa Delpit (1988) lays out the case for teaching Black students "the codes of power" (p. 283), which include White Mainstream English. In Delpit's experience, Black parents want their children to be initiated into the culture of power, but they have been consistently shut out of conversations about educational approaches. While Black parents see explicit instruction in cultural codes as empowering, progressive educators tend to see such instruction as repressive; progressive teachers instead promote children's "right to their own language" (Delpit, 1988, p. 291). Speaking from her perspective as a Black educator, Delpit advocates that children be taught to respect and value their heritage languages, but also to learn the skills of speech and writing that can enable them to "play the game" (p. 292) of acquiring power. Rather than pretending her students don't need White Mainstream English, Delpit chooses to be direct, to "tell them that their language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political power game that is being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are certain games they too must play" (p. 292). This is not how she *wants* things to be, Delpit insists, but simply how things *are*.

Delpit (2012) echoes this position in a more recent work, arguing that Black students from lower-income backgrounds need explicit instruction in navigating a world dominated by the white middle class: "Basic skills"—knowledge of the strategies and conventions of middle-class cultural capital—can and must definitely be taught, but are best taught and learned within the context of meaningful, engaging instruction" (Delpit, 2012, p. 55). In other words, Delpit is not recommending that teachers and students slog through endless grammar worksheets. She

suggests, rather, that Black students from lower-income families need a much broader range of cultural knowledge: strategies for playing the “game.” According to this position, we would teach Isabel to value Black Language, but to be aware of the rules of the game in an interview situation and to refrain from using it. We would accept the current reality that the interviewer will privilege White Mainstream English, and our responsibility as educators would be both to make Isabel aware of the rules of the interview-game and to ensure that she is fluent in the dominant language.

Another prominent Black educator, Ron Ferguson (as cited in Bergner, 2020), recently made use of the “game” analogy for acquisition of power. An economist and the director of Harvard’s Achievement Gap Initiative, Ferguson advocates teaching “competitive prowess” (quoted in Bergner, 2020, p. 50). Ferguson implies that his training as an economist has led him, like Delpit, to assume the liberal middle position in Baker-Bell’s (2020) schema, rather than the more radical stance of rejecting “conventional standards and qualifications” (quoted in Bergner, 2020, p. 50). Ferguson observes: “When the same group of people keeps winning over and over again, it’s like the game must be rigged” (quoted in Bergner, 2020, p. 50). And while he concedes that “the game” (our economic and political system) is unfairly rigged in favor of white players, Ferguson’s strategy for closing the education gap is not to change the game, but to ask how students of color can play more skillfully: “I tend to go more quickly to the question of how we get prepared better to just play the game” (quoted in Bergner, 2020, p. 50). Like Delpit, Ferguson believes that Black students can, with the right training, play the rigged game and win.

This is the assumption that more radical educators reject (Baker-Bell, 2020; Condon & Young, 2016; Greenfield, 2011; Inoue, 2019a; Lippi-Green, 2012). According to their perspective, people of color *cannot* win in this rigged game, no matter how well they play; the system must be dismantled if we are to achieve equity in the school and the workplace. They argue this because the evidence points to the fact that mastery of White Mainstream English does *not* ensure people of color equal access to education or jobs. Second, by continuing to privilege White Mainstream English, we suggest that Black Language and identity are inferior. Students internalize this damaging view. Finally, the moderate position leaves the status quo intact, allowing the university to continue reinforcing the racial caste system.

Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo (2014) write: “As instructors, we are aware that our courses are ensconced within an institution whose default effect is the reproduction of inequality” (p. 9). Delpit (1988) acknowledges this structural inequity, but suggests that it cannot be changed from the bottom up—that is, we must start with policy, not classroom practices (p. 292). On the other hand, Inoue (2019a; 2019b) and Baker-Bell (2020) demonstrate that we can effect immediate change, fighting inequity by transforming what we do right now in our classrooms.

This third position is the only one that would enable us to ask why Isabel’s interviewer privileged White Mainstream English, and to question their decision to reject Isabel based on her use of Black Language: given Isabel’s outstanding interview, how can the interviewer justify their preference for a white candidate? Let’s imagine that the interviewer was also a student of ours: what was our responsibility to *them*? If we approach our classes from an antiracist perspective, then we have a complex set of commitments, both to Isabel and to her interviewer:

we would seek to make Isabel aware of the linguistic politics of the interview, enabling her to evaluate the situation; she might make a deliberate decision to code-mesh, perhaps as a way of challenging the interviewer's preconceptions or countering their biases. She might not, but she is aware of the choices she is making and possible implications. As antiracist teachers, we would seek also to make the interviewer aware of the linguistic politics of the situation, and perhaps to choose to set aside their preference for "standard English" and hire Isabel. We might even aim to teach the interviewer to prefer Isabel's code-meshed language, or at least to understand that the code-meshed language can be just as correct and professional as "standard English." If we teach the interviewer this, maybe they can, in turn, educate their colleagues in the law firm.

Labor-based grading enacts the third position by rejecting the task of sorting students into a hierarchy based on their facility with White Mainstream English—which happens even when we consciously resist this elevation of white language. The grading system creates a space in which to critique the privileging of White Mainstream English: to invite students into the conversation about Isabel's situation, her choices, and our responsibilities to her and to the interviewer. It creates an opportunity for students to investigate what counts as "good" writing in various contexts, and why. Inoue (2019b) emphasizes that he involves students not only in negotiating the terms of the contract (how much work will be expected), but also in establishing the criteria that will be used to respond to student work. This shifts the balance of power in the classroom.

The nature of feedback may change significantly within a labor-based grading system. When the instructor is not measuring student work against a single rubric, feedback can focus not on the places where work falls short, but rather on strong features and areas for development. The instructor can meet each student where they are, with the belief that every student can move forward—but they need not arrive at the same place at the end of the semester. Within this system, we can appreciate the writing they have done, rather than penalizing students for the deficits of their work—how their writing falls short of a standard.

So far, I've situated labor-based grading within the context of a debate about language pedagogies and the question of whether educators should continue to privilege "standard academic English." An alternative way of contextualizing labor-based grading is to see it as supporting an "asset mindset" in education, as opposed to a "deficit mindset." Rich Milner (2020), a professor of education at Vanderbilt University, argues that when we make use of a deficit model, focusing on what our students *don't* bring to the classroom, we are likely to trap them in a pernicious cycle: teachers' low expectations lead to poor performance, which in turn reinforces low expectations. When we approach teaching with an "asset mindset," on the other hand, we see "all students as capable of learning, holding high expectations for all, and using students' strengths and talents to help them succeed in a challenging and meaningful curriculum" (Milner, 2020). Labor-based grading aligns with—even reinforces—an asset mindset by focusing on what students accomplish; it allows instructors to value students' writing and to be attentive to the ways it reflects their unique "strengths and talents," rather than to see it as falling short of the standard, according to the deficit mindset.

This is not just a matter of relaxing standards, but of creating a genuinely multicultural nation, as Ibram X. Kendi (quoted in Bergner, 2020) observed in *The New York Times*:

I think Americans need to decide whether this is a multicultural nation or not. If Americans decide that it is, what that means is we're going to have multiple cultural standards and multiple perspectives. It creates a scenario in which we would have to have multiple understandings of what achievement is and what qualifications are. That is part of the problem. We haven't decided, as a country, even among progressives and liberals, whether we desire a multicultural nation or a unicultural nation. (p. 50)

Rather than merely abandoning rigor, we are actively working towards a more inclusive vision of "what achievement is and what qualifications are." Instead of arming Isabel with White Mainstream English, we can imagine a scenario in which both Isabel and the interviewer might draw on alternative conceptions of "what qualifications are." As Inoue (2019a) succinctly states, students "only need it [White Mainstream English] because we keep teaching it" (p. 364). He enjoins us to take courage and stop.

The Labor-Based Grading Study Group: Courage in Numbers

In the summer of 2019, we found strength and courage in numbers. Our Director of First-Year Writing, Danika Myers, sketched out a sequence of meetings for the newly formed Labor-Based Grading Study Group, building from an initial stage of reading and discussion of Inoue's work. We continued to read and discuss relevant scholarship as we progressed through the stages of developing, implementing, and reevaluating course materials.

Stage 1: Laying the groundwork. We read and met to discuss Inoue's *Labor-Based Grading Contracts* (2019b)—both what excited us about the model and what our concerns were: we worried about whether students would remain motivated without the promise of a grade; whether university administration would regard our choice with suspicion, thus putting our jobs at risk; and just how much time and effort it would take to switch from conventional grading to labor-based grading.

Stage 2: Considering course design and labor-based grading. We met to discuss overarching questions about course design: how would the implementation of labor-based grading shift the nature of the course as a whole? We helped each other consider how this assessment model would be integrated into the broader ecology of our courses, each of which is uniquely designed by the instructor in accordance with our course guidelines.

Stage 3: Exchanging drafts of course materials. We drafted course materials and met to share these drafts. We looked at a range of approaches to implementation and offered feedback to group members.

Stage 4: Discussing classroom experiences within the group. Once the semester was underway, we met to discuss student responses and to consider how to revise materials. Based on these discussions and feedback from students, we continued to revise our grading contracts, our expectations for labor completed, and other aspects of labor-based grading.

Stage 5: Sharing our experiences and new knowledge beyond the group. In the summer of 2020, as the university prepared for a year of virtual teaching, we shared our experiences more broadly by organizing and participating in a roundtable for University Writing Program faculty

and, in Danika's case, by leading a workshop for the college. Because of COVID and the circumstances of virtual learning, the university administration was receptive to new approaches to assessment; this opened up a wider forum for sharing our first ventures into labor-based grading.

After the death of George Floyd in May 2020, our program created a committee to examine the racial dynamics in our program, the Antiracism Committee. The committee organized "listening sessions" to discuss and reflect on racial dynamics within the University Writing Program, and how we could combat racism in our work together. Along with the Antiracism Committee, we also formed a group more specifically focused on antiracist pedagogies, dedicated to studying theoretical texts and considering how to rethink our teaching practice: the Antiracist Praxis Group. So while the Labor-Based Grading Study Group no longer exists as a separate entity, members of the group continue to meet and discuss antiracist pedagogies, including labor-based grading, but also beyond: for example, we have read Aja Martinez's (2020) *Counterstory*, April Baker-Bell's (2020) *Linguistic Justice*, and texts about the intersection of race and disability. Our most recent meeting discussed texts that critique labor-based grading, especially from the perspective of disability studies.

Approaches to Grading Contracts

In this section, I will share highlights from grading contracts. These contracts are from faculty members who now participate in the Antiracist Praxis group, which has absorbed the Labor-Based Grading Study Group.

In the introduction to her contract, Danika identifies two qualities of an excellent writer: they recognize the kinds of practice they need (are self-directed); and they understand that writing happens in and for communities. Because these two qualities are vital to becoming an excellent writer, the additional labor required to raise a student's grade must develop both these skills: self-direction and community participation. She names this work, "self-directed labor." Her course helps students to become more aware of what kinds of practice they need, and to be more self-directed in undertaking that practice.

- **Higher grades -- the grades of B+, A-, or A -- require not only *more* labor, but *self-directed* labor.** This is because two things are true of an excellent writer:
- An *excellent writer* is someone who identifies unique writing goals, seeks out practice they recognize they need, designs a process to achieve those goals, and is able to take control of their own writing process. That is, the excellent writer does not rely entirely on an instructor, editor, or boss to tell them what to write or how to write it.
- An *excellent writer* is someone who recognizes that writing depends on communities. Writers communicate with readers, and respond to their needs. Writers learn from others in their discourse community and, in turn, share what they themselves have learned. Writers seek out editors, or form small groups to read and respond to work in progress.
- Thus, labor to earn grades higher than a B must somehow serve to help you learn both of these skills (self-direction & community participation).

Danika's contract focuses on helping students to develop self-efficacy, choosing work according to their own goals as writers; Phyllis Ryder's contract has a different focus, in keeping with her course theme, "Writing for Social Change in Washington DC," a service learning course in partnership with DC community organizations. In her contract, Phyllis explains how labor-based grading addresses linguistic justice and combats the dominance of white language. Her explanation clarifies for students—and for me—what is problematic about conventional grading systems: the conflation of the key moves of academic writing with the use of White Mainstream English. Phyllis observes: "In traditional grading, students who are familiar with the dominant language often are ranked higher because of their prior knowledge." She also articulates, with admirable clarity, how labor-based grading combats the predominance of White Mainstream English: "In labor-based grading, we acknowledge and explore how non-dominant languages and epistemologies (ways of knowing) can accomplish the same intellectual work, and everyone who performs the intellectual work and communicates effectively receives credit." The discussion of linguistic justice, part of her implementation of labor-based grading, fits naturally with the class's focus on social justice.

Labor-based grading acknowledges—and even celebrates—the variety of ways that people create and share knowledge. Traditional grading often conflates two separate elements of writing: 1) the "moves" of intellectual work, such as building on other people's ideas, developing clear criteria to evaluate something, providing appropriate evidence, and so on, and 2) the ability to follow the conventions of so-called standard academic English, such as "proper" tone, and "correct" grammar or mechanics.

This conflation wrongly presumes that so-called standard English is the only way or the best way to create and communicate knowledge. In traditional grading, students who are familiar with the dominant language often are ranked higher because of their prior knowledge. In labor-based grading, we acknowledge and explore how non-dominant languages and epistemologies (ways of knowing) can accomplish the same intellectual work, and everyone who performs the intellectual work and communicates effectively receives credit.

Carol Hayes makes use of Phyllis's important distinction between intellectual "moves" and "standard English" in her grading schema. As Carol explains in the introduction to her contract, labor-based grading is the basis for her system, but she also borrows from Linda Nilson's (2015) "specifications grading" model. Like Inoue's (2019b) system, Nilson's system awards grades based on completion; however, in Nilson's model, an assignment is considered complete if it meets certain specifications. In Carol's class, this means demonstrating particular intellectual moves in writing: for example, performing John Swales's (as cited by Wardle & Downs, 2020, p. 62) moves of "creating a research space" in the paper's opening.

- Inoue's "labor-based" grading model focuses on work: the time, energy, and effort you put into your writing and into the classroom community. I will be borrowing part of this model: most of the daily "grading" in this class will be based on whether you fully completed the work, in the spirit in which it was assigned, in a timely manner.

- However, because I am also teaching specific writing and research skills, I am also borrowing from Nilson’s “specifications grading” model, which essentially uses a “complete/incomplete” approach: On major papers, did you demonstrate, at least at the minimum required level, the specific skills that I am teaching in this class?

These three examples begin to suggest the variety of contracts within our program. While they are consistent with the principles and basic practices Inoue (2019b) lays out in *Labor-Based Grading Contracts*, faculty have shaped contracts that reflect their individual pedagogical values and concerns. By participating in the Labor-Based Study Group and the Antiracist Praxis Group, faculty found a sense of safety: reassurance that they could adopt an innovative practice and not face criticism from the university. Drawing on the safety and courage provided by our group, faculty were able to develop unique grading contracts, tailored to their courses.

Recommendations for Implementing Labor-Based Grading

By participating in the Labor-Based Grading Study Group, members were not only able to find a sense of safety, but also able to develop an awareness of the variety of ways the system might be implemented. Based on the experiences of the group, I can offer several key recommendations for teachers about implementation:

1. ***Find your allies.*** Reach out to teachers in your department and beyond to form a group, which can provide you with feedback on your materials and offer support as you work through the challenges. If they are willing to share, borrow and build on the strengths of course materials created by group members. Program leaders should reach out to administrators who will understand the value of your efforts and perhaps even organize workshops so you can reach faculty members outside of your department or program.
2. ***Make the system your own.*** There are many different viable ways to implement labor-based grading. You can combine it with other models, ranging from more traditional approaches (perhaps you still want to assign grades for certain projects) to less familiar ones, such as Nilson’s (2015) specifications grading, as Carol Hayes did. Align the system with your own pedagogical values, as Danika Myers did when she emphasized self-directed learning in her grading contract.
3. ***Know that your system is always a work in progress.*** Even after two years of using labor-based grading, every one of us continues to make adjustments. For instance, I worked on creating ways of getting students more involved in negotiating the grading contract so they felt more of a sense of ownership over the system. We were all engaged in the ongoing project of developing meaningful independent labor projects, which students could complete to raise their grades above the baseline B. You can be frank with your students about the fact that you are still figuring things out, and invite their feedback and help in shaping this integral dimension of your course. Their feedback can be invaluable.
4. ***Situate your work within the larger antiracist agenda of your department or institution.*** When challenges arise—as they inevitably will—remember the reasons why you are

making the shift to an antiracist model. Consider how you and your allies might continue to further an antiracist agenda. Our Antiracist Praxis Group is one example, as is our Antiracism Committee, which looks beyond the classroom to examine and critique the culture of our program as a whole, including our hiring and promotion practices. This work—including the shift to labor-based grading, but also beyond it—might begin to change the institutional culture for students and teachers alike.

Conclusion: Redefining Courage

To conclude, I would like to return to the complaint Inoue (2019a) often heard from colleagues: “I’m just not ready” (p. 366). These colleagues seemed to lack courage, but I want to suggest the problem is we misunderstand the nature of courage, taking it to be an individual quality, rather than a collective one.

In a recent essay, Christy Wenger (2020/2021) observed that before the pandemic, we tended to think of *resilience* as an individual, heroic quality—something we demonstrated by “conquering our limits” or “rising above” circumstances (p. 100). Wenger suggests that we can better understand resilience by thinking of it in feminist terms as a *collective* strength:

That’s the thing about resilience that we often get wrong. We tend to think of resilience as the property of the individual working alone. Heroic and independent and rising above the challenges of life. But resilience is better understood in terms similar to those we’ve used about the pandemic itself. The pandemic has reminded us that we are dependent on each other and that we are only as strong as our community. (p. 99)

This is true, I would argue, of courage as well, and particularly the courage to adopt antiracist pedagogies. The pandemic has “cracked open” the concept of resilience, allowing us a deeper understanding, Wenger (2020/2021, p. 100) argues; so, too, of courage—like resilience, it’s not the property of a determined individual, but of the group, bound together by shared commitment to antiracist values.

Further, Wenger (2020/2021) points out that the academy as a whole relies on “individualist narratives” (p. 100), often pitting us against one another (just as conventional grades turn classmates into competitors for a limited supply of As). When we formed a Labor-Based Grading Study Group, we worked against those individualist narratives, even as we focused on creating new ecologies in our classrooms. The mistake we might be making, Wenger’s analysis implies, is to say: “*I* am not ready.” *I* may never be ready on my own; but with the courage of the collective, *we* may be ready now.

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QUESTIONING THE QUESTIONING SKILLS OF PRESERVICE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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Abstract

The literacy educators collaboratively designed an interactive read-aloud assignment to explore elementary preservice teachers' (PSTs) questioning skills. Following the Gradual Release of Responsibility framework, the PSTs worked with small groups and whole group to complete in-depth analysis of their conversations before, during, and after the read aloud with the elementary students. Overall, the PSTs' reflections indicated that this read-aloud assignment highlighted the complexity of questioning in ways they had not previously considered and they valued the opportunities to refine their questioning skills in authentic settings. We came to the conclusion that PSTs need explicit instruction on questioning.

Keywords: questioning, interactive read-aloud, preservice teachers

Questioning the Questioning Skills of Preservice Elementary Teachers

They say there is no such thing as a dumb question, but let's face it, some questions are better than others and it takes time to develop the art of questioning. Teachers skilled at questioning have the ability to promote critical thinking about a text by asking the right questions at the right time. Questioning is a vital comprehension strategy (Pressley et al., 1995).

In 2018, the three of us were doctoral students teaching separate sections of literacy methods for preservice elementary teachers at the same Midwestern university. We lamented that our preservice elementary teachers' (PSTs') were asking predominantly knowledge level questions and not promoting critical thinking for the students they were working with. We were looking for a way to "show" rather than "tell" our preservice teachers the value and importance of asking open-ended, higher-level questions. Together, we planned a unit on questioning, using a children's picture book read-aloud lesson as the mode for our preservice teachers to practice and develop their questioning skills. When we moved to different universities, we had the opportunity to make this a cross-institutional collaborative study. The assignment has evolved each year as we work with different groups of preservice teachers.

As literacy teacher educators, we know firsthand that PSTs need explicit instruction on how to ask quality questions before, during, and after reading. Indeed, even veteran teachers benefit from revisiting their questioning practices to encourage critical thinking and promote comprehension. Degener and Berne (2016) noted in their work with intermediate-grade teachers facilitating guided reading that, "many teachers, although comfortable with the instructional format, were still unclear about what they should say during these interactions with students" (p. 595). We agreed with this observation and wondered how to give preservice teachers a stronger foundation for questioning. We lamented that our preservice teachers were asking predominantly knowledge level questions when engaging students in discussing texts. Therefore, we looked for a way to "show" rather than "tell" them the value and importance of skilled questioning. We designed a read-aloud lesson for our PSTs to practice the skills learned about questioning and also envisioned practical ways the experience could be transferred to reading experiences across the curriculum and grade levels. Our goal was to create authentic opportunities for PSTs to take an active role in thinking about and analyzing their questioning habits and routines.

Based on Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism (1978), we first collaboratively designed an interactive read-aloud assignment to explore preservice teachers' questioning skills *before* instruction. Identifying strengths and needs would allow us to plan for instruction to support and expand their questioning skills. As a means of promoting self-analysis, we assigned PSTs to do an initial audio-recorded read aloud of *Last Stop on Market Street* (De La Pena, 2015), after which they transcribed their conversations with students to identify, review, and analyze their questions and student responses. This initial assignment became the first in a series of assignments for the 18 preservice teachers enrolled in our literacy methods courses at two small Midwestern private liberal arts universities and one regional teaching university in the Southeast. This first assignment was important because it provided a window for us and our students to discover potential areas for growth. As instructors, we valued the assignment as a window into our PSTs' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The following is an example of a first read aloud transcript from Shannon (all names are pseudonyms) who was assigned to a third-grade classroom for her practicum. Shannon read the story aloud while Jamie, a child she was working with, followed along. When Shannon finished reading, she asked Jamie questions about the story:

Shannon: Who's the main character?

Jamie: CJ

Shannon: Do you know why people might take buses?

Jamie: They don't have cars. Cause they wouldn't have enough money to buy a car, so that's why they would have to take a bus.

Shannon: Do you know what they are doing here?

Jamie: Eating.

Shannon: Yeah, they are eating, these people are serving them food.

Shannon: What was your favorite part of the book?

Jamie: When they got on to the bus and the man was doing his one song thingy.

Shannon's conversation with Jamie was typical of other transcripts we collected prior to instruction on questioning skills. After self-analysis of her transcript, Shannon found that three of her four questions required only a one-word or yes/no response. Similarly, we found that all of our preservice teachers benefited from this self-analysis. Breaking down the complex art of questioning increased their awareness of how they engaged students in conversations and promoted complex thinking during read alouds.

Based on our students' first read alouds and our observations of experienced teachers as well, we planned instruction we felt would best give them an opportunity to improve their questioning skills. First, we introduced seminal research about models of interactive reading aloud and questioning. We began with dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003) which promotes young children's expressive vocabulary and abstract thinking (Lonigan et al., 2011; Rezzonico et al., 2015; Whitehurst et al., 1994). In dialogic reading, adults scaffold for students with open-ended questions, praise, repetitions, and expansions to promote oral language skills (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Burkins and Yates (2021) confirmed that interactive read-alouds using dialogic conversations is a powerful way to elevate student language and comprehension. Their adaptation of Whitehurst and colleagues' strategy (1988) for K- 2 classrooms helps teachers plan for high-quality questions and thoughtful conversations. The process they recommend involves engaging students in the text in general ways by asking for opinions, making personal connections, and asking children to recall or name something from the text.

Next, we introduced Question Answer Relationship (QAR) (Raphael, 1982; Raphael & Au, 2005) which was designed to help students increase comprehension and understand the different types of questions. It is a well-known and explicit framework for teachers because it provides a common language to use with students and to model questioning. In QAR, questions can be categorized as:

- Right There: Answers to questions are in the text. Words in questions match words in the text, usually in a single sentence.
- Think and Search: Answers to questions are in the text, but maybe found over several sentences or even paragraphs.
- Author and Me: Answers to questions are not directly in the text. The reader needs to think about what the author has written and background knowledge to infer meaning.
- On My Own: Answers are based on personal experiences related to topics or themes in the text.

Figure 1
Assignment Procedures



The Interactive Read Aloud Assignment

In this section, we describe our assignments and instructions. We recommend that novice and experienced teachers alike consider transcribing their own interactive read aloud or disciplinary reading activity with teacher questioning to self-analyze patterns of questioning as a way to improve the art of questioning in instruction.

As teacher educators who wanted to practice what we preached, we followed the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework (Pearson & Gallagher 1983a, 1983b, Pearson et al., 2019) in the design of this assignment. Based on experiential learning, GRR shifted responsibility for learning from the professor to the preservice teacher and from the preservice teacher to the elementary student in an authentic learning experience. The GRR framework follows the model of I Do, We Do and You Do.

- I Do: Teacher models skill.
- We Do: Guided practice. Student practices with teacher support.
- You Do: Student practices skill independently

We began with an initial You Do (first read aloud), as previously mentioned this afforded us the opportunity to understand the PSTs' baseline questioning skills and plan instruction aimed at their current zone of proximal development. We then moved to I Do (classroom instruction) and relied on modeling and sharing research-based frameworks on questioning. Next, we worked through analyzing questions together in We Do (guided practice), and finally, gave preservice teachers an opportunity to practice what they had learned in You Do Again (second read aloud). See Figure 1. PSTs reflected in writing throughout the gradual release experience. This assignment provided them with an authentic setting to develop their questioning skills while simultaneously giving us a way to document their shifts and development in questioning skills over time. Below are detailed descriptions of our instruction based on the GRR model:

You Do

The directions for the first read aloud were intentionally vague because we wanted PSTs to document their questioning habits prior to instruction. Each preservice teacher read aloud to one elementary student. They were given these limited instructions for the first reading: *Read, Last Stop on Market Street (de la Peña, 2015) to a student in your classroom and engage them in conversations and questions about the story.*

We chose *Last Stop on Market Street* (de la Peña, 2015) for this assignment because the themes within the story are rich and lend themselves to higher-level inferential questioning. We wanted to model good text selection as well and this book is a Newbery Medal winner and a Caldecott honor book verifying that it has literary value and that the illustrations add depth to the story.

After the PSTs transcribed their first read aloud conversation and identified what questions were asked, we noted that the questions they asked during the first reading were mostly knowledge level questions. For example, remember Shannon in the beginning vignette asked, “Who’s the main character?” and “Do you know what they are doing here?”. These questions are “Right There” questions in QAR and can be answered with a simple one-word response. These questions did not engage the elementary students in a dialogic conversation, but instead had a quiz-like feel with a right or wrong answer.

Next, we planned instruction to model questioning skills for our students in hopes of increasing the quality of dialogic conversations during reading aloud.

I Do

During the I Do time, the PSTs read and discussed research on interactive reading aloud and questioning which included: Levels of Questions (Kearsley, 1976), Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, 1956), QAR (Raphael, 1982; Raphael & Au, 2005), and dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). We showed sample questions in QAR and dialogic reading with familiar picture books such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1969).

As instructors, we then modeled the process of questioning before, during, and after an interactive read aloud using the book, *After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again* (Santant, 2017). We wanted to engage PSTs in the rich conversations that only quality questions can inspire. Themes of overcoming fear, learning to get back up, and reaching new heights in this creative version of the well-known nursery rhyme provided ample opportunity for discussion. We carefully chose our questions in advance and used sticky notes to model how teachers plan for engaging students with questions.

We Do

Step One: Instructor-Led Whole Class Discussion

Following the modeled read aloud, PSTs first took part in sorting the questions according to when they were asked. Please refer to the top of Figure 2 for an illustration of how our sticky notes were initially sorted and color-coded: before (pink), during (green), or after (blue) the story. Next, the whole class sorted the questions into the four types of questions in QAR (Raphael, 1982, Raphael & Au, 2005): Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own. As a whole class, we then talked through the categorization until an agreement was reached. The whole class sorting and resorting of the questions helped preservice teachers see that questions should be asked throughout the read aloud and the importance of asking different kinds of questions.

The instructors also showed their PSTs how to scaffold questions upward or downward. In Figure 2 the questions in parenthesis are examples of potential questions for scaffolding.

Preservice Teacher Reflection: *“Through this task I learned the benefit of asking questions before, during, and after a reading is taking place and why a teacher might plan their questions [during] these times.”*

Preservice Teacher Reflection: *“The biggest difference in the questions I asked was the time that they were asked. For the first student, I asked all of the questions after the reading was finished, for the second student, the questions were asked throughout the reading of the book.”*

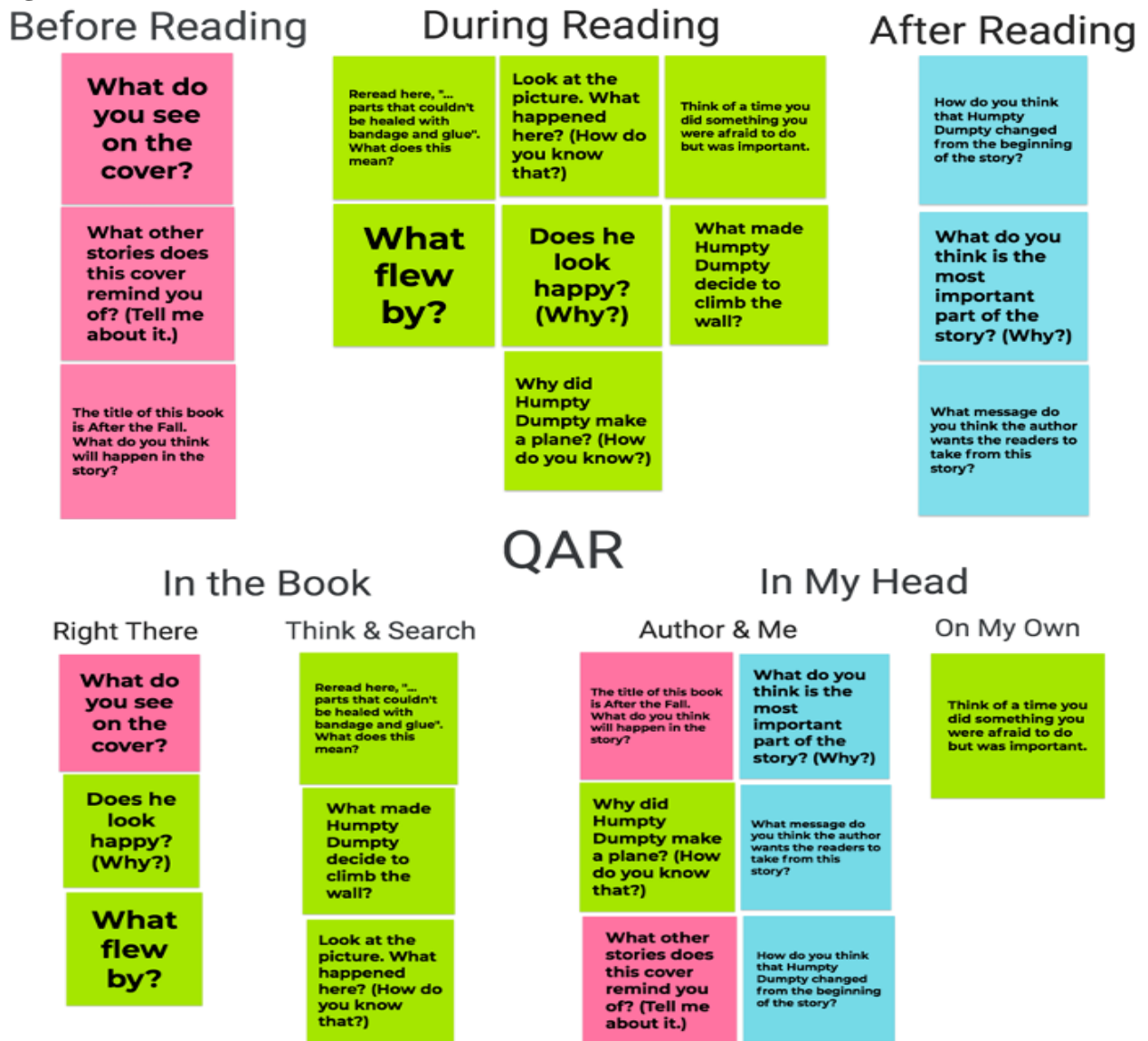
Step Two: Small Group Work on the First Reading Transcript

Following instruction, PSTs then worked in pairs or small groups to analyze their first read aloud transcripts by categorizing the questions according to the four QAR categories: Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, On My Own (Raphael, 1982; Raphael & Au, 2005). Additionally, they labeled each question based on when it was asked: before, during, or after reading. Finally, they discussed their initial transcripts to identify opportunities they may have missed to scaffold questions. They found places where they could have scaffolded downward when a student needed support, or scaffolded upward to challenge a student to think more deeply or provide additional detail (Zucker et. al., 2020).

Preservice Teacher Reflection: *“I learned that sometimes you need to prompt the child with another question or a different wording of the question in order to get a deeper level of thinking to go on inside their head.”*

Figure 2

Categorization of the Modeled Questions



Note: the questions in parenthesis are examples of upward scaffolds prompting additional information when not given in the initial response.

Step Three: Whole Class Discussion on Higher-level Questions

Like Degener and Berne (2017) and Fisher et al. (2010), we found our PSTs were more likely to ask questions focused on skills such as decoding, word recognition, or sentence-level comprehension. They were less likely to ask questions that encourage higher-level thinking. Before instruction, PSTs were assigned to read an article: *Using Higher Order Questioning to*

Accelerate Students' Growth in Reading (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). In class they discussed their key takeaways from the article and then reflected on the questions they asked during the first read-aloud. PSTs were asked to find examples of how some questions might be changed into higher-level questions to promote critical thinking. During the discussion, they acknowledged that their questioning skills did not elicit the responses they were hoping for. They expressed that prior to the instruction, they didn't realize how important asking the right questions is to encourage higher-level thinking.

Preservice Teacher Reflection: "The questions I provided to the first student were a lot of [knowledge level] questions. I noticed that these questions are my 'go to' questions when asking about a story. This led to mainly [knowledge level] responses." ... This was frustrating for me because I knew what I wanted him to take from the book and what I wanted him to comprehend, but my questions were not getting him there."

Step Four: Small Group Work on Questions for the Second Read Aloud

The PSTs finally worked in small groups to apply their new learning about questioning. They wrote questions for the second read aloud of *The Last Stop on Market Street* with another elementary student. They were asked to include different types of questions and plan questions to ask before, during, and after the reading.

You Do Again

With their new learning in mind and revised questions in hand, our PSTs read *Last Stop on Market Street* (de la Pena, 2015) a second time with another elementary student. They asked the elementary students the questions developed collaboratively in class. PSTs again analyzed their transcripts and found the questions asked included higher-level questions. Additionally, there was evidence of a more dialogic conversation with questions being asked before, during, and after the reading. Their written reflections confirmed growth and greater confidence in their ability to produce quality questions.

Shannon, for example, realized that in her first reading she asked questions in a quiz-like manner after reading the story, rather than promoting a dialogic conversation. Through this authentic experience, she was able to apply her new knowledge to the second student, Billy.

Before Reading

Shannon: So looking at the front cover, do you have any observations about what the book will be about or anything that might be important?

Billy: I think that there's a street called 'Market Street' and they have to go to places on Market Street.

During Reading

Shannon: How do you think C.J. is feeling right now?

Billy: Um, sad and kinda mad.

Shannon: Why do you think he's sad and mad?

Billy: Because after church he has to go on the bus and his friends don't.

How do butterflies dance? Do they just fly around?

Shannon: That's a great question. What do you think C.J. means?

Billy: Maybe he's just picturing them kind of flying around.

After reading

Shannon: How has C.J.'s mood changed from the beginning of the story to now?

Billy: So at first he was like, "I don't want to come" and now he was like, "I was so glad I came."

Notice that after instruction Shannon asked open-ended questions and scaffolded upward when needed. Shannon asked, "How do you think C.J. is feeling right now?" and Billy responded, "Um, sad and kinda mad." Shannon felt Billy knew more so she followed up with, "Why do you think he's sad and mad?" Billy expanded his response, "Because after church he has to go on the bus and his friends don't."

Preservice Teacher Reflection: "I didn't realize how bad I was at asking questions before this assignment. I realize the importance of expanding on my questions and I learned to constantly be thinking of new questions and adjusting these according to how the students are reacting to these questions. I realized the importance of questions and how much these questions allow students to expand their knowledge and comprehension."

Results

As a result of completing the above assignment, we observed our PSTs asking more types of questions and intentionally planning higher-level questions in preparation to read aloud. Because we emphasized asking higher-level questions that promote critical thinking, we found some of our PSTs overcorrected by only asking higher-level questions and avoiding literal or knowledge-level questions, but this provided an opportunity to discuss when teachers might choose literal questions or not. Overall, PST reflections indicated that this series of assignments highlighted the

complexity of questioning in ways they had not previously considered. The following reflections capture the results of this assignment for our PSTs.

“Students will often give you exactly what you ask for and no more. When I was in elementary, middle, and high school, I hated when I saw “why?” or “explain” at the end of a question. Now I see the importance. ... I have changed the questions I ask or how I ask them. I know that what I am asking is higher-level when I see the gears turning in their brains. This makes learning so much more fun because when they finally understand or comprehend [the text], they get excited about it as well!!”

“I knew previously that administering questions while reading a text is highly beneficial for the student’s comprehension of the text. I didn’t know how hard it would be for me to create deep text questions.”

“I learned that questions are very hard to come up with that will engage the student and connect them with the reading. I found myself wanting to ask those ground level questions that I knew I could get the answer rather than the deeper level questions that I would not always get an answer for.”

“I didn’t realize how bad I was at asking questions before this assignment. I realize the importance of expanding on my questions and I learned to constantly be thinking of new questions and adjusting these according to how the students are reacting to these questions. I realized the importance of questions and how much these questions allow students to expand their knowledge and comprehension.”

In the end, it was clear that this assignment provided an authentic experience for our preservice teachers to learn, reflect, and apply their ability to generate and ask higher-level questions. We confirmed that our PSTs needed more explicit instruction on questioning and the opportunity to practice in authentic settings was invaluable.

Research to Practice

In the spirit of providing practice opportunities, we have included two additional models of questioning to guide others in this process. We have chosen two picture books as additional models for practitioners: *On Meadowview Street* (Cole, 2007) and *Mother Bruce*, (Higgins, 2015). Some questions also include follow-up questions for scaffolding down or up. The downward scaffolding questions are preceded with a down arrow (↓) and the upward scaffolding questions are preceded with an up arrow (↑). See Figures 3-4.

Whether one is a preservice teacher, an in-service teacher, a literacy specialist, a reading coach, or a university professor working with preservice teachers, we believe it is important to continually revisit and refine questioning skills. General understanding of a text is essential to students’ ability to answer complex questions so we needed to revisit this topic and reiterate the

value of asking all types of questions to guide students as they read a text (Fisher et al., 2012). We suggest that explicit instruction should include research and practice related to:

- 1) asking questions before, during, and after the reading;
- 2) how to ask higher-level questions;
- 3) when to scaffold questions upward and downward.

This read-aloud assignment is one way for teacher educators to provide PSTs authentic and explicit instruction on questioning during read-alouds. It is also our hope that novice and veteran alike teachers will find this refresher on questioning useful and be encouraged to question their questioning skills as well.

Figure 3
On Meadowview Street



On Meadowview Street
Cole, 2007

This book is appropriate for preschoolers through adult learners. One theme to emphasize is, big ideas begin with small steps.

Summary

Caroline has just moved into a new house on Meadowview Street with her mom and dad. As she watches her dad mow the lawn, she wonders where the meadow is on Meadowview Street. When she notices a small blossom growing in the grass, she asks her dad to mow around the flower.

Before Reading

Q: What can you do/have you done to make your neighborhood a better place? (Right there or author and me)
Q: What do you think this story will be about? (Right there or author and me)
1Q: What is she doing in the picture?
1Q: Why might she be putting a fence around the flower?
1Q: Why do you think that?
1Q: Did the title or illustration make you think that?

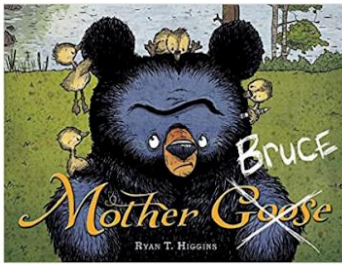
During Reading

Q: Why is Caroline's dad selling his mower? (Author and Me)
1Q: Does he use the mower anymore? Why not?
Q: Now there are flowers and butterflies. If this was your preserve, what might you add to it?
1Q: What other plants or animals would you want in your preserve?
1Q: What are some animals or insects besides butterflies that might be beneficial to the preserve?
Q: Now that there is a pond, what kind of animals might come to the preserve?

After Reading

Q: What did Caroline's neighbors think of her preserve?
1Q: What can you tell by looking at this picture of the neighbors' yards?
1Q: Why do you think that?

Figure 4
Mother Bruce



Mother Bruce

Higgins, 2015

This book is appropriate for preschoolers through adult learners. One theme can be family and/or cultural differences.

Summary

This is the story of a grumpy bear named Bruce, that only likes one thing, eggs. When the eggs Bruce plans to eat hatch into goslings, Bruce makes many plans to send the goslings on their way. But the goslings thought Bruce was their mother and they followed him everywhere.

Before Reading

Q: The title of this story is Mother Bruce. Look at the cover and the illustration on the title page. What do you think this story will be about?

↓Q: What do you see in this picture?

↓Q: Who do you think the characters in the story will be?

↑Q: What do you think the relationship is between the bear and the goslings?

During Reading

Q: What do you think Bruce does like? (Author and Me)

↓Q: What are some things bears like?

↑Q: Why do you think that?

Q: Why do the goslings think Bruce is their mother?

Q: How do you think Mrs. Goose feels about giving Bruce her eggs?

↓Q: Does she look happy? Why? Why not?

↑Q: Why might a goose feel that way?

Q: What do you think the unwelcome surprise will be? (Author and Me)

After Reading

Q: How did Bruce change from the beginning of the story to the end? (Think and Search)

↓Q: At the beginning of the story what did Bruce want to do with the goslings?

↓Q: At the end of the story what did Bruce do with the goslings?

Q: How is Bruce's family the same as or different from your family? (Author and Me)

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CREATING INCLUSIVE WRITING ENVIRONMENTS: MULTIMODALITY AS A VEHICLE FOR INCLUSIVITY

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Abstract

Most teachers' literacy instruction is centered around alphabetic composition. This essay discusses how varying composition styles in the writing classroom can create a diverse environment, inclusive of all students, where students are able to exercise their personal identities, learn from differences in perspective, and prepare for future professions. Providing detailed instructional steps for implementing multimodality in the writing classroom, this essay highlights three major roles multimodality can occupy to enhance literacy instruction: 1) analyzing and learning writing concepts through multimodality, 2) multimodality as writing inspiration, and 3) multimodality as a form of writing composition.

Keywords: composition, diversity, inclusion, multimodality

Creating Inclusive Writing Environments: Multimodality as a Vehicle for Inclusivity

In most classrooms, alphabetic text and print are often used and required as the sole acceptable form of composition. In *Creating Inclusive Writing Environments in the K-12 Classroom*, the author, Angela Stockman (2021), recognizes that,

The most privileged form of composition in schools, alphabetic compositions are made up entirely of letters and words, alphabetic text, and print. This is the mode of expression that students are most often required to use in their classes and on high-stakes assessments that determine whether or not they will earn a diploma. When those heavy-print assessments aim to measure the mastery of content or skills that have nothing to do with it, alphabetic composition creates unnecessary and even discriminatory barriers that too many students struggle to scale (p. 64).

Stockman highlights a key message that using only one mode of composition in the classroom can contribute to an environment that is less inclusive of students who are more fluent in other modes, adding that if diversity and inclusion are goals to be achieved, writing should be made multimodal. Using only one mode of composition robs students of the opportunity to fully express themselves or learn from other perspectives. When students are more fluent in modes that are not used or accepted in the classroom, they may struggle with creativity, originality, and the expression of ideas and information on assignments, as they are unable to compose in ways

that are comfortable, familiar, and coherent for them. In addition, without the presence of numerous modes in the classroom, students are robbed of differing, unique perspectives, as they are all taught the same way and expected to compose in the same manner. This leads to a classroom environment where students cannot learn from new ideas and perspectives because there are no other perspectives – students are presented the same way of writing in different “fonts.” In other words, students may use different information in their work, but are accustomed to using the exact same modes in the exact same formatting, limiting their ability to learn from and explore new ways of composition. While their work may offer unique information and knowledge, the mode in which they use offers little to no information of their personal learning styles, ideas, or beliefs, possibly diminishing the quality, purpose, and/or effectiveness of their work. Therefore, as teachers, it is important to integrate students’ differences and personal abilities into the classroom, as it allows students to express themselves as well as see from others’ perspectives.

Defining Writing

From a young age, most students are taught to write using a specific procedure, method, or format. Papers are required to be typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font; formatted in APA or MLA; and double spaced with 1-inch margins. In most academic classes, students are to write according to a defined set of steps, known as “*the writing process*,” and are required to use one specific form or format. This practice may result in some students focusing solely on the process or formatting of their writing, so much so that they begin to believe the process or formatting *is* the writing. However, fonts, formats, processes, and letter sizes *do not* define writing, and it is important for students to obtain an understanding of writing as an inclusive term or concept for use both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers should not present writing as a skill with set rules writers should abide by, but rather as a process with conventions, or foundations, that are ever-changing. The purpose of writing is not to follow rules to a particular form, format, or process, but to communicate or express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, defined as the exigence of a piece.

What Counts as Writing?

In a forever-evolving world, all forms of composition, including academic writing, should be able to expand and change with society, proving writing to be a flexible and ever-changing practice. New forms, formats, characteristics, and processes are created every day, resulting in the world of writing constantly expanding and evolving. The problem lies with academic writing being defined and taught in schools as a single process or format required for student assignments and used to scaffold student learning. Students taught to believe that fonts, formats, and letter sizes define writing have difficulty understanding what counts as writing beyond essays and formatted papers. In society, composition can occur in a variety of forms, including, but not limited to TikToks, videos, speeches, images, PowerPoints, charts, graphs, tables, social media posts, etc. However, in schools, academic writing is restricted to linguistic and alphabetic compositions, in specific formats, arrived at by following fixed steps of “*the writing process*.” Instead, students should be able to see or create form variation in writing and writing instruction. But should other forms count in academic writing? And if so, why? Exploring the purpose and

characteristics of composition can aid in providing a definition and explanation as to why new forms should be considered in academic writing.

First, a characteristic (and the overall goal) of composition is to relay information and provoke a response from the intended audience. Composition is created to be shared, read, viewed, or even heard. Its intent is to inspire, motivate, or persuade an audience to feel, think, or act a certain way; display/provide information and/or new/other perspectives; or educate an audience with specific knowledge. As a result, composition is a powerful tool, acting as a means of, inspiration, expression, persuasion, communication, and education.

Another characteristic exhibited by all composition is modality. Whether a piece appeals to visual, spatial, gestural, aural, linguistic, and/or haptic modes, all forms of composition use at least one mode to communicate exigence. As a result of individuality, people understand and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas differently, resulting in some comprehending or preferring specific modes over others. For example, some may understand the message of a piece of rhetoric better when presented visually (as in a picture), whereas others might better understand linguistic communication (through word choice). Therefore, the use of multimodal pieces can aid in overall understanding, helping an audience – inclusive of all individuals – better comprehend what is being communicated or expressed by appealing to a variety of modes. In a classroom, alphabetic/linguistic composition is the prevalent form of writing, leaving some students who perform better in other modes behind, as their linguistic-gifted peers excel in writing classes, assignment scores, and class rankings. The use of multimodal rhetoric in the classroom is a practice inclusive of all students, allowing them to demonstrate their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and understanding of information in a way that is easier for them to comprehend and assemble.

In addition, certain modes or forms of composition are more effective than others in relaying an intended message to a specified audience. For example, the phrase, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” explains how pictures have the ability to present multiple ideas in a single image, relaying the message to an audience quicker, easier, and overall, more efficiently, than using the linguistic or alphabetic mode. This phrase provides insight into how all modes have specific characteristics that serve as advantages or disadvantages when relaying a message, and these characteristics set them apart from other modes. Then, in specific circumstances, the use of one mode may be more useful or preferred compared to others for clear, effective communication to an intended audience.

Additionally, modes may be carefully chosen to reach an intended audience. In today’s society, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are examples of media that may be more effective in reaching a younger targeted audience than Facebook, magazines, or journal articles. The message is not that these forms are not still important and relevant, but that there are other forms with a better chance of reaching a targeted audience compared to other modes.

Therefore, in order to maintain relevance and significance, it is important for academic writing to evolve with society. Today, society has grown more reliant on technology and social media platforms for a number of reasons, including communication and immediacy. As society evolves, all types of writing should attempt to grow and evolve alongside it. In addition, the two

mentioned characteristics of composition: relaying a message and modality, offer a broad scope when considering what counts as writing. Therefore, the term, writing, is not confined or boxed-in, but should be an inclusive term with a variety of forms, rather than a term solely identifying strictly formatted essays and papers. All forms of writing, including multimodal rhetoric and digital writing, should have a place in the academic writing classroom as a means to education, inclusivity, and diversity.

Importance of Teaching Writing as a Multimodal Concept

Teachers should acknowledge students as individuals, recognizing their differences in ability, background, family life, race, ethnicity, language, social class, learning style, etc. As a result of students' differences, they will not collectively compose in the same form or mode. Teachers are called to recognize, respect, and integrate these differences into the classroom in ways that may be beneficial for all students. Angela Stockman (2021) writes, "Privileging print over the many other forms of expression silences many of the writers in our workshops, including those who are fluent in other modes" (p. 66) Students should be able to express themselves through writing in ways that are meaningful to them. Then, they are better able to express their differences and exercise their identities through modes they connect with on a personal level and understand thoroughly. In addition, they are given the opportunity to learn from one another and one another's differences and perspectives, rather than being asked to conform to a certain standard or mode of writing.

While defining writing to students as a multimodal concept is important to recognizing their differences, it is equally important as it helps prepare them for the future. Digital and social modes of composition are much more prevalent in today's society, and students should be familiar with different types of writing that they may use in their future jobs, careers, or lives. The following excerpt from Angela Stockman's (2021) book speaks to the importance of implementing multimodality in the classroom and how this practice can be beneficial to students later in their careers or lives.

Employees who know how to communicate multimodally are often valued more than those who do not. Today's professions demand an agile skillset. Tools are always changing, but our schema for using each one influences all of the others. Multimodal composition matters, and not merely because it makes the internet go around. It matters because it makes our entire world go around (p. 64).

The goal of schooling is to prepare students for their future roles and careers in society, making teaching writing as a multimodal concept important to the overall goal of education.

Instructional Steps for Implementing Multimodality in the Writing Classroom

In a classroom setting, writing should be conducted or composed in ways that are personal and meaningful to students as individuals, allowing them to express their personal thoughts, ideas, and selves, making writing more inclusive and diverse. Inspiring or teaching writing in or through multimodality can take a variety of forms, ranging from tangible manipulatives to students' favorite song lyrics or movie scripts (Stockman, 2021, p. 34). There are several roles

multimodality can occupy when implementing multimodal composition in the writing classroom, including the usage of different modes 1) to teach writing concepts, 2) as composition, itself, or 3) as inspiration for student writing. In the following sections, each role multimodality can occupy in the writing classroom is discussed and explained, alongside a detailed lesson plan for implementing each.

Analyzing and Learning Writing Concepts through Multimodality

Students can learn about writing and writing concepts through composition in modes that are meaningful to them. Encouraging students to bring in lyrics to their favorite songs, poems, movie quotes, social media posts, etc. allows them to draw personal connections when learning writing instruction. Rather than teaching strictly from a book or textbook, students are able to see form variation in writing. For example, when teaching writing concepts which include, but are not limited to, strong verbs, specific nouns, sensory details, and prepositional phrases, teachers can encourage students to bring in composition meaningful and comprehensible to them into the writing classroom to aid and support learning.

On the *Teach Me, Teacher* podcast, the host, Jacob Chastain, uses this strategy of incorporating multimodality as a vehicle for teaching writing instruction and promoting inclusivity in the writing classroom. Chastain discusses using song lyrics and different versions of songs in order to teach sensory language and detail to students with music (Chastain, 2017). Chastain uses both the original version and a cover version of four different songs, asking students to analyze the lyrics and choose which version of the song they believed better fit the word choice. Table 1 provides a detailed lesson plan describing how to put this activity into practice in a Grade 4 writing classroom. In this activity, students analyze the word choice of the song alongside the rhythm, beat, and instruments. Based on word choice, students learn about sensory language in writing, identifying how the word choice alongside the music made them feel. Relying on word choice, they choose the instrumental background they feel to be more appropriate to support the words of the song. Similar activities can be done with a number of different writing concepts and modes of writing to teach students the importance of these concepts in different modes of composition.

Table 1. *Grade 4 “Sensory Language Review” Lesson Plan.*

Standards of Learning	English 4.5 The students will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, narrative nonfiction texts, and poetry. g) Identify sensory words.
Instructional Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student will understand the concept of sensory language. • The student will be able to identify sensory language in the lyrics of presented songs and choose an appropriate

	instrumental background based on the word choice and sensory language in the lyrics.
Instructional Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The definition of sensory language will be reviewed for students. The teacher will provide examples of sensory language, asking the students to identify sensory language in a sentence/passage. 2. (Optional: Students can be split into groups or pairs for further steps if the teacher believes students will make stronger arguments/reasoning when working together.) 3. After review, students will be handed a sheet of paper with the lyrics of the first song – “Am I Wrong” – to read amongst themselves or as a class (or both!). 4. After reading and reviewing the lyrics, the teacher will play the first instrumental version of the song: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg1sT4ILG0w). Next, the teacher will play the cover version: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbC-LGUFS2Q). 5. The teacher will ask students to identify the version that they believe to be more appropriate based on the word choice in the lyrics. 6. The teacher will have students volunteer to present an argument as to why they choose the version they did. 7. Students should rely on feeling, mood, tone, instruments, voice, instances of sensory language, etc. to make their arguments. The teacher will guide students on the right track with making arguments when needed. 8. The teacher will repeat steps 3-6 with the following 3 songs – “Radioactive,” “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,” and “Hallelujah.” <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “Radioactive” <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Original: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktvTqknDobU

	<p>ii. Cover: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE2GCa-nyU</p> <p>b. “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”</p> <p>i. Original: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIb6AZdTr-A</p> <p>ii. Cover: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCJh4a5iAqw</p> <p>c. “Hallelujah”</p> <p>i. Original: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xR0DKOGco_o</p> <p>ii. Cover: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRP8d7hhpoQ</p> <p>9. After allowing students to identify their stance and present arguments for each of the 4 songs, the teacher is welcome to provide his/her own insights into the “more fitting” instrumental background for the lyrics of the 4 songs. However, the teacher will explain to students that there is no definite right or wrong answer for this exercise, as sensory language may ignite and strike individuals in different ways. Therefore, the teacher’s interpretation is not necessarily “correct” or “incorrect,” much like every student interpretation. However, the teacher may explain that there are universal “feelings” associated with certain instances of sensory language. For example, rain pattering on a metal roof is usually interpreted by people as relaxing, calm, sleepy, etc. and is not typically associated with excitement, craziness, etc.</p> <p>10. The teacher will wrap up the lesson by reviewing the big points of the lesson, including the definition and purpose of sensory language.</p>
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Instructional Resources and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Printed copies of the lyrics to “Am I Wrong,” “Radioactive,” “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,” and “Hallelujah” for each individual student, pair, or group based on how the teacher divides students ● Computer/phone with access to internet to play songs ● Speaker (optional)
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student will be assessed on the ability to present an argument/reasoning on their choice of an instrumental background believed to be most fitting to the lyrics of a song.

Multimodality as a Form of Writing Composition

Additionally, multimodality can also serve as writing, itself, where students use different forms of writing to communicate their exigence for specific assignments. Allowing students the opportunity to use modes that are meaningful and comprehensible to them awards them many opportunities for success. Students are able to express themselves and their differences through writing in ways they understand and that hold personal meaning, including poems, TikToks, letters, images, PowerPoints, diagrams, speeches, etc. Then, not only are students able to connect with the mode, exercising their personal identities, but they are also able to obtain a firmer understanding of the learned material strictly because they are presenting it in a mode they are comfortable using.

An English course at Longwood University, ENGL 210: Intro to Digital Writing, provides an instance of allowing students to compose in different modes which they may better comprehend. Students were asked to further communicate and highlight exigence from Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” and encouraged to utilize a different mode of composition to do so. Table 2 provides a detailed lesson plan describing how to implement this activity in a Grade 11 writing classroom in order to teach the advantages and disadvantages of using different genres. For this activity, one student chose to convey Dr. King’s ideas in the form of a TikTok, consisting of both images and audio. When asked about the student’s choices regarding the form/mode used, as well as the exigence intended to be brought to the forefront, the student replied:

Dr. King wrote “Letter from Birmingham Jail” as a rebuttal defending his nonviolent campaign resisting racism, injustice, and inequality. His intention was to persuade his audience to break unjust laws in a peaceful manner. The letter better educated its audience and inspired more people to attend protests. I wanted to address that the problem doesn’t lie in those against racial justice and equality, but in the ones choosing to do nothing. I chose TikTok as my mode because it allowed me the affordances of

reaching my intended audience and including photos, videos, audio, and text...TikTok is a form of social media in which users present their video and exigence in a “short and sweet” fashion. Most TikToks appeal to an audience's humor to make them laugh, which could be a weakness in my circumstance with most TikTok users watching for entertainment and humor. However, there are popular TikToks that appeal to an audience’s heart and sympathy (sensitive side), much like mine. My project was a 30-second TikTok to convince people to take a stand against racism and mistreatment. I wanted to target a younger audience who I believe to possess the power and ability to take action and make a change, and TikTok targets a younger audience, which would allow me to reach my intended audience. Older people aren’t as likely to change their views, while the views of a younger audience have a greater probability of being influenced, which allows the possibility of more change and progress. Using TikTok also allowed me to use visuals and audio describing the racial discrimination taking place, providing a glance into African Americans’ experiences and allowing me to appeal to my audience and inform them that their action is crucial to achieve change. Photos of racial discrimination and violence played on the audience’s guilt, acting as pathos and intended to influence them to take action. I included a quote from Martin Luther King’s letter as the audio of my TikTok, which explained how silence is worse than rejection, which helped build the credibility of my video, as ethos. I also had a song playing in the background that helped set the tone and contribute to the emotion of my TikTok, as pathos. I ended my TikTok with a common trend – a black screen meant to call out the viewer, implying that the video was specifically made for them. The elements of using this mode allowed me to inform viewers that their personal participation is crucial to achieving justice, rather than sitting back and watching racial discrimination and violence occur or watching others take action but still choosing to do nothing. There are many people who decide to sit in the shadows and rely on others to make a change, but the people who don’t want or choose to act have to do something if the goal is justice. And through my TikTok, I wanted to inspire my audience (young individuals who weren’t acting for or against the cause) to stand up against the racism, injustice, and inequality that was occurring.

Table 2. *Grade 11 “Genre Affordances” Lesson Plan and Project.*

Standards of Learning	<p>English 11.1 The student will make informative and persuasive presentations.</p> <p>English 11.2 The student will examine how values and points of view are included or excluded and how media influences beliefs and behaviors.</p>
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	<p>b) Use media, visual literacy, technology skills to create products.</p> <p>English 11.4 The student will read, comprehend, and analyze relationships among American literature, history, and culture.</p> <p>English 11.5 The student will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts.</p> <p>VUS.14 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s by</p> <p>b) describing the importance of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the 1963 March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Acts of 1965.</p>
Instructional Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student will know how to identify the exigence and/or purpose/message of a piece. ● The student will know how to identify the affordances of the genre in which they are working. ● The student will understand the purpose and exigence within Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” ● The student will create a project in the form of their choosing (cannot be another letter) summarizing/addressing/highlighting at least one specific idea/exigence from Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”
Instructional Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will read Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” 2. The teacher will prompt students to answer/think about a series of questions based on their reading of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

	<p>a. What does using the form of a letter allow Martin Luther King to do? What are the affordances of the chosen form/genre?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A letter is universal. It allows Martin Luther King to broaden his audience, reaching more people. ii. Letters have a conversational tone, as if he is having a dialogue with narrative and questioning. iii. A letter solidifies/records his words into a document. iv. A letter gives a sense of “rawness” – urgency and authenticity. v. There is little to no restriction of content, length, and time. <p>b. What is an example of exigence you see in the letter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Police treatment of individuals ii. Getting others involved iii. Racial equality wasn’t achieved, not because of the people against it, but because of those choosing to do nothing about it <p>3. The teacher will instruct students to find another genre/form to redeliver Martin Luther King’s message, while maintaining/highlighting one specific exigence from his letter. Students should keep in mind the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What is the exigence you’ll address? What do people need to know/learn/remember? ii. Who is your audience? How will you get them to listen if they don’t ordinarily? What are their qualities, characteristics, and concerns? iii. What do they already know?
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	<p>iv. How will you best reach them?</p> <p>v. As the rhetor, how will you achieve ethos? What pathos might you use? What logos would fit the exigence you are addressing?</p> <p>4. Students may use any form/genre of their choice to execute this project and will have approximately a week to complete their projects that will be worked on both inside and outside of class, allowing for peer and teacher feedback.</p> <p>5. Upon completion of the project, students will be instructed to present a short explanation of their redelivery of Dr. Martin Luther King's letter, providing insight into why they made specific choices, the affordances and disadvantages of the genre in which they worked, and the intended audience.</p>
Instructional Resources and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Copy of Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (printed for each individual student a digital copy pulled up on the board) ● Technology for student projects (Computers/laptops, phones, tablets, etc.) ● Paper ● Pencils, pens, markers, crayons, paint, etc.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student will be assessed based on the end product redelivering the message of Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The product should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address at least one specific exigence of Dr. King's letter; ○ And include ethos, pathos, and logos, which can be identified and explained by the student. ● The student will be assessed on the ability to present a short explanation of their redelivery of Dr. King's letter, including the affordances of the genre/form in which they worked, intended audience, and rhetorical choices.

Multimodality as Writing Inspiration

Lastly, in addition to serving as a vehicle for teaching writing or composition, itself, the use of multimodality in the writing classroom, including wordless claims and tangible manipulatives, can encourage and inspire student writing. Stockman (2021) suggests that wordless claims, including graffiti, tokens, quilts, and theatrical dance, can be forms of claim-making that create powerful arguments (p. 196). While these claims can serve as composition alone, many composers choose to write artist statements, providing additional information about their product or performance and the intentions behind it. “These statements are an authentic way to engage wordless claim-makers with alphabetic text and print” (Stockman, 2021, p. 198). To utilize multimodality as inspiration for alphabetic writing, teachers can present wordless claims to students in order to generate a response. Providing students with (or having students create their own) imagery, artwork, sculptures, songs, etc., students can be prompted to write based on the shapes colors, or patterns they notice; how these features make them feel; point-of-view journals; the function of rhythm and beat alongside word choice; and so many more. Students would then be able to analyze other forms of composition, getting a sense of how these forms function and are considered “writing.” Whether they create their own work or use others’ as writing inspiration, students are able to use alphabetic text to explain their own or predict others’ choices, intentions, and meanings behind the piece, while keeping them engaged in the writing process.

Stockman (2021) presents another activity to inspire students to make claims:

The writers that filled the room were shifting away from our meeting spot and toward the back, where an assortment of loose parts awaited them: blocks and marbles, LEGO and clay, buttons and string, paint chips and paper clips. Pebbles. Acorns. A deck of cards. Markers. There were other things as well – a wide assortment of materials for students who were not my own. Students whose languages I might not speak myself. (p. 34).

During the activity, students used tangible manipulatives to build a structure with available materials and make a claim based on their structure. Stockman (2021) states that she spoke English while the students spoke Spanish, hence the statement, “Students whose languages I might not speak myself” (p. 34). However, this statement could represent more than the literal auditory language being spoken – Stockman could also be referring to the mode of composition in which the students use to write and express themselves, or the mode they use to inspire their writing. During the lesson, Stockman used hands-on, interactive manipulatives for students to build structures to inspire their writing and allow them to form claims based on what they built. Using multimodal tools to inspire writing, rather than forcing students to conform to “the” writing process allows students to explore different writing methods that are meaningful and comprehensible to them. One student created three houses – two of the same color and one of a different color. When asked to explain the structure and form a claim, the student replied, “If we don’t know people, we can’t love them...and we need to love people in order to know them. Love is not just what happens after we know people. Love is what we have to do first” (Stockman, 2021, pp. 35-36). Stockman asked the student, “How do you hope your writing will change people...? What do you hope they will do with this information?” (Stockman, 2021, p. 36). Stockman’s statement supports the definition of rhetoric received by students in ENGL 210:

Intro to Digital Writing at Longwood University – that writing can be anything that persuades an audience or provokes a response and is not required to be presented in a specific mode or format.

Table 3 describes an activity similar to Stockman’s, which purpose serves to teach Grade 2 the importance of detail and description to effective writing.

Table 3. *Grade 2 “Detail and Description through Drawing” Lesson Plan.*

Standards of Learning	<p>English 2.12 The student will write stories, letters, and simple explanations.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) Generate ideas before writing.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) Expand writing to include descriptive detail.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">d) Revise writing for clarity.</p> <p>English 2.13 The student will edit for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.</p> <p>English 2.14 The student will use available technology for reading and writing.</p> <p>English 2.8 a) Make and confirm predictions.</p> <p>English 2.2 c) Clarify and explain words and ideas orally.</p> <p>English 2.3 a) Use oral language for different purposes: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to clarify, and to respond.</p> <p>Art 2.3 The student will analyze and interpret artwork using art vocabulary.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b) Interpret ideas, opinions, and emotions expressed in personal and others’ works of art.</p> <p>Art 2.4 The student will express opinions with supporting statements regarding works of art.</p>
Instructional Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student will know the definition of and how to: describe and revise. ● The student will understand the importance of providing descriptive detail to support their writing. ● The student will practice (do) writing and editing skills by analyzing and interpreting other students’ artwork.

Instructional Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher will provide art tools (crayons, colored pencils, markers, paint, etc.) for students to create a picture/image depicting a story of their choosing. (Note: this story may be fiction or nonfiction.) 2. The teacher will instruct students to switch papers with a classmate so that all students have a paper that is not their own. 3. The teacher will prompt students to write based on what they think/believe is happening in the picture. Students will be prompted to answer questions in their writing to support their analysis: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What do you see, observe, or notice? b. What do you think is going on in this image? c. What does it make you wonder? 4. The teacher will remind students to look at colors, facial expressions, items, details, etc. of the picture to help them determine the events taking place in the picture. The teacher will stress to students the importance of revising and editing their work for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling – all concepts learned previously in class, as a means of use and review of these concepts. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The teacher will guide students in thinking about what is happening in the picture by asking them questions about what they see, feel, etc. For example, if the picture is of a fish, the teacher can help guide student writing by asking questions such as, “What color is the fish?” or, “What is the fish doing?” for the student to answer in their interpretation/description/story of the picture. 5. The teacher will have students converse with each other, as the artist describes the purposeful choices made in his/her artwork, and the observer describes how he/she interpreted the work. 6. During this process, to conclude the lesson, the teacher will stress that an interpretation is not necessarily “right” or “wrong,” as people’s differences can allow them to interpret/analyze differently than others.
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	7. At the end of class, the teacher will collect each student's paper for evaluation, grading, and assessment.
Instructional Resources and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Art supplies: crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint, etc. ● 1 sheet of paper for each student ● 1 sheet of lined paper for each student
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will be assessed on their ability to describe their ideas, analysis, and interpretation of the artwork clearly. ● Students will be assessed based on their use of correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. ● Students will be assessed based on the level of clarity and detail of their writing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, incorporating multimodality in the writing classroom should aim to address and integrate students' personal abilities, identities, and differences. Then, it is able to create an inclusive writing environment and promote diversity, rather than forcing students to conform to a particular mode of writing, in which some may be less fluent. Asking students to compose in strictly one form privileges some, while silencing others, making the writing classroom less inclusive and diverse. Therefore, it is important for educators to recognize the importance of integrating multimodality in the writing classroom alongside the different roles multimodality can serve for teaching writing. When multimodality appears in the writing classroom as (1) inspiration for student writing, (2) a vehicle for teaching writing, or (3) as composition itself, students are able to express their personalities, identities, and learned information in ways that are meaningful to them. Teaching, inspiring, or conducting writing through different modes is a significant practice in all writing classrooms, as it allows students to not only better express their personal thoughts and ideas, but also explore new perspectives and become familiar with information and modes useful to their future lives and careers. When choosing to implement multimodal writing in the classroom environment, there are a few steps teachers should follow to ensure multimodality is used effectively – not only in an engaging manner, but also as an educational and practical activity.

First, it is important for teachers to avoid discrimination, maintaining a positive, supportive, and encouraging attitude throughout the entirety of the learning process. Understanding, respecting, and integrating student differences into the classroom requires positivity and optimism, leaving no room for discrimination or rejection. The positive attitude and outlook of teachers are crucial, not only to create, but to maintain, a consistent, positive environment, inclusive of all students.

When students feel safe, valued, and supported, they are able to open up to their fullest desire or potential in their writing, performing their greatest. In addition, seeing others model confidence, self-love, and optimism, students begin to believe in themselves and their abilities, growing confident, as they see their teachers and other students believing in themselves and others. As a means to inclusivity, it is important for all students in the classroom to feel heard, supported, and valued; and for a teacher, maintaining a positive attitude is the simplest way to ensure all students feel valued and that their identities, abilities, and works are heard and supported.

Second, teachers aiming to implement multimodality in their writing classrooms should be open to new ideas of writing. Writing is constantly changing and evolving, and with the evolution of general writing should come the growth of academic writing. New forms, formats, and variations of writing are coming to exist every day, with certain forms growing more popular in society, higher education, and careers. Therefore, teachers should be open to exploring, using, accepting and/or teaching these forms. As a result, students will be awarded the opportunities of exploring and gaining new perspectives and ways of writing, as well as the opportunity to grow their knowledge and skill set for their future. As teachers become more open-minded and accepting of new forms of writing, they are not only teaching their students of the flexible and ever-changing nature of writing, but they are also showing their students the importance of the qualities and characteristics of flexibility and open-mindedness.

Finally, teachers should ensure that each form, format, or mode of composition used is carefully organized, planned, and designed. The purpose of using multimodality in a writing classroom is not solely engagement, but rather well-rounding students on a variety of different concepts and writing styles, allowing students to express themselves and present information in ways they better comprehend. Students should understand that writing is not a skill with set rules writers should abide by, but a process with foundations that are ever-changing. The process of writing should be engaging and meaningful to students, but should also teach or display educational content related to student learning.

Overall, multimodality in the writing classroom can be a useful tool for learning when implemented properly and effectively. It recognizes the differences in student learning styles and understanding, as well as addresses modes or information that may be presented or useful to students during their future roles in careers and society. When implemented effectively, multimodal learning can increase student engagement, allow students to focus on the material/information (opposed to dwelling on the formatting), and allow students to introduce or involve new or diverse perspectives. These aspects can contribute to a classroom environment that is more engaging, useful, diverse, and inclusive. As a result, students are well-prepared for their future, enjoy the process of learning, and feel that themselves as well as their differences are recognized, addressed, and valued, creating a positive learning environment that is inclusive of all individuals.

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EXPLORING THE USE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING TOOLS TO SUPPORT LITERACY

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Abstract

In this article, the authors explored the perceptions of teachers and students for using digital storytelling tools to engage learners in literacy activities. This exploratory case study included 103 K-8 students and 11 teachers who participated in the digital storytelling activities as part of a university literacy festival. Analysis of the data revealed three major themes: immersion in the learning setting, interaction with others, and instructional activities in an authentic context. Student participants felt engaged with the digital storytelling tools and how those tools supported their literacy learning. Teachers felt encouraged to explore using the digital storytelling tools to engage their students in literacy learning. Findings suggest digital storytelling tools can be used to engage students in literacy learning activities, and teachers need support for integrating digital storytelling tools into their literacy learning environments.

Keywords: digital storytelling, literacy, technology integration, literacy festival

Exploring the Use of Digital Storytelling Tools to Support Literacy

Introduction and Context

The real power behind storytelling is the immersive engagement between audience and storyteller (Leneway, 2014). Thus, the power of digital storytelling lies in its ability to serve as a vehicle to move people together for conversations and explorations of innumerable topics and subjects, which in the end, the story subsequently illustrates. The use of digital storytelling has garnered considerable attention in K-12 education because of the effective ways digital tools motivate and engage students whilst developing both traditional literacy skills and new literacies of digital communication and production (Cummins et al., 2015; Smeda et al., 2014; Vu et al., 2019). The educational method known as digital storytelling makes 21st-century storytelling richer and more effective through the use of videos, images, and audio files (Bouchrika, 2021).

Digital storytelling is comprehensively used in various educational contexts; however, literacy education is one of the most common disciplines in education to use digital storytelling activities (Wan et al., 2008).

The College of Education at a public university in Southwest Florida hosted its fourth annual literacy festival in January 2020. The one-day festival is designed to promote PK-12 literacy in southwest Florida. The festival grew from 700 elementary students in 2017 to 2000 elementary and middle school students in 2020. Participating students are from the five PK-12 school districts served by the university, and all of the schools participating are Title I schools. According to the US Department of Education (2018), schools with large concentrations of low-income students are designated as Title 1 and receive federal supplemental funds to assist in meeting students' educational goals. Festival organizers received a generous donation towards incorporating digital activities into the festival schedule. The goal was to support and enhance engagement in literacy learning.

This study sought to explore students' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to support engagement in literacy activities and teachers' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to facilitate student engagement with literacy activities. Results of the study may encourage K-12 classroom teachers to integrate digital storytelling tools that engage students in literacy learning activities and identify the types of support needed for integrating digital storytelling tools into literacy learning environments.

Literature Review

Digital Storytelling

Today, the educational method known as digital storytelling makes 21st-century storytelling richer and more effective through the use of videos, images, and audio files (Bouchrika, 2021). Digital storytelling is comprehensively used in various educational contexts; however, literacy education is one of the most common disciplines in education to use DST activities (Wan et al., 2008). Vu et al. (2019) conducted a research study aimed to further understand the impact of digital storytelling on 21st-century learning in areas like language and literacy development, and the development of positive student identities through linking community, school, and culture in education. Study findings revealed that digital storytelling assignments strengthened students' overall engagement and depth of learning in writing. Moreover, student participants' process of digital story creation helped learners incorporate their interests and bridge cultures and languages. Learners who assume active roles in storytelling are deeply engaged in language and literacy acquisition (Roney, 2009).

Students' engagement with technology through the use of digital storytelling enhances digital literacy skills and fosters positive attitudes toward learning in 21st-century classrooms (Churchill, 2020). Digital storytelling provides learners with opportunities to engage with technology and communicate ideas in areas they are passionate about. Leneway (2014) suggested the real power

behind storytelling is the dynamic between audience and storyteller. Thus, the power of digital storytelling lies in its ability to serve as a vehicle to move people together for conversations and explorations of innumerable topics and subjects, which in the end, the story subsequently illustrates.

Student Engagement

Students seek immersive and engaging activities in their learning environments (Smeda et al., 2014). According to Martin and Torres (2017), variation exists in how student engagement is measured and defined; however, the term is commonly used to communicate meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment. In addition, student engagement was described as a multidimensional construct that encompasses three dynamically interrelated dimensions: (a) behavioral engagement, (b) emotional engagement, and (c) cognitive engagement. Thus, “student engagement is a function of both the individual and the construct” (Martin & Torres, 2017, p. 5) and is best understood as a relationship between the student, the curriculum, the instruction, the learning community, the student’s peers, and the adults in the learning environment.

Student engagement is often referred to as a student’s active involvement in effective educational practices and the commitment to educational goals and learning (Christenson et al., 2012; Reeve, 2013). An increased interest in K-12 student engagement has emerged in recent years (Bond, 2020; Chiu, 2021; Fredericks et al., 2019). Chiu (2020) explained student engagement was a prerequisite for learning, and student learning is viewed as a significant aspect of education. Teachers’ relationships with student learning are multidimensional, and findings from a study conducted by Ma et al. (2014) suggested instructors’ roles reach beyond curriculum design and preparing materials for a course. Moreover, instructors who: (a) intentionally focus on designing appropriate materials and activities; (b) understand students’ characteristics; and (c) appreciate students’ real learning needs, can enhance instructor-student interactions, and increase student engagement. The literature suggests educational technology influences how students cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally engage in learning (Bedenlier et al., 2020).

Situated Learning

Digital storytelling has the ability to offer a situated learning environment that immerses students in the content of a lesson, offers pathways for interaction with the content, and provides opportunities for instructional activities in an authentic context. Situated learning is an instructional approach developed by Lave and Wenger in the early 1990s, and follows the work of Dewey, Vygotsky, and others (Clancey, 1995) who claimed that students are more inclined to learn by actively participating in the learning experience. Situated learning essentially is a matter of creating meaning from the real activities of daily living (Clancey, 1995, para. 2) where learning occurs relative to the teaching environment. Situated learning uses cooperative and participative teaching methods as the means of acquiring knowledge. Social interaction is a critical component of situated learning. Learners become involved in a “community of practice”

which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. As the beginner or newcomer moves from the periphery of this community to its center, they become more active and engaged within the culture and hence assume the role of “expert” (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

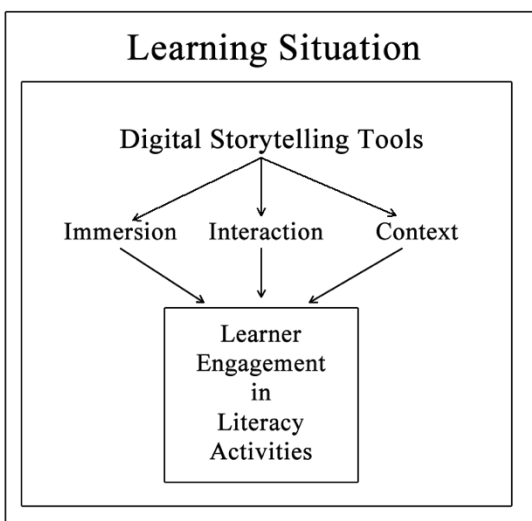
A wide range of scholarship exists about making education relevant to 21st-century K-12 students. The integration of digital technologies into K-12 classrooms over the past several decades, for example, has substantially influenced classroom pedagogical practices (Hechter & Vermette, 2014; Leneway, 2014). Applied to the classroom, situated learning is immersion in and with the experience through the use of skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication as well as through the use of technology. These experiences make up one of the key principles of situated learning theory, that instructional activities provide authentic contexts that reflect the way knowledge will be used in real life (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provided us with the opportunity to gather constructs into themes or categories (Miles & Huberman, 2014). For the purpose of this exploratory case study, the conceptual framework was developed using the theoretical framework of situated learning theory and from a review of the literature, our professional experiences, and generalizations from empirical data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The major constructs are organized in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Situated learning theory posited that much of what is learned is connected to the situation and place in which it is learned (Greeno et al., 1993). Equally, social interaction is a critical component of situated learning. First, a sense of immersion is central to situational learning as the learner feels embedded in a specific learning situation and location context (Choi & Hannafin, 1995). Second, interaction with other learners is an important component of situated

learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The importance of interaction between students and teachers, students with their peers, and interaction with the content of learning activities has been recognized as a key feature of situated learning environments (Greeno et al., 1993). The third feature is the complexity of what is studied and how this complexity is embodied in the learning environment. Complexity in this model should be understood as instructional activities in an authentic context.

Method

A bounded, exploratory case study approach was chosen for this study because we sought to explore students' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to support engagement in the literacy activities and teachers' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to facilitate student engagement with the literacy activities. This case could not be considered without the context of the literacy festival. It is within this context that student and teacher perceptions were formed. The study is bound by time and place (Yin, 2014) of the literacy festival held in January 2020 on the campus of a southwest Florida university. Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission was granted prior to the data collection phase of this study. In addition, parental/guardian informed consent for minor student participation and media release were secured by the participating schools. Data collection included 12 activity observations, 103 student evaluations, and 11 semi-structured teacher interviews.

The following research questions guided our work:

1. What are students' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to support engagement in literacy activities?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to facilitate student engagement with literacy activities?

Case Setting

During the university's one-day literacy festival, K-8 students and their teachers were invited to attend one of several 40-minute digital activities sessions offered. Students participated in two different digital activities during their 40-minute session. The first was using the digital storytelling app Puppet Pals. Students used the Puppet Pals app on iPads to record their own audio and practice speaking clearly. They worked collaboratively using visuals, movement, voice acting, and sound effects to create and tell a story. The second activity used Specdrums. Specdrums are app-enabled musical finger rings that connect wirelessly via Bluetooth to a mobile device. The rings allow you to create and mix sounds by tapping the ring on various colors or different objects. Students used Specdrums with iPads to create a musical story. Both of these activities met several English Language Arts (ELA) standards in the appropriate grade levels.

The digital storytelling theme for the digital activities at the university's literacy festival was chosen by an Associate Professor of Educational Technology in the College of Education based on their ongoing collaboration with classroom teachers to integrate digital tools into the learning environment. Undergraduate students in the university's teacher education program volunteered to help facilitate the students' use of the digital storytelling tools during the digital activities sessions. Several doctoral students from the College of Education worked with the Associate Professor of Educational Technology to design the study and collect and analyze data. Figures 2 and 3 show students engaged in digital storytelling activities during a session at the university's literacy festival.

Figure 2

Students Engaged in a Digital Storytelling Activity with Puppet Pals



Figure 3

Students Engaged in a Digital Storytelling Activity with Specdrums



Participants

Participants were 103 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade from six different Title I schools in Southwest Florida, along with 11 of their classroom teachers who attended the digital storytelling activities at the university's literacy festival. The students included English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as students receiving a variety of specialized educational services. Many of the students spoke Spanish or Haitian Creole as their first language. The vast majority of participants had no prior experience with either Specdrums or Puppet Pals. Approximately 11% of the group reported prior experience at school or at home for Specdrums and approximately 14% for Puppet Pals. All but one of the eleven teachers were female, and they ranged in teaching experience from two years to over 20 years.

Procedures and Data Collection

A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, which also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2014). The data collected in this study included activity observations, semi-structured teacher interviews, and student evaluations. The data was converged during analysis in order to understand the overall case (Yin, 2014). Pseudonyms were

used during data collection and coding to ensure all data was collected without correlation to any participant (Creswell, 2015). The principal investigator and several doctoral students carried out data collection to enhance the viability of collection. At the end of the activities, the researchers compared notes, shared interpretations, and reached a general consensus of the participants' activities during the sessions.

This study also integrated quantitative survey data to facilitate reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2014). Student evaluations were used at the end of each session to determine if the participants enjoyed their experience and if they found the digital storytelling tools helpful for supporting engagement in their literacy learning.

The digital storytelling activities were held in three different scheduled 40-minute sessions throughout the day in a room on campus set up with tables grouped for collaborative learning during the university's literacy festival. Several classes of students and their teachers arrived at the beginning of each 40-minute session. As the students arrived, undergraduate students from the College of Education's teacher education program guided the students to tables and began introducing the digital storytelling activities, including a demonstration and explanation of the Puppet Pals app and Specdrums ring and app.

Puppet Pals Digital Storytelling Activity

Students worked in pairs using an iPad that had a headphone/microphone splitter and two earbuds/microphones and the Puppet Pals app installed. Each table of students was given a choice of story starters to help them begin creating their story. Story starters included (a) a squirrel wants to be friends with a princess who has an evil stepmother, (b) a dragon goes on an adventure to free a blackbird from a knight, (c) the animals are happy to see the sun shine after a tornado, and (d) the animals throw a party for the rooster but he never shows up. Students were encouraged to use all the features of the Puppet Pals app to create their story including: (a) selecting characters available within the app or taking a photo of themselves to use as a character in the story, (b) selecting from backdrops available in the app, or taking a photo to use as a backdrop, (c) selecting from available voices within the app, or recording their own voices as part of the story, and (d) adding animation and other movements to their characters and to the backdrops. Figure 3 shows an example of the Puppet Pals screen on an iPad.

Figure 3

Example Puppet Pals Screen on an iPad



Note. From Common Sense Education (n.d.). *Puppet Pals HD*.
<https://www.commonsense.org/education/app/puppet-pals-hd>

Specdrums Digital Storytelling Activity

Students worked individually using an iPad that had earbuds/microphone and the Specdrums app installed. They were also given a ring to wear on their finger that connected via Bluetooth to the Specdrums app on the iPad. Each table of students was given a choice of books to help them begin creating their musical story. Students were told they could create a musical story based on a character or scene in the book, or they could use the story in the book to give them an idea to create their own story. Some of the books provided to the students included *My Shadow* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Shelly's Outdoor Adventures* by Kentrell Martin, and *King for a Day* by Mark Wayne Adams. Many of the book authors attended the university's literacy festival so students were able to meet the authors of the books they used in the digital activities. Figure 4 shows an example of the Specdrums app in use with a mobile device.

Figure 4

Specdrums App in Use with a Mobile Device



Note. Reprinted from Business Wire (2019, January 6). *Sphero launches music experience with Specdrums, tapping into the arts.*

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190106005036/en/Sphero-Launches-Music-Experience-with-Specdrums-Tapping-into-the-Arts>

During each of the 40-minute sessions, classroom teachers were given an opportunity to observe their students and participate in the digital storytelling activities. Doctoral students who were part of the research team conducted observations. Towards the end of each 40-minute session, research team members interviewed the teachers about their perceptions of using the digital storytelling tools to engage students in literacy activities. At the same time, students were asked to complete a Google Forms survey to collect their perceptions about using the digital storytelling tools to engage them in literacy activities and help support their reading. The Google Forms survey was accessible using a graphic image shortcut link on each iPad. Undergraduate student volunteers from the College of Education's teacher education program assisted students with accessing and completing the survey. Figure 5 shows an example question from the student survey, designed with graphic images instead of numbers to help students in grades K-8 more easily complete the survey.

Figure 5

Question from the Student Survey

I learned something that can help me when I read.



Data Analysis and Findings

After data collection, the research team reached out to an Assistant Professor of Assessment and Research in the College of Education at the university, who was independent of the research, to assist with data analysis. Data were analyzed in a three-step procedure: (1) coding each individual case including the observations and the interviews into conceptual chunks, (2) grouping open codes into categories for preliminary axial coding, and (3) comparing the open and axial codes among different participants to arrive at composite themes. Student evaluations were utilized to triangulate the observations and semi-structured teacher interview data (Saldaña, 2021). Three major themes emerged through the three-step qualitative data analysis procedure: immersion in learning setting, interaction with others, and instructional activities in authentic context.

Immersion in Learning Setting

Students felt immersed and engaged in the digital storytelling activities at the university's literacy festival, regardless of whether they had previously used Puppet Pals or Specdrums. Volunteers at the literacy festival were observed in one-on-one contact with the students, and their level of enthusiasm inspired students to engage with the digital storytelling tools. The format of the literacy festival also allowed teachers to participate and offered opportunities for them to engage with the digital storytelling tools. To determine whether any relationship between enjoyment of digital storytelling tools used at the literacy festival and perceptions of digital storytelling tools' impact on learning to read, Pearson product moment correlations were computed. Statistically significant associations between enjoyment of these digital tools at the literacy festival and perceptions of their usefulness in learning to read were found as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Correlations Among Variables of Interest

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Prior Use (Specdrums)	-				
2. Prior Use (Puppet Pals)	.14	-			
3. Enjoyment (Specdrums)	.09	.12	-		
4. Enjoyment (Puppet Pals)	-.02	-.03	.25**	-	
5. Impact of Digital Tools on Learning to Read	-.08	-.07	.21*	.24**	-

*p < .05; ** p < .01

Teachers recognized that students felt embedded and were engaged in the digital storytelling activities. One teacher mentioned it was her first experience seeing all of her migrant students engaged in learning activities. She also shared, “My student sitting over there using the Specdrums has selective mutism. This is the first time I have heard him speak ever because he is so excited to be able to create a story using music instead of words.” Another teacher shared that her students seemed so involved in the storytelling, especially those students who did not speak English. She stated, “My non-English speaking students can express themselves better with these tools using pictures and sounds.” A third teacher watched one of his students use the iPad to take a photo of a *Pokémon* character on his sweatshirt to use as a character in his Puppet Pals story. He commented, “These tools make literacy more meaningful to my students.”

Interaction with Others

Students and teachers not only felt engaged with the digital storytelling activities, but they also felt connected as they interacted with others. A student commented, “This [digital storytelling activities session] was my favorite thing yet!” Observers and teachers noted the collaboration among the students, as well as interaction with the volunteers and teachers in the room. When asked to answer what worked best in the digital activities session, one observer noted, “The kids interacting with each other.” Another noted, “The kids seemed very engaged, in more control of the material when working together.” One teacher shared, “Seeing the kids work together like this is just great.” Another shared, “The kids are more involved and comfortable interacting because the tools are interactive.” He also mentioned, “This is impactful because it’s about more than reading, kids are more involved with each other and so it brings more fun to reading.” A third teacher commented, “These tools allow kids at different levels to work at the same time.” Figure 5 shows students interacting with each other during the digital storytelling activities and Figure 6 shows students interacting with a teacher.

Figure 5
Students Interacting with Each Other



Figure 6
Students Interacting with a Volunteer



Instructional Activities in Authentic Context

Students and teachers perceived the digital storytelling tools to be a component of literacy instructional activities that can be used in an authentic context. When asked, approximately 80% of students agreed the digital storytelling tools, Puppet Pals and Specdrums, were helpful in supporting their literacy learning. The majority also liked using both Puppet Pals and Specdrums, with approximately 84% of students stating they liked using the Puppet Pals app and 70% liking the Specdrums app. One observer noticed a student rapping a story to the tune/beat she had created with the Specdrums app. When asked what she learned, the student replied, “I learned I can be anything.”

Teachers clearly found a use for the digital storytelling tools to engage students in literacy learning. Many of them shared their thoughts about the digital tools in their own context as well as ideas for the ways these tools could support literacy. Table 2 highlights thoughts and ideas shared by the participating teachers for using digital storytelling tools in their own learning environments, organized by topic.

Table 2

Thoughts and Ideas Shared by Teachers for Using Digital Storytelling Tools

Topic	Teacher Thoughts and Ideas
Standards	“I can see how these tools target standards and seeing the tools in action I have some ideas of how I would use these tools to create a lesson.”
	“I’m impacted by the way these tools target standards. There’s a connection to what’s being done in schools.”
	“These tools help reinforce the standards that include storytelling, creativity, and setting. It makes it more meaningful for the students to learn the standards.”
Diversity	“This is so helpful for students who don’t write or draw well. They have visuals for setting and characters.”
	“These tools could help all of my students, who are very diverse.”
	“I see that the technology is touching my students internally.”
	“I like that exposure to new technologies can support all students in my classroom.”

	“I realized my non-English speaking students can express themselves better with pictures.”
Lesson Ideas	<p>“It would be interesting to introduce a famous character from books we are reading so the activity is even more relatable.”</p> <p>“The Specdrums app allowed me to see how I could incorporate music into my general elementary classroom.”</p> <p>“A suggestion would be to have the app read the story (audio), while the kids add the track or beat to it.”</p> <p>“I would use Specdrums in my language arts classroom. Once the students know the app, they would really look forward to using it.”</p> <p>“Not only would these tools help kids write their own stories, the technology would help them share it with others.”</p>

Barriers

The data also revealed barriers to using digital storytelling tools in the classroom. These barriers included time for learning how to use the digital storytelling tools, student access to devices, and needed teacher support. When asked what needs more work about the digital activities, all of the observers remarked not enough time was given to the introduction and modeling of the digital storytelling tools. In response to the question of what would have made the digital activities more effective, one observer noted, “Teachers needed more background about the activity, and volunteers needed more training.” Others noted simply, “initial introduction of tools” and “more directions.” Teachers had concerns about students having access to the devices needed to use digital storytelling tools. One teacher noted, “I’m concerned about students having access to iPads at home.” Another commented, “This technology is not affordable for my charter school.” Needed teacher support was the third barrier mentioned in the data. Observers noted that teachers were engaged with the digital storytelling tools and their students, but felt teachers needed more training with the tools. Teachers acknowledged their need for support in order to use digital storytelling tools to support literacy activities in their own classrooms. One teacher mentioned, “I would need help with classroom management challenges. I feel like this could create distractions.” He also explained, “I would want to master this first, get more exposure to it. So, training and demonstrations are crucial for more implementation.” Another teacher noted she had never heard of the apps but wished she would have known about them before. A third teacher requested a lesson in her own classroom.

Summary of Findings

Student participants felt engaged with the digital storytelling tools and how those tools supported their literacy learning. Teachers felt encouraged to explore the digital storytelling tools to engage their students in literacy learning. Findings suggest digital storytelling tools can be effective tools to engage students in literacy learning activities. However, findings also suggest teachers need support for integrating digital storytelling tools into their literacy learning environments.

Discussion

It is well known that technology has the potential to add engagement and interest for learners in K-12 learning environments (Grace, 2017; Stork, 2020; Stork et al., 2020; Stork et al., 2018); however, questions remain. How can digital storytelling tools provide student engagement that supports literacy learning? What is needed to effectively integrate the technology? This study sought to explore students' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to support engagement in literacy activities and teachers' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to facilitate student engagement with literacy activities. This study is significant because it identifies possible ways digital storytelling tools can be used to engage students in literacy activities and recognizes the types of support needed for integrating digital storytelling tools into literacy learning environments.

Implications for K-12 Teaching and Learning

Digital storytelling tools can engage students in literacy learning by embedding the tools into the learning environment, offering opportunities for them to interact with others and the content of the learning activities, and providing an authentic context for the instructional activities. Barriers such as needed time for digital tool instruction, student access, and teacher support should be addressed for the successful implementation of digital storytelling tools to engage learners in literacy activities. In the following sections, we share our recommendations for both educational leaders and classroom teachers.

Considerations for Educational Leaders

Educational leaders can support teachers in integrating digital storytelling tools into the literacy learning environment by enhancing student access to the digital tools and providing the needed support that encourages teachers to use digital storytelling tools for literacy learning. Digital storytelling apps used in this study, such as Puppet Pals or Specdrums, are used with mobile devices such as iPads. Schools that use other devices (e.g., Chromebooks) have a variety of alternative digital storytelling apps to choose from (Kharbach, 2016). Many of these apps are free. If student access to mobile devices is limited due to budget constraints, educational leaders might consider reaching out to community members, investigating grant opportunities, or using funds from allowable budget areas to fund device purchases.

Beyond funding, classroom teachers need professional development support for using digital storytelling tools for literacy learning. Providing opportunities for interested teachers to

participate in professional development on how to use the digital storytelling tools for literacy learning is crucial for implementation success (Çetin, 2021; Del-Moral-Pérez et al., 2019). We encourage educational leaders to reach out to university partners or other school districts successfully integrating digital storytelling tools. In addition, educational leaders could support small cohorts of teachers to attend educational technology conferences such as ISTE Live or Future Educational Technology Conference (FETC), where they can see these digital tools in action and get ideas for integrating them into the classroom. Establishing a culture of inquiry about using digital tools to support literacy learning can further encourage classroom teachers to explore their use (Morris, 2017; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

Considerations for Classroom Teachers

There are a variety of digital storytelling tools that could be used, but this section discusses Puppet Pals and Specdrums, the digital tools used in this study. To get started, we suggest teachers develop a professional learning community (PLC). This could be accomplished with a group of like-minded teachers in the school, from within an online professional learning network (e.g., Twitter), or through a university partnership. A PLC can help teachers plan for integrating digital storytelling tools into the classroom, brainstorm lesson plan ideas, and reflect on ideas that allow teachers to directly improve teaching and learning using digital storytelling tools (Servis, 2021). It is important for teachers to understand how the tools can be used to engage students in literacy learning, but it is less important that teachers are experts in using the digital storytelling tools. Giving students time to explore how to use the tools themselves gives them opportunities for collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity which are all important 21st-century skills (Stork, 2020; Battelle for Kids, 2019).

Teachers can engage students in literacy activities using digital storytelling by using the Puppet Pals app with a mobile device like an iPad. While recording their own audio, students practice speaking clearly. If working with others, they can learn creative collaboration and dialogue. Students can also observe how multiple forms of expression such as visuals, movement, voice acting, and sound effects come together to tell a story (Villamagna, 2013). When teachers provide some background information about famous people in history or when current politicians are included as characters, students can also learn more subject-specific information in a memorable way (Villamagna, 2013). Equally important, students can work collaboratively in groups to plan their videos. Teachers should allow time for students to search online for images of landscapes, spaces, and places that might serve as great settings for their stories. Allowing students to choose images gives an opportunity for diversity to be represented. Students can use Puppet Pals videos to tell stories in a foreign language classroom, to illustrate a historical period in a social studies class, or to act out a scene in a novel or play (Kievlán, 2014).

Through the use of digital tools, students can listen to the story in the music, and this type of music can be integrated with literature, literacy, social studies, science, mathematics, and the other arts. Moreover, teachers can engage students in literacy activities using digital storytelling by using the Specdrums app with a mobile device, like an iPad. Depending on the learner level,

teachers can provide students with story starters in a read-aloud or in text form, and ask students to create their own musical story. Specdrums can also be used to support English language learners. Listening to music and focusing on the visual imagery of programmatic music allows English learners to use multiple senses to understand and use English (Cox, n.d.).

Lessons Learned

The lessons we learned during the literacy festival may be helpful for those interested in integrating Puppet Pals and Specdrums as digital storytelling tools to engage learners in literacy activities. What we share in this section are suggestions for teachers to use these digital storytelling tools to engage students in literacy activities in the classroom. We encourage practitioners to be mindful of the considerations for classroom teachers previously discussed related to time, access, and support as they integrate these tools into their classroom practice.

Suggestions for using digital storytelling tools to engage learners in literacy activities:

1. Allow time for exploration. Before beginning the activity, demonstrate the digital storytelling tool in use. If you are not comfortable using the tool, show a video that depicts the tool in use. Discuss the tool with the students and provide students with opportunities to explore the tool prior to the lesson or activity.
2. Be sure you have access to resources. Your students need access to the devices needed to use the digital storytelling tools. To use the digital storytelling tools discussed in this paper, Puppet Pals and Specdrums, students need an iPad with internet access and the app for each tool downloaded to the iPad. During the literacy festival, students worked in pairs with split headphones; each student in the pair had their own headset. If you don't have access, you could reach out to your school administration, community groups, or a local university for assistance.
3. Build support. Work within your grade-level or subject team to brainstorm lesson plan ideas. Use web-based resources such as Common Sense Media or a Google Search to find ideas and lesson plans. In a Google search for "Specdrums for literacy," the authors found over 5,000 matches, which included fully developed lesson plans aligned to standards in various states for a variety of grade levels.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore students' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to support engagement in literacy activities and teachers' perceptions of using digital storytelling tools to facilitate student engagement with literacy activities. Digital storytelling tools can offer situated learning experiences where students are engaged with literacy activities. Results of the study may encourage K-12 classroom teachers to integrate digital storytelling tools that can increase student engagement in literacy learning activities and identify the types of support needed for

integrating digital storytelling tools into literacy learning environments, such as ongoing professional development and access to digital tools. We recommend future research on the types of digital tools that support literacy learning. Exploring various technologies for immersive, interactive, and authentic literacy learning activities will also further clarify practical implementation strategies to engage learners.

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TROUBLING CRITICAL LITERACY ASSESSMENT: CRITICALITY-IN-PROCESS

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Abstract

This paper examines the perceived criticality of two students in a literacy education graduate program as they read about and discussed the role of equity in digital literacy instruction. During a graduate course focused on digital literacy, Aymee and Bethany read and socially annotated an article about the digital divide as it is perceived by newcomer families and subsequently completed an assignment where they developed a personal-practical theory of literacy education. The authors sought to closely examine how criticality demonstrated during reading may or may not transfer to future coursework and, ultimately, praxis. The data presented in this paper illustrates students' conceptualizations of equity during active reading and how their emergent understandings transferred to their personal-practical theories of teaching literacy. Findings reveal important implications for literacy educators who seek to prepare teachers to be critical, reflective practitioners.

Troubling Critical Literacy Assessment: Criticality-in-Process

This paper examines the perceived criticality of two students in a literacy education graduate program as they read about and discussed the role of equity in digital literacy instruction. This study was motivated by the belief in preparing teachers that take up criticality as a way of being

in order to push back against the inherent inequities of schooling. To authentically enact this belief requires that we interrogate whether and how teacher preparation effectively prepares critical educators. During a graduate course focused on digital literacy, Aymee and Bethany read and socially annotated an article about the digital divide as it is perceived by newcomer families. Their annotations were completed using Perusall, a social annotation tool that allows educators to observe readers' behaviors (i.e., metacognitive engagement) during reading. Students subsequently completed an assignment that prompted them to develop a personal-practical theory of literacy education. For this paper, our driving questions were: How do these two students demonstrate criticality as they read and annotate a text about the digital divide. How does their demonstrated criticality transfer to their personal-practical theories for teaching literacy? Findings reveal important implications for literacy education programs as they prepare teachers to be critical, reflective practitioners who can leverage multiple theories of literacy as tools for equity and justice.

We four authors identify as white, middle class, cisgender women. In many ways, we are archetypal literacy teacher educators and researchers. We teach about and study reading comprehension, and, therefore, we recognize the importance of reading for understanding, particularly to better understand the world and systems of power in operation. We believe reading critical texts and reading texts through a critical lens is necessary to build critical consciousness, an ongoing work in progress for us and our students. As we prepare our students to teach reading, we aspire for them to take what they learn in our classes and apply it in practice in K-12 classrooms.

Literature

Preparing teachers that utilize criticality in their praxis requires that we cultivate their critical consciousness. Building off the work of Freire (1970), we recognize the need for educators to not only be aware of inequity, but to also be committed to taking action against these inequities. One way to develop greater critical consciousness is to deeply analyze texts while considering different perspectives and recognizing oppressive social forces. In gathering data to capture this, it is imperative that we uncover methods, such as social annotation, to assess candidates' thinking. Social annotation, a during-reading tool used to capture thinking, is an innovative tool that is supported by current technological enhancements to teaching. The following sections will expand upon guiding frameworks for critical consciousness and how social annotation tools can help educators view during-reading thinking and learning about critical literacy.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness refers to one's awareness of and willingness to examine and critique socially constructed realities (Freire, 1970). Educators guide and support students in the development of their critical consciousnesses with the goal of leading learners towards engaged citizenship with the hope of "transforming dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems" (Luke, 2012, p. 5). By defining literacy as "reading the word and the world," Freire and Macedo (1987) recognized that literacy is more than learning to read and write; that it includes understanding what one reads and connecting said understanding to the

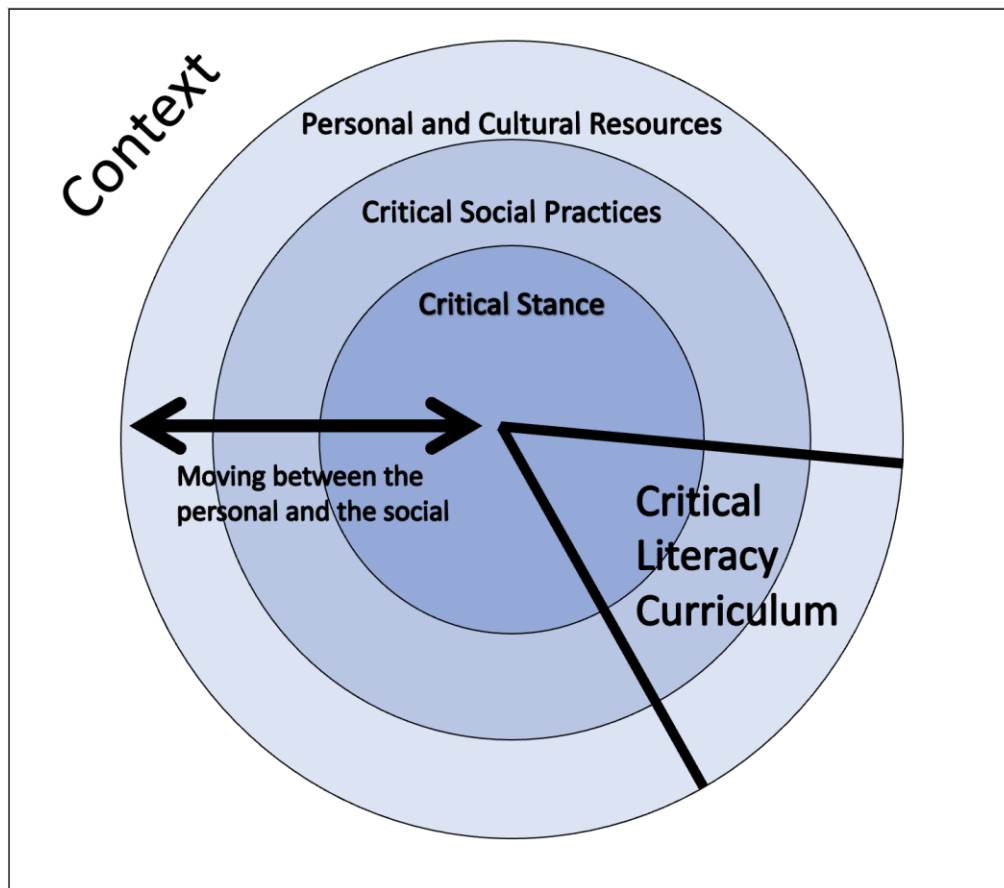
world for the purpose of empowerment. Thus, literacy instruction designed to raise students' critical consciousness can be both agentive and emancipatory through enabling learners to interpret the complex social powers at play in texts, think critically, and take action to change unjust situations.

A variety of frameworks and instructional protocols exist for helping students develop critical consciousness. Educators use activities and strategies like cultural and literary analysis, critique, creating countertexts, inquiry projects, and action projects to support students' honing of their critical consciousness and agency (Behrman, 2006; Comber, 2015; Kirylo, 2013; Lewison et al., 2015; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004a; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004b; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2019; Park, 2012; Rogers, 2018). Critical consciousness research remains contextually bound and critical scholars unequivocally support the idea that there is no prescriptive formula for incorporating critical learning opportunities into the classroom (Behrman, 2006; Luke, 2012). As such, approaches to developing critical consciousness must be "continually redefined in practice" (Comber, 2001, p. 100). However, an unfortunate result of this orientation to teaching and learning is that assessing instructional efficacy is rarely formalized and almost always left up to the teacher.

To understand the burgeoning criticality of the participants in this study, we took up Lewison and colleagues' (2015) framework for critical literacy pedagogy. They view critical literacy as a transaction among three components (see Figure 1). The first component is the personal and cultural resources readers bring to and draw on during reading. Readers bring myriad resources to reading, such as prior knowledge gleaned from any number of sources, awareness of social discourse, personal experiences, and personal desires.

The second component is the critical social practices that readers enact during reading. The authors identify five social practices that represent critical engagement with texts and the world. One practice is disrupting commonplace thinking, which manifests as probing or questioning common social assumptions or otherwise attempting to see the everyday through new perspectives. The next practice is interrogating multiple viewpoints, which manifests as questioning whose voices are present or absent in a text, seeking out counternarratives, and endeavoring to make alternative perspectives more visible. Another practice is focusing on sociopolitical dimensions, or considering how power, privilege, and in/justice impact an issue or topic. The final practice is taking action to promote social justice, or striving to use literacy to disrupt and transform inequities and our own complicity in hegemony.

Figure 1. Lewison et al.'s (2015) critical literacy framework



The third component of Lewison and colleagues' (2015) framework is the internal critical stance—or critical consciousness—that readers can demonstrate while reading and when out in the world. The authors identify four cognitive practices that represent an internalized critical stance: 1) consciously engaging, or recognizing one's unconscious frames and choosing to reframe; 2) entertaining alternative ways of being, or trying on new perspectives; 3) taking responsibility to inquiry, or recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed and asking questions that make difference visible; and 4) reflexivity, or examining our own practices, behaviors, or role in reifying inequitable systems. While complex, this triad of components effectively “melds social, political, and cultural debate and discussion with the analysis of how texts and discourses work, where, with what consequences, and in whose interests” (Luke, 2012, p. 5).

Lewison and colleagues' (2015) framework is well-honed both by them and many other scholars (e.g., Labadie et al., 2012; Leland et al., 2015; Mitchell Pierce & Giles, 2020; Wood & Jocius, 2014) but has been employed primarily with elementary and middle-grade students (for an exception, see Adams, 2020). Given that assessment of any kind always involves deciding what to value (Drummond, 2008), this study responds to a need for additional targeted research that tests the utility of this framework with adult learners (Adams, 2020).

Social Annotation

Social annotation tools are online platforms that allow readers to mark online materials with highlights and/or comments that are shared with other readers of the same text (Glover et al., 2007). Examples of popular social annotation tools include Hypothes.is (<https://web.hypothes.is/>), Perusall (<https://app.perusall.com/>), and NowComment (<https://nowcomment.com/>). For learners, annotations create visual representations of text that help them to extract important information during reading to improve comprehension (Lo et al., 2013). Readers' "language serves as proxy for their knowledge, expressing thought and understanding" (Parsons, 2018, p. 401). It also provides readers with the opportunity to asynchronously engage with a text along with their peers. This invites learners to cocreate meaning mediated by the text (Kintsch, 2013) as they develop a community of practice (Adams & Wilson, 2020; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

For educators, annotation provides a glimpse into students' during-reading thinking, allowing for the observation of readers' metacognitive awareness and engagement (Adams & Wilson, in press). A glimpse into readers' metacognitive engagement with the text provides teachers with insight regarding students' learning that may not be clearly articulated during after-reading assignments (Adams & Wilson, in press). Social annotation also can provide insight into readers' criticality towards a text. Previous research on how critical consciousness is performed through social annotation discovered that critical perspectives present in learners' annotations "represented novices engaging with ideas for the first time" (Adams & Wilson, in press, p. 15). Nonetheless, educators want to know if assigned readings intended to raise students' consciousness are achieving their intended impact. We believe burgeoning criticality demonstrated through annotations can offer at least partial insight to that end.

Study Context

This study took place at an online M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education program at a medium sized comprehensive college in the Northeast United States. The literacy program has a purposeful focus on preparing literacy specialists who understand the role of literacy in creating an equitable society. The course in which this study is situated is an asynchronous online digital literacies course that has no prerequisites. The students were assigned weekly readings using the social annotation tool, Perusall. Students were provided an introductory video on how to use Perusall as well as a list of strategic reading practices (Table 1) that good readers utilize when reading and annotating assigned texts. Students were directed to review and apply strategic reading practices from the provided list on a regular basis. Students were provided with weekly feedback from their instructor regarding their overall sense-making of the assigned readings, their use of various strategic reading practices.

Table 1. List of Strategic Reading Practices Provided to Students

Strategic Practices	Definition/Example
Inferencing	Using information from the text along with one's experiences, knowledge of, or beliefs

	about the world to fully understand what the text is about
Summarizing	Restating key ideas from multiple pages/chapters
Questioning	Asking questions of the text; asking questions that extend the text
Connecting	Linking to prior knowledge and/or praxis; connections can be text to text (includes academic learning experiences), text to self (personal experiences), or text to world (generalized experiences)
Monitoring	Confirming or clarifying understanding; looking up words; restating; asking a question regarding praxis
Synthesizing	Making deep connections between multiple texts or to earlier points in a text
Reflexivity	Examining one's own behaviors
Pushing back	Providing personal or research-supported counternarratives
Disrupting Commonplace	Asking questions about societal and/or educational issues; probing teaching practices
Focusing on Sociopolitical	Focusing on privilege, access, equity, and/or justice

For this paper, we examined annotations from a reading that was assigned near the end of the semester to gauge whether/how the participants were “developing a critical consciousness to engage in critical discussions with others in a common journey toward truth and peace” (Gee, 2017, pp. 26-27) while participating in conversations during reading. The reading, *Stories of Digital Lives and Digital Divides: Newcomer Families and Their Thoughts on Digital Literacy* (Gallagher et al., 2019), was selected by the instructor to compel students to think about access to digital technology and perspectives and experiences of those different from themselves.

In addition to examining the reading annotations, we also examined an assignment participants completed at the end of the semester. This assignment asked students to describe their personal-practical theories about literacy teaching and digital literacy teaching. For this assignment, participants were asked to create a two-column chart. In the left column, students were directed

to state their feelings or beliefs about literacy education. In the right column, students described the people, places, and experiences that impacted or led them to arrive at their stated feelings or beliefs (see Figure 2 for an example). The second part of the assignment followed the same format, but candidates were asked to describe their feelings or beliefs about digital literacy and how it impacts teaching, learning, and literacy education. As this assignment was at the end of the semester, we hoped that candidates would identify issues that were presented in readings about technological access, inequities, and the complexities of literacy. The analysis of the personal-practical theories used the same codes as those used for the annotations.

Figure 2. Example of a completed Personal-Practice Theory assignment

Feelings/Beliefs about Literacy Education	People, places, and experiences that have impacted my feelings/beliefs.
I believe literacy education is multifaceted and involves people as culturally literate beings.	-My first reading assignment as a graduate student impacted my feelings and beliefs about how literacy education involves people as literate beings. <i>What is Literacy?</i> By James Paul Gee, discusses how systematically engrained literacy is in our society. The way we talk, think, act, and speak around others is based on discourse, both primary and secondary, which in some ways are problematic because every discourse holds viewpoints and values defined as true, will do so at the expense of another discourse, thus

Methods

The two participants examined here are part of a larger case study and were purposefully selected for this article as rich examples for why criticality must be assessed in multiple ways over time. We utilized stratified purposeful sampling to identify “samples within samples” (Patton, 2022, p. 240) who would help us capture some variation (Suri, 2011). Each student is considered a case and is studied to gain understanding of how each case is situated in a greater entity (Stake, 2005). The first participant, Aymee, was a full-time upper elementary school teacher and a part-time student taking her first class in the master’s program. The second participant, Bethany, was a full-time student in her second to last semester in the master’s program. Bethany also worked a full-time job in residence life at an institution not connected to the institution at which this study takes place. The participants were selected purposefully as they shared many similarities—both Black women living in a major metropolitan area in the Northeast—but were on different teaching and learning trajectories.

Data collected in this study were the digital annotations participants made on Perusall during an assigned reading about newcomer families and their perceptions of the digital divide as well as a subsequent assignment that prompted the students to develop a personal-practical theory of literacy education. All data were collected with the approval of the college’s institutional review

board. Data was aggregated and coded eight months after the semester in which the study occurred.

The codebook (Table 2) was pre-established based on critical reader behaviors adapted from Lewison and colleagues (2015):

Table 2. Preliminary Codebook

Critical Behavior	Description
Engaging in reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining one's own practices and behaviors (e.g., "I need to pay attention about what I am resistant to.") Recognizing one's own role in maintaining the status quo (e.g., "I know I am guilty of this...")
Pushing back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing personal or research-supported counternarratives (e.g., "That isn't always true. When I was in school...") Considering multiple and contradictory perspectives (e.g., "Who gets to say what activism looks like?")
Disrupting commonplace ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking questions about common social assumptions (e.g., "I think it is ridiculous that school lunch costs money.") Asking questions that probe common teaching practices (e.g., "Ok, but pull-out models just create different learning losses...") Seeing the everyday through new lenses (e.g., "Why is this considered normal?")
Focusing on sociopolitical dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering how privilege, power, and injustice impact topic (e.g., "Not all students have access to technology in their homes.")
Contemplative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not make initial statement but is triggered to think about another perspective (e.g., "I hadn't thought about that before")

Each code was then ranked according to the depth of understanding and demonstration into one of three hierarchical levels: lip service, surface, or strategic understanding (see Table 3 for example). Lip service was considered the lowest level of criticality and entailed acknowledgement of a concept, but no additional backing with ideas or concepts. A surface level code indicated slightly deeper understanding, perhaps probing a concept, while strategic understanding demonstrated the highest level of criticality backed by research and the acknowledgement of multiple perspectives.

Table 3. Coding Examples

Code	Lip Service	Surface	Strategic Understanding
Focusing on sociopolitical dimensions	“No one should have to choose between being Black and being American. This is so sad!”	“We shouldn’t view students’ cultures and communities as detrimental to their learning. We should look at them as things for us as educators to learn about to be culturally sustaining and motivating in general.”	“I think this terminology should really be changed to ‘educational debt.’ These students do strive and grow just the same as their more privileged peers, they just start at a disadvantage and are given equal or less resources and are positioned to never catch up. That’s why Gorski says we have to build equity into literacy instruction.”

We four researchers met as a whole group to review the codebook and participate in collaborative coding. The two authors, Author 1 and Author 4, with the most experience with the codebook demonstrated how to code and then we split into pairs to practice coding. Pairs were then given additional material to code before the next meeting where we reviewed the codes and established interrater reliability. Researchers were then assigned a coding partner and one case student. Once each pair finished coding, the whole group met to review and confirm codes as an act of member checking.

Findings

In the findings that follow, we showcase participants’ social annotations written in response to assigned readings and in dialogue with peers as well as their responses to the personal-practical theories assignment. Aymee’s annotations demonstrate a range of critical behaviors (e.g., socio-political, reflexivity, contemplative, and disrupting commonplace), while Bethany’s annotations show the range of hierarchical levels (i.e., lip service, surface, strategic understanding). We also establish the ways that the participants do and do not take up critical perspectives in their personal-practical theory statements.

Aymee

Aymee did not annotate as often, but we noted that there seemed to be a lot of intentionality in her annotations. Through Aymee’s annotations we see her begin to consider how privilege, power, and injustice, what we refer to as socio-political dimensions of learning, impact a topic like access to technology. To effectively capture Aymee’s critical behaviors while reading, we highlight four annotations below. We then examine her personal-practical theory for evidence of critical transference.

Considering Access. Aymee’s annotations reveal her attempts to wade into issues of inequity regarding student and family access to digital resources. In response to the text discussing how

digital lives and the digital divide seem like bounded concepts but are actually deeply context dependent (Gallagher et al., 2019, p. 774), Aymee annotated: “This brings to mind the idea of equity. Knowing that people have different needs and available resources should be a constant reminder that opportunities and access should be different for each individual to help them meet their fullest potential.” Through this comment, Aymee reveals that she is beginning to think about and consider concepts of equity and access. She appears to ponder how educators can think about equity and access when every individual has different needs and wants. She did not indicate specific changes or alternative actions that would support this perspective, suggesting these were emergent ideas for her or potentially lip service.

Reflecting on Practice. Aymee’s annotations also showed evidence of reflection about her own practices and behaviors. As the article discussed how structural inequalities impact technological skills and patterns of use—that is, that people living in poverty tend to exclusively consume digital texts, while more affluent people both consume and produce digital texts (Gallagher et al., 2019, p. 774), Aymee reflected on her own practices. She wrote, “This reminds me of our Twitter assignment for this course where we are either consumers or producers or both. Now I can’t help being persuaded to do a bit of both so as to broaden my own literacy development.” While this annotation sidesteps the concerns about structural inequality, it does show us that Aymee was beginning to think about where and how she was positioned in the context of who gets to produce and who gets to consume digital texts. Further, her reflection led her to commit to strengthening her own digital text production, to ensure that she is not a passive consumer. This commitment stems from a desire to be more literate, perhaps for her own edification, or for that of her students, or both.

Contemplating Language Learners. Aymee demonstrated thoughtful contemplation of a critical issue as she read about the scarcity of digital literacy research focused on English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrants (Gallagher et al., 2019, p. 774). She noted, “I’m glad ELLs are being explicitly mentioned!” Her response, though lacking substance, showed a willingness to learn about a new perspective by acknowledging the importance of this topic and research.

Challenging Assumptions. Aymee later disrupted commonly held teacher beliefs or conclusions that teachers might draw about newcomer families’ engagement around digital tools or technology. The findings of Gallagher and colleagues’ (2019) research revealed that the participating newcomer families ultimately marginalized building digital lives in favor of establishing themselves in their new country, however, they emphasized, “This is not to suggest that digital literacy was not important to these newcomer families; indeed, all project participants were grateful for the opportunity and affirmative of the value of the project” (p. 777). To this, Aymee responded:

Oftentimes a misconception is that an in-active digital life is as a result of economic status or a families’ negative attitude toward technology. It is interesting to see that some digital lives are the way they are because they are newcomers that prioritize other things. I think the author wants to remind us to always remember that digital lives are affected by

so many different factors, and it is up to educators to make known the importance of digital literacy for a child's development.

This comment speaks to recognizing and interrogating the assumptions teachers often make about young learners and their caregivers. Simultaneously, Aymee was reflexive about her own practice in committing to not drawing such conclusions with her own students.

Developing a Personal-Practical Theory. Despite annotation data that exhibit Aymee's considerations of issues of in/equity, contemplation of new perspectives, probing of common assumptions, and reflexivity about her own practice, very little of that thinking seemed to transfer to her personal-practical theory. It did not appear to us that Aymee took away implications for her own students. Instead, it appeared that her focus remained on her students' perceived immediate needs, such as meeting assessment goals, based on what was prioritized in her written personal-practice theory.

For example, Aymee wrote:

I believe that literacy education should empower students to read books at their level while building and practicing skills that would allow them to advance to books at higher levels. They should also read books of varying genres and in varying forms (online & print).

Varying genres in varying forms seemed to be the closest Aymee would edge toward the idea of digital texts. We interpreted this as her seeing value in developing students' digital literacies, but not necessarily critical aspects. She justified her expressed belief, saying:

My experience as a teacher has taught me how important foundational skills, such as questioning, making inferences, and summarizing, are and that these skills can be applied to any level of reading. I have students on Level E in fourth grade. However, when they are taught these skills, they are able to apply it to what they read, and still function as a contributor to texts we read together as a class. My students have taught me that giving them books above their level is not helpful. It can be more frustrating than anything else.

Her teaching beliefs centered on her students' ability to advance in reading levels. We respect and agree with her sentiment that comprehension strategies can be taught with texts of any complexity, though we take a position that concerns about text complexity must move beyond the lexical and grammatical to include medium and structure.

Aymee did demonstrate some emerging critical consciousness about change, expressing:

I believe that digital literacy is an essential part of literacy education and is necessary for students to be ready for our digital world. I also believe that digital literacy allows students to learn and practice higher-order thinking skills, which are necessary for the classroom and to be global citizens. I also believe that schools should prioritize including digital literacy in curriculum and school practices.

This was as disruptive as Aymee seemed willing to be within her personal-practical theory. She suggested that teachers need to be educated about the importance of digital literacy, schools need

to prioritize it, and they are not. She explained, “I realize how important it is for students to... be allowed to practice skills such as creating, synthesizing, analyzing and evaluating information... When students engage in digital learning, the aforementioned skills are being used and developed.” It appears that the course materials helped Aymee to adjust her perspectives on literacy instruction to be inclusive of digital text. It appears that she recognizes the importance of digital skills for students’ future, but only in how they fit into her text-based and monomodal conception of literacy, that is: reading and writing print text. She does not seem to have expanded her definition of literacy—or rather, *literacies*—to include digital literacies.

She further explained her thinking, sharing, “I see the need for teachers to be given education on why digital literacy is important and how it really adds value and meaning to a student’s learning experience and their life.” This final comment seems to imply that, despite Aymee’s use of the term “digital literacy,” she continues to perceive digital learning opportunities as an avenue for enhancing print-reading skills. This is reinforced by her earlier reference to learning theories and skills that were developed by Bloom (1956) long before the advent of digital texts.

Bethany

Bethany was almost exclusively focused on the socio-political dimensions of learning in her annotations. She was an active class participant who frequently spoke directly to peers through her annotations. Even though many of her annotations were often shallow in content, the frequent critical bent of her comments demonstrates critical consciousness to some degree. In this section, we examine three of Bethany’s annotations as representative of the corpus of her data. We then examine her personal-practical theory to understand the ways in which her critical consciousness carries over.

Naming Privilege Power, or Injustice. Throughout her annotations, Bethany was seriously considering how power, privilege, and injustice impact digital literacies. In response to the text’s description of newcomer parents’ priorities (i.e., employment, housing, legal documentation) (Gallagher et al., 2019, p. 776), Bethany wrote, “!!This is important to recognize, especially in schools where poverty and low socio-economic status are prevalent. Sometimes parents are just trying to survive and provide food for their children. Then, comes everything else.” Bethany’s use of exclamation points signaled her emphatic feelings about her point that no teacher should be judging parents for not prioritizing technology over basic needs. While she seemed to understand and echo the criticism the text offered, her annotation was reiterative rather than additive.

Probing Inequities and Power Disparities. Bethany often probed issues of inequity by highlighting the cultural conflicts between some students’ home life and school. For example, when the authors of the text discussed an unexpected finding about communication styles—“educators in Canada tend to provide abundant praise and positive feedback when many newcomer parents prefer to get honest, even critical feedback so that they can focus on skill deficits that their child needs to address.” (Gallagher et al., 2019, p. 776)—Bethany connected that to larger diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in schools. She commented:

According to Gorski's video, we need to acknowledge the difference in cultures in school and appreciate them, rather than celebrate them all the same way. This leads students to feeling invisible, as if it's a marketing strategy of convenience, rather than a meaningful homage to their culture.

Bethany first made a connection to a video she viewed earlier in the semester as part of her coursework. She imperfectly reiterated Gorski's (2017) point that celebrating diversity does not make an institution less sexist, ableist, racist, etc. We infer that she was calling diversity celebrations performative and alleging that what would be truly equitable would be to understand different cultural norms and practices and modify instruction and communication styles to align with those norms and practices.

Proposing Transformative Actions. In a few of Bethany's annotations, she moved beyond criticizing current practices to suggesting alternative practices that would be more equitable. In outlining their research questions, Gallagher and colleagues (2019) ask,

What are the at-home resources (digital and nondigital) that families use to support the literacy learning of their children? How can the parents of English learners be supported to collaborate, access, and use 21st century literacy learning tools in their homes? (p. 775).

Many students in the course responded to this question with their own favorite resources, such as Raz-Kids (<https://www.raz-kids.com/>), while others discussed the differences between resources for home and resources for school, and still others shared personal experiences with different resources. Bethany added to her peers' responses, sharing, "These are all great digital and non-digital resources! I think an information sheet about literacy learning resources in each family's [sic] home language would be helpful for students to bring home!" In saying so, Bethany moved the class discussion forward by imagining how to actualize their knowledge to be of use to the families of language learners: providing families with resources in multiple modalities as well as in a variety of languages.

Developing a Personal-Practical Theory. Bethany's personal-practical included multiple incidences of criticality. Each incident, like the annotations showcased above, focused on socio-political dimensions of learning. For example, Bethany took a flexible stance toward literacy and literacy education, stating, "I believe literacy education is continuously expanding, evolving, and developing." She explained her position:

Literacy education includes educating students on how to be literate socially, emotionally, culturally, and digitally, amongst other factors including media, multicultural, and anti-racist literacy. Literacy education has expanded beyond reading and writing. We have read about this concept of never quite achieving literacy comprehension due to "the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity in society" (New London Group, 1996).

It seems that the coursework supported Bethany's expanded notion of literacy, as she drew on a quote from another course reading to substantiate her position.

She acknowledged the intersection of culture and literacy, sharing, "I believe literacy education is multifaceted and involves people as culturally literate beings." Her reasoning once again cited a text she read as part of her coursework: "The way we talk, think, act, and speak around others is based on discourse...[and] every discourse holds viewpoints and values, sometimes at the expense of other discourses (Gee, 1989)." She also discussed how "being literate" depends on your context, referencing a trip to Thailand where she struggled to navigate language barriers.

At another point, Bethany probed the intersections of literacy and identity, and how historical contexts shape communication. She wrote, "I believe literacy education is a socio-historical concept with considerations for the historical concept of identity," explaining, "it is important for one to understand the history behind why we communicate the way we do, what historical implications still remain in literacy, and how we can move forward to dismantle these implications in contemporary literacy."

Notably, all of Bethany's demonstrations of criticality were about literacy, broadly, and not about digital literacy, specifically. In fact, her multiple statements about digital literacy (such as, "I believe digital literacy impacts teaching and learning" and "I believe digital literacy impacts literacy education") were marked by their lack of critical commentary. We found this surprising, as she readily connected digital literacy to issues of access in her annotations. Instead, she discussed the benefits of technology and digital literacy skills for expanding learning opportunities in school. The closest she edged toward critical discussion of digital literacy was when she explained:

When you go into stores, malls, or restaurants, many people offer a QR code for guests to scan. Also, saving money requires digital literacy and comprehension, as many store discounts require guests to follow an account, create an account, or download/upload a barcode online. Finally, making money also requires digital comprehension because one must fill out a job application, engage in email correspondence, schedule an interview time, virtually log onto the interview, and accept a job online through a portal, where they also fill out needed information, agree to a background check, and access their money/pay stubs when they get paid.

We perceive this comment as an implicit nod toward the role digital literacies play in socio-economic opportunity.

Bethany was adept at identifying discriminatory systemic practices and following the thread down to the individual impact of such practices. In an attempt to understand her position on the spectrum of critical literacy development, we did note that her critical stance remained largely limited to identifying issues; rarely did she propose or suggest solutions or alternative actions toward justice or equity. However, we wonder if that was simply due to the nature of the assignments analyzed.

Discussion

We found that Aymee participated judiciously in her social annotations. She engaged in a variety of critical behaviors as she responded to the text and her peers. This is perhaps unsurprising, given Aymee's positionings as a new graduate student and a novice teacher. However, we were left wanting more from her annotations in terms of depth and moving toward action, or at the very least transference to her person-practical theory.

Ultimately, we saw her take up some critical ideas, but then she seemed to set them back down. She recognized that all students need digital literacy skills, but her priority remained on what she perceived to be her students' immediate needs. Not knowing her students, we cannot say one way or the other if Aymee's call is the right call. We do wonder about her framing student needs in the language of standards (e.g., reading on level) and whether administrative pressures muddle the issues for her. After all, increased emphasis on standards-based strategies and skills and teacher accountability over the past few decades has pushed classroom experiences that foster critical perspectives and analysis to the margins (Lau, 2012; Rury, 2016). Avila and Moore (2012) posit that critical teacher perspectives have continued to be challenging in K-12 instruction because "critical literacies often operate from a sociocultural definition of literacy while standards define literacy proficiency in individual students" (p. 32). Ours and others' research reveals the challenges pre- and in-service teachers encounter with making connections across such seemingly disparate concepts (Dávila, 2013; Papola-Ellis, 2016). And when they do, curricular mandates incapacitate though teachers, leaving them with little flexibility or time for concerted disruption of the many inequities that plague public education.

We found that Bethany participated less often but was more consistently critical. When responding directly to the text, she frequently discussed socio-political dimensions, often identifying systemic inequities. When interacting with peers, her social annotations were more likely to lack critical commentary, though she did infrequently push peers toward taking action. Bethany was in the final semester of coursework in the program and had experienced multiple semesters of sustained critical exposure prior to this course. We recognize that this likely means she brought more background knowledge about literacy to the reading experience and had more structured practice taking up a critical stance toward literacy topics. We speculate if this is perhaps why Bethany was more likely to discuss systemic issues. We also suspect that Bethany's lack of teaching experience compelled her to reflect more on the big picture of literacy and education, as she did not have her own classroom context to which she could apply her learning. Perhaps had she a classroom of her own, she would have more confidently proposed positive alternative actions for practice.

Taken together, we found ourselves questioning learner pathways to critical consciousness and wondering whether our examination of Bethany and Aymee necessitates a shift in how we understand literacy educator preparation. We do not believe two cases can or should be generalized to make definitive claims about critical trajectories, but Bethany and Aymee do reveal how criticality evolves over time and in multiple ways. Their processes were highly unique despite their similarities in geographic location and racial identity. Sociocultural definitions of literacy argue that literacy is always about ways of participating in social and cultural groups (Gee, 2017). Just as students bring culturally constructed knowledge and values

into the classroom (Heath, 2011; Moll et al., 2009; Street, 1985), teachers too draw on personal and cultural resources, social relationships, to facilitate their understanding of instruction. Additionally, teacher beliefs and a socialized avoidance of controversial issues has also impeded the development of critical consciousness (Cruz, 2015; Lee, 2011; Rogers & Mosley-Wetzel, 2014; Smith & Lennon, 2011; Vasquez, 2000).

We understand the ultimate goal of critical pedagogies as learners carrying critical perspectives forward into the world and reacting to lived experiences from that critical stance. Our goal remains to expose graduate students to consciousness raising texts, like the instructor did here, for them to engage critically, as Aymee and Bethany did, but then to move together toward strategies for understanding where we provide possible alternative actions for practice and implement them, which Bethany did to some extent, but Aymee did not. If students toy with these critical ideas but we do not see those ideas transferred to application assignments, such as creating a personal-practice theory, does that mean that our instructional practice is ineffective? We do not believe that is the case. We view novice teachers' critical development as a long-term process; as a continuum of skills, knowledge, and dispositions. This orientation is supported by Bethany's more confident critical commentary at the end of the program when compared to Aymee's budding attempts at the beginning of the program. How we assess critical literacy is not prescriptive, nor should it be. For decades, critical literacy as an instruction movement has been criticized for its dearth of evaluative tools. While we hope for future research that strives to develop effective tools for evaluating criticality, we also believe that such a tool must include multiple metrics across time.

Implications for Practice and Research

The critical literacy present in the analyzed social annotations represents novices engaging with ideas for the first time. Although the annotations were not deeply critical, they did contain sparks of critical thought that, while unfinished, might be expounded upon later. This suggests that when readers build connections across experiences and texts they are reading, they are better equipped to scrutinize "how, why, and in whose interests' particular texts might work" (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 218). The two participants demonstrated the deep thinking that precedes critical literacy, but criticality present in the annotations was shallower than what we would hope for in a post-reading discussion and as described in the literature. We suspect this is because during-reading annotation does not invite stepping away from the text to conduct deep critical analysis. We must formatively assess in a variety of ways to determine their criticality and we do not know what that means for their future practice because this represents their thinking in a particular context. Possible means of doing this could include modeling how one may move through the hierarchy of criticality. Other instructional strategies might include having students define their comprehension strategy use in their annotations using hashtags (e.g., #connection, #synthesis, etc.). This may build students' awareness regarding the frequency of which they use some strategies and not others. We could then ask students to 'try on' strategies they haven't used in this context. In addition, we could encourage students to increase their peer-to-peer responses to promote dialogue. For instance, if one peer asks a question, another peer should try to answer it.

While we have been studying the utility of social annotations in the context of teacher education (e.g., Adams & Wilson, 2020; Adams & Wilson, in press), we have more questions for future research. This particular study reveals the limitations of social annotation in that just because students engage in criticality while reading and responding to a text, it tells us nothing about whether that critical orientation persists to show up in future coursework or praxis. Future research might include developing tools to measure this and to track sustained criticality as well as how criticality transfers to practice over time. Finally, we also do not know if participants' lip service stems from their dispositions or more of a pragmatism to get the assigned work done. Future research might inquire about this as well.

Conclusion

Raising preservice teachers' critical consciousness requires facilitating multiple opportunities for them to engage with text that encourages criticality, supported by assignments that invite students to transfer and apply new critical knowledge to imagined teaching contexts. If we seek to develop teachers for whom criticality is a way of being, our courses must be explicitly designed to elicit sustained critical stance, and to assess and evaluate student progress at multiple points and through multiple means. Whether students are offering lip service, surface engagement, or demonstrating strategic understanding, such behaviors provide insight into how deeply students are internalizing criticality and how effectively instruction is supporting their learning. One or two assignments will not suffice. If we want our future teachers to hone their way of being, we must make it our way of teaching as well.

This article presents a snapshot of the thinking of two literacy education graduate students as they responded to a text about equity in digital literacy instruction and crafted personal-practical theories of teaching. This snapshot highlights the difficulties in examining criticality-in-process, as there are always potential external factors impacting comprehension that we do not see. Teacher educators committed to this work must utilize multiple techniques to prepare teachers to take up critical ways of being. This work takes time, reinforcement, patience, and reflexivity about one's own practice.

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