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Georgia Journal of READING

Volume 36 Number 2 Fall 2013



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Message From the Editors

BY LINA B. SOARES AND CHRISTINE A. DRAPER

As we approach the days of autumn, we are reminded that our students are back in school and we must say good bye to the summer days, the fun vacations we have taken, special times with families and friends, and welcome fall and all its radiance. I have often wondered what it is about fall that puts a smile on my face. Is it the fact the days will begin to grow shorter? Is it the fact that soon the earth will begin to change to different hues? Or . . . is it the fact that I can shed my shorts for corduroys and sweaters and feel as if I have a brand new wardrobe? Perhaps, it is all of the above. Fall is a special season and it cannot be neatly categorized because the different months of fall are as wide-ranging as the sun and the moon.

In our third publication since becoming editors, Christine and I are pleased to offer readers a diverse group of articles – articles that are as eclectic as the autumn season. While each contribution is borne from research, framed in theory, and specifically informs classroom instruction, each article does so in a uniquely different manner. Yet, each article we present is ultimately bound by the continued commitment to maintain the journal's integrity and focus - a forum for authors who understand the important role literacy plays in the lives of elementary, middle, secondary, and higher education students.

The first contribution, "Helping Struggling Readers Track Their Own Learning Growth" by Dr. Susan Szabo, features a new twist to K-W-L. Dr. Szabo has reworked K-W-L to permit struggling readers in content-area classrooms to build comprehension while engaging in content material. Due to the advent of the Common Core State Standards, Dr. Szabo has been intensely interested in helping struggling readers develop the skills and abilities to increase their content knowledge and build a sense of confidence while reading at the same time. The students featured in this article were struggling readers in a social studies classroom and from their participation and engagement using the remake of K-W-L, they became motivated readers and developed a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

Our own editorial board member, Dr. Anne Katz, offers "The ABC's of Literacy: Creating Excitement about Learning through Reading, Writing, and Poetry in an Early Learning College Literacy Session." The article is a report of a grant that was funded by the Georgia Reading Association and describes two literacy workshops that Dr. Katz conducted as part of a local Early Learning College initiative. The program's goal was to engage very young children and their families in early literacy experiences in preparation for entering school. Dr. Katz writes, "The workshops aim to provide parents with strategies to create high-quality learning environments for their children. The article is a must read as Dr. Katz highlights the merits of forming partnerships between early childhood teachers and families of preschool children.

The role of close reading in the 21st century has become a necessary component of reading comprehension more than ever. Given the extraordinary amount of informational texts presented in print and digital formats that students encounter in today's classrooms, the need for students to engage in critical reading to determine what a text says explicitly is essential for students to become critical consumers of information. The next article in this journal is a review of Sunday Cummins' (2013) *Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8*. According to Cummins, close reading is the process of understanding how the words on a page fit together to support the author's central ideas. While close reading is a concept that is more familiar in the content areas of middle and secondary classrooms, the beauty of this text lies in the effective how-to instructional strategies, lesson plans, student work samples, and a study guide that elementary teachers can adapt to their own classrooms.

The final article in this issue examines the importance of vocabulary in learning and highlights the significant responsibility that all content-area classrooms now face in sharing responsibility to help students develop academic language with the demands of the Common Core State Standards. In a very practical manner, Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle and Watts Taffee's book, *Teaching Academic Vocabulary K-8: Effective Practices across the Curriculum*, discusses the importance of introducing students to the academic discourses of the content disciplines through various methods to maximize vocabulary teaching. The goal is for students to learn the content more deeply. This book emphasizes the intentional teaching of specific words and word learning strategies which can build students' vocabularies and improve reading comprehension. Readers will enjoy the insightful, authentic examples that are included throughout the text and the thoughtful discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

In closing, we think you will find as you come to the end of your journal reading an excitement that comes from good reading. As editors of the *Georgia Journal of Reading*, a refereed journal of the Georgia Reading Association, we invite those interested in improving reading and language arts instruction at all levels to submit manuscripts for publication in future issues. The *Georgia Journal of Reading* is published twice yearly in the Spring and Fall. We request articles that are grounded in current theory and research, book reviews, or creative teaching strategies that address all levels from elementary to college. Preference is given to articles focusing on topics that impact Georgia's students.

Greetings!

I am honored to serve as President of Georgia Reading Association (GRA) for the 2013-2014 academic year. Thank you for your continued membership in GRA. Each member plays a vital role in promoting literacy in our schools and communities. If you are not a member, we encourage you to join. Membership in GRA is a great professional opportunity. The organization offers many benefits, such as scholarships, the Georgia Journal of Reading, Focus newsletter, and the Fall Forum.

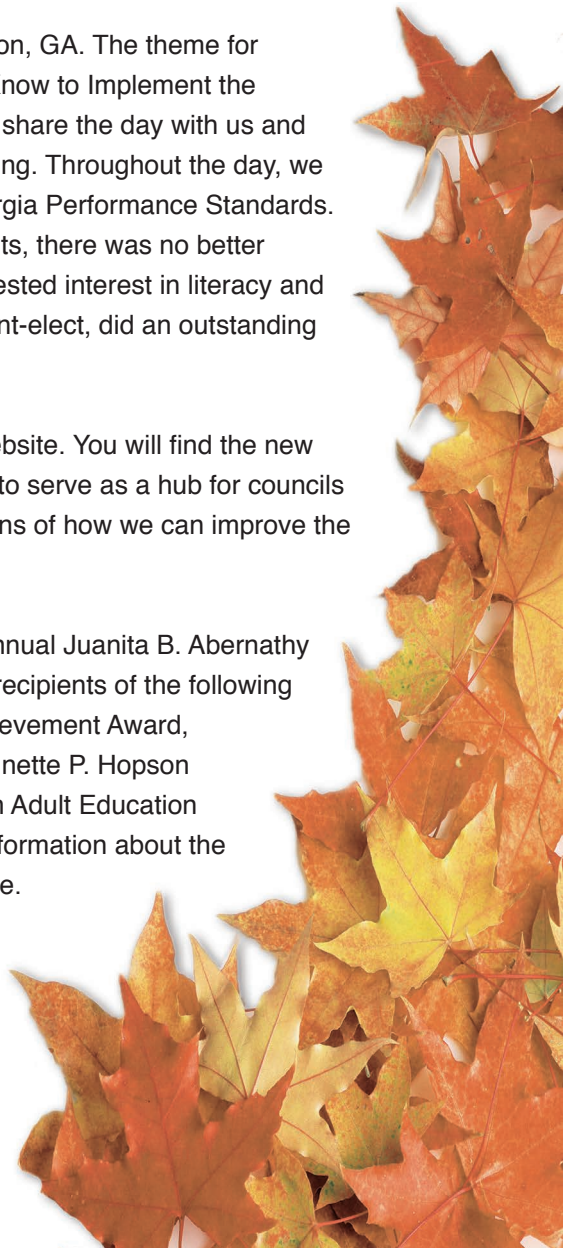
On September 23, 2013, we hosted the Fall Forum in Macon, GA. The theme for the forum was "Read Across Georgia: What You Need to Know to Implement the Standards." We were fortunate to have Dr. Douglas Fisher share the day with us and provide guidance and support in understanding close reading. Throughout the day, we discussed strategies to implement the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. From the plenaries to the concurrent sessions to the exhibits, there was no better place than the Fall Forum to meet educators that have a vested interest in literacy and implementing the standards. Dr. Beth Pendergraft, president-elect, did an outstanding job planning the event.

We are currently in the process of redesigning the GRA website. You will find the new website more user friendly and dynamic. We want the site to serve as a hub for councils to share updates, events, and ideas. If you have suggestions of how we can improve the site and better serve you, please inform us.

In the near future, you will receive information about our Annual Juanita B. Abernathy Awards Program and Reception. Each year we recognize recipients of the following awards: Reader of the Year, Bob W. Jerrolds Reading Achievement Award, Lindy-Lopez Butner Award, Reading Leadership Award, Annette P. Hopson Service Award, Reading Teacher of the Year, Ola M. Brown Adult Education Award, and Undergraduate and Graduate Scholarships. Information about the awards and scholarships may be found on the GRA website.

Thank you again for your commitment to literacy!

*Warm Regards,
Loleta D. Sartin
GRA President*



Helping Struggling Readers Track Their Own Learning Growth

BY SUSAN SZABO

Abstract

This is a classroom strategy that helps the student become responsible for their own learning.

Have you ever been in a classroom where your struggling readers say, “This is stupid” or “I don’t know anything anyway, I’m dumb?” These statements, made by struggling students validate that the affective side of learning is a powerful determiner on how struggling students’ approach learning and show just how discouraged they are with the reading/learning process when they are asked to work at a frustrational level.

However, effective teachers have long recognized that attitudes, activating prior knowledge, peer discussion and summarizing are activities that support struggling readers as they learn to read (Alderman, 2003; Bandura, 1997; Bandura, Schunk, 1981; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997/2007; Rosenblatt, 1969, 1978; Wang, 2000). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to share an old strategy, the KWL, which was modified and used in a new way (see Appendix A). This new way provided a means for students to track their own learning growth, which in turn changed their attitudes toward learning. This is an important step, as the common core standards state that students are to work toward meeting expectations so they are prepared to enter college and/or the workforce (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association, 2010).

Common Core

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) created the Common Core Standards (CCS) to help insure that all students were college and/or career ready no later than the end of high school. According to CCSSO and NGA, the Standards are: “(1) research and evidence based, (2) aligned with college and work expectations, (3) rigorous, and (4) internationally benchmarked” (p. 3). The Standards state that those students who are ready for college and/or career have mastered the following literacy skills:

- They demonstrate independence.
- They build strong content knowledge.
- They respond to the varying demands of audience, task purpose and discipline.
- They comprehend as well as critique.
- They value evidence.



They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.

They come to understand other perspectives and cultures (p. 7).”

In addition, the Standards support having good oral and written communication skills and reading both widely and deeply.

Struggling Readers

Reading matters. As Stanovich (1986) explained more than two decades ago, when he developed the idea of the Matthew Effect, reading begets reading. Being able to read well supports cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1986), which in turn impacts a readers’ self-esteem and motivation to learn (Stanovich, 1986).

Thus, instruction for struggling readers needs to combine multiple strategies. They should promote both positive attitudes and meaningful learning while

developing the needed skills to become independent learners. Thus, programs should contain multiple features that not only focus on meaning, but also allow for learning through peer interaction because as students work together and discuss their ideas, they construct new meaning and at the same time improve their literacy skills (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Walker, 2003).

Instructional Strategies for Struggling Readers

Teachers look for instructional strategies for struggling readers who appear to be “turned off” or “tuned out” to help motivate and to improve their literacy skills (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003; Headley & Dunston, 2000; Ruddell, 1999). This was my motivation as well. Reflecting on how to help these students, various strategies were revisited that I felt promoted content learning as well as had a focus on building student’s self-esteem. Because I was working in a reading room, I had flexibility in how I taught. I decided that I would teach reading and writing skills through content area material and developed lessons around content topics that were being taught by the various content teachers my reading students had.

In the beginning, the K-W-L was used in a literature circle format using both interactive read-alouds and silent readings. The K-W-L is a before, during, after comprehension strategy (Ogle, 1989). It encourages students to not just answer questions but to develop their own question, thus showing struggling readers that they must do both while reading in order to become effective readers (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). The literature circle activities provided time for discussion of the reading material (Daniels, 2002; Taylor, Pressley & Pearson, 2002), as well as encouraging oral language development while students were sharing, reflecting, and summarizing their understanding of the text. The interactive read-aloud allows teachers to model how they think while reading the text. These three strategies were chosen because they not only helped to build a positive attitude toward learning but provide for more active participation while focusing on making meaning from the text.

Promoting Positive Attitudes and Meaningful Learning

First, I had to borrow a social studies’ textbook from the content teachers, so I could explore topics that were being taught to the students. Even though the social studies textbook was chosen to teach reading, this could be done with any content textbook. Next, a list of topics was created by examining the textbook’s table-of-content.

The lessons began with several topics the students

had already covered as I had hoped to make the learning process go more smoothly. However, that did not happen as the students had not learned the content and were actually making a D or F in their content subjects. I worked with the students on several topics they had already done while learning the process and later moved to topics the students were currently studying in their content so they would be exposed to the topic at least twice in the hopes that this strategy would help them with their social studies grades. In addition, the students studied the people associated with each topic (e.g. Slavery, Civil War) in the hope that finding out what people did would help to motivate the students to learn about something they thought was boring. Thus, the topic might be slavery but some of the people the students read about included Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and John Brown as well as subtopics like the Underground Railroad, the Missouri Compromise, and the 13th Admendment.

As the daily lesson plans are read below, it must be remembered that these procedures were done in a reading class which contained roughly 65 minutes per class session and 10-15 students. In addition, it must be noted that when the K-W-L procedure was first introduced, it took several class sessions to complete, as the students were not familiar with the strategy. The basic procedure is as follows:

Step 1: Day 1 Lesson

1. First, each student received a blank KWL chart (8 ½ x 11). As seen in the appendix, the “K” column was divided into half for the students to write both facts and important people, the “W” column was divided into half for before questions and during questions, while the “L” column remained the size of the paper. In addition, several large chart papers were prepared which contained the same KWL chart. These large charts were used for modeling purposes, but this could be done on a SMART board today. It was explained to the students that each column represented something that good readers do but the focus would be on the “K” column to determine what they already knew about the subject that was being discussed. It was further explained that this step required them to brainstorm or think about what they already knew about the topic from other grade-level classes, books they had read, or something they had heard. In addition, the students were informed that it did not matter how much or how little they wrote, but they were encouraged to think about the topic and to write for 3 minutes.

Student Reactions: This met with limited success. There were some students who stared into space or out the window or just sat there. While the students were writing, I modeled the procedure by writing

several facts and an important person into the “K” column on the chart.

Next, the written ideas were shared using a whole group discussion format. During this phase, the students were asked to put down their pencils and to just listen to what other students knew about the topic that they did not. As each student shared the information written in their “K” column, the statements were summarized and written on the chart paper and followed by the student’s name that submitted the information.

Students Reactions: The students appeared to be amazed at the different knowledge each one possessed on the same topic. Thus, the assignment was stopped and we discussed how our experiences shape our understanding. The students were also asked whose knowledge was more important. It took several sessions for the students to figure out that they all had good information; it was just different but still a part of the whole.

2. To address the “W” column, I returned to the whole group instruction format and explained that good readers both answer and ask questions, as the questions set a purpose for reading. Therefore, as a group before reading began, several questions were created. First, a discussion occurred about how ideas are formed for questions. We then decided that the best two places to look were at the class “K” column and to scan the chapter in their social studies text that dealt with the topic looking at pictures and bolded print. Continuing as a group, we took some time and developed three-four questions. (It should be noted that I helped the students form one question that could not be answered by reading this text.) As I wrote the questions on the KWL chart paper, the students wrote our developed questions into the top-half of the “W” column. The students were told that they had to develop at least two questions on their own as they were listening to the text. These questions were to be written in the bottom-half of the “W” column.

3. I read the text to the students while they followed along in their books the first several times as I wanted the students to listen to the text and concentrate on answering the before reading questions or the developing of during reading questions. I stopped reading at the end of each subheading and as a whole group we discussed and summarized the reading. Next, the students determined if they could answer any of our questions and if they needed to develop any new questions. As the class found the answers to their questions, the students wrote the answers in the “L” column and numbered the response using the question number in the “W” column. They also put the

page number to verify where they heard (seen) the answer. This continued until the end of the section being read (normally 3-5 pages).

Student Reactions: All the questions were answered but one. A great discussion followed but it was the consensus of the students that we needed to read more in order to find out the answer. Of course, there were many moans and groans. This was the end of the first day.

Step 2: Day 2 Lesson

1. The second day the students within the class started the process over again with the same topic. The students received another blank KWL sheet. They were encouraged to think about what was learned yesterday about the topic and then they were given 3-minutes to write what they wanted to about the topic in the “K” column.

Student Reactions: Today, I noticed that most of the students started writing right away. After the three minutes of writing, I asked the students to count how many different pieces of knowledge they wrote and put the number by the “K” and circle it. The students were then directed to go back to the “K” column on their first KWL, which was done yesterday and count the information in the “K” column. The students were then asked, “So did your knowledge grow”? For those students who wrote nothing the first day, their knowledge growth was larger than those students who had written something, but everyone had knowledge growth. Thus, I was able to congratulate everyone on learning something new, as they had all written one to four statements in today’s “K” column more than yesterdays.

2. Once again, the students were asked to put down their pencils and share their written statements. This time, however, when the students shared their statements, I had them tell me where they learned the information – the text or someone else. This was also modeled for them, as I continued to fill-in the big KWL chart during class sharing.

3. Next, the class designed questions and again I helped them develop one question that I knew could not be answered by today’s readings. Once these were developed, they wrote them in the top-half of the “W” column of their second KWL.

4. I read aloud another section of the textbook, stopping at each subtitle for class discussion, summarizing, answering questions and creating new questions if need be. New information as well as answers to the questions were written in the “L” column and if need be on the back of the page.

This process was continued, using various social studies topics for three months – one topic per week. Each day, the students received a new KWL chart handout and each day they compared what they had written in the “K” column with yesterday’s response in the “K” column. On Friday, they compared their final “L” column to their Monday’s “K” column. Comparing gave the students a chance to see their growth and grow their background knowledge (Erwin, 1991).

Changes over Time

As the students became familiar with the process, more text exploration was added. As the topic each week stayed the same and the social studies textbook had a limited section on the topic, we started reading old sets of encyclopedias of various years to compare the information, children’s literature books, and conducted various internet searches. As a result, the students were growing their understanding from various texts and view-points, which is supported by the common core standards. This helped them to go into their social studies classrooms and actually participate in class discussions and do better on tests which helped to build the students’ self-esteem and motivation for learning. In addition, many of the students on the third semester report card received a B or C instead of the D or F they had received at the end of the first semester.

Conclusions

This was a powerful and motivating experience for most of the students. This was the first time that most of the students had visually seen the growth of their knowledge. They could no longer say they were dumb, or that they did not understand because they “saw” through their number count that they had indeed learned about the topic and not only from the text and informational readings but from each other.

This activity not only built students’ self-efficacy, it built their understanding of literacy skills and their social studies knowledge. They became more engaged, retained more information and actually enjoyed the learning process, even though there was a slow start. At the end of the semester these students were not only scanning the text to create before questions but they were reading the text with the understanding that it was okay to ask questions while they read. This activity supports the Standards, as they state “all readers should read informational text independently and proficiently” (p. 10). However, this activity also shows that reading well independently cannot be done until students/readers believe in their own abilities. One’s self-efficacy in their ability to read and to comprehend what they are reading is important in the learning process. This idea is supported by Rosenblatt (1969) when she talked about the important of connecting cognitive (efferent) learning and affective (aesthetic)

factors such as self-efficacy and motivation. It is doubly important to combine the two for struggling readers.

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**Appendix A
Modified KWL
Szabo, 2012**

Write the Topic: _____
Circle the Day: M T W Th F

K What do you already know about the topic?	W What do you want to know? This gives you a purpose for reading.	L What did you learn? These are the answers to your questions, and where you found them, as well as anything else you have learned. You may not find the answers to your questions in order, thus put the question number by the answer
Count your knowledge phrases. _____		
Facts you know: People you know that are involved with the topic	Before Questions 1. 2. 3. During Reading Questions: 1. 2. 3.	3. answer & put page were found; put a * on information learned but did not answer a question 1. answer & page found 2. answer & page found * new information



The ABCs of Literacy:

Creating Excitement About Learning Through Reading, Writing and Poetry in an Early Learning College Literacy Session

BY ANNE KATZ

Introduction

Early learning experiences serve as the building blocks for young children's scholastic success. Providing parents, grandparents, and caregivers with the necessary tools to establish this foundation is critical. This article describes two literacy workshops which were held as part of a local Early Learning College initiative. The goal of the program is to ensure that young children in the community are prepared for school and for early literacy learning experiences. The workshops aim to provide parents with strategies to create high-quality learning environments for their children. In turn, this will enhance their ability to effectively partner with teachers when their child enters a formal school setting.

The goals of the sessions are to promote continued literacy learning at home. As the workshop facilitator, I modeled instructional strategies and provided participants with literacy materials and books focusing on environmental print, poetry, shared book reading, comprehension skills, and early writing development. This project was facilitated by a grant from the Georgia Reading Association. I also outlined various approaches that can be used to enhance young children's enjoyment of reading and writing.

Project Overview

Early Learning College sessions are held at several times throughout the school year at a local elementary school that serves as a gathering place in the community. The average age of the children whose parents, grandparents, and caregivers are attending the session range from birth to five years of age. The project is in keeping with the Georgia Reading Association's goal of "promoting the full literacy development of Georgia's student and adult populations to ensure that each person becomes a full contributor to society."

According to Hart and Risley's landmark study on language development (1995), children's academic successes at ages nine and ten are attributable to the amount of language they hear from birth to age three. Providing parents with tools to create high-quality early learning experiences at home will prepare students to be active participants in language and literacy learning when they enter formal schooling. Mastering these skills will optimize children's academic and personal successes.

The objectives of the sessions were multifaceted. The primary goal of the workshop was to strengthen participants' abilities to excite their children about reading and writing. I hoped to provide parents with quality instructional activities to promote "concepts about print" and enable them to conduct an effective

read-aloud. In addition, I shared and modeled a variety of tools to facilitate early writing experiences. Lastly, the workshop aimed to enable parents to implement demonstrated strategies to support early language development.

Pre and Post Workshop Assessment

In order to gauge participants' comfort level and familiarity with the content of the workshop, a pre-assessment survey was administered before the workshop began (Appendix A). Questions on the survey addressed participants' familiarity with conducting a "picture walk" with their child, making predictions, visual literacy skills, comprehension development, discussion around text, illustrating text, and shared writing activities. Ten items appeared on the pre and post workshop assessment. Results of the participants' pre and post workshop assessment appear in Appendix B.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Playing with Poetry and Language

The workshop began with a discussion about the importance of developing children's appreciation for language and word play. Rasinski, Rupley, and Nichols (2008) describe how poetry is a solid text choice for performance and practice, as most poems for young children are relatively short, lend themselves to repeated readings, and promote a sense of accomplishment while building fluency. The use of poetry on a regular basis, in school and at home, can have a significant and positive impact on students' word recognition and reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski, 2004; Rasinski & Stevenson, 2005). Furthermore, research describes how creating a welcoming environment for families and facilitating their participation in their children's education leads to future gains in "children's attendance, interest, motivation, general achievement, and reading achievement" (Padak & Rasinski, 2010, p. 294).

I explained that we would be practicing reading poems around fundamental concepts such as colors, shapes, and months of the year with a sense of expression. The purpose of my selection of these poems was two-fold—both to model reading with expression and fluency as well as to reinforce important early learning curriculum topics. Poems that were utilized in the workshop were from *Poetry Place Anthology* (Scholastic, 1999) and *A Poem a Day* (Scholastic, 1997). A sample of some of the poems utilized in the workshops appears in Appendix C.

After we read and reviewed the poem, I gave each table a large sheet of chart paper with segments of the text written in marker. Each group brainstormed how they could best illustrate the message contained

in their portion of the poem. This was followed by each group presenting their chart paper illustration to the workshop participants and explaining their rationale for drawing attention to other text features (such as placing a square around common sight words and drawing attention to certain key words in the poems). For example, when illustrating "The Shape of Things" by Meish Goldish, one group drew a circle, square, and triangle around each of these words when they appeared in the text for reinforcement. One participant stated, "I learned that poetry is very important." Another participant added, "I liked the interaction in the class. We got to do the activity just as the child would."

I also discussed the importance of "raising a reader" through drawing children's attention to the environmental print in the world around us and prompting questions to facilitate language development. Hart and Risley (1995) indicated that many economically disadvantaged preschoolers come to kindergarten with much smaller vocabularies than more advantaged children. This uneven start can make learning to read more difficult (McCardle, Chhabra, and Kapinus, 2008). My suggestions for "raising a reader" included labeling familiar items around the house (chair, table, bed) and discussing the sound the word begins with. In addition, recommendations included talking about objects that you see in the world around us (shape, color, texture, use) and extending children's conversations through prompting questions. While conducting art projects, such as illustrating poetry, discuss your choice for selecting a color or explain a rationale for your drawing for a segment of the text. Research shows that children learn vocabulary best when words are presented thematically or in a meaningful context (Harris, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011).

In the end-of-workshop evaluation form, when asked to "provide at least one specific example of new information you learned in this workshop," one parent noted, "I will use paper to write out poems to hang on the wall and let the children illustrate." Another parent explained how she learned that "you can draw pictures to go with the words of a book or poem...to make reading more fun for children." A third workshop participant noted that he "enjoyed the word play and illustrations of the poem."

The workshop proceeded to some additional poetry and language development activities.

I introduced a Friendship Cinquain poem format, a simple five line poem that invites child and parent joint participation. We began by reviewing the format of a cinquain poem, as follows:

_____ (person's name)

_____, _____
(two adjectives describing the person)

_____, _____,
_____ (three action words)

_____ (a four-phrase word about friendship)

_____ (nickname or noun)

I modeled how I wrote a cinquain about my mom, and invited participants to discuss how they could participate in this language-building activity with their child.

The final poetry element of the literacy workshop focused on “I am From” poems, which were inspired by George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” template (1993). I reviewed sample sentence starters around an “I am From” poem for the participants adapted by Levi Romero (http://www.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/t/Target_I_am_from%20poem.pdf). I continued by sharing a few lines of a sample “I am From” poem that I composed. I then invited participants to review the sentence starters and take a few moments to compose a couple of lines of their own “I am From” poem. Finally, we discussed how this activity could be a valuable language development tool as parent and child could wander around their home collecting ideas for composing their own original “I am From” poem. We concluded by discussing how this activity would facilitate children’s language development skills and instill pride in themselves and their backgrounds.

Read-Alouds, Early Writing, and Making Connections to Text

The remainder of the workshop focused on teaching parents how to maximize the benefits of conducting a read-aloud with their child in a meaningful way. Utilizing *A Letter to Amy* (Keats, 1968) as a framework, participants were taught book-handling knowledge guidelines, picture walk guidelines, and retelling evaluation guidelines from *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (McKenna & Stahl, 2003) in the context of the workshop. I began by asking participants to generate a prediction about what they thought the book might be about based upon the title and cover illustration. The workshop continued by modeling a picture walk and discussing the value it adds to the pre-reading process. We proceeded to take turns reading the pages of the book with expression.

Throughout the reading of the text, I paused to model how to pose predictions and adjust/revise prior predictions

based upon the events of the text. Additional discussion focused on ways to expand children’s oral language development through discussion about the text as well as ways to develop visual literacy skills. Picture books convey meaning through the use of two sign systems—written language and visual images (Serafini, 2010). The primary focus with picture books has been on cultivating skills and strategies that promote an understanding of written text. However, in our increasingly visual world, pedagogical strategies for understanding visual images merit consideration and have only recently begun to be explored in the literature (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Albers, 2008). Clearly, there is value in teaching skills and strategies to enable young children to interpret and analyze images. One parent noted that she will “spend more time discussing pictures and keeping the child’s attention” now as she reads.

Sample prompting questions to ask after the book reading included the following:

- How do you communicate with your friends?
- Do you write letters?
- Why is a letter a good way to communicate?

I continued to share a storyboard with parents to promote the development of sequencing skills. We discussed the importance of teaching young children how to summarize the main events in the story through both pictures and words (first, second, next, last). Illustrating the main events of the story can serve as a visual reinforcement of the main events in the text. I modeled how parents can scaffold their child’s oral language to compose a sentence to label the events shown in each picture. Research suggests that providing opportunities for children to talk and use language in meaningful contexts can promote vocabulary development in preschoolers (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010). In the evaluation form, one parent noted, “I liked the picture outline suggestion. I will do it as I read with my child.” When asked “what specific improvements will you make in your home environment because of this workshop?” the parent also noted, “I will read more and discuss the story with my child.”

The final element of the read-aloud activity for the workshop centered on early writing skills and the importance of writing to support the reading process. Young children’s first writing efforts look like scribbles, followed by pictures, single words, and then sentences. We discussed the importance of children learning to express his/her thoughts on paper to facilitate the process of self-expression. In the end-of-workshop assessment, a parent noted that “the picture outline was a great idea to help the child learn sequence and how to engage the child in learning.” Another workshop participant wrote “sequencing can

really help with writing...try using a picture outline to help with creative writing.”

Concluding Thoughts

“Very informative...we need more classes like this to help parents.” This written feedback from the Early Learning College Session illustrates the impact and importance of these workshops. The sessions incorporated a range of objectives—to provide parents with instructional activities to conduct an effective read-aloud; to provide parents with tools to excite their children about reading and writing; and to provide parents with strategies to facilitate early language development. A recent meta-analysis found a high correlation between preschool language skills and reading competence at the end of first and second grade (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009).

Surveys were distributed before and after each session to assess each participant’s feelings about integrating the literacy strategies into their home life with their child. In addition, written feedback from workshop participants assessed the project’s impact. Samples of workshop participants’ quotes affirm the literacy workshop project’s positive impact, as follows: “I will question my son more about all the books he reads for more information.”

“To have more excitement when I read to my child...I will color more and draw more with my child.”

“To be more descriptive when reading.”

“Interact with child during and after reading the material...sequence and ask questions after reading with the child.”

“How I can keep my child focused/engaged to reading stories”

“Making words into pictures (poetry)...letting pictures tell the story”

The following quote from a workshop participant resonated with me. She wrote the following: “Reading a book is a form of art when read deeply.” Parents who are dedicated to ensuring that their children fulfill their potential as readers, writers, and learners should be equipped with a repertoire of strategies in order to empower them. Workshops such as “The ABC’s of Literacy: Creating Excitement about Learning through Reading, Writing, and Poetry” serve as powerful supporters of parents as they strive to facilitate their children’s personal and academic success.

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Appendix A- Pre and Post Survey

1. I look through the pictures with my child before reading a book and we discuss them together (conduct a "picture walk").

True False

2. I ask my child to tell me what they think is going to happen next in the story as I read (make a prediction).

True False

3. I encourage my child to talk about and describe the pictures that they see in the story.

True False

4. I talk about the events in the story with my child.

True False

5. I talk about the story with my child and make connections between the story and their own lives.

True False

6. My child and I discuss what we liked about the story after we read it.

True False

7. I complete drawing and writing activities with my child about the main events of the story when we have finished reading.

True False

8. I read my child poems and he/she illustrates them to show their understanding.

True False

9. I talk to my child about shapes, colors, and months of the year.

True False

10. My child and I participate in writing activities together.

True False

Appendix B- Pre and Post Survey Results

The ABCs of Literacy: Creating Excitement About Learning through Reading, Writing, & Poetry - Dr. Anne Katz - 5.18.13					
	ID	Pre	Post	Improved	
1	1257	0	0		0
2	7606	2	0		2
3	5421	1	0		1
4	G	3	0		3
5	3171	1	1		0
6	542	2	0		2
7	4987	0	0		0
8	3514	0	0		0
9	303	1	0		1
10	2	3	3		0
11	9905	1	0		1
12	2150	0	0		0
13	1659	0	0		0
14	999	2	0		2
15	8730	2	0		2
16	1811	3	0		3
17	9240	4	0		4
18	6161	1	0		1
19	3537	4	0		4
20	6607	6	0		6
21	8362	0	0		0
22	4453	0	7		-7
23	1847	0	0		0
24	9830	1	1		0
25	5119	3	0		3

Appendix C- Poems Utilized in the Workshops

"Wonderful World"

A Poem by Eva Grant

I can see
Trees and grass
The sun and sky;

I can taste
Chocolate ice cream,
Apple pie,

I can hear
Music, laughter,
Words you said;

I can touch
Silk and velvet,
A baby's skin;

What a wonderful
World I'm in!

"Colors and Colors"

A Poem by Vivian Gouled

Sometimes I think of colors
one by one by one...
pink for puffy evening clouds
yellow for the sun.
I think of watermelon

for something that is green,
or an orange jack-o'-lantern
on the night of Halloween.

I think of purple eggplant,
and sky that's bright and blue,
or white for sneaker laces,
especially when they're new.

Sometimes I think of traffic lights
when they just turn to red,
or else I think how black it is
at night when I'm in bed.

I might think of an elephant
for something that is gray.
I like to think of colors
and have some fun that way.

"The Shape of Things"

By Meish Goldish

What is a circle? What is round?
A quarter rolling on the ground.

A wheel is a circle, so is the moon,
A bottle cap, or a big balloon.

What is a square, with sides the same?
The wooden board for a checker game.
A slice of cheese, a TV screen,
A table napkin to keep you clean.

What is a rectangle, straight or tall?
The door that stands within your wall.
A dollar bill, a loaf of bread,
The mattress lying on your bed.

What is a triangle, with sides of three?
A piece of pie for you and me.
A musical triangle, ding, ding, ding,
A slice of pizza with everything!

These are the shapes seen everywhere:
A triangle, rectangle, circle, square.
If you look closely where you've been,
You'll surely see the shapes you're in!

FOCUS NEWSLETTER

News from members of the GRA

Focus is a format that shares information from and about members and councils across Georgia. This can be reviews of upcoming new books, dates of upcoming meetings, news or exciting happenings about a local council member. What a wonderful way to support the active people in our organization. This is a spot to publish interesting stories or poetry that a talented member or student has written. **Deadlines for *Focus* are September 30, December 15, March 15 and June 15.**

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Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8



BOOK REVIEW BY LINA B. SOARES AND CHRISTINE A. DRAPER

The role of close reading in the 21st century has become a necessary component of reading comprehension more than ever. Given the extraordinary amount of informational texts presented in print and digital formats that students encounter in today's classrooms, the need for students to engage in critical reading to determine what a text says explicitly is essential for students to become critical consumers of information. In addition, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) place further emphasis on the importance of teaching students to engage in "close, attentive reading" as critical text analysis relates to 80% of the Reading standards at each grade level (International Reading Association Common Core State Standards [CCSS] Committee, 2012). Sunday Cummins' (2013) *Close Reading of Informational Texts; Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8* offers teachers a wealth of tools to teach close reading wrapped in one book. According to Cummins, close reading is the process of understanding how the words on a page fit together to support the author's central ideas. Students examine the text's structure, key vocabulary to build conceptual meaning, and connect to their own prior knowledge to use the information and ideas

drawn from texts as the basis to grasp meaning. As a former classroom teacher, Cummins understands the needs of classroom teachers and the actions that can be taken when challenged to meet the diverse reading abilities of their students. While close reading is a concept that is more familiar in the content areas of middle and secondary classrooms, the beauty of this text lies in the effective how-to instructional strategies, lesson plans, student work samples, and a study guide that elementary teachers can adapt to their own classrooms.

The book's strength lies in its comprehensive scope and practical guidance. Beginning with an introduction to close reading, Cummins (2013) follows with "as assessment-driven, structured approach to teaching" (p. 4) that emphasizes the importance of ongoing assessment before, during, and after instruction in the teaching and learning cycle. The author then brings the role of synthesis to the forefront through interactive read-aloud, detailing a continuum of lessons that classroom teachers can follow to develop students' close reading skills. Further reading introduces the significant role that text features play in reading

comprehension, followed by strategic practices to set the purpose for reading. Attention is then given to self-monitoring strategies students can use to increase comprehension while reading informational text, followed by strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of information sources. The text concludes by returning to the importance of synthesis to close reading.

Chapter One, “What Does ‘Close Reading’ Mean?” builds a strong case for students to comprehend new information encountered in content studies. As Cummins (2013) points out, the first two Common Core Strands (CCSS, 2010) require readers to determine what the text explicitly says and determine authors’ central ideas – requirements that signify the importance for close reading. The chapter delineates a sensible and logical approach to teach students the important aspects of how informational texts are structured and to develop close reading strategies:

- Tapping one’s prior knowledge related to information text structure
- Topical and vocabulary knowledge
- Setting a purpose for reading
- Self-monitoring for meaning
- Determining what is important
- Synthesizing (p. 10).

Chapter Two, “An Assessment-Driven, Structured Approach to Teaching,” explains in detail the essential components of Cummins’s (2013) instructional approach outlined in the first chapter. To begin, the author first introduces readers to her epistemological reasoning on how knowledge is constructed. For readers who may not be familiar with the sociocultural theory of learning, Cummins offers that the sociocultural perspective perceives reading to be the involvement of daily social interactions within classroom settings that are crucial for the attainment of literate practices. Borrowing from Vygotsky (1978), literacy is not an isolated cognitive skill; learning is inherently social and all learning involves the process of inquiry whereby members within a social group are involved in the construction of meaning. This theory of learning is the philosophical underpinning of the entire text and grounds the author’s position that meaning-making is a process of appropriating the necessary tools for comprehending in a socially situated literacy activity.

The chapter then moves to the crux of assessment. Cummins (2013) endorses an ongoing approach throughout the teaching and learning cycle. This process allows for a “gradual release of responsibility” from which teachers move from teacher-centered discussions (explicit instruction and modeling), in which they control the flow of activity, to shared stances (scaffolding and coaching), in which responsibility is more equally shared, to more student-centered stances

(facilitating and participation) in which students take primary responsibility and engage in self-assessment. To do so, Cummins provides readers with a model to illustrate the assessment-driven, structured approach:

- Assessment of students’ strengths and needs
- Lesson preparation and text study
- A focus lesson – explaining the instructional objectives and modeling
- Guided practice
- Independent practice
- Student self-assessment (p.32)

Chapter Three, “Introducing Synthesis with Interactive Read-Alouds,” describes the merits of read-aloud experiences and offers teachers useful strategies to employ read-aloud and model written responses to demonstrate understanding. Cummins (2013) introduces readers to a clever method she has used many times to teach students how to synthesize text by showing students a framed photograph and having the students determine why the events in the picture are significant. Using questions such as: *What do you notice?*, *What is the event in this photo?*, and *Why would I frame this picture?* (p. 51), the visual image serves as a tool to help students articulate the central ideas of the photograph and build meaning. The chapter then follows with detailed methods that teachers can use to teach students to craft written responses. The author builds a strong case through students’ work examples that written responses are an essential component of synthesis because the undertaking permits students to critically think about the author’s key ideas.

Chapter Four, “Understanding the Features of a Text,” speaks to the importance, but often overlooked features, such as maps, charts, photographs, diagrams, captions, and illustrations. Cummins (2013) points out, “Together, the features and the running text are “the text,” meaning that one cannot serve to convey the author’s central ideas without the other” (p. 79). The chapter articulately provides lesson examples with step-by-step procedures from introducing key features to lesson implementation to assessing students’ understanding. Again, the role of synthesis is brought to the forefront as the necessary ingredient to determine what the important central ideas are as students learn to grasp the content of the features with the main text.

In Chapter Five, readers come to understand the author’s purpose for writing is the crucial first step for reading. The chapter builds upon students’ knowledge of synthesis, coupled with their understanding about how texts are developed to establish a clear purpose for reading. “Strategic Previewing of a Text to Set a Purpose,” offers the clever mnemonic strategy that

Cummins (2013) has termed as THIEVES which is defined as:

- T = Title
- H = Headings
- I = Introduction
- E = Every first word in a sentence
- V = Visuals and Vocabulary
- E = End-of-article or end-of-chapter questions
- S = Summarize thinking (p. 103).

The mnemonic strategy is a tool to teach students to preview a text, make predictions about the author's central ideas, and then read with a sustained purpose to understand the author's words. The beauty of this strategy lies in its application. Students are taught to question while reading, pause and summarize as they read, and to monitor their understanding of the reading material.

"Self-Monitoring While Reading Information Texts," Chapter Six, addresses the reading skills students need to acquire to continually think, ask questions, and self-check for understanding. When students self-monitor their understanding while reading, they are actively involved with an inner dialogue to determine if the text makes sense and they employ tools to enable comprehension. Cummins (2013) calls the self-monitoring strategies "fix-up" strategies (p. 118), and the featured "fix-up" strategy that the author describes is Hoyt's (2008) coding method (as cited in Cummins, p. 118) that permits students to think about their thinking and to consider the author's key ideas in text. As with each lesson in this text, the author recommends that teachers model and think aloud how to apply the codes for their students to use while reading, and then gradually permit their students to apply the codes independently. The following codes are:

- + This is new information
- * I already knew this information
- ? I wonder...or I don't understand
- ! Wow!

The author does caution readers that coding should not be overused to the extent that students become too dependent or tire of the process. Rather, the goal is to model and guide students to acquire personal self-monitoring strategies while reading.

Chapter Seven, "Determining Importance in a Text," builds on the role of self-monitoring in the previous chapter and moves to a higher level of thinking whereby students learn to evaluate the usefulness, the credibility, and what is really important in an informational text. Using the analogy of making pasta, to illustrate why procedures must be followed and certain steps must be taken first – sequencing - the

author introduces readers to the importance of text structures. The chapter provides lesson examples and teaching strategies to help students evaluate information for accuracy, credibility, and usefulness that target important text structures, such as sequence, cause and effect, and compare and contrast, problem and solution, and description.

"Determining Importance and Synthesis across Texts" is the final chapter and brings together the essential components of close reading (e.g. synthesis, purpose for reading, text feature, self-monitoring strategies, and text structures) in order for students to engage multiple sources of informational texts and comprehend for meaning. The primary objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how all the essential components of close reading are needed for students to conduct a mini-research project. Hoffman's (1992) I-Chart (as cited by Cummins, 2013) is the featured instructional tool to help students formulate their research question, organize students' notes from different reading sources, synthesize the most important information, and then draft a research report. Throughout the chapter, the author provides lessons, step-by-step procedures, and examples of student work to emphasize how the instructional routine of close reading is a building block for strong critical analysis that can be realized when students are able to write a mini-research report.

Sunday Cummins' (2013) *Close Reading of Informational Texts; Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8* offers classroom teachers a comprehensive framework to teach students in grades three through eight how to engage in critical thinking and informational texts. Elementary, middle, and secondary classroom teachers can benefit from the text's instructional strategies, lessons, and examples of student work that can easily be adapted for specific grade-level needs. In addition, Cummins practices by example such that each chapter demonstrates the best instructional practices that include teacher modelling, guided practice, interactive read-aloud, think aloud, and time for independent practice. For classroom teachers, *Close Reading of Informational Texts; Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8* is an informative text that will teach students to dig deeper beneath the surface level of the text and get to the real meaning of the author's words.

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BOOKS REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Blachowicz, Camille; Fisher, Peter; Ogle, Donna; and Watts Taffe, Susan

Teaching Academic Vocabulary K-8: Effective Practices across the Curriculum

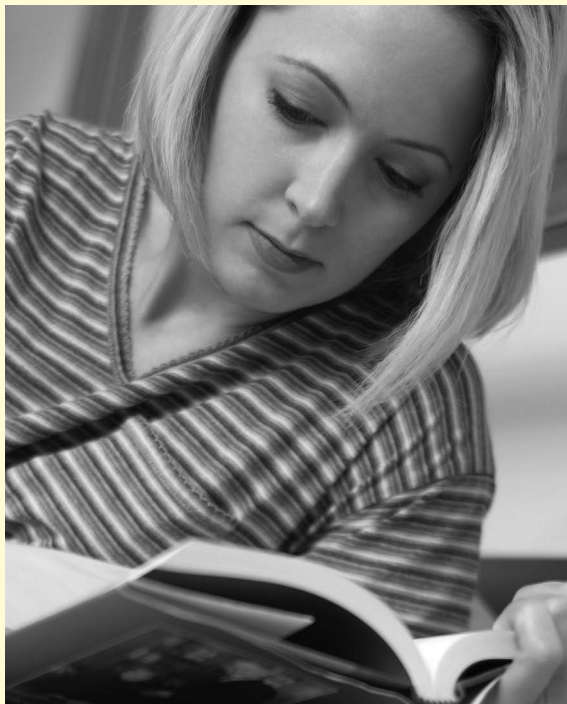
2013. 175 pp. \$28 pbk. Guilford Press.
978-1-4625-1029-0. Professional

Cummins, Sunday

Close Reading of Informational Texts:

Assessment-driven Instruction in Grades 3-8

2012. 194 pp. \$26 pbk. Guilford Press.
978-1-4625-0781-8. Professional



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Teaching Academic Vocabulary K-8: Effective Practices Across the Curriculum

BOOK REVIEW BY CHRISTINE A. DRAPER
AND LINA B. SOARES

The Common Core Standards place a new emphasis on academic language with shared responsibility for language arts standards in science, social studies and technical studies classes. In a very practical manner, Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle and Watts Taffee's book, *Teaching Academic Vocabulary K-8: Effective Practices across the Curriculum*, discusses the importance of introducing students to the academic discourses of the content disciplines through various methods to maximize vocabulary teaching so that students can more deeply learn the content. Insightful, authentic examples are included throughout the text and thoughtful discussion questions at the end of each chapter provide opportunities for deeper introspection. This book emphasizes the intentional teaching of specific words and word learning strategies which can build students' vocabularies and improve reading comprehension. The authors call for teachers to provide rich and varied language experiences, to focus on specific vocabulary intentionally, to teach word-learning strategies, and to foster word consciousness in their classrooms. They encourage the interplay between using academic terms orally and having learners encounter them in print for vocabulary development which helps learners construct fuller understandings of vocabulary terms rather than simply learning basic dictionary definitions. Students are then able to fully understand how important context is to vocabulary meaning.

Throughout the text the authors continually refer to the connections with the Common Core Standards and they emphasize the support that English Learners garner from the strategies and resources cited and provided. The authors directly state that the book's usefulness is the ability to skim through the headings in the chapters to focus on topics where one needs further instruction and understanding. Additionally, the later chapters are separated in specific content-areas which provide specific key understanding, strategies, instructional frameworks, and activity resources. In each of these chapters, the authors point out that each discipline demands that students attend to and learn specific meanings of key words and



phrases. Subsequently, they provide the teacher with various methods to encourage students to use these vocabulary words when speaking and writing. One chapter, vital to all content areas, addresses the role of technology in learning academic vocabulary. The authors highlight how the range of new technologies available can enhance students' learning across the curriculum and how this can support their academic vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, they present methods for utilizing technology in the teaching of strategies for independent word learning and how these immerse students in rich and varied language experiences which work to broaden the landscape of academic vocabulary to be learned. The final chapter in the book answers common questions that the authors were asked when they visited and worked with classroom teachers about developing academic vocabulary. They provide guidance for selecting and prioritizing vocabulary for instruction as well as engaging and relevant ways to assess learners. The last section of this chapter details manageable and sustainable goals for professional development and describes how to incorporate academic and content vocabulary instruction throughout the school.

There is a call for increased support of academic language in all content classrooms. Students need regular opportunities to learn strategies for identifying and learning words encountered in academic work. Teachers must feel confident in helping students build awareness of unfamiliar terms and provide strategies for learning new words and phrases. Overall, this book would be very useful to those teachers that are nervous about the demands of academic language as called upon by the Common Core Standards, or for those teachers that have already started and feel that they need some additional guidance. The book is jam-packed with practical methods and resources that work to maximize vocabulary teaching so that students can learn the content more deeply. In addition, this book emphasizes approaches that encourage teachers to be role-models of these vocabulary strategies in their classrooms so they can indeed whole-heartedly practice what they preach.

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Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS



Georgia Reading Association GOALS

- Empower members of the GRA and local councils to become effective leaders in the field of literacy.
- Provide quality reading education services to all Georgia educators.
- Recognize exemplary individuals, local, and state literacy efforts.
- Achieve maximum involvement of members at the local, state, and international levels to receive maximum benefits.
- Promote the goals and objectives of the International Reading Association of Georgia.



GEORGIA JOURNAL OF READING CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

As editors of the *Georgia Journal of Reading*, a refereed journal of the Georgia Reading Association, we invite those interested in improving reading and language arts instruction at all levels to submit manuscripts for publication in future issues. *The Georgia Journal of Reading* is published twice yearly in Spring and Fall.

We request articles that are grounded in current theory and research, book reviews, or creative teaching strategies that address all levels from elementary to college. Three types of manuscripts are currently being solicited.

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These articles should deal with research, current issues, and recent trends in reading or literacy programs. Appropriate topics for the Journal include project descriptions, research or theoretical reports that address pedagogical implications or issues in reading education at the local, state or national level. Preference is given to articles focusing on topics that impact Georgia's students.

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Articles for this column should describe creative teaching ideas and strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. These articles are shorter than full-length and may or may not require references.

Book and Resource Reviews

Reviews should describe and critique children's books, professional books, or reading resources that are appropriate for use by teachers and reading professionals. Complete bibliographic

information, the address of the publisher, and the cost of the resource should be included.

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Manuscripts should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, and the format should conform to the guidelines presented in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Ed.). Manuscripts should not exceed twenty double-spaced typed pages. The author's name, full address, telephone number, email address, and school/affiliation, and a brief statement on professional experience should be submitted on a separate cover page. The author's name or any reference that would enable a reviewer to know who the author is should not appear on the manuscript. Manuscripts will not be sent out for peer review until this information is provided. All manuscripts will undergo a blind review by at least two members of the editorial board. Decisions will be made within 8-12 weeks of publication of the journal for which the submission was made. Only electronic submissions will be accepted.

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