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Lina Soares
Georgia Southern University

Christine Draper
Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Journal of
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Message From the Editors

by Lina B. Soares and Christine A. Draper

As we think of the coming of warmer weather and the rapid approach of the end of the school year, a quote about quality teaching comes to mind: *"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."*—William A. Ward. With this edition of the *Georgia Journal of Reading*, we seek to inspire all teachers and hope that the articles in this journal will provide resources and quality tools to support the diverse learners in their classrooms. We would also like to thank the authors who submitted manuscripts for review, as well as the reviewers who provided feedback for selection and revision of the manuscripts for this publication.

In the first editorial piece, Gerald Boyd invites teachers to consider the quantum shifts that are needed with the Common Core Standards which include practice with academic language and complex texts, pulling evidence from both literary and informational texts, and building content knowledge with non-fiction pieces. In doing so, he hopes teachers will recognize the importance of addressing curriculum and teaching to build the content knowledge students will need to embrace the future.

Katie Stover and Crystal Glover look to literacy coaching to provide leadership and support for the next generation of teachers in their article. They speak to the isolated nature of teaching that can especially leave beginning teachers with feelings of doubt about their decisions to become teachers. They stress that early support for new teachers is crucial in order to foster a sense of confidence, develop knowledge and pedagogy, and enhance student learning.

Alma Stevenson's piece titled, *Significance of Prior Knowledge Activation: A Close Look at a Bilingual Kindergarten Student's Response to a Poem,* provides a detailed description of a bilingual student's illustrated response to a poem. The article emphasizes how important it is to activate and consider prior knowledge and sociocultural background as an essential part of instruction.

Laurie Sharp's article, *The Effect of Explicit Instruction with Writing Conventions among Preservice Teachers*, seeks to determine the effect of explicit instruction with written conventions embedded within the context of a language arts methods course on preservice teachers' personal knowledge. Findings reveal statistical significance regarding participants' personal knowledge after receiving explicit instruction with written conventions.

Nancy Arrington's integrative lesson piece titled, *Tacky and a Tambourine: Enhancing First Grade Literacy through Music*, addresses first grade English Language Common Core Standards as students play instruments, create movement, sing and chant, and discuss their roles throughout the process. Students' understanding, fluency, and discussion skills are enhanced through their participation in this lesson.

Finally, Shannon Howrey's review of Frank Serafini's new book, *Reading the Visual: An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy*, is likely to fill a need for those who realize the importance of visual literacy instruction but whose knowledge of why and how to incorporate this element into the classroom is limited. In addition, Howrey reminds one that Serafini's book makes a compelling case for expanding the meaning of literacy instruction for the 21st century.

It is our sincere hope that this spring edition of the *Georgia Journal of Reading* will provide you with quality resources, research, and classroom tools to promote literacy and understanding across all levels and content areas.

Greetings!

I hope your 2014 is off to a great start! This has been an exciting and eventful beginning of the year for Georgia Reading Association. We started the year off planning for the Juanita B. Abernathy Awards Program and the Early Literacy Symposium.

We hosted The Juanita B. Abernathy Awards Program Reception on March 9, in Macon. Robbin Dykes, Awards Committee Chairperson, did an outstanding job organizing the event. We celebrated Readers of the Year, Bob W. Jerrolds Reading Achievement Award winner, Lindy Lopez-Butner Award winner, Reading Teacher of the Year and the Exemplary Reading Program.

The next day, March 10, continued on a high note as GRA co-hosted the Early Literacy Symposium with the Georgia Department of Education. We were fortunate to have Dr. Jack Pikulski, Dr. Sharon Walpole, and Dr. Michael McKenna share the day with us. Throughout the day we discussed foundational literacy skills. From the plenaries to the concurrent sessions the day was enlightening, enriching, and engaging. Dr. Beth Pendergraft, president-elect, did an excellent job organizing the symposium.

For more GRA and Council updates visit our website at www.georgiareading.org or like us on Facebook at Georgia Reading Association. Moving forward we are planning to have more of a social media presence. Tune in for all of the exciting updates.

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.

Thank you again for your commitment to literacy!

Warm Regards,
Loleta D. Sartin
GRA President

Quantum Shifts

BY GERALD BOYD

pre-teach vocabulary ➤ evidence from text ➤ synthesize ideas

Even though Georgia is no longer a part of the PARCC consortium and the PARCC assessments no longer engender fear in the hearts of Georgia teachers, it might be a good idea to review what is different about the Common Core State Standards and decide what the quantum shifts are for the classroom and the teacher.

We know what the three big premises for the CCGPS are: 1) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language, 2) Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational, and 3) Building content knowledge through the reading of content-rich non-fiction.

O.K. What do these things really mean? I think we are getting used to the idea of text complexity, but there is an additional statement in that first premise that I consider a quantum shift - academic language. We have for many years taught vocabulary in schools, and for almost as many years we have been teaching vocabulary wrong. (I'm not casting blame here because I am guilty of using all of the strategies I talk about.) Using a vocabulary list that is unrelated to anything else that the students do provides a time-filling, but practically useless exercise. This practice is not what the CCGPS premise expects. Academic language is vocabulary that is used across all disciplines, and it includes words that students cannot recognize or define through context clues. As an example, I use the word "iterative" to describe the process for the implementation of the CCGPS. That word is an academic word which simply means that the implementation will consist of stages of development. Teachers will try things, make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, improve, and begin again. (That's what they have always done.)

The teaching of academic language, however, requires a different process. In order to scaffold the more challenging text required by the CCGPS, teachers will need to extract the academic language within a text and pre-teach that vocabulary to students using the definition of the words implied by the text.

This process does require a quantum shift from the way we have always done things. Nevertheless, all research in reading will verify the idea that pre-teaching vocabulary is important. One teacher I talked to recently used the term "front-load vocabulary." I like that term. Virtually all words in the English language have more than one meaning, and it is important to teach vocabulary terms in the context in which they are used in the text.

The next quantum shift I see with the CCGPS is the idea of reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from the text. Again, we have for many years employed a version of this practice, but I don't think many of us are prepared for what it really means. Looking at the first standard for reading, students are required to extract both explicit and inferential evidence from text in order to draw conclusions or to determine a central theme or idea.

With the CCGPS, we get a whole new notion of what that process should look like. Many times we are satisfied, and sometimes we are extremely proud, that students can make inferences about a piece of text. English teachers always get excited when students are able to cite a central idea or a theme about a text. The standards, however, go a quantum step further. The student actually has to cite the evidence verbatim from the text.

Citing evidence from text has for most been a notation function, but with the standards, it becomes a direct quotation function. When a student makes an inference, that student should be able to read the passage directly from the text which has led him or her to that inference. Students should be able to read direct evidence from the text for explicit details, inferences, and central ideas or themes. I have demonstrated this process many times in close reading exercises. When a teacher asks a text-based question and a student gives an answer, the teacher's next statement should be, "Read it to me."

Well, if these two shifts aren't "quantum" enough for

you, wait until you hear the next one. Even though we are no longer a part of the PARCC consortium, the assessments created by the Georgia Department of Education will have to be rigorous. Otherwise, the standards will not be worth their weight in ink. If the new assessments are "PARCC-like" in any way, there is another major shift that I would call quantum. The assessments should require a process called "Writing to Multiple Resources and Research." Again, for many years, it has fallen upon the English teacher to teach the research process. Along with that process, we have taught students how to summarize and paraphrase text material and how to synthesize that material into a cohesive paper that bears the ideas of multiple resources.

That process, however, only teaches students how to take ideas from several texts and put them all together in a single paper. That is altogether not the idea of what the standards are addressing. The new assessments should require the student to analyze and synthesize ideas across multiple sources and texts. Now just what does that mean?

First of all, the assessments should require the student to read two or more excerpts of text before responding to the prompt or the selected response items. The prompts will almost always require an analysis of the two or more texts, but that is not all. The prompt may ask the student to write an analysis of the affect one of the texts has on the other. It requires a very specific type of analysis which involves a specific type of critical thinking. How does text A treat a subject differently than text B? Or how is something in text A treated differently in text B? This is a quantum shift that most students are not prepared for today. I really do not know how the new state assessments will shape up, but I have heard that they are being structured to be similar to the PARCC prototypes that we have seen. If that is true, teachers will need to adapt their modes of teaching to prepare students for the new

assessments. I do not worry about this change in classrooms because teachers have always stepped up to the plate to address the learning that students need. The problem is, we don't have much time.

All in all, the reality is that the standards seek to move students to that third premise – Building content knowledge through the reading of content-rich non-fiction. This premise is dear to my heart, because since the inception of No Child Left Behind, we have engaged in a process of fragmenting and narrowing curriculum to the point that the only concern in the classroom is the test. I have heard many teachers say, "I teach what is tested," and to some degree that statement breaks my heart. There is so much more to the curriculum than just what is tested. That whole strand of Speaking and Listening is difficult to test, and most of the giant test developers simply ignore it. Yet, the strand represents some extremely important skills for students to develop in life.

I hope as we continue to develop units and lessons for the CCGPS, we will recognize the importance of addressing the entire curriculum and teaching to build the content knowledge students will need to embrace the future. I constantly quote Sidney Lanier's "Marshes of Glynn," and I love the line that (taken out of context) says, "I am fain to face the vast sweet visage of space." I want our students to be able to face the vast visage of space their futures hold.

This article was first published as "Common Core Shifts" in *Scribble 'n Bits*, Georgia Council of Teachers of English and has been reprinted with permission.

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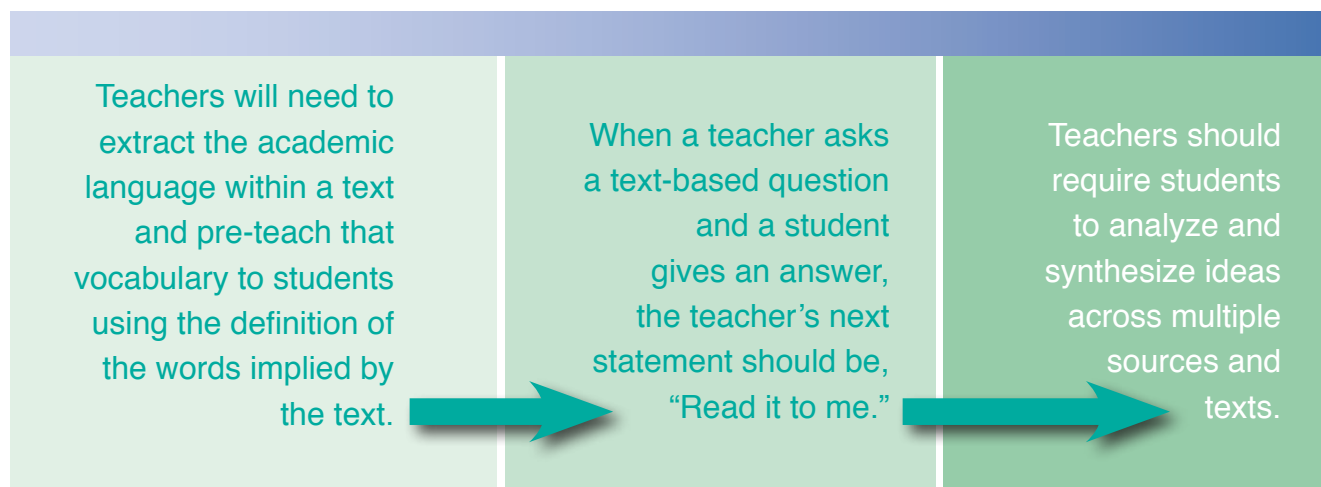
Literacy Coaching:

Providing Leadership and Support for the Next Generation of Teachers

BY KATIE STOVER,
FURMAN UNIVERSITY
AND CRYSTAL GLOVER,
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH
CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE
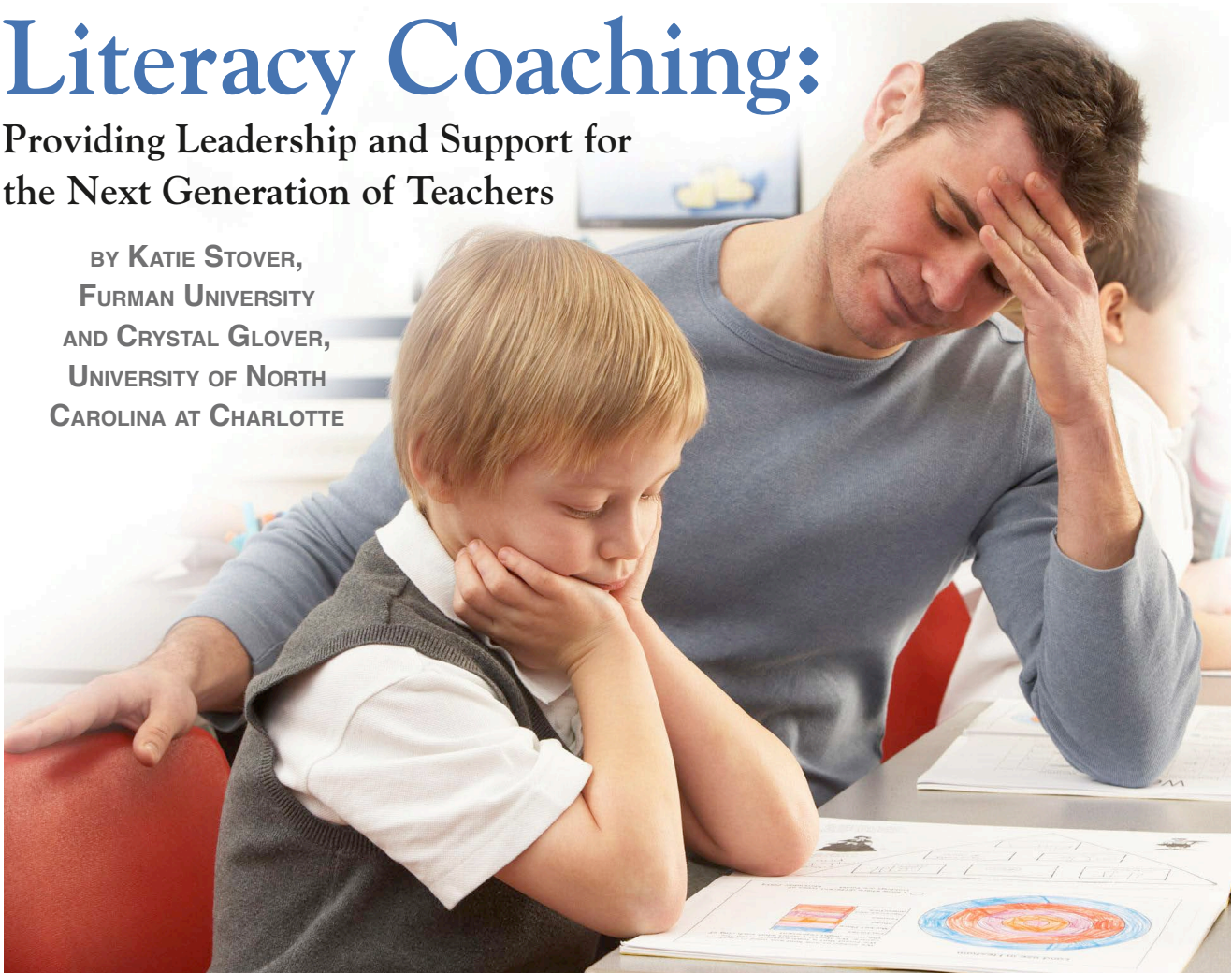
Abstract

New teachers face a number of challenges as they begin their careers. In fact, many leave the profession for a range of reasons including an overwhelming amount of information and responsibility, pressures of high stakes testing, and lack of support. To counter these challenges, the authors discuss ways literacy coaches can provide leadership and guidance to new teachers through building relationships, creating a climate of trust, and developing individualized support to enhance the teacher's success.

I began my first year of teaching with enthusiasm and was excited to make a difference in the lives of my students. Ready to implement the strategies I learned in my teacher preparation program. I thoughtfully arranged my students' desks in cooperative learning groups, organized my classroom library, adorned the reading area with comfortable pillows and soft lighting and hung student work to create an inviting classroom community.

Yet, my attempts to foster an engaging learning environment were quickly squashed with the harsh reality of teacher accountability and the pressure from testing mandates.

With a population of students who scored close to the bottom percentile in the entire state, the school's administration called for a standardized and scripted instructional approach and the shuffling of students to create ability grouped classes. As the new teacher, I was given the group with the struggling learners.

Teaching a classroom full of students who were all below grade level left me feeling vulnerable and scrutinized when administrators relied on student test scores to judge my teaching abilities. I was expected to use a skill and drill approach to teach to the test and put all of what I learned about

> *effective and engaging teaching on hold. I was told to use data to drive my instruction and teach to the test if I wanted to see results. This left me feeling discouraged, unsupported, and second guessing my decision to become a teacher. I felt like the little mole that pops out of the Whac-a-Mole arcade game only to be whacked by the enormous, ever-present mallet just waiting to clobber me. The administrative mallet stripped me of my professional knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching and learning in an effort to create a factory-like setting of standardized test preparation. I wanted to quit.* (Anne, fourth grade teacher)

Challenges of New Teachers

Like the teacher in the above vignette, new teachers face a number of challenges as they begin their professional careers. For 25% of first year teachers, these challenges prove too difficult and force them to abandon the profession after just one year. Almost half of all new teachers quit teaching within five years (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003). Beginning teachers leave the profession for reasons such as inadequate pay, inadequate support from school administration, intrusions on teaching time, discipline problems, and limited input in decision making (DeAngelis, 2012; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012). Unlike many professions which provide new hires with an introduction period complete with on-the-job training, new teachers are often isolated and left to fend for themselves. They are frequently given a set of teacher manuals and expected to provide meaningful instruction and produce savvy test takers with little or no outside assistance.

Information Overload

Research suggests that beginning teachers have difficulty managing the abundance of responsibilities they encounter in their first years of teaching (Chorzempa, 2011). In an effort to ensure their preparedness for teaching, beginning teachers are inundated with information. This information overload can lead to confusion and frustration for novice educators that are managing their own classrooms for the first time (Chorzempa, 2011). The massive amount of professional development and teacher training sessions leave new teachers unsure of where to place their focus. New teachers often complain of having so much information to sift through, that they neglect important aspects of their jobs (Chorzempa, 2011). In talking with four beginning teachers, the authors found that these new teachers felt unprepared to handle the expectations placed on them to manage a classroom, communicate with parents, and implement differentiated instruction for diverse learners.

Pressures of Standardized Testing

For many school districts, standardized test scores have considerable influence on the amount of state and federal funding schools receive. This can have a significant impact on low-performing schools or schools whose student populations come from poor or low-income families. For new teachers in these schools, the emphasis on testing adds an additional measure of stress and anxiety (Brookings Institution, 2011; Tempel, 2012). Novice teachers are often required to attend professional development designed to assist them with such things as test preparation strategies, data analysis, and assessment techniques. Yet these training sessions often leave new teachers with more questions than answers. While these professional development measures may help ensure that teachers understand the importance of using data to drive instruction, such training fails to show beginning teachers how that concept translates into practice. This missing link represents a significant challenge for beginning teachers.

A Need for Support

The isolated nature of teaching can leave beginning teachers with feelings of doubt about their decisions to become teachers (Chen, 2012). Many new teachers feel disconnected from other teachers in the school community. Veteran teachers, whose personal experiences have the potential to benefit beginning teachers, are often busy with the demands of their own classrooms and fail to offer much-needed support to the novice teachers in their school settings. This lack of support leads to further frustration and dissatisfaction on the part of beginning teachers. In many cases, these negative feelings affect new teachers' ability to provide effective instruction to their students.

Research on the academic performance of students in classrooms taught by beginning teachers suggests the need for new teachers to receive on-the-job training and support during their initial teaching experiences (Sterrett & Imig, 2011). Early support for new teachers is crucial in order to foster a sense of confidence, develop knowledge and pedagogy, and enhance student learning. Researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that students in beginning teachers' mathematics classrooms performed 21 days behind their counterparts taught by veteran teachers on end-of-the-year assessment measures (Henry, Thompson, Bastian, Fortner, Kershaw, Purtell, & Zulli, 2010). Having the support of literacy coaches and mentors to scaffold the learning experience for novice teachers can help ease the transition into teaching and enhance the academic

performance of students in beginning teachers' classrooms.

Literacy Coaching Offers Leadership and Support

To counter these challenges, it is essential that beginning teachers have a mentor or literacy coach who provides leadership and guidance as they begin their teaching journeys. Literacy coaches are commonly employed as instructional leaders within many schools. According to the International Reading Association (2004, 2006), a literacy coach works primarily with classroom teachers to improve instructional practices. However, literacy coaches wear many hats and are responsive to teachers' needs beyond instructional support. For example, they may work with new teachers to discuss classroom management techniques, strategies for differentiating instruction for diverse learners, and ways to engage and motivate students to learn. Literacy coaches also work with teachers to examine a variety of assessment options and guide them in analysis of the data to drive instruction (Blamey, Albert, & Dorrell, 2008: Walpole & McKenna, 2013). In the state of Georgia, literacy coaches are expected to be fluent in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards and standards-based education (Stout, Jeffcoat, McSwain, Davis, Chauvin, & Throdore, 2010). Literacy coaches in Georgia are also required to have strong command of reading and writing within the content areas, Response to Intervention (RTI), assessment, the interpretation of data, differentiating lessons based on data, and selecting and implementing appropriate interventions (Stout et al., 2010).The ways in which literacy coaches support teachers is based on the strengths and areas of needed growth for each individual teacher. Building off of the teacher's strengths, the literacy coach fosters reflection and assists the teacher with goal setting. The individual needs of each teacher drive the differentiated coaching conversations (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011).

Building Relationships

In order to provide effective leadership, it is necessary for literacy coaches to foster trusting relationships by establishing rapport early on. Before the school year begins, the literacy coach should reach out to new teachers to introduce themselves and welcome them to the school. Showing the teacher around the physical space of the school building, where materials are kept, and how to gain access to supplies helps orient the new teacher to the structural aspects of the school. Planning a broad instructional timeline with new teachers to map out curriculum based on the grade-level and Common Core State Standards familiarizes the teacher with instructional goals and objectives. Topics such as classroom arrangement, management, assessment and grading expectations are important for beginning teachers to have a clear understanding. This work is crucial at the onset of the school year in order to provide the teacher with a foundational level of familiarity and comfort with the expectations and routines of the school so they are not left uninformed and guessing about what to do. Getting acquainted to a new school and a new career for many, amidst an overabundance of information is when the most support is needed from a mentor or instructional coach.

Creating a Climate of Trust

It is important in the role of a literacy coach to remain neutral. Building trusting relationships by maintaining confidentiality and support is critical to the work of literacy coaching (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). The role of the literacy coach is crucial to providing a non-evaluative liaison between the classroom teacher and the administration and ongoing demands of the nuts and bolts of teaching. Fostering relationships where teachers feel comfortable talking openly about concerns and struggles without being judged allows the literacy coach to better meet each teacher's individual needs and create an ongoing support system. In order for the new teacher to accept feedback, they must feel valued and comfortable working collaboratively with instructional coaches. Building rapport and developing trusting relationships enhances the connection between the instructional coach and the new teacher. Fostering teachers' personal, professional, and emotional well-being helps teachers feel appreciated and supported.

Meeting Individual Needs

Like the diverse students in our classrooms, the type of support teachers need varies based on each individual teacher. Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) discuss the importance of differentiating support offered by literacy coaches based on the individual needs of teachers. This is particularly relevant to the support of novice teachers. Some new teachers need development of classroom management skills while others need strategies to meet the needs of struggling learners. By meeting with new teachers on an individual and regular basis, the literacy coach can create a safe setting where the teacher will more likely share questions and challenges allowing the coach to better meet his/her individual needs.

Teachers and their students benefit from the leadership of literacy coaches. Teachers can improve their instructional practice by including higher-level thinking questions, actively engaging students, and differentiated instruction (Bean, Belcastro, Hathaway, Risko, Rosemary, & Roskos, 2008). Through collaborative partnerships between the teacher and the literacy coach, opportunities for focused self-

reflection and reflective professional development can lead to enhanced instructional decisions and improved student achievement (Stover et al., 2011; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). It is critical that teachers are reflective practitioners in order to navigate the complex field of teaching in an era of policy mandates and teacher accountability (Moore & Whitfield, 2008). With the leadership of a literacy coach, new teachers no longer have to feel isolated within the four walls of their classroom.

Final Thoughts

With the ongoing support and leadership of a literacy coach, new teachers can become more adept at meeting the complex demands and challenges of teaching. Literacy coaching can fulfill a vital role in helping new teachers meet the demands of teaching without succumbing to the pressures associated with the profession. If new teachers such as the one mentioned in the opening vignette of this article are to conquer the world of high stakes testing and teacher accountability, they must be armed with the tools to accomplish this task. A literacy coach can provide the much needed leadership and support necessary for new teachers to meet the wide range of needs of students in their classrooms.

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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.

Full-length Articles

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.

Articles for the Exchange Column

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.

Manuscript Guidelines

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.

**Please submit all manuscripts
to the co-editors:**
Lina B. Soares and Christine A. Draper
grasubmission@georgiasouthern.edu

*Lina B. Soares, Co-Editor
Georgia Journal of Reading,
Georgia Southern University*

*Christine A. Draper, Co-Editor
Georgia Journal of Reading,
Georgia Southern University*

Significance of Prior Knowledge Activation:

A Close Look at a Bilingual Kindergarten Student's Response to a Poem

BY DR. ALMA STEVENSON,
GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This manuscript examines a kindergarten bilingual (Spanish/English) student's responses to a poem during a two-day writer's workshop. A detailed description of the student's illustrated initial response to the poem is compared with the student's later response after the vocabulary embedded in the poem was discussed. The importance of considering students' sociocultural backgrounds and activating their prior knowledge as essential parts of instruction is stressed.

When students come to school, they bring their linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds and the experiences they have been exposed to outside the classroom. When they participate in instructional activities, students' backgrounds and experiences impact the way they perceive texts. For this reason, instructional approaches, wherein learning is conceptualized as a social process, have placed a central focus on valuing students' experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Within this frame, learning is socially constructed through interaction with people and the social environment, and requires the formation of meaningful connections between students' previous experiences and sociocultural backgrounds and the new knowledge that is being taught. In order for this to consistently occur during instruction, both teachers and students need to cultivate such connections. Consequently, the activation of prior knowledge has become an integral part of most contemporary instructional approaches.

Prior knowledge is structured, tacit, or explicit knowledge an individual possesses that "contains conceptual and metacognitive knowledge components" (Dochy, De Rijdt, & Dyck, 2002, p. 267). Prior or background knowledge is grounded in the schema theory. This theory contends that the knowledge or schema already stored in our memory structures the ways in which new information, such as an unfamiliar reading passage, can be comprehended, interpreted, and integrated into our mind (Anderson & Pearson,

1984). Therefore, new learning is impacted and shaped by students' pre-existing, relevant schema. Moreover, their retention of new learning requires connecting it with this older knowledge in salient ways. It does not matter if students' existing knowledge was obtained from experiences outside school or from instruction in school (Marzano, 2004); it provides the necessary foundation for new learning.

Detecting and Connecting with Prior Knowledge

Activating prior knowledge at the start of instruction has the objective of bridging the gap between what students already know and new concepts or topics about to be addressed in the classroom. Initially, accessing and assessing the students' prior knowledge provides teachers useful measures of what students know and what they have misconceptions about (Alvermann, Phelps, & Ridgeway Gillis, 2010). Subsequently, connecting instruction with prior knowledge is one of the most important factors in promoting students' comprehension, since it stimulates the students' interest in the new knowledge and prepares their brains to form new cognitive connections between what they already know and their new learning. In the same way, the students' linguistic background and cultural experiences, as reflected in their prior knowledge, can be used to foster understanding and opportunities to make meaningful associations. However, the essential moment-to-moment negotiations between teacher and students that build such connections require a great deal of quick, high-level thinking by teachers

during instruction. Teachers need to instantaneously integrate social and cultural awareness, verbal and visual creativity, and sometimes difficult interpretations of students' intended meanings.

Assessing and Integrating English Language Learners' Background Knowledge

Working with English Language Learners (ELLs) requires teachers' awareness of not only the students' prior knowledge, but of the linguistic demands a lesson requires from students. Thus, it is important for teachers of ELLs to know specific strategies to address these demands and thereby assist ELLs in simultaneously learning content and English language skills. The SIOP Model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008), which is supported by Georgia's Department of Education as an approach to ELL education, includes many such strategies. One of the most important strategies for making a lesson's content more comprehensible is pre-discussion of key vocabulary in order that students can move beyond decoding individual words and take in the content of the larger lesson. As a means to this end, it is recommended that teachers use graphic representations and illustrations to introduce vocabulary words and help ELLs understand new content. However, to do this well, the visuals must make sense within students' existing schema based in their cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds. As the following example demonstrates, sometimes the process of using graphics and illustrations to assess and activate students' existing knowledge can reveal unanticipated connections by the students, and a resultant necessity for teachers to explicitly build new understandings and schema as alternatives to what students already know.

A Close Look at a Bilingual Kindergarten Student's Response to a Poem

An example of the impact of an ELLs' linguistic and sociocultural background on their interpretation of a text is outlined in this classroom vignette extracted from an informal kindergarten classroom observation. The teacher was developing her class's visualization skills by asking them to describe and illustrate their mental images of particular concepts or schema (Miller, 2002, 2012). Her chosen strategy was to read a poem and then ask students to respond by illustrating the mental images they visualized while listening to the poem.

[Note that this approach is a bit reminiscent of McConnell's (1992) Talking Drawings strategy, which was later developed by Paquette, Fello, and Jalongo (2007). However, in Talking Drawings, students are presented with a topic, asked to visualize their prior knowledge about the topic, and then draw that mental image – a guess of what is to come – all before hearing or reading a text (usually expository) regarding the topic.]

In the case under examination here, Ms. Furlong (pseudonym), a public school teacher in a small town in southern New Mexico, taught a dual-language (Spanish/English) kindergarten class wherein students were instructed in English and Spanish during alternating weeks. During an English language week, she presented to her students the poem *Ducks on a Winter Night* by Georgia Heard (1997). She used a lesson structure suggested by Miller (2002, 2012), as part of a two-day writer's workshop activity. The poem reads:

Ducks asleep
On the bank of the pond
Tuck their bills
Into feathery quills
Making their own beds
To keep warm in
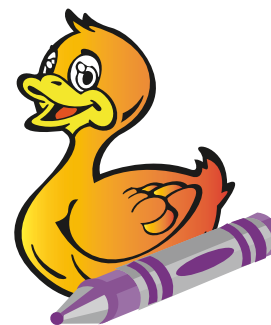
The poem itself provides several opportunities for teaching both vocabulary and visualization, but it also contains possibilities for misinterpretation, some of which even Ms. Furlong may have not realized when starting the lesson. Miller (2012) emphasizes the importance of students' schema as a focal point in this strategy. In Miller's example, she noted that while teaching this lesson in her own classroom, one of her students thought that the "quills" in the poem referred to porcupine quills. Similarly, when Ms. Furlong asked her students to illustrate their interpretations of the poem, one Latino, predominantly Spanish speaking student, drew and described the following:

"bills" as dollar bills

"bank" as financial

His picture was a clear indication of his pre-existing knowledge, but also his limited understanding of crucial English-language vocabulary: "bank" and "bills." His hometown, located along the Rio Grande and surrounded by irrigated fields of pecan trees and cotton, does not have ponds with "banks" around them. Moreover, the distinction between the general category of birds' beaks and the specific subcategory

of aquatic birds' "bills" is likely not to be part of his experience at home or at school. This is especially unlikely since in everyday Spanish both beaks and bills are referred to by the same noun: picos. In this way, the natural / outdoor interpretations were not apparent to the student. Instead, the presence of the two English words, "bank" and "bills", close to each other in the same poem, both of which have business-oriented meanings, clearly facilitated a financial, rather than a wildlife interpretation. Thus, it is no surprise that he understood "bills" in its more commonly used sense, as dollar bills, and expected that those bills were connected to a commercial bank, such as is likely frequented by his parents.

Afterward, the teacher led an extended discussion and analysis of the poem, using visual representations to explain the poet's intended interpretations of the vocabulary. She demonstrated how to choose amongst these alternatives on the basis of the context of the poem. Subsequently, the same student produced another, substantially different, and more accurate representation of the poem:

ducks' "bills" tucked in for sleep

"bank" as the edge of a body

This example clearly illustrates one of the crucial benefits of assessing and activating students' prior knowledge early in any instructional activity: the diagnosis of misconceptions and possible linguistic, cultural, and experiential barriers and gaps that might prevent students from fully understanding texts (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Ms. Furlong used the students' initial drawings as formative assessments that informed her about her students' vocabulary knowledge and previous experiences. She then built new schema that both connected and contrasted with their background knowledge in order to allow them to fully understand the meaning of the poem. Such pre-assessments are crucial for teachers to clarify and connect with students' background knowledge and then construct understandings of new concepts in relationship with what students already know.

Closing Thoughts

In summary, activating and connecting with students' prior knowledge is crucial in order to optimize their learning. Research has shown that the most meaningful learning takes place when students are provided with opportunities and assistance to connect and compare new knowledge with their background experiences and skills (their existing schema).

As discussed in this article, incorporating the students' prior knowledge and background experiences facilitates students' engagement and prepares their brains to connect new knowledge with their background experiences. In the same fashion, it is necessary to consider the impact of the students' (especially ELLs) socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds to facilitate their participation in the classroom. Developing the ability to assess and build upon students' prior knowledge before and during instruction provides teachers with the opportunity to construct learning upon the stable foundation of what students already know (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) and to interconnect topics so as to reinforce students' understandings.

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

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS

The Effect of Explicit Instruction with Writing Conventions Among Preservice Teachers

By Laurie A. Sharp

Abstract

Preservice teachers require both personal knowledge and pedagogical understandings with written conventions. Concern with preservice teachers' inability to demonstrate proficiency with written conventions prompted this study. This study utilized a pretest/posttest design, and participants' were preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher education program. Participants completed five professor-created lessons aimed to develop personal knowledge with written conventions. Findings showed statistical significance regarding participants' personal knowledge after receiving explicit instruction with written conventions.

Writing conventions, also referred as grammar, was defined as "the set of rules that describes how words and groups of words can be arranged to form sentences in a particular language" (Cowan, 2008, p. 3). Cowan stressed that the ability to teach written conventions requires much more than fluency with the English language. Rather, teachers of written conventions require "conscious knowledge of the grammatical rules of the language" (p. 2).

Several researchers have shown the importance of teachers possessing a thorough understanding of written conventions in order to develop their students' knowledge and skills related to the proper use of written conventions (e.g., Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2010; Meyer, 2003), especially when teaching struggling learners (Moats, 1994). Borg (2001) asserted that teacher education programs must include multiple learning experiences aimed to advance and sustain preservice teachers' awareness of their knowledge of written conventions, as well as how this knowledge will affect their ability to teach written conventions. In this same manner, Myhill and Watson (2013) purported that knowledge about written conventions is not sufficient by itself. Preservice teachers must also possess pedagogical understandings regarding the instruction of written conventions.

The impetus for this study derived from a shared concern among faculty within a teacher education program: preservice teachers' lack of proficiency with use of conventions in their writings. Undergraduate students enrolled in this university's teacher education program complete 12 hours of English courses and nine hours of courses identified as writing intensive as part of their prescribed degree plan. These courses, in addition to the learning experiences within all other

required courses, should ideally build preservice teachers' proficiency with concepts related to proper use of written conventions. Of greater concern is the fact that these preservice teachers seek certification at the elementary level, as well as certification to work with English language learners. Therefore, these preservice teachers will eventually be teachers of written conventions to young students and nonnative English speakers.

Clearly, effective teachers of written conventions require both personal knowledge and pedagogical understandings related to instruction (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001; Moats, 1994; Myhill & Watson, 2013). Based on the aforementioned assertions of Borg (2001) and Myhill and Watson (2013), the researcher posited that learning written conventions through meaningful and relevant learning experiences was an important piece for preservice teachers enrolled in this teacher education program. With this in mind, this study sought to determine the effect of explicit instruction with written conventions embedded within the context of a language arts methods course on preservice teachers' personal knowledge.

Methodology

Participants of this study consisted of 71 undergraduate students enrolled in a teacher education program at a public state university. All participants were classified as seniors and seeking elementary-level teaching certification, as well as certification for teaching English language learners. Participants were enrolled in their final semester of university coursework.

At the time of this study, all participants had successfully completed a minimum of 99 hours of undergraduate coursework, of which 12 hours were English courses (two freshman-level English courses and two sophomore-level English courses) and six hours were courses identified as writing intensive. Writing intensive courses were selected courses within a program of study at the university aimed to achieve two purposes: (1) to improve the personal writing ability of students, and (2) to improve the professional writing ability of students within their program of study. At the time of this study, all participants were enrolled in a third writing intensive course, which was related to the implementation of language arts instruction at the elementary and middle grade levels. The content of this course seemed highly appropriate to achieve the purpose of this study.

This study utilized a pretest/posttest design, with which data would be measured with a t Test to determine if statistical significance was present. The pretest was administered at the beginning of the semester, before any formal instruction took place. The posttest was administered during finals at the end of the semester.

Throughout the semester, participants completed five lessons, which were developed as learning modules and delivered through Blackboard, a Web-based learning management system. Each participant had individual access to the professor-created learning modules, and each learning module was accessible during a specified two-week window. Participants' activity within each learning module was accessed and tracked through administrative reports available in Blackboard.

The content of each learning module focused on a specific writing convention identified as part of the state-mandated English language arts curriculum for the elementary grades. The rationale behind this methodology was to ensure that participants were developing personal knowledge about specific writing conventions they would be expected to teach. The content of the five learning modules was as follows:

Lesson 1 – Punctuation
This learning module focused on the use of ending punctuation marks for sentences, commas, apostrophes, quotations marks, colon, and semicolon use.

Lesson 2 – Spelling
This learning module focused on common and advanced orthographic spelling patterns in English.

Lesson 3 – Commonly Confused Words
This learning module focused on proper use of commonly confused words, such as affect/effect.

Lesson 4 – Parts of Speech and Sentence Structures
This learning module focused on the various parts of speech and sentence structures (e.g., run-on sentences, sentence fragments).

Lesson 5 – Capitalization
This learning module focused on the written conventions associated with capitalization.

Each of the five learning modules followed a pattern aligned with the lesson cycle (shown in Figure 1), a lesson planning framework based upon best practices in teaching (McGregor, n.d.). As participants accessed a learning module, they were guided through the following sequential steps:

1. State Purpose and Focus: Participants were provided the objective for the learning module and interacted with a hook for engagement, such as a brief YouTube video clip.

2. Explanation of Content: Participants completed
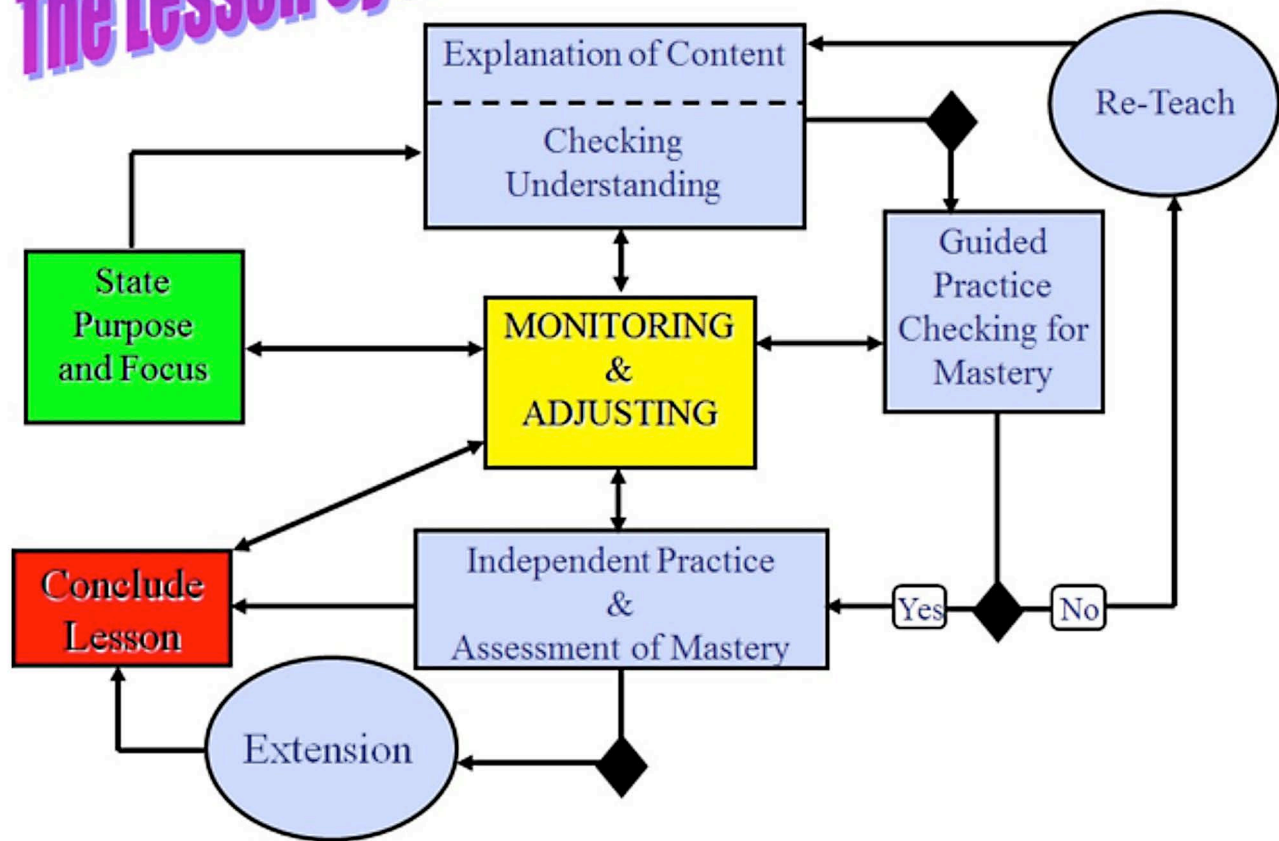
The Lesson Cycle:

Figure 1. Flowchart showing the instructional design of a lesson using the lesson cycle (McGregor, n.d.). The lesson cycle is highly structured and adapted from Madeline Hunter's (1994) Instructional Theory into Practice (ITIP) model. The ITIP model is a linear framework that involves teacher decision-making throughout the process. As shown in Figure 1, the lesson cycle shows the recursive process of instructional design.

a professor-created task sheet and viewed a professor-created presentation. Task sheets and presentations focused on building participants' personal knowledge of the learning modules' content. While completing a task sheet, participants used valid and reliable references to gather information pertaining to the written conventions associated with the learning module, such as definitions and grammatical rules.

3. Guided Practice: Participants practiced applying knowledge and skills related to the content of the learning module through interactive games and quizzes accessible via the Internet.

4. Independent Practice: Participants completed a quiz within each learning module to demonstrate mastery of personal knowledge. Quizzes consisted of 20 questions in varied formats, including matching, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank. Some of the quiz questions contained multiple

responses; therefore, partial credit could be earned. Quizzes were timed, and participants were given a 30-minute window to complete the quiz associated with each learning module.

The format of the pretest and posttest was similar to the quizzes. The only difference was the pretest and posttest randomized questions related to all content: punctuation, spelling, commonly confused words, parts of speech and sentence structures, and capitalization.

Results

Data for participants' performance on the quizzes, pretest, and posttest were entered into SPSS. Descriptive statistics were first analyzed to check for a normal distribution of data. One outlier was identified, and this datum was removed from further analyses. After removal of this outlier, the remaining data met all assumptions, and a Shapiro-Wilks test confirmed normality of data ($p > .05$).

Summary of Quiz Performance

Measure	N	M	SD
Lesson 1	70	90.45	17.96
Lesson 2	70	90.35	10.26
Lesson 3	70	90.92	9.95
Lesson 4	70	93.94	9.33
Lesson 5	70	91.00	20.38

Table 1

Summary of Pretest and Posttest Performance

Measure	N	M	SD
Pretest	70	58.77	12.85
Posttest	70	70.21	11.95

Table 2

An initial analysis of data revealed high mean scores for each of the learning modules' quizzes (see Table 1). Further analyses were conducted using a paired samples t test to compare participants' performance with the pretest and posttest (see Table 2). The mean of the posttest (M = 70.21, SD = 11.95) was higher than the mean of the pretest (M = 58.77, SD = 12.85), t(69) = -7.05, p = .00, d = .92. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the pretest and posttest was -2.23 to -1.14. Therefore, the t test revealed a highly statistically significant difference between participants' pretest and posttest scores. Hence, the explicit instruction with written conventions had a significant effect on participants' personal knowledge with written conventions.

Discussion

Faculty within a teacher education program shared a concern regarding preservice teachers' lack of proficiency with written conventions. The need for teachers to possess both personal knowledge and pedagogical understandings of written conventions is documented (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001; Moats, 1994; Myhill & Watson, 2013). Being that preservice teachers enrolled in this specific teacher education program were required to complete several courses that involve a great deal of writing, it seems reasonable to conclude that personal knowledge of written conventions was being developed. However, faculty noted that preservice teachers within this specific program were not able to consistently demonstrate application of personal knowledge with written conventions.

Although research exists that reported no statistically significant findings between explicit instruction with written conventions and students' writing (Petrosky, 1977), there is a body of research that showed instruction focused upon the improvement of students' writing was more effective than isolated skill-based instruction (e.g., Hillocks & Smith, 2003; Weaver, McNally, & Moerman, 2001). According to Feng and Powers (2005), the most optimal approach for instruction with written conventions involves crafting minilessons that are based upon errors present in students' writing. While error-based instruction with writing conventions is a meaningful and authentic instructional approach, Berger (2001) also emphasized the importance of a "scope and sequence that addresses many grammar conventions" and provides students with a "steady diet" of explicit instruction (p. 49).

Preservice teachers admitted to this teacher education program will eventually be certified to teach at the elementary level, as well as certified to teach English language learners. Consequently, it was imperative that preparation of these preservice teachers included development of both personal knowledge and pedagogical understandings of written conventions. At the time of this study, preservice teachers were enrolled in a course that covers content related to implementation of language arts instruction. Thus, with instruction already taking place that focused on pedagogical understandings, learning modules were created to focus upon development of personal knowledge simultaneously. As Patterson (2001) contended, instruction related to written conventions must be "a means through which students learn more about themselves, their texts, and the world around them" (p. 55).

Analyses of data showed that the explicit instruction with written conventions had a statistically significant effect on preservice teachers' personal knowledge of written conventions. This finding implies that a more concerted effort was needed to develop personal knowledge with written conventions among preservice teachers. However, this study took place in a senior-level course taken the semester before student teaching. Would preservice teachers be better served if this effort took place earlier in their educational program? Perhaps it would be more beneficial for preservice teachers to have time to sustain personal knowledge of written conventions while under the direction of faculty within the teacher education program. On the other hand, timing explicit instruction aimed towards personal development with written conventions to align with the delivery of content related to pedagogical understandings might be more meaningful. Further research would be needed to determine when delivery of explicit instruction with written conventions should take place with preservice teachers.

It should also be noted that much of the university coursework, such as the freshman and sophomore level English courses, preservice teachers completed are courses offered outside of the teacher education program. Therefore, university students from all other programs of study also enroll in these courses. It raises the question of concern with preservice teachers' use of written conventions unique to students enrolled in the teacher education program, or is the concern university-wide? With this in mind, the content of courses aimed at developing students' use of written conventions might also need to be examined and adapted to better meet students' needs.

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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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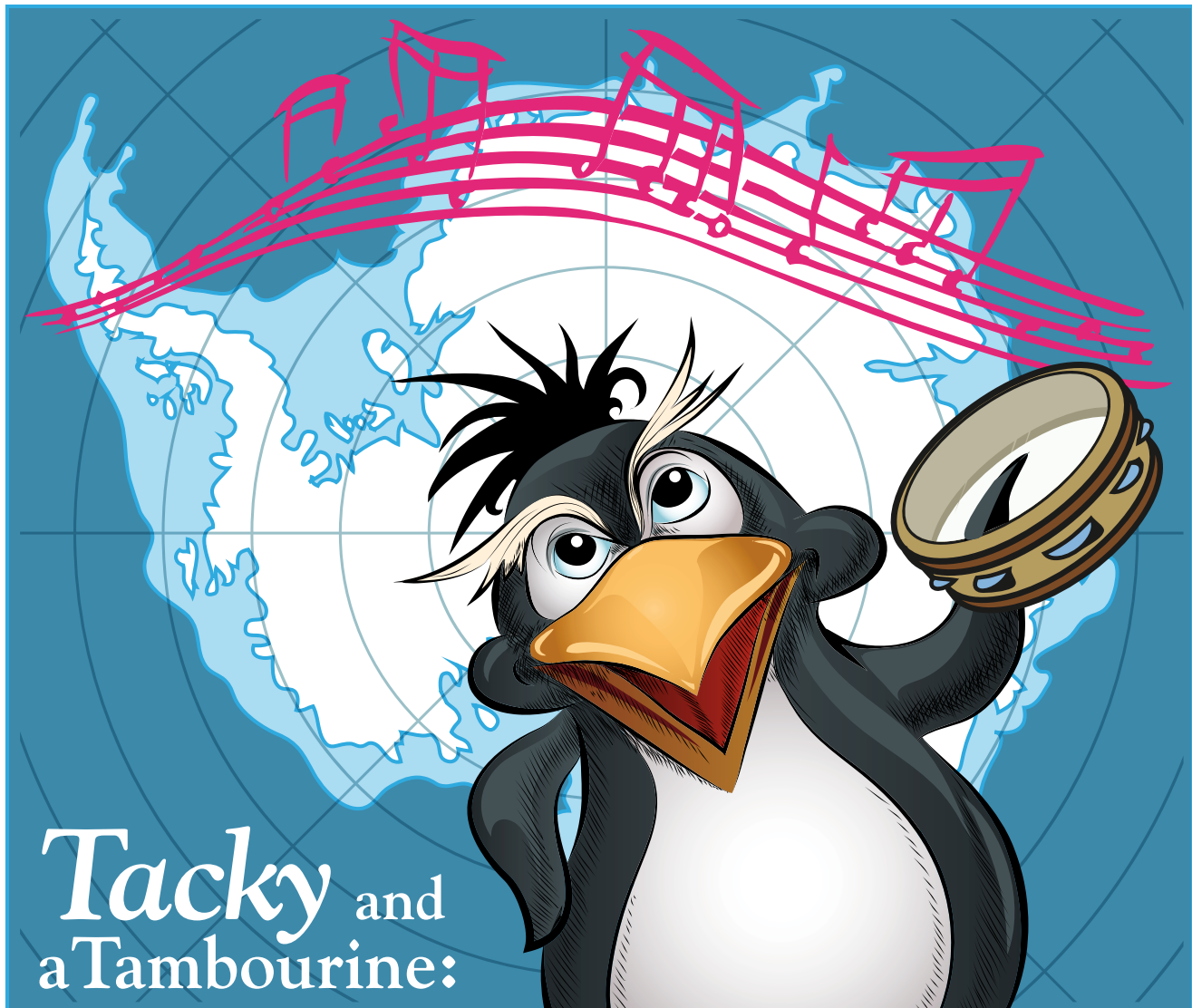
Tacky and a Tambourine:

Enhancing First Grade Literacy Through Music

BY NANCY MCBRIDE ARRINGTON,
GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This integrative lesson engages students in retelling the story *Tacky, the Penguin* through music. First grade English Language Arts Common Core Standards (ELACC) are addressed as students play instruments, create movement, sing and chant, and discuss their roles throughout the process. Students' understanding, fluency, and discussion skills are enhanced through their participation. The activity requires inexpensive hand bells and basic classroom rhythm instruments, and can be facilitated by general education teachers or music specialists with their young students. While the focus of this lesson is on the development of first grade literacy, this activity can be easily adapted to other stories and grade levels.

When teaching as an elementary music specialist in grades K-5 several years ago, I was approached by the first grade teachers in my school to contribute lessons to an interdisciplinary unit on the continents and to teach each lesson in music class during their study of each continent respectively. As one can imagine, it was easy to contribute a lesson consisting of folk songs/instruments/dances from North America. The lesson from the Asia unit brought to life many instruments and songs resonating in pentatonic modes. The Europe lesson afforded our students a rich heritage from classical music, along with French, Spanish, and German children's songs. Didgeridoos and kangaroos were at the center of the Australia lesson. African drumming rang

throughout our building during its respective lesson. The South America lesson focused on Argentine and Brazilian children's game songs, along with the Andean panpipes. When I began brainstorming about Antarctica, I asked myself the same questions as I had regarding the other continents: Who were famous composers from Antarctica? What are some folk songs from Antarctica? Instruments? Dances? Well, I obviously drew a blank!

Using my best resource (my students!), I asked the first graders what they knew about Antarctica. In unison they shouted, "PENGUINS!" So, I visited the librarian for a recommendation for a children's book. Without hesitation, he presented me with *Tacky the Penguin* (Lester & Munsinger, 1988). As soon as I saw the book, I knew it was the one to use for my lesson. I, however, had to get creative to turn it into a musical lesson. This lesson, which is described in this article, served the purpose for contributing a musical Antarctica lesson to the Interdisciplinary Continent Unit for many years at my school.

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS, 2012), literacy instruction is the responsibility of all content areas, which includes music education. Similar themes are shared between CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA) and the National Standards for Music Education (NAfME, 2014). Some of the commonalities between these sets of standards include demonstrating independence, having strong content knowledge, comprehending, critiquing, and understanding other perspectives and cultures (Weidner, 2013). Additionally, other learning-to-read skills correlate with music literacy skills. These include phonological awareness, sight identification, orthographic awareness, and fluency (Hansen & Bernstorf, 2002). Coleman (n.d.), one of the authors of the Common Core State Standards, developed the *Guiding Principles for the Arts* and made connections between these principles and literacy. For example, principal one states, "Studying works of arts as training in close observation across the arts disciplines and preparing students to create and perform in the arts" (para. 2). This interdisciplinary connection enables students to actively participate in performance. In addition to actively participating in reading through music, concepts of literacy can be taught and/or enhanced through music. Research has demonstrated that music contributes to focused attention (Asaridou & McQueen, 2013; Tierney & Kraus, 2013) and enhances auditory processing (Saffran, 2002; Skoe & Kraus, 2012). Bernstorf (2013) reminds us that good music literacy can "provide the very same benefits as those who teach language reading, plus the enjoyment of an arts experience" (p. 2).

As I examined this lesson in the context of literacy, I discovered that the musical retelling of *Tacky, the Penguin* also served as an effective read-aloud. Therefore, in the description of this activity, I have noted the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in English Language Arts (ELA) addressed in this lesson (GaDOE, 2014).

As stated earlier, my music students were my most valuable resource to utilize in generating creative ideas for lessons. Through the years, I had found that their natural movements led to innovative choreography and that their chants at play developed into meaningful songs for school events, etc. Therefore, it was natural for me to use their ideas when developing this activity: their contributions were invaluable, as they made many suggestions to make this activity more meaningful than I could have imagined. For example, I had initially only used the hand bells, tambourine, and drums for a select group to participate in their assigned part. I quickly learned that all students wanted a special role to play, and my first graders suggested having a "choir" and some "dancers" for the story. As a result, the Crooning Penguins and Partying Penguins groups were formed, joining the characters named in the book. Based on my experience in the general classroom and in sharing this with preservice teachers, I have found that this activity can be facilitated by a general classroom teacher. The instruments used in the activity are basic and are most likely available to borrow from the elementary music specialist. These classroom instruments are inexpensive and can be purchased easily through PTO or mini-grant funds. Vendors that provide these basic instruments at reasonable costs include local education supply stores, toy stores, and online vendors such as Musician's Friend (www. musiciansfriend.com/classroom-kids) and Music is Elementary (www.musiciselementary.com).

The following is the description of the lesson activity in which I correlated music with the book *Tacky the Penguin* written by Helen Lester, illustrated by Lynn Munsinger. Enjoy!

LESSON ACTIVITY
Tacky, the Penguin – Retelling the Story with Music

GRADE LEVEL: First

CCGPS:

ELACCKRL5: Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems)

ELACCKRL6: With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story

and define the role of each in telling the story.

ELACCKRL10: Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

ELACC1RL1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

ELACC1RL2: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of

their central message or lesson.

ELACC1RL3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key

details. ELACC1RL6: Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

ELACC1RL7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

ELACC1RF4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension

ELACC1SL4: Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details,

expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

ELACC1SL5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

MATERIALS:
Lester, H. & Munsinger, L. (Illustrator). (1988). *Tacky the penguin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Music Instruments:

Hand Bells – (Pitches C, D, E, G, and C1)

Tambourine

Hand Drums

Procedures for Initial Reading of the Book:
1. Share and discuss the Title, Author, and Illustrator. Use the illustrations to help students determine the type of story.
2. Ask the students what they think the story is about, what they know about penguins, etc.
3. Read the book, pausing to note how the illustrations contribute to the meaning of the story, the characters, setting, and/or events.
4. Facilitate a discussion by asking questions about key details in the text, and other questions such as, "Who told the story?" and "Which words/phrases suggest feelings or appeal to senses?"

Procedures for Retelling the Story with Music:
As a group, the class will help retell the story with music as the teacher narrates, using the following directions.
1. Assign the characters (*Companions*, *Tacky*, and *Hunters*) represented by musical instruments, as described below. Demonstrate proper playing technique of instruments. Characters:
   5 Companions – represented with Hand Bells (The pitch, or note, which is printed on each bell, is denoted beside each Companion's name).

Goodly	C
Lovely	D
Angel	E
Neatly	G
Perfect	C¹

Tacky – represented with tambourine

Hunters – represented with hand drums. Play a steady beat on thump, thump, thump, and as a steady beat accompaniment to the *Crooning Penguins'* chant. The steady beat can be related to their pulse or heartbeat in that it is evenly played (See chart below).

Partying Penguins – perform the movements in the story

Crooning Penguins – perform the songs/chants in the story

2. Assign the *Partying Penguins* their role and allow them to create the following based on the feelings elicited by the words and phrases in the story at the respective times the words are read:
   a. Performing strict marching pattern
   b. Performing haphazard marching/tripping pattern
   c. Performing splashy cannonballs

3. Assign the *Crooning Penguins* their role and allow them to practice the following based on the feeling elicited by the words and phrases when they are read:

   a. "Sunrise on the Iceberg." Sing with sweet and pretty voice. (Suggest using the pitches sol-mi, or sol-mi-la which are the pitches sung naturally in childhood songs such as "Rain, Rain, Go Away," and "Na Nana Boo Boo").
   b. "How Many Toes Does a Fish Have?" Sing with harsh and weird voice.
   c. Chant. (*Hunters* will accompany the beat of this chant with hand drums. Beat is marked with X underneath the words). The steady beat will contribute to students' fluency.

"We're gonna catch some pretty penguins, and
　　X　　　X　　　　　X　　　X

we'll march 'em with a   switch, and we'll
　X　　X　　　　　X　　X

sell　'em for　　　a   dollar; and get
　X　　X　　　　　X　　X

rich,　rich,　RICH "
　X*　　X*　　　X*
(All add CLAP on *. Use gradual increase in dynamics, or crescendo, which means "to get louder," on the repetition of "rich."

4. The teacher re-reads the story, allowing the characters to play their musical instruments and

perform their movements, singing, chants, etc. at the appropriate times, as follows:

    a. *Companions* are named slowly, one at a time, to allow each student to play his/her individual bell after his/her respective name is called.

    b. Every time the name "Tacky" is used, the student assigned the tambourine shakes and beats his/her instrument.

    c. When the words thump, thump, thump for the hunters are used, the students assigned the hand drums beat their drums. Also, the drummers will play a steady beat to accompany the hunters' chant. (See chart above for beats marked with X)

5. At the end, the teacher will facilitate additional discourse to include, "How did the illustrations, musical instruments, movement, and use of different voices help us understand the story better?" and "Compare the characters."

It is my hope that your students (and you) enjoy using *Tacky, the Penguin* in this musical read-aloud as much as my students (and I) have. And, don't forget … you can always use this activity in your Antarctica lesson!

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Reading the Visual:
An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy

BOOK REVIEW BY SHANNON HOWREY

In the 21st century, a literate citizenry needs to know how to go about interpreting, designing, and asking questions of not only written text but of the visual and design elements within the growing genre of multimodal text. At this point, however, the visual piece is a mostly neglected area of the literacy curriculum. Frank Serafini's book is likely to fill a need for those who realize the importance of visual literacy instruction but whose knowledge of why and how to incorporate this element into the classroom is limited.

Serafini's book is divided into three parts. He moves from theories that inform multimodal literacy, to their application in general, to more specific sample units of study. The first section of the book is meant to build knowledge of the basics of visual literacy. The author defines and explains visual literacy within the larger topics of multi-literacies and the informing elements of media literacies and visual grammar.

In the second section, Serafini explains a pedagogical protocol of expose, explore, and engage. In the *exposing* stage students are immersed in various genres, the types of devices used, both visual and textual as they build a personal "map of the terrain (p. 93)" of communication means and modes. The *exploring* stage includes opportunities to look more closely at specific examples of multimodal texts, while developing a "metalanguage" (p. 93) for discussion and analysis. Finally, in the *engagement* stage students produce their own multimodal ensembles while making critically informed choices regarding design, mode, and other choices that will influence its communication.

In the third section of the book several units of study are laid out with detailed learning objectives, suggestions for teaching, possible culminating projects, potential texts, and questions for analysis. These are broken into the genres of postmodern, wordless, historical fiction, and informational picture books. Units for other genre types, such as graphic novels, comics, cartoons, advertisements, news reports, film, and digital media are also included.

Serafini readily acknowledges the curriculum, material, and time constraints that teachers face, and provides lists of potential texts for use in the unit on a variety of topics. These options not only provide flexibility for teachers across grade-levels but also integrate visual modality skills throughout the content areas rather than simply making them a topic solely for language arts. The only limitation to his approach is that the quantity and language level in the sample questions is more appropriate for middle or high school students. For example, in the section on wordless texts there are fifteen points of inquiry, which include the questions of "What is included in the peritext?" and "How much time elapses or setting change in between the images in the narrative sequence?" (p. 115). The number of the questions probably needs to be reduced for K-5, limited to the mostly concrete, and written in more kid-friendly language. Nevertheless, these questions provide a starting place for teachers in knowing how to go about analyzing visual images themselves.

You won't want to skip over the forward, in which James Paul Gee provides a convincing rationale behind multimodal literacy instruction, or the introduction and epilogue, in which Serafini provides a mini-review of literature in the visual literacies. The comprehensive nature of this book could inform a conversation of teachers who are literate in multimodal content and pedagogy. This book would be an excellent choice for a professional book club within a school, district office, college or university. In sum, Serafini's book makes a compelling case for expanding the meaning of literacy instruction for the 21st century, even while policy makers in Georgia and elsewhere are busy shrinking the meaning of "literacy" to simply reading words on a paper page.

You may also want to visit the author's website at www.frankserafini.com.

Serafini, Frank

Foreward by James Paul Gee

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GERALD BOYD is a former member of the English Language Arts Division of the Georgia Department of Education. He is a current Co-Editor of *Scribbles 'n Bits*, Georgia Council of Teachers of English.

KATIE STOVER is a former literacy coach and elementary teacher. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Furman University and teaches courses in reading and writing pedagogy. Her email is Katie. stover@furman.edu.

CRYSTAL P. GLOVER is a lecturer in the department of Reading and Elementary Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has ten years of experience as a primary grades teacher and received a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in Urban Literacy. Her email is cglove10@uncc.edu.

DR. ALMA D. STEVENSON has served as an educator of immigrant, special needs, bilingual, and mainstream students since 1993. She is an Assistant Professor at Georgia Southern University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in critical literacy, strategies, assessment, and literacy in the content areas. Her research explores educational policies and develops curricula and socio-cultural strategies that support the science and literacy education of historically underrepresented populations. She is active in a local social justice advocacy group and the regional migrant education program. She can be reached at: almastevenson@ georgiasouthern.edu.

LAURIE A. SHARP, Ed.D. is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. Laurie teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in literacy and serves as the advisor for graduate reading programs.

DR. NANCY MCBRIDE ARRINGTON earned B.A., M.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees from Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. Having been certified in Elementary Education, Music Education, and a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), she taught in general classrooms, grades 3-5, and in music classrooms, grades K-5, in a public school system in Anderson, South Carolina before joining the Department of Teaching and Learning at Georgia Southern University.

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