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Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Social Skills: Do their High Achievers Need it and Do the Teachers Feel Prepared to Teach It?

Kay Hanson & Arlene Puryear

Abstract
Current research shows that social skills are positive factors in academic success. In order to explore teachers' perceptions of the social skills of middle school high achievers, we conducted an on-line survey with 68 in-service middle school teachers. We asked them about their middle school high achievers' acceptance by others, play habits, and social skills compared to normally achieving, twice achieving and high achieving peers. Teachers were also asked if they were responsible for and prepared to teach social skills. While the teachers felt that they were responsible, they did not feel prepared.

Literature Review

With the advent of national, district, and school mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Common Core, the emphasis in classrooms across the country has shifted from an emphasis on the whole child to a laser focus on a restricted number of academic skills. With these policy changes have come a sharper demand for teacher accountability, with resulting threats to teacher employment and salaries based on students' standardized test performance. Loveless (2008) pointed out that, "Incentives shape behavior" (p. 14). It is no wonder, then, that teachers have little time or motivation to put toward subjects that will not impact these test scores, including the growth and development of their students' social skills.

Yet research shows that social skills are essential for academic success. Elias (2014) found, for example, that the rate of college dropouts was related more to "reduced social-emotional skills than intellectual or academic levels" (p. 58). He noted that, "...the same skills being neglected in the implementation of the Common Core are those that are ultimately most beneficial for success outside of school" (p. 58).

In fact, a meta-analysis of over 200 studies evaluating the importance of social-emotional learning found that improved social skills resulted in a 10 percent gain on standardized achievement tests (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schelinger, 2011). It would seem reasonable, then, that schools would prioritize their students' social skills, even if only for the purpose of improving standardized test scores (Elias, 2014).

There are hopeful signs of a growing attention to social skills. All states have long-standing social skills curriculum standards for the preschool level. However, four states (Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia) have now implemented freestanding comprehensive social skills standards for preschool through 12th grade with grade level developmental benchmarks (CASEL, 2014). While this is a positive step, it cannot be assumed that even with new curriculum mandates, teachers will implement them as intended.

Teacher beliefs frame their practices, influencing how and what they teach (Brown & Harris, 2009; Brown, 2004). Certainly, if teachers do not see a need for a particular

practice, they are less likely to implement it. As Brown (2004) wrote, "...the success or failure of such policies may hang on the conceptions and meanings that teachers give to those policies" (p. 301). Professional development is often unsuccessful when there is a disconnect between state and district expectations and teacher beliefs (Schaaf, Stokking, & Verloop, 2007; Ajzen, 2005; Brown 2004). Therefore, as Brown and Harris (2009) noted, "attention must be paid to the conceptions teachers have surrounding current practices and appreciate how they are most likely to understand, respond to, and implement reforms" (p. 69). So it is essential in any new policy that there be an awareness of the current beliefs and perceptions of those who will be expected to implement it.

As a first step in understanding teachers' perceptions on the social skills of their high achieving students, we initiated an Internet search for current research. Four different databases (Academic Search Premier, Education Full Test, ERIC (EBSCO), and Psych Info) were searched for journal articles on teacher perceptions of the social skills of their high achieving students. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

With the keywords 'high achievers', 2,946 articles were found. To narrow the search, we used the key words high achievers and social skills. The number of articles dwindled to 17.

We then added the key words 'teacher perceptions'. Only 2 articles were found. Both were pre-NCLB, with publication dates of 1990 and 1989. We then substituted keywords, 'social emotional' for 'social skills', which resulted in zero hits. We also tried 'teacher attitudes' instead of 'teacher perceptions', with the same results.

These surprising results appear to indicate that, at this time, there is a scarcity of research on teacher perceptions of the social skills of high achievers. This may be because not only are teachers focusing their time on academic skills as a result of NCLB, they are fixing their efforts on a limited group of students. Loveless (2008) pointed out that, "Some analysts today express concern that, by focusing attention on the education of students at the bottom of the achievement distribution, NCLB is surely encouraging schools to neglect high achievers" (p. 14). Fin & Petrilli (2008) echoed Loveless when they noted that,

Teachers are much more likely to indicate that struggling students, not advanced students, are their top priority. Asked about the needs of struggling students 60 percent of teachers say they are a 'top priority' at their school. Asked a similar question about 'academically advanced' students, only 23 percent of teachers say they are a top priority (p. 4).

Table 1
Current Research on Teacher Perceptions of the Social Skills of their High Achieving Students

Search Keywords	High Achievers	High Achievers + Social Skills	High Achievers + Social Skills + Teacher Perceptions	High Achievers + Social Emotional + Teacher Perceptions	High Achievers + Social Skills + Teacher Attitudes
Number of Articles Found in the 4 Databases	2,946	17	2	0	0

Databases: Academic Search Premier, Education Full Text, ERIC (EBSCO), Psych Info

Within the classroom, "Low-achieving students receive dramatically more attention from teachers. Asked 'Who is more likely to get one-on-one attention from teachers?' 81 percent of teachers named 'struggling students' while only five percent named 'advanced students'" (p.4).

Another issue that may be affecting teacher perceptions is the lack of training afforded them in their pre-service classes. Farkas & Duffett (2008) found that,

Teachers report receiving little grounding on how to work with academically advanced students. They say the preparation programs they attended as well as the professional development they got once they had their own classroom were unlikely to emphasize this kind of training. Nearly two-thirds (65%) report that their education courses or teacher preparation programs focused either very little or not at all on how to best teach academically advanced students. Relatively few (34%) say there was a lot or some focus on this subject in their programs. Nearly six in ten (58%) say they have had no professional development over the past few years that specifically focused on teaching academically advanced students. Four in ten (41%) report that they have (p. 62).

This study was initiated as part of a larger study to explore teacher perceptions of the social skills of high achievers. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are teacher perceptions of the social skills of high achieving students?
2. Do teachers believe they are responsible for teaching social skills?
3. Do teachers believe they are prepared to teach social skills?

Participants and Methodology

Our survey participants consisted of 68 in-service middle school teachers seeking South Carolina gifted and talented endorsement. Because this was an online course, the teachers were drawn from locations across the entire state of South Carolina. The teachers completed the on-line survey prior to taking their first of two required courses. South Carolina requires that any teacher responsible for the education of

Figure 1. Teacher Perceptions of the Acceptance of High Achievers
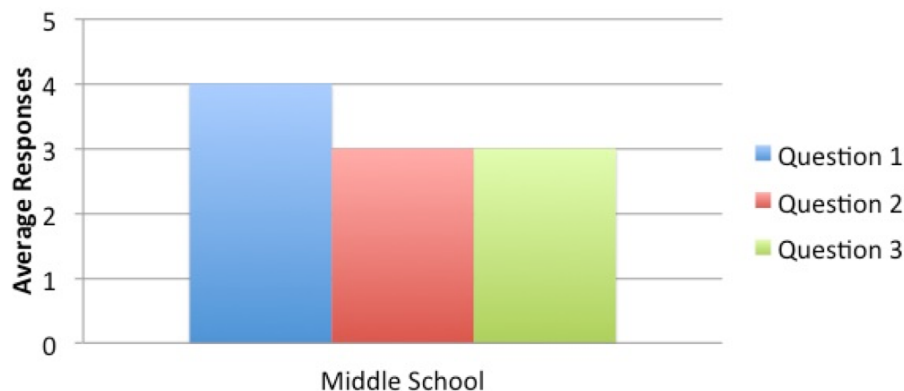
Questions the teachers responded to on the survey:
1. High achieving students fell comfortable in their relationships with their normally achieving peers.
2. High achieving students face rejections in their relationships with their normally achieving peers.
3. A lack of overall peer acceptance affects high achieving students.

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Moderately Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Moderately Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Figure 2. Teacher Perceptions of High Achievers with their Peers
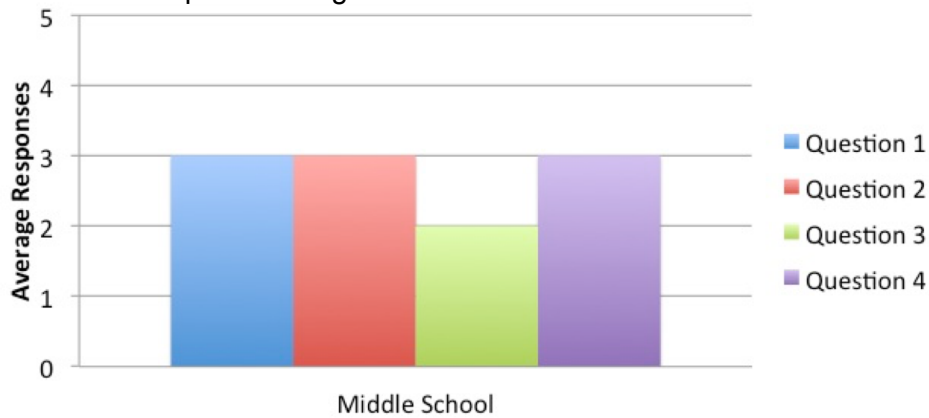
Questions the teachers responded to on the survey:
1. High achieving students have social problems when playing with their gifted peers
2. High achieving students have social skills problems when playing with their high achieving peers.
3. High achieving students have social skills problems when playing with their twice exceptional peers
4. High achieving students have social skills problems when playing with their normally achieving peers.

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Moderately Agree; 3=Neutral;2=Moderately Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Figure 3. Teacher Perceptions of Social Skills of High Achievers Compared to their Normally
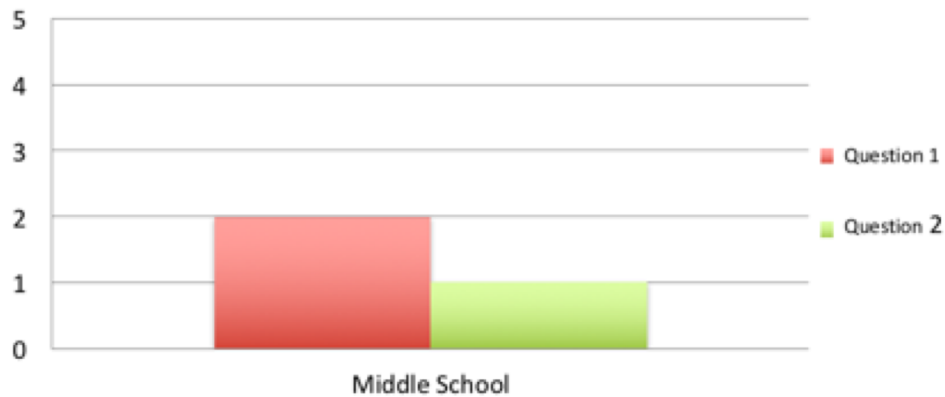
Questions the teachers responded to on the survey
1. The social skills needs of high achieving students are different from those of twice exceptional students.
2. The social skills needs of high achieving students are different from those of gifted students.

students identified as gifted and talented obtain the Gifted and Talented Endorsement.

Results

For the survey we used the following scale:

5= Strongly Agree,
4=Moderately Agree,
3=Neutral,
2=Moderately Disagree, and
1=Strongly Disagree.

We asked teachers about their perceptions of their high achieving students' comfort with, rejection by, and acceptance from their normally achieving peers.

Overall, the teachers moderately agreed that their students felt comfortable in their relations with their normally achieving peers. The middle school teachers were neutral about their perceptions of whether or not their students faced rejection or encountered acceptance (see Figure 1).

Figure 2 focuses on the teacher perceptions of high achievers and their social skills when playing with their gifted, high achieving, twice exceptional, and normally achieving peers.

While teachers were neutral in the area of gifted, high achieving, and normally achieving peers, they moderately disagreed that their students had social skills problems when playing with their twice exceptional peers.

Figure 3 illustrates teacher perceptions of whether or not the social skills needs of their high achieving students differ from those of twice exceptional and gifted peers.

While both responses fall within the moderately disagree range, there is a slight difference, indicating that they do feel there is a difference between the high achieving and gifted.

Do teachers believe they are responsible for teaching social skills?

Figure 4, question 1, shows teachers across both grade levels moderately agree that they should be responsible for teaching social skills. However, in question 2, teachers across all

Figure 4. Teacher Perceptions on the Responsibility for Teaching Social Skills
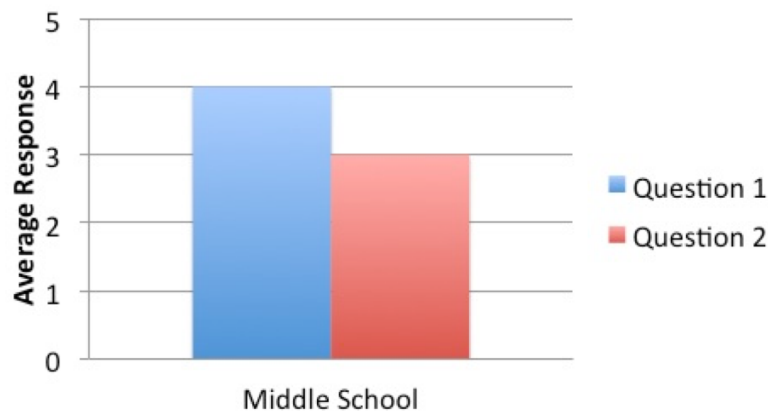
Questions the teachers responded to on the survey:
1. I believe teachers should be responsible for teaching social skills.
2. Teachers of gifted and talented classes are responsible for explicitly teaching social skills.

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Moderately Agree; 3=Neutral;2=Moderately Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Figure 5. Teacher Perceptions of Training & Preparation to Teach Social Skills
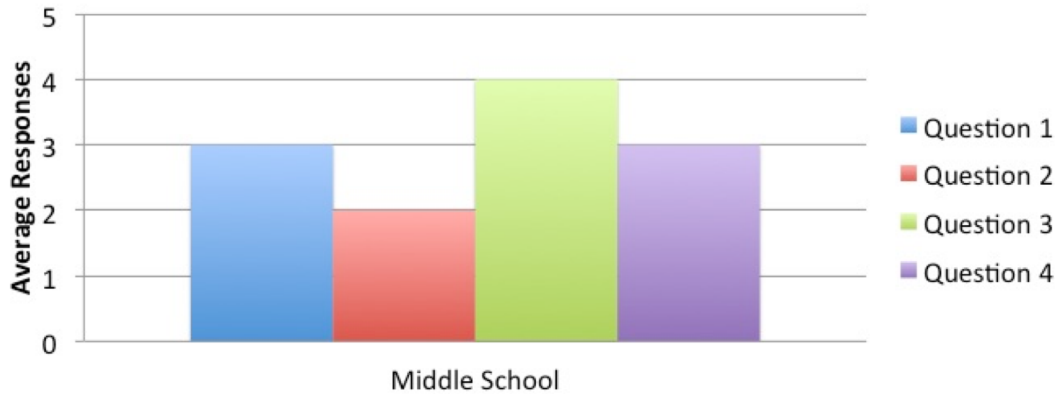
Questions the teachers responded to on the survey:
1. If I have to teach social skills, I have the training to do so.
2. My in-service professional development has prepared me for teaching social skill.
3. I teach social skills.
4. My curriculum currently includes social skills.

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree; 4=Moderately Agree; 3=Neutral;2=Moderately Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

middle school grade levels replied neutral when asked if they are responsible for teaching social skills.

Do teachers believe they are prepared to teach social skills?

In the first question of figure 5, we asked teachers if they had the training to teach social skills. The middle school teachers neither agreed nor disagreed that if they had to teach social skills, they had the training. Instead, they were neutral. They were also neutral when asked if their curriculum currently included social skills. They moderately disagreed that in-service professional development had prepared them for teaching social skills. Despite these responses, middle school teachers moderately agreed that they do teach social skills.

Discussion and Future Research

With the passage of No Child Left Behind and Common Core, the emphasis changed from addressing the whole child to a restricted number of curriculum standards. With these policies have come threats that leave

teachers with an incentive to focus time and attention on their lowest performing students. Yet, even though typical curriculum does not include social skills standards above first grade research shows that social skills are a positive factor in student success.

A new trend in curriculum is the addition to social skills standards that teachers will be expected to implement. This can create a disconnection between policy expectations and teacher beliefs, with the result that interventions may be unsuccessful. This study was a first step in understanding the teacher perceptions on the social skills of their high achieving students. It also focused on teacher beliefs on their responsibilities for preparation to teach social skills. As shown in the data base search, virtually no post-NCLB research has addressed this topic.

In our first research question, we asked teachers their perceptions of the social skills of their high achieving students. We found that, across the board, teachers believed their high achievers were comfortable with their normally achieving peers, but the teachers were neutral

whether or not their students faced acceptance or rejection by their peers.

Research question 2 asked teachers about their responsibility for teaching social skills. Across all grade levels the teachers moderately agreed that they *should* be responsible for teaching explicit social skills; however, the teachers were neutral when asked if they *were* actually responsible for teaching social skills.

In research question 3, middle school teachers were asked if they were prepared to teach social skills. The middle school teachers all reported that the professional development had not prepared them. This indicates that the teachers did not feel that they were not getting the professional development to prepare them to teach social skills and, at the same time, they agreed that they do teach it.

Overall, it was striking to the researchers the number of neutral responses generated in this survey. It is possible that teachers have not been able to attend to their students' social development due to the state and districts' attention on academic learning. It may also be possible that the teachers are responding with neutral as a proxy for their not knowing the social development of their students. Also, it may be that they have responded neutral because they are hesitant to add one more thing to their to-do list. Future research should address the reasons for these teachers' neutral perceptions of their middle school high achievers' social skills.

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Bullying in the Academic Setting: The Dispersal of Victimization

Bethany Blackman

Abstract

Bullying has become a prominent point of discussion amongst academics over the last decade. School shootings and teen suicide rates have become commonplace on television screens across the globe. Although bullying has been present since humans were able to interact, analyses and facts about bullying have become public and have caused concern. Bullying does not only affect victims and bullies; it is also a byproduct from the reactions of teachers and bystanders. This article not only addresses the consequences of bullying, but it also serves to confront the academic effects posed by bullying, and offer alternative approaches to resolve this issue.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying can present itself in many forms, but the most collective definition of bullying is a repeated action or set of actions aimed at an individual, or a group of individuals, with the intent to do harm. These recurring actions continue over a period of time and can do social, psychological, and academic damage to the victim, bully, bystander, and other persons witnessing the abuse or neglect, such as a teacher (Olweus, 1993). The concept of bullying embodies several actions including verbal assaults, and extends to gestures and even physical attacks (Barrington, 2016). An extensive study showed that 25% of students across grade levels have attested to being bullied at school (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015).

Bullying does not begin at a certain age, nor does it cease at a given time. Bullying is evident in preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, universities, and even into adulthood. Students who are bullied in primary and secondary schools are susceptible to the consequences of bullying at the collegiate level. Prior victims of bullying, once he or she reaches the collegiate level, report lack of academic motivation and a decrease in academic success even if he or she is not actively being bullied (Young-Jones, Fursa, Byrket, & Sly, 2015).

Although evident at all levels, bullying is more common in early adolescents, and more specifically students' levels of hostility and physical violence towards their peers begin to increase between grades 6 to 9 (Mariani, Webb, Villares, & Brigman, 2015). In a more focused study on middle school aged students associated with bullying, ages 11 to 15, 13% of students resonated with the characteristics of a victim, while 11% claimed to have engaged in bullying acts as an aggressor (Saarento, Garandeau,& Salmivalli, 2015).

Bullying can develop in any atmosphere, and because schools, and more importantly classrooms, are an area where children learn to develop key social development skills, the influence of the social context of the classroom is vital in addressing bullying (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015). Bullying does not only occur within the classroom, or even within the school. Bullying has also entered into other influential realms of children's lives in a more sinister manner.

Cyber-bullying has become more prevalent with the growth of technology. This form of bullying may occur after school hours, but the effects are transported to the classroom as victims recollect the actions performed outside of school, leading to insecurities and fear. The question becomes how to address actions performed digitally and after school

hours. However, before one can attempt to find a solution to the problem, one must first acknowledge why bullying exists.

There are various reasons why children bully. Some may bully to gain respect, which may be lacking in their home life. The majority of researchers believe the source of bullying comes from insecure students who feel obligated to bully in order to increase dominance and power within their social context. Most students who bully do so in order to gain or maintain social status within their peer group, an important aspect among youth (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015).

Peer groups can also be defined as a social clique. These peer groups are important to students because without these groups, individuals act alone. This fear of loneliness and hopelessness causes students to reach for acceptance among their peers and ultimately within a certain peer group (Berger, & Palacios, 2014). Because social acceptance is imperative in the social development of our youth, those students who feel the need to "fit in," for lack of quality friendships, may participate in bullying activities in hopes of creating friendships and obtaining popularity among other peers. It is proven those students who are considered more prosocial and popular among their peers are less likely to confront bullying (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015).

Among their friends within their peer group, individual students are less likely to be victimized by other students (Berger, & Palacios, 2014). As in nature, a predator is more likely to prey on an individual animal rather than attack the entire group, fearing retaliation from group members. These "popular" or prosocial students determine the caliber of bullying within their social sphere. If a student, deemed as popular amongst classmates, demonstrates a lack of toleration for bullying and shows concern for those victimized by bullies, other peers will follow suit (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015). Also, students who share the role

of victim belong to a certain peer group: the victim group. These students do not feel alone, a trait that can result in damaging psychological effects, and find comfort and empathy among peers in this peer group (Horrevorts, Monshouwer, Wigman, & Vollebergh, 2014).

Who and What Does Bullying Affect?

Bullying affects every individual within the bully's realm-of-influence. Who is bullying whom? The answer is simple: by participating in bullying acts, bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders are all equally affected. By dividing those affected by bullying into four categories, bully, victim, bully-victim, and bystander, psychologists are able to contrast how, and to what extent, each participant is affected. Some psychologists even argue that teachers are involved in the mix and supply an equivalent amount of influence as bully and victim, because teachers have the power to control the atmosphere of his or her classroom (Saarento, Boulton & Salmivalli, 2015).

Victims of Bullying

Victims are those students who endure the abuse or harassment from a bully. The majority of these students are considered powerless in defending themselves (Horrevorts, Monshouwer, Wigman, & Vollebergh, 2014). Victims can be harassed and abused in countless ways and the side effects are equally alarming. Barrington (2016) records that the acts oppress victims' self-esteem and affect victims socially, as well ad hinder academic performance.

In a study conducted by Dewey Cornell, a professor at the University of Virginia, and Anna Lacey, a graduate student at the University of Virginia, on Virginian high schools, schools with higher bully rates showed three to six percent lower scores on state achievement tests (Lacey & Cornell, 2011). Another study conducted throughout middle schools in Los

Angeles, California rated students who have been bullied on a four point "bullying" scale; for every one point increase on the scale, symbolizing an increase in experienced bullying, a student's grade point average decreased by one and a half points (Wolpert, 2010).

These findings are both troubling and exasperating, but the numbers continue to show a continuation into secondary schools. McAdoo (2012) points out bullying behaviors create victims who are disengaged from academics, which can drop students' grades by a letter grade and a half across their high school years. These statistics rose drastically for academically above average Latino and African American students and under average Asian students, verifying demographics play a role. These students, who are labeled negatively by their peers, eventually spin into a downward cycle and continue to perform poorly (Wolpert, 2016). This cycle leads to the ultimate decision to cease the pursuit for education, resulting in every educator's worst nightmare: drops outs.

Educators' main goal is to provide the necessary information to their students while positively encouraging their students to become life-long learners. However, victims are among those with higher drop out rates, which correlate directly with academic performance. In Lacey & Cornell's study (2011), calculations proved students who performed poorly on tests, and on schoolwork in general, were more likely to drop out of high school. Not only are victims disengaged in classroom participation, but their attendance at school, homework, and interaction among peers are also negatively impacted.

Victims who are bullied throughout the school day dread enduring an environment in which they feel threatened or suppressed. Barrington concludes that on an average school day approximately 160,000 children miss school due to the presence of bullies. Even more specific, in the same study 280,000 students claim to experience some form of physical attack throughout the day (Barrington, 2016). If victims do attend school, they may be tardy to classes due to attempts to avoid bullies. Other ill effects of victimization, in regards to bullying, include social anxiety, stomach pains, insomnia, nightmares, depression, thoughts of suicide, and other violent eruptions.

Victims, who fear the limelight in a bully-tolerant environment, tend to be identified by teachers as lacking initiative and motivation (Barrington, 2016). Teachers may assume these students lack the desire for success; however, this misinterpretation of their silence needs to be addressed (Wolpert, 2010). Some teachers may show less attention to those students who do not willingly participate, but Barrington (2016) argues this only decreases the student's chance at academic achievement. Victims may not be active students simply due to the fear of acknowledgement from bullies within the classroom (Wolpert, 2010). Students who do abandon the idea of success eventually lose the initiative to learn. This lack of motivation can extend beyond the classroom, causing concern for academics. Victims also lack motivation and initiative in regards to completing homework assignments, a property arguably important among the academically thriving youth of society.

Victims are not the only individuals impacted by bullying. Aside from victims there are four other clusters involved: bullies, bully-victims, bystanders, and teachers. Bullies, those who initiate the continual actions towards victims, are affected equally, if not more, than victims. By partaking in these engagements, bullies are more likely to exhibit damaging behavior outside of the school, and later in his or her lifetime. This behavior includes gestures such as vandalizing property, smoking, drinking, fighting, carrying a weapon, and other behavioral problems (Barrington, 2016).

These students also exhibit poor grades due to a lack of focus on schoolwork, and some bullies may even go to the extent of leaving school early due to their lack of motivation, or

simply not come to school at all (Victoria State Department of Education and Training, 2013). Some bullies demonstrate a focus on self-interest and may use forms of manipulation to achieve personal goals, and view their relationships with peers as functional and exploitative rather than emotional (Berger, & Caravita, 2016). This Machiavellianism thought-process causes emotional detachment and may be detrimental to both bully and his or her victims, as well as his or her friendships.

Bully-Victims

Bully-victims, a group classified as both externalizing emotions onto victims as well as becoming victims of other bullies, share the effects of bully and victim: a harmful combination. Scholars call these students the most troubled, as they are aggressive and violent, but they also share the hatred and negative self-image victims embody (Horrevorts, Monshouwer, Wigman, & Vollebergh, 2014). These bully-victims are not responsive to their feelings while they feel powerful as bullies and powerless as victims.

Bystanders

Bystanders, those who witness bullying first-hand, have one of the most influential positions in regards to enabling or ceasing bullying. Barrington (2016) argues that more than 70% of students between grades 4 through 12 have witnessed bullying in his or her school. Bystanders can be defined as a student, or group of students, who witness an act of harassment.

There are four types of bystanders: those who assist, reinforce, defend, and stand by passively (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015). Those who assist and reinforce support the bully in carrying out his or her social and physical satisfaction while non-active witnesses, or defenders, may support or protect the victim. If bystanders, assistants, or reinforcers react to the bully's action in a positive manner, cheering or laughing, versus a disapproving manner, the

bully's behavior will continue (Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli, 2015). By withdrawing this social satisfaction, or simply showing disapproval of the bully's actions, bystanders have the power to terminate the bully's actions entirely. By not voicing negative emotions towards bullying, bystanders also leave the door open for bullies to misinterpret bystanders' opinions and intentions (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru, & Salmivalli, 2015).

Although bystanders have the power to affect a bully's behavior, bystanders are affected by witnessing these actions in several ways. Aside from witnessing these heinous acts, bystanders who do not assist the victim may feel guilty for not doing so, and therefore may develop mental problems such as anxiety and depression (Victoria State Department of Education and Training, 2013). While witnessing another child being bullied, bystanders may also develop feelings of insecurity and fear. These vulnerable bystanders, like bullies, are also more prone to substance abuse.

Teachers

Teachers, although not directly involved in the interaction between bully and victim, do play an extensive role in whether or not bullying is present within the classroom. Lacey & Cornell (2011) note in their study that classroom climate plays a big role in the presence of bullying behavior. Teachers set the standard for discipline procedures and expectation in their classrooms. Therefore, if a teacher establishes a precedent for how he or she expects his or her students to behave while in the classroom, a non-tolerant bully environment is recognized and less bullying activity will occur (Saarento, Boulton & Salmivalli, 2015).

A teacher is a role model to each one of his or her students and should act accordingly in the classroom. If a teacher's stance or attitude on bullying is definite and clearly defined as disapproving, students are less likely to bully, but if students feel their teacher disregards

bullying within his or her classroom, a bully environment fosters (Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli, 2015).

Scholars argue an enhanced learning environment can be fashioned if teachers construct more interpersonal and positive relationships with all students, lessen the amount of discipline directed towards bullies, and demonstrate higher levels of control and closeness among their students (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015). How and if a teacher intervenes in bullying incidents determines the extent of bullying behavior within his or her classroom, and it impacts the bully's future behavior.

Discipline is a controversial topic among teachers. There is always the question of how to punish bullies correctly. Scholars assume teachers who respond passively to bullies may reverberate the wrong impression onto other students, allowing students to believe bullying is acceptable (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015). However, research also claims teachers who discipline bullies in an inappropriate manner may increase the levels of bullying in his or her classroom. Punishments urge bullies to cease the harassment immediately, but fail to address the long-term implications such as revenge seeking.

Researchers also propose teachers spend more time allowing students to solve social problems on their own in a nourishing and enlightened manner versus strictly disciplining the bully. Students will then learn how to handle other social situations outside school walls (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015). Justin Patchin, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, suggests classrooms that establish a positive and enriching learning environment create students who are less likely to engage in bullying behavior outside of the classroom (St. George, 2011). However, other scholars argue against this logic claiming cyber bullying, a form of bullying performed via electronic devices, may be more predominant in

classrooms led by teachers who are more likely to intervene in bullying behaviors, thus transferring the bullies actions to an area where the teacher has less control (Saarento, Garandeau,& Salmivalli, 2015).

Teachers also suffer from the presence of bullies in their classroom. Teachers who focus on disciplining bullies within their classroom spend unnecessary time away from academics, affecting both the teacher and other students in the classroom (Lacey & Cornell, 2011). This in turn creates an environment of disrespect and fear, leading to other students within the classroom having difficulties learning, which teachers must spend time addressing (Victoria State Department of Education and Training, 2013). Essentially, a student may then feel as if the teacher has little control over his or her classroom and students may lose respect for the teacher. Students may also feel the teacher simply does not care about the student for lack of intervention and proper prevention practices.

How Can Schools Prevent Bullying?

There have been many successful anti-bullying programs developed around the world. One of the most advanced studies, the KiVa program in Finland (Berger & Palacios, 2014), believes to have created a successful solution and deterrent for future students. Berger and Palacios note peer victimization is carried out when classmates do not sympathize or empathize with the victim. This program seeks to address the issue on a more behavioral, cognitive, and emotional level (Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli, 2015). The program focuses on finding safe ways to alter students' mindsets towards bullying, generate empathy for victims, and evolve bystanders' reactions to offset bullies' actions in a healthy and progressive manner.

The program claims its success because of its individual discussions with victims, bullies, and bystanders about the incident, as

well as its efforts to encourage students who are considered popular by their peers to support those who are victimized (Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli, 2015). The program arguably keeps its relativity outside of the classroom and has proven to stop bullying at its source, therefore decreasing the amount of cyber-bullying among Finnish youth (Saarento, Garandeau,& Salmivalli, 2015).

One of the most agreed upon forms of prevention involves simple education practices. Researchers agree students who are more educated in the reasoning behind bullying, and those who increase his or her insight into successful preventative measures tend to handle bullies and their actions better than those with no education on the subject. By educating victims, bullies, bystanders, and most importantly teachers, on their role in counteracting bullying, schools can hope to further prevent and eventually eliminate bullying.

A source of concern is victims' social capabilities. Psychologists propose by developing victims' social abilities and advancing victims' communication skills victims will be better able to externalize their emotions, which would lessen stress amongst these students (Mariani, Webb, Villares, & Brigman, 2015). Psychologists also suggest an approach that utilizes school psychologists and capitalizes on school psychologists' management of bullying (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015). These school psychologists can offer various services to all involved in bullying such as in-service training for teachers, intervention support and coaching, reflection practices, and development of communication skills for teachers, bullies and victims.

Environment plays a role. Scholars approve the idea to form a definite non-tolerant policy on bullying that should be established at the beginning of the school year, throughout the school, to form a collective arrangement, and throughout each individual classroom (Saarento, Boulton & Salmivalli, 2015). Since classroom

environment represents a tremendous role in the presence, or lack of, bullying, scholars claim teachers can assist in bully interventions by simply adjusting their classroom environment. Barrington (2016) argues these programs, no matter how large-scale, should focus on the harmful behaviors and not solely on the students displaying the behaviors. This includes rewarding students who act as positive role models to those not following the school's policies. Since bullying can be considered "cool" among peers, especially in middle school, Wolpert (2010) asserts the cruelty should be addressed at the source.

Music therapy has also proven to be an efficacious tactic within school systems. Shafer and Silverman (2013) argue this type of therapy successfully improves students' social skills among peers, aiding in the enhancement of self-management. Music also allows those who seek help to creatively express and externalize emotions, within an atmosphere that neither reinforces or punishes bullying behaviors. Music teachers, who create a more longitudinal relationship with students, use these interactive methods and apply social learning theory to their implementation, which supports their efforts to use positive reinforcement to teach acceptable social behaviors and expectations.

Among the aforementioned, other academics have suggested other forms of intervention and prevention. Some suggest more advanced counseling for victims, alongside higher discipline standards for bullies (Lacey & Cornell, 2011). While these implementations seem plausible, scholars also argue the involvement of other adults such as administrators, parents, or even other teachers lessens the amount of peer victimization within the school (van der Zanden, Denessen, & Scholte, 2015).

As with students and people in general, every school and every bully offer a different scenario and must be adjusted accordingly. As one solution may address bullying in one school,

across the globe another form of anti-bullying programs may counteract the bullying in that area.

Conclusion

This article offers several approaches to consider when discussing preventative actions in regards to bullying. Although bullying manifests itself throughout age groups, the effects of bullying play no smaller role, especially pertaining to the academic effects bullying creates among bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders. Bullying creates a toxic environment capable of affecting the entire classroom population. These acts should not be taken lightly, nor should they be excused or unheeded. Ultimately teachers, who play a huge role in the development of a nurturing and non-tolerant classroom, have the power to tackle bullying at its source.

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Critical Literacy: A Culturally Relevant Framework for Meeting the Needs of English Learners

Bobbi Siefert, Katie Kelly & McKinsey Payne

Abstract

This article posits that English Learners (EL) require that educators use evolving pedagogies to affect schooling outcomes for diverse learners in U.S. contexts. It provides an overview of EL demographics, unique implications for middle level educators, and culturally relevant teaching with a specific emphasis on the use of critical literacy as an instructional lens for approaching literacy learning. It examines the potential for critical literacy as an instructional framework to promote language development and conceptual understanding as teachers integrate language minority students into the classroom in a way that is natural, empowering, and inclusive.

This We Believe (NMSA, 2010) calls for curriculum that is exploratory and relevant as well as a school community that is inviting, safe, and inclusive for all. Moreover, The Teaching English Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association's P–12 Professional Teaching Standards (TESOL, 2010) advocates for instructional practices that use "principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture and cultural groups to construct supportive learning environments for ELL" (p. 38). Both orientations have important implications for the diverse 21st century classroom.

To this end, a chorus of scholarship calls for culturally responsive instructional practices to meet the unique needs of English Learners (EL) in U.S. schools (Avalos, 2011; Ben-Peretz, 2001; Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009; Duffy, 2002; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Chang, 2012; Nieto, 2010). How do middle level educators approach literacy in ways that affirms the diversity that is reflected within the classroom and the broader societal context? How do they promote a classroom community that is "inviting, safe, supportive, and inclusive for all" (NMSA, 2010)?

This article provides an overview of demographic shifts, unique implications for

middle level educators, and culturally relevant teaching with a specific emphasis on the use of critical literacy as an instructional lens. Critical literacy is a framework for participating in the world and varies based on the context it is being used as a perspective for teaching and learning (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Comber, Thompson & Wells, 2001; Vasquez, 2004). This approach acknowledges and affirms diversity in society by capitalizing on students' background experiences and perspectives. This is particularly important for English Learners (EL) who may not see their culture or language represented in traditional texts and instructional practice.

A business as usual approach to education may be more of a problem than a solution for these students. Scholarship argues that culturally diverse students may be disaffected with such commercial curricula, and teachers working with EL may be deficit-driven with a focus on students' limitations regarding language and academics (Delpit, 2006; Nieto, 2010). To this end, influential research in the field of Teaching English Speakers of Other Languages advocates for educators to use an asset-based approach which capitalizes on the rich and varied ways of knowing or "funds of knowledge" EL bring to the classroom. It is defined by Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez

(1992) as the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). Culturally responsive practices acknowledge and honor the diversity represented in the classroom. They leverage EL "funds of knowledge," variety in ways of knowing and lived experiences, as jumping off points for learning and social-emotional growth and development.

In this article, we first explore the shifting demographics that leave middle level educators to contend with cultural and linguistic diversity. This reality requires that teachers use evolving pedagogies and practices to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Next, the unique implications for young adolescents are discussed. While their elementary school counterparts fare better given the curricular and linguistic demands are conducive for language development and content learning, older students face layers of complexity including rigorous curricular and linguistic demands as well as academic gaps in background knowledge and challenging social issues. Finally, critical literacy as a culturally responsive approach to engage EL in relevant and equitable learning is described. Instructional implications and practices are presented and followed with a discussion of its pedagogical potential to position diversity as the norm (Souto-Manning, 2014).

Teaching in Culturally Complex Classrooms

Given population shifts at both the national and regional levels, many classrooms are culturally complex and represent the diverse demographics of larger society. Specifically, the population of language minority students is growing exponentially, and this trend is expected to continue. The growth of EL in schools is far outpacing the numbers of English only students. While the overall school-age population increased by only 4%, language minority

students grew by over 50% (NCELA, 2011). By the year 2025, the number of students who will come from a home in which English is not the first language is projected as one in four (Goldenberg, 2008). While some states like California, Florida, New York, and Texas reflect EL concentrations of more than 10%, others like South Carolina and Indiana are experiencing unprecedented growth with a 400-800% increase of language minority students (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). Both scenarios present certain challenges to educators and especially to those of adolescent learners.

It is widely reported that EL is the fastest growing population in U.S. schools and, at the same time, the achievement gap between linguistic minority students and their monolingual peers is persistent. Engaging EL with culturally responsive pedagogy such as critical literacy is one way to integrate diversity into the classroom. It is an effective way to foster students' understanding about issues of power, privilege, language varieties, and multiple perspectives with learning that is transformative. EL require that educators embrace pedagogical approaches that draw on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds to mediate literacy instruction in order to foster language development and academic learning rather than be "baffled" by the diversity immigrant students bring (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Valdes, 1996, 2001). However, teachers' lack of preparation for working with diversity (Calderon, 2007; Minaya-Rowe, 2002) Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Nieto 2010) and a growing population of EL pose a challenge for middle level educators.

Implications for Adolescent English Learners

Longstanding achievement trends reveal persistent disparate achievement for EL in U.S. contexts. Fry (2008) and Goldenberg (2008) reported that EL lagged behind their White,

monolingual peers in both reading and math in fourth grade with those trends widening by eighth grade. Other research reiterates the unique academic needs of EL and the challenge of teachers to promote equitable achievement in the mainstream classroom (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, & Jimenez, 2005; Garcia, Jensen, & Cuéllar, 2006). This need is particularly acute for adolescent learners as they manage cultural and language disconnects, while also grappling with social identity and acceptance that is typical for adolescents within the school and community at large. As Calderon (2007) argues, "Most middle and high school language-minority students fail to develop to their fullest potential. As a result, they become disaffected, drop out of school, and have to settle for low-paying jobs or no job at all because they have little or no access to either high school or a college education" (p. 4).

This We Believe (NMSA, 2010) characteristics call for middle level learners to engage in rigorous, relevant, and equitable education. While these characteristics are hallmarks of successful middle level practice, they have special implications in diverse classrooms. Educators must also look for effective instructional frameworks for working successfully with EL.

The Association for Middle Level Education This We Believe Characteristics

- Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant.
- Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches.
- The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all. (NMSA, 2010)

Traditional approaches to literacy instruction may not engage EL in ways that are relevant and empowering and promote equity in classroom communities as put forth by NMSA (2010). Seminal works in the field of

multicultural education call for teachers to engage culturally and linguistically diverse students in the classroom in ways that empower them and honor their backgrounds (Delpit, 2006; Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Middle level educators can capitalize on instructional practices that leverage culture and language represented within the classroom to promote equity and foster inclusive environments in which all students can thrive. Specifically, the use of critical literacy as a pedagogical approach to equitable education for middle level learners is described in the next section.

Critical Literacy as a Pedagogical Approach

Critical literacy is an instructional approach that engages readers with social, political, historical, and global issues to promote critical thinking, questioning, and dialogue within and beyond the text. Critical literacy is an example of a culturally responsive approach to teaching. Ladson Billings (2009) states culturally relevant pedagogy fosters the construction and reconstruction of knowledge that is shared by both teachers and students. According to Beck (2005), "The critical literacy classroom is characterized by an emphasis on students' voices and dialogue as tools with which students reflect on and construct meaning from texts and discourse" (p. 394).

A critical literacy framework embraces students as co-creators of the learning process and formation of knowledge. This varies from traditional models where the teacher acts as a dispenser of knowledge (Freire, 2007). According to Freire (2000), education fails to provide equal opportunities for all people including the poor who become victims of an unjust system. To address this oppression, critical literacy can empower individuals by repositioning them as holders of knowledge to question the word and the world.

Viewed as a lens for increasing students' social consciousness and a way for viewing the world (Vasquez, 2010; Wood, Soares, & Watson, 2006), critical literacy positions readers to move beyond passive acceptance of reading between the lines to challenge texts and the acceptance of social norms (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2010). Through a critical literacy framework, readers begin to question the world and work towards social justice (VanSluys, 2003).

Text is not neutral (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010) and therefore positions readers to believe certain truths through promotion of certain ideologies and omission of other perspectives. Reading with a critical lens, allows readers to question text to examine issues of power and challenge social norms (Stover, 2012). Lewison, Flint & VanSluys (2002) suggest that critical literacy fosters the challenging of the commonplace, consideration of multiple perspectives, examination of power, and action for social justice. This occurs through deconstruction and reconstruction of text.

Deconstructing Text

When deconstructing text, readers peel back layers of text to consider power and positioning (Jones, 2006). Hidden messages can be revealed through examination of what has been omitted to question whose interests are being served and what role power and privilege play in the construction of text (Stover, 2012). Deconstruction helps readers uncover power relations and inequities that are also mirrored in society (Jones, 2006; Vasquez, 2010). In doing so, reading becomes a political act where the status quo is challenged. Without a critical lens, status quo can be unknowingly maintained, perpetuating a system of inequity.

Exploration of multiple perspectives disrupts the commonplace (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004) and allows students to examine positions of power that result in the marginalization of some. Readers begin to

understand the perspective of others and gain a sense of agency to regularly view text and the world through a critical lens that questions power relationships. Students can examine multiple perspectives by reading a variety of text about the same topic. For instance, when studying about explorers, social studies textbooks often portray Christopher Columbus as credited with discovering the continent of North America. Yet, Jane Yolen's (1996) book titled, *Encounter*, provides an alternative perspective of Columbus as told by a young Taino boy whose people and culture were destroyed as a result of colonialization. In *Pedro's Journal* by Pam Conrad (1992), Columbus's voyage is shared through the perspective of a ship boy from the Santa Maria who captures his discomfort of the journey in his diary.

Examining a topic from multiple perspectives encourages students to understand that meaning is not fixed and teaches them the value of using evidence in each piece to support various interpretations of one event or theme (Mellor & Patterson, 2008). One way to incorporate this strategy is to select a historical event or topic and find a variety representative multimodal texts about the topic. As students read, they can analyze the text critically to discover multiple perspectives and examine voices that have been omitted and disenfranchised.

Reconstructing Text

Reconstruction of text tells the other story that has been traditionally been omitted to portray a more equitable way of thinking and viewing the world. According to Jones (2006), reconstructing identities of people who have been marginalized is essential to the work of critical literacy. Critical literacy allows us to write the word and rewrite the world through a sense of agency to act against social injustice (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Writing for social justice helps students better understand

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themselves and the world around them (Bomer & Bomer, 2001).

The development of counter-text requires that students engage in meaning-making by examining their own thoughts, experiences, and perspectives in relation to those posed by the author. It acknowledges the significance of students' stance in reframing the text (Behrman, 2006). When students reconstruct text, they are able to identify their personal bias and ideas as well. Students can produce counter-texts in a variety of modes including reading response journals, reading logs, blogs, narratives, videos, articles, etc. Additionally, the use of digital tools allows students to reconstruct text through the use of multimodalities including online literature discussions, Edmodo, Scribble Press, Book Creator, and Dragon Dictation (Stover & Yearta, 2017). Digital tools such as these extend access to critical dialogues with authentic audiences via multimodal responses.

Critical Literacy and English Language Learners

Current demographic shifts are creating more diverse classrooms, and educators can use instructional frameworks and methodology that are inclusive and foster English language development, conceptual development, and literacy learning. Educators who frame literacy learning with a critical lens recognize and honor the myriad and multifaceted experiences and perspectives students bring to the classroom and to texts. Importantly for EL, these ideas align with Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practices that call for educators to capitalize on EL funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) to create learning that is accessible, relevant, and acknowledges and affirms cultural and heritage language.

In accordance with the TESOL professional standards (TESOL, 2010), research and scholarship consistently argue that educators should engage EL with learning that acknowledges, affirms, and integrates culture into teaching and learning activities. This is in sharp contrast with a deficit lens approach and validates EL as significant members of the classroom community.

A goal of critical literacy is to examine and question traditional power and privilege relationships and whose voices are represented and omitted in texts. This has powerful implications for diverse learners as it repositions the status quo and equalizes race, ethnicity, language, gender, and social class. To that end, teachers who approach curriculum activities through a critical lens engage EL in a classroom that is motivating and encourages discourse to develop oral language skills as well as reading and writing (Calderon, 2007; Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008). They provide a safe and inclusive classroom in which diverse learners use language productively to develop conceptual understandings (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

When reading with a critical lens, readers do not simply accept the author's message and are positioned, rather, as significant others in meaning-making. Learners identify, question, and consider the power relationships that are present in the text and among readers and authors. These critical conversations are ways to engage EL in purposeful and productive talk in conversations with English speaking peers as well as with other EL who may be at higher language proficiency levels. Settings such as this are optimal for English language development as it affords students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) time, language mentoring, and a safe space for growing language skills.

EL engage in integrated oral and written language learning as they read and respond to text. Importantly, they develop language and conceptual understanding in tandem, and this is the goal of the Sheltered Instruction Approach widely used with EL across the country (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Reaction,

interpretation, and analysis of issues taken on in critical literacy is different for all students and especially for those within different cultural contexts. Identifying and confronting these issues is an essential lifelong skill for students as they engage in democracy within and beyond the classroom.

Final Thoughts

Critical literacy approaches call for transformational learning. Critical literacy involves social action to improve the conditions or attitudes students discern as problematic in various texts and work to improve social, economic, or global issues. Using a framework such as this helps students understand how literacy can be a "vehicle for social change" (Behrman, 2006).

It is important that all students are affirmed as valuable in classroom communities. To this end, the aforementioned discussion on critical literacy as an instructional lens is a culturally responsive approach to engage EL at the middle level in curriculum that is natural, relevant, and empowering. Bringing to light the diversity within the learning environment, middle level educators develop a safe space for diverse perspectives, and, as a result, develop learner agency for all learners including EL.

It is an approach that leverages student voice and perspective as it draws on background experiences and weaves learners into texts and interpretation in natural ways that both acknowledge their thoughts and experiences and, as such, affirms the uniqueness of each culture and language represented in the classroom community. For the growing number of EL in the U.S. and for the teachers who struggle with finding ways to approach literacy and learning in ways that affirm and leverage diversity, critical literacy offers inroads to foster meaningful literacy learning at the middle level. It promotes an inclusive and empowering learning environment for the diverse 21st century classroom.

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Adding Relevancy to Mathematics While Exploring Presidential Data

Bridget K. Coleman, Deborah H. McMurtrie & Gary J. Senn

Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate ways to add relevancy to mathematics while exploring social studies content. Intentionally integrating thought-provoking social studies data adds rich, meaningful context and real-life application to the study of mathematics. Similarly, situating math tools and concepts in social studies lessons deepens the analysis of the content. Connecting data analysis with factors pertaining to history and average life expectancy of U.S. presidents provides multifaceted meaning to both mathematics and history concepts.

Introduction

When will I ever need this in "real life?" Stem and leaf sounds like some kind of flower, not a data analysis tool. President who? What does this have to do with me?

Mathematics and social studies occur together in life. From interpreting graphs and statistics through current events to using and analyzing historical data, math and social studies are natural companions. Understanding the ebbs and flows of the economy, orienting and interpreting maps, and plotting population shifts require skills from both disciplines. This natural integration of mathematics and social studies is evident in and through the interdependent structure of society. Teachers could make both content areas more relevant and meaningful for students by viewing them and teaching them this way.

All aspects of life are inherently interwoven. Given this, it stands to reason that an integrated curriculum is best practice for educating students (Campbell, Mumpire, & White, 2000). Historically, educators such as John Dewey, Howard Gardner, and Benjamin Bloom have emphasized the value of contextual learning. An integrated curriculum can provide students meaningful opportunities to connect learning in and out of school (Beane, 1997; Vars, 2001). Integration promotes the relevance of classroom learning by making the curriculum more meaningful to students' lives (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000). An integrated curriculum has several important goals or objectives, namely to establish the connections between different subject areas, to develop the ability to think openly and critically, to enhance problem-solving skills, and to encourage students to view themselves as a part of a larger picture or bigger community (Caine & Caine, 1991; Campbell, et al., 2000; Stevenson & Bishop, 2012).

In their landmark position statement, *This We Believe,* the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE, formerly National Middle School Association [NMSA]) (2010) advocates for curriculum that is "challenging, exploratory, integrative, rigorous, and relevant" (p. 17). Learning should not occur in isolation. According to AMLE,

> Curriculum is relevant when it allows students to pursue answers to questions they have about themselves, the content, and the world. When teachers help them see the many connections that link various topics and subjects, students recognize the holistic nature of all knowledge. (NMSA, 2010, p. 22)

With some effort and planning, teachers can bring multi-disciplinary connections to the forefront by utilizing real-life applications with cultural relevancy in current and historical data. Social studies naturally lends itself as the

unifying theme for interdisciplinary planning (Senn, Coleman, & McMurtrie, 2010). By doing their best to connect content areas, teachers can help students see mathematics, social studies, and other disciplines as "permeating life and not just existing in isolation" (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000, p. 279). The purpose of this article is to model increasing the relevancy of a math lesson by integrating thought-provoking social studies data.

Connections Between Content Areas

Just as mathematics is more than memorizing facts and formulas, social studies is much more than defining words, listing dates, and labeling maps. In our world of access to massive amounts of ever-changing information, our students need to be critical thinkers who can interpret, analyze, and evaluate information. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process and asked to make connections between the content we teach and the lives they lead. As students learn mathematics, they too learn about citizenship, government, map skills, geography, history, economics, family, and community -- all core components of social studies. Interdisciplinary connections, particularly with social studies, can help students recognize the power of mathematics as an essential analytical tool in understanding and interpreting their world.

With a little extra effort and planning, what may seem daunting can ultimately prove beneficial to enhancing student interest in and understanding of the content. Integrative curriculum "helps students make sense of their lives and the world around them" (NMSA, 2010, p. 21) and opens their eyes to "the rich and inherently interdisciplinary world in which they live" (Stevenson & Bishop, 2012, p. 37). As Hinde (2005) reminds us, "When teachers are knowledgeable about content areas and integrate them effectively, students' achievement

increases" (p. 108). Integration of content areas offers an opportunity for rich, relevant teaching and learning. It affords teachers and students alike opportunities to engage with the content in creative, purposeful, and relevant ways.

Integrative teaching is viewed as one of the best ways to maximize student learning. Venville, Sheffield, and Rennie (2008) define integrative curriculum as "the purposeful planning, by teachers, of strategies and learning experiences to facilitate and enhance learning across key learning areas . . . [as well as] the demonstration, by students, of knowledge and understandings, skills, and values and attitudes that transcend individual key learning areas" (p. 859). An integrated or interdisciplinary curriculum allows for varied instructional approaches that recognize and accommodate differences in student learning. We teach more effectively when we move beyond basic coverage of isolated skills and plan for, through cross-disciplinary integration, meaningful and creative student exploration.

Both the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000) and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2010) standards support curriculum integration. NCTM (2000) urges mathematics teachers to "enhance students' understanding of mathematics by using other disciplines as sources of problem solving" (p. 278). Applying mathematics to other subject areas helps students see where mathematics fits into the world at large. To address this, NCTM promotes five process standards: problem solving, communication, connections, reasoning and proof, and representation. The key to mathematical competence is learning with understanding so that students are able to reason, solve problems, and apply their learning to new situations. To reach this end, students can use social studies to deepen their understanding of mathematics.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (2010) defines social studies as the integrated study of the social sciences and

humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies "provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences" (p. 3).

When trying to implement math topics in ways that are relevant to students, integrating social studies is a perfect avenue. Social issues provide a context for connecting mathematics to students' lives. Real-life applications give students opportunities in using tools to integrate mathematics into their everyday lives, a skill that will prove extremely valuable in the future. Emphasizing the value of connections, NCTM (2000) promotes providing students with opportunities to experience mathematics in context. Such connections can also be found in situations arising from social studies, the sciences, the social sciences, medicine, and commerce. Connecting content to other disciplines promotes relevancy and meaning. In turn, mathematics skills enable accurate investigation of social studies topics.

Though both the mathematics and social studies content areas share numerous interdisciplinary opportunities, they also share many of the same student lamentations: "Why are we learning this?" "When will we ever use this?" "What does this have to do with me?" Students perceive both mathematics and social studies as information and procedures to be memorized, not necessarily to be understood and applied. With purposeful integration, teachers can shift the way students approach mathematics and social studies. The learning that takes place in the classroom should mirror the world outside of the classroom. In real-world situations, we rarely stop to recognize which "subjects" apply (Beane, 1993). We use the knowledge and skills acquired through multiple subjects and in multiple contexts to understand, interpret, and

respond to our world. Similarly, integrating mathematics and social studies allows for such meaningful connections to be made.

Using Data to Connect Mathematics and Social Studies

Data is all around us. With access to the Internet, information is simply a click away. To be able to make reasoned, informed decisions, students need to be able to analyze and interpret data. A working knowledge of number sense and statistics is a necessary part of informed, participatory citizenship. Numeracy is a perfect example of the link between mathematics and social studies. Authentic problem-solving opportunities abound with the use of historical and current data. Crowe (2010) highlights four areas of numeracy skills that teachers can seamlessly integrate with social studies: raw numeric data in context, percentages in context, understanding averages, and analyzing graphs and charts. A solid understanding of economic issues requires both social studies and math skills. For example, trying to comprehend the United States' national debt requires number sense!

Social studies and mathematics are part of our everyday lives, not just random, non-contextualized facts to memorize. The goal is to forge real-world and relevant connections between both subjects. Social studies teachers can provide opportunities for students to analyze data from historical events, thus affording deeper, more complex understandings. Whenever possible, teachers should utilize current and historical data and graphs in the classroom setting. Additionally, students can conduct research to investigate lines of inquiry and create their own charts, tables, and graphs.

Data is a bridge connecting mathematics and social studies. Posing a question in the context of historical data gives meaning to learning data analysis in an authentic manner. For example, investigating the question, "What

is the average life expectancy of U.S. presidents?" requires information from both math and social studies content. The relevancy of a math lesson is enhanced by integrating thought-provoking social studies data. The precision of the examination of the historical data is strengthened with the use of appropriate statistical techniques. Thus, connecting data analysis with factors pertaining to history and life expectancy brings deeper meaning to both the mathematics and history concepts.

Analyzing U.S. presidential data offers an opportunity for students to connect mathematics and social studies utilizing a historical data set (see Table 1). While investigating the ages of U.S. presidents at death, students can use statistical methods to analyze the data, construct a stem-and-leaf plot, interpret a box-and-whiskers plot, and calculate measures of central tendency. As students calculate statistics and graph the data, they also consider questions such as the following:

- How many presidents died in their 40s or 50s?
- Who was the youngest to die? Which president lived to be the oldest?
- Identify the four presidents who were assassinated. How do these data points impact the data set?
- Construct a stem and leaf plot. Describe the distribution of the data.
- Describe the data using the measures of central tendency – mean, median, and mode. How do these measures relate to the shape of the distribution of the data in the stem-and-leaf plot?
- Construct a box-and-whiskers plot representing the data set. Analyze the plot. Discuss quartiles, the spread of the data, as well as gaps and clusters.

In the discussion of the data, students can look for trends in life expectancy and consider historical contexts. Students can investigate facts about U.S. presidents, leadership, and government. For example, we can enhance the discussion of the findings from the data

regarding the longevity of life for U.S. presidents by incorporating the eligibility requirements for presidential candidates. An important part of the discussion is the minimum age requirement. An examination of presidents' ages at inauguration would be another relevant research topic. The U.S. Constitution also requires that the president be a natural born citizen. A related task could be for students to research where each president was born, create a map, and graph the data.

Table 1. Ages of U.S. Presidents at Their Death

Ages of U.S. Presidents at Their Death

The table below lists the presidents of the United States and the ages at which they died.

President	Age	President	Age	President	Age
Washington	67	Pierce	64	Wilson	67
Adams	90	Buchanan	77	Harding	57
Jefferson	83	Lincoln	56	Coolidge	60
Madison	85	Johnson	66	Hoover	90
Monroe	73	Grant	63	Roosevelt	63
Adams	80	Hayes	70	Truman	88
Jackson	78	Garfield	49	Eisenhower	78
Van Buren	79	Arthur	57	Kennedy	46
Harrison	68	Cleveland	71	Johnson	64
Tyler	71	Harrison	67	Nixon	81
Polk	53	McKinley	58	Ford	93
Taylor	65	Roosevelt	60	Reagan	93
Fillmore	74	Taft	72		

Other Data Sources for Statistics Connecting Disciplines

Good questions can lead to more questions. As teachers and students investigate presidential data and average life expectancy, students' natural curiosity will stimulate additional questions. Teachers can prompt critical thinking by challenging students to generate additional questions as they examine data. For example, do U.S. presidents live longer than other Americans? What variables and factors should be considered? What is the average life expectancy in the United States and how has that changed over time? How does the average differ among various subgroups? What is the life expectancy in other countries? What is the average age of a US president? How many

Table 2. Websites for Data and Statistics

Topic	URL
Presidents, V.P.s, & First Ladies of the USA	https://www.usa.gov/presidents
USA Government Statistics	https://www.usa.gov/statistics
Life Expectancy by Country (2015)	http://www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/life-expectancy-country.html
U.S. Life Expectancy at Birth by Race & Gender (1930-2010)	http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005148.html
U.S. Census Bureau Data	http://www.census.gov/
Aviation Data	https://www.faa.gov/data_research/aviation_data_statistics/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	http://www.cdc.gov/datastatistics/
State Facts	http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/state-fact-sheets.aspx
U.S. Department of Agriculture Fact Book	www.usda.gov/factbook
National Center for Educational Statistics	http://nces.ed.gov
The American Revolution	http://theamericanrevolution.org/
The War of 1812	http://www.theuswarof1812.org/
The U.S. Civil War	http://www.theuscivilwar.org/

former presidents are still living? What potential do their ages have to affect the current data trend? Data from sources listed in Table 2 can be analyzed using both mathematics and social studies skills.

Using Children's Literature as a Bridge

Children's literature is a great way to connect mathematics and social studies. Many stories naturally convey aspects of history. Linking children's literature, social studies, and mathematics provides students with multiple opportunities to relate to the concepts presented during both mathematics and social studies instruction. Integrating mathematics and social studies through children's literature promotes a deeper understanding of both content and context. Such text-rich integration helps students make meaningful content correlations and illustrates how mathematics and social studies connects to the lives of students (Kinniburgh & Byrd, 2008). Rich literature provides students with background knowledge about people, places, events, and experiences (Vacca & Vacca, 2008). Table 3 has multiple examples of children's literature that may serve as the premise for mathematics and social studies integration related to the presidential data.

Conclusion

The opportunity to learn social studies and mathematics together in applicable ways makes the information come alive for students.

Table 3. Children's Literature Related to U.S. Presidents

Topic	Author	ISBN
20 Fun Facts About the Presidency	Levy, Janey	978-1433991899
Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt!	Fritz, Jean	978-0698116092
Curious About the White House (Smithsonian)	Waters, Kate	978-0399541452
Don't Know Much About the Presidents	Davis, Kenneth	0-06-028615-6
George Washington's Breakfast	Fritz, Jean	978-0698116115
George Washington's Teeth	Chandra, Deborah & Comora, Madeleine	0-374-32534-0
Grover Cleveland, Again: A Treasury of American Presidents	Burns, Ken	978-0385392099
Hail to the Chief! Fun Facts and Activities About the US Presidents (Smithsonian)	West, Tracey	978-0399541469
Lincoln and Kennedy: A Pair to Compare	Barretta, Gene	978-0805099454
Lives of the Presidents: Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors Thought)	Krull, Kathleen	978-0152008086
Our Presidents Rock!	Turner, Juliette	978-0310730958
Presidential Elections and Other Cool Facts	Sobel, Syl	978-1438006918
Presidents (Eyewitness Books)	Barber, James	978-0756649449

Teachers can integrate the disciplines of mathematics and social studies in meaningful ways that will allow their students to see the relevancy of both subjects to their lives.

Though students may not always perceive mathematics and social studies in the best light, there are ways that teachers can create integrated lessons that make mathematics and social studies relevant, engaging, and fun. Integrating mathematics and social studies promotes a deeper understanding of both content and context. Social studies content provides a rich context for many math concepts. In turn, mathematics provides an avenue through which students can thoroughly examine social studies content. The more teachers explore this relationship, the more seamless connections they can make. Look around. Math and social studies are everywhere!

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6th Graders Using Disciplinary Literacy Skills to Produce Multimedia Historical Portrayals

Bea Bailey, Nora McMillan & Dwane Valera

Abstract
This mixed-methods case study is an examination of an intervention within a professional development (PD) community of 22 6th grade history teachers within a high needs school district. The intervention was to enable teachers within a 5-day 9-3 summer PD to develop the content background and disciplinary literacy skills needed to produce and exchange *Our History Clips© (OHCs©)* or 2-3 minute multimedia narratives of historical understanding through the use of various disciplinary literacy skills. They were then prepared to model the processes and help their own students produce comparable products. The results of this initial pilot study revealed that teachers were able to develop fluency with efficiency and could also help students use a wide variety of disciplinary literacy skills within the context of producing *OHC*s©.

Research Problem and Brief Review of the Literature

Many state departments of education are working with teacher preparation programs throughout the country to develop curricular infusions related to disciplinary literacies. South Carolina is no exception. Its recent *Read to Succeed* program, though still in its infancy, is offering research and incentives to support teachers K-12 and throughout the disciplines as they begin to take seriously the challenges and importance of encouraging discipline specific literacies that will better prepare students for college, career, and civic life.

Quite a bit of research is evolving from the ground-breaking research of Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) who have long advocated for specific disciplinary literacy preparation for teachers versus a more traditional literacy strategies-for-all approach. In the wake of the Shanahans' efforts, social studies researchers are discovering that even young middle grades students can shape understandings of key historical concepts that are developmentally appropriate and that are the by-products of their use of specific disciplinary literacy skills (e.g. Barton, 2001, 2005; Bråten, Strømsø, & Britt,

2009; Britt, Wiemer-Hastings, Larson, & Perfetti, 2004; Conley, 2008; Endacott & Pelekanos, 2015; Ferretti, MacArthur, & Okolo, 2001a, 2001b; Gil, Bråten, Vidal-Abarca, & Strømsø, 2010; Gilles, Wang, Smith, & Johnson, 2013; Larson, Dixon, & Townsend, 2013; Monte-Sano, 2010, 2015; Monte-Sano, Paz, & Felton, 2014; O'Brien & White, 2006; Paz & Felton, 2010; Reisman, 2010; Seghi, 2011; Van Sledright, 2002, 2004).

Drawing on these research insights, our mixed-methods case study evolved within a grant project that was funded through a South Carolina Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) grant and that was directed by one of the researchers. The call for teacher involvement within the professional development grant initiative explained that the invited 6th grade social studies teachers within a large high-needs South Carolina school district would be using various historical disciplinary literacy skills as they crafted their own richer versions of historical concepts. They would then be required to use the methods that they refined within the professional development (PD) with their students during the following year. Very few studies have shown the effects of PD efforts related to cultivating teachers' historical disciplinary literacy skills as

a means of supporting their understandings of historical concepts and those of their students.

Method

Purpose

The purpose of this pragmatic, mixed methods, single case study was to describe the effectiveness of an intervention related to supporting the production of multimedia narratives of historical understandings through the use of various disciplinary literacies by sixth grade social studies teachers who participated within a week-long, 9:00-3:00 PD. The first part of the intervention was defined as the production of several two-to-three minute multimedia historical narratives (or what we dubbed *Our History Clips* or OHCs) that required teachers to use historical literacy skills. The teachers worked together with the support of coaches to develop the visuals and voice-over narratives for their OHCs and then exchanged them for feedback to enhance their own developing understandings of historical concepts.

The second part of the intervention, then, was to have these participating teachers encourage these same disciplinary literacy skills within their own sixth grade classes and within a similar unit of study related to ancient Greece and Rome. The teachers could require the voice-overs for the OHCs or visual portrayals of their understandings that they then shared with their peers via conversational exchanges in small groups or within a whole group through the use of a document camera and projector.

Research Questions

The following research questions developed:

- To what degree were 6th grade social studies teachers within a professional development community able to develop richer understandings of historical concepts as they developed and exchanged multiple, multimedia historical portrayals that were forged through their strategic use of disciplinary literacy skills?
- How, if at all, were the participating 6th grade social studies teachers able to encourage these disciplinary literacy skills within their own classes to help students develop conceptual historical understandings as encouraged within the state's course standards?

Site of Study

The site of the study was within the vicinity of a large high-needs school district selected for the study. Teachers met within a university setting that enabled them to have ample space and internet capabilities so that they could craft their *OHCs* within small groups.

Participant Population

The participant population ultimately included twenty-two 6th grade teachers from one school district. Sixth grade teachers from private schools within the school district's vicinity were invited to participate as well and did. Within the Call for Participants, they were promised stipends and materials for their work along with 14 days of PD over an 18 month period as well as site visits from the leaders with the condition that they would participate for the entire time and encourage the methods and disciplinary literacies within their own classes. They also agreed to participate in research studies and completed IRB permission forms.

Researcher Roles

Three researchers actively participated in this one of several case studies related to the effectiveness of this ITQ grant project. One served as the Director and Principal Investigator for the ITQ grant project. As such this researcher collaborated with a team of directors to design the PD, recruit the teachers, organize the research agendas, and collect and analyze the data for the project and for other research projects. The second researcher was a

participant-observer within the project. This researcher has a PhD and is nationally board certified and applied to participate within the PD. As a participant observer, the researcher completed all assignments and used the content and methods encouraged within the PD within 6th grade classes within a district school. The third researcher was a doctoral student assigned to the grant project. This researcher helped code and analyze data related to the overall effects of the PD project.

Apparatus

Within the 5-day summer PD, the institute had a uniform structure from 9:00 to 3:00. In the mornings after a brief overview, the historian within the leadership team interacted with the teachers from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. During that time, he shared current revisionist history related to concepts encouraged with South Carolina's standards document for 6th grade Ancient Civilizations courses. The teachers took notes from the lectures and from their analyses of many sources using a graphic organizer within their Interactive History Notebooks (IHNs) that aligned with the foci of these standards (Green, 2010; Jaladanki & Bhattacharya, 2014; Rheingold, LeClair, & Seaman, 2013). Throughout the process teachers were invited to pause and develop on the left side pages of their IHNs visual renderings of what they were learning. They would then exchange these with their peers. In the afternoons, teachers regrouped to develop their *OHCs* or their voice-overs for their visual portrayals of their historical understandings that emerged from their evolving use of disciplinary literacies. The last part of the PD ended with members of the various groups sharing their *OHCs* for all to review and learn from.

As the week developed, the members developed an evaluative tool that helped them shape the nature of their inquiries as well as their final *OHCs*. **Figure 1** includes in the left column a list of the 7 disciplinary literacy skills that their

district had defined as strategic and that were based on the work of Shanahan and Shanahan (2008). These operational definitions of the disciplinary literacies evolved from the PD participants as they worked together to define for themselves the disciplinary literacies their district encouraged based on the work of Shanahan and Shanahan:

- **Corroboration Literacy** or the skill of building historical position statements based on analysis of multiple sources;
- **Chronological Literacy** or the skill of reading and/or creating timelines and sequenced texts; or being able to place an event or person or concept within a chronological context;
- **Perspective Literacy** or ability to view a stated position from multiple perspectives;
- **Sourcing and Contextualizing Literacy** or the skill of noting when, where, and why a source was written or created and its role and significance within a historical context;
- **Visual Discrimination Literacy** or developing historical understanding from analysis of multiple media;
- **Geographic Literacy** or the skill of reading maps to develop historical understanding; and
- **Economic Literacy** or applying basic economic principles to historical interpretations.

The teachers were then required to encourage these disciplinary literacy skills within their sixth grade classes during the following semester as they produced OHCs.

Procedure

A pragmatic, single, mixed-methods case study was used to capture the impact of the intervention within the PD because it enabled a more robust portrayal of the effects of the whole intervention and since the purpose of the study

Figure 1. The Rubric for Assessing Teachers' Our History Clips

Disciplinary Literacy Skills for Historical Understanding	3 Right on Target	2 Almost There	1 Needs More Focus
Corroboration Literacy 3X (Building Historical Position Statements Based on Analysis of Multiple Sources)	• Includes a Position Statement That Is Easy to Understand and Can Be Defended • Develops 3 Supportive Claims for Position • Uses at Least 2 Sources to Build Convincing Support • Offers a Counterargument and Rebuttal	• Includes a Position Statement that Is a Bit Unclear • Develops Only 2 Claims • Uses Only One Source or Sources Are Not Used Very Effectively	• Lacks a Clear Position Statement • Develops Only 1 Claim • Needs Help with Building Historical Position Statement from Multiple Sources • Sources Aren't Carefully Analyzed
Chronological Literacy 2X (Reading and Creating Timelines and Sequenced Texts or Being Able to Place an Event or Person within a Chronological Context)	• Suggests clearly (visually, orally, and/or textually) how position statement is related to a specific historical and chronological context	• Is not clear about how position statement is related to a specific historical and chronological context although there is some effort in this direction	Lacks clear information about the time period
Perspective Literacy 1X (Views Position Statement from Multiple Perspectives)	• Shows that at Least 2 Different Perspectives Have Been Considered That Relate to the Position Statement	• Incorporates Only 1 Perspective Related to the Position Statement	• Needs Help with Stating Multiple Perspectives in a Clearer Way
Sourcing and Contextualizing Literacy 1X (Noting when, where and why a source was written or created and its role and significance within a historical context)	• Gives source information for at least one primary source within the clip (when, where & why source was created and its significance in historical context)	• Lacks information about when, where or why at least one source was created or its role in the historical context	• Has little or no information to contextualize the sources
Visual Discrimination Literacy 1X (Developing Historical Understanding from Multimedia Sources)	• Analyzes at least one visual historical source in way that lends credible support to position; the source is analyzed so that viewers appreciate its significance	• Uses a visual source but doesn't explain why it's important or relevant; needs more focus on the significance of the image	• Does not use a visual source or does not show much historical understanding from its use
Geographic Literacy 1X (Using maps and map skills to develop historical understanding and change over time)	• Reveals (visually, orally, and/or textually) how maps have helped build historical understanding related to position statement	• Uses insights from map but historical understanding from it is still a bit unclear	• Does not reveal that map/s were used to help build historical understanding related to the position statement
Economic Literacy Optional Extra Credit—1 Point (Applying economic principle to historical interpretation)	• Applies an appropriate economic principle or idea to suggest change or continuity if relevant to position		
_____ 24 Points Total plus an optional 1 point			

was to get feedback on the effects of an instructional intervention (Creswell, 2013, 2014). The quantitative component of the first part of the study involved a content analysis of every *OHC* that was produced within the 5-Day PD. Using the rating scale that was co-created by the participants and coaches and that earned inter-rater reliability, the researchers tallied the scores for each *OHC*. A spreadsheet listing the scores for each daily output of the teachers' *OHC* productions was developed for each literacy skill and each total score. Then, paired t-

tests of the data were developed to help discern the overall effects of this instructional intervention. In addition, qualitative methods were employed in a pragmatic way to more fully document why and how the intervention mattered. The researchers used participant observations, analyses of course documents, as well as focus group interviews and participants' written reflections. Themes emerged through a constant comparative method (Creswell, 2013, 2014).

The second portion of this case study unfolded within a sixth grade classroom led by one of the PD participant observers. The participant observer carefully documented the methods used to help 6th graders (N = 130 students) produce multimedia portrayals within their out-put pages within their Interactive History Notebooks (IHNs) that they then shared in small groups and through the use of a document camera. Below is a brief summary of the process that unfolded:

Within the teacher researcher's 6th grade classroom, who participated in the summer PD, students within the high needs school had already developed several disciplinary literacies within the academic year and could use them to showcase their understanding of historical concepts encouraged within their state's standard indicator: 6-2.1: Describe the development of ancient Greek culture (the Hellenic period), including the concept of citizenship and early forms of democracy in Athens. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011)

Using a variety of historical resources, including the texts that teachers received from the PD, students developed their own visual portrayals of their emerging and developmentally appropriate understandings of ancient Greece through their judicious use of various disciplinary literacy skills. Students also participated in scoring each other's historical visual portrayals based upon the use of the seven literacy skills that had been

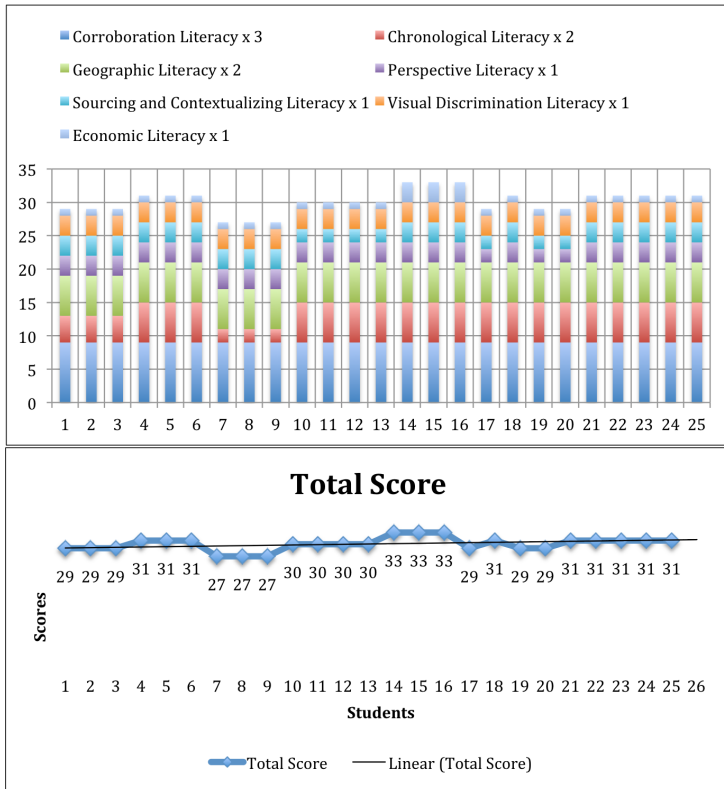Figure 2. Scores of First Our History Clips
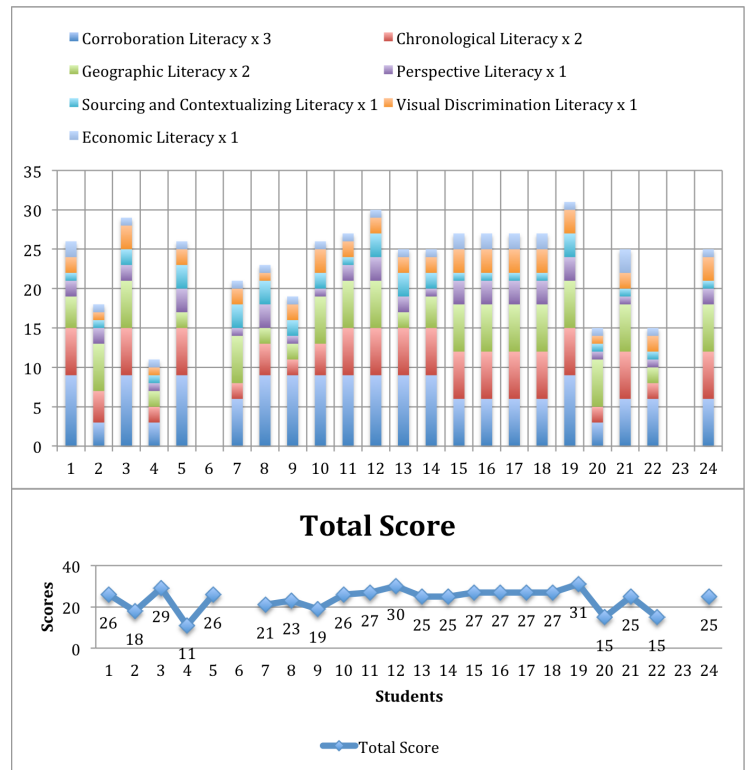
slowly introduced from August until November. This allowed for students to participate in the process of evaluation. By allowing sixth grade social studies students to peer review the visual historical portrayals within their IHNs, they were encouraged to clearly demonstrate their own understandings of the content and their evolving understandings of the disciplinary literacies.

The Project Director and co-researcher also conducted a participant observation during a day when students shared their multimedia portrayals of their conceptual understandings of ancient Greece. The research team then analyzed several representative IHN output pages produced by the students using the same analytical rating scale encouraged in the summer PD (see **Figure 1**).

Results

The researchers evaluated each *OHC* that was produced within the one-week PD using the 1-3 scale as suggested in Figure 1. The total

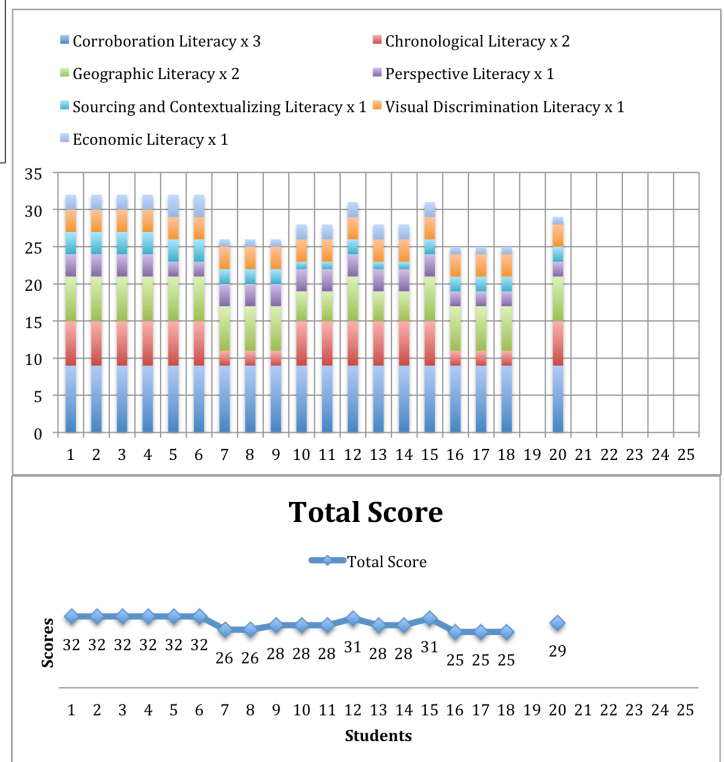Figure 3. Scores of Second Our History Clips

by the group. Here we see that the classroom average increased and the demonstration of understandings of the literacies were stronger. Participants continued to struggle with Economic Literacy but there were slight gains.

The total average score of this group of OHCs was 30.12 out of 33 possible points. There were no missing participants and a positive effect could be seen with the teachers beginning to work collaboratively. This not only improved the output but also increased the level of creativity and enthusiasm for the project as witnessed in the participant observations and as recorded in their reflections. The third and final set of OHCs had a slight decrease in total score

Figure 4. Scores of Third Our History Clips

score was then tallied to suggest one measure of "historical understanding" evidenced within the *OHC*. **Figure 2** reveals what teachers could do alone and with initial instruction and support. As it suggests, many teachers had difficulties developing mains ideas and support for them within their narratives as few earned the 9 total points for that literacy. The other major difficulties related to sourcing and contextualizing, visual discrimination and economic literacy. The total average for all of the *OHCs* for that day was a 27.45 out of a possible 33 points. The two teachers who failed to submit their projects were not included in the tally.

The second set of OHCs involved more collaboration **(See Figure 3).** They worked in groups instead of independently to develop their OHCs. This enabled them to interact more fully, seek answers to questions and concerns, and brainstorm ideas using their inquiry resources. An additional teacher also joined the group as he received a reprieve from his military obligations. This second session was by far the best output

(See Figure 4). Two sets of three teachers did not submit their OHC but the quality of those that were submitted remained about the same. The six who did not submit their OHCs produced them but forgot to post them and could not retrieve them when the time came for the data analysis two months later. Economic literacy continued to be difficult to incorporate

Figure 5. Statistical Significance of Our History Clips

	Corroboration Literacy	Chronological Literacy	Geographic Literacy	Perspective Literacy	Sourcing and Contextualizing Literacy	Visual Discrimination Literacy	Economic Literacy	Total Score
Statistically Significant Changes from First to Second *Our History Clips*	T=21.73 α=0.005	T=0.907	T=2.71 α=0.025	T=2.28 α=0.05	T=4.15 α=0.005	T=3.54 α=0.005	T=1.72	T=11.9 α=0.005
Statistically Significant Changes from Second to Third *Our History Clips*			T=1.81	T=0.4202	T=1.882		T=3.43 α=0.01	T=0.855
Statistically Significant Changes of All Entries in the *Our History Clips*	T=0	T = 0.691	T=2.3.66 α=0.05	T=2.393 α=0.05	T=1.472	T=3.55 α=0.005	T=1.81	T=17.42 α=.005

within their narratives. Those who did complete their OHCs earned a total average of 28.9 out of 33 possible points.

After the data were collected for this first week, a spreadsheet was developed that listed the overall average scores for each day. A paired t-test analysis of these data was then administered **(See Figure 5).** Based on a significance of at least 0.05 there were statistically significant changes from the First OHCs to the second in terms of evidencing Corroboration Literacy, Perspective Literacy, Sourcing and Contextualizing Literacy, Visual Discrimination Literacy, and on the Total Score that revealed their relative historical understanding as evidenced within the OHCs. The changes from the Second to Third OHCs were significant only in Economic Literacy and nowhere else, suggesting that the quality of the other literacies remained about the same. When the growth throughout the week was measured over all, there were statistically significant changes in Geographic, Perspective, and Visual Discrimination Literacy, and the overall score on the OHCs was significant.

These data suggest that overall significant improvement in their conceptual understandings of historical content related to ancient Greece and Rome improved quickly and significantly as evidenced by their OHCs efforts. Furthermore, the qualitative data from the various sources revealed that the teachers felt confident and excited about encouraging disciplinary literacy skills as a means toward fostering richer historical understandings since they had successful experiences with it. They found that the method helped them use many disciplinary literacy skills in an integrated, motivational and efficient way.

Within the teacher researcher's 6th grade classroom, who participated in the summer PD, students within a high needs school had already developed some developmentally appropriate expertise with several disciplinary literacies within the first semester of the academic year and could use them to showcase their

Figure 6. Typical Example of Disciplinary Literacies Evidenced in
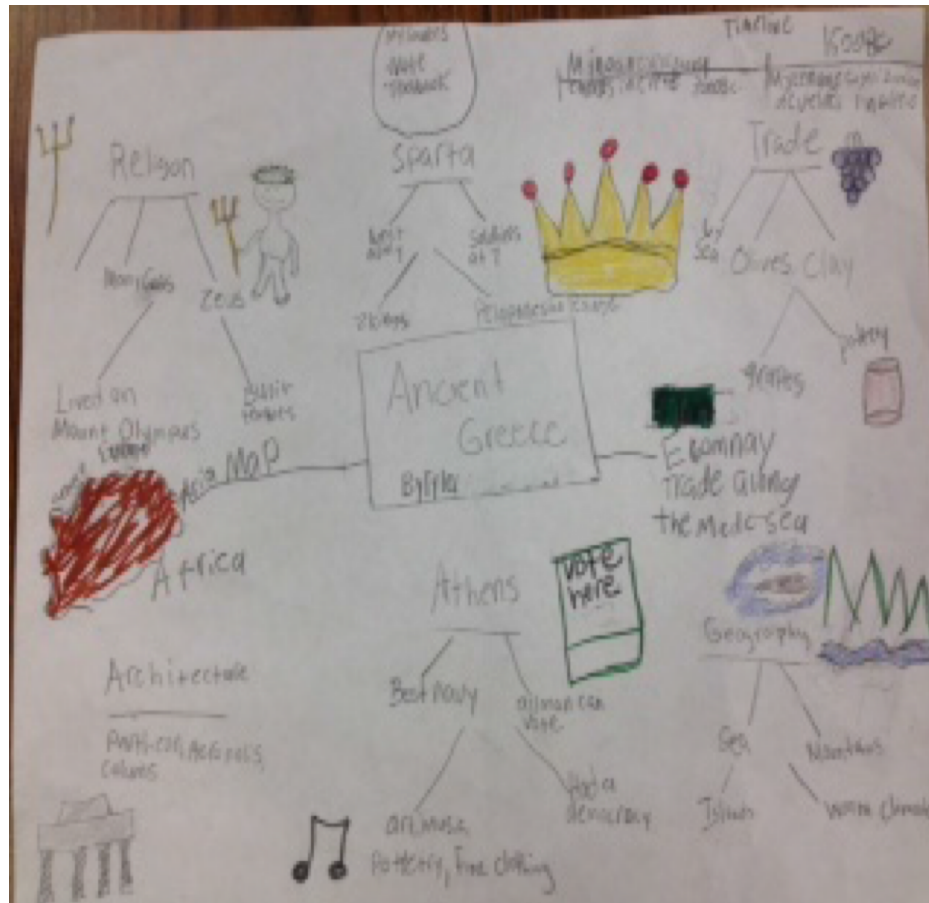
understanding of historical concepts encouraged within their state standards. Evidence from participant observations and the students' IHNs revealed that they could use these disciplinary literacy skills to develop meaningful historical understandings.

Figure 6 offers a typical production of an output page within an IHN. As can be seen from the multimedia visual portrayal, the student has a key concept that is supported with multiple forms of support. The box in the center of the page represents the historical concept "Ancient Greece." Surrounding the box is visual evidence of the student's emerging conceptual understanding of that term. For example, the student visually represents information about Athens and Sparta, suggesting that these two city-states had significance within the period. It also represents two different cultures within what is commonly referred to as ancient Greek culture. In fact, there appears to be a comparison between Athens and Sparta. Athens, for example, had a better navy and emphasized the arts while Sparta prepared soldiers at an early age. The suggestion is that there was more of a voting democracy within Athens versus a rule by a King in Sparta.

The student did apply Economic Literacy in various segments of the output page as in noting the trading within the Mediterranean Sea area related to clay objects and olives. Impressively, the student noted the geography of Greece by depicting the hilly terrain, the proximity to the sea, and the warm climate. In addition, Chronological Literacy was evidenced with the timeline in the upper right of the output page. Corroboration Literacy was apparent in the list of multiple sources that were used to build the conceptual portrayal. These are located in the upper center of the multimedia IHN page.

No evidence of Visual Discrimination Literacy was employed since there were no images that were analyzed in any meaningful way to add additional support to the overall conceptual understanding of ancient Greece. The student could have pasted a well-know image from the period, such as a statue of Athena, and then drawn inferences from it about the nature of Ancient Greece. Although some evidence of Sourcing and Corroboration literacy was evident in that multiple sources were used, the IHN output page does not have any of the images correlated to those sources, nor does the source list explain why the sources used were indeed credible sources. Regardless, this typical IHN output page and others like it demonstrate that at this early stage in the ongoing investigation of the PD's effectiveness and with regard to the second research question within this study, sixth graders are already well on their way toward developing thoughtful and developmentally appropriate conceptual historical understandings through the judicious and appropriate use of various disciplinary literacy standards. Sixth grade students, under the tutelage of well-prepared teachers who know how to use disciplinary literacies to develop conceptual understanding, can begin to use the thinking processes of historians through an inquiry process that aids their deepening understanding of historical concepts like ancient Greece.

Discussion

Knowing more about the effects of this PD intervention may help disciplinary literacy researchers and educational leaders think through the kinds of PD offerings that will help middle grades social studies teachers cultivate disciplinary literacies as a pathway to richer understandings of historical concepts. Middle grades social studies teachers can also use this initial case study to consider ways to initiate their own steps toward a disciplinary literacy classroom.

More research is needed. This initial study only looks into the classroom of one of the participants within the study. Research data are still being gathered from the other participants that will enable researchers to discern more clearly if this initial result is an anomaly from a well-prepared professional or more the result of the interventions under review. Other studies will examine other variables that may have enabled teachers to develop their own fluency with these disciplinary literacies so readily. The researchers are engaged in this analysis to see if they contributed to the results of the PD intervention and research foci.

In closing, these initial findings do seem to suggest that disciplinary literacies can be encouraged among a diverse group of middle grades social studies teachers in an efficient and effective way. With appropriate supports, these same teachers can model this expertise within their own classrooms in ways that enable students to use them to develop conceptual understandings that are more in accord with approaches used within the discipline of history.

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Let's Work Together: Mobile Apps for Collaborative Instruction

Erin D. Besser

Learners live in a connected world where they seek out information frequently and access it non-sequentially through a variety of media choices. Learners thrive in student-centered learning approaches, discovery inquiry, and constructivist learning methods, where they readily integrate a variety of technological devices, tools, and software not only into their daily life, but also to enhance their learning experiences. Schools have implemented one-to-one laptop programs, integrated Smartboards in classrooms, taken part in tablet initiatives, and have taken strides to increase internet access and technology resources within the school walls. These actions have not only given students the ability to live within this digital world, but has encouraged it.

Integrating technology into the curriculum has been linked to positive student outcomes, including student achievement, attitudes, and motivation (Lei, 2010). Mobile devices give students an opportunity to make personal connections, work collaboratively, and engage in real-world activities (Facer et al., 2004; Lai, Yang, Chen, Ho, & Chan, 2007; Sung, Hou, Liu, & Chang, 2010; Wong & Looi, 2010). The portability of devices allows learners to connect throughout the classroom and school environment, and decide when and how to collaborate (Clough, Jones, McAndrew, & Scanlon, 2008; Henderson & Yeow, 2012; Mueller, Wood, De Pasquale, & Cruikshank, 2012; Norris & Soloway, 2004). Networked applications give students opportunities for increased peer-to-peer and social interaction surrounding a learning task. These interactions may occur face-to-face within the classroom, or outside of the classroom through various informal tasks across time and space.

The overlapping strengths among mobile learning and collaborative instruction provide educators with opportunities to leverage these technologies in a way that enhances collaborative practice. Winer (1994) defines collaboration as, "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone" (p. 33). During collaborative interactions, there is a sense of a shared goal (Deutsch, 1962), opportunities for social interaction (Cohen, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998) and explanation (O'Donnell & O'Kelly, 1994), individual accountability (Laughlin, Zander, Knievel, & Tan, 2003), and co-construction of knowledge (Barron, 2003). These elements work together to increase learning. Paired with the affordances of Mobile Learning, collaborative instruction is able to maximize formal learning and provides opportunities to leverage current classroom devices.

Teachers can no longer be passive consumers of technology for their private and professional work life, but must become technology enthusiasts that model excellent technology usage and prepare their students for learning with continuously emerging devices and software. With over 80,000 educational applications available,

exploring these resources for appropriate and meaningful collaborative instruction can be daunting and hard to navigate. The following table begins to tackle the numerous resources available and provides a list of applications that is more easily assessable to educators looking to enhance collaborative instructional environments.

Table 1
Resources for Collaborative Instructional Environments

Type	Name	Descriptions and Examples
Assessment	Socrative	During an in-class lesson, the teacher can poll the class, provide exit tickets, manage collaborative spaces, and provide various forms of feedback.
Course Management	Collaborize Classroom	Opportunities for classroom discussion using various methods such as voting, questioning, and open forums within a private platform.
	Edmodo	Course management tools that offers opportunities for interactions among teachers and student groups (in and outside of the school house), discussions, share resources, and provide feedback. Integration of other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Google Drive).
	Gaggle	
	Schoology	
Document Management	Astralpad	Provides a shared space for groups to collect and create various documents. Options for integration with other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox). Uses capabilities of video chat for synchronous communication.
	Clibe	Collaborative journal that allows for not only text, but sketch tools with various formatting features. Opportunities to share and follow other journals with the application space.
	Sugarsync	A place to store all your file, images, and digital life with opportunities to share and view offline.
Mind mapping	iBrainstorm	Shared space with various formatting features particularly useful for mind mapping. Stickies, drawing tools, graphic organizers, and sharing features across Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Evernote, Google Drive).
	Lino	
	Popplet	
	Padlet	
Shared Browsing	Nearpod	Similar to such course management tools like Edmodo and Schoology, Nearpod provides additional opportunities for teacher-controlled shared browsing
	RabbleBrowser	This shared space allows for facilitated learning with unlimited connected peers. Features that make this app unique include social media integration, inter-app integration, multi-user and private chat.

Type	Name	Descriptions and Examples
Sharing Information/ Organization	Evernote	A place to organize everything. Opportunities for lists, annotations, document management, sharing, and the integration of other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Google Drive) and Evernote related products.
	LiveBinders	Organizing tool to store and share various digital files and media.
	Taposé	
	Pearltrees	
	Diigo	Space for saving, annotating, and sharing bookmarks (predominately for text-based resources).
	Skitch	Similar to features of Diigo, Skitch focuses on images and utilizes the camera feature on your device.
Productivity	Wunderlist	To-do and task list that can be shared among various users.
	Trello	
Communication	VoiceThread	Dynamic conversation and discussion through text, voice, or video
	Remind	Free text- messaging app for quick reminders and communication between students, teachers, and parents.
	Yammer	Similar to Twitter, the private space offers all the benefits of this public tool for use within a closed environment.
Media Creation & Sharing	Audioboom	Create, share, and access audio content.
	Coach's Eye	This unique tool records and uploads video, and allows the user to mark the video. Particularly useful for improvement on body movements within sports, interviewing, and presentation skills.
	Threadlife	Create collaborative video content.
	Vittle	Screen-recording capabilities with various media integration. This is a great tool for teachers to use in providing non-text related feedback.
	Ask3	Create short instructional video where students can interact and ask questions to corresponding content.

Type	Name	Descriptions and Examples
White Board	Baiboard	Similar to many of the mind mapping tools, a shared space with various formatting features is provided. Opportunities for screen and audio recording, integration among various other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. YouTube), and teacher controlled viewing.
	Doceri	
	Educreations	
	Explain Everything	
	Ink Flow	
	Realtime Board	
	Screen Chomp	
Content-Specific: Literacy	Inklewriter	Write and publish interactive stories. Particularly useful for creative writing.
	Puppet Pals	Create animated stories with audio.
	Scribble Press	Write, create, and illustrate a digital story.
	Sonic Pics	
	Storify	Use various social media and news outlets to create and share real-time content, informational texts, and stories.
Content-Specific: Science	Leaf Snap	Using the camera feature on your device, identify and learn about various natural elements.
	Vernier Video Physics	Capture video and images while integrating properties of physics.

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Making the Invisible Visible: Creating and Fostering a Classroom Culture of Thinking

Janie Riddle Goodman & Victoria A. Oglan

If you are a parent or grandparent of a little one, you know how their minds always seem to be filled with questions! Watch them as they observe the world around them, and you can almost see the creative and critical thinking going on inside their heads. I believe that teachers of our youngest children are masterful at fostering and encouraging creative and deep thinking in their students.

I recently had the opportunity to learn more about dinosaurs from my four-year-old grandson, Adam. His preschool class collaboratively chose to study dinosaurs because his teacher, Ms. Rachael, has created a classroom culture of thinking that empowers the children to see themselves as decision-makers. He explained to me one theory as to why dinosaurs became extinct is that a meteorite hit the Earth, causing earthquakes and volcanoes. He then went on to explain to me what a theory is and how scientists need to make experiments to test their theory. Because Ms. Rachael supports her young students in seeing themselves as scientists, she deepened their understanding of what scientists really do by helping them create their own volcanoes out of dough, baking soda, and vinegar. My grandson informed me, in his most confident scientist's voice, "Yep, Granna, I think that is what happened to the dinosaurs. The lava from the volcanoes covered them all up, and they went extinct."

As I listened to Adam's explanation about the extinction of the dinosaurs and tucked this sweet memory away in my heart, I couldn't help but think, as an educator, of how Ms. Rachael has attended not only to the academic learning of her students but also to their development as thinkers with an emerging sense of agency, a sense of "I can do this." She builds her curriculum around the interests of her students and encourages them to wonder and ask questions. She has created a preschool classroom where thinking and learning are clearly visible through the enthusiasm and love for learning exhibited by her four-year-old students.

As middle level teachers, we may ask ourselves the questions: "What do thinking and learning look like in a middle level classroom?" and "Under what conditions can thinking and learning thrive in our classrooms?" We may wonder about the classroom conditions we need to create in order to see our young adolescent students recapture and/or deepen the enthusiasm and love for learning they had when they were younger. One of the first conditions we must provide our students with are ample opportunities for thinking. We can create this condition by posing meaningful, real-life problems for student exploration and inquiry. Additionally, we can establish a classroom where thinking is valued and infused throughout the curriculum.

As the following authors demonstrate, purposefully and overtly encouraging students to think deeply about their learning engagements can and will deepen their understanding of conceptual knowledge. In her book, *Unpacking Complexity in Informational Texts,* Sunday Cummins (2015) helps ELA teachers of grades 2 - 8 understand how to unpack the issue of informational text complexity as students learn how to think not only about the content of the text but also the deep structure of the text itself. To facilitate students' understandings of informational texts, Barbara Moss and Virginia Loh-Hagan (2016) have written *40 Strategies for Guiding Readers through Informational Texts.* Author John S. O'Connor (2011), in his book, *This Time It's Personal: Teaching Academic Writing through Creative Nonfiction,* shows ELA teachers how to encourage students to think deeply about themselves and their lives as sources of information for writing. Lastly, Pam Goble and Ryan R. Goble (2016) offer their reinterpretation of literature circles in their book, *Making Curriculum Pop: Developing Literacies in All Content Areas*. By reimagining the roles for students to explore as readers, the authors show teachers how to foster creative and critical thinking as students engage with texts in new and exciting ways. (JRG)
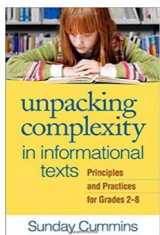
Unpacking Complexity in Informational Texts: Principles and Practices for Grades 2-8 by Sunday Cummins, 2015, 147 pp, ISBN 978-1-4625-1850-0 Have you ever considered whether or not your students have been overtly taught how informational text authors craft their texts? Without this knowledge and understanding of how informational texts "work," is it any surprise that students often face challenges as readers when they encounter these complex texts? As an example of text complexity, Cummins uses an excerpt from renowned author Seymour Simon's (2000) book, *Bones: Our Skeletal System*. Cummins points out that if students are to learn and retain the information, they must not only understand the content of the text, they must also understand Simon's purpose for writing the text, his structure of the text, his deliberate choices of particular words and phrases to create a cohesion of ideas in the text, and his development of the main ideas in the text. Quite a challenge for a young adolescent who may have little or no "background knowledge about the purposes, structures, language choices, and the types of details informational text authors use to convey ideas" (p. 2).

For this reason, it falls upon teachers to create learning spaces where students can explore and inquire about the content of the informational text along with the deep structures used by the author of the text. It is only through their understanding of how informational texts are structured that students will be able to think critically and deeply about the information that is being conveyed. Because teachers must make text complexity visible to students, teachers themselves have to understand what makes informational texts complex.

Fortunately for teachers, Sunday Cummins has written a book providing a detailed roadmap to use when addressing text complexity. Readers will find chapters devoted to the various elements that contribute to text complexity in informational texts along with examples from easy-to-find resources, instructional anecdotes, and samples of student work. Teachers can use the examples provided by Cummins to create lesson plans for purposefully and overtly teaching students the deep structures of informational texts.

For example, chapter two is entitled, "What Makes an Informational Text Complex?" Cummins begins the chapter by grouping the qualitative dimensions of text complexity into four categories: purpose and main ideas, structure, styles of language and types of vocabulary, and knowledge demands. She then deconstructs her statement by explaining each of the four categories along with providing examples of lessons and texts for each. In her explanation of purpose, she points out how authors' purposes for writing informational texts traditionally have been placed in five categories: to instruct, to recount, to explain, to describe, and to persuade. As an example of one category, she suggests sharing the informational text, *Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* (Blumenthal, 2011), to show students how the author's purpose for writing the text was to recount the events that led up to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and then its repeal. Additionally, Cummins provides teachers with tables and other text features to further deepen their understanding of the categories listed in the chapter.

Cummins uses this same reader-friendly format throughout the remainder of the book. She provides teachers with the specific information they need in order to teach students about the deep structures of informational texts. She then fleshes out the information so teachers will have ideas for lesson plans and accompanying resources. Chapters three – eight address author's purpose, text structure, types of details in non-narrative texts, types of details in narrative texts, connective language, and the construction of main ideas. After reading this book, you may find yourself going to your local public library to check out the informational texts Cummins offers as her examples. So if you find yourself reading *How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous* (Bragg,

2012), don't just think about the content. Think about the deep structure of the text and how the author uses a humorous tone and a less formal style of language. These are categories of language and vocabulary you will want to teach your students. Teach your students to think deeply as they read informational texts in order to discover the author's craft moves. After all, deep comprehension is a result of deep thinking. (JRG)
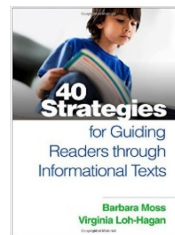
40 Strategies for Guiding Readers through Informational Texts by Barbara Moss and Virginia Loh-Hagan, 2016, 276 pp, ISBN 978-1-4625-2609-3

Students today are living in an age of information, globalization, and digitalization. They are constantly bombarded with and surrounded by information from a variety of sources that have one thing in common—to inform or persuade them as readers. For these students, it becomes critical that classroom teachers help them develop the reading and thinking skills and strategies that will enable them to read and understand the many different types of informational texts they encounter. It is not enough for students simply to be able to locate information. Instead, they need to know how to think critically in order to assess and evaluate the informational texts they read. Teachers must overtly teach these critical thinking strategies to all students to prepare them for their lives both inside and outside the classroom. Moss and Loh-Hagan have written a book that will enable classroom teachers to do just that.

The co-authors organized the 40 strategies into seven topics: getting started, building background, vocabulary, reading closely, comprehension, discussion, and writing.

For each strategy, they provide an explanation, description, rationale, step-by-step procedures for implementation with students, and a list of references. Teachers will especially appreciate the reproducible forms and templates designed for student use and teacher planning purposes that the co-authors include.

One example in the book of a reading closely strategy is Thinking Aloud. This strategy is a way for teachers to make their thinking visible to students by allowing them to hear what goes on in the mind of a skilled reader. Students come to understand that thinking and reading are active processes. Further, this strategy allows teachers to demonstrate for students what it means to actively engage with a complex text and provides students with cognitive tools to facilitate their own deep thinking.

Readers of this book with find step-by-step instructions on how to conduct a Thinking Aloud and prompts for scripting the Thinking Aloud. An example is provided of how a fifth-grade science teacher used this thinking strategy during a lesson on reptiles, as well as a sample of the teacher's Think-Aloud script. Moss and Loh-Hagan conclude this strategy by providing a student template for a Think-Aloud Listening Guide. Students use the template to keep track of the reading and thinking strategies used by the teacher throughout the Thinking Aloud demonstration. Using the guide enables students not only to hear how their teacher thinks about the text, but it also allows them to consider different strategies that readers/thinkers use during a reading engagement.

In this book, Moss and Loh-Hagan provide teachers with practical ideas for strategy instruction with students. Additionally, they include an Appendix that includes trade books categorized according to levels, a listing of informational magazines for children and young adults, and a list of informational text websites. (JRG)
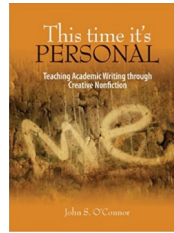
This Time It's Personal: Teaching Academic Writing through Creative Nonfiction by John S. O'Connor, 2011, 227 pp., ISBN: 0-814-154-301

The English classroom has a long-standing history of the teaching of formulaic writing steeped in the tradition of the five paragraph essay or the thesis-support model. In addition to the structure remaining static, all too often, the teacher assigns the topic or creates a list of topics from which students can choose. Both the structure and the topic are really the teacher's choosing and so students end up writing for an audience of one – the teacher, with no authentic purpose or audience in mind. In the end, both the teacher and the students are left with little or no enthusiasm for the narrowness and artificiality of the writing engagement. This is the state of academic writing in most classrooms. John O'Connor (2011) offers a counter-narrative in his book, *This Time It's Personal: Teaching Academic Writing through Creative Nonfiction.* His path out of the "deadening discourse" (p 11) of traditional classroom writing is to engage students in personal writing and invite them to the page with their own stories and interests. Through this landscape of creative nonfiction, O'Connor demonstrates that students can write with both fine control and enthusiasm when they are the architects of authentic writing.

Although writing has a renewed place of prominence in the classroom as a result of the Common Core State Standards, teachers have focused attention on the information and argument genres and have relegated narrative and personal writing to the back burner according to O'Connor. His book offers a rich

range of high interest creative nonfiction topics where students have choice and through which students develop voice and craft. He demonstrates how students begin writing with a personal focus and move that writing to literary nonfiction using a workshop model where students write, conference, and revise as needed, taking time to hone their craft. O'Connor is clear about the fact that he and his students collaboratively construct the assignments, making sure that all assignments have a potential audience beyond just the teacher. He wants students to understand the wide appeal writing can have in the world. Knowing his students through their writing is at the heart of O'Connor's classroom.

The book is organized with teachers in mind. Each chapter can stand alone or chapters can be read in succession and used as a guide. There are a multitude of engaging and different writing assignments that have the potential to pique the interest of any adolescent. He clearly shows how students write both about themselves and about the world. For each assignment, O'Connor explains in detail the nature of the assignment in easy to follow steps and then follows with a collection of writing samples. O'Connor offers such things as a travelogue that includes poetry and prose, a themed collection of mini-memoirs, current events commentaries modeled on newspaper op-ed pieces, interdisciplinary blogs, exploratory essays on a variety of high interest topics that combine research with personal experience, and a number of narrative inquiries. The numerous writing samples from both students and professional writers can be used as mentor texts and adolescents will surely be interested in leaning on the writing of their peers. An additional appeal of all these writing assignments is that they can be used across disciplines.

Of particular interest is chapter 9 which focuses on oral histories and interviews. In this chapter, O'Connor discusses the structure of oral histories and essays that are based on interviews. He wants students to know how to acquire knowledge for their writing from others. Topics such as the American dream, civil rights, Vietnam War literature, and race are just some of the choices for students in this genre. For the interviews, students must choose individuals they are not personally familiar with, so family and friends are excluded. O'Connor offers help choosing interviewees and tips for effective interviews. Students transcribe the interview and O'Connor teaches them how to edit the transcript. There are many sophisticated craft moves that students explore for this assignment, as they transcribe and edit. For example, they explore how to keep voice alive throughout the essay with both language and punctuation, and how to sequence events in an engaging way. The student writing samples are compelling and are a testimony to the idea that students can and will write and live the writing process when they have voice and choice.

O'Connor reminds us that "We teachers need to make a similar imaginative leap, listening to our students' stories and inviting them into the larger community of storytellers" (p. 14). For teachers who are looking to breathe life into their writing curriculum and to find an alternative to the traditional formulaic writing that plagues classrooms, O'Connor's book is a must have. (VAO)
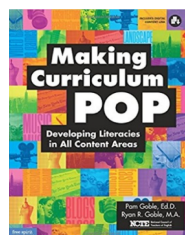
Making Curriculum Pop: Developing Literacies in All Content Areas
by Pam Goble & Ryan R. Goble, 2016, 213 pp., ISBN 1-631-980-610

Adolescent literacy continues to be a hot topic in education circles with many teachers working to figure out how to help all adolescents be more engaged and proficient learners. More than ever, it is expected that 21st century adolescents will read, write, discuss, interpret, and interact with multiple texts across multiple platforms and disciplines. They will need to navigate a world where technology will dominate their personal and work lives and where they will have to continually develop skills across multiple literacies. They will also have to be skilled at collaborating with diverse groups to think critically and creatively, research, problem solve, imagine, and create in ways not get conceived. In short, they will face literacy demands unlike any other generation. It is, in part, for these reasons, Goble & Goble (2016) wrote their book *Making Curriculum Pop: Developing Literacies in All Content Areas.* They wanted to provide teachers with a collection of interdisciplinary tools that will promote student engagement across content areas.

The authors indicate that their thinking for the book had its foundation in the literature circles practices envisioned by Harvey Daniels. As a means to offer students a chance to look at a piece of text from multiple perspectives, and to promote both student engagement and collaborative conversations, Daniels constructed a series of role sheets for literature circles. Typically, roles might include such titles as: Discussion Director, Literary Luminary, Vocabulary Enricher, and Checker. Students learn to take responsibility for their reading inquiries and share their findings with the group. The authors transformed the role sheet idea into what they call Learning Experience Organizers (LEOs) which provide a structure for responding to any type of text. The authors offer a broad definition of the term "text" moving it out of the notion of print alone and into the real world of "things that can be read" (p. 3) which include art, baseball cards, music, webpages, video, photos, and buildings, just to name a few. Goble & Goble believe "The more texts students can critically and creatively examine and create, the more well-equipped they will be to mindfully navigate our complex and textually rich world" (p. 4). The LEOs then are tools designed for "helping educators creatively integrate broad literacies into dynamic and engaging teaching practices" (p. 7).

Chapter 4, "Resources to Make Your Curriculum Pop," will be a favorite of teachers. It provides a wide range of resources readily accessible and includes such categories as: television series, advertising, audio, comics, cultural artifacts, games, moving images: fiction, moving images: nonfiction just to name a few. And for each category, the authors list a multitude of resources from books, websites, and films as examples. The resources in this chapter are unlike any other. Teachers will have a world open up at their fingertips with these suggestions. In addition to the exhaustive list of resources, the authors offer teaching tips for which LEOs would be good to use with each text and how to use the LEOs. Their directions and suggestions are easy to follow and teachers can readily take these suggestions into their classrooms.

Chapter 5 will also be a teacher favorite since it offers 55 LEOs that are reproducible. They look like a combination role sheet, graphic organizer, and webpage. Some of the LEOs include: archaeologist, archivist, cartographer, fact checker, ecologist, sociologist, numerist, and x-cavator. At the beginning of the chapter, the authors offer a collection of examples of completed LEOs as demonstrations. Many of the LEOs offer teaching, resource, and tech tips and easy to follow instructions for the students to

engage them with any text in more critically and creative ways than any worksheet or list of questions could. Students can work collaboratively or independently using the LEOs offering teachers flexibility in their planning. The authors also include an explanation of how the LEOs are aligned with the standards.

This book offers teachers a way to broaden their classroom practice with innovative yet practical resources and it promotes a classroom culture of student engagement and collaboration. (VAO)

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# Young Adult Book Reviews

Northwest Middle School Students

The Iron Trial

By Holly Black & Cassandra Clare, Scholastic Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0545522250. Review by Kaitlin Shumway.

A book called *The Iron Trial* by Holly Black and Cassandra Clare is a mysterious novel about a boy named Call who is trying to determine if he should try to escape the magical school or try to learn more about his magical abilities. His dad always told him his mother's death was all the school's fault and that magic is evil. Still, Call is curious as to exactly how his mother died and how strong his magical abilities are. Read this fantastic novel to find the truth within the school of magic.
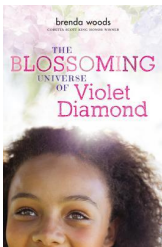
The Blossoming Universe of Violet Diamond

By Brenda Woods, Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014. ISBN 978-0399257148. Review by Jessica Wingo.

This is a book review about *The Blossoming Universe of Violet Diamond*. The author is Brenda Woods. The book is about a little girl named Violet Diamond. She is biracial with a African-American father and a White mother. Her father died before she was born. She is wondering where she belongs because she grew up and lives in a mostly White neighborhood and school. She also has a White sister named Daisy. Violet discovers she has a grandmother on her dad's side of the family that she has never met. She is excited to meet her and find out what the universe has waiting for her to discover. This book is about real life issue in the world. That is why I recommend this book.

The Lost Hero

By Rick Riordan, Disney-Hyperion, 2010. ISBN 978-1423113393. Review by Caiden O'Shields.

The Lost Hero tells the stories of Jason, Piper, and Leo. They go to rescue Juno (Hera) in the wolf house. Piper tells the others that her dad is being captive on Mount Diabalo. Before that they rescue Gleeson Hedge and capture the storm spirits. The storm spirits got out eons ago. Aelolus (the god of winds) captured them until more came after Typhoon was defeated. Jason, Piper, and Leo defeat a giant. Then at the Wolf House, they beat the king of giants and free Hera. Jason learns more about himself and he is from a Roman god instead of Greek. Then Jason realizes where Percy is… at Camp Jupiter. If you want to know more, read the The Lost Hero and The Son Of Neptune.