

Montana State Reading Council



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MSRC President's Message

Greetings MSRC Members:

Here's hoping that you are enjoying a summer break. Please know that your board members have been active over the winter and spring, planning for the 2012 conference in Great Falls on October 18-19 at the Heritage Inn. *Literacy for a Lifetime* is the theme chosen by Karen Hickey, conference chair, and it promises to be a wonderful experience for all. See www.montanareads.org for future information.

Perhaps some of you were lucky enough to attend the IRA conference in Chicago in late April. Your officers Connie Metcalfe, treasurer; Karen Hickey, conference chair; and Carole Monlux, membership chair, attended as well. They have brought back great ideas for Montana, as well as the **Award of Excellence** achievement for 2011-2012 for Montana. Our state councils are exceptional. The International Reading Association acknowledged this at the conference with this coveted award. Congratulations

to all of you who dedicate time and passion to literacy for all Montanans and contributed to this award for our state.

For a brief recap, in October 2011 in Billings the annual conference featured authors James Dashner and Anne Isaac, as well as Linda Rief and Terrell Young. Special thanks to all of the presenters from local, state and national backgrounds who contributed to a diverse educational experience. Many thanks to Annette Young and her conference committee, all of whom worked tirelessly to offer two days of professional development. To have a conference of this caliber that serves broad regions of Montana is indeed an event for which we should all be grateful. The entire process is the work of volunteers, people with jobs and families and other commitments, who give of their time to bring you exceptional professional development available. Neither union funds nor taxpayer monies are used in bringing this all together; only your dues as MSRC members and conferences fees fund this conference and the benefits and opportunities you receive as members.

This is no small thing.

As one of my goals as president, I initiated a "cyberspace" meeting for our winter board meeting, using SKYPE to bring us together, avoiding icy roads. This method of meeting worked in part, with a majority of members able to connect and discuss; however, as with any technology, perfection was not yet achieved. We will continue to hone our skills and provide this method of meeting to make it easier for all to participate without cost or inconvenience. Our next meeting will be in Great Falls and those who cannot attend will use SKYPE again. In addition, an MSRC calendar will be available through Google format and will be a link on our website. Look for future 21st century additions to our state council.

Some of you have applied for the scholarships and grants for the upcoming year. Please know that these often go wanting with little competition. With budgets waning, why are so few of you making application for funds to further your professional development, classroom activities and other needed areas? Please check out the opportunities listed on the website.

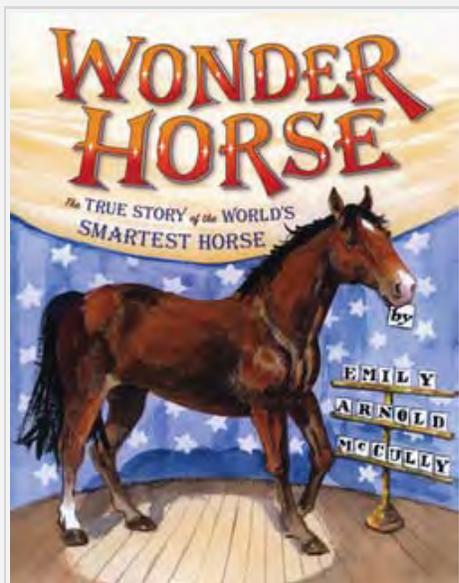
Please do not hesitate to contact me or other members of your board to express your needs, concerns, wishes, and expectations for future conferences and opportunities. Planning for 2013 begins now. We welcome your personal input and will strive to continue the programs of excellence that are the hallmark of Montana State Reading Council.

Sincerely,

Leslie Ferrell,
Ed.D.
MSRC President 2011-12

Wonder Horse: the True Story of the World's Smartest Horse Wins Treasure State Award

Carole Monlux



Since 1991 Montana students in kindergarten through grade three have had the opportunity to participate in voting for the Treasure State Award which is the Montana Picture Book Award. Each year there are 5 titles nominated for the award and students either have the books read to them or read them independently and then vote for their favorite title. Students that participate in the award assume ownership of the titles and eagerly cheer for their favorite until the winner is announced in early April each year.

Anyone can nominate books for the award which is sponsored by the Montana State Reading Council.

Nominations are due to the chair of the committee

no later than February 1st. Titles that are nominated must have been published within the past 3 years.

In 2012 Montana students selected the book, *WONDER HORSE: THE TRUE STORY OF THE WORLD'S SMARTEST HORSE* by Emily McCully as their favorite among the 5 nominees. Over 14,000 votes were cast in determining this winner. This book is a fictionalized account of how "Doc" Key a former slave who became a veterinarian, trained his horse, Jim Key, to do such amazing things as recognize letters and numbers. Other titles that were nominated for the 2012 award and their placements in the final voting were:

2nd Place-*QUEEN OF THE FALLS* by Chris Van Allsburg

3rd Place-*OSCAR AND THE VERY HUNGRY DRAGON* by Ute Krause

4th Place –*JOHA MAKES A WISH: A MIDDLE EASTERN TALE* by Eric Kimmel

5th Place-*ALFRED ZECTOR BOOK COLLECTOR* by Kelly DiPucchio

The titles that have been nominated for 2013 are:

THE DAY DIRK YELLER CAME TO TOWN by Mary Casanova, a story set in the west. The Outlaw Dirk Yeller arrives in town looking for a solution to his cat-scratch fever.

Young Sam is the one in town who discovers just what is needed to calm Dirk down and it just happens to be the library and books.

Chris Van Dusen's book, *KING HUGO'S HUGE EGO*, a book in rhyme, is the story of a king tiny in stature with a very large ego. Hugo mistreats the village sorceress who casts a spell on him making one wonder if any one will ever live happily ever after in the kingdom.

MONKEY: A TRICKSTER TALE FROM INDIA by Gerald McDermott is the story of how Monkey outsmarts Crocodile in order to be able to eat mangoes to his heart's content.

The fourth nominated title for 2013 is *THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK* by Lester L. Laminack. All is quiet on the Tuckers' farm until a peacock shows up and causes quite a stir among the hens of the farm. Sick of all the attention the peacock is getting the hens and peacock switch jobs.

The final title that has been nominated for the 2013 list is the biography, *THE WATCHER: JANE GOODALL'S LIFE WITH CHIMPS*, which is written by Jeanette Winter. The story chronicles Jane's life from her early childhood to the current day.

If your school is not currently participating in the award please consider involving your students. Authors love having their books win awards like this, for it validates for them that their book is enjoyed by the audience for which it was intended. If you have questions about the award please direct them to carolemonlux@gmail.com.

Literacy for a Lifetime

2012 Literacy Speakers Announced

October 18 & 19 Great Falls

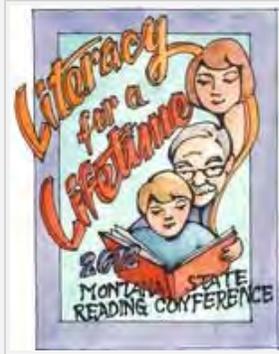
MSRC is pleased to present another quality professional development opportunity for Montana educators.

Join us at the Great Falls Heritage Inn for two days of keynote speakers, seminars, sessions and vendors,

Janet Stevens & Susan Stevens Crummel

Our 2012 Keynote Speakers are the authors and illustrators of many children's books, including *Jackalope*, *Plaidypus Lost* and *Cook-A-Doodle-Do*.

Janet and her sister Susan moved around a lot as kids because their father



all focused on supporting educators and literacy development in Montana. OPI Renewal and college credits are available. Most districts in Montana

also accept MSL Conference for PIR credits.

Cheryl Lemke

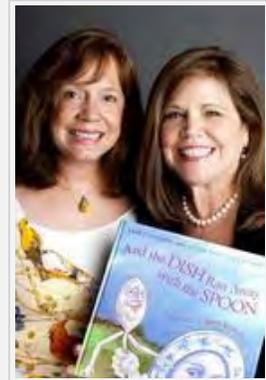


Cheryl Lemke serves as the Practice Leader for Metiri Group Policy Consulting. Prior to launching the firm, she was the executive director of the Milken Exchange on Education Technology for the

Milken Family Foundation.

Ms. Lemke specializes in public policy for K-12 learning technology, working at many levels with governors, legislators, superintendents, business leaders, and teachers. Most recently, she authored the definitive work on 21st Century Skills that was published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

was in the Navy. Janet has been drawing for as long as she can remember, and Susan was a math teacher for 31 years before she became a children's book author.



Maureen McLaughlin

Maureen McLaughlin is the President-Elect of the International Reading Association and is a professor of reading education at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. Prior to her university career, she spent fifteen years as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, and department chair in a public school system.



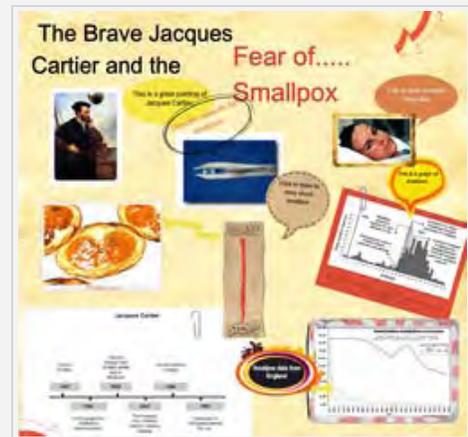
She has authored numerous publications including *Guided Comprehension in the Primary Grades* (2003). Ms. McLaughlin's presentations focus on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and content area literacies.

Tech Approach

Jessica Louk, 5th Grade, Great Falls

Web 2.0 Gems

Technology is a huge component of our classroom culture, from the use of our SmartBoard, to our document camera, to hand-held clickers. As a district, we are extremely fortunate to have such a plethora of technology to utilize as a means of enhancing instruction. As a result of several years of teaching elementary school, I would like to share a few *web 2.0 tools I have tested, and find to both be educational and FUN!



Student Created Glogster Poster

My most revered 2.0 tool is glogster (www.edu.glogster.com). If you enjoy seeing your students be creative, while they are still learning - this is your tool. In a nutshell, glogster is an online-poster generator website, which allows students to upload their own images, audio, and hyperlinks. I have used this site with all age groups, from second to sixth grade, and found students' engagement levels to skyrocket. Here is an example of a glog created by a previous student, Jordyn Bennett. Jordyn included photos she found on the internet, an audio recording of her speech about Jacques Cartier, and a timeline she created on another website.

Pixton and Wikispaces



Student Created Pixton Comic Strip

Another popular tool I recently stumbled upon is pixton (www.pixton.com). This is a fabulous site geared at allowing students to create online comic strips. The cool part is students may upload their own characters or use pre-generated characters. My class recently completed a project based on key events of the American Revolution. Each student made a 4-panel comic, incorporating speech bubbles, the setting, main character labels, etc. I was thrilled to see the inclusion of language arts and history! Here is an example of a comic created by one of my students:

Lastly, I am a fan of wikispaces -- an ad-free, website-creator site. Wikispaces allows you to upload useful links for your students, communicate information with parents, and upload important documents, etc. Parents and students enjoy having the ability to practice math facts from our website and view the homework calendar. These are only a few features of wikispaces, but there are many more!

As one can see, the internet is full of amazing educational tools, making teaching more fun for students and teachers! Try a few of these sites today and watch your students' faces light up!

*Web 2.0 generally refers to a second generation of services available on the World Wide Web that lets people collaborate and share information online."

Northwest Council Looks Toward Professional Development

Betsy Kohnstamm

Outgoing Council Chair for NWRMC

Greetings from the northwest corner of Montana and the Northwest Montana Reading Council (NWMRC)! We just had our last regular meeting of the school year on Wednesday with a good turnout of interested folks, a heartening new group of people volunteering to be council leaders, and some plans tightened up for our annual big event in August. Our council continues its long standing tradition now of planning one large literacy event for this area of Montana each August. It has gradually become the primary professional development offering for K-12 literacy and we have about 250 educators attending for a full day each August.

This year we have invited Cheryl Lemke as our keynote speaker. She is an expert in educational technology and currently is Director of the Milken Exchange on Educational Technology and Vice President of Educational Technology for the Milken Family Foundation. In addition to her speech and break out sessions we will have about 25 other break out sessions provided by local teachers, our educational co-op leader Eliza Sorte, and our friends Barb and Ron Sherry will be on hand to tell us about their latest summer "reads". We invite you all to join us on August 15th this year. You can register on PIR.net under Literacy Conference.

We hope to send a car full of our new leaders to the gathering in Lewiston this June. Best wishes for finishing the year strong with some great books!

Stories Aren't Enough:

Informational Texts in the Primary Grades

Ann de Onis and Nicole Singer

Learning to read is, arguably, one of the most important tasks an individual will do. Unlike many other skills learned later in life, this complex, multi-layered, and multi-

faceted process is often begun with children as young as four- or five-years old. Expertise in manipulating the rudiments of language—sounds and symbols—along with other skills—word attack, vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and comprehension—add to this foundation. Most primary-grade teachers favor the use of narrative text in teaching these building blocks. Nevertheless, other types of reading material, namely informational texts, should not only be introduced, but used side-by-side their more familiar counterpart.

Reading is reading is reading, right? Not really. Students need to learn how to read and make meaning from two forms of text: narrative and expository. Each requires a different approach. Lower-primary teachers often introduce the basics of learning to read with stories. Sometimes a steady diet of such reading material permeates the classroom, but then when students are presented with nonfiction and use the same standard approaches to reading, comprehension breaks down. Therefore, it is incumbent upon teachers at the primary level to acquaint students with both types of text selections.

A Case for Informational Text

According to the Montana Common Core English Language Arts (ELA) Standards (OPI, 2011), informational texts for K-5 includes,

Literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts includes biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and informational displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics (p. 33).

Since the Common Core State Standards aim to prepare students for college and career readiness, they “must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts” (OPI, 2011, p. 12). By fourth-grade students are expected to read nonfiction at least half of the time (Zombro, 2012). Thus, knowing the particulars of informational texts will allow educators to use texts more strategically. Understanding that all reading is not alike—that approaches to reading should be adjusted in response to the type of material—fiction or nonfiction—is what skilled readers do.

Evaluating Informational Text

As teachers prepare students to read longer pieces with more dense concepts, they themselves must know how to evaluate and select material suitable for their readers. Indeed, gauging text complexity is critical so students are matched with reading material that has the appropriate linguistic complexity. According to Standard 10: Range, Quality, and Complexity of Student Reading K-5 from the Montana Common Core Standards (OPI, 2011), text complexity can be measured

using the “Measuring Text Complexity: Three Factors” framework. The three factors are *qualitative*, *quantitative*, and *reader and task* (p. 33). *Qualitative* evaluation includes “levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands” (OPI, 2011, p. 33). Students’ reading abilities, or Lexile levels, are compared with the Lexile levels of texts to determine appropriateness in readability for students (Zombro, 2012). Obviously, texts ought to be within the range of students’ reading abilities. *Quantitative* evaluation includes “readability measures and other scores of text complexity” (OPI, 2011, p. 33). This factor evaluates texts’ content (Zombro, 2012) for how accurate, relevant, and well written they are. Lastly, *reader and task* text evaluation includes “reader variables and task variables” (OPI, 2011, p. 33). Reader variable refers to motivation and subject knowledge while task variables include pre, during, and post reading response activities and extensions (OPI, 2011). All three factors play equal roles in measuring text complexity. By using the “Measuring Text Complexity: Three Factors” framework, educators can select informational texts that are high-quality and of increasing difficulty.

In addition to the “Measuring Text Complexity: Three Factors” framework, teachers can also use the Five A's for evaluating nonfiction trade books. This evaluation system offers several indicators which provide teachers with a way to evaluate just how easy or difficult a book might be (Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2011). Five criteria form this metric: *authority*, the author identifies experts in the field and cites sources; *accuracy*, the content is accurate and maps, graphs, and tables are presented clearly; *appropriateness*, the content is appropriate for readers and information is organized; *literary artistry*, the literary devices are effective in making information more interesting, appealing, and assessable; and *attractiveness*, the book looks visually appealing and the layout is organized (p. 368). If teachers use the Five A's in evaluating trade books, their judgment will be comprehensive, not haphazard.

Text Features

Once a teacher has determined that the text is suitable for use in the classroom, the next step is to evaluate its structure. Writers are not in the habit of randomly presenting material, and this is especially the case in nonfiction. Consequently, an effective teacher explicitly teaches textual features so that readers do not naively assume that all reading is alike. “Text structure is a critical variable in learning and memory” because authors use external and internal print scaffolding (Vacca et al., 2011, p. 319). External structures are the heading, subheadings, titles, paragraphs, and maps, charts, diagrams, and photographs (Vacca, et al., 2011; Kendall, 2003). Pointing out boldface print and formatting features may seem obvious, but all learners benefit when the teacher explains how knowing about these layout realities help readers organize and key in on main ideas.

On the other hand, internal structures serve to inform readers by using different techniques, such as explaining “by definition, sequence, categorization, comparison-contrast, enumeration, process, problem-solution, description, or cause-effect” (Burke, 2000, p. 142). The notion of text structure is unique to informational texts, and this is why for many students, it poses additional hurdles; it is in stark contrast to narrative structure which tells a story. Dissimilar from narrative frames—with characters, settings and plot sequence—with which students are familiar, they must be taught how to read and how to construct meaning from nonfiction and its more complex presentation. What might this vital instruction look like?

Teaching Informational Text

Text structure can be taught using explicit instruction and graphic organizers that match texts' internal structure. In order for students to be good readers, text structure must be taught; it is not a skill that can be inferred. Assuming that students will “figure it out” because they already know how to decode words simply won't work. In fact, decoding words typically encountered in narrative material is vastly different from the demands placed on the reader to recognize complex terms and words used in particular or unusual contexts. When short bursts of frequent instruction occur with teachers and students together examining particular passages that exemplify different text structures, it is then that students begin to experience how nonfiction “feels.” Students learn that signal words such as *but*, *in contrast*, *however*, *even though*, *since*, and *as a result* are ways that writers clue them into understanding the meaning. As teachers incorporate informational texts as part of strategy lessons, students have the chance to apply what has been taught.

A powerful way that teachers can introduce nonfiction into the classroom is through read-alouds. This simple, yet effective practice can showcase nonfiction as a special genre to be appreciated and studied. Reading informational texts aloud serves many purposes: to build background knowledge, to teach content, and to learn about ways authors organize and present ideas. Relatedly, teachers can monitor students' comprehension by asking what the author is doing—Is she presenting a list of facts, comparing two ideas, or identifying a problem and offering a solution? Of course, an additional benefit of reading aloud is that it provides students with a model for how to appropriately interact, read, and construct meaning from the material presented.

Having students engage in independent reading gives them the much-needed chance to practice the skills that have been presented and modeled during instruction. When teachers have an array of books—with ample nonfiction selections—student interest may be piqued. After all, text availability and convenience can influence reader choice. If students' selection is limited to fiction, that is what they will read. Conversely, if students see books on varied topics with compelling illustrations, their curiosity may arouse them to explore further. Lucy Calkins, co-author of *Constructing Curriculum- Alternate Unit of Study* (2010) suggests having a variety of

texts on a subject that is being studied in science or social studies can result in students reading multiple texts at their just-right-reading levels (p. 319). That is the goal, after all—to have students become avid readers, knowing that reading is the gateway to knowledge.

Biancarosa and Snow (2006) advocate the use of authentic learning practices to embed instructional principles into content lessons rather than present them in isolation:

Students should receive instruction and then practice their new skills using these materials. Too often reading and writing instruction focuses solely on literature and does not promote the transfer of the skills into the context of content-area materials. Furthermore, learning from reading content-area texts requires skills that are different than the skills needed to comprehend literature (p. 14).

While these observations address adolescent literacy learning, these same principles can be applied to primary students' literacy development. Teaching students content area vocabulary and study skills, such as note taking and using graphic organizers to capture key ideas from the reading, improves learning. Throughout the lesson cycle, abundant opportunities to practice these skills will, hopefully, result in proficiency. For example, before-reading activities serve to activate schema, pre-teach vocabulary, examine text structure, and set a purpose for reading. During-reading activities helps teachers and students monitor learning, make predictions, practice reading and using content vocabulary in context, and deepen content knowledge by engaging in discussions, completing graphic organizers, and asking questions. Finally, after- reading activities allow students to respond to the text, share what they learned, summarize main ideas, and transfer their knowledge to other subjects and areas across the curriculum. "What a teacher does before reading, during reading, and after reading (B-D-A) is crucial to activate purposeful reading. The B-D-A instructional framework can help teachers incorporate instructional strategies and activities into lessons involving content literacy and learning (Vacca et al., 2011, p. 131). Some age appropriate B-D-A activities include SQ3R, dramatic monologue, timelines, brainstorming/webbing, story boards, KWL charts, reciprocal teaching, and making up one's own test (Burke, 2000, p. A-64). All of these B-D-A activities serve to improve students' understanding of how to read informational texts and to make meaning from them. By using these activities, teachers can help students become more skilled with informational reading material.

Final Thoughts

With the impetus of the Common Core State Standards, reading instruction in the primary grades now includes more than just learning the alphabetic principle and applying it to decodable text. Teaching students how to read *informational* text is also a top priority. As mandated by the Montana Common Core State Standards

(OPI, 2011) students need to read high-quality and challenging information texts; additionally, they need to make sense of what is read. Teaching students how to read such material requires a different skill set as compared to reading narratives, and these skills must be directly and explicitly taught. In particular, text structure is crucial to helping students become proficient readers of informational texts. Specifically, using teacher read-alouds, independent reading, embedding instructional principles through the use of instructional texts, and age-appropriate B-D-A reading activities are part of a teacher's toolkit. Teaching students to read *all* types of material is an exciting challenge, especially with the wealth of materials available to teachers today. And it *will* have an impact on student achievement. Now that's exciting.

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About the authors:

Ann de Onis is a professor of English language arts at Montana State University. Nicole Singer, a former primary-grade teacher, is a graduate student at Montana State University. Their collaboration is a result of mutual interest in reading in the content area.

Teachers as Professionals:

Expectations and Student Accountability

Ann de Onis and Terri Daniels

The broad sweeping momentum known as Common Core State Standards will impact every teacher in K-12 schools. Now adopted by 46 states (Texas, Alaska, Nebraska, and Virginia have yet to sign on) and the District of Columbia, these standards differ from former standards in the explicit goal of ensuring student readiness for life beyond high school. The goal to create highly literate global citizens is front and center of this movement. A *basic* education is defined as readiness for college and careers, supported by a growing body of research that reaffirms the importance of postsecondary education.

Technology is dramatically altering the workplace; routine skills are being replaced with problem-solving and communication skills (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl; 2010).

Even jobs traditionally considered “blue collar” such as farming, construction, and transportation are beginning to require heightened levels of language use. Just as the literacy demands on workers in the manual labor force are increasing, so too it is with professional jobs, including management and office work. More precise levels of literacy will be standard. Employees will be expected to master key cognitive functions such as problem formulation, research and interpretation, organization of data, and accuracy in presenting findings.

Furthermore, the Common Core heralds major changes that reflect an increased emphasis on comprehension of informational texts, ability to cite textual evidence, and competence with figurative and technical material. While studies (Rothman, 2012) show that students who have been schooled during the No Child Left Behind years show deficits in thinking independently, this new generation will be college and career ready, able to integrate diverse media and formats, resulting in users who can delineate arguments and claims and evaluate evidence. Well, that’s the hope, anyway.

In “A Common Core of Readiness,” author Robert Rothman (2012) suggests that the present shortfall in postsecondary success is the inadequate preparation of students in high school. He asserts that lowered ACT scores (ACT 2011) and higher remediation rates in colleges and universities suggest that reform is in order. Across the nation, close to 40 percent of entering college students are required to take at least one remedial course before they can proceed to for-credit courses (Rothman, 2012). Notwithstanding these and other alarming findings, it is valuable to examine what is happening in today’s classrooms. What does accountability look like?

Accountability in the Classroom

While “accountability” has perennially been associated with schools and student learning, there’s a different sense with this Common Core paradigm. There is an expectation that teachers *and* students will be mutually responsible for meeting the standards of the Common Core, including content area literacy.

But what does this mean? Does it imply that teachers have not been holding students accountable for their learning? Does it mean that teachers and students are now tethered in the race to meet learning objectives? Or does it mean that No Child Left Behind and other such mandates have failed? Pundits can debate, but really does it matter? It matters that students are college and career ready. It matters that students can navigate texts and analyze precise and complex details. It matters that students can read across texts, comparing and using textual evidence to support claims. It is not over-statement to claim that the role of the reading professional has never been as important or as central to learning as in these present times.

Arguably, the understanding of “teacher as professional” will be at the forefront of meeting the CCSS. After all, teachers know their subject matter, they know their students, and they know how to bridge student learning for success. Further, teachers who have high standards and expect that all students will learn anticipate gains in academic performance.

Professional development is certain to take center stage as educators transition from a business-as-usual mode to a new focus on evidence-based design. While students have always been at the heart of teaching, change is on the menu in every school, challenging teachers to incorporate crucial content area literacy strategies into their instruction at all levels. How will practitioners respond to this obligation?

One secondary teacher comments, “I can’t dictate to my colleagues how they should teach or approach their own continuing education and development as educators. I only know that when I stop wanting to improve in my craft, I need to find something else to do. To me, an essential part of being a professional is the continued drive to better meet the needs of students. Ultimately, the motivation must come from within, but teachers also need ongoing coaching and constructive feedback in order to provide more effective instruction to meet students’ needs—then it’s up to the teachers to use the tools to improve their performance.”

Obviously, this teacher understands what it means to be professional. For example, no matter how many times a teacher has taught Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there is always another, maybe better, approach waiting to be explored. And it is this type of teacher who tirelessly seeks to uncover yet another way to help students discover how setting contributes to the story line, how the development of characters

reflects prototypes, and how the universal themes resonate with what it means to be human.

Classroom Realities

Yet noble intentions and grand ideas must intersect with reality. Below are three different classroom scenarios which illustrate the challenges teachers face today. While the settings are different— middle school language arts and a college methods class—at the heart of all three is the fundamental issue of performance.

Teaching scenario #1: an eighth-grade teacher writes--

In my classroom students are fond of calling certain classmates “overachievers.” One day, this happened rather publicly in the middle of class, and I felt that the subject merited discussion. It also turned out to be a good opportunity to cover the term “connotation,” a vocabulary word we were targeting. When one student calls another an overachiever, it’s not a compliment. The label carries a negative connotation, roughly equated with “brown-noser,” someone who is trying to impress the teacher or to get a better grade by going unnecessarily above and beyond the expectations. Somehow, in our culture, students who turn things in on time and take pride in their work are stereotyped as studious, teacher-pleasing nerds. In my classroom, I pointed out that meeting the requirements of an assignment does not constitute *overachievement*. It is *achievement*. We talked about the difference between achievement, overachievement, and underachievement. Some underachievers wear this label proudly and enjoy publicly advertising their choice not to meet the requirements of the assignment, earning laughter and praise from some of their classmates. Culturally, the label “underachiever” has a positive connotation, one associated with humor and coolness.

Teaching scenario #2: a seventh-grade teacher writes--

As an English and social studies teacher, I know how critical word learning is, so in my classes, as we read, students keep notecards of new vocabulary encountered. Students know that each week their stack will grow and at semester’s end, it’s the big test, which they call “the big kahuna.” One day I overheard two of my students talking. One indicated that he had failed to do his vocabulary preparation, and his friend Josh asked him in disbelief, “How can you go into Mr. Gilles’ class unprepared? It is so disrespectful. He will be disappointed, for you know how he expects us all to do our best.” I then decided to join this conversation—yes—to their surprise. The boy admitted not completing his homework and was looking a bit uncomfortable. I gave him a “free homework” pass that I sometimes dole out. But I looked him in the eye and told him that he had only shortchanged himself. He nodded and indicated he’d do better.

Teaching scenario #3: a methods instructor of elementary education majors at a university writes--

Today in one of my classes I reminded students to do work that was their best--not something that looked "hurried." My reminder was in reaction to several students' submission of sloppy work. There is no other way to describe it. Was it accurate? Yes. Was it less-than-professional looking? Yes.

One student raised his hand and defended his less-than-polished work by saying it was *my* job to remind students to present work that was in professional form. I was dumbfounded. Since when does a teacher need to tell students this, especially when the audience is ready to embark on their student teaching in the fall semester? When did "whatever is worth doing is worth doing well" go out of fashion? Indeed, isn't the mark of a "professional" one who does precise, accurate, and neat work?

Discussion

Classroom teachers face many challenges; one is the negative influence of peers. Sadly, in many classes, it isn't "cool" to be good at school, making it often socially acceptable to be a slacker, such as those often modeled by characters in popular television sit-coms. This may lend some insight into the habits and low self-expectations of students who are more comfortable taking shortcuts and doing "less" rather than "more." When students care about their learning, they are often mocked and ridiculed. This attitude is pervasive in middle and high schools, and extends to the university classroom, where an air of casualness is ubiquitous. Often, college students view attending class as their ticket to an "A." When this attitude is found among students in teacher preparation programs, as in the above example, it is especially troubling. Expecting intellectual rigor often results with students who complain that "it's so unfair" and "the work is so hard." Yes, it's unpopular to have high expectations, but teaching isn't a popularity contest.

Additionally, it's hard, thankless work for teachers to maintain high expectations in a culture that seems to value humorous slackers over sincere achievers. Yet if they give in and lower expectations, teachers become part of the problem. What is the solution? One approach a secondary teacher might take is to have frequent discussions about quality in an attempt to make expectations as clear as possible. Also, when teachers hand back sub-standard work and ask students to re-do or revise it, they send a powerful message. It makes sense that middle schoolers need their teacher to remind them of expectations, again and again. As 13- and 14-year-olds, many are at a developmental stage in which they feel driven to defy the expectations of adults. High school students also require frequent modeling and reminders to meet expectations for quality as they approach graduation. Secondary school teachers can help their students by pointing out the connection between turning in high-quality work and attaining their post-secondary goals.

College students, having survived adolescence and puberty, have made a choice and a commitment to further their education, skill level, and performance in a field of study leading to a profession. Shouldn't it be a given for them to be hungry for the constructive criticism and coaching that will help them be successful in their chosen field? College professors have the responsibility to provide honest and helpful feedback, to give hand-hold--in the form of written comments and in one-on-one conference--that help learners climb to the next level. Post-secondary learners may need to be reminded to value thinking, careful work, and enterprise. Nonetheless, it is difficult to inspire a "learner" who portrays him/herself--through behaviors, comments, and performance--as someone just going through the motions and seeking only that piece of paper that represents a degree. This type of student--who puts more energy into defending lame work than into the work itself--is hard enough to deal with in middle school, but in a teacher education program, it is almost unbelievable.

Final Thoughts

The Common Core State Standards are a clarion call to all educators that business as usual no longer works. With the United States limping along in international academic comparisons, it is time for a change. Raising the rigor of what American students can do and what they are expected to know is exciting and, truthfully, a bit overwhelming. But as with everything, small steps result in forward gains. Leaving no child behind requires "passion, brains, knowledge and technique" (Finn, 1999).

If students and teachers at all levels embrace the attitude of earnest and honest work toward common goals, much can be realized. Just as a friendship or marriage would wither with merely half-hearted efforts, so too, will learning be diminished with flimsy excuses, lukewarm efforts, and come-what-may attitudes. The Common Core State Standards provide a powerful opportunity for educators and students to make strides toward excellence.

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School-Based Coaching:

Effective Ways to Prepare and Support Literacy Coaches

Dr. Chhanda Islam

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the leadership roles of literacy coaches and to describe how a graduate reading methods course supports graduate literacy candidates who work as literacy coaches and reading specialists. The IRA 2010 standards now require that graduate candidates preparing to be reading specialists must actually demonstrate their skills to mentor and guide classroom teachers through professional experiences in literacy coaching. The results of the study support the idea that through a professional leadership project offered by a reading methods course, literacy coaches can help to improve the quality of teacher instruction.

School-Based Coaching: Effective Ways to Prepare and Support Literacy Coaches

Struggling readers and writers especially need highly competent classroom teachers who can guide them in developing higher levels of comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary knowledge (Brozo and Simpson, 2003). If they are to develop higher levels of reflective thinking, they need additional assistance from teachers who have special training in reading. A well-educated reading specialist is needed in every schools: to “guide, assist, and support” classroom teachers, provide a specialized knowledge of assessments of students’ reading strengths and needs, and provide leadership for the school’s reading program as a “resource to other educators, parents, and the community” (International Reading Association, 2000).

The role of the literacy coach appears in the current standards for reading professionals (International Reading Association, 2004a) where one category lists the following responsibilities for the reading specialists' role: (a) be a resource person, (b) collaborate with other professionals and colleagues, (c) provide professional development, and (d) advocate for students' needs and interests. For example, a literacy coach might collaborate with a team of teachers on assessment scores and assist the teachers in developing evidence-based literacy strategies to address students' needs. These standards are also results of much research and used as benchmarks that help university faculty understand the teachers' leadership role (Bean, Knaub, and Swan, 2000) especially as it relates to the improvement of the quality of literacy instruction (Allington and Baker, 1999).

The Research

The teacher preparation programs and universities' literacy programs should play a pivotal role in preparing teachers at the graduate level to serve as literacy coaches and leaders of schools' reading programs (Quatroche, and Wepner, 2008).

Today's reading specialists are expected to serve as leaders in working with classroom teachers to ensure that all children receive quality reading instruction. Hall (2004) contended that although the leadership role varies from venue to venue, the literacy coaches should provide professional development and support to teachers to improve the instructional capacity of teachers so that children are reading on grade level (Blachowicz, Obrochta, and Fogelberg, 2005) by the end of third grade. In other words,

reading specialists who are preparing to be literacy coaches must serve as leaders and resource for schools' reading program and demonstrate their ability to assist and support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals through professional experiences.

Although the role of reading specialists as leaders is not new, we are unaware of any research that identifies what traditional teacher preparation programs are doing to meet the needs of preparing literacy coaches and reading specialists (Quatroche, and Wepner, 2008). Bean et al., (2005) found that many reading specialists are not well prepared to serve as literacy coaches and to handle these leadership responsibilities. More needs to be done to prepare reading specialists so that they can understand specific leadership responsibilities that involve serving as a resource to teachers and parents, teaching classroom demonstrations, and providing ideas about instructional strategies and ongoing staff development (Dole, 2004; Picard, 2005).

The International Reading Association (2000) stated that literacy coach's responsibilities should include support for the classroom teachers, assessments based on student strengths and needs, and professional development for teachers on effective reading practice. Bean et al. (2003) expanded this leadership role to include

“planning with teachers, selecting reading materials, working with allied professionals, coordinating the reading program, developing curriculum, co-teaching, and participating in school-based study teams” (p. 447).

Today university faculty, reading teachers, literacy coaches, and principals tend to have different perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach (Tatum, 2004). Some classroom teachers view themselves as literacy coaches in a special education program while others emphasize the literacy coach’s role as a member of the response to intervention team. Some principals emphasize literacy coach’s role as a resource person while others highlight the assessment role (Bean et al., 2003). Little research has documented what these literacy coaches actually do to fulfill their job requirements and perform adequately in the coaching role.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the leadership roles of literacy coaches and to describe how a graduate reading methods course supports graduate literacy candidates who are working as literacy coaches and reading specialists.

A Graduate Reading Methods Course

The capstone course in the program is REA 639, Supervised Practicum in Reading. Under the supervision of a leader in their school, teachers design, plan, and implement leadership projects. In these projects, teachers provide professional development workshops for their colleagues or work as a literacy coach with individuals or small groups of teachers. There is a growing need in our region for Reading Specialists and Literacy Coaches, and the Master of Arts in Education: Reading and Writing program prepares teachers with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and dispositions needed to serve these roles. The practicum course provides teachers with experiences that enable them to develop both in-depth understanding of literacy and the coaching skills that they need to be effective coaches.

The purpose of REA 639 is to allow teachers to explore a topic related to literacy development in depth, and to provide leadership in literacy in their schools and districts. The course is designed to further develop the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, coaching skills, and professional dispositions in the following domains: data based decision-making and evidence-based practice. The objectives are to help teachers pursue individual professional knowledge and behaviors through professional activities and leadership and to use literature and research about professional development and school culture to build effective professional development programs in their school or district. The aims are to encourage teachers to reflect on teaching and learning in their schools and districts, determine needs, and decide on a project to improve teaching and learning. The teachers are also permitted to reflect on the effectiveness of their project through the project evaluation.

Instructional Activities

The teachers learn about the role of Reading Specialist and Literacy Coach; local, state, and national policies affecting reading including the Common Core Standards; and about their own development as professionals and leaders in literacy. They also review the IRA Standards for Reading Professionals in order to design a leadership project which supports classroom teachers in designing and implementing instructional approaches and materials for all students that are based on the Common Core Standards and that are responsive to diversity. They write and submit a proposal, which includes the following, (a) a title of project or planned experience, (b) rationale for the project/experience, including the importance or relevance to students, faculty, district or the reading profession in general and how the project addresses the Common Core Standards, and the IRA Standards for Reading Professionals, (c) how the project deals with diverse learners, and (d) time line for the project {components of the project, length of time needed for various components, anticipated hours for each aspect of the project, targeted completion dates, etc.} (e) a statement from Supervisor, and (f) evaluation methods.

The teachers conduct a review of the appropriate literature and implement the project in their school or district. They evaluate the effectiveness of the project and summarize their findings in a project report. All projects involve supervised applications in a school or clinical setting.

Methods

A graduate reading methods course was offered by a mid-western university's Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Twenty-four teachers were enrolled in the practicum course and age of the teachers ranged from twenty five to forty years. All were white female classroom teachers. Of the total twenty-four, 75% had taught for three years or less and 25% had over five years of teaching experiences.

The teachers developed an understanding of local, state, and national policies that affect reading and writing instruction, including the Common Core Standards. They extended and refined learning from previous graduate level reading courses by designing a leadership project which sustained classroom teachers in designing and implementing instructional approaches and materials for all students that were based on the Common Core Standards and that were responsive to diversity.

Data of this study was collected during the spring 2011 academic terms. Data collected included leadership project report, end of program or exit reflections as well as group discussions that took place on Blackboard – a web-based environment for teaching and learning. The REA 639/Supervised Practicum in Reading course was

taught through an online learning environment to enhance the sense of professional learning community and to encourage teachers' participation in an asynchronous online discussions. Assignments were evaluated based on whether a student presented ideas that reflect integration of course material and critical thinking skills. Grades were assigned according to expectations for a particular assignment relative to the material covered in the class. Each piece of data was graded using a 100 point rubric. The rubric criteria used were (Figure 1):

The cooperating teachers were asked to respond to a field experience evaluation form to assess the impact of the class as well as progress and needs of the teachers. The cooperating teachers' comments and feedback data were used to assess the academic and professional expertise of the reading teachers. The cooperating teachers' input provided guidance and implications for ways to improve instructions.

Outstanding	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Candidate exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides impressive and detailed evidence of candidate's understanding of importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers.	Candidate establishes a good comprehension of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides some evidence of candidate's understanding of importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as to model, coach, and support classroom teachers.	Candidate lacks basic understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching demonstrates candidate's lack of understanding of importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as to model, coach, and support classroom teachers.
Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's in-depth understanding of the standard, and the importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's general understanding of the standard, and the importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's lack of understanding of the standard, and the importance of students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds in planning reading programs, and in selecting materials for reading instruction, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers.
Candidate exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides impressive and detailed evidence of candidate's ability to use various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners, and to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers in selecting and using a variety of books, including technology-based information and non-print materials that match a range of reading levels, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students.	Candidate exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides some evidence of candidate's ability to use various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners, and to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers in selecting and using a variety of books, including technology-based information and non-print materials that match a range of reading levels, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students.	Candidate lacks basic understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching demonstrates candidate's lack of ability to use various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners, and to model, coach, and support classroom teachers in selecting and using a variety of books, including technology-based information and non-print materials that match a range of reading levels, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students is not provided.
Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's in-depth understanding of the standard, and the importance of using various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners in reading programs, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in using students' interests and background experiences to select appropriate materials.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's general understanding of the standard, and the importance of using various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners in reading programs, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in using students' interests and background experiences to select appropriate materials.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's lack of understanding of the standard, and the importance of using various books and non-print materials appropriate for a diverse group of learners in reading programs, as well as the importance of being able to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in using students' interests and background experiences to select appropriate materials.
Candidate exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides impressive and detailed evidence of candidate's ability to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.	Candidate exhibits a general understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching provides some evidence of candidate's ability to model, coach, and support classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.	Candidate lacks basic understanding of the assignment. Evaluation of coaching demonstrates candidate's lack of ability to effectively model, coach, and support classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.
Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's in-depth understanding of the standard, and the importance of effectively modeling, coaching, and supporting classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's general understanding of the standard, and the importance of effectively modeling, coaching, and supporting classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.	Reflective narrative addressing how standard is met reveals candidate's lack of understanding of the standard, and the importance of effectively modeling, coaching, and supporting classroom teachers in various ways of modeling reading and writing as valued thinking activities to their students in classroom.
Candidate exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Modeling provides impressive and detailed evidence of candidate's commitment to the development of professional knowledge and dispositions, and ability to effectively conduct study groups for paraprofessionals and teachers aimed at assisting them in implementing recommendations to improve adopted reading programs to meet needs of all learners.	Candidate exhibits general understanding of the assignment. Modeling provides some evidence of candidate's commitment to the development of professional knowledge and dispositions, and ability to effectively conduct study groups for paraprofessionals and teachers aimed at assisting them in implementing recommendations to improve adopted reading programs to meet needs of all learners.	Candidate lacks basic understanding of the assignment. Modeling demonstrates evidence of candidate's lack of commitment to the development of professional knowledge and dispositions, and ability to effectively conduct study groups for paraprofessionals and teachers aimed at assisting them in implementing recommendations to improve adopted reading programs to meet needs of all learners.

Figure 1: Essential benchmark and rubric.

Results

The purpose of this paper was to discuss the leadership roles of literacy coaches and to describe how a graduate reading methods course supported graduate literacy candidates who were working as literacy coaches and reading specialists.

Semester grades were based on the teachers' performance and mastery of the

course objectives. Teachers' knowledge and educational concepts and theories were evaluated through exit reflections. Their abilities to express their knowledge of educational concepts and theories within the conventions of academic discourse were assessed through discussion board and project report. Integration of information from lectures, readings, discussions, and field experiences was also taken into consideration. The researcher articulated criteria for work that corresponds to letter grades such as outstanding, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, etc. The assignment of the letter grades was based on a student's total score (a number between 0 and 100). The researchers explained and interpreted the evidence of the teachers' performance through a feedback sheet and an evaluation standard that was applied to all students. Grades were determined in accordance with the university's policy and written guidelines that were distributed among teachers via Blackboard.

The results of the study suggested that the data from the teachers fell overwhelmingly in the "outstanding – satisfactory" column and had a mean score of 90.5 (Figure 2). The data from rubric suggested that the 94% of the teachers carried out coaching roles through practices that involved demonstration and observation, pre-conference meetings, work-site activities, debriefings and classroom follow-up. From the data in the leadership project report, it appeared that one fifth of the teachers designed, monitored and assessed reading achievement progress and helped teachers make the content of their subject more comprehensible to students, so they could truly understand the complex information in their textbooks.

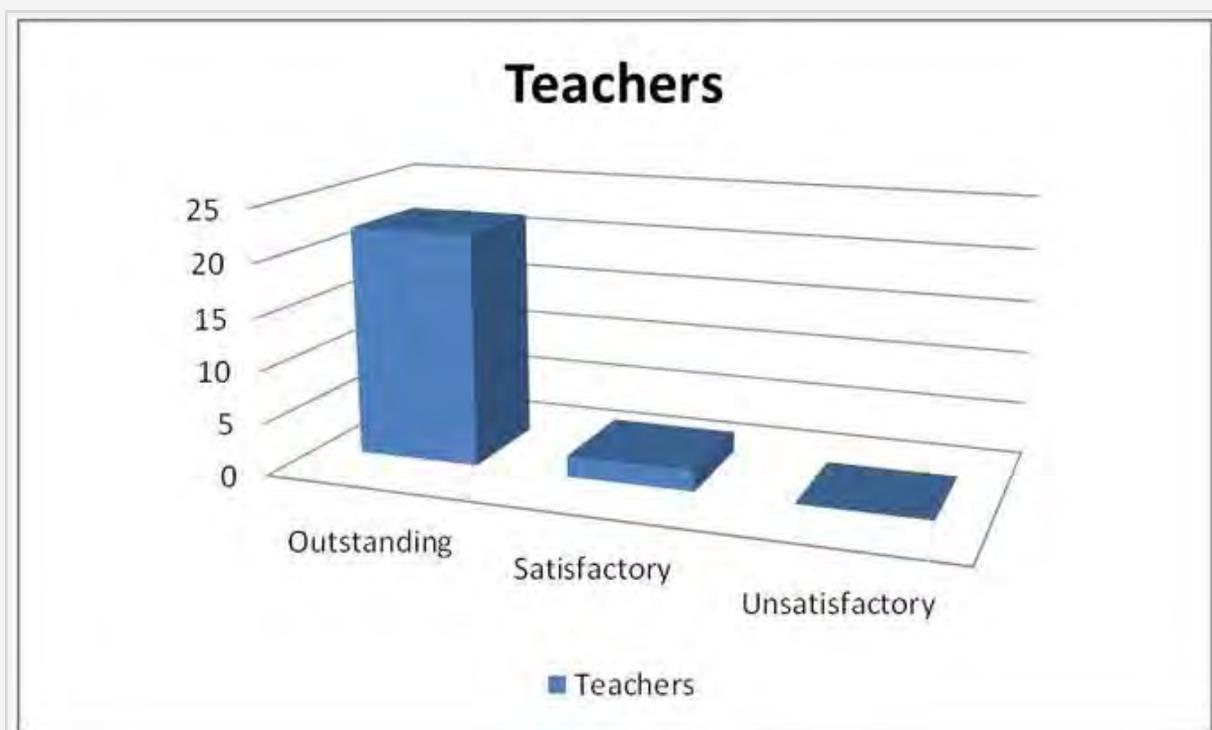


Figure 2: The literacy candidates utilized best practices in their instruction and served as a resource to classroom teachers.

The supervising teachers' evaluation indicated that 93% of the teachers coached a team of teachers as they explored and shared ideas about classroom environment, grouping, inclusion, and gradual-release instruction. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers also presented some workshops in which they modeled best literacy practices and launched some small-group collaboration. At least one third of the teachers provided professional development focused on establishing an inviting classroom environment and differentiating reading instruction; began organizing a book room for small-group instruction and revitalizing classroom libraries for independent reading; and initiated professional book studies and conversations about writing instruction. The supervising teachers were very satisfied with the teachers' staff development role and said that they have had successful experiences teaching and mentoring, preferably with K-12 students.

The International Reading Association's position statement on the role of the reading specialists identified three major leadership roles: (a) resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents; (b) professional development; and (c) coordination of a literacy program based on students' needs. The exit reflections as well as group discussions that took place on Blackboard suggested that 94% of teachers served as a mentor for teachers who wanted to talk about issues problems, or ideas about reading instruction and assessment. Ninety-five percent of teachers collaborated with a team of teachers in sharing their issues and concerns, developing shared beliefs, investigating and understanding effective literacy practices, and opening up their teaching for reflection. The teachers reflected at a deeper level and included a variety of perspectives in their descriptions of the coaching experiences. The reflection data fell in the "outstanding" column and the teachers had a mean score of 90.

Following are teacher comments about the International Reading Association new standards which now recommend additional practicum experiences that include opportunities for working with teachers:

Since I utilized data from my classroom to coach the second-grade accelerated classroom teacher and the fourth-grade gifted & talented teacher in fluency instruction, this project also met IRA Standard 6.3: "participate in, design, facilitate, lead, and evaluate effective and differentiated professional development programs." Working collaboratively with colleagues is an important aspect of being a literacy coach. Communicating results and offering advice during the course of this project gave me a sneak peek of a literacy coach's job.

Another teacher took on many new roles such as collaborating and coaching with fellow teachers as well as working with struggling readers while maintaining the IRA standards 5 and 6:

Since I was able to increase fluency rates and accuracy with focused fluency

instruction while meeting IRA Standards 5.2 and 6.3, I feel this project was a great success and plan to implement fluency instruction into my classroom curriculum throughout the future school years. In respect to coaching my colleagues, I established communication of my research with them on a weekly basis. I wanted them to experience the successes and challenges my students and I were experiencing with fluency instruction in my advanced classroom setting. Checking in with them weekly to discuss the various strategies implemented was an effective coaching method.

As a resource to classroom teachers the two major roles identified as most important were: (a) assist teachers by demonstrating ideas and strategies that can improve instruction and assessment, and (b) support teachers in planning and administering professional development. Several characteristics were identified that appeared to lead to successful collaboration. These included "receptive to change", "commitment", "creating a professional learning community", and "positive interaction". Almost 93% of teachers said that the advanced practicum course gave them an opportunity to apply and enhance their coaching training.

A teacher from a rural elementary school reflected on teaching and learning and found that literacy coaching contributed to student achievements in grades K-12:

Since I am the accelerated third-grade teacher at a rural elementary school, I chose to serve as a literacy coach for the accelerated second-grade teacher and the gifted & talented fourth-grade teacher. As a whole, our students have improved their oral reading fluency rate and accuracy. Initially, our students were averaging 116 words-per-minute at the end of February. Rounded to the nearest whole number, our students made a 13 words-per-minute improvement by the middle of April. Accuracy scores improved as the number of errors plummeted from an average of 2.6 errors-per-minute to 1.3 errors-per-minute. We observed that our students' prosody improved with each repeated reading and teacher oral reading modeling session.

Another teacher said that promises of literacy coaching were appealing for improved professional development and student achievement:

Serving as a literacy coach, I worked with colleagues to observe, evaluate, and provide feedback on each other's practice, as stated in IRA Standard 5.3. I communicated with the other four teachers on a weekly basis of the strategies I was using in my classroom and the progress of my students. Tracking oral reading fluency improvement in my classroom and relaying the results made it easier for my colleagues to see how fluency instruction fosters progress. They told me that seeing the results in a real classroom made them more apt to implement those strategies into their own classrooms in the future.

Research on literacy coaching has demonstrated that when teachers work with

literacy coaches, they are more likely to use evidence-based literacy instruction, implement new instructional and assessment strategies, and improve the quality of reading instruction (Swartz, 2005). Researchers contend that improving the quality of reading instruction can lead to growth in student reading achievement (Elish-Piper and L'allier, 2010). Almost 92% of teachers said that the potential of literacy coaching to collaboratively influence teachers' growth can, in turn, positively impact student learning.

A teacher from a fourth grade class built the capacity through coaching relationships as they moved into the coaching role:

This leadership/coaching project addresses IRA Standard 5 Literate Environment, specifically Standard 5.3: uses routines to support reading and writing instruction (e.g., time allocation, transitions from one activity to another, discussions, and peer feedback). As I lead my teachers-as-readers group, we discovered constructive means to "understand the role of routines in creating and maintaining positive learning environments for reading and writing instruction." Leading the teachers as readers group was an enjoyable and worth-while experience. I feel much more competent in my leadership abilities after this project.

The leadership role emerged as a critical component of literacy coaches as they assisted teachers by modeling strategies and suggesting materials that can enhance instruction and assessment and supporting teachers in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading. From this research teachers gained a better understanding of how to assume a leadership position amongst their peers. They became more confident in their ability to guide another teacher in his or her pursuit of instructional growth. Almost 96% of teachers commented on the satisfaction they gained from problem solving with and for teachers.

Implications

The results of the study suggested that the majority of the teachers used their knowledge and performance skills to make an impact by demonstrating lessons and communicating and collaborating with classroom teachers. More than 90% of teachers demonstrated lessons, assisted teachers in selecting best literacy practices, trained classroom teachers to administer and interpret assessments, presented professional workshops, conducted study groups, assisted classroom teachers in preparing technologically based information, assisted with assessment, and co-planned appropriate instruction.

Feedback from supervising teachers has been very positive. However, based on this research, it was suggested that the majority of teachers were not confident to take on multiple roles within their schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of reading instruction for all children, but more than 95% of teachers in this graduate

program reported that while they were not confident taking on the role of a literacy coach, once they began coaching, they found it to be a rewarding, empowering experience that reinforced their knowledge and skill as a literacy coach.

The universities are being challenged to prepare reading specialists who are not only exemplary reading teachers, but also skilled literacy coaches who can build capacity in other teachers through mentoring and coaching relationships (Spelman and Allman, 2007). Future research is needed to determine how we fully integrate this new role into graduate programs

or whether universities' literacy program should reexamine their curricula for reading specialists that give teachers more built-in opportunities to learn how to fulfill the major areas of responsibilities as literacy coaches.

There is a growing need for increased clarification about what is expected of literacy coaches, with coaches, teachers, and supervising teacher participating in the process. In addition, graduate, advanced licensure, and professional development programs that prepare elementary teachers could benefit from information related to the daily work of coaches at the schools and districts level (Mraz and Sturtevant, 2011). By better understanding of the expectations, professional development program for literacy coaches could be modified to better suit current needs.

Future research is needed to draw conclusions related to the relationships between quality of literacy coaching, teacher confidence in the coaching, and student reading achievement (Elish-Piper and L'allier, 2010). The Swartz (2005) study explored the effects of literacy coaching and suggested that literacy coaching contributed to the gain in reading in grades K-4. Additional research in this area would provide greater insights into the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading achievement.

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