



Transformations through Literacy



Kentucky Reading Journal  
Fall 2018 Edition

**KRA is a nonprofit affiliate of the International Reading Association, a professional organization aimed at promoting reading for all. KRA is one of the largest state professional organizations.**

Members of the KRA represent a dedicated body of educators interested in moving reading/literacy forward in the Commonwealth. Becoming a member of KRA affords educators with opportunities to network and learn about the most current research and instructional practices in reading/literacy. KRA has local councils in all areas of the state. Participating in local council activity is one way to tap into the multiple advantages of being a KRA member.

*Our mission  
is to be a voice for literacy*



2018-2019

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Kentucky Reading Association

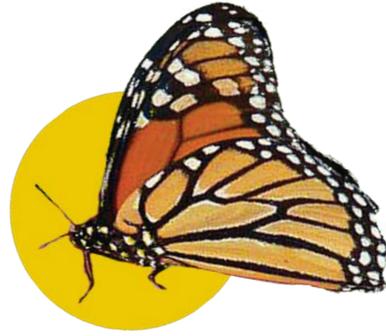
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### **KRA Newsletter**

Literacy Leaders, the KRA newsletter is now “green” and *available online in PDF format from the KRA website: <http://kyreading.org>*. Members are encouraged to submit their news and information for the newsletter to Roxanne Spencer at [roxanne.spencer@wku.edu](mailto:roxanne.spencer@wku.edu).



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## A Word from Your Editors

The Summer 2019 issue of the *Kentucky Reading Journal* is titled *Transformations through Literacy*. This theme highlights the transitions that occurred during the year, as we transitioned our relationship with the International Literacy Association, in order to better serve the needs of Kentucky's educators. The articles in the journal highlight different ways of thinking about literacy, both traditional and non-traditional.

The overall journal is organized into three main sections: *Feature Articles*, *Teaching Tips*, *Professional Book Reviews*, and *Student Writing*. The feature articles are longer works, which synthesize research, present new research, or take a theoretical look at issues that provides valuable knowledge and practical applications for literacy teachers. The Teaching Tips are shorter pieces which share information about specific practices and implementation ideas. The Professional Book Reviews are reviews of current professional literature to help teachers decide which resources will meet their needs. Finally, the Student Writing is a submission from a Kentucky teacher. If you have student work to publish, please consider sharing their work. Regardless of the type of submission, each article focuses on expanding the views of literacy to open literacy to students, at all levels of education.

## Featured Articles

In this article you will find on featured article, "**Affinity Spaces: Reflections from an EL Elementary Teacher**", authored by Dr. Dorian Harrison of Belmont University. This article uses practitioner autoethnography to critically examine her experience as a black female teacher in an English Learner classroom, using Gee's (2005) aspects of affinity spaces. She reflects on her teaching experiences in these spaces to identify how bilingual/multilingual children develop affinity groups around language and ethnic origins.

## Teaching Tips

Included in this issue are three articles that provide tips for educators.

"**Classroom Interventions to Aid Students with Dyslexia**", co-authored by Ms. Scarlett Moore and Dr. Shikwambi from Middle Georgia State University provides an overview of the diagnosis and previous research in the field. Additionally, they provide considerations for classroom instruction.

"**Improving Teaching Practices using Literary Games**", co-authored by Dr. Burns, Eastern Kentucky University and Mr. Scott Self, Model Lab School at Eastern Kentucky University provides educators with an idea of how to structure literary studies. This student-led approach supports engagement, collaboration and student choice on ways to demonstrate learning.

Finally, in “**Enhancing Reading Fluency through Engaging Activities**”, Drs. Renee Moran, Stacey Fisher, LaShay Jennings, and Edward Dyer from East Tennessee State University discuss the need for engaging students in meaningful practice to improve fluency. They discuss teachers’ use of CD’s for reading instruction, then make suggestions for how to engage students in the creation of their own oral recordings of texts.

## Professional Book Reviews

Ms. Joyce Harris, Literacy Consultant for Erlanger-Elsmere Schools, discusses a book for professional study, *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* by Anita L. Archer & Charles A. Hughes (2011). The book is relevant for all content areas and grades and highlights the 16 essential elements to explicit instruction. The book also contains video segments to support teacher development.

Additionally, Dr. Eileen Shanahan, assistant professor at Eastern Kentucky University, reviews the recently published book *The Quickwrite Handbook: 100 Mentor Texts to Jumpstart Your Students’ Thinking and Writing* by Linda Rief (2018). Dr. Shanahan discusses the layout of the text and potential for this text to be a teacher resource to engage students in writing.

## Kids Korner

Finally, the journal ends with the celebration of student writing in the Kids Korner. We hope you enjoy the writing of 6th grader, Ms. Adrianna Hines poem *Sing, Sing, Sing*. Her poem was submitted by her former 4th grade teacher, Ms. Jennifer Hickman at Northern Elementary.

Finally, take note of the Call for Manuscripts at the conclusion of the journal. Feel free to submit manuscripts as feature articles or teaching tips to the journal. We are also accepting book reviews for current professional books. I hope you particularly will consider the “Kids’ Korner” portion as an opportunity for your students to share illustrations, stories, narratives, poems, informational writing, etc., with our literacy community. Please be aware, too, that you are invited to submit to the KRJ newsletter. See the journal’s contents page to find more information about how to do just that.

We hope that you learn a little something by reading the articles herein and that you are motivated to implement a new idea, consider a new approach or program, or question the way you have traditionally taught something, or even read a new professional book.

*Enjoy!*

**Drs. Stacey Korson and Tammie Sherry**

Co-Editors

# The Kentucky Reading Journal: CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Kentucky Reading Journal welcomes articles that are both scholarly and practitioner-focused as well as other original contributions addressing literacy and/or literature across all grades and content areas. Classroom teachers, reading specialists, and other reading professionals are encouraged to submit manuscripts according to the guidelines indicated below.

## TYPES OF SUBMISSIONS

Submissions may fall under the following categories:

- **Feature articles** should be approximately 10-15 pages (2500-3500 words), including references, and may include original research in literacy and/or literature, reflect the current research interests of Kentucky educators, or review best practices for multiple literacies (i.e., visual, digital, textual, or technological).
- **Teaching Tips** for engaging readers and writers should be approximately 3-5 pages and may include practical ideas for teaching literacy and/or literature. These also may include teaching vignettes that describe especially poignant or humorous classroom moments. While not required, such submissions are strengthened by the inclusion of digital components that demonstrate students' success and engagement with the teaching tips.
- **Kids' Korner** submissions may be much shorter. These submissions come from things that students have written, created, or reviewed. Audio submissions of kids reviewing literature or promoting technology tools are ideas to consider.

## GUIDELINES FOR MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

Submissions must apply the following:

- Submit the manuscript/video electronically. Please use separate email attachments for text and each digital, audio, or video file.
- Include a cover page with the following information: the title of the article; the author's full name, position, school/library affiliation, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, complete mailing address; and a 50-100 word abstract for the article. Please include the title on the first page of the manuscript text; however, the author's name should not appear anywhere else in the manuscript to insure impartial review.
- Use Microsoft Word and double space in 12 point font with 1" margins.
- Include charts, graphs, bulleted points, and/or figures wherever possible to vary the format and enhance the content of the article.

- Prepare reference lists and text citations according to the style specified in the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
- Submit digital images as separate email attachments in .jpg format. Notations should appear in the text for proper placement of digital images (e.g., “insert photo 1 here”). Include captions or bylines for each image.
- Submit audio/video files with captions or bylines and include a written summary of the audio/video. Audio/video files should be no longer than 5 minutes but may be as brief as 1-2 minutes.

## MANUSCRIPT REVIEW

Manuscripts are evaluated on the basis of content, interest, organization, clarity, and style. If accepted, revisions may be requested. Manuscripts must be original works, should not have been previously published, and should not be undergoing simultaneous review for another journal. Preference is given to Kentucky authors. If an article is accepted, the editor reserves the right to make appropriate stylistic editorial changes. Authors wishing to use substantive portions of their articles accepted for publication in KRJ must give credit to KRJ for original publication.

### **Submit all manuscripts by July 31, 2019, to:**

Dr. Tammie Sherry and Dr. Stacey Korson  
Kentuckyreadingjournal@yahoo.com

# Children's Submissions for *Kentucky Reading Journal*

We love to include children's artwork, video submissions, or writing in the Kentucky Reading Journal. Entries must be original student work. Contributors whose work is featured in the journal will receive a letter of acceptance and a link to the online journal. The names of the student, teacher, and school will also appear with the student's submission.

Work from individual students should be submitted in a reproducible form along with a signed parental permission form (see below). Artwork (or photographs) must be submitted electronically in JPEG color format. Along with the submission, include the following information on the Student Submission Release Form: the name of the student, teacher and school; full contact information for the teacher and the parents (including summer contact information); and the parent signature indicating permission for inclusion in the KRJ.

All submissions must be emailed to [kentuckyreadingjournal@yahoo.com](mailto:kentuckyreadingjournal@yahoo.com). Once signed by the parent, the release form can be scanned or photographed and attached to the email with the submission. Notifications of acceptance will be given within two-three weeks of receipt of submission.

## Student Submission Release Form

As parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby grant permission for my child's artwork, video, or writing to appear in the Kentucky Reading Journal, a publication of the Kentucky Reading Association (KRA). The KRA is a nonprofit affiliate of the International Reading Association, a professional organization aimed at promoting reading for all. Members of the KRA represent a dedicated body of educators interested in moving reading/literacy forward in the Commonwealth. The Kentucky Reading Journal is one of the professional resources supported by the KRA. By signing this release form, I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that my child's work and name may be included in the journal and that the Association reserves the right to include this student's submission in any future publications of the Kentucky Reading Journal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent/Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Guardian's phone number*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Guardian's email address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher's Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*School Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher's phone number*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher's email address*

# Kentucky Reading Association Membership Information

All members of the Kentucky Reading Association are granted membership into their local council and vice-versa. The unified, **one-year membership fee is \$25.00; student (full-time, undergraduate) membership is \$10.00.**

The Kentucky Reading Association is a professional organization of educators and individuals actively engaged in the development of literacy throughout the Commonwealth. We are committed to encouraging lifelong reading for pleasure and learning, providing information related to literacy, increasing opportunities for professional growth, and promoting research-based instructional practices.

## **Our awards include:**

2007-2012 IRA Award of Excellence

2007 IRA Advocacy Award

2010 IRA Advocacy Award



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# IMPROVING TEACHING PRACTICE by Using Literary Games

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## *Abstract*

The article outlines an innovative teaching practice used by a secondary English teacher. Teaching methods which are creative and collaborative in nature allow student exploration of the topic and students' learning. This method allows students to have an influence on their literary experiences and enhance their ability to analyze and communicate literary works.

## **Improving Teaching Practice by Using Literary Games**

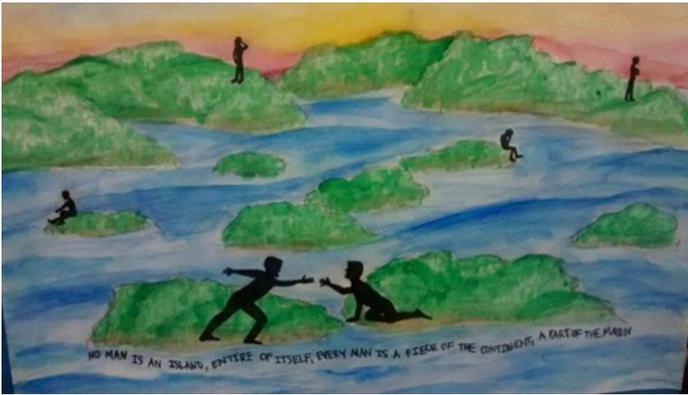
A primary and essential outcome for any secondary English class is for all students to become better communicators; this includes stronger thinking, listening, speaking, research, and writing skills. In addition to the primary outcomes, instruction that is especially innovative and empowering develops critical and creative thinking in students and can help shape students' beliefs and attitudes about their own learning (Stein, 2018). Literary Games are specifically designed to build community as well as educate and equip students through challenging, innovative aspects of learning in the secondary English classroom. Literary Games is a learning process for all students to develop individual skills while offering opportunities to collaborate with teammates to apply innovative strategies to English content; think of it as a mental Olympics with collaborative groups of students focusing on a single author's works. Literary Games is a set of assigned learning tasks that are all related to one literary author; the tasks are designed to encourage creativity and independent thinking by the student groups. According to feedback from the classroom students, by designing and developing Literary Games content based on the tasks assigned by the instructor, they all learn exponentially more with this student-led approach to traditional English content.

The concept of Literary Games touches on three popular approaches within educational theory and practice. The foundational fabric of the Literary Games is strongly built through establishing genuine, organic trust amongst students in an academic environment (Maslow, 1943), utilizing Multiple Intelligences, allowing all students the opportunity to succeed through the number of options and mediums to choose from in order to best demonstrate their learning and to best reflect and share their unique skill sets (Gardner, 2008), and students applying the highest, cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, resulting in synthesized creations (1956). Bloom's Taxonomy

becomes a living, breathing kaleidoscope of creativity in the classroom as students learn not only to create original group products as they explore the inquiry process and maximize the quality of their English learning experience, but also learn the transference of the taxonomy as it translates into a practical protocol in resolving conflict and contending with real life critical problem solving possibilities and group interactions.

The tasks assigned in the Literary Games serve as a context for students' thinking during and after the instructional process (Doyle, 1988). By using an explicit instructional process with formative and summative data points, teachers can assign a variety of tasks to support the English instructional core. The various tasks are assigned to groups, and students are allowed unstructured, collaborative think time to develop the products related to each assignment. The instructional core in its simplest term is defined as "teachers and students working together in the presence of content" (Elmore, 2009). By using this context as the framework for the games, it strongly encourages students to look at the actual task assigned by the teacher as it relates to the content. What happens in the instructional core is the most significant piece of student learning, so the identified tasks must be highly engaging for optimum effect. Again, think of the various separate events related to an Olympic decathlon; all separate, but interrelated events to show the skills of the participants.

In order to provide time to establish classroom stability and to create teacher-student and student-student trust to cultivate, the Literary Games strategically begin each year in mid-October with a review of the established rules for the games, forming strategically and differentiated student working groups, and identifying the tasks associated with the week-long games. By framing the work at the core level with common class guidelines and rubrics for the work, students are then free to assign contemporary meanings to enduring works, culminating in creative and culturally relevant products as well as creating an empowered space of their own learning through edifying applications. Students develop their understanding of the tasks by exploring the content within their assigned groups to clarify their own thought processes and develop skills of inquiry to understand the thinking of others (Ross & Hannay, 1986). The collaborative groups begin to develop their thinking in terms of "How can we creatively demonstrate our learning for other groups to understand?" Within that learning context, students are free to create multiple representations of how they learn.



*"A contemporary interpretation of self-induced isolation and its consequence, based upon John Donne's famous quote (1624)"*

## Literary Games Process

The Literary Games process includes specific tasks that are directly related to secondary English standards and are focused on one poet or author and their works. Prior to the beginning of the Literary Games, students have explored the works of the identified poet or author extensively, utilizing level one and two of Bloom's taxonomy. Once assigned to their team, members must communicate effectively and decide how to accommodate the variety of tasks assigned: choreographed pride shout, representing group name and concept; creative poetry or music based on identified work(s); inclusion of previously learned material; intellectually intense "movie trailer" for identified work and concept; one recited, unified pertinent quote; representative artistic expression; and formal class discussion (debate) for identified work. The analogy of the Olympic heptathlon can be used as Literary Games events are held over a one to two week period and winners are determined by the combined performance in all seven areas. Performance is scored with a rubric using a points system for each task. Students are given a formative assessment rubric to guide the work throughout the Literary Games and a summative rubric for completion of all tasks.



*"A metaphysical statement through artistic expression highlighting William Blake's Innocence and Experience (1789)"*

## Learning from Literary Games

For students to remain highly engaged in the learning process throughout the Literary Games, they all must participate in the work and identify talents within the collaborative group. The collaborative teams must be willing to plan and work after school hours to develop the products for the competitions. The work of the teacher is defined by the success of the students and their perception of how much they learned and can apply this learning to other contexts (Varlas, 2009). Literary Games is designed to bring about the application of the learning. In focus group interviews, students report a deep sense of engagement, competition, and urgency to not let the team down in preparation and throughout the competitions. The learning is embedded in both the intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions as they work through the tasks, develop a common understanding of the learning, build a culture of trust, and develop a focus on their ability to learn at the highest level. "In the end, it makes us all better at our individual and collective educational achievement." The students indicate a greater understanding of the concepts and develop lifelong memories of participating in the Literary Games.



*"Alfred, Lord Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott (1833), illustrating the concept of consequence resulting from, "I am half-sick of shadows."*

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# ENHANCING READING FLUENCY through Engaging Activities



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Renee, Stacy, LaShay, and Ed have great interest in involving students in engaging and enjoyable activities. The authors propose that producing products such as CD recordings within an academically sound learning environment enhances learning and encourages students' interest in material studied.

## Abstract

Reading fluency is essential for reading comprehension. The authors propose that practice for attending reading fluency must be in a meaningful context. Students can practice until fluency is attained and then produce a compact disk (CD) recording of their fluent reading and/ or auditory recording with visual input. Strategies presented herein can be applied in a wide variety of learning environments.

## Background

Reading fluency is defined as the smooth and seemingly effortless reading of text with “meaningful expression that enhances the meaning of the text” (Rasinski, 2010, p. 31-32). The fluent reader reads in logical phrase units while observing conventions of print in the text such as commas, periods, **BOLD** text, question marks, exclamation points, etc.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that a high level of fluency is essential for reading comprehension (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2015; Allington, 1983; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993). Consequently, development of reading fluency is an essential part of the reading instructional program. Fluent reading empowers the reader to concentrate on the meaning of the text without having logical thought progressions hampered by stumbling over words and phrases. Fluency is a gateway to the ultimate goal of all reading instruction, comprehension. The production of a high quality CD demonstrates the ability of the reader to deliver a highly fluent rendition of a written work. The audio recording can demonstrate competence to the audience but, perhaps even more important, the recording

demonstrates competence to the reader. We sometimes work with students to produce a visual as well as an auditory production using apps provided on smartphones. In addition, providing models of fluent reading is essential for encouraging fluency development and automaticity among developing readers. In the following sections, we provide classroom vignettes that demonstrate ways that practicing teachers incorporate fluency instruction in a student friendly and accessible manner.

### **Classroom Vignette #1 Ms. Kelly**

In this light, we know a third grade teacher we will call Ms. Kelly, who has made CD recordings of at least 40 books in which she models fluent reading with an animated delivery. She keeps the books and CDs in zipper-lock freezer bags. Early in the school year Ms. Kelly explains in a letter to the parent(s) or other caregiver(s) that the children may take home a book and CD. However, parents or other caregivers must sign a gently worded agreement that they will do their best to ensure that the books and CDs are cared for and that the child will listen and follow along with the reading. Ms. Kelly stresses that it is very important for the child to follow along with the reading and not just relax and listen. Ms. Kelly divides the books into three approximately even stacks and places 14 books on a rack she obtained from a store in a nearby mall that was going out of business. On Monday Ms. Kelly invites half the class, 12 students, to select a book to take home in their backpacks. They bring the book back on Tuesday and the remaining 12 students in the class get to take home a book on Tuesday. They will return the book on Wednesday. The students who took home a book on Monday will select another book to take home on Wednesday that they will return on Thursday.

The rotation for selecting books and CDs continues until the end of a six-week interval. Ms. Kelly then collects the 14 books previously used and replaces them with 14 different books and CDs that are also in zipper-seal freezer bags. After six weeks of using this second set of books, Ms. Kelly will add a third set of about 14 books for the take home CD reading program. Ms. Kelly thoroughly enjoys making CDs and is continuously adding to the collection. After the third six-week interval, Ms. Kelly returns the original set of 14 books for the students to select and possibly a few new ones that she recently recorded. Many students are delighted to see a well-liked book again. Over the course of an academic year the students read a large number of books along with their teacher, Ms. Kelly.

## Classroom Vignette #2 Mr. Brown

A middle school teacher we know, we will call Mr. Brown, works with his middle school students on developing fluency. Mr. Brown recognizes that older students also need practice in building automaticity and in turn increasing comprehension. He recorded the entire book titled, *Slakes Limbo* (Holman, 1972). for his students to read along with him. He read the story fluently, demonstrating reading competencies such as attention to conventions of print, sense of drama, and pacing. He plays the beginning chapter in class and then encourages students to take home a copy of the book and listen along as he reads each chapter. The class has a large set of paperback copies of *Slakes Limbo*. Mr. Brown bought a stack of 100 CDs and made numerous copies of the recording for his students.

Mr. Brown also notes that some of the students in his class would have substantial difficulty in reading *Slakes Limbo* on their own. Consequently, the recordings provide needed support for some students who can then participate comfortably in class discussions about the chapter under study.

### *How do I create my own recording?*

Modeling fluent reading in is essential for encouraging fluency among students. Hopefully, this will lead to our overarching goal which is to enhance fluency competencies among developing readers as well as to foster appreciation for fluent reading. A wonderful resource for studying effective oral reading is: <http://www.storylineonline.net/> (Screen Actors Guild, n.d.). Guidelines are presented below for preparing CD recordings with students.

## Introduction

The introduction is critical for providing an invitation to the listener. The reader is advised to provide the listener with the name of the book or other selection and the author. The reader must state his or her name clearly: A sample introduction is presented below:

“The book we will be reading today is *The Dog Who Cried Wolf* by Keiko Kasza (2005). My name is Ima Reeder and I will be reading the story. Let’s look at the book cover. There you will see a dog who is howling at the moon. (Pause briefly, about five seconds.) Now, let’s look at the title page. There you will see a picture of a dog looking at a book. Let’s turn that page and there you will see a picture of a dog and a girl reading a book. Now, let’s begin the story.”

## Choice of Selection

Children can comprehend stories and content-oriented material at their listening level, that is, the level of language that they can understand when it is heard. The listening level is usually substantially higher than the reading level. Consequently, by listening to audio CDs and following along, students can enhance their reading competencies and background information. However when it comes time for recording the selection must be at independent reading level.

Students are advised to select books that they enjoy reading in preparation for producing a CD recording. In addition, students are advised to develop background knowledge through discussion before reading. For example, two students chose *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst (1972). They talked about the book and why they liked this story and practiced reading aloud.

Practice through guided repeated reading of the selection is essential before recording. Students are very serious when they say, "I want to sound good." In all areas of reading instruction, we avoid having students struggle through a selection and then go on to another selection before mastering the selection just completed.

## Prosody

Presenting the audio rendition of the reading selection in a lively and energetic manner is critical for holding audience interest. We remind our students that there will not be an audience when the recording is being made but to keep in mind that there will be listeners when the CD has been completed.

## Diction and Fluency

We advise our students that recording a CD is not the same as engaging in conversation. We admonish them to not lose word endings. Sometimes readers let their voices trail off as they approach the end of a sentence. We encourage students to watch for appropriate phrasing by observing conventions of print and maintaining logical thought units. As suggested above, we do not record until the reader provides an effortless and fluent rendition of the text.

## Volume

We advise the students to be sure to keep the volume level appropriate for the context of the

material being read. . For example, the reader’s voice might be a little softer or a little louder in places when maintaining a sense of drama. We often remind students that the volume does not fade at the end of a sentence.

## Pace

We advise students to read at a natural pace in logical thought units at a speed that is comfortable and to make a short pause after finishing a page. The pause gives the listener/reader time to turn the page. Sometimes we use a signal, such as a gentle ring from a bell to indicate that it is time to turn the page.

We like the CD recording rather than a digital rendition because it provides students with a physical product that demonstrates to them and to others that they can read fluently. Students are delighted with the CD. For example, a mother who arrived at school to pick up her third grade son told us that he came racing out of the building waving the CD and immediately wanted to put it in the CD player in the van. Another parent told us about her daughter who recorded the *True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka, 1989). The girl played the CD about 12 times on a boom box on a Saturday shortly after making the CD. Another parent was inspired to produce a CD while reading *The Day Jimmy’s Boa Ate the Wash* (Noble, 1980) with her son. She said they greatly enjoyed making the CD and added wistfully, “When he’s 18 and going off to college, I’ll have his seven year old voice.”

As mentioned above, producing a visual and auditory recording using a smartphone can be a powerful learning strategy. The presentation can demonstrate to the students that, yes, they can be fluent readers. We recall working with a second grade student who was a struggling reader. We practiced with repeated reading and echo reading. She mastered reading *Pete the Cat: Rockin’ in My School Shoes* (Litwin, 2011). She read with amazing enthusiasm and confidence and was delighted with her video recording. Anyone who did not know about her struggles with reading would have thought she was an overall superior reader upon viewing the video.

We could go on and on mentioning books we love to record but we will leave that to our readers who undoubtedly have a marvelous storehouse of wonderful books. However, we must mention a timeless favorite that everyone likes, *Harry the Dirty Dog* (Zion, 1956/2002). This story with delightful illustrations is perfect for readers’ theater recording.

### *Supplementary Ideas to Compliment the Recording*

We invite our students to produce story maps and stick puppets to go along with some of the stories they record, especially Aesop fables. The story map consists of: Main character(s), Setting; Events, Outcome, Lesson, and By-line of the creator(s) of the story map. We also produce black line drawings of the characters, invite the students to prepare the puppets, and present a puppet show that complements the reading. However, we do not record during the puppet show because of distractions. See Photograph 1. The delightful activity for drawing the dog face puppet was obtained from Wikihow (n.d.).

Production of CDs is also very helpful relative to content oriented reading. Books or selections can be made into readers' theater scripts and provide opportunities for in depth study. Elementary school students frequently study about wildlife but usually in textbook or on-line formats. Producing a CD with or without accompanying stick puppets or video can be highly worthwhile. For example, the text *Grandma elephant's in charge* (Jenkins, 2003) tells the story of elephants in an interesting format that lends itself to CD production of the text in a readers' theater format. In addition, we photocopied a beautiful black line drawing of an elephant to give to all of the students. In addition, we invite the students to cut out the drawing and place it on a jumbo craft stick and have an elephant puppet.

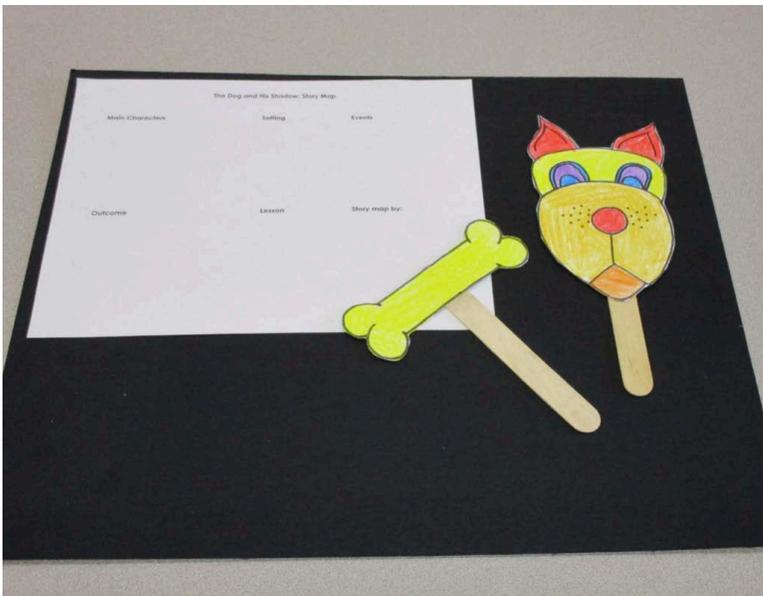
## **Conclusion**

We agree with Harvey and Ward (2017) who proposed that developing readers must become emboldened with confidence through meeting success and not be forced to plod through tedious activities that fail to inspire them. Harvey and Ward retired the word "struggling" when referring to readers who have difficulties and replaced "struggling" with "striving". We propose that the information presented herein can do much to encourage readers, both competent and "striving," to make substantial gains towards successful reading. The gains in achievement through enhancing fluency through making recordings provide students with the refreshing insight that reading is enjoyable and that, "I can be good at reading!"

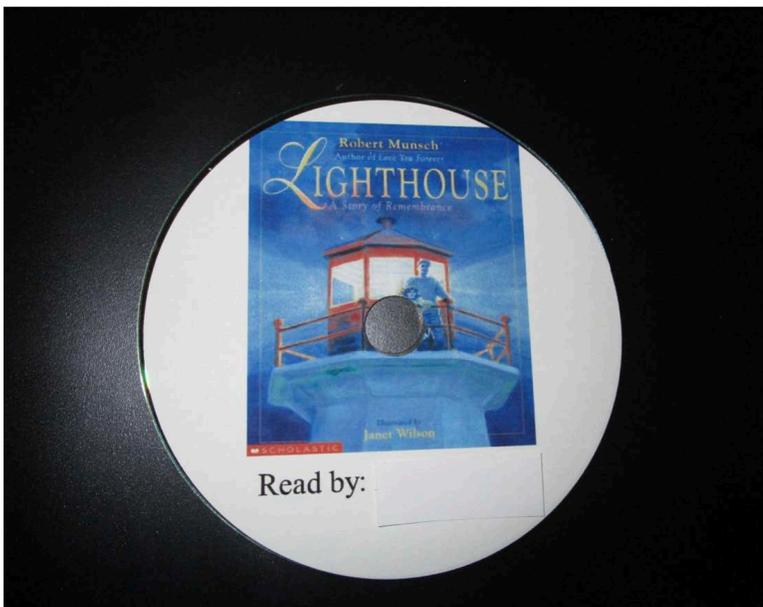
In addition, we have developed a store of readers' theater scripts that can be used for performance reading in class and for recording either by individual students or in a readers' theater format. We have made many readers' theater scripts based on Aesop fables. Readers' theater is wonderful for building classroom community. We will gladly share the readers' theater scripts

through email with anyone who requests them from the authors.

A final touch is making professional looking labels for the CDs our students produce. There are marvelous label making materials available from companies such as Avery™ and Memorex™. We Google the book title and click on images and drag an image onto the CD and add the reader's by-line. The label adds a delightful elegance to the final product. See Photograph 2.



*Photograph 1. Story map and puppets for the Aesop fable, The dog and his bone.*



*Photograph 2. Model CD label.*

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# CLASSROOM INTERVENTION to Aid Students with Dyslexia



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## Abstract

This paper provides information concerning dyslexia. Its effect on cognitive development in children will be elaborated. The definition of dyslexia and the importance of diagnosis will be explained. The interventions that are used in the classroom to promote learning as well as teacher understanding will be discussed. The purpose of this paper is to educate the readers, so they are more aware of dyslexia and how it interferes with a student's learning process.

**Keywords:** dyslexia, intervention, cognitive development

It is important for others to understand dyslexia in order to best aid students who deal with its effects on a daily basis. According to The Dyslexia Research Institute (2014), "ten to fifteen percent of the US population has dyslexia, yet only five out of every one hundred dyslexics are recognized and receive assistance," (the Dyslexia Research Institute mission section, para. 1). This number is alarming and reveals a gap that must be filled to ensure the greatest educational outcomes for our children. Dyslexia is known for differences in a child's cognitive development and learning processes. For students, intervention in a classroom setting can translate to success in reading and comprehension.

## Cognitive development and dyslexia

According to McDevitt and Ormrod (2016), "cognitive development refers to the age-related transformations that occur in children's reasoning, concepts, memory, language, and intellectual skills" (p. 4). In a learning disability, many of these processes are affected. Dyslexia is the most common of learning disabilities and it does not discriminate, effecting all genders, race, and ethnicities all over the world (Caskey, Innes, and Lorell, 2018; Peterson, Kinell, O'Brien, and Valerie, 2017; Menon, 2016; and Fedora, 2014). Children with a diagnosis of dyslexia are being taught in schools across our nation, which is why understanding this learning disability is crucial to their future. Students that are dealing with dyslexia can exhibit impairments in cognitive processes such as phonological processing, verbal processing speed, and verbal short-term memory (Tilanus, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2016).

The definition of dyslexia has evolved over time. Even now, many states have differing definitions to describe it. In the southeastern states, such as Georgia and Kentucky, dyslexia is

in a category termed specific learning disability. The Georgia Department of Education reports that dyslexia can appear as “an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations” (2017, para. 1). According to Peterson et al. (2017), many years ago, dyslexia was thought to be a vision defect that caused letter and word reversal. As more research was conducted, this was found to be untrue. Although, the earliest description of what is known as dyslexia was given by Dr. Kussmaul, a German physician, when he called it “reading blindness” (p. 69). The most recent definition given by International Dyslexia Association (2002) is:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (para. 1).

## **Diagnosis**

Diagnosis of dyslexia can be a long process. The International Dyslexia Association suggests that diagnosis may begin with a series of screening tests before a child has learned to read. All assessments, screenings, and interventions used for a child’s weaknesses must be documented. This process, or evaluation, could take two to three years once the child is of school-age, as noted by Frith (1999), “diagnosis is the first step in an otherwise misunderstood and misinterpreted pattern of problems” (p. 211). The student struggling with dyslexia may present with many signs of the learning disability or very few. However, most agree that difficulties with learning to read and write are common features. Assessments can be helpful in determining the student’s area of struggle. Spelling is a precise test that is more likely to reveal dyslexia than reading. As observed during teaching clinical and engaging with cooperating teachers from differing school districts, most schools will not perform testing until a student is two grade levels behind, which usually does not occur until second or third grade. Students will usually go through a series of interventions before assessments are done.

Schools in the United States are encouraged to use a response to intervention model (RTI) to determine what level of interventions are necessary to assure student success. RTI is a multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior

needs. RTI, when used correctly in a classroom setting, can provide teacher-guided, research-based interventions for students who present with reading difficulties. Researchers such as Peterson et al. (2017), and Tilanus et al. (2016), show that it is imperative that students with dyslexia receive special instruction; early detection and intervention will be most beneficial. It is important to mention that dyslexia, itself, is not one of the 13 conditions recognized by The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Instead, Lee (2018) explains that it falls under the category of specific learning disability, which includes conditions that affect a child's ability to read, write, listen, speak, reason or perform math.

## Interventions

As previously reported, the RTI approach to assessment and intervention appears to hold promise for the early identification of children who are failing to learn to read at the expected rate. For many years, the importance of early identification and intervention for children with dyslexia has been stressed. A list of interventions is shared and explored for the reader in an effort to offer assistance. Please note that this is not a complete list of dyslexia specific interventions as new innovations are being explored in classrooms throughout the nation by educators who strive to meet the needs of all of their students.

### **Some interventions for dyslexia are as follows:**

- Individual learning pace plan
- Intensive review of letter names/sounds
- Post-remedial renewal period
- Poetry and writing for ownership, engagement and motivation
- Modeling
- Dyslexie font

It is important when assisting students with dyslexia that the opportunity is given for one-on-one help along with learning at their own pace. This intervention can help remove some of the fear of failure when students compare themselves to peers. Students with dyslexia struggle with decoding and per Tilanus et al. (2016), "have persistent problems with accuracy and speed of word reading and spelling" (p. 215). Dyslexia almost always presents with a lack of phonemic awareness, which is when students cannot hear differences in letter sounds and how those sounds combine to make words. Through personal experience, I have noticed students confusing the short "i" sound and the short "e" sound when practicing spelling. When these students were verbally reminded of the distinction between these sounds, the students replied that they did not hear a difference.

The research also stated that “phonics instruction puts a high demand on children’s working memory” (p. 216). This can lead to weariness with any child.

As observed in teaching clinicals, intensive review of letter names and sounds associated with the letters is helpful. Research (Tilanus et al., 2016) has shown that using a symbolic scaffold for phoneme separation in words can help children recognize differences in spelling. This shows that, in turn, the complexity of the language is reduced, leading to less load in order memory. The strain on a student with dyslexia is apparent after remediation and he or she may require down-time as seen during my time in the classroom with a cooperating teacher. This observation has shown me that it is beneficial to provide the student with quiet time and a small activity, such as small puzzles or coloring, to do by themselves. If possible, it can also be helpful to plan for remediation in the learning segment immediately before recess or outside play.

Dr. Benita Bruster (2016) conducted a study with a small group of students with dyslexic traits. By practicing poetry and writing, she found that “students must acquire a sense of ownership over the entire reading process, resulting in increased engagement, motivation, and fluency” (p. 93). If a child can take new material they have learned and apply it to other areas of their lives, then they are more apt to reuse that information and make it their own. If an educator is able to find what is most interesting to the student with dyslexia, then he or she should use those findings to promote the student’s education. This could be art, educational videos, or sports related materials. Students will most likely perform better on a task when it is first modeled for them and when their progress is monitored.

As seen in several classroom settings, when an educator is in tune with his or her students and anticipates their needs by demonstrating the work to be done, there is a better outcome for learning. This includes a multitude of tasks such as phonemic awareness, word formation, and fluency. Fluency, according to Bruster (2016), connects phonics and comprehension. Once a child is able to use phonics to create words and word patterns, then that child must build on fluency in order to comprehend what he or she is reading. Comprehending a passage that has been read requires a student with dyslexia to process the deeper meaning of a text and this can only be done if automaticity and parsody are achieved; freeing up cognitive resources for deeper meaning. Interpreted, this means the student with dyslexia may have to work harder to comprehend a text, but it is possible. Students need to understand that it is okay to learn differently and at a pace that will accommodate their needs.

In 2008, a Dutch artist named Christian Boer began creating a font to aid children and adults with dyslexia. He named it Dyslexie and it was based on the crowding theory of dyslexia (Marinus et al., 2016). Boer believed people with dyslexia struggled with: distinguishing between letters that looked similar, reverse/rotation of letters, and difficulty with start/end of sentences. He attempted to solve these issues by changing the heights, angling, and forms of letters that are shaped the same, such as b and d, making the base of letters look thicker, and making capital letters and punctuation marks bolder, so combined, the font in text had a larger between-word spacing.

As observed during clinical rotation in the coordinating teacher's classroom, a child with dyslexia displays frequent mix-up of similar letters as well as recurrently running sentences together. The most commonly mixed up letters by students are p, d, b, and q. Due to the similarity of these letters and the closeness of type, oftentimes children will run their words together or disregard punctuation entirely when orally reading. As noted by his TED talk (2015), Boer's first focus during creation of this special font was based on the mix-up of these comparable letters. Although Dyslexie is not widely used, it is important to note that when researcher Marinus put this font to the test, most children read more words per minute in Dyslexie than in Arial font (2016). Dyslexiefont.com offers the font with a variety of options including household, business, or educational use. The price fluctuates with the number of users and the length of the license that is purchased. This may be a viable option for classroom use in the future.

Another intervention that would be helpful, but is actually deficient, is a teacher's knowledge concerning dyslexia. Peterson et al. (2017), shows that teachers are not familiar with the characteristics of dyslexia and feel unprepared to teach children with dyslexic traits. Missing the sign of dyslexia can have long-term effects on a student. In the HBO video, *Journey into Dyslexia*, by Allan and Susan Raymond (2011), many older students and adults shared their experiences by mentioning feelings of low self-esteem, frustration, and the need to work harder to understand material. Many times, educators have crowded classrooms which can cause a lack of one-on-one time. As revealed through personal communication (Moore, 2017), dyslexia characteristics can sometimes be confused with attention problems. Although dyslexia can have a comorbidity with attention disorders, they do not consistently present together. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2017), it is estimated that 30% of those with dyslexia have coexisting Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It is vital for students to be evaluated if symptoms of either disorder persist.

There are a variety of learners in classrooms across the nation at any given time. These students are kinesthetic learners, others visual, and some are auditory. This variance in learning does not change for students with dyslexia. Research (Peterson et al., 2017) reveals that teachers trained in “a multisensory, systematic, direct instructional approach” (p. 78), will benefit learners with dyslexia the most. Students need all support options available to them in order to promote academic success.

## **Conclusion**

There is still much to learn about dyslexia and how it effects a child’s cognitive development. Technology has been helpful with the creation of spell-check and audio screen readers. While some people with dyslexia learn to compensate nicely and develop symptomatic treatment, it is important to note that it never goes away and there is no cure. Students with dyslexia in the classroom need support from patient, highly-skilled, caring educators whose main goal is seeing a student succeed in learning and in life.

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# AFFINITY SPACES: Reflections from an EL elementary teacher

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## Abstract

Utilizing a practitioner autoethnographic approach, this article is critiquing conversations around transferability and affinity spaces within multilingual classroom practices. Two prominent themes emerged from the year long reflections on my own practices within an EL 4th grade classroom. A critique of the role of teacher stance and curriculum is also explored.

Bilingual learners seek varied and alternative spaces where they can learn (Bligh, 2014). Conteh and Brock (2010) utilized third space to help them understand the ways bilingual learners develop trust within safe classroom spaces. These hypothesized spaces are sights for learning through empowerment and providing border-crossing space that has the ability to be transformative. A commonly held belief is that classrooms are autonomous structures which are developed by the teacher and that the teacher also sets the tone for language practices (Pennycook, 2010) which occur in that space. However, as Rymes (2010) describes, classrooms should be seen as affinity spaces for learning. The affinity spaces view classrooms as shared spaces where people interact around common goals and norms (i.e. language practices) established in conjunction with each other. Within these affinity spaces students and teachers engage in a participatory culture that allows for negotiation of language norms and practices.

The purpose in writing this article is to take the reader on a journey into my classroom experiences which explores how teachers can develop interconnected cultural and academic spaces for their young bilingual students. One world is represented through the experiences of the Black female teachers working in an English Learner (EL) classroom. Initially I had strong ideas of what these spaces looked like from my experiences in the Midwest. I understood that the language experiences of children in the southeastern United States would be very different. The Midwest has language policies in place to help support bilingual development. At present, Tennessee is an English only state.

Through my reflective journaling about my teaching, I wanted to examine how I was using similar processes in Tennessee that were taught and used in the Midwest. Applying a sociocultural lens to this investigation helped me use my reflections to see the contributions students were able to make to their own learning. Additionally, I was able to problematize my own journey into understanding some of the bilingual experiences in the Southeast.

Pulling from these concepts, I sought to describe how affinity spaces occurred within my classroom and to understand how affinity spaces and groups take shape across a year. Within this study, I use the term bilingual and multilingual interchangeably. I also recognize that states place varying labels on people who are learning English for the first time. For the ease of this paper, I will use the term English Learners (EL) to represent those students in my classroom.

## **Review of Literature**

As teachers of multicultural/multilingual children, we must strive to make use of the myriad of cultural resources that children bring to our classrooms. When taking into consideration that many students enter the classroom with multiple languages, dialects, vernaculars, and linguistic practices, our curriculums and pedagogies should also match the demographic of students we serve. The way students affiliate with their peers, teachers, and other staff highlights, to some degree, the way affinity spaces and affinity groups highlight students comfort with expressions of their multiple identities within the classroom setting.

I maintain the concept of affinity spaces is relevant to bilingual/multilingual literacy studies and the ways classroom teachers understand its role in day to day activities. By way of explanation, the review of literature will highlight the ways affinity spaces have impacted studies of bilingual students in general education classrooms.

## **Affinity Spaces**

What is an affinity space? Gee (2004) states that affinity spaces are locations of informal learning where everyone interacts around a common task. These spaces can be in person or virtual according to his theory. There are some limitations to the types of environments that could be deemed an affinity space. According to Gee (2005), classrooms are not commonly sources of affinity spaces for children. Students are typically segregated by race, gender, ability level, or other demographic factors. Individuals within these affinity spaces relate to each other based on common interests or practices, not limited to the previously mentioned categories. Within these spaces, people use knowledge from within the environment and beyond which enable the growth of new knowledge and learning.

Gee's (2005) example of affinity spaces would translate to bilingual/multilingual classrooms where students are empowered to use their L1 in classroom activities. In a classroom where students

are able to freely blend and mesh their languages would translate into an affinity space. Specifically, Gee highlighted core characteristics that should be present to enhance this probability: (1) Common endeavor, (2) Accommodating, (3) New signs and relationships, (4) Internal grammar, (5) Knowledge gained, (6) Individual and networked knowledge, (7) Dispersed knowledge, (8) Tacit knowledge, (9) Participation, (10) Code-switching, and (11) The instructor is a participant.

Affinity spaces serve as rich spaces for seeing and observing children's literacy practices that stretch across contexts, communities, and tools. I argue that when doing affinity space research in classrooms, the researcher should pay close attention to the following features:

#### *Accommodating space.*

The notion that all people should be able to access the space, no matter what level they are performing at in the classroom. This is important because it requires attention to other academic and social factors that would permit students to work together.

#### *Knowledge*

is distributed across the entire space. Lammers, Curwood, and Magnifico (2012) stated that no one person needs to be all-knowing within an affinity space. Knowledge is in constant development and people are providing their repertoires of knowledge to help enhance the overall learning.

#### *There are no hierarchies or leaders.*

In classroom settings, the implied and literal power structures which exist are in constant tension with the affinity space. The roles within the space often lead to continued social practices from people's experiences. In addition, leadership roles can act as gatekeepers to future participators. The leadership does not have to remain in the hands of the teacher/educator. Leadership can also be shared between students which encourages contributions and increased knowledge. While I recognize there are more tenets to Gee's (2005) approach to affinity spaces, these three areas are key to everyday practice in the bilingual classroom setting.

## **Affinity Groups**

In line with Souto-Manning (2013), I sought to understand the ways membership was permitted within affinity spaces. Affinity group membership, within this particular study,

represented language membership. Affinity groups, in theory, serves as a conduit for multilingual students to be able to extend their linguistic repertoires (Rymes, 2010) while also providing a space for code-meshing to occur<sup>1</sup>. In this type of classroom, students are not restricted linguistically in terms of how they respond or use language for learning and social purposes. Each teacher provides a space (affinity) inside the classroom which promotes and encourages linguistic expression from students to help them learn and interpret concepts in which ever language helps those most. These classroom affinity spaces are now also sites for new language practices and language learning.

Blackledge and Creese (2010) used complementary schools<sup>2</sup> as the sites for their investigations. More specifically, they analyzed the language use in classrooms based on Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory while also providing context on how students negotiate language and learning practices across both of their languages. A classroom that engages in translanguaging becomes a festival cite because it does not replicate the linguistic models found in society. In the classroom students have equal linguistic capital (Bourdieu) and parody manifests itself within multiple languages. Students can recontextualize prior learning by presenting someone else's voice in the form of the language and style of presentation. Lastly, as seen in the Chinese complementary school from Blackledge & Creese, students used the classroom for critical, yet playful, discussions about the power of language as it related to their identity (2010). "While theoretically language may be just one of many markers of identity, in practice it is much more than that, as 'the link between language and identity encompasses both significant cultural and political dimensions'" (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 40). Identity is also being valued within the affinity spaces. In the case of the bilingual/multilingual classroom both identities are being honored in the classroom and students become more conscious of language and power structures in society. Social sciences review of transfer is not limited to the messages but also includes the context and social implications of the environment on the individual. What was not reviewed were the multiple ways student products take shape in the classroom.

## Methods

The narrative approach to research treats the researcher's story as being integral to the process and outcome. It represents an ontological and epistemological stance of generative research.

<sup>1</sup>Code-meshing is the shuttle between repertoires. It provides a space for linguistic resources and allows students to feel confident in pulling from all aspects of their languages.

<sup>2</sup>Complementary schools as described in Blackledge and Creese (2010) were community schools that taught students their heritage language which many of their parents spoke. These schools functioned on weekends and course materials were facilitated from the heritage language country. For example, the Chinese schools received materials from China. The schools were located in the United Kingdom (UK).

process is a close analysis of their personal reality with an added realization that there are additional perspectives and experiences also at play within the space.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

This study is grounded in constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978), which acknowledges the researchers experience as an active participant in the process. The data for this paper was collected over the course of the year. A reflective journal was the primary source of information. All of the names and identifying information was replaced with a pseudonym. All of the information was retrieved by the author. The author is a Black female with more than eight years of K-12 teaching experience.

## **Findings**

This section I show how affinity space and affinity groups presented in my 4th grade classroom. Specifically, by reflecting on Gee's (2005) eleven aspects of affinity spaces, I was able to see how power and brokering influenced my bilingual/multilingual environment. At the same time, this approach to studying my own practice allowed me to ask critical questions about the culture of my classroom and trace the social practices across time and space. I begin by exploring the process of developing an affinity space as a method for literacy learning.

## **Classroom background and Developing an Affinity Space**

In a classroom filled with twenty-four students, most of which were active English Learners (EL) students, I spent a large amount of time establishing a culture of free language expression and access to multilingual materials. I provided students with my background, explained my use and understanding of the Spanish language, and shared my collection of bilingual books with all.

As a new teacher to the school, I was tasked with establishing myself within the culture of the school and with the students in my classroom. Additionally, I was one of a handful of African American teachers at a school with predominately White, female teachers. There were many layers of my own identities that were challenged in the school and classroom. Nonetheless, I continued engaging students in activities that highlighted the cultural knowledge I learned day by day and they began to engage with me and the classroom materials more confidently. Students began to see the classroom as their space and would spend a lot of time in areas of the class that were purposefully designed to highlight their individual selves.

Particular to this study, I focused on the reading area in the room and the discovery wall. The reading area is where students found the classroom library, local newspapers and magazines, stuffed animals, books on disc, and maps. There was a special bookshelf for my collection of books. I had taught the students about the books so they would handle them carefully, but they knew they could access them at any time. Titles included *Migrant*, *Diego Rivera*, *Funny Bones*, *Mis Primeras Palabras*, *A Comer!*, and many others.

The newspapers and magazines were in multiple languages. Gathering periodicals from local churches and grocery stores helped students see portions of their community present in the classroom. At the same time, the inclusion of these resources gave me certain affordances with the students and parents as we spent time together during the year. This is how I began to shape the classroom as an affinity space. I invited all languages, cultures, expressions, and abilities to the classroom setting. Reflecting on my actions throughout the year, I noticed some key activities that explained additional layers of understanding within the affinity space and affinity groups.

### *Affinity spaces take time*

The concept of affinity space and transferability were keen when I began designing my classroom space. I took about a month getting to know the community, teachers, and staff prior to setting up my room so that it reflected the community. As the beginning of the year opened and invited many familiar faces to the school, I soon realized that I was not one of the people in the 'in' crowd. There were no conversations with the teacher that involved a shift between languages, while I would often shift (English to Spanish) on my own accord. Students would stare at the beginning and later I was met with the comment, "Ms. Harrison, I thought you were black?". A few picture stories and projects around Latino culture later, I was no closer to establishing myself as a safe space and they were no closer to speaking with me using their L1. As Gee (2004) points out, participation within affinity groups and spaces is governed by interests, knowledge, and communication. It does not have to embody race, ethnicity, or language. Though I had learned many aspects of the student's language and culture, I was still an outsider in terms of their interests, knowledge, and communication. They had established affinity groups that did not permit me (the teacher/leader) to enter. I also was challenged with what the social norms of the students were in terms of using languages in the classroom. I was outside of what they deemed to be a Spanish speaking individual. My ascribed identity as the monolingual (English), African American, female

teacher was set with my students. I needed to find ways to break through the stereotypical models my students had come to know.

One result of being met with a public shunning within my classroom was the reality of my need to continue to build community within my classroom. With the permission of my students, we began to highlight their cultural backgrounds within our morning meeting activities, finding explicit connections between the curriculum and my students backgrounds. Generally, students were more receptive and participatory when I asked for their input. Students would immediately comment about their family structures in terms of stories of immigration that matched the stories we were learning about.

Another moment of enlightenment occurred as students discovered they could continue their inquiries during center time. Students were empowered to research information that was important to them but also connected to the school content. Jennifer was one of my quieter students. She had older siblings in middle school and she was part of the after school tutoring program that targeted EL students. During college week Jennifer commented on how excited she was to learn about Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and the reasons those institutions were established. According to Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999), teachers who do not share a similar background to the students they teach must take additional steps to build the culture in the classroom. Through the use of morning meeting activities I was able to connect the open environment/ affinity space with my expectations for students, and take steps to helping students feel comfortable expressing themselves in multiple languages.

### *Pedagogical decisions don't always transfer*

In my class I attempted to establish an affinity group around bilingual texts. In large part because of the realities around language loss for EL students. I spoke with a parent during parent teacher conferences about her son. She was excited to tell me about his abilities and where he would attend school the next year. As she looked around my classroom, she noticed my collection of bilingual books on the shelf. "You have Spanish books?", she asked. I nodded and walked over to pick out a few. As I began making my way back to her, she continued to describe her desire for her son to read and speak in Spanish. She had hoped he would continue to practice and learn about his history, but he had no desire to do so. I slowly uttered out my response to her son. "¿No quieres leer en español?" He simple shrugged his shoulders and smiled. His mother responded, "See....nothing."

My parents would often look through my classroom library and borrow texts. In this example, some parents and I formed an affinity group around bilingual texts and an appreciation for becoming bilingual. However, my students had not adopted that stance. I tried various pedagogical approaches toward interacting with my students and showing an appreciation for their multicultural selves. Yet they did not seek membership/inclusion into the affinity group based on bilingual texts.

I continued to wrestle with my lack of success with my students. I spoke with Lara, a young Latina in my classroom, about the books. She would occasionally read the bilingual texts in my classroom, but not many others. She said, “these are the only Spanish books, but everyone can’t read Spanish and we have to know the other stuff.” This was one of the most poignant conversations I had all year. The students didn’t make the connection between reading strategies across languages. The comprehension strategies and annotations we completed were lost in translation. This led me to the conclusion of subtractive bilingualism within the classroom. Subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1979; Winsler, Diaz, Espinosa, & Rodriguez, 1999) occurs when the learning of the majority language does not value the student’s first language (L1). Within my classroom I took steps to highlight the student’s culture and their L1. I also utilized pedagogical approaches I thought would invite them to. Despite those efforts some of my students still experienced the effects of subtractive bilingualism because the curriculum didn’t lend itself to multilingual learners.

Lastly, there are many different forms to classroom participation. It is inevitable that certain students in a classroom won’t be comfortable participating in discussion with the teacher. Add on an additional layer, language, and the teacher is trying to find the best approach to reaching those few. What I failed to do this year was respect the silence of my students. Sometimes a silent discussion provides time and space for students to thoughtfully take in materials, experiences, and cultures from the day/activity. Utilizing online spaces or unconventional methods of expression would have benefited my teaching more. It would have also provided shared leadership in the learning activities.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

The above themes reflect how bilingual/multilingual classrooms are lived by your Latino/a students. For many of the students in my classroom, school was English only and based on a school-based capital, despite my efforts within the classroom. However, it soon became clear that when a student began brokering the language ‘experience’ with their peers, others were more inclined to join in the environment. There still weren’t many who made that decision.

The reflections of experiences with my students and my teaching practice revealed how bilingual/multilingual children developed affinity groups around language and ethnic origins. The need for EL certified teachers and bilingual teachers who don't look like media representations is needed. Additionally, Lammers, Curwood, and Magnifico (2012) believed that because classroom teachers can easily observe a multitude of contexts that students engage with during the day, they are able to observe new pedagogical approaches to language use promote acceptance, learning across languages, transfer of skills across languages, and removing previously held notions in relationship to linguistic capital in the classroom. In contrast, the linguistic capital I'd hope to shed (i.e. English only) remained.

Advances in the ways teachers are approaching multilingual and bilingual learners has provided new approaches to understanding students backgrounds and the skills they bring into the classroom (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Looking forward it is apparent that more research is needed to develop core skills and competencies for affinity spaces. Of continued interest to me are the curricular implications around affinity spaces. The ability for students to extend their repertoires and also make curricular connections across languages would be the most ideal situation for learning and not promoting language loss.

The success of future practitioner research on bilingual/multilingual affinity space in EL classrooms requires that more language educators assume the task of organizing and researching the communities of students in their classroom. Such endeavors have a wide diversity of potential for language practice the development of intercultural competence, learning of skills, and reframing student/parent understanding of public education. Additionally, it could provide insights into language acquisition with less intervention pedagogies to monitor the growth of the language.

This year long reflection helped shape my next steps as a researchers and teachers within EL classrooms. I hope to assist my fellow teachers become more critical about their practice, what they are promoting within their classrooms, and understand the power we can provide students so they can eventually advocate for themselves.

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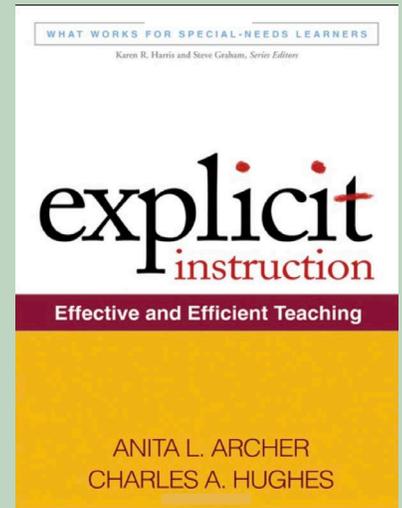
# BOOK REVIEWS



# *Explicit instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*

by Anita L. Archer & Charles A. Hughes Guilford Press,  
2011, 278pp. ISBN 978-1-60918-041-6 \$44.

Reviewed by Joyce Harris, Northern Kentucky University  
and Erlanger Elsmere Independent Schools, (district literacy coach)



Our district has many diverse learners who struggle with the acquisition of a strong academic vocabulary. Teachers are consistently requesting strategies to better meet the needs of our students. My copy of Explicit Instruction has dozens of colorful tabs sticking out at the top and side and has proven to be a go to source to share with district teachers at all levels in a variety of content areas. The focus on vocabulary instruction provides an effective, easy to follow plan with clear concise procedures that enable students to learn the essential concepts and strategies, experience guided practice and receive timely feedback.

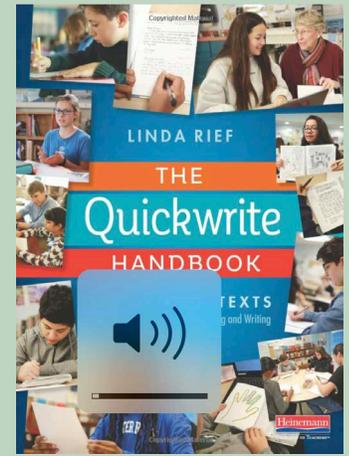
Explicit Instruction, Effective and Efficient Teaching is one in a series of books published by Guildford Press entitled What Works for Special-Needs Learners. Anita L. Archer and Charles A. Hughes set the tone for this book with the quote “How well you teach = how well they will learn”. The 8 chapters provide details about the 16 elements of explicit instruction that is appropriate for all grade levels and content areas, to address the needs of diverse learners. The message consistently focuses on the importance of step by step modeling, using clear and concise language, followed by repeated practice over time and corrective feedback. Sample application lessons are embedded throughout the book such as algebra lesson on parentheses, determining the main idea, vocabulary selection for primary read alouds, and creating examples to illustrate a rule.

The book also provides access to several video clips modeling the explicit instructional process including strategies for decoding, vocabulary and writing at the elementary level. There are additional segments for secondary educators which focus on building background knowledge and vocabulary. The reproducible pages that accompany each chapter provide a step by step guide

for opening a lesson, presenting the skills or strategy, modeling, guided practice, independent practice and finally a process for review. Archer and Hughes state in their concluding paragraph “As teachers, we constitute the most critical variable in student achievement. What we do on a daily basis has an enormous impact on students’ learning.” This book offers a structure and support for all teachers as they strive to provide effective and efficient instruction for all students.

# *The Quickwrite Handbook: 100 Mentor Texts to Jumpstart Your Students' Thinking and Writing* by Linda Rief

Reviewed By: Eileen Shanahan, Ph.D., Eastern Kentucky University



This book provides a collection of mentor texts and corresponding quickwrite prompts for teachers to use to facilitate their writing instruction. Using engaging and short mentor texts, the book aims to provide an instructional resource for teachers to motivate all writers. As made clear by the title, this is a handbook for teachers; as such, it does not spend much space describing the research or experiences from which these ideas are based, but rather jumps right into minilesson ideas for teachers to use in their classrooms.

## **Key Instructional Constructs**

The Quickwrite Handbook is based on the understanding that students improve as writers when they write often, which includes the process of brainstorming ideas for writing. For Rief, quickwrites are critical for having students generate ideas for writing. It is also based on the notion that by providing students with accessible and high interest models of quality writing, it will increase students' motivation for writing themselves. Finally, this book rests on the foundational idea that by studying and mimicking the moves that authors make in mentor texts, students will improve as writers.

## **Quickwrites**

As quickwrite is a concept defined and practiced in varying ways by teachers and researchers of writing, Rief is clear to clarify what she means by a quickwrite. To her, quickwrites are opportunities for students and the teacher to write continuously for two-three minutes with a mentor text as a guide. That mentor text can serve as a model for content ideas (e.g., writing about a similar experience as the one presented in the text), or for craft ideas (e.g., modeling writing after one particular line in a text). Quickwrites should occur multiple times a week, opportunities for

sharing and feedback should be given, and quickwrites can evolve into larger more polished pieces or end that day. Rief argues that quickwrites help to build our students' confidence, develop as writers, and grow as readers.

## Layout of the Text

After a thorough introduction to the text and to the concept of quickwrites, Rief divides the book into four sections. These sections include: Seeing Inward, Leaning Outward, Beyond Self, Looking Back. These topics somewhat mirror the types of connections that we ask students to make in their reading and writing: self, others/other texts, the world, and then back to a more informed self. She states that these four themes generally outline the progression of her teaching across the year, but that she also picks and chooses across sections as needed. The mentor texts contained in these sections are all either poems in their entirety, passages from novels or short stories, or quickwrites that she or her students wrote at one time. She then offers a few quickwrite prompts that teachers might use to go along with the ideas and craft moves in the mentor texts. The prompts often begin as: Borrow this (insert line from text) and let it lead your thinking; Write about a time when \_; Write about what comes to mind for you when reading this text.

## Conclusions

The Quickwrite Handbook rests on critical concepts in teaching writing that, as teachers, we know to be true, but sometimes skip because of everything else that we feel we need to cover. Rief reminds us of the importance of giving our students opportunities to write, giving and receiving feedback, writing along with our students, and using mentor texts. It is highly practical and truly one of those texts that you could read parts of one day, then implement those ideas on the next day.

While the mentor texts and prompts are largely centered around narratives, personal essays, poetry, and other creative types of writing, with some revising and creativity, these ideas could be expanded to have utility in informative and argumentative writing too. Better yet, perhaps this text will ignite the flame in each of us to create a collection of our own mentor texts to use across all types of writing—both fictional and nonfiction. Rief encourages readers to use the book as a starting point for gathering mentor texts—not as an end all, be all. This highly useful text can enhance instruction in upper elementary, middle, and high school classrooms to foster a love for the craft of writing and provide specific ways that mentor texts can be used to help achieve this lofty, but important instructional goal.

# STUDENT WRITING



# Sing, Sing, Sing

By: Adrianna Hine

Sing, sing, sing

Will you sing to me please?

Sing to me from the tree tops

Like the birds calling my name

Let your words flow through me

As if rain was pouring through the river

Sing, sing, sing

Let your tone warm me

Like the golden flames lit in the fireplace

Let your voice's sound be sweet

Until my world feels like cotton candy underneath

Sing, sing, sing

Let my worries float away

Like the clouds above my head

As your song becomes a story

And reality vanishes away

I lay here to listen

So, please will you?

Sing, sing, sing