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The Oklahoma Reader Editor
Stephan E. Sargent, Ph.D.
Northeastern State University
3100 East New Orleans
Broken Arrow, OK 74014
Work: (918) 449-6000
sargents@nsuok.edu
The Oklahoma Reader

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Invitation to Authors

The Oklahoma Reader invites teachers, graduate students, college and university instructors, and other reading professionals to submit original articles related to all areas of reading and literacy education. The Oklahoma Reader has a large readership of classroom teachers and teacher educators. The editorial board encourages articles about classroom practice and current issues related to literacy education. The Oklahoma Reader also publishes research syntheses and reviews, original research, and reviews of professional materials related to literacy.

Specific instructions for authors are described on page 26.
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Letter from the Editor

As the summer vacation quickly comes to an end, many educators and reading professionals have already been working in their rooms for weeks. Finding new methods and techniques for enhancing reading instruction is a never-ending task! This issue of The Oklahoma Reader is full of ideas to help get your year started with innovative ideas!

This issue has something for everyone inside. Moses, Fischer-Rasmussen, and Lucrezia share fresh thoughts on the use of inquiry. They share how meaningful inquiry involves content-rich explorations through reading, writing, thinking, listening, and sharing. Dr. Lisa Tritschler-Bosogna shares new research and practical ideas about students with Autism. Knowing that many Oklahoma educators will likely serve students with Autism, this study is sure to provide helpful ideas, especially in the area of literacy. Watson & McGowan share ideas about the use of reader's theater with pre-service teachers. This article also reminds all reading professionals of this wonderful, time-tested method of instruction.

Are you interested in integrating literacy and social studies this year? Farris and Vasinda share wonderful ideas for using Google Earth with primary students. This is sure to please as well as teach! These, along with our regular column, provide a wonderful read as you start back. Don’t forget, I’m always happy to hear from you.

Dr. Stephan E. Sargent
Supporting Inquiry Literacy Practices in Diverse Classrooms

Dr. Lindsey Moses,
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University,

Melissa Fischer-Rasmussen
&
Melissa Lucrezia

Teachers often hear the word inquiry and feel overwhelmed about how to support the many processes that go into supporting the content, process, and literacies involved in inquiry units. As I (Lindsey) work with teachers across the country to help them get started with inquiry opportunities to support language and literacy in their classrooms, I frequently hear the question, “Where do I even begin?” This article is going to address that very question by sharing the experiences of getting started with inquiry in a diverse classroom.

Why Inquiry?
Inquiry-based instruction has been documented to increase content knowledge, reading comprehension (Romance & Vitale, 2005), and motivation (Mansfield, 1989). Research has shown that literacy practices found in inquiry-based classrooms assist in meaning construction with informational texts (Guccione, 2011) and provides rich opportunities for language and literacy development, particularly for English learners.
Unfortunately, English learners typically receive rote-based instruction focused on decontextualized skills (Allington, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1995). Many schools are attempting to make a shift away from that type of instruction to a student-centered approach with a focus on 21st century skills, and inquiry provides a perfect opportunity for that.

Background

I (Lindsey) provided professional development to Port Salerno Elementary about supporting language and literacy development through inquiry-based instruction, with a focus on English learners. I introduced and showed examples of the supportive and frequently used literacy practices that included the following: asking questions, documenting new learning, schema documentation, viewing, visually representing, non-fiction text features, connections, summarizing, editing and publishing, organizing research, and presenting (see more detailed explanations of these in Guccione, 2011; Moses, Busetti-Frevert, & Pritchard, 2015). However, no group of students or inquiry projects are the same, so I always encourage teachers to take up and modify the introduced literacy practices. These experiences have to be guided by the needs of the students and specific classroom context.

After the professional development at Port Salerno Elementary, Melissa Fischer-Rasmussen (the classroom teacher) went far beyond the initial ideas of supporting inquiry to create a classroom filled with authentic learning experiences guided by students’ questions.

Supportive Literacy Practices

In the following sections, we share our experiences and practical examples of the three most essential and supportive literacy practices found as Melissa Fischer-Rasmussen (the classroom teacher) made the shift to an inquiry-based classroom with her diverse second graders. First, we share the original literacy practice or concept as it was introduced during the professional development. Then, Melissa Fischer-Rasmussen shares the specific classroom instruction, experiences, and student examples. Finally, Melissa Lucrezia, the literacy specialist, addresses challenges they encountered at the school-level and how they were addressed.

Questioning

Questioning is really the heart of inquiry. Questioning guides students’ big ideas, thinking, research, and documentation of meaning making. Proficient readers constantly ask and answer questions (Shanahan et al., 2010), but this does not always come naturally to all students. I recommend beginning simple with wondering. For English learners and beginning readers, I suggest using a language frame, “I wonder....” in order to get students talking about their curiosities. It is important to emphasize that some answers might be easily found, but others may never be completely answered. Teachers can jot down students’ wonderings as a whole-class about a broader topic of interest. Then, students can begin keeping track of their own wonderings that guide their research and inquiry. These can be documented on sticky notes, inquiry journals, etc. As the questioning becomes more sophisticated, I remind students that the best questions can’t be answered by a simple Google search. The big questioning, thinking, and inquiry requires reading, researching, thinking and collaboration across resources, experts, and content areas. This type of questioning and inquiry can be enhanced by supporting the creation of essential questions first on a whole-group level, but then released to the students.

Summarizing

Summarizing is another strategy used by proficient readers (Shanahan et al., 2010) that can often be challenging for English learners, especially with informational text. Summarizing is an essential component of collecting, documenting, and sharing important information in the inquiry process. However, in previous studies and experiences, I had found that many students were copying information out of the text and using vocabulary that they
were not familiar with. English learners need modeling and multiple opportunities for oral language rehearsal to develop confidence and competence in summarizing informational text. Photograph 1 is a picture of an anchor chart that was used to support summarizing and synthesizing with English learners.

Photograph 1

**Structure, Sequence, and Management**

One of the most common questions I hear about inquiry is related to the structure, sequence, and management. How can we support students’ independence and research while also managing to support the language, literacy, and research needs of an entire classroom? There are many different ways to do this, but having a plan is crucial to the success of inquiry. Inquiry should include an opportunity to bring students’ thinking together in a cohesive final project or presentation, and this requires consideration for an audience other than just the teacher. As teachers think about the sequence and management, they have to consider with whom students will be sharing their new learning.

Some teachers provide open-ended inquiry that includes a checklist or menu of options from which the students can select to meet their inquiry project needs. These often include some type of minimum requirement (one summary, 3 nonfiction text features, etc.). Some teachers have students organize all of their thinking and data collection in an inquiry notebook or folder before putting it together into a final project. Organization and structuring the process can take on many forms, but some type of accountability and goal setting is particularly helpful for sustaining progress.

**What Did It Look Like? Implementation from the Teacher’s Perspective**

As I (Melissa Fischer-Rasmussen) began making a shift in my classroom instruction, I can easily identify the pivotal moments which led to inquiry success with my diverse students: my principal’s initiative to bring engaging instruction through an integrated STEM block, professional development (in the content and inquiry process, and language and literacy support with inquiry), and the moment I realized my students were self-sufficiently monitoring their learning. This section will provide practical details of how I got started in creating a literacy-rich, inquiry-based classroom.

I quickly realized the beauty of inquiry resides with the students guiding their (and my own) learning. Lessons metamorphosed before my eyes and were transformed into teacher-facilitated, student-guided instruction. Students learned immensely more than what I originally had planned to teach because of their self-guided research. However, this did not magically happen with our initial attempts—it involved taking a risk that eventually resulted in rich, effective, and purposeful teaching. As you read this, keep in mind that the children (and I) needed multiple opportunities in order to gain confidence within these practices of questioning, summarizing, and managing the inquiry experiences.

**Questioning**

As an elementary teacher, I know how important it is for young children to be curious about the world around them. Curious children ask questions, and children who ask questions are naturally driven to answer those questions. The key is supporting the initial and continued generation of meaningful questions.

Each of my units began with an introduction of the standard through a read aloud, video, or discussion. During one unit, we
were working on a second-grade standard addressing the human body. Students were asked to keep track of the body systems mentioned in the video and map them in their STEM journals in the form of a web graphic organizer. Afterwards, groups Discussed, Agreed, and Recorded (DAR) their chosen topic and reported to me in a first-come, first-serve manner. Once all groups chose a body system to research, we collaboratively brainstormed a list of essential, or guiding questions and listed them in our journals. These questions were at the core of each specific unit, but there were common questions that arose across multiple units. Students consistently wanted to know the definition by asking, “What does it mean?” regardless of the specific topic or standard we were studying. Other common questions were: “Where is it located? What are the dangers associated with it? What is the impact or importance?” These became the categories in which they easily organized facts acquired during independent research. Facts that did not fit into any of these categories were placed on another page in their journal entitled Fast Facts. See Photograph 2 for an example of the STEM journal entries related to the unit’s guiding questions. Through researching, they broke down boundaries of appropriate text levels and soon mastered the art of wondering—understanding that content learning was limitless if they asked the right questions.

**Photograph 2**

**Summarizing**

Questioning is what guides our students to inquiry, but they must also comprehend and summarize their learning in order to answer the questions and document new learning. Informational texts use complex, content-specific vocabulary which creates a nearly impossible scenario for pre-teaching all of the core words within each unit, particularly when students are self-selecting topics. In order for students to gain ownership over the new knowledge they were interacting with, I implemented a summarizing activity from the professional development that focused on increasing vocabulary development with English Learners. This strategy, "Author’s Words/My Words," refined students’ abilities to summarize a portion of the author’s words into a translated version of their own.

I quickly realized that this skill took more than a few modeling sessions for students to master. Author’s Words/My Words was implemented into our daily literacy rotation. Students worked in partnerships to find interesting facts within an informational text. Students created a T-Chart in their STEM journals which were labeled AW and MW and also cited the title of the text. Under AW, partners copied the text exactly as the author wrote it. Underneath the MW section, partners would discuss what they thought the author’s intended meaning was. See Photograph 3 for an example. One AW/MW sessions between two boys was remarkable in that it lasted more than five minutes because they held such a healthy debate over how one or two words might alter the author’s meaning. This interaction not only promoted summarizing, but also allowed students to rehearse oral language within meaningful, content-rich dialogue.

**Photograph 3**

By supporting their ability to summarize, students naturally transferred this skill into the inquiry units as they read facts, categorized
them into their essential questions, and translated them into their own words.

**Structure, Sequence, and Management**

My young learners became efficient at asking questions and summarizing, as well as displaying incredible teamwork during various components of the units. However, they lacked the organizational skills needed in order to manage progress. I noticed they were more successful if I supported them with a checklist of steps in which they could guide their own progress. See Photograph 4.

![Photograph 4](image)

Students became accustomed to common, structural guidelines and could simply replace the new topic or content. Students *signed off* by dating the completed steps and adding important details in the “Notes” section. Units began with the introduction previously outlined in the “Questioning” section. The next step was independent research, which allowed readers to work through texts using previously taught reading strategies. As the facilitator, I assisted students with difficult content or guided students through summarizing dialogues. One great example of this dialogue occurred with a student studying tornadoes. He was reading below-level, but was able to engage in a powerful conversation with me about how tornadoes were formed based on illustrations within the informational text. The discussion was so rich that even I learned something new about the tornado formation.

![Photograph 5](image)

Towards the end of each unit, I integrated an opportunity for groups to digitally publish their learning. Some examples involved students creating brochures using Microsoft Publisher, interacting with a digital storytelling program called VoiceThread, and presenting a Paper Slide Video using video cameras to record their production. Although I wanted variety in their digital experiences, it was not the chosen program that held the most importance—it was the audience. Students needed to know that there was purpose behind their hard work—that important people were seeing it. Many of my units were accompanied by persuasive letters to specific community groups. For example, students wrote letters to the citizens of our community to convince them to help stop the spread of the Influenza Virus. These letters made their way to the local Health Department and were featured on their monthly community television news channel. Students also wrote persuasive letters to our principal requesting the funds to build new garden beds. By providing students the structure needed to organize their steps and an
authentic audience to present to, my class found validation in their learning.

Through inquiry, my students not only developed stronger language and literacy skills with informational text, they learned core values: collaboration with their peers, determination during difficult tasks, and commitment to finish a process. These skills naturally found their way into other parts of my instruction, as well as their homes.

Challenges and How They Were Addressed: Implementation and Support from the Literacy Coach’s Perspective

Utilizing inquiry projects in a classroom setting comes with challenges that classroom teachers must address. As a literacy specialist, I (Melissa Lucrezia) had the opportunity to observe, identify, and address challenges as they arose in classrooms that were attempting to take an inquiry-based approach. When these challenges are considered and addressed before and during the early stage of inquiry instruction, the students and teachers tend to find greater success in the inquiry process and literacy development.

Resources

One of the biggest concerns we encountered was lack of resources and/or supplies. Many of the inquiry projects that students participate in require some area of research in order to gain information and further enhance any background knowledge the students may already have. Students will need access to multiple sources of informational text, and this can pose a problem depending on classroom libraries and access to computers. One solution we used to address this challenge involved me visiting the school’s teacher resource bookroom with the classroom teacher to locate the necessary supplies in order to facilitate learning. I would also work with the media specialist to find audio or e-books that may be available. I also searched for and shared additional online resources that might be helpful for the selected topics of inquiry at the various grade levels.

Background Knowledge

Another area that posed a challenge for us was the lack of background knowledge and experience that students might have about a given topic before beginning an inquiry project. Background knowledge is one of the key components that supports success in questioning, researching, and sharing. Many of our students would benefit from additional exposure and background building. While we could not take the students to experience and build background on all topics, we worked hard to collect many visual, both pictures and illustrations, to support the initial background building during questioning and summarizing. Additionally, we sought out resources so that students could watch videos or see a real-life demonstration. Artifacts and objects such as maps and globes helped students have a better understanding of the world around them. We found that the initial planning for building background through the previously mentioned strategies facilitated the necessary background that supported students’ understanding of the project.

Helping English Learners with Inquiry

Supporting oral language opportunities with English learners can be a challenge for some teachers, and English learners benefit greatly from a large amount of oral language opportunities. Throughout the inquiry unit we would scaffold students’ understanding while prompting with question stems or sentence starters. I found that using question stems and sentence starters, as well as graphic organizers, in the early stages of the inquiry project, helped the English learners organize their thinking. These question stems and sentence starters provided the initial academic language necessary to document their questions and new learning. With beginning English learners, it might involve the sentence starter, a picture and oral rehearsal. However, this provided opportunity and access for all learners to participate in reading, writing, thinking and sharing their inquiry with differentiated levels of support and required output.

It is very important for all students, especially English learners, to have multiple
opportunities throughout the day to experience the English language through oral language activities. One challenge we found throughout an inquiry project was that some of the English learners were worried about their language being syntactically “correct.” They were not as likely to participate or share their thinking with the class if they did not feel comfortable. As a literacy coach, I would work with the classroom teacher to plan out the inquiry unit by mapping areas where students might have the opportunities to share their thinking or the work they have been doing in non-threatening situations. We would discuss and plan opportunities for differentiated participation to scaffold successful opportunities to interact and engage with their inquiring peers.

Group work, can also be a challenge, and many, if not all, inquiry projects require some form of group work. Prior to starting an inquiry project, we had teachers practice with students how to work together in groups. This involved supporting discussions, taking turns, responding and adding to the speaker’s comments, deciding on responsibilities. In some instances, we asked groups to assign certain jobs and develop norms for their collaborative inquiry. English learners needed to feel as if they are part of the group and that they belong, so we attempted to create partnerships in groups that involved more than one student who spoke the same first language whenever possible.

There were multiple areas that posed a challenge for us, but many of these were overcome with a bit of planning and preparation. The benefits of integrating content, language, literacy and students’ curiosities made the preparation and considerations worthwhile. I recommend consulting with the literacy coach and media specialist because we are often able and eager to help with the resources and literacy support!

Conclusions
Inquiry is not without challenges, and we wanted to be transparent about the ones we faced and how we addressed them. Meaningful inquiry involves content-rich explorations through reading, writing, thinking, listening, and sharing. In order to support students being successful throughout the inquiry process, teachers have to provide the necessary literacy strategies and supports. Getting started with that process can feel daunting, so we broke it down to share our three most essential components for successfully getting started with inquiry in diverse classrooms: questioning; summarizing; structure, sequence, and management. We hope that sharing our practical examples will encourage you to support both English learners and English speakers to engage in meaningful language and literacy development through inquiry.

References
EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT AND SERVICE PREFERENCES OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Dr. Lisa Tritschler
Northeastern State University

Abstract

The type of educational placement and services preferred by parents of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) was explored in this study. Participants (N= 187) included parents of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. However, it must be noted that this study was conducted prior to the development of the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and the children of the participants in this study had previously been diagnosed according to the former DSM-IV which included Asperger syndrome and PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified) within the spectrum of ASD.

Respondents, who represented different regions of the United States, completed an online survey including questions pertaining to educational placement and services as well as satisfaction with their child’s education. Results indicated that the majority of parents preferred the full-time general education classroom, desired their children to receive more special education services than they were actually receiving, and parents with a doctoral degree were significantly more satisfied about their child’s education, placement, and services than parents with a bachelor’s degree. Results also suggest that as the child becomes older, parents become more disenchanted with the services and education received. Conclusively, parents who lived in the Northeast were significantly more satisfied with their child’s education, placement, and services than parents who lived in the Southeast.

Keywords: Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Special Education, Parental Perception

Research has found that the parental preferences of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may vary according to the child’s characteristics or where the child may benefit most among the different placement options, including full-time general education placement and the continuum of services (Handleman, Harris, & Martins, 2005; Patten, Baranek, Watson, & Schultz, 2013). Several studies have found the impact that different educational placements and services can have on students with ASD (Humphrey, 2008; Jones & Frederickson, 2010). Due to the increase in the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting, researchers have specifically examined the effects full-time general education placement has on students with ASD (Humphrey, 2008).

Eldar, Talmor, and Wolf-Zukerman (2010) studied the successes and difficulties of students with ASD who were placed in the general education classroom. They found that those students demonstrated higher levels of social collaboration, obtained more social support, had an assortment of social networking, and had more progressive personal educational goals than students with ASD placed in special education classrooms (self-contained classrooms). On the contrary, parents who prefer a self-contained special education classroom environment may do so because they believe their child’s specific type of disability may not benefit from a full-time general education setting (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, & Nelson, 2001).

A parent’s preference and perception of his/her child’s education is an essential factor when determining the appropriate educational placement and services for a student with ASD. The manner in which parents may
perceive the educational placement of their children and the service options provided is vital to the social and academic development of their children (Dymond, Gilman, & Myran, 2007). Some studies have found the general dissatisfaction of parents of children with ASD toward placement and services offered to their children, specifically older students with ASD in full-time general education classroom settings (Kasari, Freeman, Bauminger, & Alkin, 1999; Lynch & Irvine, 2009). As children with ASD grow older, parents may become less satisfied with the educational services because it may become more obvious that their children’s needs are not being met appropriately (Kasari et al., 1999). Positive preferences (e.g., satisfaction with school placement and educational programs/services for students with disabilities) not only can help create an effective relationship between school and home, but may allow the development of an encouraging learning environment (Dymond et al., 2007). While some studies have found having a positive parental outlook can affect the quality of life for adults with ASD (Billstedt, Gillberg, & Gillberg, 2011), other studies reveal having a negative parental outlook regarding the quality of life for adults with ASD (Howlin, Goode, Hutton, & Rutter, 2004).

Minimal research has been conducted that specifically focuses on the parental preferences regarding educational placement and services of students with ASD. This study investigated the type of educational placement and services preferred by parents of students with ASD. This study was conducted prior to the implementation of the DSM-V and it should be noted that the classifications previously listed in the abstract are not generally accepted, especially since the development of the DSM-V. Thus, the researcher assessed what parents think about the placement and services their children with ASD presently receive. Parents disclosed their preferences toward the educational placement of their child (i.e., full-time general education classroom, pull-out/resource services, or full-time special education classrooms) in addition to the current placement of their child. Parents communicated their preferences and satisfaction concerning an array of special education and related services, and also indicated how well the school prepares their child for the future.

The following research questions guided this study:
1. What are the educational placement preferences of parents of students with ASD?
2. What are the educational service preferences of parents of students with ASD?
3. What are parents’ perceptions about the effectiveness of schools in preparing students with ASD for adulthood?

Method
This study employed a survey research design, utilizing a cross-sectional survey by which data were gathered from parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Participants
Participants in this study were members of several online support groups for parents/guardians of children with ASD. These support groups are available for parents to join through their email provider. There were approximately 300 active members of the support groups combined. The support groups utilized in this study were support groups to assist parents of children with ASD by providing resources, advice, and the ability to communicate with other parents of children with ASD. Parents who completed the survey participated on a voluntary basis. Parents were able to gain access to the survey by viewing a post (including a link to direct participants to the survey) on the online support group wall (support group coordinator permission was granted before posting) and identities of participants remained anonymous. A total of 187 parents of children with ASD participated in this study from across 17 different states, representing the Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, and West regions of the United States. This was an effective response rate of
Measures
Participants were asked to fill out an online survey created by the researcher consisting of questions pertaining to the educational placement of their children as well as the educational services provided. The survey is modeled and is based on empirical studies about parental concerns toward the educational placement and services of children with disabilities (Dymond et al., 2007; Elkins et al., 2003; Kasari et al., 1999). Several questions included in the survey were based on parents’ suggestions by phone interviews conducted between the researcher and four parents of children with ASD, who did not participate in the study or the pilot study discussed in the next section. These parents were asked what type of questions they feel should be on a survey pertaining to the educational placement and services of children with ASD. The first part of the survey included descriptive questions about the child, including type of ASD diagnosis, age the child was first diagnosed, educational placement, and services received at school. The second part of the survey assessed the type of educational placement and services that parents would like their child to receive. The third part of the survey included items that assessed parents’ agreement with statements evaluating their child’s placement, services, preparation for adulthood, and transition; their child’s happiness and improvement; the IEPs; prospects of adult success; and staff support. This section utilized a Likert scale format with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Procedure
To help establish the content validity of the survey developed for this study, six parents of students with ASD (who did not participate in the study) completed the survey as part of a pilot study to assist in determining the clarity of the questions, the survey flow, the sensitivity of the questions, and the length of time needed to complete the survey. Based on this pilot study, it was determined that the average time to complete the survey was approximately fifteen minutes. Parents indicated (via phone interview with the researcher) that all questions were easy to understand and seemed appropriate to the educational needs and preferences for their child with ASD. One parent in particular specified during a phone interview that, “The survey was simple to fill out and I felt that I was able to express my opinions sufficiently.” The researcher worked collaboratively with online support group coordinators (i.e., the gatekeepers) who showed interest in the study and assisted the researcher by recruiting participants. Members of the online support groups received an introductory post that contained the cover letter and the link to the survey instrument.

Results
As a measure of internal consistency, a Chronbach’s alpha was calculated for this sample on the survey used in the study. The reliability coefficient was α = .94, indicating a high internal consistency of the survey. Frequency distributions were utilized for the demographic variables of the sample. These frequencies represent the number of occurrences and valid percentages for each variable. As observed in Table 1, more boys (n = 148, 79.1%) were diagnosed with ASD than girls (n = 38, 20.3%). The age of persons with ASD ranged from 2 to 38. The researcher separated the age in category ranges of 2-5, 6-13, 14-20, and 29-30. About 20 (11.2%) were 2-5 years old, 95 (52.9%) were 6-13 years of age (elementary and middle school), 62 (34.4%) were 14-20 years old (high school and post-high school), and very few (n = 3, 1.8%) were 29 years or older. Participants who indicated their children were 29 years or older were excluded from current placement and services analyses since they are over the age of 21 and are not currently receiving special educational services. Most parents were mothers (n = 164, 91.1%) and had received a Bachelor’s (n = 67, 35.8%) or Master’s degree (n = 46, 24.9%) as their highest degrees earned. Moreover, 126 (66.6%) had a
bachelor’s degree or higher, indicating the relatively high achievement of this group.

The final distribution of diagnoses is described in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

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<thead>
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<td>Age 1-2</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 3-4</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 5-6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 6+</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some numbers may not add to the total number of participants (n = 187) due to missing data.

As discussed previously, this study occurred prior to the development of the DSM-V. Therefore, children of the participants in this study were diagnosed in accordance with the DSM-IV. According to the former DSM-IV (2000), children predominantly exhibit ASD
characteristics by the age of 3. Parents were asked to identify the age their child was diagnosed with ASD. Almost half of the children ($n = 81, 44\%$) were diagnosed between the ages of 1 and 2.

Parents were also requested to indicate the state they reside in. The states represented in this study were divided into four regions of the United States. Representing the Southeast were the states of Florida, Arkansas, Texas, Kentucky, and Georgia. States representing the Northeast included New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Jersey. The West included the states of Colorado, Idaho, and New Mexico. Lastly, the Midwest included the states of Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. Table 1 indicates that parents were almost equally distributed in the four regions of the United States.

One of the questions of this study investigated the educational placement preferences of parents of children with ASD. The specific research question was: What are the educational placement preferences of parents of students with ASD? However, first, parents were requested to indicate their child’s current educational placement. Placement was defined as five different categories, full time in a general education classroom, part-time in a special education classroom (the remaining time spent in the general education classroom), full-time in a special education classroom, special school for students with diverse disabilities, and special school for students with ASD. Parents who indicated their child’s placement occurred at a special school for students with diverse disabilities ($n = 8$) were collapsed with those who indicated that their child was placed in a special school for students with ASD ($n = 17$). Descriptive statistics identified that 52 (30.6%) students were currently placed in full time general education classrooms, 51 (30.0%) were placed part-time in a special education classroom, 42 (24.7%) were placed in a part-time special education classroom, and 25 (14.7%) were currently placed in a special school for students with ASD.

Frequencies and proportions of parents who preferred a type of school placement given the current educational placement of their offspring was reported. This analysis was conducted regardless of diagnosis. A chi-square analysis was generated to find out if current educational placement and preferred educational placement were independent from one another. A significant difference was found between current educational placement and preferred educational placement, $x^2(7)=125.84, p<.001$. Parents who had students in a full-time general education classroom had a significantly higher preference for this type of placement ($n=45, 86.5\%$).

Another question asked: What are the preferred educational services of parents of students with ASD? But first, parents were asked to specify which types of special education services their children with ASD currently receives. Parents were to check all that apply from a list of the following services: applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech, language, social skills, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavioral management (not ABA), assistive technology, counseling, sensory, communication, early intervention, and transition. Participants also were able to provide particular services that may not have been listed on the survey in a separate section of the survey. Frequencies and proportions of parents who preferred a type of service were reported. Inferences were not conducted to compare current and preferred educational services. These analyses were not conducted due to the non-independence of observations, since parents could select as many services as they wanted.

Approximately 67.9\% ($n = 127$) of the students received speech services and nearly 55.6\% ($n = 104$) of the students received occupational therapy. The preferred services were speech ($n = 120, 64.2\%$), social skills training ($n = 149, 79.7\%$), occupational therapy ($n = 111, 59.4\%$), sensory integration ($n = 95, 50.8\%$), and communication training ($n = 104, 55.6\%$). Figure 1 illustrates the current and preferred special education services for selected services. The eight services selected were those that showed the highest differences between receiving and preferring a specific educational service and those services exhibiting a high desire regardless of how many
services currently received. Figure 1 indicates that, overall, for each service there was a higher desire to receive that service compared to the actual percentage of students who were receiving it, which is consistent with other analyses described in the next section.
Satisfaction with the child’s education, placement, and services was also investigated in this study. Parents completed a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on items regarding, services, placement, child’s interest in school, child’s academic and behavioral progress, knowledge of professionals, teacher strategies, smaller classes, collaboration, acceptance by students without disabilities, transitional services, and IEP meetings. The last three items (i.e., school provides adequate transitional services, school assists families to plan for their child’s post school employment, and school prepares their children with ASD to be an independent adult) of the Likert scale were answered by parents of students who were 14 years old or older, since they focused on current transitional issues. Means and standard deviations for each item in the scale (from 1 to 5) were reported. The issues that showed higher parental satisfaction were: attendance at IEP meetings ($M=4.82$, $SD=0.608$), desire for more services ($M=3.97$, $SD=1.011$), the child likes school ($M=3.83$, $SD=1.205$), and awareness of services available ($M=3.81$, $SD=1.017$). Results showed that when parents were requested to provide their satisfaction about transitional services (for children over the age of 14 only), parents specified lower satisfaction ratings toward the ability of schools to provide adequate transitional services ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.08$) for
their children with ASD, assisting families to plan for their child’s post school employment/college ($M=2.79$, $SD=1.14$), or preparing their children with ASD to be an independent adult ($M=2.72$, $SD=1.18$).

Parents were asked on a Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree whether they felt their child should receive more services than he/she currently receives and whether they felt the services their children received were sufficient. Sufficient was defined as whether the parent feels their child has made academic, behavioral, and/or functional progress due to the educational services provided by the school. A total score for number of services was created by adding up all the current services that parents indicated their children were receiving. Pearson $r$ correlations were conducted to assess if there was a relationship between Total Number of Services, parent desire for more services, and whether services were sufficient. Total Number of Services was positively correlated with parental desire for more services, $r = .220$, $p<.05$; both variables shared about 4% of their variance. Total Number of Services was also positively correlated with the sufficiency of current services, $r = .201$, $p<.05$; both variables shared about 4% of their variance. These positive relationships suggest that parents whose children were receiving more services still desired to receive even more services although, at the same time, they felt the services received were sufficient. The finding that parents desire to receive more services aligns with Figure 1 that compares current services to preferred services.

Adding up all the scores in the Likert scale, excluding the last three questions that were designed for students over the age of 14, created a total score and a new variable, Total Satisfaction. Total Satisfaction refers to parents’ overall satisfaction with the child’s education, services, and placement. Pearson $r$ correlations were also conducted to determine the relationship between Total Number of Services and Total Satisfaction. Total Number of Services was positively correlated with Total Satisfaction, $r = .266$, $p<.001$; both variables shared about 4% of their variance. This positive relationship indicates that parents whose children received more services, showed a higher degree of satisfaction.

An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether parents differed on their Total Satisfaction and Total Number of Services based on their child’s primary condition. Means and standard deviations for Total Satisfaction and Total Number of Services by condition were analyzed. Results indicated that no significant differences existed by condition on parents’ Total Satisfaction, $F(2, 148) = .463$, $p>.05$, or on Total Number of Services, $F(2,138)=2.219$, $p>.05$.

This study also investigated parental perceptions about transitional services. Specifically, the research question asked: What are parents’ perceptions about the effectiveness of schools in preparing students with ASD for adulthood? Three questions on the Likert survey inquired about parental satisfaction with special education transitional services for children over the age of 14. A total score was created by adding up the three scores that addressed satisfaction with special education transitional services. An ANOVA was conducted to assess whether parents differed in their satisfaction of transitional services based on their child’s primary condition. Means and standard deviations for Total Transitional Satisfaction by condition were analyzed. Results indicated that no significant differences existed by condition on parents’ Transitional Satisfaction, $F(2, 87) = .421$, $p>.05$. Similarly, Pearson $r$ correlations were conducted to indicate if there was a relationship between Total Transitional Satisfaction and Total Number of Services. However, there was no significant relationship found between Total Number of Services and Total Transitional Satisfaction, $r = .198$, $p>.05$.

To further investigate the overall parental satisfaction with education, services, placement, and transitional satisfaction, one-way ANOVAs were generated to assess whether parents differed in their Total Satisfaction and Transitional Satisfaction based on parents’ highest level of degree completed. Means and standard deviations for Total and Transitional Satisfaction by parents’
highest degree were reported. Results indicated that no significant differences existed, based on parent highest degree, on parent Transitional Satisfaction, $F(2, 86) = .525, p > .05$; however, there was a significant difference by parent highest degree on Total Satisfaction, $F(2, 147) = 4.248, p < .05$. Tukey post-hoc tests indicated that parents with a doctorate degree were more satisfied than parents with a bachelor’s degree.

A Pearson $r$ correlation was conducted to assess if there was a relationship between parents’ Total Satisfaction and the age of their children with ASD. Total Satisfaction was found to be negatively correlated with the age of children with ASD, $r = -.211, p < .05$; both variables shared about 4% of their variance. This result suggests that as the child becomes older, parents become less satisfied with educational services.

In one of the questions, parents were requested to specify the age that their children were diagnosed with ASD. Means and standard deviations for age of diagnosis, Total Satisfaction, and Total Transition by preference of small class were analyzed. ANOVAs were conducted to assess whether the age of diagnosis was related to small class preference, to Total Satisfaction, and to Total Transition satisfaction. Results indicated that there was a significant difference based on age of diagnosis on parental preference of a smaller class for their child, $F(3, 177) = 4.61, p < .05$. Post-hoc tests (Tukey) indicated that parents of children who were diagnosed with ASD at the earliest age (1 to 2) had a higher 3.975, $p < .05$; and on the perception that the educational placement is conducive to learning, $F(3, 170) = 3.169, p < .05$. The ANOVA results are shown in Table 2. Post hoc tests (Tukey) indicated that parents in the Northeast and West felt more positively that their children liked to go to school than those in the Southeast and Midwest. Parents in the Northeast felt more positive that professionals who provide services to their children were knowledgeable about ASD, their children were happy at school, and the educational placements of their children were conducive to learning when compared to the three other regions. Tukey results indicated that parents in the Southeast differed significantly from the other three regions in that they felt that their children were less accepted by students without disabilities, $F(3, 174) = 3.231, p < .05$.

Based on the findings of these individual items, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the differences in Total Satisfaction between parents in the four regions of the United States. Table 2 indicates that there was a significant difference on Total Satisfaction based on the region, $F(3, 144) = 2.694, p < .05$. Post hoc tests (Tukey) indicated that parents in the Northeast were significantly more satisfied preference for their children being in a smaller class compared to parents whose children were diagnosed at the age of 5 to 6. However, no significant differences by age of diagnosis were found on parent Total Satisfaction, $F(3,145) = .346, p > .05$, and on Total Transition, $F(3,860) = 1.34, p > .05$.

Finally, to further address the research questions regarding parental preferences of educational placement and services, an ANOVA was generated to assess whether parents differed on their preferences of educational placement and services based on the region where they reside. (Only those items that showed significant differences by region are reported, as well as the Total Satisfaction scores.) Among the list of items, parents were asked whether their child likes to go to school, whether other professionals are knowledgeable about ASD, whether their child is happy at school, whether the educational placement of the child is conducive to learning, and whether their child is accepted by students without disabilities. Means and standard deviations for the above individual items, as well as the Total Satisfaction scores by region of residence.

Results indicated that there were significant differences by region of residency on all the above-mentioned items. Parents differed on their perceptions that their children like to go to school based on the region, $F(3,175) = 7.001, p < .001$; on the agreement that other professionals who provide services to their children are knowledgeable about ASD, $F(3,172) = 3.022, p < .05$; on the belief that their children are happy at school, $F(3,175) = 3.231, p < .05$. Tukey results indicated that parents in the Southeast differed significantly from the other three regions in that they felt that their children were less accepted by students without disabilities, $F(3,174) = 3.231, p < .05$. Table 2 indicates that there was a significant difference on Total Satisfaction based on the region, $F(3,144) = 2.694, p < .05$. Post hoc tests (Tukey) indicated that parents in the Northeast were significantly more satisfied...
than those living in the Southeast region of the country. Finally, an ANOVA was conducted to assess whether the number of services children receive differed amongst the regions. However, no significant differences were found on Total Number of Services by region, \( F(3,177) = .559, p > .05 \).

### Table 2

**ANOVA: Likert Scale Items and Total Satisfaction by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Likes to Go to School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>27.967</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.302</td>
<td>7.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>233.006</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.331</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other professionals who provide services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.538</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.179</td>
<td>3.022</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>180.957</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1.052</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My child is happy at school</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>14.857</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.952</td>
<td>3.975</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>218.037</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.246</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational placement is conducive to learning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>12.335</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.112</td>
<td>3.169</td>
<td>.026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>220.590</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.298</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My child is accepted by students without disabilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>11.376</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.792</td>
<td>3.231</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>204.220</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1.174</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Satisfaction</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1721.320</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>573.773</td>
<td>2.694</td>
<td>.048</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>30669.97</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>212.986</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the educational placement and service preferences of parents of children with ASD. Thus, two of the research questions specifically explored both the educational placement preferences and the educational service preferences. When simply comparing the mean scores, many parents surveyed preferred that their children be placed in general education or in an inclusive classroom. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Kasari et al. (1999). Their research presents the notion that parents of children with ASD chose the general education classroom for both academic and non-academic interactions. The finding that so many students with ASD are fully included supports the inclusion reform movement’s idea of including students with disabilities into the full-time general education classroom (Andrews & Lupart, 2000), an idea with which parents seem to be satisfied.

This study also sought to assess parental preferences of special education services. This was investigated in four areas of the survey: parents were specifically asked to specify the current services their children were receiving, whether their children should receive more services, whether they felt services were sufficient, and finally to indicate which services they desired for their children. Results indicated that parents preferred that their children receive more services, particularly language services, social skills, assistive technology, sensory integration, communication training, and transitional services. Two of the desired services were also those that most of the children with ASD were already receiving: speech services and occupational therapy. In other words, although students were receiving these specific services, parents still desired more similar educational services. Parents whose children received more services had a higher degree of satisfaction and felt those services were sufficient as reported in the Pearson correlations conducted in this study. This result may seem contradictory, but as children receive more services, parents become more aware of the services available to them; thus, although they may be more satisfied, parents may still be willing to receive additional services. A specific survey question regarding awareness of services indicated that parents are aware of all services accessible to their children. Therefore, they feel that the services their children receive are sufficient, but still desire even more educational services.

Consistent with the findings in this study, the research study conducted by Dymond et al. (2007) discovered that parents requested more services for their students with ASD. Dymond et al. also found that parents wanted more services in the areas of language, social skills training, and transitional services. Lynch and Irvine (2009) also discuss how parents of children with ASD emphasize the need for the increase of ASD specific services to benefit their children’s needs. Resembling the other studies mentioned, this research study also signified the desire for more ASD-specific services such as social skills training, sensory integration, and assistive technology.

The final question of this study inspected parental perceptions about the effectiveness of schools in preparing their children for adulthood. Three particular questions addressed the issue regarding preparation for adulthood. No significant differences were found on parental satisfaction of transitional services, based on their child’s primary condition. However, as discussed in the previous section, parents indicated a desire for more transitional services when comparing current transitional services and preferred transitional services. Considering this study did not specifically inquire about post-secondary goals, it could be possible that parents desired more transitional services to assist students with their post-secondary goals. Few research studies have been conducted regarding parental satisfaction of transitional services, but as society becomes cognizant of the increasing ASD prevalence in adulthood, more studies may arise as parental concerns increase.
This study did reveal a significant relationship between parents’ total satisfaction with their children’s education and parents’ educational levels. It was found that parents who obtained a bachelor’s degree were less satisfied with their children’s education than parents who obtained a doctorate degree. Limited research has been conducted in the area of special education parental satisfaction, parental preferences, and parental education levels to provide explanations, but theories for this significant result are expressed further in this study.

Analysis also indicated that the age of the child at the time of the study was negatively correlated with overall satisfaction, indicating that parents of younger children were more satisfied than parents of older children. To confirm these correlations, parents of children 14 years and older showed less satisfaction when specifically asked about transitional services and preparation for adulthood. Montes, Halterman, and Magyar (2009) conducted a similar study on parent preferences of children with ASD. Similar to this study, they found that parents of older children with ASD were less satisfied with their children’s education and services than parents of younger children with ASD. This study disclosed the aspect that parents of older children are less satisfied with their child’s education than parents of younger children. Other studies have revealed corresponding results by relating dissatisfaction toward special education and services by parents of older children with ASD (Kasari et al., 1999; Lynch & Irvine, 2009).

One could speculate from the results of this study and the research conducted by Kasari et al. previously discussed, that parents have high hopes or expectations for educational placement and services when their children are younger. When schools fail to meet their high expectations, parents may end up developing negative attitudes resulting in an overall dissatisfaction with placement and services over time. Parents may be developing their own viewpoints based upon the negative experiences that their children encounter over time in school and therefore develop more negative preferences or attitudes toward educational placements and services. Parents of younger children who have not experienced many issues with services and have not had the opportunity to develop their own viewpoints may have more positive attitudes and preferences, including higher expectations and hope. Parents of older children may have more priorities to attend to with their children as their needs change and they expect more out of the educational system (Starr & Foy, 2012).

One of the most interesting findings in this study involved the four regions of the United States. When comparing parental satisfaction with their children’s education based on region of residence, results revealed that parents in the Northeast were significantly more satisfied with services than those in the Southeast region of the country. Theories regarding these results are discussed in the next section.

Conclusion

It is evident from this research study and other studies previously mentioned (Lynch & Irvine, 2009; Dymond et al., 2007; Kasari et al., 1999), that parents of children with ASD desire more special education services. The results of this study could raise questions as to why extra services are not accessible to students with ASD. Unfortunately, more often than not, special education budgets are cut on a yearly basis, possibly preventing more ASD services to be offered. Budget cuts often lead to a shortage in special education teachers and/or related service providers. West and Hardman (2012) describe the critical shortage of special education teachers and suggest that federal funding should assist in alleviating the budget problem. Overall, they explain how this is an underlying issue in all areas of education and often school districts are limited as to which areas of education they are able to support financially.

On a positive note, this study exposed the concept that parents of children with ASD are, overall, satisfied with their current educational placement and do not desire a change in their placement. This could be attributed to the inclusion reform movement.
over the past few decades. Lynch and Irvine (2009) explain in their research that the trend in the ASD community is parallel with the inclusive education reform movement by utilizing best practices as an educational model. Even though the debate amongst researchers between a continuum of services and inclusion still exists, parents seem to be satisfied with their current educational placement.

Research suggests that students with ASD and other disabilities are encountering difficulties after graduation and parents are concerned about the future of their offspring in adulthood (Billstedt et al., 2011; Camarena & Sarigiani, 2009; Johnson, Mallard, & Lancaster, 2007; Tymchuk, Lakin, & Luckasson, 2001). This study discovered that parents of children with ASD over the age of 14 seemed to be dissatisfied with their current education. Moreover, as previously explained, parents of younger children showed more satisfaction overall with the services schools provide than parents of older children. This may be a result that their children have not entered adulthood and parents are not able to witness if their children are struggling independently as adults. Camarena and Sarigiani discovered that parents of children with ASD felt that schools should provide more training toward a vocational or postsecondary school track in order for the children to become more independent, which may need to occur in a different educational placement setting.

Parents did indicate a yearning for more transitional services in this research study, which denotes a growing concern and need for adult preparation considering the influx of ASD diagnosis over the past decade. The prevalence of ASD has increased significantly and these students will be transitioning into adulthood during the next decade. Sullivan (2005) discussed the fact that there are only 25 agencies that voluntarily provide services specifically for adults with ASD. Parents are possibly now becoming more aware that the prevalence of ASD is surpassing the amount of services available to adults with ASD, giving reason for the growing concern and desire for more services prior to adulthood.

Parental education level and parents’ satisfaction were significantly interrelated in this study. Research conducted by Mandell and Salzer (2007) indicated that over half of the caregivers of children with autism who had a college degree had ever belonged to a support group. Support groups similar to the ones in this study, may allow parents to educate themselves regarding ASD by communicating with other parents and utilizing the resources offered to them through an online support group. Therefore, they are able to advocate for their children, possibly providing a rationale for the occurrence of higher satisfaction results. It could be possible that parents with a higher degree are more conscious or educated regarding the educational placements and services available to their children. Due to their higher educational level, they may have acquired research skills and are able to access research studies on ASD or resources for their children more effectively than those with a lower educational level. Many of these parents take the advocacy role and learn more about available educational opportunities by researching them (Stoner & Angell, 2006). So therefore, they are more satisfied with their children’s placement because such placements are actually the placements for which they advocated.

Finally, this study revealed that parents of students with ASD in the Northeast of the United States are inclined to be more satisfied with the educational placement and services than parents in the Southeast. Not much research has been conducted on the comparison of parental preferences across regions of the United States. It is possible that more services for students with ASD or teacher professional development are being provided in the Northeast; however, this study did not indicate that any one particular region was receiving more services than another. It may also be a possibility that more support groups are available in the Northeast for parents of children with ASD compared with parents in the Southeast. In-depth comparative studies should be conducted about the differences that exist in the provision of special education.
services across the country as well as ASD support groups available to parents. To further elaborate on this issue, Henderson (2011) reported that states in the Northeast offer content-specific summer trainings to general education teachers, which focus on how to assist and provide accommodations to students with disabilities in the classroom. As mentioned previously, the Northeast may also provide more family support than what might be offered in the Southeast. Research shows that some of the states in the Northeast do provide intensive behavioral interventions to families of children with ASD (Henderson, 2011). This combination of both educator professional developments in the area of educational services and behavioral interventions for families of children with ASD may allocate more positive experiences for students.

**Limitations**

This study did experience some limitations. These limitations may significantly impact the generalizations of the results of this study. The participants of this study were all members of particular online support groups and may not be an accurate representation of all parents of children with ASD throughout the United States. If more members checked their email or logged onto the online support group, there may have been more participants. An attempt was made by the researcher to provide daily-posted reminders to complete the survey for those members who may not have logged onto the online support group within an extended period of time, but participants notified the researcher that postings were too abundant and the researcher reduced the amount of postings to once a week.

The data for this study came from online parent support groups for families of children with ASD, and their views may differ from families who are not members of similar online support groups. Self-reported parental preferences were represented in this research. It is unknown whether these self-reports truly reflect what may be occurring in the school districts. Even though parents and schools are encouraged to collaborate with one another, it is improbable that parents are completely aware of everything that transpires in the classroom.

This study took place during the implementation of the DSM-IV. Results may vary had this study been conducted after the publication and practice of the DSM-V. Lastly, it should be taken into consideration that not all parents or caregivers of children with ASD have access to a computer for an online support group. Results may have varied if this study included face-to-face participants involved in support groups.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

We know that the number of children identified with ASD continues to grow rapidly across the United States and as educators we try to make sure that these students are not only educated in the correct educational settings where they can learn to their fullest potential, but that they are receiving the services they need to become independent citizens of our society.

Findings from this study propose numerous questions for future research that should be understood at the local, state, and federal levels.

More research needs to be conducted on parental preferences in the four regions of the United States. This study did not investigate the rationale as to why parents in the Northeast of the United States are more satisfied. Specific variables need to be investigated, such as precise services provided to students with ASD, types of supports provided to families of students with ASD, socio-economic status, and parent educational levels. This study did not uncover a link between parent education levels and regions of the United States in regards to satisfaction levels of educational placement and services, indicating that more research may need to be conducted in this area. If researchers can discover what enables parents from a specific region to be more satisfied with different placements and services, then maybe these discoveries could be implemented in other regions in the United States.
Considering this study was conducted during the implementation of the DSM-IV, a similar study involving the new DSM-V would be appealing. This study did not address the severity of ASD or where the children of the participants fell from high to low functioning. It would be thought-provoking to see if the same manner of parental preferences (educational placement and services) would differ among the different functioning levels of children with ASD. Likewise, considering this study discovered that parents of older students are more discouraged along with parents indicating the desire for more particular services, an in depth study to investigate the rationale as to why these parental preferences have transpired would be noteworthy. Results of a study suggested above could influence the types of placement and services provided as students become older.

Further research needs to be conducted involving parents’ educational and services preference variables and the effect those preferences may have on the academic and social performance of children with ASD. Countless research studies have been completed on parents’ perceptions and the effect those perceptions have on academic and social progress of children with diverse disabilities (Fan & Chen, 2001; McDonnall, Cavenaugh, & Giesen, 2012), but few studies have been completed that specifically address children with ASD. Students with ASD learn and socialize in vastly different ways and their parents may have different perceptions, preferences, or attitudes when compared to parents of children with other disabilities. The educational placement and services provided to students with ASD has improved immensely in the past few decades (Rapin, 2005), however, this research study demonstrates the vital need for school districts to continue to improve the educational placement and services they provide to students with ASD.

References


Introducing Readers Theater Using Preservice Teachers to Elementary Students In an Urban School

Dr. Allyson L. Watson
Northeastern State University
Dr. Orlenthea S. McGowan
Langston University

Abstract

Research literature has identified there are positive implications for the impact of Readers Theater on elementary students. This study examines the use of Readers Theater implemented through a school-university partnership in an urban school setting. The researchers led a cohort of preservice teachers through intricate teaching and training sessions on Readers Theater, which developed into a focused service learning project with elementary students. Through qualitative inquiry, participant reflection and journal writings, the outcomes provided a clear indication that the impact was dually reached. The preservice teachers experienced growth through their practice and reflection and the elementary students achieved academic enrichment in fluency, accuracy and overall motivation in reading.

Keywords: Readers Theater, urban schools

Introduction

In every preservice teacher development program, reading pedagogy and instructional techniques are a high priority. We know and understand legislative reading mandates within Oklahoma, and we are aware of the national emphasis placed on students reading ability in other states. To mitigate the trepidation around teaching reading, this research study allowed preservice teachers to experience hands on activities in a small, less intimidating school setting. Readers Theater is a dramatic presentation of a story in script form. The reading parts are divided among the readers, and students can read from a script. No memorization, special equipment or lighting is needed to perform a Readers Theater. Readers Theater presentations can be conducted for elementary or middle school students. Readers Theater is a style of theater in which the students do not memorize their lines, and they use vocal expression to help the audience understand the story rather than storytelling. These dramatic performances of Readers Theater were initially started because it emphasized hearing a written text as a new way to understand literature.

The original Readers Theater was presented using only scripts and stools or chairs. The materials performed were in the form of plays, poems, narrative fiction, and non-dramatic literature. The performers’ focus was offstage and limited costuming could often be used. Reading performers would wear all black to strip away character details and allow for more focus on vocal interpretation of the piece (Walker, 2014). While the readers may have interpreted the scenes or poems cold, in most cases, the scripts are memorized and rehearsals are conducted with even more intensity than those conducted for a regular play. There is little to no interaction between performers or
movement. This style of performance also assists performers who deal with performance anxiety (Walker, 2014).

The purpose of Readers Theater is not to increase students' reading speed, but rather to use repeated readings as a way for students to find deeper meaning of text while making significant gains in expressive reading (Rasinski, 2012). The rereading of the scripts helps increase student's reading rate, automaticity, and prosody while motivating those students who are reluctant to reread texts (Moran, 2006). Children become more motivated to practice and rehearse their lines when they know that they will be performing for an audience (Rasinski, 2012; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Since the lines of their script are not memorized, the students must use expressive reading to gain the audience’s attention, create the drama through their voices, and carry the message of the written script (Clark et al., 2009; Young & Rasinski, 2009). This type of repeated reading, “provides students with diverse learning needs an opportunity for authentic participation in rereading texts- in contrast to the traditional skill and drill approach of rereading text by teacher direction” (Garrett & Connor, 2010, p. 7).

Readers Theaters have built-in instructional strategies to improve teaching and learning (in particular to improve reading skills) for young readers. The dramatic interaction and engagement causes readers to look more closely to the book text to visually interpret meaning into the reading experience. Through the Readers Theater, students can improve fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Many students are unable to become fluent readers on their own, thus explicit reading instruction targeting fluency needs to be implemented with elementary classrooms (Reading Rockets, 2010).

Purpose

This research project was developed to provide reciprocal impact on preservice teachers from a state institution and elementary students in an urban school setting. Preservice teachers in the School of Education implemented a service learning project using Readers Theater. The partnership was facilitated with the university instructor and a local community charter elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The preservice teachers were enrolled in a reading course, ED 3043 (Trends in Reading) and the course instructor led them through a content based service-learning project tied to the course outcomes. Telephone consent to perform the Readers Theater at the school was initiated by the course instructor and approved by the host site’s school administrator. The proposed service learning project using Readers Theater was implemented in the first week of April 2016. Upon completion of the service learning project (Readers Theater), preservice teachers in Trends in Reading, provided written reflections to summarize their experiences and thoughts.

Procedures

The elementary students (service learning subjects) were asked to voluntarily participate in a class assignment. The elementary students were then selected to engage in Readers Theater during the afterschool program. The preservice teachers and the students were involved in a dramatic presentation of the age-appropriate children's book, "Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons" by Eric Litwin. This book was selected by the Teacher Education (TE) preservice teachers and approved by the course instructor. The TE preservice teachers served as readers to an audience of afterschool students in lower elementary grades, who read from a “script”. The script roles and sections were divided among the participants and the TE preservice teachers, no memorization or special lighting was required.

Upon the completion of the service learning project, preservice teachers provided a written reflection which was then analyzed and coded for emerging themes and trends(Creswell, 2002). The summary notes and teacher candidate emerging outcomes will allow the researchers to identify implications for further research and qualitative investigation. Additionally, the researchers will
develop key strategies with the urban school teachers and staff around implementing Readers Theater within the reading curriculum.

Benefits and Reciprocity
The teacher education preservice teachers and the elementary student participants both benefitted from the reciprocal agreement. The preservice teachers experienced first-hand how “Theory in class is being put to practice” through the Readers Theater experience. The elementary students gained multiple positive outcomes through confidence building, reading accuracy and the enjoyment of reading. Additionally, the student participants interacted in reading using vocal expressions and story through drama and acting. Implementing the Readers Theater within the context of the urban school setting established a new strategy for the faculty to help young students visually see the story and improve their reading skills.

Findings
As a result of the service learning project, the preservice teachers reflected upon their experience and shared the most impactful occurrences. Reflections are a fundamental part of the teaching and learning process and it permits students to critically analyze their work through the learning process. Reflection is also a major benefactor in improving academic skills. Teaching all students, undergraduate and K-12, to reflect on their work by noticing and correcting their own mistakes (as well as their activities and behavior) allows them to be successful. It is a vital part of the learning experience that far too many classrooms leave out of the equation (Clements, 2016). The summary of narratives that follow highlights the pre-service teachers’ reflections as a result of their preparation and implementation of the Readers Theater. The preservice teachers shared the selected Eric Litwin text in the Readers Theater experience.

The following are descriptive qualitative findings from the pre-service teachers’ insightful reflections.

The findings revealed that pre-service teachers:
- thoughtfully selected a book that any student would enjoy and be engaged in.
- enjoyed dramatizing the story “utilizing song and dance” with the students and as a result “their eyes lit up” with excitement as they acted out the story.
- enjoyed the joyful expression of the students’ smiles, as they imitated the preservice teachers and provided their own version of reading and dance.
- possessed a strong belief that as developing teachers, they learned as much as the students through the use of Readers Theater.
- motivated students to be engaged in the production, by leading them through the book as they read along, and increased fluency through artistic interpretation of the story.
- received positive feedback from the Readers Theater, and were asked to perform again for another class in the school.
- encouraged reading and motivated the students to have a love and appreciation for reading even after the service learning project ended.

Furthermore, several themes emerged from the preservice teacher reflection regarding the importance of the book choice, the level of student engagement and motivation.

Conclusion
This service learning implementation integrated a new way of teaching in a small urban classroom setting for developing preservice teachers. The reflection and light bulb moments which were noted, underscored the level of engagement the preservice
teachers had with lower elementary students in an urban school. The school site administrator, faculty and staff were all immensely excited about the refreshing way to teach reading using Readers Theater. The school-university partnership in this service learning project created a positive experience for all who were involved. The research team will extend the study in the future and build upon current results to formulate and improve additional measures and meaningful outcomes.

References


Technology

Column Editor
Jiening Ruan,
Ph.D., Associate Professor, Reading/Literacy Education
College of Education, The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

Me on the Map: Using Google Earth for an Out of this World (and back) Experience for First Graders

By Chandler Farris and Sheri Vasinda

As students assembled on the carpet in front of the interactive whiteboard, their teacher, Chandler, clicked on Google Earth to begin a virtual field trip that launched them into outer space and back—literally into their own front yards! The students were completely mesmerized as they explored Google Earth together for the first time. They started by watching the Earth spin from a vantage point further out in space. The room was silent as each child’s eyes grew larger and larger. As Chandler zoomed in on our continent, our country, and our state, these curious little first graders began to gasp in excitement! They whispered to their neighbors and hands shot up everywhere with questions as they saw familiar images in their neighborhood. “There’s the school!” “There’s my house!” They had never seen the world through this perspective. Chandler zoomed in on our continent, our country, and our state, these curious little first graders began to gasp in excitement! They whispered to their neighbors and hands shot up everywhere with questions as they saw familiar images in their neighborhood. “There’s the school!” “There’s my house!” They had never seen the world through this perspective. Chandler modeled how to navigate this virtual application. Now, it was their turn to explore their world. Pairs of children equipped with iPads were ready to chart their own course. Enter Google Earth.
Learning goals and planning decisions:
Learning about the world around us is a common, and rather consistent, first grade skill. Chandler focused on the Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS) for Social Studies (2014) as follows:

- Geography Literacy Content Standard 3: The student will demonstrate knowledge of basic geographic concepts.
  1. Define and compare the physical features of urban and rural communities.
  2. Construct maps and identify cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west, and identify locations on the map of their community, Oklahoma, and the United States.
  3. Locate on a map and globe the United States, the seven continents, and five oceans.

While working on this project, naturally occurring English Language Arts standards (OAS, 2016) were also addressed including:

- Standard 4 Vocabulary: Students will expand their working vocabulary to effectively communicate and understand texts.
- Standard 7 Multimodal Literacies: Students will acquire, refine, and share knowledge through a variety of written, oral, visual, digital, non-verbal, and interactive texts.

They spent an extensive three to four weeks learning about themselves and the world they live in during a Getting to Know Us unit at the beginning of the year. This particular project was called “Me on the Map” inspired by Joan Sweeney’s (1998) book of the same title and used Google Earth and Popplet in a process called App Smashing.

Technology tools:
Google Earth is a free, web-based virtual globe and map application that can be accessed from a desktop computer or mobile devices (Android or iOS). Features include the ability to view the Earth from a faraway vantage point and then zoom in for closer three dimensional views of continents, countries, states, and cities down to street views of specific addresses. Tutorials on its use make it an easy tool to use. (https://www.google.com/earth/learn/)

Popplet is a flexible, mind mapping web-based tool that also has an iPhone and iPad app. It can be used to create concept maps, timelines, brainstorming webs, and even presentations. Students can insert images and text to communicate their thinking and understanding. Additionally, students can work collaboratively from separate devices on the same Popplet project. The resulting Popplets can remain private to a group of class, or be made public. Free web use is limited to five popplets and the Popplet Lite app gives access to one free popplet. Purchasing the Popplet App provides unlimited popplet creation and Popplet offers educational discounts for this $4.99 app (http://popplet.com/), which is usually a 50% discount.

How to Do It:
This project was just one part of the Getting to Know Us unit that includes geography literacy standards and integrated ELA standards. Prior to this part of this project, Chandler read Me on the Map (Sweeney, 1998) to launch this part of the unit. Students mapped their bedroom, the classroom, and the neighborhood using paper and pencil. They
learned about the continents and oceans and identified them on both physical maps and Google Earth’s virtual map. They compared and contrasted urban and rural communities. The creation of a multimedia product was done over the course of four days.

The first day, Chandler modeled how to use Google Earth for students and then turned it over to them to explore the app. This is so important to do for any manipulative or tool, but especially for an app as cool as this! A great feature of Google Earth is how easy it is for young learners to navigate. All learners were able to explore the world, whether it was simply zooming in and out to see different perspectives of the earth or using the search bar to locate Disney World. Providing time for exploration on this first day gave students the opportunity to learn with nothing guiding them but they’re own curiosity.

On the second day, Chandler modeled the use of Popplet by explicitly showing students how to create a text box, or “popple”, change the colors of “popples”, add a picture, and finally how to connect each box to create a concept web. Then she did a shared modeling approach to guide the students in creation of the graphic structure. The student partners followed along on their iPads taking turns to create a linear graphic that showed the progression from planet, to continent, to country, to state, to city, and finally to home with each step having its own box in the Popplet. She also used sentence stems to scaffold their writing, especially since it was early in the year. As the partners began their work, they discussed what came next in the progression and created each box and sentence in Popplet creating their Me on the Map graphic outline.

On the third day, the students put Google Earth and Popplet together, which is often referred to as App Smashing, using two or more apps to create a seamless project. Chandler first modeled how to take a screenshot on Google Earth and insert it into the Popplet graphic they created the day before. As students worked in partners, they screenshot the planet, then zoomed in to the North American continent and took a screenshot, then the United States, and Oklahoma. Chandler worked alongside the students using Google Earth on the projector to provide guided instruction and to keep students on track. Once all students had identified and screenshot the planet, continent, country, and state, Chandler modeled how to find their house by using her own address. Then using their own address card, each student typed in their address to the search bar and found their house and took a screenshot. After taking all of the screenshots they needed, partners worked on adding the photos to the corresponding Popplet boxes (Figure 1).
On the final day, it was time to show off and celebrate! Chandler projected each pair’s Me on the Map product on the screen, and they were able and eager to share their findings with the class, bringing the world into their classroom. Every student partnership created this multimedia project with great success!

**Tips for Using the Tools**

As Chandler demonstrated, there are times for free exploration and for explicitly modeling. Chandler’s quick demonstrations equipped the students with the features of each app. Time for exploration gave students an opportunity see what else apps afford inspiring new ideas for other projects. When using Google Earth, show students how to use the search bar. This will enable them to locate the correct continent, state, or anything else. Once they learn to create and link “popples” in Popplet, students find endless opportunities for creating graphics in various configurations.

Just as with a traditional project, modeling each step of the project for your students is the surest way to success for each learner. But technology also pushes teacher creativity, as well. Teachers also have to be prepared for the unexpected, from an unexpected student response to technology glitches. Be creative when things do not work out as you planned. Some of the students’ homes did not show up on Google Earth, so, they took a screenshot of their neighborhood or the area they lived in. Having a backup plan often means troubleshooting in the moment. Do not be afraid of potential glitches. Just like in our low-tech teaching, we adapt and change. Adapt this project to meet the needs of your students.

**Opening Up the World with Google Earth**

We are passionate about teaching students how to become global citizens. Even in first grade, children begin to develop their worldview. Kids begged to use Google Earth all year long because of this project. Many of my students come from families that travel back and forth to Mexico frequently and others have never been outside of Oklahoma City. Google Earth helped expand the worldview of all the students no matter what their background or experiences are. During Morning Meeting (Kriete & Davis, 2014), when a student shared that he was going to Mexico over Christmas, the class found it on Google Earth zooming in
to get as close as possible. Likewise, when Chandler bought a new house, she showed them her new house on Google Earth. Anytime they read about a new place in a read aloud, small group, or independent reading, students would beg to look it up on Google Earth! Google Earth opened the world to all of the students in ways to honor and validate those who travel back and forth to see family in faraway places and for those who have never left the city. Popplet helped them capture their thinking and understanding. Using both provided an out of the world anchor experience from which they built and grew all year.

About the Authors:
Chandler Farris just completed her first year as a first grade teacher at Central Elementary in Warr Acres, OK, an Apple Distinguished School. She will begin her master’s program at Oklahoma State University in Educational Technology and Library Media this summer.

Sheri Vasinda is an assistant professor of literacy at Oklahoma State University. Her interests include technology integration in which students create content and creative products while improving and practicing traditional and new literacies.

References


Research

Column Editor
Linda McElroy
Ph.D., Professor, Education, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma Chickasha, Oklahoma

What does that word mean? I know! I know!

Editor’s Note: This column discusses vocabulary development for young children, and considers the role of instructional activities such as teachers’ book reading and book-related play. The featured research is from:


Many studies have confirmed an important connection between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Teachers of young children, as well as research studies, note that many children arrive for the first day of their first “school experience” with an extensive collection of words that they know. Other children, especially those whose backgrounds have provided fewer literacy experiences, arrive with a much more limited vocabulary base. For all of the children, teachers are eager to learn effective ways to extend and enhance the
children’s vocabularies. These early vocabulary experiences are important to helping children become successful readers.

The research study that is the focus of this column recognized that “vocabulary” is a complex construct that includes both breadth (the number of words that a child understands) and depth (the richness of understanding, or how well the child knows the words). The study examined the concept of depth of understanding, the kinds of knowledge that students have about particular words, and whether that knowledge is of sufficient quality to impact reading comprehension.

The researchers focused on two specific dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: richness of semantic representation of words, and the knowledge of use in typical contexts. A component of the research was a response to the need for more information about what kinds of instruction can support depth of understandings of new words.

Children typically learn a new word in a process that the researchers explained as “fast-mapping,” following a few incidental exposures as the child learns a few aspects of the word. The process of building a deeper understanding of the word requires multiple exposures over time, building links such as understanding synonyms, antonyms, gradations (for example, warm to hot to scalding), and multiple typical contexts for the word.

The featured research study was part of a larger study with children who were participating in Read, Play, Learn. This was a project to increase the vocabulary knowledge of preschoolers from low-income backgrounds. Participants were four-and five-year old students. Eighty-five of the children were in seven Head Start classrooms, and 155 were enrolled in eleven preschool classrooms from a state-funded program for low-income families. None of the children had an Individualized Education Plan, and all of them understood English well enough to be able to follow directions. The interventions were delivered by nine female intervention specialists, all of whom had a bachelor’s or master’s degree plus experience in early childhood settings.

The larger study examined the efficacy of play combined with book reading as a method of vocabulary instruction. The portion of the research in the current study focused on increases in depth of knowledge by word type (concrete and abstract nouns, verbs, and adjectives). Children were assessed on three types of words: target words, which were part of the book texts, used in the play sessions, and explicitly defined; exposure words, which were in the texts and the play sessions, but not explicitly taught or defined; and control words, which were not used in the interventions at all.

The intervention included read-alouds of books and play interventions around two themes (dragons and farms). Two books for each theme were selected that were similar in terms of pictures, text complexity, and length. Ten target words were carefully selected for each book, including concrete and abstract nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Procedures for selecting the words and for adapting the original books to make them comparable were described.

The intervention was done over a two-month period. Children were individually pretested and post-tested for knowledge of the target words. Students were randomly assigned to one of three play conditions in the classrooms, and classrooms were randomly assigned to one of the themes. Intervention specialists read aloud to mixed-gender groups of three children in a quiet location in the classroom for four consecutive days. The adults read two books aloud to students four times as part of the intervention. Each target word was explained during each part of the book reading, once during the reading as the words occurred and once after each reading as part of a vocabulary and plot review. Explanations included drawing the children’s attention to a word by pointing to the pictures, by defining the word in child-friendly language, by gestures, and by giving an example of the word in another context. Immediately following the read-alouds, play sessions were conducted.

Teachers who are planning vocabulary instruction may want to consider some of the features of words that were targeted in the
analysis, since these features may help with selecting words to teach in our classrooms. The concrete nouns were the most easily learned. The easier words to learn were described as more perceptually accessible, based on factors of shape (the outline or contour one might envision when one hears the word; cup has a more consistent shape than a person dancing, which has a more consistent shape than someone thinking), individuation (the ease with which an item can be distinguished from others in a scene), concreteness (whether something is a tangible object), and imageability (how easily one can produce a mental image for that word). Nouns fall at various points along a continuum for perceptual accessibility, so they were divided for analysis into concrete nouns and abstract nouns.

Verbs also fall along a continuum, with verbs such as “walking” more easily producing a mental image than “thinking”. Verbs tended to be less perceptually accessible than nouns. Adjectives had the least accessibility perceptually, so learning these words was supported by synonyms, gestures, and use in context.

Preschoolers in this study were more likely to learn words that were described in terms of their function or what it is used for (a shovel is used to dig), when relationships among words were taught (superordinates and subordinates), and part to whole relations (a fish has parts such as scales, fins, gills, and tail). Discussing synonyms was helpful as children developed a semantic network for words (gallop means to run fast). Gestures were another way of representing the meanings of words, and gestures play an important role in clarifying or supplementing spoken language, especially when the language is complex. Pairing gestures with language was shown to improve comprehension for preschoolers.

Understanding of words progresses over time, from a basic association the word and its typical context, to being able to use the word in a single context, or eventually learning to use the word flexibly in a range of contexts.

Children in this study were asked to define concrete and abstract nouns, verbs, and adjectives verbally or by using gestures. Children showed significantly greater growth in their knowledge of the words that were explicitly taught than in exposure words or control words. They showed significantly greater growth in their knowledge of concrete nouns compared with verbs, abstract nouns, or adjectives. However, they displayed significant growth in all four word types from pretest to posttest.

Children who already have rich and extensive vocabulary knowledge more easily acquire deep vocabulary knowledge about new words. Their prior vocabulary knowledge helps them to understand new words, based on their larger store of known words which they can use to express their emerging understandings of the new words. Children who lack deep vocabulary knowledge tend to fall further behind. Findings in this study support many earlier studies to stress the pressing need for efforts that focus on building vocabulary depth in young children.

Findings from the study confirm that the techniques used during the interventions were indeed helpful in supporting increased vocabulary depth. Teachers will find the techniques beneficial in classroom instruction. Some of the ideas that can effectively transfer to instruction include modeling by the adult as they read aloud (drawing attention to a word by pointing to the picture and explaining: “Look, the king is wearing spectacles”; providing definitions in child-friendly language: “Spectacles are glasses”; giving perceptual and functional explanations: “Spectacles help the king see”; using gestures and kinesthetic experiences “Pretend you are wearing spectacles” while gesturing to make spectacles with rounded fingers; and providing an example of a word in a context outside of the story: “Your teacher wears spectacles, too!” Another important feature of the interventions was providing repeated readings of the texts, so children received multiple exposures to and explanations of the words. Especially powerful in the instructional sequence was the opportunity to children for utilize the words in
play experiences following the read-alouds. Older students could receive this type of reinforcement through other types of extended activities of dramatizations, discussions, writing, etc.

This focus study was limited to preschool children. The concepts that support the varied instructional techniques can certainly transfer to vocabulary lessons for older children, as well. The extended process of developing children’s understandings of increasing numbers of words, in increasingly diverse and complex contexts, is an appropriate goal for teachers who are working with learners well beyond the preschool years. With support, more of our students will gleefully say, “What does that word mean? I know! I know!”

About the author/editor: Dr. Linda McElroy is a professor at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. She previously taught in Oklahoma schools as a classroom teacher and reading specialist.

---------------------------------------------
Policy

Column Editor
Dr. Julie Collins
Associate Professor, Reading Education
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma

2016 Oklahoma Legislative Updates

This Oklahoma Legislative Session has been an active one concerning education issues and budgeting. This column will provide updates from the session affecting education in Oklahoma as well as information on issues to watch in the future.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

As a result of Senate Bill 3399, passed during the 2014 Legislative Session, new academic standards for PreKindergarten through 12th grade have been written for the state of Oklahoma. This bill required Oklahoma to develop its own set of standards instead of implementing the Common Core State Standards. The process was overseen by a Standards Steering Committee and facilitated by staff members at the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Multiple drafts of the standards were developed, being revised between drafts based on feedback from subject area experts from across the country as well as Oklahomans who participated in meetings across the state and online surveys. Nearly 2000 Oklahoma teachers participated in this process, in addition to parents, legislators, community members, PreK-12th grade administrators, representatives from higher education institutions, and members of the business community, helping to meet the goal of these standards being developed, “By Oklahomans, for Oklahomans.”

The final drafts of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for both Mathematics and English Language Arts were presented to the Steering Committee in January, 2016, and approved by the Oklahoma State Board of Education on January 28, 2016. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education also met on that day and certified the Oklahoma Academic Standards as being College and Career Ready. The standards were presented to members of the Oklahoma Legislature at the beginning of the 2016 Legislative session in February. The standards were discussed among the legislators, as well as by citizens and advocacy groups for and against the contents of the new standards. House Joint Resolutions (HJR) 1070 and 1071 and Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 75 were written to either approve or disapprove the majority of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts and/or Mathematics, allowing for the Oklahoma Legislature to return a portion of the standards to the Oklahoma State Department of Education to revise portions of the standards based on feedback from content experts. Each of these proposals progressed through varying portions of the legislative process, but none of the three proposals were approved by both houses of the legislature.
Since these proposals were not accepted the new Oklahoma Academic Standards took effect at the end of March with neither outright approval nor rejection from the Oklahoma Legislature.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education is moving forward to develop implementation guides for Oklahoma school district personnel to use to prepare for implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for the 2016-2017 school year. A task force is working during the summer to develop implementation resources, which you will be able to access on the following websites. You can access the new Oklahoma Academic Standards at [http://sde.ok.gov/sde/oklahoma-academic-standards](http://sde.ok.gov/sde/oklahoma-academic-standards). Blueprints for the assessments for the new standards were recently released and these documents can be found at this site: [https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/OKSDE/bulletins/1501487](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/OKSDE/bulletins/1501487). You can find support and guidance for implementing the new standards through several resources. First, Joshua Flores, Director of Language Arts at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, offers “PD on your Plan,” short videos with outstanding educators. You can access these videos at [http://elaokteachers.com/category/pdonyourplan/](http://elaokteachers.com/category/pdonyourplan/). Additional resources and support are available through the English Language Arts teacher group at [http://elaokteachers.com/](http://elaokteachers.com/). There are also active Facebook groups for #ELAOK and #ELAOK Elementary. If you are a Facebook user, you may want to join in the conversations in those two closed groups.

2016 Oklahoma Legislative Action

The 2016 Oklahoma Legislative Session has wrapped up and as a result we have some new laws on the books. You can track these bills at [http://www.oklegislature.gov/](http://www.oklegislature.gov/). You can search for bills by subject, without having to search through each bill numerically, by using the Advanced Bill Search feature. Here are summaries of some important pieces of legislation affecting education which were passed during this session.

**Bills addressing the recommendations of the OSDE’s Oklahoma Teacher Shortage Task Force**

**House bill 2371.** Authored by Representative Coody and Senator Barrington, this bill modified the term “mentor teacher” in the Oklahoma Teacher Preparation Act from “one holding a standard certificate who is employed in a school district to serve as a teacher,” to “a current or former classroom teacher” who “has been appointed to provide guidance, support, coaching and assistance to a resident teacher employed by the school district.” This bill passed through the House of Representatives on February 17th and through the Senate on April 13th. The bill was signed by Governor Fallin on April 20, 2016, and due to an emergency clause, became law immediately and will be in effect for the next school year.

**House Bill 2946.** This bill was authored by Representatives Henke, Cockroft and Lepak and Senator Smalley and provides for the Oklahoma Board of Education to have greater flexibility in accepting out of country or out of state certification and teaching experience in approving them for an Oklahoma teaching certificate. The bill also directs the Board to accept a larger range of teaching licensing exams used in other states. This bill passed the House of Representatives on May 19th and the Senate on April 5th. It was signed into law by Governor Fallin on May 24th and went into effect on July 1, 2016.

**House Bill 2967.** Authored by Representatives Nelson and Lepak and Senators Holt and Pittman, this new law allows school districts to enter into contracts with student teachers for a time period beginning after the conclusion of the student teaching requirement. The student teacher would be allowed to receive a signing bonus or stipend, dependent on the student teacher fulfilling their first year of teaching, and without being included in the state minimum teaching salary. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 17th and by the Senate on April 14th. Governor Mary Fallin...
signed this bill into law on May 24, 2016, and it went into effect on July 1, 2016.

**House Bill 3025.** This bill was authored by Representative Jordan and Senator Smalley. The new legislation changes the requirements for being able to apply for alternative certification to include holding at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited university, and includes holding a terminal degree and having related work experience. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 24th and by the Senate on May 9th. Governor Mary Fallin signed this bill into law on May 9, 2016, and it will go into effect on November 1, 2016.

**House Bill 3114.** This bill was authored by Representatives Martin and Ann Coody and Senator Griffin. This new section of law created the Empowering Teachers to Lead Act. This act will create a pathway for teachers to be mentored to become ready to take on leadership roles. The law defines the roles of initial teacher, model teacher, mentor teacher, and lead teacher and sets up a process for teachers to develop into leaders and apply for leadership positions. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 24th and by the Senate on April 20th. Governor Mary Fallin signed this bill into law on May 9, 2016, and it will go into effect on November 1, 2016.

**Senate Bill 1038.** Authored by Senator Smalley and Representative Martin, this new law created the Teaching Certification Scholarship Program. This program will provide scholarships for the certification exams of teacher candidates who agree to teach for at least one year in an accredited school district in Oklahoma. A new teacher would be required to reimburse the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability if they do not ultimately teach for one year in Oklahoma. The scholarships are dependent on funds being available and each teacher candidate is limited to one scholarship. This was passed by the Senate on March 1st and by the House of Representatives on March 31st. Governor Fallin signed this bill into law on April 7, 2016, and it will take effect on January 1, 2017.

**Bills addressing the evaluation of teachers and students**

**House Bill 2957.** Authored by Representative Rogers, and many colleagues from the House of Representatives, and Senators Ford and Sykes, this bill added flexibility to the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) evaluation process. One major revision is that Value Added Measures (VAM) were removed from the computation of the score. The new flexibility measures are expected to save Oklahoma school districts and the Oklahoma State Department of Education millions of dollars a year. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 24th, by the Senate on April 20th, and signed into law by Governor Fallin on May 16, 2016. It went into effect on July 1, 2016.

**House Bill 3218.** The primary authors of this legislation were Representative Hickman and Senator Bingman, with many colleagues signing on as co-authors. This legislation made some specific clarifications regarding school personnel definitions, including updating the definition of a teacher to, “any person who is employed to serve as a counselor, librarian, or classroom teacher, or in any other instructional capacity.” The main focus of this bill was updating the formal assessment process used in schools. This new law directs the Oklahoma State Department of Education to update assessments to align with the newly updated federal education law, the updated Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and to align all assessments to the newly adopted Oklahoma Academic Standards. This bill removes the requirement for passing End of Instruction tests for students in grades 9-12, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. This legislation also opens the possibility of adopting an already constructed assessment for the 2017-2018 school year, “based on...the availability of funds, an additional nationally recognized
college- and career readiness assessment or assessments as recommended by the State Department of Education which will be administered to students in high school at no cost to the student." This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 23rd and by the Senate on May 25th, and was signed into law on June 6th by Governor Fallin. This law became effective immediately.

Policy Issues to Watch in Oklahoma

The final bill passed with importance to Oklahoma education was the budget for the next fiscal year. This budget was hailed as containing no further cuts to the education budget, but that remains to be seen as the tax collections actually come in each month. Additionally, while the general education revenue was set at a level equaling the current level of funding, other funding sources, such as the line item for curriculum materials, were not included. Be prepared to be diligent, watch the reports of tax collections each month and their effects on the state of education across our state, and get involved in the discussion with your legislators and colleagues.

A ballot initiative to watch in Oklahoma is State Question (SQ) 779, which will be on the general election ballot on November 8, 2016. This initiative was proposed by David Boren, President, University of Oklahoma, as a solution to education funding issues in Oklahoma. Passage of this state question would approve a one cent sales tax increase, estimated at over $615 million per year, to be used for new spending, not supplanting of current education expenditures, to provide raises of at least $5,000 for teachers, and additional new funding for higher education, early childhood education, education grants, and vocational and technological education. Please educate yourself on the pros and cons of this proposal and be ready to vote in November! Governor Fallin proposed a $3,000 raise for teachers in her State of the State address in February (https://www.ok.gov/governor/documents/2-16%20State%20of%20the%20State%20FINAL%20wCHARTS%20.pdf), but the legislature did not approve that during the legislative session. Full text of the initiative is available at https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/questions/779.pdf.

The Oklahoma Primary Elections were held on Tuesday, June 28, 2016, and the general election will be conducted on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Due to frustration with education funding and action during the legislative session, there are more candidates running who state that they are educators, or family members of Oklahoma educators, on the ballot. This alone does not earn them an endorsement for office, but these candidates may give more options to voters concerned about education. Be sure to check on the candidates for office in your area to find their stances on education issues and budgeting, and above all, please get involved and get to the polls to vote! It is important to make your voice heard! More education discussion groups have been started. I encourage you to get involved and learn more about the issues important to you! There is an Oklahoma Education group active on Facebook, #oklaED, at https://www.facebook.com/groups/411506902268907/, and they also have Twitter conversations at https://twitter.com/oklaed?lang=en. A group of parents and educators also discuss education issues on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/groups/oklahomaeducators/. Today more than ever it is imperative that teachers be involved in policy discussions. Keep yourself informed and be willing to speak up!

Molly’s Musings

By
Molly Levite Griffis

Sad news this time as I have to report the passing of one of my all-time favorite authors Robert B. Jackson of Woodbury, Connecticut. Check out his obituary online as he was one of those "Man for All Seasons" guys who excelled
in every area of his life....and best of all, he was a librarian!

If you read my story in the last issued of The Oklahoma Reader, you know that my sister and I once had a publishing company that specialized in books written by Oklahoma writers or set in Oklahoma. We published 18 books in nine years and won prizes for more than half of them.

First published by Henry Z. Walck in 1967, Bob’s Remarkable Ride of the Abernathy Boys has gone through more printings than I can count since I first reprinted it in 1989. We did it in a Centennial Edition beautifully hard bound by the Motter Book Bindery in Muskogee. I’m sure many of you remember the Motter name as Bob Motter and his father before him were the strongest supporters of libraries in Oklahoma for, again, more years than I can count. They organized and helped run the OLA conferences for many years.

If you are lucky enough to own one of those limited edition copies, hang on to it as I’ve been told it is a pretty pricy buy on Amazon. (I have to rely on hearsay evidence since I don’t "compute" the net!) The cover is lipstick red and features a picture of the Abernathy boys in their Brush automobile holding a sign that reads "This car is being driven from New York to Oklahoma City by the Abernathy kids."

I had fun publishing all 18 books, but the Abernathy Boys tale was my greatest success because of the wonderful people associated with it. When I issued it in Frederick, Oklahoma, it was Number 7 in a series of eight books Sister and I dubbed "The Land We Belong to is Grand."

Sixty-eight members of the Abernathy family came to Fredrick for the release of the paper-back edition. We had a parade and showed the 1910 movies of The Wolf Hunt and The Bank Robbery which are still available. Check the web for order information.

I could write another whole book about the people who helped me promote the books we published: bookstore owners, relatives of the authors, and most of all the librarians whose Oklahoma collections are their most precious area.

When you have time, check out my website MollyGriffis.com, if you haven't already done so, as I packed it with everything you always wanted to know about our wonderful state of Oklahoma.

No matter what some misinformed Yankees have to say about it, Boomer Sooner is still my battle cry and I bet it’s yours too!

I’ve always wondered if there is anybody out there who still owns all 18 books we published and/or anybody who still owns the eleven titles I wrote. If so, I’d love to hear from you! I'm easy to find: mollylevite@gmail.com.
Oklahoma Reading Association Membership Form

ORA DUES: $20  Local Council name or # __________________________
(Enter “At Large” if you do not belong to a local council)

Local dues $_______  Check _______  Cash _______

College Student Dues: $5 ___________  Name of Higher Ed. Institution ________________

Contact Information – Please PRINT legibly

Date ________________ mm/dd/yy

Name (Last, First) __________________________ MI ______

E-mail ______________________________________
(email is important for membership renewal dates)

Mailing Address________________________________________

City________________________ State___ Zip________

Phone Number______________________________________

Please enter the number that is best to reach you.

ORA Membership: New ____ Renewal ____

IRA Membership: Yes_____ No_____

If yes, IRA #_____________ Expires _______

Remit only ORA dues to:

Debby Yarbrough
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If you receive the Oklahoma Reader or Newsletter by mail your ORA dues will be $25: Oklahoma Reader/Newsletter ______ online (free with ORA dues) or _______ mail ($5 more)

All areas are required to check membership status on-line, especially middle initial.
www.oklahomareadingassociation.org

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College Student Dues: $5 ___________  Name of Higher Ed. Institution ________________

Contact Information – Please PRINT legibly

Date ________________ mm/dd/yy

Name (Last, First) __________________________ MI ______

E-mail ______________________________________
(email is important for membership renewal dates)

Mailing Address________________________________________

City________________________ State___ Zip________

Phone Number______________________________________

Please enter the number that is best to reach you.

ORA Membership: New ____ Renewal ____

IRA Membership: Yes_____ No_____

If yes, IRA #_____________ Expires _______

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All areas are required to check membership status on-line, especially middle initial.
www.oklahomareadingassociation.org
Editorial Review Board Application

Name_________________________ School_______________________________

Current Job.____________________ E-mail ________________________________

Have you ever reviewed articles for a journal or newsletter?   Yes   No

If so, which journal(s) or newsletter(s)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Educational background: Please list your degrees:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

List all teaching certifications that you hold.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Circle the areas that you could review articles about. These areas should be ones on which you have expertise or special interest.

Fluency         Adolescent         Critical Literacy         Comprehension
Adult            Spelling           Early childhood          Vocabulary

Comprehension strategies   Phonics/word work   Phonological awareness
Literature          Assessment            Reading Policy        Struggling readers
Writing              Professional development Language skills

Content area reading Research skills Reading research

List any publications you have or presentations that you have made.
Doing something in your classroom that really helps kids learn literacy skills?

Researched an issue or problem in your classroom?

Read a great professional book?

Learned something new about Research-based best practices?

Write about it for The Oklahoma Reader.

Share what you know and do with others by submitting an article, an activity description, a research summary, a review of a professional resource, or a summary of your own action research.
Guidelines for Authors

Authors are requested to submit only unpublished articles not under review by any other publication. A manuscript (1500-3500 words) should be typed, double spaced, not right justified, not hyphenated, and should follow APA, 6th Edition guidelines (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association). Tables and graphs should be used only when absolutely necessary. Include a cover page giving the article title, professional affiliation, complete address, e-mail, and phone number of the author(s). Special sections have specific requirements that are described below. The editors reserve the right to edit all copy.

Submit the manuscript electronically as either a Word or rich text file attached to an e-mail message. The e-mail message should include information about which section the manuscript is being submitted for (articles, Teacher to Teacher, Teacher Research, Research Summary, and Professional Resources), the title of the manuscript, and a brief description of the topic. All correspondence regarding the manuscript will be electronic. Send manuscripts to Bradlee Ross, Editorial Assistant, at rossbe@nsuok.edu.

Teacher to Teacher: Submit descriptions of teaching activities that have helped students learn an essential literacy skill, concept, strategy, or attitude. Submissions should be no longer than 1500 words, typed and double-spaced, and follow the following format:

- Title (if adapting from another source, cite reference and provide a bibliography.
- Purpose of activity, including the literacy skill, concept, strategy, or attitude the students will learn.
- Description of activity with examples, questions, responses. Please provide enough detail so someone else can implement the activity.
- How activity was evaluated to know if purpose was achieved.

Teacher Research: Submit manuscripts that describe research or inquiry conducted in classrooms. Submissions should be 1000-2000 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 6th Edition, and follow this format:

- Description of the question or issue guiding the research/inquiry, including a short review of pertinent literature
- Description of who participated in the study, what the sources of data were, how the data were gathered and examined.
- Description of the findings and conclusions from the research/inquiry.

Research Summary: Submit manuscripts that summarize either one current published piece of research or two to three related studies. Submissions should be 1000-1500 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 6th Edition, and following this format:

- Introduce and describe the study or studies, including purpose, information about who participated and in the study, how and what type of data was gathered, and the findings or conclusions.
- Discuss the implications of the study or studies for classroom teachers. The implications could include a discussion of what the study told us about literacy learners and literacy learning and/or what the study implies teachers should do to support learning.

Professional Resources: Submit reviews of professional resources of interest to teachers or reading specialists. Resources reviewed could include books for teachers, books for children, curriculum packages, computer programs or other technology, or games for children. Reviews of technology will be forwarded to Dr. Jiening Ruan, editor of the Technology and Literacy column for her review. Submissions should be 500-1000 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 6th Edition, and following this format:

- Title, author, publisher of the resource.
- Short description of the resource.
- Critical review of the resource, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Short discussion of how the resource might be useful to a teacher.