The Oklahoma Reader

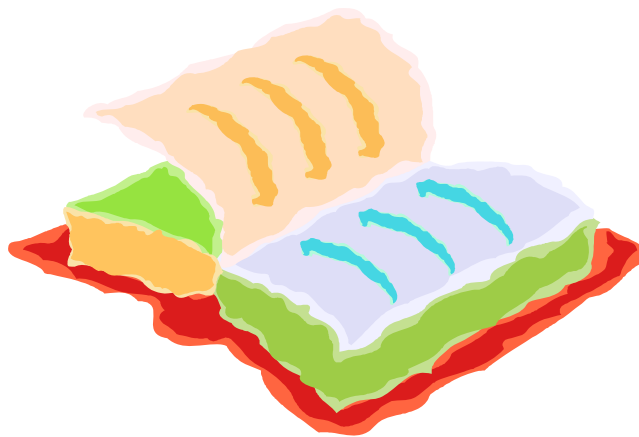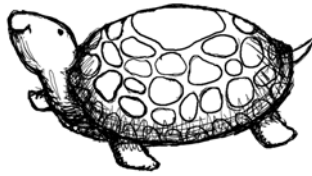"Creation of the Mask" - Inspired by Reading: *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*

Created by: Christine – 3rd Grade – Lynnwood Elementary – Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Submit children's art related to literacy, reading, writing, or learning for the cover of the next issue. Please include a release from the child's parent or guardian. Send original art (no copies) on 8.5" by 11" paper to The Oklahoma Reader, ATTN: Dr. Stephan E. Sargent, Editor, Northeastern State University, 3100 East New Orleans, C-129; Broken Arrow, OK 74014. Deadline for Summer 2012 issue: April 17, 2012.

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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 31.

The Oklahoma Reader

A journal of the Oklahoma Reading Association, an affiliate of the International Reading Association (www.reading.org)

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Letter from the Editor

According to the calendar, the annual conference of the Oklahoma Reading Association, achievement tests, and spring break are nearly here! At this reflective season of the year, one usually reflects on what has been done and remains yet to do before the close of school. As such, I often contemplate the complexity of being a teacher of reading. The reading teacher has such a huge impact on and responsibility for children's literacy learning. Most of all, the reading teacher must ensure that he/she does all that is humanly possibly to support a love of reading and writing. This winter issue of *The Oklahoma Reader* addresses this complexity in a variety of ways. Dr. Linda Gambrell, Past-President of the International Reading Association, Distinguished Professor of Education at Clemson University, and long-time friend of Oklahoma reading teachers and Heather J. McCrea-Andrews of Clemson share a phenomenal strategy for cultivation of motivation and comprehension that can be used immediately in the classroom. Next, Dr. Joanna Neel of The University of Texas (Tyler) provides an article sharing research-based and time-proven strategies for readers who struggle. She even notes their positive impact on state-mandated testing. The regular columns also add to our understanding of the complexity of being a reading teacher.

As always, I am encouraging everyone to share the activities you are using in your classrooms that are working with your learners. I'm always happy to hear from our readers and to read your articles and teacher tips. Happy Spring!!

Dr. Stephan E. Sargent

Last November, Oklahoma State University's women's basketball coach, Kurt Budke, and assistant women's basketball coach, Miranda Serna, were killed in a tragic airplane accident near Perryville, Arkansas. Oklahoma teacher, Mr. Christopher Snodgrass, memorialized their memories in a beautiful poem (below). Mr. Snodgress graduated from OSU in 2006 and currently is a senior high school teacher at Liberty Mounds Public Schools.

Proud and Immortal
by
Mr. Christopher Snodgress

Proud and immortal, though broken and torn

Four taken, the rest of a Nation left to mourn

The chill of November never brought such cold

Though not unfamiliar, like a nightmare retold

Too fresh, the wounds of a snowy Colorado night

Too surreal, the thought of another fateful flight

The bell still chimes, though now no one hears

The fountain still flows, though now with tears

With broken hearts and shaken to the core

We will Ride on, in due remembrance of the four

America's brightest orange will shine once again

Lighting the way for the four, as it did for the ten

Proud and immortal, arm in arm with me and you

And ever you'll find them, still loyal and true.

Linda B. Gambrell is Distinguished Professor of Education in the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. She is past president of the International Reading Association (RA), National Reading Conference, and College Reading Association. She is a former 3rd and 5th grade teacher and reading specialist. In 2004 she was inducted into the Reading Hall of Fame. Her major research interests are in the areas of reading comprehension strategy instruction, literacy motivation, and the role of discussion in teaching and learning. She has written books on reading instruction and published articles in major literacy journals, including Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, and Journal of Educational Research.

Heather J. McCrea-Andrews, MA, is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction in the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. She is a co-director of the America Reads program at Clemson Elementary. Heather is

a former middle and high school English teacher who is passionate about working with marginalized and underprivileged adolescents. She is interested in adolescents' motivation to read and the role of technology in increasing reading motivation.

Write-Read-Right: An Integrated Language Arts Strategy to Support Students in Reading and Writing

Linda B. Gambrell
Heather J. McCrea-Andrews
Clemson University

Teachers strive to help all students become literate members of society. However, this is not an easy goal to reach when students struggle with reading. Embedding literacy instruction in highly motivating and relevant experiences holds great promise for increasing both motivation to read and reading achievement (Gambrell, 2012). It is with this sentiment in mind that we have worked with teachers to implement the Write-Read-Right (W-R-R) instructional strategy in classrooms from elementary through high school.

The steps in W-R-R instructional strategy are in keeping with research-based evidence that indicates that students need consistent practice and experiences in the following areas (Leslie & Allen, 1999; Stahl et al., 2005; Scammacca et al, 2008):

(1) decoding and word study while reading text, (2) vocabulary and comprehension strategies while reading text, (3) reading and rereading text, (4) the reading of progressively more difficult texts, and (5) meaningful written practice linked to text.

Rationale

Motivation and comprehension are not only difficult to gauge, they are also challenging to cultivate. However, according to research, there are ways to improve motivation that will eventually improve students' reading and comprehension skills (Gambrell, 2010; Pitcher et al., 2010; Alverman, 2003; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Students who are unmotivated often find it

difficult to stay focused long enough to comprehend what they read. They quit reading easily and do not learn essential comprehension skills needed for academic success. The ultimate goal of reading instruction is comprehension—gaining meaning from text. According to Edmonds et al. (2009), "comprehension occurs through an interaction among three critical elements: the reader, the text, and the activity" (p. 262). It is through this interaction that the W-R-R strategy focuses on developing literacy skills to improve comprehension in a highly motivating context that focuses on student success in a range of literacy tasks.

Theoretical and foundational frameworks for the W-R-R instructional strategy are drawn primarily from constructivism and cognitive theory. "Discourse, writing, and language acquisition work together bringing about reading comprehension and language development through a collaborative effort between teacher and student" (McCrea-Andrews et al., 2011). Vygotsky's (1976) view of social constructivism explains "that learning results as a function of interacting with others" (p.109). In the W-R-R instructional strategy students work together with the teacher and peers to accomplish a series of literacy tasks.

Write-Read-Right: How It Works

In the following section, the steps of the W-R-R strategy are presented along with brief commentary about how the strategy supports motivation, reading, and writing, including the specific elements of decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. W-R-R is most effective when the strategy is used 2 – 3 times a week and the teacher-selected short texts are thematically linked. For example, if the class is studying poetry, then a series of poems could be used for W-R-R. In science, if students are going to be focusing on a study of the solar system, the teacher might select a series of short paragraphs from the content area textbook about each of the planets to be used as the teacher-selected texts over the course of several weeks.

There are many ways W-R-R can be used to complement the content areas and the reading curriculum. There are three phases to the W-R-R instructional strategy. Phase 1 is a **Spell-Guess** test that introduces the students to challenging and interesting vocabulary drawn from the teacher- selected text. The Spell-Guess activity affords students with opportunities to engage in a variety of word study and vocabulary development activities.

Phase 2 is **Write and Read** where the teacher introduces a short text and then reads the text aloud slowly as students take dictation and write their own text, using many of the words used in a Spell-Guess activity. During the dictation phase, the students are writing their version of the text and they engage in "mumble" or "repeated" readings of the text as the teacher encourages them to "proof" their dictation as they reread what they have written. The Write and Read phase of W-R-R provides students with opportunities to focus on conventions of print, spelling, comprehension, and grammar and many other aspects of language learning.

In Phase 3 the students engage in a **Quick-Write**, where they are free to write about any topic of their choosing. They can write about something related to the teacher-selected text or they can write about anything else they choose. The rule is that they only have 3 minutes to write and they must write for the entire 3 minutes. They are then given an opportunity to share (read-aloud) what they have written with their peers in small groups. Across the three phases of W-R-R students have the opportunity to produce a spelling paper that is 100% correct, a piece of text (dictation) that is almost perfect, and produce a piece of creative writing.

Based on our experiences using W-R-R, we suggest using the instructional strategy at least twice a week. Our experiences also suggest that, with practice, both teachers and students become more comfortable and proficient in using the strategy and the interactions between students and teachers become more focused on critical aspects of literacy learning.

Phase I – Spell-Guess Activity
1. *The teacher selects an appropriate, short piece of high interest text.* Words to be used in the Spell-Guess activity

are selected by the teacher from this short text. In the example provided below, the students are studying holidays around the world. The first holiday to be studied is the U.S. celebration of the Fourth of July. In language arts the students are also reading and writing poems so the teacher has identified the theme of "holiday poems" for W-R-R. The teacher selected a short, humorous poem related to each of the 8 holidays the class will study in a 4 week unit several weeks as a vehicle for W-R-R. Below is the poem selected by the teacher for the Fourth of July holiday:

Independence Day
My Grandfather Ben,
Has a Shanghai hen,
And you can bet she's a hummer.
She laid nine-nine eggs
On the Fourth of July,
And now she's laid up for the summer!
          (author unknown)

2. The teacher identifies words from the text, choosing a few easy words and a few challenging words, some descriptive words or any words that might present a reading or spelling challenge to the students. From the poem, *Independence Day*, the teacher selected two words that are strongly related to the curriculum on the Fourth of July: independence and fourth. In addition, the teacher selected a few challenging words (Shanghai, ninety, laid, hummer) and a few easy words (bet, now). The primary goal is to choose words that students need to know how to spell, write, and read.

3. The teacher prepares students for a Spell-Guess activity, explaining that they have not had any time to study or learn these words – that is why is it a Spell-"*Guess"* activity. In addition, the teacher shares with the students that this will be a "tricky" activity and that they will sometimes have to make guesses about the words. Ask

students to do the best job they can to spell the words – all they have to do is try their best – but they should attempt to spell each and every word. It is important that students use a pencil with a good eraser for all steps in W-R-R.

4. Have students number their papers in preparation for the Spell-Guess activity.

5. The teacher calls out the words – repeating each word twice. The words are NOT given in a sentence, rather students should be encouraged to guess, as in the example below.

Teacher calls out the spell-guess words:
   1. **now**
   2. **independence**
   3. **fourth** (At this point students may say "Which one?" – the response should be something like "You have to guess which one is on my list." This should be done in a fun and engaging manner, encouraging students to "make a guess." One rationale for this rather unusual procedure is that it is usually the "good spellers" who always make 100% on spelling tests – the guessing factor levels the playing field in that some good spellers will guess incorrectly – and some of the struggling spellers will guess correctly -- so at the end of the activity is it not just the struggling spellers who will need to make changes to their list.)
   4. **bet**
   5. **hummer**
   6. **ninety**
   7. **laid** (Again, students may question "Which one?" and the teacher encourages guessing.)
   8. **Shanghai**
6. The teacher now reveals a list of the words spelled correctly and asks students to compare their list with the corrected list. (This "master list" of

words could be on a chart, the overhead, SmartBoard, etc.) At this point the teacher asks, "Who found some surprises on their paper?" Some students may point out that they spelled "forth" instead of "fourth". The teacher responds by printing both words on the board and pointing out that it could have been either word – and engages students in discussing the meaning of each word. Another student might point out that they spelled "independence" incorrectly as "independance" and the teacher could point out that there are a number of "e's" in independence and no "a's". Someone may point out that they did not capitalize "Shanghai" and the teacher might pose the question, "Why do you think "Shanghai" is capitalized?" The teacher can take advantage of opportunities to increase vocabulary by asking students questions such as "What do you think "hummer" means?" or "What do you think of when you hear the word "independence." After all the interesting "surprises" have been discussed, the teacher tells students that it is important that they correct their list so that every word is the same as the words on the teacher's list because they will be using the words later and will need to know how to spell them. So, students correct their papers, leaving the paper on their desks.

Phase 2 – Write and Read (Dictation)
1. The teacher reads the poem aloud to the students, saying something like, "Now I'm going to read you a funny poem called "Independence Day".
2. The teacher now reads the poem aloud a second time, encouraging students to listen for the words on their list (they should have their corrected list on their desks for viewing).
3. The teacher instructs students to get out a clean piece of paper so that they can take dictation so that they can "produce a copy of the text."
4. The teacher then reads each line of the poem, slowly repeating each line as necessary, while students take dictation. Again, the teacher should point out to students that they should refer to their Spell-Guess list because some of the words in the text are on the list.
5. After a couple of lines, the teacher should reread the poem from the beginning and engage students in "reading along". This procedure results in the poem being read aloud by the students several times – all for the purpose of checking that they have recorded the lines of the poem correctly. This step in W-R-R also provides fluency practice and pacing that supports struggling writers.

At the conclusion of the dictation, the teacher should have all students read the passage aloud (mumble read), reading from their own text. The teacher should encourage students to proof their work during the final re-readings of the text.

6. At this point, the teacher now reveals a copy of the text:

    Independence Day
    My Grandfather Ben,
    Has a Shanghai hen,
    And you can bet she's a hummer.
    She laid nine-nine eggs
    On the Fourth of July,
    And now she's laid up for the summer!
                    (author unknown)

7. Students are now asked to correct their paper so that their copy looks like the text on display.
8. As students work, the teacher asks, "Who found a surprise on their paper?", encouraging them to share the changes they are making. Some student responses to the poem Independence Day were as follows: Student 1: "I forgot to capitalize Independence Day?"

Teacher: Why are those two words capitalized?"

Student 2: "I did not capitalize Grandfather? Why is it capitalized?"

Teacher: Students why do you think the author capitalized Grandfather?

Student 3: "I think it is because the grandson is talking and a grandson would not call his grandfather just "Ben", but he would call him "Grandfather Ben."

Student 4: "I spelled Shanghai right but I almost didn't capitalize it – but I looked on my Spell-Guess paper!"

Student 5: "I forgot to hyphenate ninety-nine.

Teacher: Why do you think we need to hyphenate ninety-nine?

(A discussion of hyphens and their use ensued.)

Student 6: I did not capitalize the word "Fourth" in Fourth of July. On the Spell-Guess list it's not capitalized!"

Teacher: "I told you I was going to try to trick you!"

Student 7: "I did not capitalized the first word in each line and I had to correct every one of them!"

Teacher: "Why do you think the first word of each line is capitalized?"

(A discussion of the writing conventions of poetry took place here, with the teacher pointing out that while most poets use this format, that not all do. One well-known poet, e. e. cummings, did not use capital letters in his name or in his poems.")

As the above exchange between students and the teacher reveals there will be many opportunities to take advantage of the "teachable" moment as students share their work. Emphasizing the "surprise" elements of discovery, rather than "mistakes" supports students in recognizing and correcting their work. Also, attention should be devoted to deepening comprehension of the text. In the example above, the teacher could ask students questions such as "Why do you think this poem is called 'Independence Day'?" "What does the line, 'And now she's laid up for the summer !' mean?"

Students can keep their poems in a folder and each time they do W-R-R they can add a poem to the folder – one for Fourth of July, one for Halloween, one for Thanksgiving, etc. At the conclusion of the unit on holiday celebrations each student can illustrate a cover, create a table of contents, and include their poems in a student-constructed book.

Phase 3 – Quick-Write

In the third, and final phase, students are encouraged to engage in a Quick-Write. The teacher tells the students that they can write about anything they choose -- they can write about the "theme" of holidays, what they did on the Fourth of July, or whatever they would like to write about – the options are wide open. But, everyone must write for 3 minutes (or if students are older and more fluent writers, it could be 5 minutes).

1. A timer is set and the teacher says, "Ready, set, write!"

2. When the 3-minute time for writing is up, the teacher should encourage students to quickly wrap up their writing.

3. The teacher then asks the students to mumble read what they have written – and they should use their pencils to correct any "surprises" they find in their writing, indicating that all writers occasionally leave out a word, use an incorrect word, or make some other obvious error (teacher encourages attention to spelling, punctuation, etc.).

4. At this point the students have engaged in creative writing and have written a piece of text. In addition, they have reread (mumble reading) and proofed their work.

5. The teacher organizes the students into groups of 4 so that students can take turns reading what they have written to their peers. When all 4 students have read their Quick-Write text aloud they are encouraged to ask questions and talk about the texts that have been shared. Having students share (read aloud) their written work in groups of 4 may be a bit noisy – so encourage students to "lean in" and to use their "low voices" for this activity. You should plan on this activity taking approximately 6 or 7 minutes at the most – it usually takes less than a minute for students to read their work aloud. Students get to read their work and they get to hear the work of 3 of their peers. Since groups will finish at different

times, be sure to encourage students to discuss the ideas in the work of their peers and to ask questions of the authors.

6. Students should place their Quick-Writes in a "drafts" writing folder. After a couple of weeks the teacher asks students to get out their "Quick-Write" folder and select their best "Quick-Write" to edit and revise (after a couple of weeks students should have at least 4 Quick-Writes in their "drafts" folder). As a first step, have students mumble read the piece they have selected and make any corrections they might need to make (a word omitted, a descriptive word added, spelling, etc.). Encourage students to improve their piece by expanding on ideas and using descriptive vocabulary. They should work to produce a piece of writing they would be proud to have in a student-authored class book.

7. Students turn in the piece they have selected and the teacher acts as editor, indicating changes that need to be made in order to turn the piece into a good writing product. This aspect of W-R-R works well with writing workshop. It is important to remember that students always do Quick-Write in pencil so that they can erase and correct without having to rewrite the entire piece. When the teacher returns the teacher-edited, student authored text to the student, all they need to do is erase and make corrections in order to have a "revised and improved" version of their work. The goal here is not to edit so that students produce a perfect paper, but rather the teacher provides sufficient feedback so that the student can edit their work into a *pretty perfect paper – or an "almost" perfect paper.*

After students have refined their best Quick-Write, the student-authored texts can be grouped by categories and made into books. When students completed W-R-R using the Independence Day text, most students chose to write about the Fourth of July, while a few wrote short poems about animals, and a few wrote about their Grandfather. Three class books were generated for the classroom library on the following topics*: Stories of Independence, Animal Poems,* and *Grandfathers Are Special.*

Why Write-Read-Right is a Motivating Instructional Strategy

In this final section, we share two points from the literature that provided insight and inspiration for our development of the W-R-R instructional strategy.

1. *The role of guessing in motivation to learn.* In the first phase of W-R-R students engage in a Spell-Guess activity. Kang and colleagues (2011) found that incorrect guessing does not impair a students' ability to learn facts. They noted two basic findings in their summary section. They first found that "being forced to guess and getting it wrong had no significant effect on the probability of recalling the correct response the following day" (p. 5). They also found that "data offer little support for behaviorists' assertion that producing an error automatically results in its being 'stamped' into the mind of the respondent" (p. 5). Thus, they concluded that incorrect guessing does not impair learning. These findings were true of both short- and long-term memory.

2. *Collaboration and motivation to learn.* In all phases of W-R-R students are encouraged to share and talk about their learning "surprises" rather than mistakes. Students also share and discuss with peers the meaning of the teacher-selected text as well as their own creative writing. In keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, W-R-R results in learning that is a function of interacting between the teacher and peers. The W-R-R instructional strategy combines a variety of literacy learning experiences that are supported by the scaffolding provided by the teacher as well as peers.

The effective implementation of W-R-R requires teachers to raise questions about text and to field a variety of questions from students. Incorporating dialogue about text into literacy lessons creates an open space for free exchange of ideas. Using W-R-R results in the proverbial flood-gates opening as students inquire about their long-held questions and uncertainties about literary learning. As students give voice to their own questions and uncertainties, the teacher can more clearly see what instruction is needed to

move students forward in their literacy development.

Finally, the questions we are most often asked are, "Where do I find time during the school day to use W-R-R?" and "How long does it take for teachers and students to be able to use the strategy effectively?" Some teachers we have worked with have used W-R-R two or three times a week during their language arts block. Other teachers, in the upper elementary and middle-grades have successfully used W-R-R during content area instructional time. Some teachers have been very creative in using W-R-R across the curriculum. For example, one teacher started the day with the Spell-Guess activity, used the teacher-selected text (dictation) to introduce the content area lesson, and then had students do the Quick-Write as a component of the writing block – all the while focusing on a theme appropriate for content area learning.

With respect to how long it takes for the teacher and students to become comfortable and proficient using W-R-R, we agree with some of the teachers we have worked with that it is difficult to judge the potential of this instructional strategy in one or two lessons. Most of the teachers we have worked with have indicated that about the third or fourth time the strategy is implemented, it happens – students feel more comfortable and teachers become more flexible and strategic in using the strategy.

We would like to challenge teachers who read this article to try the W-R-R instructional strategy with their students and share results with us. We are particularly interested in the text sources you might select, the words you would choose (and why you chose them) for the Spell-Guess activity, the teacher-selected short text for dictation, and what students compose for their Quick-Write. We are especially interested in how students of varying reading levels respond to this strategy. We invite you to share your experiences and students' responses to W-R-R with us as we work to refine this instructional strategy. Try it – you and your students might like it! And if you do try it, send us your classroom vignettes. You will find our email contact information below. We will look forward to hearing about your classroom experiences with W-R-R.

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Proven Literacy Strategies for Hard to Accelerate Learners
by
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In a time when children are held to increasingly difficult state and national standards, educators are striving to prepare students for mandatory assessments while differentiating for student needs. Test scores reflect a central curricula and an increasing number of students are not prepared and thus are caught in the testing cycle. The problem addressed in this study is that some students have not acquired language and literacy strategies to be successful in school settings or on standardized assessments. Students identified for this study lack the ability to effectively talk or communicate in educational settings, and lack basic school academic language or survival skills. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of providing supplemental language and literacy acquisition instruction to kindergarten students at their respective "instructional" learning levels.

1. Did providing specific language and literacy acquisition strategies to kindergarten students for forty-five minutes daily improve student participation, interaction, and scores on standardized assessments?

2. What would be the outcomes of providing specific strategies targeting language acquisition and literacy development?

3. How did the students perform academically, after receiving the intervention treatment?

4. How did students who received the treatment compare to those who did not receive the intervention treatment?

5. What would be the implications of the treatment to English Language Learners (ELL)?

In many kindergarten classes there are invisible children. Children who do not make eye contact may appear shy and hide in their sweaters, under hoods, behind their bangs or hair. One child went without milk at lunch for the first three days of school because he did not know how to open the carton and did not have the words to ask for help. Another child had repeated accidents because he did not know where the restroom was, and later because he did not understand the routines and procedures for asking permission to the restroom. Characteristics of limited language learners are that they seat themselves on the outside of the carpet during group time, cover heads in discussions, avoid eye contact--fearing the teacher will call on them; they are not risk-takers, and will rarely call attention to themselves. The literacy and language needs of students lacking proficient language skills were identified and addressed over the course of one year, during forty-five minutes daily.

Specifically, kindergarten students received daily instruction in specific literacy strategies proven to improve oral language development, language acquisition, and literacy language development. The language and literacy acquisition strategies outlined in this study were created to address the needs of all students without violating social or political needs of students.

This study addressed how to facilitate students receiving instruction within a supportive environment designed for language and literacy. The study examined the effects

of teaching students how to talk and how to learn language for the specific purposes of school survival and success, talking to get meaning, and language for learning and literacy. Students were given multiple opportunities to acquire and develop language and literacy strategies from their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings may have implications for educators as they design learning contexts to meet the needs of every learner. This study provided empirical data regarding the effects of language and literacy acquisition strategies on participants. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed. With this data, subsequent researchers may be able to conduct further research.

Context as Discussed in the Literature

1. What did the literature say regarding providing specific language and literacy acquisition strategies to kindergarten students?

2. What did the literature say regarding possible outcomes of providing specific strategies targeting language and literacy learning?

3. Specifically, what did the literature offer pertaining to the long-term implications of providing specific language and literacy acquisition strategies to kindergarten students?

4. What strategies have been proven effective when working with students in need of language and literacy acquisition?

5. What strategies have been proven effective when working with students in need of language and literacy acquisition?

According to Marie Clay, children learn language through listening and speaking (Clay, 1991). Based on Clay's model of reading recovery model where a child works one on one with a trained educator to learn

how to scaffold reading and writing process, the intervention designed here was specifically designed for children in need of oral and literacy strategies to learn how to process these skills in a small group and then transition them back into the classroom.

What did the literature say regarding possible outcomes of providing specific strategies targeting language and literacy learning? Vygotsky stated that language is the medium for thinking and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Literacy development is supported by strong oral language. Children who have strong oral language skills often have strong reading and writing skills. In contrast, children who have oral language deficiencies often have reading and writing difficulties.

Researchers have studied instructional conversations as central mechanisms for supporting active and strategic learning in language and literacy. These studies showed significant variations in their scope, specific purposes, designs, and types of data.

Specifically, what did the literature offer pertaining to the long-term implications of providing specific language and literacy acquisition strategies to kindergarten students? Few studies routinely assessed children's oral language comprehension or production or considered these aspects as variables accounting for individual differences in responsiveness to strategy learning in reading, writing, and spelling through the mechanism of instructional conversations. Finally, few studies conducted detailed discourse analyses to determine similarities and differences among teachers in their applications of instruction (Wilkinson and Silliman, 1991).

The basis of teaching is dialogue through instructional conversations. These dialogues integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing as tools of inquiry serving multiple communicative purposes. Instructional conversations, when organized by thematic units and the activation of background knowledge (Goldenberg & Patthey-Chavez, 1995), function as format for supporting the development of new conceptual understandings that have educational value

(Roehler & Cantlon, 1997). Through such collaboration, students invest in their own learning, seeking out challenging concepts in order to form, express, and exchange ideas in speech and writing (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Despite variations among studies and their limitations, compelling evidence has accumulated for the contributions of Vygotskian theory and the concept of supportive scaffolding to constructivist teaching practices with diverse learners in language and literacy. When real-world interactions are closely aligned with interesting texts, coherence, or interconnections between instructional processes, is increased. When students' engagement in reading is being enhanced by coordination among instructional processes, coherence in the classroom is occurring at a high level.

As educators strive to meet the increasing demands of educational change, it is critical to know main points from the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, the 1993 Improving America's Schools, National Goals 2000, and the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). All students will meet high standards in mastering the core curriculum for language and literacy. Accountability must include standards for processes and outcome of language and literacy learning.

This study was limited to fifteen of seventeen elementary schools in Tyler Independent School District. The study was limited to twelve students from fifteen elementary schools. Entrance into the study was limited to those students scoring thirteen or below on the Record of Oral Language. Random sample students selected from each of the seventeen elementary campuses were a control group. For this reason, results may not be generalized to schools outside the district nor to middle or high schools. The advantage of limiting the study to Tyler schools is that these schools have been subjected to similar instructional, demographic, and political pressures during the last decade and that data reporting at these schools has been uniform and extensive. Tyler Independent School District assessed all primary (kindergarten-second

grade) elementary school children with Texas Primary Reading Inventory, running records, district benchmarks assessments, and writing samples.

The use of TPRI as the measure of student achievement meant that results may not be directly compared to the results of similar tests in other states. The assessment tools utilized will be derived to assist educators to successfully identify student needs.

This study relied on accurate reporting by kindergarten and reading recovery teachers who administer the TPRI assessments, benchmark assessments, Record of Oral Language, and all other testing methods. All teachers involved have experience administering all assessment tools. Guided Reading text levels from Running Records and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) were two assessments that are reported in this particular report.

The research began with Reading Recovery teachers in fifteen elementary schools identifying the twelve students in each school's kindergarten program who were most at-risk in terms of literacy/language acquisition. The students were identified with the Record of Oral Language Assessment Tool. This tool assessed a student's ability to repeat phrases back orally, after hearing each phrase one time. Phrases are designed to become increasingly more complex and difficult to repeat. A score of 12 or below is considered to be at-risk for the purposes of this research study. The treatment group included the twelve students selected who attended daily literacy-language development sessions for forty-five minutes, taught by the Reading Recovery teacher. These daily sessions were designed to establish and improve literacy language acquisition through eight strategies. The control group consisted of students from a campus who did not participate in this intervention due to scheduling issues at the campus level.

Students in the treatment group received daily instruction around the following lesson plan format: Repeated Reading, Conversations, Linking, Identifying Similarities and Differences, Interactive Writing, Inquiry, Connecting Talk to Writing.

Research questions addressed:

1. Would providing specific language and literacy acquisition strategies to kindergarten students for forty-five minutes daily improve guided reading levels at the end of kindergarten?

2. What would be the outcomes of providing specific strategies targeting language acquisition and literacy development?

3. Where were the students after the treatment--how were they performing academically on end of the year Guided Reading Levels and TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)?

Research Findings/ Results

Table #1 School "A" Opening Doors Year 2006-2007 (3rd Grade in 2009-2010)

Name	Spring GRL	Reading Recovery		1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade TAKS Reading
	Kinder	Y/N	Outcome	Spring GRL	Spring GRL	Pass/Fail
1	C	N	N/A	J	N	N/A
2	B	Y	Rec.	H	F	Moved
3	A	Y	Rec.	A	Moved	Moved
4	A	N	N/A	A	N/A	N/A
5	C	Moved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	C	Moved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	C	N	N/A	J	N	P
8	B	Y	Disc.	N/A	N/A	P*
9	A	Y	Rec.	D	E	F
10	D	Moved	N/A	N/A	M	P
11	A	Y	Rec.	H	M	F
12	N/A	Y	Rec.	N/A	N/A	P
13	N/A	Y	Inc.	N/A	N/A	P
14	N/A	Y	Rec.	N/A	N/A	P
* retained in 2nd, see 2nd gr. Form						

School "A" reflected students who were in the kindergarten intervention in 2006-2007. Of the 14 students in the intervention group, eleven were assessed for the spring Guided Reading Level in Kindergarten. Of those 14 original students in the intervention who were assessed at the end of the year, six were below grade level, reading at level A or B. Five

students were at or above grade level, reading at level C or D. Three students were unavailable at the end of the year for testing.

When this group of 14 students progressed to first grade, three moved, leaving 11 students. Of those 11 students, three were reading too well to be considered for Reading Recovery. Eight of the 11 qualified for Reading Recovery services, with six being recommended at the end of the twenty weeks, one student discontinued Reading Recovery after the twenty weeks, and one student had an incomplete program. At the end of first grade, 3 of the 14 students who received the intervention in kindergarten read below level; 4 of the 14 read on grade level at the end of first grade; 7 of the 14 were not available for end of the year testing. At the end of second grade, 2 of the 14 were reading below grade level, 4 of the 14 were reading on grade level; and 5 moved, 3 of the 14 were not available for end of the year testing. When this group of students who were in the kindergarten intervention were assessed in third grade with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test, 2 failed, 6 passed, and 5 had moved.

Table #2 School "B" Opening Doors Year 2006-2007 (3rd Grade 2009-2010)

Name	Spring GRL	Reading Recovery		1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade TAKS Reading
	Kinder	Y/N	Outcome	Spring GRL	Spring GRL	Pass/Fail
1	D	Y	Disc.	H	N or above	PASSED 75%
2	D	N		J	N or above	PASSED 83%
3	D	Y	Rec.	I	M	FAILED 61%
4	D	N		H	L	PASSED 78%
5	B	Y	INC	D	E	FAILED 50%
6	D	Y	REC.	I	L	PASSED 83%
7	D	N		J	N or above	PASSED 94%
8	D	N		J	N or above	PASSED 83%

In school B, four of the twelve students moved during the kindergarten year. Eight remained in the intervention. Of those eight students, 7 of the 8 were reading at or above level at the end of the year. One of 8 was reading below grade level at the end of the kindergarten year. During first grade, four of the eight were reading too well to qualify for

Reading Recovery. Four qualified for Reading Recovery, with one discontinuing from the program, two students being recommended, and one having an incomplete program. At the end of first grade, one student read below first grade level, seven of the eight read at or above grade level.

At the end of second grade, the eight students from School "B" who were in the Opening Doors Intervention, seven read at or above grade level, with one reading below grade level. In third grade, two of the eight students failed and six of the eight passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading test.

Table #3 School "C" Opening Doors Year 2006-2007 (3rd Grade in 2009-2010)

Name	Spring GRL	Reading Recovery		1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade TAKS Reading
	Kinder	Y/N	Outcome	Spring GRL	Spring GRL	Pass/Fail
1	D	N	N/A	M	N	P
2	A	Moved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	C	N	N/A	N	N	P
4	B	Y	Disc.	I	Moved	P
5	A	Y	REC.	G	H	P
6	A	N	N/A	D	D	F
7	A	N	N/A	N/A	I	F
8	A	N	N/A	F-RETAINED	H	N/A
9	B	N	N/A	Moved	N/A	N/A
10	B	Y	INC.	F	J	P
11	A	Moved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	A	Y	Disc.	J	N	P

School "C" reflects that twelve students were in the Opening Door Intervention in kindergarten. Of the twelve students, ten of the twelve students read below grade level at the end of their kindergarten year. Two of the twelve read above grade level at the end of their kindergarten year, following the intervention. Four of the twelve students qualified for Reading Recovery, second round, with two discontinuing successfully after the twenty week program, one was recommended after twenty weeks of Reading Recovery, and one student had an incomplete program with less than twenty weeks in the program.

In first grade, six of the twelve students who had been in the Opening Doors Intervention, were reading higher than their peers in first grade, not qualifying for Reading Recovery, which takes the students who need intervention the most.

Three of the twelve students moved. Seven of the twelve students were reading at or above grade level, one was unavailable for spring testing. One of the twelve was retained.

In second grade, four students had moved, four were at or above grade level with guided reading levels of J-N, four of the twelve students read below grade level, at level I, Guided Reading Level I or below.

Teachers involved in this research were surveyed and asked to identify and rank the strategies in order of usage and effectiveness for their specific group. Strategies were big books, picture books, word walls, name charts, ABC charts, interactive writing, inquiry, conversations and linking. Fifteen of the sixteen teachers submitted surveys. Data from the surveys reflected the following results ranked in order with the top being repeated reading of big books, the second strategy was conversation, third is repeated reading of picture books, fourth was linking texts and identifying similarities and differences, fifth was linking and conversations with the word wall, sixth and seventh strategies were tied, re-reading the name chart and ABC charts, interactive writing was the eighth tool to link reading and writing, and the last strategy to be developed was inquiry.

The original reason for deciding to support oral language with a kindergarten intervention was to impact students coming into Reading Recovery. It was expected that many of the students selected for Reading Recovery would stall at about book reading level 7 or 8. We began checking those students with the Record of Oral Language and noticed that most were struggling with more difficult structures. The number of students participating in the kindergarten intervention being selected for Reading Recovery the following year was an indicator of the success of the intervention.

During the 2006-2007 school year, students were served in the K intervention. Of those students 75% were not selected for Reading Recovery in the first round. The next step was to closely observe and identify strategies critical in supporting literacy and language development.

A key finding that resulted from using inquiry is that as students' language skills developed, they could better communicate their deeper thinking; thinking and language are intertwined and interdependent.

An unexpected finding of repeated reading was the personal ownership students developed with words that they had learned from books. These words gave students power to think, communicate, read, and write successfully and confidently. Eventually, usually by mid-March, students were given opportunities to write the stories they could re-tell. A benefit of re-telling was that students were able to integrate these conversational and group work survival skills into the homeroom classroom. Strategic questioning, giving time to answer, and strong sense of community in a risk-free environment were factors that contributed to the success of students becoming more proficient in conversations.

Similarities and differences was a strategy that took extensive development over time. Inquiry and linking were key strategies that fostered similarities and differences.

Table 4: Results of Survey Administered to Teachers of Kindergarten Intervention for Oral & Literary Language Development

Ranking	Strategy	Tool
1	Repeated Reading	Big Books
2	Conversations	
3	Repeated Reading	Picture Books/
		Trade Books/
		Browsing
		Boxes
4	Linking	Word Walls
	Identifying	Repeated Reading
	Similarities/Differences	Of Texts
5	Conversation	Word Walls;
6	Repeated Re-reading;	Name Chart; ABC
	Conversations	Chart
7	Interactive Writing	Conversations:
		Linking Reading & Writing
8	Inquiry	Questions; Games

Table 4 reflects the ranking of strategies in order of preference in the following order: repeated reading of big book; conversations; repeated reading of picture books, trade books and individual reading with browsing boxes; linking and identifying similarities and differences with word walls, repeated reading of texts; conversations around the word walls; repeated re-reading of name charts; alphabetic charts; interactive writing with conversations, linking, reading, & writing; inquiry with questions and games.

Table 5: Years Experience in Teaching of Intervention Teacher

Teachers	Teaching Experience	Reading Recovery Exp.	Intervention Exp.
17	*318*	116.5	33

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Molly's Musings
By
Molly Levite Griffis

Marilyn and Me

Sad to say, Alzheimer's has become one of this decade's hottest topics since all of us know someone, often someone we dearly love, who has been diagnosed with that terrible thief of all that is of value in life. When one of my closest friends came down with early onset...she was fifty-five at the time...I began attending Alzheimer's support groups in order to prepare myself to help guide her through the darkest of tunnels. The result of that journey has been two novels, the first for children, the other for adults. I discussed *Once in a Blue Moon* at an earlier time. The new book, available in both e-book from Amazon and hard copy from Reader's Press in Hillsboro, Kansas, is titled *Marilyn and Me*. Little did I know that by the time it was published the sweetest sister ever, my own Georgann Levite Vineyard, would be reaching for my hand to guide her.

What follows is a summary of *Marilyn and Me*. When Lydia Patterson and her best friend, Marilyn, both lose their husbands in the same week, Lydia is thrust into the role of only caregiver for Marilyn who is in stage four of early-onset Alzheimer's. At the same time, the ominous rattling of chain bookstores forces the closing of the independent Book Nook where Lydia has worked most of her adult life. Her judgment impaired by grief, Lydia decided to fulfill a promise made long ago to take Marilyn on a road trip to meet some of the bookstore customers who she's befriended over the years. On the first day out, a blind cat who also turns out to be pregnant, crawls into Marilyn's lap and heart causing her to speak for the first time in two years and leaving Lydia with some tough choices. *Marilyn and Me* is a tale of devoted friends and their one great last adventure together.

Go to my home page www.mollygriffis.com and click on the cover to read the first chapter. I'd love to hear what you think.

Current Policy Affecting Reading Education
By
Julie Collins, Columnist

In the current atmosphere, teachers need to be aware of, and involved in, the policy conversations that are taking place in our state, and in Washington, DC. Currently Oklahoma teachers need to be aware of several initiatives, as well as several current legislative proposals in the Oklahoma Legislature's 53rd Session.

Common Core State Standards

Oklahoma is in the midst of transitioning from *Priority Academic Student Skills* (PASS) to *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) as its guiding curriculum. Oklahoma is embracing the CCSS as part of Oklahoma's C^3 (College, Career and Citizen Ready) Standards. The C^3 are part of the REAC^{3}H initiative, Regional Educators Advancing College Career and Citizen Readiness Higher. Information and support for this initiative can be found online at http://sde.state.ok.us/Programs/REAC3H/default.html. If you are not yet familiar with CCSS, you can find information about the standards, and about the development of the standards, online at http://corestandards.org/. Information about Oklahoma's transition and implementation can be found at http://sde.state.ok.us/Curriculum/CommonCore/default.html. If you are a smart phone subscriber, you can also find apps for the CCSS to give you quick access to the standards for planning purposes.

As you look through the CCSS, you will find similarities and differences between PASS and CCSS. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has provided side by side comparisons of the standards, which can be found on the above website. As you examine the CCSS, keep in mind that these standards represent end of instruction expectations, but do not delineate how to teach those standards. Additionally, you will find that the standards are written with the expectation that content areas will be integrated. While social studies/history, science and technical subjects do not have their own CCSS, there are standards for the use of literacy in these subjects. However, Oklahoma's C^3 Standards include the CCSS, as well as updated standards for science and social studies.

Two consortiums are currently working on developing assessments for the CCSS. Oklahoma belongs to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). You can find information about PARCC at http://www.parcconline.org/. The assessments that are being developed are expected to be more authentic than current state assessments, requiring students to combine reading and writing tasks, rather than answering multiple choice questions. Oklahoma's timeline states that assessments reflecting the CCSS will be in place by the 2014-2015 school year.

Retention-Will it be the Solution?

During the 2011 Legislative Session, the Oklahoma Legislature passed Senate Bill 346, which amends the Reading Sufficiency Act. This new law makes several revisions to the Reading Sufficiency Act, with one of the most significant changes requiring that third grade students who do not pass the third grade criterion referenced test be retained in third grade, beginning with the students that are in first grade this year.

Senate Bill 346 created a new initiative to help support the existing Reading Sufficiency Act. This new section is the Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development (READ). As stated in the law: "The focus of the READ Initiative shall be to prevent the retention of third-grade students by offering intensive accelerated reading instruction to third-grade students who failed to meet standards for promotion to fourth grade and to kindergarten through third-grade students who are exhibiting a reading deficiency." This portion of the law requires that students identified as at risk through the assessments used under the implementation of the Reading Sufficiency Act be provided additional instruction during the regular school day through instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, and that their progress is tracked through ongoing analysis of their reading progress by "scientifically based and reliable assessment." The law begins implementation with current first grade students, with retention required for members of the current first grade class when they are in third grade (2013-2014), if the students perform at an unsatisfactory level on the reading portion of the statewide criterion referenced tests.

The READ initiative also requires the development of an Intensive Acceleration

Class for those students retained in third grade under this law. This class aims to increase achievement in reading by two years during the students' repeated third grade year. This is to be accomplished by having a reduced student-teacher ratio with a high-performing teacher, providing uninterrupted time for reading instruction which includes a scientifically based reading program aimed at accelerating progress, and includes intensive language and vocabulary instruction. This class is also directed to provide students the opportunity to master fourth grade curriculum in other academic areas. The law also requires that a process be implemented for mid-year promotion for students who make sufficient progress.

This law also states that, "No student may be assigned to a grade level based solely on age or other factors that constitute social promotion." The law also allows for "good cause" exemptions for some students who are English Language Learners, are on an individualized education plan, and/or can show progress through a portfolio developed by the teacher to document growth. You can find the complete list of "good cause exemptions" in the text of the bill. The State Department of Education is currently working on the rules for implementation of this new section of law. Watch for information to be forthcoming regarding the specifics of this implementation. You can read the text of SB 346 at http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=SB%20346 by clicking on "Enrolled (final version)".

Current Legislative Proposals

The Oklahoma Legislature is currently in session. This is the 53rd Session of the Oklahoma Legislature, which meets annually from the first Monday of February through May (although there is a current proposal to change that to meeting every other year). Some proposals that you might be interested in following during this session include:

HB 2511, authored by Representative Coody. This bill proposes removing the limit of 3 assessments for RSA screenings.

HB 2516, authored by Representative Kern. This bill proposes revising the Reading Sufficiency Act to add kindergarten to grade level students to be assessed Kindergarteners have been included before, but this appears to be moving kindergarten children from being screened and followed in their class to having an individual reading plan written and implemented. This bill also proposes removing the exemption from liability for the district for suggesting to parents that a struggling student be referred for medical evaluation.

HB 3031, authored by Representative Coody. This bill proposes a new section of law to require the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP) to provide professional development for the "big 5" components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) of reading for teachers in early childhood, elementary education or special education prior to 2001.

HB 3072, authored by Representative Dorman. This bill proposes the development of a study skills improvement pilot program.

HB 3073, authored by Representative Dorman. This bill proposes a pilot program for dyslexia training. Institutions of higher education would be identified to participate and would be required to train their early childhood, elementary and special education teacher candidates in dyslexia and assessments; as well as to provide institutes on the same content for current K-4 teachers.

SB 1093, authored by Senator Coates. This bill proposes allowing students to substitute certain scores on the ACT for EOI test requirements for graduation.

SB 1110, authored by Senator Fields. This bill proposes delaying the EOI test requirements for graduation by one year.

SB 1227, authored by Senator Stanislawski. This bill proposes changing the birthdate requirement for starting school from September 1st to July 1st, and would allow students with a July 1st birthday to enter early childhood programs with results from an assessment (paid for by the parents; approved by the school/district) show that the student is ready to enroll.

SB 1564, authored by Senator Paddack. This bill proposes establishing a new law requiring middle schools to prepare personal academic plans for every student entering middle school, emphasizing academic achievement, completing of middle school curriculum, and preparation for college and careers.

SB 1565, authored by Senator Paddack. This bill proposes dyslexia training, and is the senate version of Representative Dorman's HB 3073.

SB 1797, authored by Senator Jolley. This bill proposes replacing the Education Oversight Board with Commission for Education, Instruction Quality, and Accountability.

I encourage you to get involved in the process by checking out current legislative proposals, following their progress, and contacting your Representative or Senator, and/or the legislators that are authoring bills that you are interested in. You can find your legislators online, and follow legislation, at http://www.oklegislature.gov/.

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Research Summary
Linda McElroy, Ph.D.
Column Editor

Editor's note: *This research column focuses on text complexity, fluency, and comprehension for young readers. The featured research is from:*

Text Complexity and Oral Reading Prosody in Young Readers, by Rebekah George Benjamin and Paula J. Schwanenflugel, in Reading Research Quarterly, 45 (4), pp. 388-404, 2010.

As teachers in Oklahoma schools and across the nation transition toward implementation of the Common Core State Standards, many factors will need to be considered. One of these important issues will be the complexity of the texts that young children will be expected to read. Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert's article in the Dec. 2011/Jan. 2012 issue of *Reading Today*, (The Common Core's Staircase of Text Complexity: Getting the Size of the First Step Right) points out that the required level of difficulty of texts, measured in Lexiles, used by beginning readers, will be increased. Dr. Hiebert points out that the level of complexity in the Common Core State Standards for the end of third grade is approximately one grade level higher than previous recommendations.

Because of these issues of text complexity, I was especially interested in a research article on Text Complexity and Oral Reading Prosody in Young Readers by Rebekah George Benjamin and Paula J. Schwanenflugel in *Reading Research Quarterly.* The article describes a research study conducted with second grade students, analyzing several factors as these young students read texts at different levels of difficulty. A primary factor was fluency, described by the authors as rate, accuracy, and prosodic qualities in the oral reading of children. The prosodic qualities (prosody) include variations in loudness (stress on a word, phrase, or exclamation), duration (rhythm, vowel length, or stretching an entire word for emphasis), pitch (intonation), and pausing (for emphasis or phrasing)

Participants in the study were 90 second-grade students, who were part of a larger study, from varied ethnic backgrounds and divided almost equally by gender. The children included in this study were not receiving special services for dual-language learners, and they were able to read the "difficult" passages in the standardized reading assessments used in the study without

excessive decoding errors, so that comparisons between an "easy" passage and a "difficult" passage could be made. The study had two main goals. One was to determine whether text difficulty impacts prosody in children's oral reading and, if so, which features of prosody were impacted. The second goal was to determine whether prosody enhances the ability to predict both fluency and reading comprehension, in difficult versus easy texts.

Standardized assessments were administered to the children during the spring of second grade for reading fluency (Gray Oral Reading Test—GORT—to assess reading rate and accuracy), for word reading efficiency (Test of Word Reading Efficiency—TOWRE—to assess the number of real words correctly read from a list within 45 seconds), and for reading comprehension (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test—WIAT). Reading prosody was measured during the reading of two passages from the GORT, chosen as an "easy" passage and a "difficult" passage. The easy passage was highly decodable and allowed for prosodic measurement in the context of a text with few decoding errors. Readability formula averages placed it at approximately 1.97 grade level. The difficult text was selected to be above grade level for the participants, with an approximate reading level of 3.79. The oral readings were audiotaped, and spectrographic software was used to analyze four variables of prosody. Pitch at the end of sentences , intrasentential pausal intrusions (pauses within sentences), ungrammatical pause ratios, and intonation contours were examined. An ANOVA compared each prosody variable from the easy text with prosody from the difficult text.

Children were given a score on fluency skill (defined as reading rate and accuracy), and based on these scores, they were divided into low, middle, and high fluency skill groups. The four prosody variables were then analyzed. In all fluency groups, children paused significantly more when reading the more difficult text. The difference in pauses between the easy and difficult texts was significantly greater in the low-fluency group than the middle-fluency group. Similarly, the difference

between pauses in the middle-fluency group and the high-fluency group was significantly greater.

Interestingly, all groups decreased their ungrammatical pausing when reading the more difficult text. When the most fluent readers pause, their pauses tend to be grammatically appropriate, and the more difficult text seems to promote this behavior among all groups more than the easy text.

The researchers examined the four variables of prosody to see if prosody serves as a predictor of fluency skill (rate and accuracy). Easy text prosody significantly predicted fluency. Difficult text prosody was an even greater predictor of fluency skill.

Further analysis was done to determine whether reading prosody independently predicts reading comprehension. Fluency accounted for a significant amount of variance in the comprehension scores on the WIAT. When prosody variables were added for the easy text, they had no significant predictive value beyond that of fluency. For the difficult text, however, prosody variables did account for more variance in comprehension beyond fluency alone. Reading fluency skill and reading prosody taken together provide a better indicator of reading comprehension than either skill alone.

In summary, these research findings show that text difficulty impacts prosodic performance. In more difficult texts, children paused more often, perhaps explained by increasing numbers of decoding uncertainties as text difficulty increased. However, their pauses tended to reflect the grammar of the more complex sentences more often. Children's intonation contours were more adultlike with the more difficult text. The trends were true in all fluency groups, and the researchers interpreted the results to mean that "children seemed to marshal prosodic resources to deal with the more difficult text" (p. 399).

In examining whether good prosody is related to good comprehension in any way beyond rate measures alone, this research study suggests that the answer is dependent on the difficulty of the text from which prosody is measured. Prosody from the more difficult

text was more predictive of comprehension than prosody from the easy text. The researchers point out that while intuition suggests that prosody should fall apart as children read more difficult texts, in this study prosody was actually enhanced in the more difficult texts. A possible explanation is that prosody may serve as a scaffold in long, complex sentences. By parsing the sentences into phrases, the reader is more able to hold a segment in working memory until a more complete semantic analysis of the entire sentence can be completed. The researchers theorize that complex text is more likely to encourage the use of good prosody, because children need it for comprehension.

In discussing implications of the study, the researchers discussed assessments of fluency, including rate, accuracy, and prosody. Typical classroom assessments are not done through spectrographic analysis of the prosody variables, but by use of descriptive rubrics. The rubrics need to recognize the variables of prosody in analyzing oral reading. This research suggests that adding some indicator of text difficulty to the rubrics would be helpful.

Overall, this research would encourage teachers who are working with young readers to consider more than rate and accuracy when describing fluency. Prosody is a vital part of fluency. Teachers can support prosody by modeling the variables during read-alouds and by directly teaching children the importance of reading sentences "chunk by chunk" instead of "word by word". Teachers can include specific lessons to demonstrate how dividing sentences into phrases helps the reader to comprehend a sentence. Lessons can also demonstrate how important voice inflection and pauses can be in conveying the meaning of a sentence. As children deal with more complex texts, teachers' roles in modeling ways that good fluency (including rate, accuracy, and prosody) supports good comprehension will become even more important.

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Technology

Jiening Ruan, Ph.D.
Column Editor

Internet Resources for Spelling
By
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Spelling is an important component of elementary school literacy curriculum. It is closely connected to decoding and writing. Thoughtfully planned spelling activities can help elementary students develop critical knowledge of sound and letter correspondence, which can lead to stronger decoding abilities. For those students whose spelling is well developed, they also tend to have more confidence in their ability to write and are more motivated to write. This article features eight online resources that can be used to support the spelling development of elementary students.

1.) **Vocabulary Spelling City by Vkidz Inc.** http://www.spellingcity.com

Vocabulary Spelling City is a website that offers activities for spelling and vocabulary practice. Many activities on the website are free although its premium activities cost money. Teachers can create spelling lists on this website and also assign a definition to the words. The website offers activities such as unscrambling words, finding words in a crossword puzzle, putting them in the ABC order, and even more! Parents can help students locate spelling lists online and

practice the words from home. When students master their weekly words they can move on to more challenging lists already created on the website such as homophones or compound words. At school, teachers can eliminate paper worksheets and written tests by having students practice and take the test on the website.

2.) **K12 Reader: Reading Instruction Resources for Parents and Teachers by Jerry and Leanne**
http://www.k12reader.com

Jerry and Leanne Charles created this free website in 2008 in an attempt to help parents assist their children in learning to read. By clicking the spelling tab on this website, a teacher or parent can get spelling lists for grades first through fifth. The spelling lists for each grade include a 36-week program. These spelling pages are printable and developmentally appropriate for each grade level. The weekly spelling lists have a phonics theme and that theme corresponds with a comprehension activity that includes practicing reading the spelling words in a story and answering questions about the story. In addition to the spelling program, there are resources for reading instruction, grammar, sight word vocabulary, and comprehension activities, worksheets, and games.

3.) **ICT Games by Jim Barret**
http://www.ictgames.com/lcwc.html

The spelling activity featured in this website uses the traditional method of "Look, cover, write, and check". This method of spelling practice is effective because it allows students to learn the spelling words by conducting careful examination of the words and going through multiple steps of practice. The spelling game is presented in a fun and easy to play format. The website also offers many other literacy and math games, and they are free to use.

4.) **ABCya by ABCya.com, LLC**
http://www.abcya.com

This free website provides fun and interactive games, and many of them were created by certified teachers. The activities are divided into grade levels. For Kindergarten through 5th grade, each grade level has its own set of activities. There are also seasonal activities such as those related to different holidays. In addition, the website offers a fun activity for students to practice Dolch sight words and some noun sight words. Students hear the word spoken and then drag the letters into boxes to correctly spell each sight word. They are allowed to have the word repeated and have a hint of how the word is spelled if needed. This activity can help both struggling and regular students learn to master the spelling of commonly and frequently used words in their everyday classroom writing assignments. Additional spelling activities on this website include spelling bingo, student created word searches, and other grammar themed spelling games.

5.) **BrainFlips by BrainFlips Inc.**
http://www.brainflips.com/home.html

This free website is a great resource for spelling words. Teachers, parents, or students can create flip cards on this website. Teachers can create and assign a set for students to look up and print at home. The website has a search engine which can be used to find flip cards that have already been created by other teachers. Teachers can add pictures and audio so they are helpful for various subjects and languages. This feature can also benefit students at different levels or with special learning needs.

6.) **Kidspell by Kids Know It Network**
http://www.kidsspell.com/spelling-lists.php?ls=1&lsNumber=1&lsName=short%20a&lis=

The Kids Know It Network started out as an elementary teacher's website and grew from there. It began in 1998 and has the goal of being a free learning resource for children, parents, and teachers. Kidspell.com is the spelling portion of Kids Know It Network. The

website has many different games and activities to practice spelling. You can choose to select pre-made lists or create your own custom list. The pre-made link boasts 982 spelling lists. The link begins with first grade lists and continues through 12th grade lists. At the end of this impressive collection of spelling lists are guidelines for parents and educators on how to choose the correct list for the child in need of practice. Along with the guidelines of choosing a list, there is information on how students can learn and also retain the words.

7.) http://www.uniqueteachingresources.com/ spelling-teaching-resources.html by Heidi McDonald

Unique Teaching Resources was created by Heidi McDonald, a teacher with twenty-two years of teaching experience in countries all over the world. She created this website in 2009. The spelling resources on her website are reached by clicking the spelling resources tab in the menu. Once there, Ms. McDonald takes you step-by-step through the what, how, when, and why of teaching spelling to your students. This information is targeted towards the spelling teacher whether you are a classroom teacher or a parent wanting to help a student at home master spelling. She guides the reader through setting goals and evaluating current practices. Last, you are given access to hundreds of words on lists including Fry's lists, the Dolch lists, spelling rules lists, commonly misspelled words, and more. Ms. McDonald doesn't just give you tons of words; she gives the teacher tools to effectively present words for students to master.

8.) http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/english/co ntents_spelling.htm by Mark Warner

The Literacy-Spelling section of Teaching Ideas is created by Mark Warner, a teacher in the United Kingdom. The website provides spelling resources in the form of free PDF files, interactive Power Point presentations, YouTube videos, and word documents. You can find ready-made spelling activities that correlate with various spelling patterns and

rules. There are also activities to improve skills in spelling homophones, prefixes, suffixes, and other spelling tips and ideas. The activities are free. The lessons are also engaging due to their different approaches to learning the words. The website is user friendly. Each link on the website has a title, short description of its contents, and a downloadable file.

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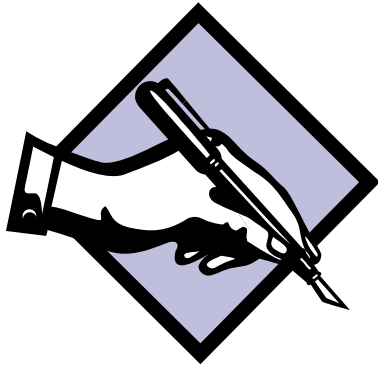
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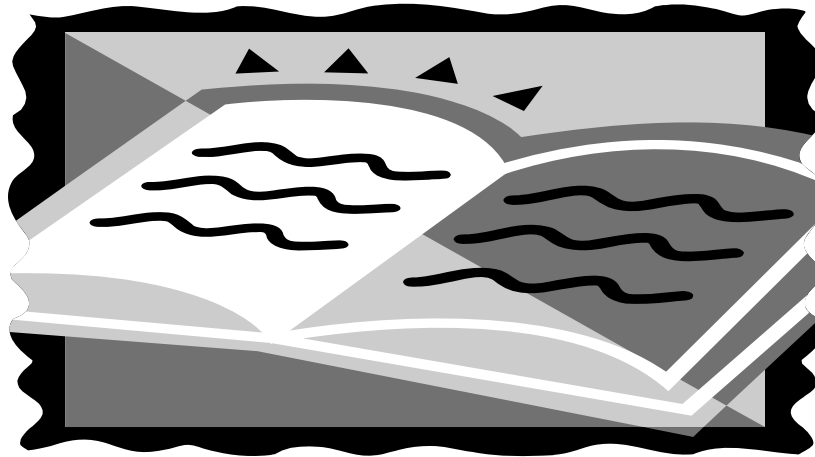
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Guidelines for Authors

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 which 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 **Vickie Caudle, Editorial Assistant, at <u>caudlev@nsuok.edu</u>.**

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.