Making Literacy Connections

The Journal of the Greater Washington Reading Council

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Table of Contents

A Backwards Glance: How 20th Century Reading Research and Practices Have Shaped Current Instructional Approaches

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Experts have been researching and debating the "best" way to teach reading for over sixty years. In reality, there is no single instructional approach that will lead all students to be successful in reading. Over the decades, various approaches have been implemented in an effort to raise reading achievement, many of which were later discarded or modified. Among these instructional approaches are included outcomes-centered literacy scope and sequence documents, organizational structures for literacy blocks, and the provision of scripted literacy curricula. Each of these approaches led to inconsistent, and often very few, impacts on student learning outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

For more than a half-century, literacy instruction has been impacted by changing paradigms and theories, such as constructivism, social constructivism, information/cognitive processing theories, sociocognitive theory, structuralism, poststructuralism, pragmatism, and motivational theories (Alvermann, Unrau, & Ruddell, 2013), as well as the evolving environmental, economic, and political climate. Each period in time led to innovations and new approaches in literacy instruction. Upon evaluation of how literacy instruction has been approached in the last sixty years, it is clear that many of today's literacy instructional approaches stem from decades of reading research that reflected the historical perspectives of the time. Gaining a clearer understanding of how literacy pedagogy has been shaped over the years will allow current teachers of reading to fully understand the "why" behind many of today's current instructional approaches.

1950s-1960s: The Beginning of Skill-Based Phonics Instruction

Early notable literacy research, conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, found a postwar America that was ripe for new beginnings in reading research, based on both the high birthrate following World War II, which led to record numbers of students entering public elementary schools, and the country's desire to be globally competitive in the age of Sputnik (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000). The desire to "speed up" reading acquisition led to a focus on phonics instruction. This led to the introduction of the first scripted phonics programs as well as texts that were based on controlled vocabulary (Chall, 1967). These efforts coincided in time with B.F. Skinner's research on behaviorism

(Skinner, 1976). Skinner, who believed that the acquisition of desired behaviors and skills could be clearly defined by breaking each down into parts and reinforcing each part in systematic ways, supported the focus on phonics and skills instruction as well as the introduction of "reading training" programs (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Glaser, 1978).

1970s: Moving from Skill-Drilling to Comprehension

By the mid-to-late 1960s, the focus of reading research began to move away from Skinner's behaviorism, which focused reading instruction on the drill and practice of skills, toward a focus on the learner and the learning process. Driven by linguists and psycholinguists, research during this era (late 1960s to mid-1970s) was influenced by Noam Chomsky, whose research was based on neuroscience and cognitive science (Chomsky, 1965). One of the key differences in reading instruction during this era was the belief that the learner was an active participant in constructing meaning and understanding, rather than a passive recipient of new information (Halliday, 1969). During this period, diagnoses in reading struggles focused less on isolating and correcting problems and more on readers' metacognition and understanding how readers arrived at their interpretations of text. Kenneth Goodman's research on miscue analysis, which focused on the types of errors made by students when reading, represented this shift in thinking (Goodman, 1965). Strong focus was given to comprehension as well as to the use of context clues to glean meaning from a text.

The mid-1970s brought in increased federal funding for literacy research (Alexander, 1998). This funding ushered in an influx of researchers whose interests were primarily rooted in cognitive psychology (Alexander & Fox, 2004). Information-processing research, for which this period is known, resulted in much research and writing taking place on text cohesion, story grammar, text structures, and text genres (Armbruster, 1984; Meyer, 1975; Taylor & Beach, 1984). Schema theory, or the understanding that students will comprehend more readily when they are able to attach new information to prior knowledge (commonly known today as the "activation of prior knowledge"), originated during this era and is still currently a popular focus in reading and learning research (Allington, 1980; Lundeberg, 1987). An important discovery made during this time period was that students' reading knowledge and comprehension could be significantly impacted through targeted interventions and explicit instruction (Pressley, Goodchild, Fleet, Zajchowski, & Evans, 1989; Weinstein, Goetz, & Alexander, 1988). This understanding led to the early stages of data-driven targeted reading instruction.

1980s: From Technology and Individualism to Early Socio-Cultural Approaches

In the early 1980s, information-processing theory began to dominate researchers' approaches to determining new literacy pedagogies. This paradigm led researchers to search for general processes or laws that explained reading acquisition and achievement (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981; Ericsson & Smith,

1991). During this time, there was a strong focus on text structure, story grammar, and text genres (Armbruster, 1984; Mandl, Stein, & Trabasso, 1984; Taylor & Beach, 1984). This era, in which many approaches were impacted by early computers and technology, focused on the individual mind of learners and led to the realization that readers could interpret text in more than one way, rooted in their individualism (Brewer, 1980).

By the mid-1980s, the applications of information-processing research and theories had proven to be less promising than educators had hoped (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Harris, 1996). This reality, along with the increased influence of social and cultural anthropology, led to a devaluing of traditional scientific inquiry and focused on the impact made by social interactions on student learning (Sfard, 1998). Vygotsky's work became influential during this time, focusing research on the sociocultural nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1986). This led to the popularity of collaborative learning contexts such as cognitive apprenticeships and cooperative learning (Alexander, 1996). Socioculturalism was also the early theoretical basis for the focus on learning communities and responsive teaching, which are currently being implemented in many of today's classrooms (Brown & Campione, 1990).

1990s: Multimedia and Motivation

During the mid-to-late 1990s, a new era of reading research commenced due to several factors: the increased presence of media that replaced traditional texts, a strong interest in student motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), and the demands of becoming literate in an age of information-technology (Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, & Kieffer, 1998). Prior to this time, texts were generally considered to be printed materials. This era ushered in a multitude of options to interact with digital text and media.

The research focus on student motivation led to educators' consideration of interest-based learning, goal-setting, and student self-regulation (Almasi, McKeown, & Beck, 1996; Ames, 1992; Schallert, Meyer, & Flower, 1995). This research serves as the foundation for many current classroom approaches that take students' personal reading goals into consideration during the planning process. The value of ascertaining students' affect was discovered during this time, encouraging researchers and teachers to critically examine students' interests, goals, beliefs of self-efficacy, and examining how these impacted students' approaches to reading and understanding text (Almasi, McKeown, & Beck, 1996; Ames, 1992; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Research during this time period resulted in deeper understandings of the multidimensionality of reading, or the recognition that readers' schema, their strategic processing, and their motivation to read consistently interact during reading development (Alexander, 2003; Alexander & Jetton, 2000). Research on learning strategies, specifically reading comprehension strategies, expanded during this time in response to the new focus on student engagement and motivation (Pressley, 2002).

Early 2000s to the Present: Readers' Intentionality

Recent research indicates that there are three factors at play that are currently impacting approaches to reading instruction (Alvermann, Unrau, & Ruddell, 2013). They are: 1) questions about the focus on engagement; 2) the arguably over-the-top focus on student testing, and; 3) growing concerns about students' ability to thinking deeply and critically due to passive engagement with a multitude of technologies (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2005). The notion of student engagement has been called into play recently due to the fact that there is not one hard-and-fast definition of engagement, leading to multiple interpretations of its meaning and its impact on instruction (Dochy, Segers, Van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003). Additionally, researchers have questions if there is a true link between engagement and achievement. Because a student is motivated to read, does that automatically mean they will be more successful in doing so?

Another concern brought to recent light is America's current culture of assessment. Studies have found that the culture of testing, focused on knowledge and recall, is not conducive to optimal reading achievement (Alexander, 2010; Hofer & Pintrich, 2002), due the fact that there is no way to assess metacognition and deep understanding through the use of right-wrong, multiple choice questions. Concerns about "over-testing" have been exacerbated by the amount of time that students spend online and interacting with media platforms. As the time spent engaging in this continues to rise, time spent in traditional printed text is waning (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Engagement in technology is also typically passive, rather than active, with students listening to or watching what is being shared with them (Rideout et al., 2010).

So, what do these concerns mean for changes in current literacy pedagogies? One current school of thought is the importance of refocusing on text structure instruction due to the variety of text media at students' disposals. It is important that students are explicitly taught ways to navigate each type of text and strategies for drawing meaning from each. There is also a renewal of focus on student goal-setting (Moje, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Educators cannot simply assume that students will understand the intended aim of a reading text; it is important to consider what students ascertain to be their goals in reading assigned texts (Kulikowich & Alexander, 2010). According to Alvermann, Unrau, and Ruddell (2013), it is the learner's intentionality, or what they hope to gain from taking part in specific tasks, that currently matters in reading instruction.

Concluding Thoughts

As we examine the literacy pedagogies that emerged during the past several decades, patterns of learners and learning become evident. Literacy trends that grew out of the research of each era, aided by the economic, environmental, and

political contexts during that time, indicate that many of our current reading instructional practices are anchored in past pedagogies. Decades of reading research have led to the understanding that reading is invariably physiological, psychological, and sociological (Alexander & Fox, 2004), suggesting the need to approach instruction through the integration of these components through provision of appropriate learning contexts, embracing psychological understandings of the storage, retrieval, and demonstration of learned information, and acknowledging the sociological aspects of learning through individualized goal-setting and engagement strategies. A glance into our past serves as a reminder that much of today's literacy research and reading instructional practices have roots that began growing many decades ago.

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Leveraging Digital Literacies for Success in a First-Year Writing Program

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The ability to write well has remained a cornerstone of effective communicative practices for centuries and now extends into digital domains. While there have been increases in writing expectations in K-12 settings since the passing of No Child Left Behind and more recently the establishment and adoption of the Common Core State Standards, writing proficiency has remained relatively stable over the last two decades (Ortlieb, Verlaan, Cheek, & DiMarco, 2016) with only ¼ of students performing at the proficient level in writing in eighth and twelfth grades (NAEP, 2011). While these statistics are alarming, many students are increasingly skilled in composing within online and digital contexts (Kajder, 2018), though these literacies often go unnoticed in comparison to more traditionally and culturally valued academic skills such as reading and writing using traditional compositional skills (Merchant, 2007). The integrated effects of digital literacy were also documented in John Hattie's (2011) notable work on factors that impact student learning and 21st century skill acquisition, with computer assisted instruction in writing rendering a .42 effect size.

The 2018 Pew Research Center found that 78% of Americans 18-24 use a variety of social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter (Smith & Anderson, 2018). In our culture, digital advances and opportunities to make meaning with a variety of texts are happening at a mercurial speed, and literacy educators must keep pace with the way students make meaning in these contexts. These 21st century digital literacy skills are mostly practiced and mastered outside the classroom. However, English educators have made considerable effort to find ways to integrate these skills into the classroom and teach critical literacy (Sperling & Dipardo, 2008). While there have not been any large-scale projects that focus on integrating those skills into the regular classroom, there is immense potential for the literacy skills fostered online to be transferred to the classroom (Alvermann, 2011). Not only do the online activities provide opportunities to develop identity, create authorship, promote agency, receive feedback from peers, use critical discussions to foster comprehension, develop voice, organize, and compose, but they also provide the sociocultural context in which these literacy practices occur.

When students begin college, most learners are active participants in virtual communities that reflect their belief systems and culture (O'Dowd, 2013), yet they now must transition into the college community and become active participants in academic discourse. With the National Center for Education statistics reporting that 40% of students attending a four-year institution require developmental course work in math or English, it is apparent that students are not coming to college with the skills to successfully begin their college career and enter this discourse (Chen, 2016). Although the number of students that require intervention is high, the trend in higher education is to eliminate those courses altogether (Moss, Kelcey, & Showers, 2014). As a result, developmental and nondevelopmental students alike are often placed in classrooms and contexts with unequal access to a college degree. This is particularly the case of first-year college students who may have acquired important compositional skills online but who have not learned to transfer those skills into their academic writing. The purpose of this study is to explore opportunities for leveraging the digital literacy practices of first-year college students to support (not replace) traditional literacy skill acquisition.

First-Year Writing Programs

The first-year writing (FYW) college classroom poses a variety of social and academic challenges to novice writers. They must shed their academic identity as adolescents navigating high school towards becoming independent adult learners. Students must learn to navigate the college community and its enhanced levels of academic rigor and expectation. Meanwhile, the challenge for first-year writing instructors is to meet the needs of those diverse students, especially those who have been underserved. Often, this group contains multilingual learners sometimes labeled as in need of language, "specifically academic writing," based on academic power structures that discriminate against students who are literate in many other ways besides standard English (Alvarez, 2018).

With the preponderance of adolescents with limited English skills, it cannot be assumed that all of their literacy needs will have been met before entering college; academic support must be available to improve their abilities. Without providing these scaffolds, students are denied an equal opportunity for college success. Deficits views prevail in this area of higher education (Ortlieb & Majors, 2016), rather than the understanding that not all students have the same lexical and syntactical skills as do first language students. As a result, explicit instruction and scaffolding through a gradual release of responsibility is not provided where it is needed most (McVee, Ortlieb, Reichenberg, & Pearson, 2019) and students experience difficulties with claims, organization, audience, voice, and evidentiary support.

While these important skills are central to a successful academic career, using the same criteria for all students creates an institutional bias in grading. A deficit model approach denigrates students' out-of-school literacy practices. While students come to the university to learn the language of the academy, changing

criteria or lowering standards is not the goal of either instructor or student, but to remedy this inequity, instructors must find other ways to help foster literacy. Since students already compose using a variety of technologies that extend beyond typed documents, schools must also value and investigate how their virtual experiences can be transferred and applied to support traditional academic outcomes (Moore et al., 2016).

Methods

For the purposes of this exploration, researchers used the following criteria to select literacy-related studies for inclusion in this meta-analysis:
1) conducted in the past five years;
2) included qualitative research with an ethnographic, observational, or action-research orientation; and
3) focused on written composing skills in digital spaces

This paper does not address teaching methods or ways to integrate digital technologies into the classroom, as those areas have been more fully researched. Instead, it aims to gather data on how to effectively transfer compositional writing skills in a digital space back into successful writing in class using pen and paper.

Design

As with any meta-analysis, this systematic review of literature utilized some criteria as a filter for inclusion: a) studies published in the last five years (2014-2018); b) research reflective of current digital literacy practices (e.g., personal blogs, gaming, social media); and c) available research in ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. By narrowing the extant literature through this specific lens, this meta-analysis was framed to provide a timely account of a domain that is continually changing, such as the way young adults use digital technologies. Moreover, it attempted to shed light on the most relevant studies that feature successful outcomes with the potential to transfer students' writing skills from their lived worlds to the classroom context.

Learning more about how the dynamics of these virtual spaces play out required that studies include detailed observations of the many ways students make meaning in virtual environments. To satisfy this requirement, qualitative research studies were included as they permit deep contextualization of student activity, engagement, and development (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2018). Analysis included students utilizing literacy skills as they navigate digital spaces through participating in blogging, fan-fiction sites, discussion forums, social media, multimodal construction, and gaming.

Content in systematic review. Studies of these digital spaces and the literacy practices occurring within them offer real-world applications of virtual discourse, where students are empowered by their ability to direct their own compositions rather than take direction from a teacher. The included studies not only observed

the agency of the participants but also the way they interact and support each other in these non-threatening or "safe" spaces. The studies highlight how students use the literacy skills taught in traditional first-year college writing classrooms in their virtual communities. This includes how students use argument, evidence, appeal to audience, provide feedback, revise, create an authorial voice, use critical thinking skills, and organize their ideas as they navigate the digital world.

Discussion forums allow for the interaction of participants in a transcultural and global context. Looking for studies that utilize literacy skills that can transfer into the classroom, the researchers have chosen six studies that were relevant to the college level age group. Three of the studies focus on spaces where participants share interests—a popular television show, a fanfiction site, and a forum for dog lovers. The other three studies focused on identity construction in the way of personal blogs, social media, and Twitter. Each study includes the importance of culture and use of language as a basis for literacy development.

The studies on multimodal construction also focus on how students create identity and authorship in these virtual environments. The three studies follow the ways students make meaning with a variety of texts and direct their own literacy developments. Students create seamlessly and learn to become independent and confident composers and communicators. The studies also show the value for L2 students to explore and take risks in these safe places.

Finally, students' time spent gaming cannot be ignored. Gaming, although often not valued as an intellectual activity, provides students with opportunities for critical thinking, peer feedback, and composing. The two studies on gaming provide insights and discussion on how these skills must be identified so they can be used to support traditional classroom learning.

While some studies of online discussion forums and fan fiction involve large quantities of participants, others focus on a single student. It is the nature of the virtual world for students to move between independent works as they construct individual projects that help develop their identities, such as blogs and multimodal compositions, and collaboration, such as the participatory culture of gaming. It is important to note that many of the studies in this meta-analysis were conducted by practitioners, who are focused not just on how literacy develops online but are equally invested in helping students grow and gain confidence in virtual spaces as well as in the classroom.

Using the results of these studies, researchers sought to determine *how* digital literacies can be utilized to create equity, value identity, support diverse learners, and create confident writers in the traditional classroom of a first-year writing program. Emergent themes included the following topics that will be detailed more fully: *virtual spaces as sociocultural communities; online discussion forums, fan fiction, & blogs; multimodal composition; and gaming & composing.*

Findings

Virtual Spaces as Sociocultural Communities

The activities used to create, communicate, and understand are created from the social, historical, and cultural contexts from which they exist (Li, 2011). Fishman (1988) notes that one becomes literate by "becoming acculturated in one's sociocultural word; literacy can be seen as the means by which individuals conduct and construct their lives in the community and society" (p. 143, as cited in Li, 2011). Today, social media and online communication are integral parts of the communicative process.

Virtual spaces create communities where students conduct and construct their lives through active discourse with other members. A Discourse, as defined by Gee (1996), is a "socially acceptable manner of using language, symbolic expressions, and artifacts of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a meaningful group or 'social network'" (p. 131). A student's out-of-school Discourse and social network extends to online interactions and is greatly influenced by membership within those social groups. Literacy practices do not take place in isolated academic environments but are constantly evolving and being shaped by experiences.

It is upon this premise that Street's (1995) work challenged the idea that literacy is an "autonomous model" and that there is only one way to form literacy, instead, he viewed literacy as it develops in relation to the social influences that impact it as well as the power structure. He called his model the "ideological model," which viewed literacy as a "social practice inextricably linked to societal relations of power" (in Alvermann, 2011, p. 543). These virtual spaces or communities become safe spaces that allow students to create their identities through empowering literacy practices. By combining these binaries, academic spaces and personal spaces, a hybrid space is created where academic skills are practiced in the personal space (Bhabha, 1994; Moje et al., 2004; Soja 1996). The third space as a hybrid allows for a student's identity as a literate and confident individual to develop and evolve (Bhabha, 1994).

The New London Group's (1996) ground-breaking report on multiliteracies validated these types of literacy interactions and identified how disregarding them contributed to the great inequities that exist in education that in turn create the unequal distribution of economic, political, and social capital (Stewart, 2014). These scholars recognized that there are many ways of making meaning beyond printed text including multimodal interactions such as "visual, oral, aural, gestural, linguistic, musical, kinesthetic, and digital" ones (Alvermann, 2011, p. 543). People communicate using these methods in virtual communities, and their choice of modes often represents a culture and identity.

Social practices that result from multiliterate environments offer opportunities for literacy that are "participatory, collaborative, published, less authorcentric, and less individual than conventional literacies" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 98). Multiliteracies provide a safe space for learners to compose with appreciation for audience, use critical thinking and receive feedback; "literacies—*all* literacies, 'new' or conventional—involve bringing technology, knowledge, and skills together within contexts of social purpose" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 98). Students spend time blogging, remixing, and creating multimodal projects not to mention using social media and taking part in discussion forums to create meaning within a sociocultural context.

Although many educators do not incorporate multiliteracies and digital literacies into the traditional classroom, there is a wealth of research that supports and validates the importance of literacy practices that take place using various texts and in different sociocultural communities (Alvermann, 2011; Gee, 1996; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Hine, 2015; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014; NLG, 1996; Street, 1995). However, there are not many studies about how to use these methods to help support conventional literacy practices. The academic classroom can often be intimidating, while virtual spaces afford students the ability to create and practice those skills without fear of high-stakes assessment. In virtual spaces, students receive feedback from peers; they are engaged; they use critical thinking; they must consider audience; and they are provided with agency and authorship.

Although there are many educators who admire the "writing skills, inventiveness, and social intuitions" that students use online to create content, the transfer between these literacy practices has not been widely accepted and appreciated in the classroom (Alvermann, 2008). The following research studies focus on students' literacy practices concerning writing and composing in virtual spaces where students utilize skills that are often difficult for first-year writing class students to master. However, since there is a very limited amount of research on adult learners and very few studies on using these skills in an academic context, the scope is limited, but the research does support the value of further inquiry into how to use students' out-of-school learning to support traditional literacy learning in first-year writing classes.

Online Discussion Forums, Fan Fiction, and Blogs

Discussion in the classroom helps develop comprehension; teachers often use small discussion groups for literature study to aid in comprehending difficult texts (Duke & Carlise, 2011). Online discussion forums are similar as learners exchange ideas and receive feedback from peers; but unlike the traditional classroom, learners interact within environments where they feel less threatened by assessment and freer to create their persona as a writer and composer. These communities offer students the opportunities for global and intercultural conversations that can result in social activism and action (Kirkland & Hull, 2011). They also create agency for budding writers without the stigma of the classroom

and provide exposure to the use of English in less formal terms, exposing them to colloquialisms and idioms in a context that can help them comprehend. While instructors struggle to validate students' identity in the classroom, online environments offer students just such an opportunity.

In this way, these virtual spaces offer students infinite ways to connect with different people using different modalities. Kim (2015) notes that traditional classroom efforts to be inclusive to minority students, especially L2 learners, can create an environment of difference and isolate these students further. Based on Gee and Hayes's (2011) premise that adolescents' literacy practices are directly tied to their social engagements and since much of this communicative interaction goes on in virtual spaces, she focused her research study on a global, transcultural online community called *Drama Crazy*. The forum consisted of learners from around the world who discussed and analyzed a Korean drama series. This type of discussion is not different from the discussions of literature done in the classroom, in which students analyze and critique the work of the author. Using Hines' (2015) rationale that online spaces create their own ethnography, she documented the literacy practices of this discussion forum using three types of qualitative research: ethnography, case study, and content analysis. Collecting data over a two-month period, she found the discourse rich with literacy behaviors: writing, visuals, and interactions. Participants communicated with each other through signs, symbols, and languages.

Although this study does not discuss how these skills can be transferred to the classroom, it does reveal that the online environment presents a safe space or "third space" for literacy learning and language acquisition (Alvermann, 2011). This third space provides students with an opportunity to create on a topic of shared interest. This engaging activity includes discussion of character, setting, and plot just as would be discussed in a college literature class. Participation in an online discussion forum assigned as a prewriting could serve as a bridge activity that students can use to develop analytical writing. Bridging these skills would require the instructor to help students identify literacy skills and provide activities that will help them transfer these skills to a traditional learning environment.

Further studies of online communities support students' gain of important literacy skills when participating in forums where they share interests in a virtual space. Guzzetti and Foley (2014) found that these virtual spaces provide adult learners with a place to share similar experiences to advance literacy skills. Their longitudinal study focused on a forum of Havanese dog owners and admirers and consisted of informal observations of the discussions of participants. They examined the data using "discourse-centered online ethnography," which allowed them to observe the way participants interacted with each other and "how they made meaning with their semiotic productions" (Guzzetti & Foley, p. 463).

Over a six-year period, they read 30,435 posts by 1,121 members and analyzed 436 posts, collected documents, and conducted interviews to triangulate

the data. Analyzing the data using discourse analysis (Gee, 2011), they examined the social language as well as the structure of the content. They found that the discourse revolved around sharing multimodal texts, recommending fiction and nonfiction to each other, e-books and websites as sources of information literacy. They found that the boundaries between print and digital literacies crossed and literacy practices were developed beyond the virtual space. "Adult literacy educators can provide opportunities for adults to self-select digital forums as affinity spaces (Gee, 2011) and in doing so foster both digital and print literacies" (Guzzetti & Foley, 2014, p. 469) bridging on and offline literacy practices.

Like discussion forums based on interests, fan fiction sites also allow participants to engage in a variety of literacy practices with groups of individuals with similar interests. Those who use these sites create texts and receive feedback, similar to what they might receive from a teacher or in a classroom peer review. Peer review is an important part of the first year writing classroom, with instructors modeling and implementing the practice both in groups, individual, and at various draft levels. Often students do not know how to respond to this activity, worrying more about the social aspects than providing feedback. They also feel that they do not know enough to provide intelligent feedback.

A study of FanFiction.net and Figment.com sought to discover the primary characteristics of the feedback given in this online forum (Magnifico, Curwood, & Lammers, 2015). Examining these online collaborations, researchers coded over 646 reader comments and found that comments included social communication and created social presence as well as provided feedback on the story. Researchers determined that the feedback did not provide adequate instruction and few reviewers provided anything in-depth. They concluded that it is up to the classroom teacher to provide meaningful feedback. This is an excellent opportunity to transfer students' ability to review or give feedback online into their classroom peer reviews. They noted that although the feedback may not have been instructive, it did provide social validation, which is often something that the intimidation of the FYW classroom diminishes. Students often feel insecure about their abilities and lack the confidence to provide feedback. Using this type of work to help students understand the task of peer review will allow them to use their prior knowledge and apply it to a regular, and often unnecessarily intimidating, component of FYW classes. These sites provide a distinct online identity that is not distinguishable by race or socioeconomic background and a safe space for composing (Magnifico et al., 2015).

Stewart (2014) found that students' ability "to be someone" was strongly correlated with the acquisition of both high school and college degrees as well as their attainment of language. She found that the confidence that resulted from creating an online identity also resulted in students using more English online than in the classroom. Without embracing multiliteracies and retaining a narrow "monolithic perspective," literacy and achievement is privileged (Stewart, 2014, p. 368). In virtual spaces, students can use the broad definition of texts to create

compositions and to express themselves and develop their own voice and style. These skills can be transferred into the FYW classroom where students must create their own voice and style in their academic writing.

Using this broad definition of texts, ethnic and cultural identity can also be validated in virtual spaces. In a study of three Chicana bloggers, Santoy (2013) followed the way these women used virtual environments to connect to others through their racial and ethnic representation. Using images, text, stories, critical analysis, photos, and clip art, they created content that was used to correct misrepresentations of their culture. These bloggers gained important literacy skills that allow them to control how they are represented and can "reflect the diversity of the offline communities" (Santoy, 2013, p. 366). The composing practices that come so easily to users in these online environments can be used as starting places to help create understanding and equity in the classroom.

Another group of researchers used Twitter as a learning tool for students as they investigated the authentic way students use language in virtual environments (Young, Filson, & Ednam-O'Dea, 2018). Although the study focused on integrating Twitter into regular classroom practice as a tool to support student engagement and as a professional development tool, it involved teacher training that required teachers to observe how students composed in these environments. In this sense, it helped teachers understand the authentic way language is used in the Twitter community (Young et al., 2018). It has been noted that college students have high engagement on Twitter (Ebner, Lienhardt, Rohs, & Meyer, 2010, in Young et al., 2018). This is important because Twitter allows for language awareness as a result of its current 280 character limit on entries (tweets). Students must choose their words carefully, understand the connotations of their word choices, and keep their writing clear and concise; these are challenging notions for many first-year writing students. By identifying the literacy skills acquired on Twitter, educators can then transfer them into lessons that teach concision and word choice.

Multimodal Composition

Unlike the traditional classroom, these virtual third spaces allow for students to bridge in-and out-of-school learning. Smith's (2016) three-year case study found that her subject, Emily, seamlessly integrated texts to create meaning. Her research and endless evaluation of her own material supported her compositions and allowed her to synthesize in-and out-of-school learning for her online productions. This study had grown out of a larger study and allowed the researcher to be an observer in Emily's virtual world. Smith (2016) refers to Emily's semiotic construction as a design framework, working off the New London Groups' concept that "we are inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning and at the same time active designers of meaning" (NLG, 1996, p. 65).

One skill students have from online activity is the creation of multimodal compositions. Bringing digital forms of communication into the classroom is

important because students must be digitally literate to survive in a rapidly changing environment; it mimics their environment outside of school, empowers learners, and breaks down linguistic barriers by allowing students to communicate through digital means (Hafner, 2015). Compositions created by students are created by remixing cultural artifacts found online, which in turn creates an authorial voice (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). Developing an authorial voice is one of the most important components in learning to compose.

Collecting data over 15 months, Hafner (2015) studied the composing practices of 52 students whose ages range from 18 to 23 and how remix practices contributed to their authorial voice. Hafner (2015) found that bringing these practices into the classroom helped students to learn to build upon others' works, as is done when we teach students to integrate the works of writers into their compositions. The *remix practice* also provides the instructor with a realistic and relevant discussion of plagiarism, which students often find confusing.

Translating linguistic claims to multimodal claims helps students identify the elements of argument necessary to writing a composition, an important step in FYW. Multimodal compositions offer "authorial agency and communicative potential for expressing voice" (Cimasko & Shin, 2017, p. 388). Although the researchers studied a class of students, they focused on how one L2 student, Olga, translated her linguistic claims into visual claims. As a qualitative case study, it drew on semiotic and ethnographic theory and examined the choices the student made and where she was able to "recontextualize" her argument effectively. The researchers collected data consisting of the student's texts and field notes of her composition process. They found Olga's process to be just as complex as the process of creating a written argument and was shaped greatly by her efforts to meet the needs of her audience, asserting that teachers should "value their previous experiences with multimodal digital texts outside the classroom as pedagogical resources for effective L2 writing instruction" (Cimasko & Shin, 2017, p. 388). The method of translating claims works effectively for all learners if they begin with the visual claim, or multimodal composition, and then translate it into a linguistic claim. Using the same components of effective argument that were used to create the multimodal project, students can transfer their online composing skills to develop their academic writing skills.

These studies on multimodal composition provide insight into the process that students use when creating these written compositions. These studies are also limited by their use of only qualitative data, but they raise important questions about how the compositions created online transfer into the classroom and support agency, authorial voice, composing skills, and develop vocabulary knowledge. Although attempts are made to bridge in-and-out of school literacy practices, the skills learned online are used in these studies to replace traditional literacy learning, and there are no concrete instructional techniques on using those skills to support traditional literacy outcomes. The extant literature suggests that teachers

have limited access and understanding of students' out-of-school multimodal reading and writing practices (Alvermann, 2017). While students use literacy skills in online compositions and discussion forums, they also use literacy skills in virtual gaming worlds.

Gaming and Composing

The gaming world is a global world, which removes language barriers while still providing practice in literacy skills, such as understanding audience, using evidence, feedback and critical thinking. It also instills collaboration, which is a skill that becomes essential in college courses as well as in the workplace. Although the skills may not be immediately obvious, students are greatly invested in making meaning, reading, and communicating when entering these worlds. In Sabatino's (2014) study, students must evaluate and critically judge the information presented to them in a game, deliver and receive feedback from other students, understand audience, and plan for action (as done in prewriting).

Arduini (2018) makes a concerted effort to bridge what she refers to as "gaming literacy," which primarily take place at home towards the development of multimodal literacy skills in the classroom. She found that her "research participants illustrated how their experiences with digital technologies have honed literate skills that can be used to make more meaningful and theoretically effective multimodal texts" (Arduini, 2018, p. 92). Gee (2012) acknowledged that although video games provide gamers with entertainment that corresponds to learning, they must be high quality games. To transfer gaming literacies, practitioners need to develop assignments that position students to be increasingly aware of their engagement with gaming and require them to reflect upon the games they play as well as the skills they develop from them. Students may be best suited to identify the skills they glean from gaming, and how they translate to literacy activities and skill development in the classroom.

Conclusion

Although studies have been conducted on using online environments as part of classroom instruction, the studies included in this meta-analysis specifically reveal how students compose online. When blogging, taking part in fan fiction, using social media, creating multimodal texts, participating in discussions, and taking part in gaming, students demonstrate a bevy of literacy skills that can be transferred into their academic work. At the college level, inviting adult students to bring their knowledge to the classroom is a significant component of adult learning theories. Educators must adjust to the many platforms and ways students compose in the 21st century and learn to value these skills as they would the traditional composition (Moore, et al., 2016). Students use a variety of formats in these virtual spaces to create identity and use language. This allows students to compose in non-threatening environments where they are not graded or evaluated.

Further studies in using these virtual environments as the starting place for teaching traditional composing skills need to be conducted. Although instruction in how to write for these different environments for public and professional reasons must be taught, students bring these skills to the classroom. The composing they do online requires an understanding of audience and purpose, critical thinking, drafting, revision, and multiple uses of modes of communication. They offer opportunities for authorship, agency, and identity building as well as combat the social inequities that occur when a student's sociocultural environment is not considered. College students spend enormous amounts of time online and navigate these virtual spaces with relative ease; meanwhile, they often struggle to do the same in their first-year writing classrooms.

Harnessing the skills that are utilized in an environment where students feel comfortable and confident and leveraging these skills to the classroom opens up many learning possibilities. It is important to note that these literacy practices should not be a replacement for traditional literacy skills, for students adept at literacy in virtual spaces, but instead must support traditional literacy instruction. With the rapidly changing technological environment, virtual spaces offer places where students can gain important literacy practices that will support academic performance in college and work toward making a more equitable learning experience at the college level.

Ideas for Practice

Most important in facilitating this skill transfer is respecting and valuing the skills students acquire in virtual spaces. In order for students to understand that their expertise is welcomed in the traditional, academic environment of higher education, the assignments must be low stakes. Limited guidelines for their virtual activities should be imposed and instead students should have agency. The following are some guidelines for engaging students in the transfer of their online literacies skills towards traditional composition in a first-year writing program:

- Discussion facilitates comprehension, creation of identity, agency, and voice. Creating a student blog between composition classes or cross-disciplinary classes on a relevant course reading, a current news topic, or student-chosen alphabetic text or multimodal text allows the instructor to create a third space for students to engage in an intellectual discourse where students can communicate both linguistically and visually.
- Have students create a literary response discussion forum or social media exchange. The exchange of ideas in a virtual, anonymous format, encourages students to take risks in their interpretations, which can then be validated by peers. Begin with a popular movie or television program assigned for class, then move on to the literary works to be studied in class. A student's literary response discussion forum should encourage students to use creative response methods, including alphabetic text and multimodal constructions.

- Students are familiar and skilled at remixing for a virtual audience. When assigning essays, have students create their initial response in a multimodal draft, including video, images, and with a virtual audience in mind. The subsequent drafts should translate their visual claims into linguistic claims for a more academic audience.
- Every student has a favorite movie or book. Have students join a fan fiction site in which they respond in a creative manner. Ask them to keep a journal of their editing and peer feedback interactions. With the class or in small group discussions, have students share their experiences as editors. Using their experiences helps prepare them for workshopping and peer editing their classmates' papers.
- Gaming online or in participatory groups from home is a major social community for students. Bring the critical reading, collaborative skills to class by having students keep a log of game time and skills achieved. Create a list of questions that helps students pinpoint the literacy skills they gain while playing. Direct students to note how difficult decisions were made, how they worked together to compose an action plan, how feedback was provided, and how the time period of the game's setting affected their decisions. Students should be encouraged to focus on high quality games. When they have accomplished their logs, work together to identify the skills they have used while playing and how they will be used in the composition classroom.
- Have students navigate through Twitter to examine the decisions made about language and what can be inferred by word choice. They can choose their own tweets or those of another person. Students should carefully examine why certain language was chosen and the connotations the words held. In small groups, they can ask peers to do their own analysis of tweets and compare how each member interpreted the language. Finally, as a prewriting exercise in language awareness and concision, students should take part in a Twitter exchange on the topic of an upcoming composition.

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Adolescent College and Career Readiness

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Changes in the job and career options available to the workforce are occurring at an ever-increasing rate. Jobs currently available will cease to exist, while others will emerge, requiring constant exploration of needed skills and knowledge, interests and values, and vocational and personal identities (United States Department of Labor, 2015). The State of Virginia has recently revised high school Standards of Learning requirements to reflect 21st century expectations of college and career readiness. Students are expected to graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in undergraduate college or career training (Virginia Department of Education, 2018). Loudoun County Public Schools meet the State of Virginia requirements, as 100% of its schools are fully accredited (lcps.org, 2018). However, there is a continuing need to respond to the changing needs of students and the world of work. Results of longitudinal surveys of youth have indicated that unlike past generations, young people will change jobs at least 12-15 times in their lifetime. This change increases the ambiguity adolescents face in planning careers and developing vocational identity (United States Department of Labor, 2015).

The current study proceeds with a review of career development literature focused on adolescent college and career readiness. A program and subsequent analysis of the impact of the program follows. The results of the analysis sheds light on adolescent awareness of the requirements of college and career readiness in a suburban high school in Northern Virginia.

Goal of College and Career Readiness

There are many components underlying the goal of college and career readiness. These components include student engagement to reduce the risk of dropping out, personal learning goals and intellectual self-identity, vocational identity, ability to utilize community cultural awareness, career adaptability, and orientation to the future.

Student engagement is a critical component of success in achieving college and career readiness. The lack of engagement may impact educational and occupational preparation. Students must feel connected, described as involved,

engaged and belonging, to make best use of the resources available in the school setting. School connectedness accounted for the greatest factor in whether students experienced thoughts of dropping out of school (McWhirter et al., 2018). The impact of dropping out of high school is reflected in data examining employment rates for students that dropped out of school in 2016. Thirty-four percent of dropouts were employed, another sixteen percent were unemployed, but were seeking employment, while 49% were not employed and were not seeking employment. The dropout rate for males was 2% higher than the dropout rate for girls. The total dropout rate for adolescents born outside the U.S. was 9% compared to 5% for adolescents born in the U.S., with the highest rate for Hispanic adolescents at 16%, 5% for Black and almost 4% White adolescents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The accompanying comparison of median weekly earnings demonstrated the financial impact of level of secondary and postsecondary academic achievement. According to the U.S. Labor Department, weekly median earning for a high school dropout was $494, for those earning a high school diploma it was $740, for those with some college but no degree it was $760, for those with an associate degree it was $800, and for those earning an undergraduate degree the weekly median earning was $1200. (United States Department of Labor, 2018). Students with the greatest likelihood of dropping out are most likely those with the least amount of school connectedness. Males and students of color are the most vulnerable, but all students with little engagement in school fare the worst in the long run.

Figure 1

Weekly Median Income

For a high school dropout was $494	For those earning a high school diploma it was $740
Weekly median earning for those with some college but no degree it was $760	For those with some college but no degree it was $760
For those with an associate degree it was $800	For those earning an undergraduate degree the weekly median earning was $1200

Murillo, Quartz, and Razo (2017) conducted a study of the impact of high school internships as a means for supporting career preparation for low-income students of color. It was determined that students' ability to make the best use of internship opportunities was based on their passion for a career area, and their exposure to learning contexts outside of the classroom. It was important that their hopes and dreams were supported and they had the knowledge to be able to maneuver through social institutions. This study supported the results of a community needs assessment conducted in 2009 that posited that both parents and adolescents believed that education and career planning were important needs of adolescents, but that planning for the future was the most stressful for them. Both parents and adolescents felt the need for support from the community in order to help students utilize resources in the community (Anda, Franke, & Becerra, 2009).

While an adolescent's vocational identity is generally a topic of discussion in preparation for postsecondary plans, a review of vocational development literature looked at students' vocation development from a life-span developmental perspective (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2004). A later study reiterated the findings that vocational identity is part of a trajectory beginning in childhood and continuing through adolescence and early adulthood (Rogers, Creed, & Praskova, 2018). However, vocational identity does not stabilize until around age 15 (Hirshci, 2010); therefore, adolescence is a critical period in which to explore personal interests, personal values, and career interests as they relate to vocational identity. The level of career development defined as higher level of awareness of personal interests was positively related to vocational identity. Students with differentiated personal interests were more engaged in exploring different career fields, which supported career decision-making. Students whose interests were not as defined were not as engaged in career exploration.

Career adaptability and an orientation to the future were examined by Ginevra et al. (2018). Adaptability was examined from the perspective of problem solving and coping strategies to include: concern, curiosity, control, and confidence. Orientation to the future was defined as ideas, feelings, or thoughts about the future. Career adaptability and orientation to the future were explored to determine their impact on the breadth of identified vocational interests. It was found that career concern and curiosity within the construct of career adaptability, were significantly related to consideration of multiple career paths. In addition, orientation to the future was also significantly related to adolescent development of an identify formation that supported consideration of multiple career paths.

Methods

Description of the Career Awareness Fair

Teachers, counselors and administrators meeting as an Intervention Committee (IC) discussed, the long-term plans of vulnerable students in a Northern Virginia high school; or, rather, the lack of long-term plans for many of those

students. A few vulnerable students had communicated that they just wanted to drop out and get a job. They were unclear as to what job, and for how long, and had no long-term plans for the future. Many other students, in general advising conversations, had shared with their guidance counselors that they expected to go to college, but they were unsure about their interests. The IC believed that career awareness for 9th grade students might prove useful in furthering student engagement in coursework, volunteer opportunities in the community, and participation in the upcoming Job Fair sponsored by the Career Center at the high school. In addition, the Career Awareness Fair (CAF) would contribute to achieving the Virginia Department of Education (2018) and thereby the Loudoun County Public Schools' (lcps.org, 2018) goal of preparing students for college and career readiness.

The plan for the CAF coincided with the underlying theme of "identity awareness" adopted by the 9th grade English department as a focus for the academic year. It was determined in 9th grade English class discussions that required a reflection on one's own identity to answer questions about the underlying identity of characters in short stories, that students in general were unable to analyze their own identity and that of the literary characters. There seemed to be a need to provide some intervention for the 9th graders in order to help them make connections between themselves and the characters in their reading assignments.

It was decided that the CAF would be organized to bring speakers from a range of careers to the school to meet with students. The purpose was to give the 9th grade class, including English learners (ELs) and students with special needs in sheltered classes, access to people working in a variety of careers, from the community. It was planned as a two-day event to ensure that students would be able to attend with their English and literacy classes, as the school follows a block schedule, with classes meeting on alternating days. Faculty felt strongly that all students needed to be able to explore the world of work, not only to begin to define their own identity and begin to make their own career decisions, but also to understand the variety of careers present in their immediate community.

Teachers from the EL department, the school's family liaison, the school's career counselor, a retired administrator familiar with the students, and a guidance counselor volunteered to plan the event, which was scheduled at the beginning of the second quarter of the school calendar. The committee brainstormed potential career interests of the students, based on conversations, class choices for programs in the school, and student access to possible jobs that might be featured in the Job Fair to be held in the spring. In addition, on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) testing day, in which students in special education and EL students did not participate, those students spent the time creating collages of their potential career interests. This provided additional information for eliciting speakers for the CAF.

The committee worked together for six weeks contacting speakers from a range of careers. Speakers representing medical careers included an educational manager in pharmaceuticals, a medical assistant and veterinary technician, phlebotomist, speech therapist, banker, naturalist, social work and counselor, nursing, early childhood educator, elementary teacher in training, college recruiter, psychologist, attorney, and meteorologist. The military was represented by speakers from the Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy. Technology was represented by speakers in software engineering and a technology support specialist. Speakers from the district's fire and rescue team (EMS) presented, as well as a law enforcement/ homeland security specialist; a chef; real estate agent; cosmetologist; a non-profit grant writer; owner of a construction company; owner of a landscaping company; an athletic trainer; a driving instructor; school secretary/registrar; and a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) technician. In addition, representatives from the Job Corp and Work Place Innovation Act (WIOA) were invited to speak with students who were eligible for those services. Forty speakers were involved in the CAF over the two-day period.

Students were prepared for the CAF by their English teachers. Prior to the CAF, teachers spent a day discussing the importance of defining an identity that would help guide future work and career decisions, and a broader awareness of their own values and goals. This discussion extended previous discussions regarding how identity was portrayed by authors in selected short stories in the 9th grade literature textbook. Teachers presented two videos, a Washington Post article, and three websites that students would be able to return to as they progressed through high school. All the material was posted in the Google Classroom accounts used by the teachers. The videos included the song, "In the Year 2525," (Zager & Evans, 1969). The message of the pop song was how a person's experience of the world would change over time and was eerily predictive of current events. Next was the video, "Did you know?" (Scott, 2018), which gave up to date predictions of how technology is changing the world of work. The Washington Post article described the need for continued learning throughout life (Selingo, 2018). Of the three websites, two are currently used by the guidance department to help students choose classes, Career View (Virginia Career View, 2018), and Virginia Wizard (Virginia's Community Colleges, 2018). The Bureau of Labor Statistics website (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.) is an ongoing source of up to date information about the labor market.

Once students viewed the videos, read the article and explored the information on the websites, they were given an opportunity to choose their first and second preferences for two speakers out of 10 that would be speaking during the time that the students would normally meet for their English class. Once students made their selections, the results were tabulated and the choice sheets were returned to the classroom teachers to let students know in which classroom the speakers they chose would be speaking.

On the day of the CAF, students attended two sessions. Translators were available for many sessions to support the EL students. Speakers were introduced to the students by faculty and Spanish Honor Society student volunteers. Each session lasted about 40 minutes, which gave the students time to travel to the next session. The only glitch in the program was when the EMS team had to run from the building to answer a call. Two teams had come to the school, and both had to respond to emergency calls. They did return the next day, and did not have to leave. It was a real-life lesson on the work of an EMS team!

Students were asked to respond to a survey to determine what they learned from the speakers they attended, the week after the CAF. While student engagement in the sessions was observed by teachers also attending the sessions, it was important to gather feedback to justify the effort and guide future activities

Results

Table 1 below summarizes the results of the follow-up survey completed for the CAF. Out of 314 participants responding to the survey, three did not think the CAF was helpful. Four students responded to the survey that they were not present for the CAF, so they had no input. The most frequent comment was that students believed the CAF was a useful experience. Their comments indicated that they had not thought about many of the career areas presented. They expressed general surprise that there was much more they had to do in school before beginning to apply for jobs. They found the presentations interesting, because they became more knowledgeable about the jobs available in their community and what people did at work day-to-day. Students shared that they had a better idea of what classes they should take to prepare for future work. Many found they had new insights about the current range of careers, and how the world of work would change during their lifetime. The presentations helped students better define their own vocational interests. Many expressed reliefs that there were different paths to achieve desired careers and a variety of ways to pay for it. Students seemed sobered by what life in the world of work would be like as an adult.

Also, as a follow-up to the CAF, teachers engaged students in discussion about defining their personal identity based on their increased awareness about the world of work. Students' comments indicated that they had not considered career choices as a reflection of personal values and life priorities. As freshman most had not thought much about the next five or more years of their lives. The CAF gave them a sense of what would be needed to make long-term plans. Just simply saying, "I am going to college," or "I am going to get a job," without considering specifics, or the constantly changing landscape of job availability and skills required for employment will not be sufficient.

Table 1
Results of CAF follow-up survey

Topic	Theme	Description
1	Career decisions	The CAF provided information to help make career decisions. Students consistently commented that the information presented would be helpful in guiding exploration and identifying interests for consideration
2	Preview of the world of work	The CAF provided information on actual jobs. Students found the information presented gave a realistic view of jobs currently available and some future predictions
3	College costs/financial aid	The CAF made students aware of post-secondary costs. Students were relieved to learn that while college is expensive, there are options available for paying for it
4	Value of working hard	The CAF presenters reiterated the need to work hard in any field. Students acknowledged the work ethic communicated by the speakers
5	Applying for jobs	The CAF provided steps needed for job applications. Students obtained a general sense of how to apply for a job and important criteria for eligibility
6	College preferred but not required	The CAF made students aware of the range of prerequisite skills for the changing job market. Students became aware of the multiple avenues for accessing careers in various fields, from traditional college to alternative pathways
7	Choose something enjoyable	The CAF speakers encouraged students to choose a career they would enjoy, and students acknowledged it

Note: *Topics ordered by frequency of comment*

Discussion

Adolescents exhibit a great deal of energy towards things they feel are important, which generally include social relationships, athletics, and use of various forms of technology. While most acknowledge that life will be different as an adult, they tend to create personal fables to visualize their own life as an adult (Sternberg, 2017). Teachers, and parents, may try to give adolescents guidance as to how to prepare for this transition, but for many adolescents such guidance falls on deaf

ears. It is typical to hear comments such as, "It will be different for me," or "I am not ever going to use any of this stuff," or "I will figure it out later." Probably the most appropriate comment is, "I don't know what I am interested in." The development of personal and vocational identity is a process that begins before adolescence, but becomes more laden with stress as adolescents approach decision points in their lives (Sternberg, 2017). Coursework decisions, performance in classes, volunteer opportunities, summer jobs and internships all come at a time when adolescents are sorting out their values, goals and priorities. Decisions as to how to best use their time, the conflict they feel between school work and peer relations, weigh heavily. It is important to provide students with a broad view of the world of work, and support as they move towards developing their personal and vocational identity. It is critical that they understand the underlying need to continue learning throughout their lifetime. The rate of change in career options and skill/knowledge requirements, demand adaptability. The capacity to redefine their own values and goals as the world of work, and life as an adult, will enable them to continue to be self-sufficient.

The activities implemented prior to the CAF provided students with the beginning strategies to explore careers and develop an orientation towards the future. The presentations at the CAF gave students a glimpse of skills/knowledge needed in various career areas. The voices of adults other than their parents or teachers gave authenticity to the need to access the resources available in school and in the community in which they live. The IC viewed the CAF as the beginning of a process to connect school to work. It was a step towards helping students become more comfortable with decisions they will need to make, as they progress towards postsecondary life.

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Practicing What We Preach: Modeling Literacy Co-Teaching in Teacher Preparation Program

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To best meet the needs of future educators, it is important to provide them with the required tools to be successful in the classroom. Currently, many P-12 schools emphasize collaboration between general education and special education teachers (Murawski & Lochner, 2011). In 2017, U.S. Department of Education reported that 62.2% of students with disabilities were served in an inclusive general education setting for 80% or more of their day. While 18.9% of students with disabilities were served in an inclusive setting for 40-79% of their day. Combined, 81.1% of all students with disabilities spend 40%-100% of their day in inclusive settings. These large numbers indicate a need for PSTs to have exposure to co-teaching models and discussions due to the large likelihood that they will teach in inclusive settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

One way to encourage collaboration in inclusive settings is through co-teaching. While co-teaching is commonly seen and often expected in many K-12 schools, there are limited opportunities for teacher candidates to see this type of instruction prior to beginning teaching. Ploessi, Rock, Schoenfeld, and Blanks (2010) state that the "greatest obstacle to successful co-teaching is the lack of preparedness of the educators involved" (p. 158). The purpose of this paper is to share an action research project where two course instructors collaborated to co-teach their literacy methods courses. The professors approached their courses with this premise in mind, designing them in a way which lent itself to a co-teaching model.

Background

Both faculty members were teaching graduate level initial certification literacy courses in their respective programs. In previous semesters, the two professors had guest lectured one another's literacy courses, speaking on topics specific to their areas of expertise (e.g., phonics, stages of reading development, differentiation, assessment and Response to Intervention). Both faculty members wanted to effectively support their students' understanding of important literacy instructional components and actively sought assistance and support when needed.

After several semesters, the two faculty members determined that their strengths and weaknesses in regards to their background knowledge of different concepts, ideas, topics, and areas of expertise complemented each other. After several informal meetings, the two professors decided that their courses would be stronger if combined.

The two faculty members' approach to developing, planning, and implementation of their instructional design which aligned with Friend (2008) who explains, "Co-teaching presumes that both educators actively participate in the delivery of instruction, share responsibility, assume accountability, together the educators create a learning situation that cannot be produced by a solo teacher" (p. 9). Prior to the beginning of the semester, they met regularly to plan for their co-taught course. They planned out the course calendar, aligned their syllabi, identified focal topics, and discussed various co-teaching models to be implemented in the literacy course. The instructors utilized Cook and Friend's article, *Co-Teaching: Guidelines for Creating Effective Practices* (1995) to gauge their options for teaching a combined literacy course to both elementary education and special education majors. The following are the co-teaching models outlined, adopted nationally, and defined in Cook and Friend's article. These include (1) One Teaching, One Assisting, (2) Station Teaching, (3) Parallel Teaching, (4) Alternative Teaching, and (5) Team Teaching. One Teach, One Assisting identifies one teacher as the lead, while the second teacher serves in a support role. This model lends itself to be implemented by newly formed co-teaching pairs. Station Teaching is when content is divided in two or more segments and taught in different locations within the same classroom. Each teacher in the co-teaching pair has his/her own segment prepared and delivers to each group of students. Co-teachers set a rotation schedule to span one class period or over multiple class sessions. For Parallel Teaching the class divided into two heterogeneous groups. Each teacher delivers the same content to his/her own group in the same amount of time. Alternative Teaching is when one teacher teaches a small group of students while the other teacher teaches the remaining large group of students. Last is team teaching. This is when both teachers are actively instructing together while teaching the entire group of students.

The two-faculty met regularly during the semester to debrief about each week's class and plan for the following week. During class, they also took time to share their experience with their students, soliciting their feedback about instructional design, course topics, and the different co-teaching models utilized throughout the semester. By combining the early childhood and special education literacy courses, the two faculty provided their students with the opportunity to observe co-teaching models from their professors, as well work collaboratively during class activities, discussions, and assignments.

Method

School Site

This study took place at a liberal arts university located in the South Atlantic region of the United States. The majority of the students graduating from the university's college of education go on to teach in the neighboring school district. Currently, the school district has implemented co-teaching in all-inclusive classrooms and implemented a new balanced literacy initiative that focuses on addressing all components of ELA instruction. While there are multiple models of co-teaching utilized at the district, the co-teaching teams are comprised of one general education teacher and one special education teacher.

The courses were both literacy methods courses, one for special education preservice teachers (PSTs) and one for elementary PSTs. The two courses met at the same time once a week for two and a half hours. The PSTs enrolled in the two courses were in various stages of the program, some in the first semester, some in the middle of the program, and others in their final semester of classes before beginning internship. While students were at various stages in their program during the time of the study, the majority were already provisionally licensed and teaching in the classroom.

Delivery of Instruction

The course instructors utilized the following co-teaching models: Team Teaching, Parallel Teaching, and One Teaching, One Assisting. The literacy topic for each week drove the instructors' decisions on which co-teaching strategy to model. For example, because the elementary education professor had a deep understanding of early literacy development and writing, so the instructors utilized the One Teaching, One Assisting model during those classes. During classes when the literacy topic was one that both instructors felt comfortable with (e.g., critical literacy, vocabulary, and integrating literacy across the curriculum) they utilized the Team-Teaching Model. Parallel Teaching was utilized in the course during an assessment presentation when students were engaged in scoring and interpreting a reading inventory. For a complete summary of the literacy topics and co-teaching models, see Appendix.

Participants

Participants in the study included Masters of Arts (MAT) Elementary and Special Education initial certification students. Many of these students are already in the classroom, teaching under provisional licensure in the neighboring school districts. The two course instructors, one female assistant professor of special education and one female assistant professor of reading both worked in the Elementary and Special Education Department. The instructors were in their third year at the university during the time of data collection.

Data Collection

To ensure trustworthiness, multiple forms of data were collected over the course of the semester (Maxwell, 2013). The two course professors had reflective journals, kept anecdotal notes, and met weekly to reflect on their instruction after each class. They documented the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement specifically in relation to literacy instruction and co-teaching. They then used that information when planning their instruction for the following week.

Additionally, data was collected from the PSTs enrolled in the two courses. This was collected through end-of-course evaluations. The evaluations were created by the two course instructors in addition to the university's evaluation system. While the evaluations had nine, four-point Likert questions and six short answer questions, two Likert scale questions and two short answer questions specifically addressed the co-teaching model implemented during the semester. Other than identifying the course in which the student was enrolled, the submissions were anonymous.

Data Analysis

Using constant comparative analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1967), the two course professors met weekly and reflected on their instructional practices. These meetings served as a reflective exercise where the two professors discussed and analyzed their instruction as well as the thoughts on the co-teaching model presented that week. After discussing the literacy instruction and co-teaching that took place for that week, they then compared it to classes prior to that date. The instructors used this information in a way that allowed them to revisit and reflect on their instruction throughout the course of the semester and utilize it in way that informed planning and implementation of instruction for subsequent classes. This was an inductive way to add information and compare it to new information.

Results

Based on the course instructors' notes and reflective journaling, as well as the students' responses to the end of course co-teaching questions, data analysis revealed two codes. The codes identified were course instruction and physical environment. While the majority of emphasis was placed on the course instruction, the physical environment was identified by both the course instructors and the students.

Course Instruction and Co-Teaching

Data analysis revealed both professors believed that the various types of co-teaching modeled in the classroom was an effective tool. Utilizing the co-teaching model helped them, as course instructors, better understand the instructional expectations that were being placed on classroom teachers. With this understanding, they felt more prepared to discuss the various models in their other

courses. The course instructors also agreed that the co-teaching for their literacy courses helped students two-fold: they were able to see what the various co-teaching models looked like and were able to benefit from both professor's individual areas of expertise.

When students were asked to reflect further on the co-teaching models that the two course professors utilized, the majority indicated that it was something that they found beneficial. Ninety-five percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the co-taught course added to their overall learning experience. Additionally, 93% either agreed or strongly agreed that the co-taught course enabled them to see the benefits of a co-taught classroom in a public-school setting. Even though the student indicated that they were able to see the benefits of co-teaching, their short answer responses focused more on the two professors' interactions and instruction instead of the co-teaching model. One PST stated, "It was useful to have both professors' perspectives and approaches" exemplifying how many students felt about the course. Another student indicated their appreciation of the two professors' expertise in regards to literacy and special education, "It was a great experience to have the classes come together and each professor share strengths and feed of their prior experiences."

While the majority of students explained that they benefited from the co-taught literacy course, several students indicated that they felt it did not contribute to their learning. One student exemplifies this when she states, "it didn't seem very beneficial to the students. I don't think there was added value because it was co-taught." Also, as with the positive responses about the course, there was little mention of the co-teaching model, but instead students focused on the instruction and the interaction of the two professors. Another student explained, "their teaching styles and pace didn't seem to complement one another."

Physical Environment

Both course professors indicated that the increased number of students resulted in a disconnect that differed from when they taught their courses separately. When teaching their respective courses independently from one another, they were able to make personal connections with the students that they had difficulty establishing in the co-taught classroom environment. With that in mind, both course professors felt that the benefits of co-teaching outweighed any disadvantages brought on by the increased number of students.

Several also explained that the size of the class and the location detracted from the course, making statements such as, "the room [lecture hall] gave the class a less intimate feeling," and, "I prefer a smaller classroom environment." The students were used to attending classes with 15-20 students. With the combined group of 45 students, we were in a lecture hall. The oblong layout of the room and stadium seating created a clinical setting rather than a smaller inviting classroom. Still the rich discussions and expertise of differing majors brought forward learning

opportunities that superseded the disadvantages the lecture hall set for the instructors.

Conclusions

The results of this action research study demonstrate the potential advantages and shortfalls of co-teaching in a higher education literacy methods course. These align with the documented challenges that co-teachers in public education face as well. Co-teaching is often compared to a marriage. For it to be successful, both parties need to be committed to the task and to make it successful. The pair continually work to come together for the greater good of the partnership by working through challenges and differences. Like marriage, co-teaching needs the same efforts on the part of the co-teaching pair. Open communication and a level of trust is optimal for a successful co-teaching partnership (and marriage). Often times in public education, administration assigns the co-teaching pairs. These may be compared to "arranged marriages." The co-teaching pair in this scenario have no foundation on which to build and foster a co-teaching partnership. It takes time and may not yield as fruitful of results as those that chose to enter the co-teaching partnership (Friend, 2008).

While students in the course focused their feedback on the instruction and interaction of the general education and special education course professors, there was minimal acknowledgement of the types of co-teaching models taking place in the classroom. With that in mind, future opportunities to co-teach may benefit from in class discussions about the various co-teaching models presented by the course instructors. This explicit discussion may yield a more in-depth analysis of the various models. Additional research exploring the impact of co-teaching in a higher education classroom setting for PSTs moving forward in their respective programs and into the classroom may provide insight into the relevance of developing and creating such courses.

PSTs have the opportunity to see research-based co-teaching models in the higher education setting prior to entering the classroom. By seeing the various models in action, the PSTs are afforded the opportunity to bridge theory to practice. Course professors can also benefit from co-teaching their courses. By working collaboratively with faculty from other programs, course instructors can better understand skills and concepts of which they are not familiar, as well as learn about and experience firsthand some of the teaching expectations that their students will have when they enter the classroom.

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Appendix

Literacy Topics and Co-Teaching Delivery Model

Literacy Topic	Co-Teaching Delivery Model(s)
Role of the Literacy Teacher	Team Teaching
Alphabetic Principle	One Teaching, One Assisting
Assessment – Reading Inventory	Team Teaching & Parallel Teaching
Reading & Writing Process	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Vocabulary Development	One Teaching, One Assisting
Fluency	One Teaching, One Assisting
Comprehension: Reading Factors	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Comprehension: Text Factors	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Differentiation & Response to Intervention	One Teaching, One Assisting
Literacy Instruction & Diverse Learnings	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Writing	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Rigor in Literacy	Team Teaching & One Teaching, One Assisting
Critical Literacy & Families	Team Teaching & One Teaching